
HOWARD COUNTY DISABILITY INCLUSION, SAFETY AND CRISIS RESPONSE TASK FORCE SESSION #3

SEPTEMBER 28, 2026





CHAIR UPDATES

- Melissa Rosenberg, Executive Director, Autism Society of Maryland
 - Terrence Benn, Acting Colonel, Howard County Police Department
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MEETING MATERIALS

- ❖ Table of recommendations and data
- ❖ Summary and notes from community sessions
- ❖ Community survey
- ❖ Agenda and August 24 minutes – **vote for approval/revisions**

EXECUTIVE ORDER

1. **Training for County Employees**, specifically frontline employees, including but not limited to law enforcement, EMS, social workers, and community health workers, who interact with people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals;
2. **Education, Outreach, and Partnerships**, specifically, the Task Force shall identify strategies to improve coordination, alignment, and communication among all organizations and partners that support people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals;
3. **On-Scene Response Protocols**, specifically, the Task Force shall review relevant Federal, State, and Local laws, regulations, and policies that govern protocols when responding to a behavioral health crisis involving a member of the disability or neurodivergent community;
4. **Emergency Response and Prevention Protocols**, specifically, the Task Force shall review the County's current 911 communication protocols as it relates to mental health crisis response for people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals, as well as use of 988 and specialized mobile crisis response teams in Howard County and in other jurisdictions.



CONVERSATION WITH LEIGH ANNE MCKINGSLEY

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DISABILITY AND JUSTICE
INITIATIVES, THE ARC OF THE US



Howard County, MD Disability Crisis Task Force Meeting

Sept 28, 2026



*National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability*

The Arc of the United States

- The Arc's Mission:
 - *To promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.*
- Largest organization in the U.S. that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families
- Policy, program, and legal advocacy
- 600+ chapters across the country



The Arc®

*National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability*

National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability



- Created in 2013 with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Mission: Advocate at the intersection of criminal justice reform and the advancement of disability rights
 - Work on both victim/witness issues and on issues facing those who are charged with crimes
- Broad portfolio of projects and contracts from the federal government and foundations
- Target audiences: Disability advocates, criminal justice professionals, people with IDD and The Arc's chapter network

National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability



Training and technical assistance

- Pathways to Justice®
www.nccjdpowerstojustice.org
- Community-based program that creates Disability Response Teams (or DRTs)



Information and referral

- For people with disabilities and their families as well as criminal justice and allied professionals
- <https://thearc.org/our-initiatives/criminal-justice/>



Resource collection and creation

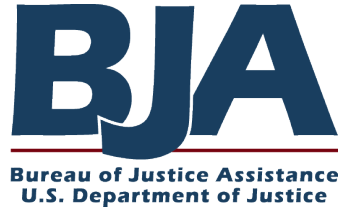
- Policy briefs, fact sheets, other publications



Education

- Social media, webinars, and conferences

Project Partners



NCCJD Projects & Initiatives

- *Just Policing: Virtual Training for Police on IDD*
- *Language Access Barriers to Justice Among Victims with IDD*
- *Crisis Response Intervention Training & Technical Assistance*
- *Interviewing People with IDD – International Assoc of Chiefs of Police*
- *Home Safe: People with autism/IDD and wandering*
- *Transforming Healthcare: Sexual Violence Prevention*
- *International work: Access to Justice International Knowledge Hub*
- *NCCJD's Community of Practice for The Arc's chapter network*



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What the Data Tells Us



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Criminal Justice & Disability*

Victims



*Cognitive disabilities include Down syndrome, autism, dementia, learning disabilities, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury.

