

**People with Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities  
(I/DD) and Law  
Enforcement (LE)**

NBC News video –  
Homecoming

[https://www.youtube.com/watch  
?v=-LwHD1PBrCM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LwHD1PBrCM)

Explain what it means to be **SAFE, UNDERSTOOD, and INCLUDED** from the following perspectives:

- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD);
- The officer; and
- The community.

# Objectives

- Identify the procedures that an officer should/may employ when encountering an individual with an I/DD.
- Identify the indicators that a person may have an I/DD.
- Identify the procedures an officer should follow to ensure the safety and calmness of an individual who has an I/DD.

- Identify the procedures an officer should follow to ensure the safety and calmness of an individual that has an I/DD.
- Demonstrate communication techniques required to effectively interact with a person who has an I/DD.
- Describe the procedures an officer uses to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act when encountering a person with an Intellectual, Developmental, or Physical disability.

**“It is not necessary, or even appropriate, for law enforcement to diagnose intellectual and developmental disabilities. What is important is to *recognize* the characteristics of I/DD so that an effective approach can be used with each person.”**

# Introductory Video with the Self-Advocates (CD)

# How could “I” interact with law enforcement?

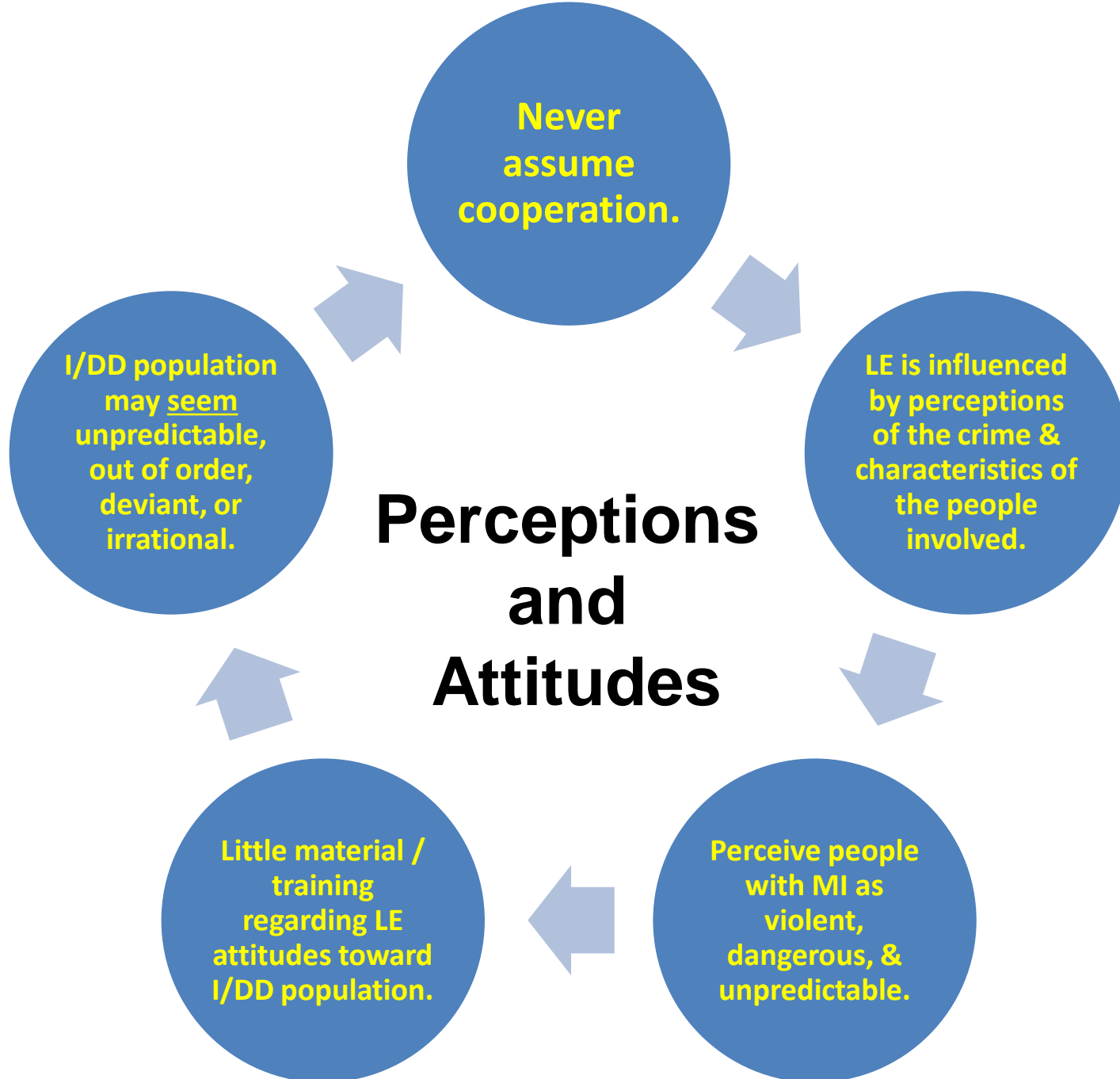
- Karen
- Tommy
- Justin
- Blake
- Sarah
- Ben
- Mike
- Arnold



