On 11/4/14 I met with Jim Jackson, Director for the Arc of NM regarding Contract 0204 – DRAD and the review went well. In FY 14, DRNM hosted many events throughout the state such as Meet your Legislator and many others that are designed to be smaller groups so that people feel comfortable in asking questions and getting involved. Also present for our meeting was a new employee, Katie Gordon who has been instrumental in getting DRNM involved in social media. They are desperately trying to get their numbers up and so the subject of outreach was discussed at length. Jim and Katie also wanted to stress that they would like to network and coordinate more with us and other agencies since we are all trying to reach the same groups of people.

Jim talked a lot about trying to get people involved in the legislative process is always at the forefront of many of their activities. People’s stories are so important to the legislators so they are working diligently to empower families so that they voice their opinions. DRNM came up with 11 training modules that are on various subjects like advocacy, and other topics and they believe they have had a lot of success with these powerpoint presentations across the state.

It was obvious that Katie is very passionate about her job and has a lot of experience with disabilities. Her son and brother both are autistic so when she started with DRNM she was a student which led to a permanent position, but part-time, just recently.

Jim mentioned that they rely on DDPC to provide the largest part of the funding to do this work. He also mentioned that the audit for the year was good.

One of the changes that he predicts will take place in FY 15 will be more involvement in social media during the legislature. The found that last year social media really helped get the word out on many things so they plan on doing much more this year. They have a good plan to get legislators informed and people in front of them so that they can get the message out.

Overall, this contract is being used to get advocates and more families involved in the process of getting bills passed and changes so that people that have disabilities have a fair chance at living productive and healthy lives. It’s obvious that Jim is passionate about making sure that people are given the same opportunities and this contract allows he and his staff to be able to keep up with all of the many issues facing people with disabilities.

- Reviewed by Ana Callahan Segura