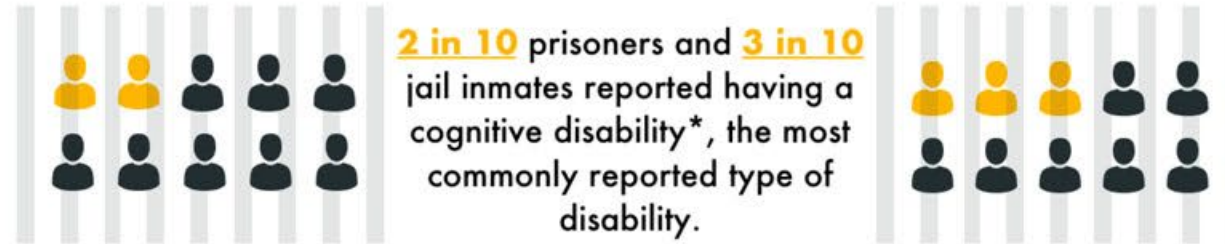
Barriers



to Justice

- Reports of victimization are not believed
- Cases may go unprosecuted, especially if there are communication challenges
- Inaccessible services and supports

Suspects/Defendants/ Incarcerated People



*Cognitive disabilities include Down syndrome, autism, dementia, learning disabilities, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics



of those later exonerated after giving a false confession to police had characteristics of intellectual disability.

Source: National Registry of Exonerations

Barriers



to Justice

- Disability goes unrecognized or is dismissed as irrelevant
- Face higher rates of arrest, conviction, and longer sentences
- Inaccessible diversion and rehabilitation programs

Race & Disability

- American Journal of Public Health article (McCauley, 2017) found that young people with disabilities are **13% more likely to be arrested than their peers without disability**
 - That figure jumps to **17% for Black youth with disabilities**
- People with disabilities have an **overall 43% chance of arrest, with a disproportionate risk falling on young Black men**

Co-occurring IDD & Mental Health Conditions

- Research shows that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are at a high risk of co-occurring mental health conditions
- Roughly 40% of people with IDD have mental health needs, about twice the national average
- They are also more likely to have suicidal thoughts compared to those without disabilities.
- This serious issue is often missed, ignored, or misunderstood, due to a lack of screening methods and training to recognize suicidal risks within the IDD population
- **People with IDD can and do have thoughts of suicide.**
 - There is a misconception that having a lower IQ can keep people with IDD from having suicidal or harmful thoughts. Research studies prove this to be false. A high number of people with IDD have been bullied or have experienced trauma. Children and adolescents with IDD who experience these types of traumatic events are at an increased risk of having suicidal thoughts with 30 – 64% developing mental health conditions.



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WHY WE CAN'T STOP ADVOCATING

Ethan Saylor (2013)



Eric Parsa (2020)

