



King County

Board for Developmental Disabilities

Build Capacity and Provide Equitable Access to Community-Based Supports - Training to Law Enforcement

Updated November 16, 2018

Request

Provide resources to establish and advance comprehensive bias training and technical assistance to law enforcement in engaging, protecting, and serving all people with I/DD.

Overrepresentation as Victim and Inmate

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) are overrepresented as victims of crime as well as being overrepresented in the inmate population. National data indicates:

- The rate for violent victimization for people with disabilities is nearly three times the rate as those without disabilities.¹
- Of people with disabilities, people with cognitive disabilities experience the highest rates of victimization.²
- Although people with intellectual disabilities comprise just 1 percent to 3 percent of the general population, they represent up to 10 percent of the prison population, with an even greater number in juvenile facilities and in jails.³

A Different Response to Law Enforcement

When people with I/DD find themselves in situations that involve police, they may respond differently than other members of the community. Fear and panic may lead people to exhibit behavior such as being defensive, non-responsive, crying or running away. The way in which a law enforcement member responds to a person with I/DD may either escalate or allay the person's fear and panic.

Impacts of Intersectionality

People with I/DD from communities of color, low-income populations and with limited English proficiency are further impacted by discrimination related to race, culture, income and language.⁴

¹ Sobsey, D. (1994). Violence and abuse in the lives of people with disabilities. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ http://rudermanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/MediaStudy-PoliceDisability_final-final.pdf Accessed 14 November 2018.

Interactions can escalate when race is a factor and both bias and misunderstanding of a diagnosis occur, or when an individual is in crisis. About 35 percent of people with I/DD also have a co-occurring mental health disorder, which can increase their likelihood of coming into contact with law enforcement.⁵

The Need for Training

Without appropriate training, officers may not understand how to identify persons with I/DD, de-escalate crisis situations involving people with I/DD, or recognize bias when race or other factors intersects with disability. Training should be extended to the larger criminal justice system where people with I/DD often are not identified and may not receive the accommodations and services to which they are entitled and need.

The passage of Initiative I-940 requires law enforcement officers to obtain violence de-escalation and mental health training. Several subjects are required to be considered to be included in the curriculum. **We request the inclusion of implicit and explicit bias and de-escalation techniques for dealing with people with disabilities, and/or behavioral health issues in the curriculum.** Comprehensive de-escalation and bias training to law enforcement and the criminal justice system serves to protect both the professional and the person with a disability. **It is important to ensure that I/DD community stakeholders are included in the development of the training curriculum.**

⁵ Petersilia, J. (August 2000). Doing justice? Criminal offenders with developmental disabilities. CPRC Brief, 12 (4), California Policy Research Center, University of California.