# Police Entry-Level Objectives - Categories

- Organizational Principles and Law
- Patrol
- Traffic
- Criminal Investigation
- Emergency Medical Care
- Communication
- Report Writing and Composition
- Crime Prevention
- **Crisis Intervention**
- Protective Strategies and Tactics
- Emergency Vehicle Operations
- Prisoner Processing and Security
- Courtroom Preparation and Testimony
- Health and Wellness
- Terrorism/Weapons of Mass Destruction, and,
- Firearms

- 02.06 – Identify the hazards and benefits of using police equipment while patrolling, in a moving vehicle, i.e. Siren, lights, radio, whistle, etc.
- How do you think the use of this equipment could impact someone with an I/DD?



# **Facts about people with I/DD**

**People with I/DD may have a typical social life.**

**People with I/DD date and marry.**

**People with I/DD drive.**

# People with I/DD learn!

- People with I/DD may have delays in processing information.
- Therefore, learning may take additional time.
- They are capable of learning.

**People with I/DD work and if they get a job, they keep it!**

62% of adults with I/DD are employed and have been at their current job for 3-years or more.

# Chris Burke Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BS8HOAViIE>



# **People with I/DD may have sensory processing issues to include...**

- Being more animated.
- Constant tapping of feet or wringing of hands.
- Chewing on fingers and other inedible objects.
- Reacting to noises perceived as loud.

**People with I/DD communicate with the skills they possess to convey their thoughts and emotions.**

- Someone with an I/DD may have fewer tools to express thoughts, emotions, and needs.
- Someone may be expressing frustration, pain or other emotions and feelings.

# **People with I/DD are generally not violent.**

- Of the few cases in which people with I/DD have been involved in a Part I crime they are often influenced by other participants who do not have an I/DD.

# People with I/DD are at risk for sexual victimization.

- 40% of women with physical disabilities reported being sexually assaulted and almost half of these victims report repeated assaults.
- Children with intellectual disabilities are also at higher risk of being sexually abused.

# **People with I/DD may be vulnerable but are often capable of communicating on their own behalf.**

- When responding to a call for service, first speak directly to the person with I/DD.
- If the person is non-verbal, make every effort to get information from the person with I/DD first.

# Prevalent I/DDs include:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Epilepsy
- More than 200 known I/DDs
- Most people with I/DD (approximately 87%) are only mildly affected and are not easily recognized as having an I/DD.

# Likelihood of I/DD & LE Encounter in Maryland, n=55,786

Type of Crime	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
Total	10,981 (20%)	44,805 (80%)
Type of Crime (2012)		
Serious violent crime	6,847 (12%)	21,232 (38%)
Rape/sexual assault	371 (.007%)	951 (.02%)
Robbery	3,195 (.06%)	6,976 (12%)
Aggravated assault	3,194 (.06%)	13,106 (23%)

# What is...

- Mental Illness?
- Developmental Disability?
- Intellectual Disability?
- Dual Diagnosis?



# Mental Illness

Mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's:

- thinking,
- feeling,
- mood,
- ability to relate to others, and,
- daily functioning.

"Developmental Disabilities" is an umbrella term that includes intellectual disability but also includes other disabilities that are apparent during childhood.

# AAIDD Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch  
?v=V\\_mTP9WLdcl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_mTP9WLdcl)

Under Maryland Law the term  
Developmental Disabilities has  
a 5-prong definition including a  
chronic disability that:

# Developmental Disabilities

1. Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments and;

Occurs before the individual reaches age 22.