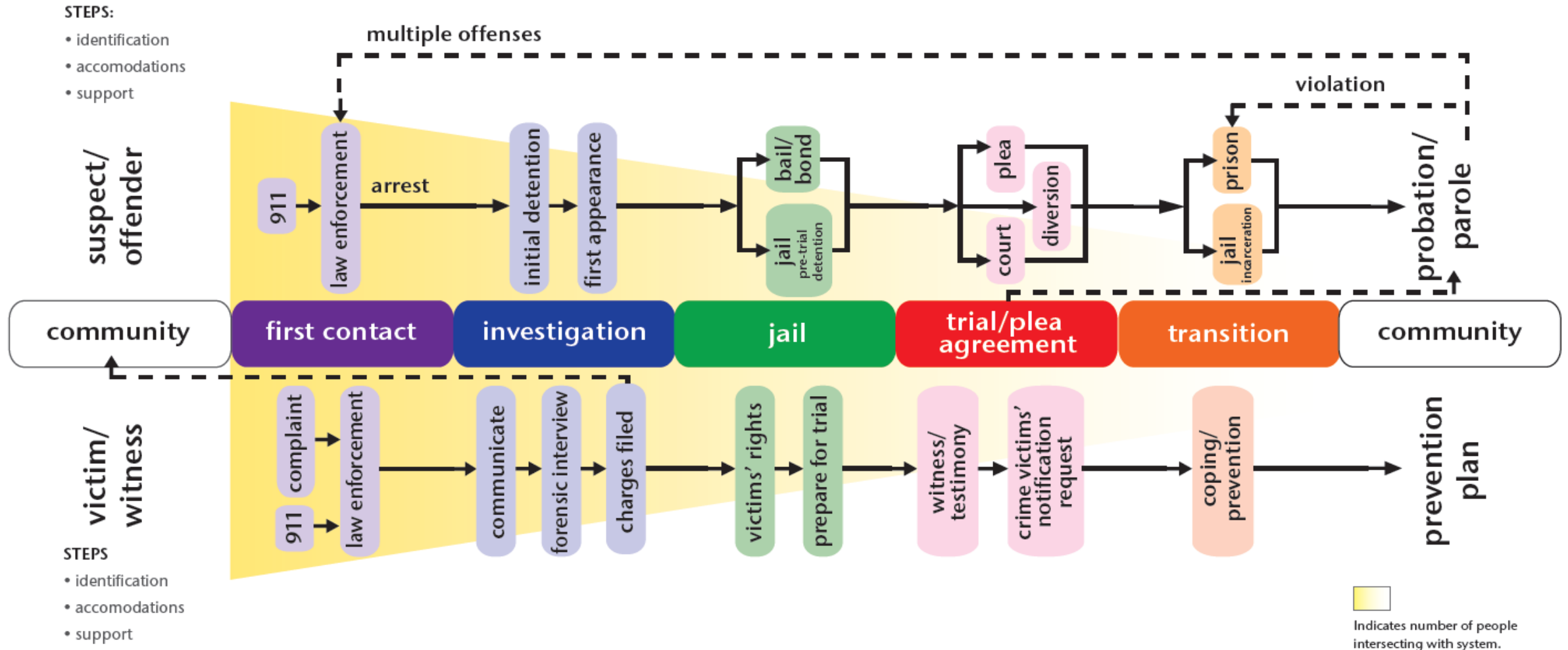
Pathways to Justice Training Program

**Newest Disability
Response Team in
Thurston County, WA**



*National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability*

Pathways to Justice™ Model



Pathways to Justice®

STEP 1:
Disability
Response
Team (DRT)

STEP 2:
Training
for Justice
Professionals

STEP 3:
Ongoing
Technical
Assistance



Pathways Principles:

- Nothing about us, without us
- Community-based
- Multidisciplinary
- Relationship-oriented



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Pathways to Justice®: ***A Comprehensive Approach***

*Module 1: Introduction to DRTs and the
Pathways to Justice Training Program*

Module 2: Disability Basics

Module 3: Law Enforcement

Module 4: Victim Service Providers

Module 5: Attorneys

Module 6: Developing a PTJ Plan

Evaluation Process



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Disability Response Team (DRT)

Hosted by Chapters of The Arc/other NGOs

**Criminal Justice
Professionals**

**Disability
Community**

Law
Enforcement

Victim
Services
Providers

Legal
professionals

Family
advocates

Disability
advocates
(other than
The Arc)

Self-
advocates

10 Facts Law Enforcement Needs to Know

When Serving & Protecting People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)



- 1. People with disabilities make up the single largest minority group in the U.S. and officers who have the skill set to work with this population have a significant advantage over officers who do not.** Officers may not realize just how common disability issues impact everyday society or the issues they pose while on the job. The more educated the officer is about disabilities in general, the more likely safe and positive outcomes will occur between law enforcement and people with disabilities.
- 2. Using ADA accommodations decreases liability and improves community trust.** By law, people with disabilities are entitled to the same level of access to law enforcement services as provided to those without disabilities. Law enforcement can avoid liability by ensuring officers are trained to interact and communicate effectively with people with disabilities. It's important to increase community trust by demonstrating an understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities.
- 3. Training for law enforcement on Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) is rare, and yet the need is rising.** Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) programs, which sometimes include the topic of I/DD, but only briefly, are not mandatory or provided at all police departments, and the rise of incidence of some I/DDs, such as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs), heightens demand.
- 4. Citizens with I/DD are over-represented in the criminal justice system.** Many citizens with disabilities end up in the criminal justice system with their disability playing a role in the situation that led them there. People with disabilities are twice as likely



