On 11/4/14 I met with Jim Jackson and also with Joan Curtiss, a Senior Advocate for DRNM. They were both extremely excited about the training module that they came up with for legal rights for children with disabilities in schools. They went ahead and came up with translated version of this module that has been extremely helpful. In the past when they went down south or up north they had translators but they found that people lost interest pretty fast because of the delays in getting conversations translated. When they started using the Spanish version along with headsets for quick translation they found that people started asking more questions and becoming more interested in all of the policies. They had 3 trainings in FY 14 and because there’s security checkpoints within the area of Anthony or close by, they felt that this along with other things like language barriers and just empowerment issues, the Spanish materials made the biggest difference. They are extremely proud of the parents and the questions that they are now asking. It’s clear that having the materials in Spanish should have been done long before. Having the new technology of the headsets has helped tremendously too.

They talked a lot about Lillie Martinez who has been instrumental at getting the northern part of the state, particularly the Espanola area involved with advocacy. The have seen significant changes and improvements in these areas due to having Lillie as a partner and employee . They are utilizing Lillie in so many ways to improve the level of services in these areas and they feel very grateful to have them on their team at this point in time. The school districts are stepping up to help and the parents are empowered so much so now that they filed a formal complaint that forced the district to provide Occupational and Physical therapies to students that were not receiving services.

Joan told me that she realizes that the personal contact with people has made a difference and they want to continue that effort. Eblasts, mailers and other flyers are important too but the smaller group meetings are always the most successful and allows people to be able to feel comfortable with speaking more about what they want changed.

When asked how we can improve the way we support their efforts, they indicated that if we can talk on their behalf to other organizations through possibly our social media efforts to ensure that more people know about DRNM and what they can do for people with disabilities and their families.

Overall, it seemed to me that Joan and of course Jim are passionate about what they do. Joan was a teacher for many years but has been there almost as long as Jim, (28 years at DRNM) so she is the lead person for educational issues and only complained about the evaluation form that we provided. She would like for us to provide her some direction on what’s required by Washington and then they will be modifying it. If there’s one in Spanish she’d like to see that one too. I’ve contacted Sheryl Matney to see if there’s any updates on the eval form so I can share it with them and all the other contractors too.

- Reviewed by Ana Callahan Segura