# Developmental Disabilities

2. Results in substantial functional limitations in three (3) or more of the following areas of major life activity:
  - Self-care
  - Receptive and expressive language
  - Learning
  - Mobility
  - Capacity for independent living, and
  - Economic self-sufficiency; and,

# Developmental Disabilities

3. The person will need:

- Lifelong services,
- Supports, or
- Assistance.

# Developmental Disabilities (cont.)

- Impacts a person's ability to learn and experience life during the developmental years, for example:
  - Born with Cerebral Palsy.
  - Born with Down Syndrome.
  - Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder by age 6-years.



# Intellectual Disability: A Subset of Developmental Disability

- Starts anytime before a child turns 22-years and is characterized by limitations with both:
  - Intelligence; and,
  - Adaptive behavior.

# Adaptive Behavior

- **Conceptual:** Reading, writing, and managing money.
- **Social:** Following rules, obeying laws, managing self-esteem.
- **Practical:** Routines, housekeeping, safety.

**Do not develop skills at the same  
pace.**

- Insert Grant talking about money

# Possible Co-occurring Conditions

- Health conditions that co-exist with a disability but are unrelated to it.
- When responding to persons with I/DD, you will encounter some of these conditions.
- Mental health disorder.

# Hidden Disabilities

- Debilitating pain.
- Fatigue.
- Dizziness.
- Cognitive dysfunctions.
- Autism.
- Brain injuries.
- Learning differences.
- Mental health disorders.
- Hearing and vision impairments.

# Dual Diagnosis

- Co-existence of the symptoms of both intellectual or developmental disabilities and mental health problems.
- Persons with a dual diagnosis can be found at all ages and levels of intellectual and adaptive functioning.
- Many professionals have adopted the estimate that 30-35% of all persons with an I/DD have a psychiatric disorder.

# **Activity 1**

## **I/DD Worksheet**

**Break**



# **Instances where people with I/DD and communities met...**

- Shopping
- Driving

# Shopping Trip



# Driving

- It's late at night on a dark road with little traffic.
- You notice a vehicle being driven suspiciously.
- You turn around to investigate.
- The vehicle stops on the shoulder as you approach.
- You stop as well.
- What are you thinking on the approach?

**Grant Driving (CD)**

# Interpreting behaviors...

- In the previous examples, there was no immediate crisis – the action had happened.
- Possibility of a false confession.
- In this activity, we examine behaviors and the outcome of the behaviors.

# Activity 2 - Behaviors

- Suspicious Juvenile
- Adult Participant at Day Program
- Young Adults Smoking Weed in a Parking Garage
- 15-Year Old in Crisis

# Characteristics of people with I/DD.

- Inability to see things from another person's point of view. (Blake)
- Impulse control. (Mike)
- Difficulty regulating emotion, impulsivity, or built up frustration. (Sarah)

- Trusting – not quite aware of malice. (Robert)
- Knows what is expected but unable to do what is expected. (Robert)
- Having difficulty describing facts or details of the offense. (Robert)
- Being confused about who is responsible for the crime and confessing even when innocent. (Robert)



- Being overwhelmed by a police presence. (Karen)
- Saying what he/she thinks the officer wants to hear. (Karen)
- Not understanding commands, instructions, etc. (Smoking weed)
- Acting upset and trying to run away. (Smoking weed)

- Difficulty understanding social norms such as respecting boundaries and touch.  
(Headphones in park)

# Tommy's Bus Pass

- One day Tommy did not feel like going to school so he caught the city bus.
- He got off the bus at a spot that seemed familiar to him.
- There was a coffee shop that he remembered having coffee with his brother at that looked just like this one.

# In summary...

- Officers should be aware that interactions with persons with I/DD will require more time due to the manner in which the person understands, processes, and communicates.

- Many people with I/DD have learned how to act like everyone else by:
  - Learning street jargon;
  - Acting as if they understand everything; or,
  - Mimicking the behaviors of others.

- May be slow to react to commands because they do not understand what is being asked of them or they are taking time to process the question(s).
  - May wait for a physical sign of what to do.
- Listen attentively when talking with people with I/DD and WAIT for them to finish.

- May not easily tolerate change or perceived violations of personal space. These things may cause the person to become:
  - Frightened;
  - Confused; or,
  - Angry.