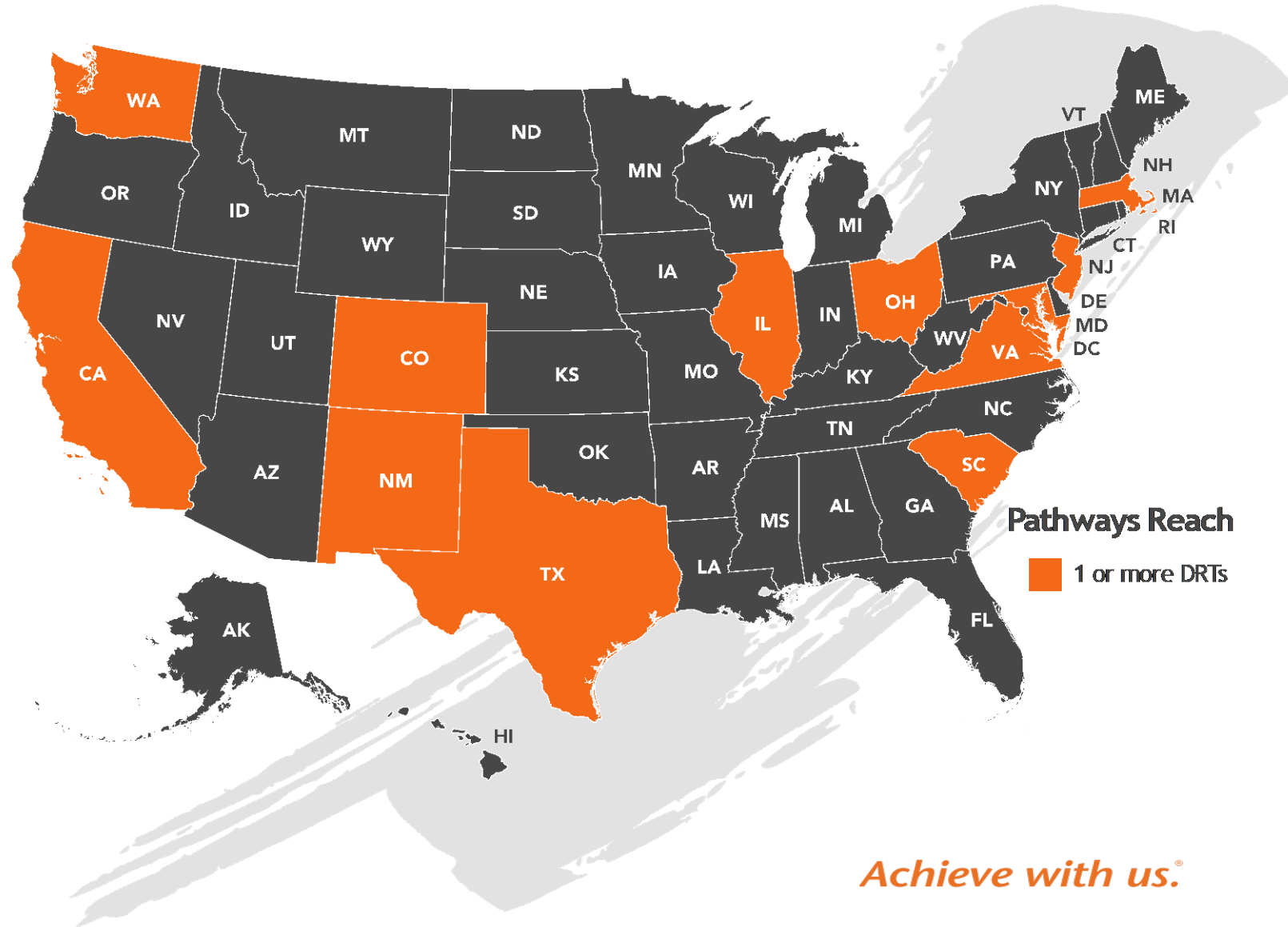
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The Impact of Pathways to Justice

- **15 Disability Response Teams** in 12 different states
- **Over 1,700 justice professionals** trained since 2015



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NATIONAL CONVENTION



Is Justice being Served?

***Holistic Solutions in a
Broken System***

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Key Take-Aways

- Tips on effective outreach to and relationship-building with police, courts and others
- Understand why a holistic approach is needed to address complex issues (training alone doesn't work)
- Learn about training tools and programs from The Arc of Benton County and The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability

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Training Tools



The Arc's NCCJD

- Just Policing (e-course for law enforcement)
- Pathways to Justice & Disability Response Teams
- Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)

The Arc of Benton County

- The COMMCARD Training Program
- Justice Consult and Access Program

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Just Policing

- Five-hour virtual course for police on IDD
- Identify IDD during common interactions
- Accommodations
- Communication
- De-escalation
- Resources



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Case Study: Not Special Needs



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1

Check for Understanding



True or False?

