

WHEN SDM FACILITATION IS TRULY A FAMILY AFFAIR

Most SDM facilitations involve family members: younger Decision-Makers often choose parents, siblings, cousins or other relatives, including grandparents (Good News 11/15/24) as supporters, while older Decision-Makers with no available biological family may engage friends, remembering that “friends are the family you choose!” Recently, however, we’ve become aware of a different family dynamic, when the son of one of our facilitators signed up for his own SDMNY facilitation.

Shailene learned about SDMNY and SDM facilitation through a “call for facilitators” she saw while working part time as a Liaison in the Member Relations Department at a Continuing Care Organization (CCO) in Broome County. She was attracted to the idea because she had been working with several young men who had very little support and saw how difficult it was for them. And, as well, she said “to give someone the opportunity to keep their human rights and the ability to make decisions on their own or with the help of others struck me differently having a son with IDD.”



Facilitator Shailene

Shailene reached out to SDMNY and was welcomed to our next scheduled training. Since then she has been facilitating two Decision-Makers, one of whom, Willie, is now close to his SDMA. Shailene reports how inspiring and informative the process has been; she has witnessed Willie’s transformation, with the support of a wonderful family, from shy and hesitant to a confident young man who is now attending community college and making healthcare decisions with support, able, for the first time, to call and engage with his doctor on his own.

Shailene’s 18-year-old son Nathaneal (Nate) recently graduated from high school and has begun attending the local community college where he aspires to a career in business administration and forensic accounting. When he learned that his mom was working as a facilitator, a conversation ensued in which, as Shailene recounts,

“I explained what [a facilitator and an SDMA] was and gave an example of a landlord not wanting to sign a lease because they had a community habilitation staff... Nathanael said that was not fair to not rent to him just because he used OPWDD. He wanted to be able to make his own decisions and that is how SDMNY piqued his interest. He became curious about how SDMNY worked and was asking questions about it, so we signed up for an informational session.”

Nathaneal went on to a sign-up session, and just last week was matched with a facilitator.

What we love about this story is that signing up with SDMNY was truly Nathaneal’s choice, not his mom’s, and also how her training and experience as a facilitator has prepared her to be a great supporter– if, of course, he chooses her, which we’re betting he will. She is thrilled that he will be working toward his SDMA and says

“On the flip side, as a parent, I see this as such an opportunity for him to live the life he wants to and also have access to a trusted group that can help him if he needs it.”

We are so proud of the way in which Shailene and Nathaneal, Willie, and all our Decision-Makers, their families (biological or chosen) and our wonderful and dedicated facilitators affirm the value and importance of SDM and SDMNY facilitation in advancing the human right of everyone to make their own decisions, regardless of disability.

THANKS TO SHAILENE AND NATHANEAL FOR SHARING THEIR STORY!