- May try to run away or become physically agitated.
- May have difficulty answering questions or finding the words to describe details, actions or facts as they know them.
- Fight, flight, or freeze.



# Activity 3 – Challenges for LE

- Domestic violence
- Abuse by acquaintances
- Caretaker arrest
- Young child running around
- Stolen bike
- Missing 4-year old with autism

**Break**

# Abbott and Costello Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQXwt83hYkE>

# Communication 101

- **7%** of any message is conveyed through words,
- **38%** through certain vocal elements, and
- **55%** through nonverbal elements (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.).

# Receptive vs. Expressive

- Receptive

- Understand words.
- Recognize a depiction of an item.
- Touch this hand for yes.
- Touch this hand for no.



- Expressive

- Finding the words to describe something.
- People who have receptive language cannot always use expressive language.
- The person understands but can't find the words.

# Flipping the Switch

- What are you learning in the academy setting about communication?
- What are you learning in the academy setting about communicating with persons with disabilities?



- Adrian – free speech

# When communication...

- Use your given name rather than a title.
- Learn and use the person's name.
- Use simple commands.



# **Try to get the person's attention.**

- Move to where the subject can see you and avoid disapproving/angry looks.
- Avoid crowding the subject, as possible.
- Control distance and maintain bailout routes.
- Remain alert.
- Minimize external distractors.

# **Attempt to Establish Rapport with the Person**

- Tell the person directly that you are here to help protect him/her.
- Listen to the person.
- Use the pronoun “I” as frequently as possible.

# Effective Approaches

- Short sentences.
- Avoid complex words.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Say it and show it.
- Check for understanding.
- Explain your actions in advance.
- Be aware of other words. i.e. names of body parts.

# Short sentences.

- Easy enough BUT pause between each sentence.
- Avoid figurative statements, such as:
  - “Take a seat.”
  - “Give me a break.”
  - “Hit the road.”

# Avoid complex words.

- Who assaulted you?
- What was the assailant wearing?
  - What are better words for assaulted and assailant?

# Build your questions.

- Did you see the person who hit you?
- Are you OK?
- Did you take this?
- What did the person look like?
- Are you hurt? Will you show me?
- Do you have something from the store? Did you pay for it?

# Avoid leading questions.

- Did you take the item from the store because you wanted it?
- Did you hit your roommate because he stole your CD?
- Was the person tall or short? Black or white?
  - A person with I/DD may simply state the last word he/she heard.
  - Short and white.

# Say it and show it.

- Touch the tip of your nose with your right index finger.
  - If I believe right is “write,” and I do not understand which finger is my index finger, I may touch the tip of my nose with my left middle finger.



# Check for understanding.

- Ask the person to repeat each phrase in his/her words?
  - Can you tell me what I just said?  
(Expressive language)
  - Can you show me? (Receptive language)

# Move Toward Resolution

- Keep the subject as calm as possible.
- Find out as much as you can about the situation.
- Use available resources to help with resolution.
- Remain realistic and honest in your dealing with the subject.

# **Explain your actions in advance.**

- I am going to place you in handcuffs.
- I am going to call for an ambulance.
- The ambulance is coming to help you.
- I am going to check for outstanding warrants.

# Additional Phrases

- I need you to listen to what I say.
- I need you to do what I say.
- Tell me if you do not understand.
- Tell me if I am talking too fast.
- Can I help you?

**One of the major improvements  
in communicating with and  
about people with disabilities is  
"People-First Language."**

People First Video (CD)

# Sarah

- Sarah
  - Possesses good verbal communication skills.
  - These skills disappear when Sarah gets frustrated or angry.
  - Sarah's story.
- Describe how you would interview Sarah.

**Break**



# What is a Crisis?

- A situation – real or perceived – that significantly reduces a person's ability to cope.
- A crisis presents an obstacle, trauma, or threat, but it also presents an opportunity for either growth or decline.



# Event vs. Crisis

- An event happens.
- Someone perceives a crisis to be occurring.
- Your interactions on scene may initiate a crisis.
- Are my actions raising or lowering the emotional level?

# Crisis Management - Goals

## Support Staff

- Ensure safety.
- Be directive.
- Crisis intervention and safety strategies:
  - Continue to attempt verbal de-escalation.
  - Use physical interventions.
  - Call 9-1-1

## Law Enforcement

- Ensure safety of self & public.
- Establish & maintain control.
- Resolve the situation positively.
- Crisis intervention may include physical interventions.

