

DDS Presentation to the
Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force's
Improving Police Interactions with
the Disability Community Subcommittee



Department of Developmental Services

Peter P. Tolisano, Jr., Psy.D., ABPP
Board Certified Clinical Psychologist
Director of Psychological Services

December 1, 2020

Overview of DDS

2

- The mission of the Department of Developmental Services is to partner with the individuals we support and their families, to support lifelong planning and to join with others to create and promote meaningful opportunities for individuals to fully participate as valued members of their communities.
- Pursuant to state statute, DDS serves individuals with intellectual disability and persons diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome. As of June 2020, DDS had 17,178 individuals that were active with the department.
- DDS offers a continuum of services that may include case management, residential services, employment opportunities and day services, health services, clinical-behavioral services, respite services, and family support.
- Approximately 95% of DDS services are provided through DDS-qualified private providers. DDS runs approximately 30 community living arrangements (group homes), three regional centers, and the Southbury Training School (STS).

Eligibility for DDS Services

3

- In order to be eligible for funding or services from DDS, an individual must:
 - (1) Be a resident of the State of Connecticut; and
 - (2) Have an intellectual disability as defined in Section 1-1g of the Connecticut General Statutes **or** have Prader-Willi Syndrome diagnosed by a physician and confirmed by genetic testing.
- Section 1-1g of the Connecticut General Statutes provides the statewide definition for intellectual disability. This statute defines intellectual disability as “a significant limitation in intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that originated during the developmental period before eighteen years of age.”

Current Initiatives with Police & First Responders

4

Police Officer's Standard and Training (Police Academy)

DDS provides trainings entitled “Responding to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities” for members of law enforcement agencies. These trainings concentrate on how best to understand and interact with persons with Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Nonverbal Learning Disorder.

- DDS trainings began in April of 2019 with classes of 20-25 participants per class.
- The three DDS trainings completed have included officers from municipalities such as Waterbury, New London, Bristol and Wethersfield, and other law enforcement entities (e.g., Amtrak Police, Probation Department).
- Co-presenters from Beacon Health Options and DCF are part of the trainings. All presenters must be certified by the Police Academy and the curricula is approved by the Academy Chief.

Current Initiatives with Police & First Responders

5

DDS's training course, listed for officers under the continuing education classification of ***Working with Special Populations***, teaches participants to:

- Better identify the cognitive limitations, adaptive deficits, and behavioral challenges associated with development disabilities.
- Understand the basics about autism spectrum disorder.
- Comprehend and appreciate fundamental information about the brain's focal regions with a main focus on the frontal cortex and the limbic (emotional) system.
- Change the way in which behaviors are perceived, especially by identifying the functions (purposes) that underlie maladaptive behaviors.
- Become familiar with proactive and reactive strategies from the positive behavior support model, especially communication and de-escalation tips.

Next Steps

6

- DDS is interested in exploring other opportunities to engage and educate police and first responders about individuals with intellectual disability and other developmental disabilities.
 - Continued parallel trainings with Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services for Children and Adolescents with main catchments in Plainville, Middletown, and Bridgeport
 - CT Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement (CABLE)
 - Engaging with municipalities directly

Conclusion

7

Thank you!

DDS is happy to answer any questions.

Peter P. Tolisano, Jr., Psy.D., ABPP

Board Certified Clinical Psychologist

DDS Director of Psychological Services

(860) 418-6086

Peter.Tolisano@ct.gov