Mental health and developmental disabilities are the same type of disability.

A

True



B

False

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Let's recap!



Having an IDD can impact an individual's ability to function in society.

Diagnosis of either ID or DD include age of onset before the age of 22.

When responding to a person with disabilities, consider their functional needs first. For example, what does this person need to assist in this investigation.

People with IDD may also have mental health disabilities (*co-occurring disabilities*) which need to be considered when responding to their needs

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Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)



- 40-hour training program for police officers responding to people with behavioral health, IDD and related conditions. Goals include:
- Expanding officers' knowledge of mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and IDD
- Creating connections with people with lived experience
- Enhancing officers' awareness of community services
- Emphasizing the de-escalation of crisis situations
- Supporting officer safety and wellness

See: <https://www.informedpoliceresponses.com/crit-toolkit>

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The CommCard[®] Training Program



 I live with Autism Name: Kermit The Frog DOB: 3/4/1968 123 Sesame St., Apt. 1, Los Angeles, CA If having difficulty, please contact my advocate(s): Ernie Grey 234-567-7890 Bert Brown 234-567-8910 CommCard	Because of my condition, I may ... Be slow to respond Shut down or withdraw Appear not to be listening I want to cooperate. To help me, PLEASE ... Speak slowly Minimize loud noises and bright lights Give me extra personal space Stress-reducing topics ... Musicals & Family and Friends
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The CommCard[®] Training Program



Train three groups to interact effectively

- Individuals experiencing developmental disabilities
- Their support team (families, staff)
- Law enforcement, representing all helping professionals

Completion

- Safely present an individualized CommCard to a uniformed, armed law enforcement

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Beyond Training, What Works?

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Pathways to Justice®

STEP 1:
Disability
Response
Team (DRT)

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STEP 3:
Ongoing
Technical
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Pathways Principles:

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- Relationship-oriented



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The Arc of Benton County's Justice Consult and Access Program



- Identify the justice blind spot for DD
- Become a resource by participating in training (NCCJD)
- Provide neutral consultation and access (navigation) to individuals with DD and justice professionals
- Make it sustainable
- Other chapters provide casework services, like The Arc of New Jersey

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Evidence-based Alternative Police Response Programs



- First to respond to emergency calls are usually police officers
- While they may receive CIT training, no evidence it is effective
- A growing number of cities have piloted or adopted alternative police response programs or procedures
 - Co-Responders: a mental-health crisis interventionist accompanies police on targeted calls for service
 - Community Responders: A paramedic and a mental-health specialist—no police—respond to targeted calls
- *Far too little* is known about the 653 alternative responder programs identified
 - Identified *only* 7 studies that credibly support causal claims
 - 3 studies of community-response programs and 4 of co-response programs

Source: Mental-Health First Responders— State of Research
Thomas S. Dee and Jaymes Pyne, Stanford University

Evidence-based Alternative Police Response Programs (cont.)



- Continued need to build an evidence base to support comprehensive and broad change
- How should such a program be designed effectively?
 - Which one works best (co-responder or community responder)?
 - What works best in different contexts? 911 or 988 dispatch?
 - Challenges implementing and scaling such programs
 - Getting police buy-in and coordination with alternative first responders
 - Staffing challenges given shortage of expert mental health specialists
 - Training dispatchers in appropriate triage of 911 or 988 calls

Source: Mental-Health First Responders— State of Research
Thomas S. Dee and Jaymes Pyne, Stanford University

Ensuring Accountability

- Consider the long-game, sustainability is the key to your success
- Create sub-groups within the task force that can focus on 1-2 key recommendations
 - Ensure individuals are supported/paid and guard against burn out
- Consider supporting legislation that could create accountability measures, and ensure it comes with money to support any related mandates
- Focus on only a few recommendations at a time, keep it doable
 - This creates momentum that is needed for sustainability
 - This gives time and space to build in accountability measures created collectively by the task force
 - Center respect for all members to be heard during this process

Tracking 911 Calls & Behavioral Health Outcomes

- Establish unified data integration pipelines that link 911 Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems with health records.
- National data shows that an estimated **21% to 38% of 911 calls** involve mental health, substance use, or homelessness, yet most jurisdictions still lack the granular metrics required to track response deployments and health resolutions accurately

Tracking 911 Calls & Behavioral Health Outcomes (cont.)