# Perception of Crisis & Persons with I/DD

- Persons with I/DD may behave atypically or unexpectedly (even without a crisis).
- Family members & support staff understand the atypical response.
  - The general public may not.

# Justin

- Justin is a 15-year old juvenile with an intellectual disability and autism.
- Justin had earned a reward for good school work and his mother took him shopping after school so he could get his reward – a new CD he had been wanting.

# Responding to People in Crisis

- Never assume how the person should feel in the given situation.
- The crisis may not seem significant to you but it is for the person.
- Crisis is a matter of *PERCEPTION* for the person having the crisis.

# Crisis Behaviors

- People who are experiencing a crisis do not always act the same way.
  - Sometimes a person is visibly upset.
  - Sometimes a person does not display any obvious behaviors.
- Consider the following:

- A 42-year old woman with a non-specified I/DD and her 21-year old support staff went to an amusement park.
- The support staff, sensing the woman was overstimulated, after several hours at the park suggested they leave.



# Activity 4 – Role Plays

- Wandering
- Drugs in Juvenile Facility
- Loitering
- Calls to 9-1-1
- Shoplifting Suspect
- Possible Sexual Assault

# Crisis Stages - Theories

- Prevention
- Escalation
- Crisis
- Post-Crisis Calming

# Prevention

- Family members and support staff:
  - Knowledge of routines.
  - Knowledge of needs.
- Know early warning signs that signal increasing stress or anxiety (family member or support person).

# Prevention – Calming Measures

- Encourage talking, be empathetic, use a non-judgmental approach,
- Be supportive, increase positive feedback, offer choices.
- Use calming object or usual calming approach (e.g., deep breathing)

# Escalation

- Increasing resistance to requests.
- Refusal.
- Questioning.
- Challenging.
- Change in tone and volume of voice.
- Sense of loss of control.
- Increasing physical activity.
- Loud.
- Self-talk.
- Swearing to self.
- Focus on technology.

# Escalation

- Consider escalating behavior as **COMMUNICATION**.
- Escalating behaviors may be the best or only way that a person with I/DD can communicate that something is wrong.

# Escalation – Calming Measures

- Check yourself!!!
- Speech
  - Tone
  - Rate of speech
- Body language
  - Physical space

# Escalation – Calming Measures

- Reflective listening
  - Describe what you see, not your interpretation of it.
- Reassurance
  - Verbal and non-verbal cues.
    - Nodding your head.
    - I'm here to help.
    - Eye contact and/or touch is different for everyone.



# Crisis behaviors stem from events

- Person with I/DD finds a gun in a trash can.
- Thinks it's a toy.
- Begins to carry it around and show it to others.
- The police are called.
- How does law enforcement get the gun from the person?

# **Crisis – Calming Measures**

- Ensure your own safety, safety of others, and safety of individual.
- Use personal space and supportive stance.
- Remove potentially harmful objects.
- Use clear, short, calm and slow statements.

- Remind the person with I/DD of pre-established boundaries;
- Remind him/her about the consequences of his/her behavior but do not threaten him/her.
- Get assistance to keep safe.

# Post-Crisis Calming

- Stress and tension decrease.
- Decrease in physical and emotional energy.
- Regains control of behavior.

# What does this look like?

- Prevention:
  - Arnold is in his mid-20s and has autism.
  - Crowds make Arnold uncomfortable.
  - Arnold likes animals.
- What could Arnold and his staff do to prepare him for the county fair?

# Escalation

- It is hot at the county fair.
- Arnold gets in line to buy water.
- Staff can see Arnold but are attending to Arnold's housemates.
- A 7-year old girl is near Arnold pestering her grandfather to buy her cotton candy.
- Arnold can hear the girl – staff can't.

# Escalation

- When the grandfather tells the girl “no,” she begins to scream that she ‘REALLY wants cotton candy!!’
- Arnold covers his ears to block the noise.
- Arnold remains in line for water.

# Escalation

- Staff can see Arnold but not the girl.
- They assume he is using his protective behaviors to block the noise of the fair.
- For Arnold, the girl is simply screaming – he no longer hears words.



