

First Responder Disability Awareness Training

Resource Guide



Overview

As a first responder, you are likely to encounter a wide variety of disabilities. As each disability exists on a spectrum, the presentation and severity can vary greatly. A person with a disability should not be expected to conform to standard procedures that are not designed with them in mind. These standard protocols are often ineffective and inappropriate and it is the first responders responsibility to accommodate the adult or child accordingly.

Niagara University First Responders Disability Awareness Training program (<https://frdat.niagara.edu/>) has developed the nation's only comprehensive law enforcement disability training (LE DAT). The Recognize-Identify-Approach-Interaction-Response (RIAR) model allows for law enforcement to appropriately address calls involving children and adults with disabilities. This information is meant to be a supplemental guideline to enhance a more formal LE DAT program.

RIAIR Model

1. **RECOGNIZE** the indicators or characteristics that are present.
2. Recognition allows you to **IDENTIFY** the disability.
Your mindset is now going to be altered.
3. Identification dictates your **APPROACH** specific to the disability.
4. Your **INTERACTION** must be in line with each disability and the etiquette and interaction skills specific to it.
5. This leads to an accurate and appropriate **RESPONSE**. Response is both in the moment and any matter that calls for follow-up.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common disability diagnosis in children. Symptoms include inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, or a combination thereof. ADHD is a common cause for behavioral issues in children and is often comorbid with learning disabilities and Oppositional Defiance Disorder, which can lead to strained peer and sibling relationships.

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): <https://chadd.org/>

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) was founded in 1987 in response to the frustration and sense of isolation experienced by parents and their children with ADHD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a disability with a broad range of symptoms and characteristics that can present itself differently from person to person. Characteristics may include difficulties with communication (approximately 40% will not verbalize), sensory impairments, stereotypical patterns of behavior and play. A common misconception is the notion that people with autism are unaware of their surroundings and lack an understanding of their environment. Individuals with ASD are often concrete thinkers and interpret language literally. Direction from caretakers is key to understanding challenging behavior.

Autism Society: <https://www.autism-society.org/>

The Autism Society of America has been improving the lives of all affected by autism for over 50 years and envisions a world where individuals and families living with autism are able to maximize their quality of life, are treated with the highest level of dignity, and live in a society in which their talents and skills are appreciated and valued.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism.

Epilepsy/Seizure Disorders

Epilepsy/Seizure Disorders cause individuals to experience seizures of varying length and severity. During seizures, individuals will have differing levels of consciousness depending on the type of seizure and may or may not understand what is being said to them. Seizure triggers vary widely. Most seizures can last from 20 seconds to 4 minutes; Any seizure lasting longer than 5 minutes calls for medical attention. DO NOT RESTRAIN a person having a seizure; instead use redirection to keep them out of harm's way.

Epilepsy Foundation: <https://www.epilepsy.com/>

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national non-profit with more than 50 local organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against seizures since 1968. The Foundation is an unwavering ally for individuals and families impacted by epilepsy and seizures.

Intellectual Disabilities

Intellectual Disabilities are often characterized by difficulty with processing questions or other information. This can contribute to gullibility, which increases the risk for potential harm and exploitation. However, this does not mean children cannot learn basic functional skills. While some people with intellectual disabilities may live in group homes or with caregivers long term, most are active in their community and use minimal supports.

The ARC: <https://thearc.org/>

The Arc is the largest national community-based organization advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and serving them and their families.

National Down Syndrome Society: <https://www.ndss.org/>

The National Down Syndrome Society is the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome.

National Down Syndrome Congress: <https://www.ndscenter.org/>

The National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to an improved world for individuals with Down syndrome. Founded in 1973, we are the leading national resource of support and information about Down syndrome, from the moment of a prenatal diagnosis through adulthood.

American Association on Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities: <https://www.aaid.org/>

Since 1876, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) has been providing worldwide leadership in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. We're a powerful community of leaders with a strong voice and important mission.

Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities are neurologically-based processing disorders that can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or math. It can also interfere with organizational skills, time management, abstract reasoning, memory, and attention. However, this does not mean that people with learning disabilities are unable to learn. On the contrary, most children with learning disabilities are as capable of learning as their peers, but do so differently.

Learning Disabilities Association of America: <https://ldaamerica.org/>

LDA visualizes a world in which learning disabilities are universally understood, so all individuals are accepted, supported, and empowered to live a self-determined life.

Physical Disabilities

Cerebral Palsy is a physical disability that can often affect ambulation and possibly speech in varying degrees. Presentation can be mistaken for inebriation. Despite common misconceptions, cerebral palsy does not indicate an intellectual disability nor do all people with cerebral palsy have a speech disability or use a wheelchair.

United Cerebral Palsy: <https://ucp.org/>

As one of the largest health nonprofits in the United States, the UCP mission is to advance the independence, productivity and full citizenship of people with disabilities through an affiliate network.

Spina Bifida Association: <https://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/>

The mission of the Spina Bifida Association is to build a better and brighter future for all those impacted by Spina Bifida.

Tourette Syndrome

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurobiological disorder that is characterized by tics. Tics are involuntary and often repetitive and may include physical movements or vocalizations. The use of inappropriate language, known as coprolalia, is common but only one of 63+ tics. Do not attempt to force someone with TS to stop ticing, as it will most likely force more tic activity instead of cease it. The average age of onset is 6-8 years old and is comorbid with learning disabilities, ADHD, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Tourette Association of America: <https://tourette.org/>

Tourette Association of America (formerly known as the Tourette Syndrome Association) is the only national organization serving the community, and works to raise awareness, advance research, and provide ongoing support to patients and families impacted by Tourette Syndrome and Tic Disorders.

Parent Supports

United Way 2-1-1:

211 is the most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country.

Parent Center Hub: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

Your central “Hub” of information and products created for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities

Resources and Research Materials

Niagara University First Responder Disability Awareness Training:

<https://frdat.niagara.edu/>

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For more information about NU FRDAT please visit: <https://frdat.niagara.edu/> or Call: 716-286-7355

DISCLAIMER: The information presented is a small sample of information that can be used for First Responder Disability Awareness Training and does not reflect the full amount of knowledge available on the subject of children and adults with disabilities.

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