

In-process Voluntary Registry System (VRS) document for Improving Police Interactions with Disability Community subcommittee, CT Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force

Updated:

May 25, 2021

Notes:

All sections below are subject to continued research.

Context/background for VRS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- 61 million adults in the United States live with a disability
- 25.6% of adults in the U.S. have some type of disability; 1 in 4 adults
- Highest percentage of individuals with disabilities live in the Southern region of the United States

According to data cited by the International Association of Chiefs of Police:

- 2013: approx. 5.3 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, related dementias
- This number is projected to grow to 13.8 million by 2050

According to a white paper released by the Ruderman Foundation and/or data from a 2015 study conducted by the Treatment Advocacy Center:

- *30-50% of individuals killed by law enforcement are those with disabilities (*unclear as to time interval for this particular statistic: annually? over the course of several years?)
- Individuals with untreated mental illness 16x more likely to be killed during a police encounter than others
- Although numbering fewer than 1 in 50, individuals with untreated severe mental illness are involved in at least 1 in 4 and as many as half of all fatal police shootings

Current data/information collection for VRS (or similar program)

- CDC, federal agency, collects data on Americans with disabilities via a variety of methods and surveys, including the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
- 40,000 adults respond to the BRFSS annually
- Alaska, Montana conduct their own state surveys to gather comprehensive pictures of residents living with disabilities

- Some states use registries to assist with public emergency preparedness by asking individuals with disabilities or their loved ones to enter information voluntarily

Overall status of data/information collection for VRS (or similar program)

- While CDC collects data on individuals living with disabilities in the United States, near-total absence of official, accurate data on interactions between law enforcement and individuals with disabilities persists
- In general, media silence on disability component to stories about law enforcement-individuals with disability interactions
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (part of federal Department of Justice) was required to overhaul data collection methodology in 2016
- Need exists for data collection in law enforcement context

Examples of VRS (or similar program)

- Smart911: a national, voluntary database supported by fees paid by public agencies
- Smart911 services are available to anyone and everyone (irrespective of having disabilities) for sign-up
- Montana: Emergency Medical Information kit, created by Montana Disability and Health Program to promote Smart911 awareness
- Rhode Island: Rhode Island Special Needs Emergency Registry (RISNE), information is shared with local and state first responders, emergency management officials
- Irvine, California: Return Home Registry (2008)
- San Diego, California: Take Me Home Program (2008)
- Colerain, Ohio: Children and Residents Encounter (2009)
- Polk County, Florida: Project Safe & Sound (2007)
- Upper Saddle River: At Risk Resident Registry Program (2013)
- Canton, CT: Alzheimer's Voluntary Registry (2012)
- Westport, CT: Voluntary Registry for People with Disabilities (2018)

***Considerations/factors for discussing VRS (or similar program)**

*below adapted from IACP Voluntary Registry Guide

By having information available and accessible prior to as well as during, law enforcement and emergency response -

- Reduction in community costs, manpower, time, resources to respond to emergency/crisis calls involving individuals with disabilities?
- Reduction in police department costs, manpower, time, resources to respond to emergency/crisis calls involving individuals with disabilities?

By inviting people with disabilities and/or their family members, loved ones to participate in formation of VRS -

- Build trust between law enforcement and disability communities?
- Build durable, lasting partnerships among community support networks, community support networks, individuals with disabilities?