

BRINGING COMMUNITY CARE ORGANIZATIONS (CCOs) ON BOARD

From the beginning of our current implementation project we have believed that CCOs have an important role to play in promoting SDM. Care managers (CMs) have direct and relatively frequent contact with clients and may be best able to ascertain their needs and how SDM and SDM facilitation could move them to greater autonomy and self-determination. Initially we planned to develop educational materials to enable the CMs to understand SDM, SDMA and the SDMNY facilitation process, and to recommend the latter to their interested clients. Informal conversations suggested that CCOs and their CMs might be interested in a facilitation role as well. To that end, we signed up three CCOs (Person Centered Services, LIFEPlan and ACA-NY) as partner agencies and have trained several of their core staff (though not their CMs) who are currently facilitating for us.

In the conversations that have ensued, however, we have come to see that there is a critical role for CCOs beyond education, referral, and facilitation, what SDMNY Director Naomi Brickel calls “keeping the SDMA alive”. One of the charges for CMs is to help develop and work with their clients’ “circles of support” to accomplish the goals in their Life Plans. In a thoughtful and more formalized way, the SDMA facilitation process has assembled precisely such a group of supporters around the critical skill of decision-making. The SDMA and the Decision-Maker’s chosen supporters create a powerful new resource for the CM, while simultaneously the CM can consistently remind the Decision-Maker to actively utilize their supporters and the kinds of support set out, and agreed to, in their SDMA. Incorporation into the Decision-Maker’s Life Plan, and explicit recognition of the role of the SDMA, makes it far more likely that the SDMA will serve as the living document it is intended to be, long after SDMNY and the Decision-Maker’s facilitator are out of the picture.

This potentially impactful role for CCOs and CMs is now part of the planning for the statewide CCO training OPWDD has requested us to provide. In collaboration with our friends and partners at the NY Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation, SDMNY will hold an initial brainstorming/working group with volunteers from five CCOs in early July to develop goals and objectives for the training, and to begin to explore the most conducive platform on which it can be delivered, given the variety of learning systems utilized by individual CCOs across the state. We are excited and enthusiastic about the training and expansion of the role of the CCOs in ensuring that their clients have the right to make their own decisions about their lives, regardless of disability. As SDMNY Director Naomi says;

“This effort is so critical. I’m experiencing it first hand as a mom. I can see how the SDM fits so organically into Life Plan meetings where circles of support are intended to play in. It’s almost like SDMA’s and their detail and structure in delineating a self-chosen support structure were made just for this process. The role that the CM can play in keeping the SDMA relevant, alive, and helping the DM connect with their supporters is a critical missing link.”

**THANKS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS IN THE CCOs AND THE NY ALLIANCE:
ANTICIPATING IMPORTANT, MEANINGFUL WORK TOGETHER!**