While exact percentages fluctuate by city due to varied infrastructure, multi-city studies and emergency data outline a clear baseline for how these calls are handled:

- **Police-Only Deployment:** Law enforcement remains the primary responder for **the majority of behavioral health calls** nationally.
- **Co-Response Models:** These hybrid teams (pairing a police officer with a behavioral health clinician) handle a vital but smaller percentage of high-risk cases.
- **Mobile Crisis / Alternative Response:** Entirely unarmed medical or clinical teams handle roughly **10% to 17% of total local service calls** when robustly funded. For example, the landmark [CAHOOTS Program in Eugene, Oregon](#) manages roughly 17% of their city's overall 911 call volume without law enforcement presence



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Framework for Better Tracking

- **Implement Standardized CAD Problem Codes**
 - Most 911 systems default to vague coding like "Welfare Concern" or "Trespassing".
 - **Action:** Embed clinicians directly inside the 911 call center to accurately flag BH components at the point of intake.
 - **Audit:** Conduct monthly dispatch audits to cross-reference calls that *should* have been tagged as behavioral health but were miscoded under standard police categories.

Framework for Better Tracking (cont.)

- **Track the "Matrix of Disposition"**

- Agencies need to log exactly who goes to the scene and the secondary support activated. A comprehensive dashboard must measure:
- **Initial Dispatch:** Was it Police-only, Co-response, or a Mobile Crisis Team (MCT)?
- **Scene Changes:** How often did a lone police officer arrive and subsequently request a Mobile Crisis Outreach Team?
- **Resolution Type:** Was the person arrested, taken to an emergency room, or safely diverted to a peer-led community crisis center?

Framework for Better Tracking (cont.)

- **Establish Multi-Agency Data Sharing Agreements**
 - The biggest barrier to tracking *outcomes* is that 911 data stops once the call ends.
 - **Action:** Create secure, HIPAA-compliant data bridges using tracking software that connect law enforcement logs with county health systems. This allows analysts to see if a specific dispatch method successfully reduced 30-day hospital readmissions or repeat 911 utilization.

After Action Review

- A multi-agency after-action review (AAR) is a collaborative evaluation where police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), and public works teams meet to reconstruct a critical incident, identify operational strengths and gaps, and create a shared improvement plan.
- What a Multi-Agency Review Looks Like
 - **Multidisciplinary Team Assembly:** Includes representatives from every responding agency, from frontline personnel ("boots on the ground") to senior leadership.
 - **Timeline Reconstruction:** Establishes a unified, factual minute-by-minute log of communication, deployment, and tactical decisions.
 - **The Four Core Steps:**
 - *What was planned?* Reviewing standard operating procedures and goals.
 - *What actually happened?* Pooling diverse agency perspectives into one shared narrative.
 - *Why did it happen?* Conducting a deep root-cause analysis of breakdowns.
 - *What will we change?* Drafting an actionable corrective plan



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Making After Actions Robust

- **Foster a Blameless Environment:** Treat the review as a learning tool rather than a disciplinary hearing to encourage complete honesty.
- **Include External Observers:** Bring in neutral third-party facilitators or neighboring jurisdictions to eliminate internal bias during reviews.
- **Involve Frontline Staff:** Ensure patrol officers and field medics actively participate, as their ground-level perspective is vital.
- **Track Implementation:** Avoid letting reports sit on shelves by assigning strict follow-up deadlines and auditing changes months later
- **Resource:** COPS Office Guide to AARs



*National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability*

Questions?

Contact Information

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- Visit NCCJD® online
www.thearc.org/NCCJD
- *Pathways to Justice*®
<https://thearc.org/our-initiatives/criminal-justice/pathway-justice/>



SCHEDULING A FINAL VOTING SESSION



NEXT SESSION: FINAL DISCUSSION

- ❖ Community survey – circulate! Closing EOD Oct 4
- ❖ Tuesday, October 6, 2026
- ❖ 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM
- ❖ Hybrid
 - NonProfit Collaborative
 - Virtual link will be provided
 - Virtual voting session: Thursday, October 15 @ 10a