

OUR YOUNGEST DECISION-MAKER AND (ALMOST) MOST VETERAN FACILITATOR JOIN FOR AN END-OF-YEAR SDMA SIGNING CELEBRATION

Although we have no age requirements for Decision-Makers, the range has been from 18 to late 70's, with a majority in the transition-age group of 18-23. Darius, age 17, and his family were anxious to begin, and so they did last April when veteran Facilitator Karen was assigned. Karen whose "day job" is Coordinator of Operations at ADAPT Community Services, began volunteering with us at the beginning of our first, DDPC grant, and has been an invaluable asset ever since. She's completed 7 SDMAs with more in process and was also "promoted" to mentoring several years ago. (Karen has even mentored Associate Director Joan Cornachio when Joan was facilitating; yes, every facilitator has a mentor, no matter how experienced they are!)



Facilitator Karen



Darius and mom Deborah

Dad Gabriel

One reason that almost all our Decision-Makers are 18 or older is that, until they reach that age, they, just like neurotypical teenagers, do not have full legal capacity. But one of the many reasons that incentivizes families to choose SDM is concern that once an adult child reaches 18, and parents no longer have legal authority, a third party may refuse to accept that person's consent or decision, and insist on the appointment of a guardian in order to provide the needed service or care. This, of course is exactly what our new SDMA law protects against, and it motivated Darius and his family to begin the facilitation process early. So early, in fact, that the process was completed before Darius's 18th birthday, and he had to wait until December to sign his SDMA to make it legal!

Darius is a very sweet young man who lives in Sullivan County with his mom and loves superheroes, for whom he will often script entire scenes. Karen took advantage of this interest in designing a personalized "easy-read" Big Four Chart (the tool used during facilitation to determine the areas in which the Decision-Maker wants support, the kinds of support in each area, and the trusted people in their life from whom they want that support) using Superhero The Hulk to represent the areas for support that Darius can draw on when he makes his own decisions going forward. Here are two examples:

Darius's Big Four Chart and resulting SDMA are a great example of the creativity that facilitators and their mentors bring to our process, and that provide learning experiences and sometimes even templates for others. They remind us, as well, that both the facilitation process and the resulting SDMA "belong to" the Decision-Maker, that each facilitation and SDMA are unique and individualized to that person. They also highlight the incredible "value added" that a trained and committed facilitator like Karen can bring to the work.



Healthcare decisions



Community resource decisions

We're so glad that our youngest (we think) Decision-Maker and the very experienced Karen got together, and that when Darius finally got to be 18, he was able to celebrate his SDMA signing with her and his parents.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DARIUS AND HIS SUPPORTERS, AND THANKS TO CREATIVE FACILITATOR KAREN!