# Escalation

- Arnold pulls his head to his chest.
- He shuts his eyes.
- He places his hands even harder over his ears.
- Staff begin to walk toward Arnold.
- The child continues to scream.

# Crisis

- Before staff reach Arnold, he opens his eyes, uncovers his ears, walks quickly toward the girl and slaps her face.
- The child starts to cry.
- Her grandfather picks her up and screams at Arnold, “What the hell do you think you’re doing? You’re going to jail!!”

# Crisis

- The grandfather calls the police.
- You are already at the fair and respond quickly.
- Staff have arrived with Arnold's housemate.
- Arnold is repeatedly stating, "no, no, no" to himself while covering his ears.

# Crisis

- A crowd has formed.
- Arnold's staff are trying to calm Arnold and talk to the grandfather.
- The grandfather is angry.
- The girl is screaming hysterically.
- Arnold's housemate is bouncing from foot-to-foot and flapping his hands.

# **Describe how you would move this situation to post-crisis calming.**

- Define the crisis.
- Identify the goal for police.
- Describe the actions you would take.
- Identify available resources.
- Describe your action plan.

# Trauma Defined

- a. An experience that produces psychological injury or pain.
- b. The psychological injury so caused.

It's not just the event but also the after-effects of the experience of the event.

# Trauma Experiences of People with I/DD

- Abuse:
  - Physical
  - Sexual
- Social/Emotional Trauma:
  - Bullying
  - Identified as being different
  - Exclusion
  - Segregation

# Trauma Experiences of People with I/DD

- Trauma of institutionalization:
  - Removal from family.
  - Foster care placement.
- Uncertainty of safety and basic needs being met (neglect).



# **Considerations for Law Enforcement – Related to past trauma**

- Verbal threats
- Physical aggression
- Running away
- Taking items

# Approaching a Person with I/DD

- May be very sensitive to tone of voice, body language, and words you are using.
  - Communicate directly with the person: don't assume that they cannot communicate.
  - Be very aware of what you and your non-verbal behavior is communicating and adjust your approach based on how the other person reacts.

# Approaching a Person with I/DD

- May be very sensitive to touch.
- If necessary to touch person, tell the person exactly what you are going to do and what you need them to do.
- Reassure the person.
- Re-iterating that you are there to help and that you want to hear what they have to say.

# Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- A Federal Civil Rights law passed in 1961.
- Guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in:
  - State and local government services,
  - public accommodations,
  - employment,
  - transportation, and
  - telecommunications.

# **The ADA effects virtually everything a law enforcement officer does.**

- For example:
  - receiving citizen complaints;
  - interrogating witnesses;
  - arresting, booking, and holding suspects;
  - operating telephone (911) emergency centers;
  - providing emergency medical services;
  - enforcing laws;
  - and other duties.

**The ADA covers a wide range  
of individuals with  
disabilities, including those  
with IDD.**

# The ADA requires

Law enforcement agencies to make reasonable modifications in their:

- policies,
- practices, and
- procedures

that are necessary to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities, unless making such modifications would fundamentally alter the program or service involved

# Reasonable Accommodations

- Finding alternate ways to communicate with a person with an IDD, such as:
  - pictures,
  - gestures, or,
  - technology



# Examples of Modifications

- Miranda
- Handcuffing
- Confiscating medications

# Decisions

- The ADA requires that the expressed choice of the individual with the disability, including an intellectual or developmental disability, who is in the best position to know her or his needs, should be given primary consideration in determining which communication aid to provide.
- The ultimate decision is made by the police department.

# **Community: A valuable resource**

- What do you know about the area in which you will work?
- Are there assisted living homes, independent living homes, or service providers?
- Does dispatch have a mechanism for identifying addresses where a person with an I/DD may reside?

# Community Engagement

- Conduct wellness checks at residential homes and day programs.
- Frequent businesses in your patrol area that employ people with I/DD.
- Ask SROs for updates of any school incidents involving people with I/DD.

# Community Engagement

- Ride-alongs
- Participate in community events such as public safety day/fire safety day.
- Volunteer for Special Olympics and other events featuring people with I/DD.
- Educate people about what law enforcement officers do.

# Community Engagement

- Provide or assist with training:
  - Safety (seatbelts, when to call 9-1-1, what to do if someone hurts you).
  - Support staff – how to engage with an officer when their client is a victim, witness, or suspect.

# Examples

- What programs do you know of...?