

## Disability training

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Cameron I Russell

 [View ORCID profile](#)

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### Abstract

A general checklist is suggested for beneficial disability-related training for those within law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and court administration.

### **A general checklist for disability-related training within law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and court administration**

Suggested types of training that may be beneficial within law enforcement agencies for more fully meeting the needs of people with disabilities include:

- Disability awareness instructional training, including understanding common types of disabilities and conditions, and being aware of any prejudices (whether your own or institutional prejudice) and acting to eliminate that bias or normalised discriminatory behaviour. Joint training seminars involving courts, police, correctional officers would provide new perspectives for each branch and open new lines of communication between them
- Training in eliciting and identifying the needs of people with disabilities as early as possible, then working out the steps required to have these needs met
- Training in how to gather disability data within crime reports (especially disability hate crimes), and how to engage with local disability community groups
- Disability awareness workshops. For example, how to react if someone who may or may not be with disability approaches you in a highly agitated state, or how to interview witnesses with different types of disabilities

- Essential information for each type of disability. For example, correctional officers must know that for diabetes management: any insulin and medical record must be moved with a prisoner when arrested, while attending court and whenever relocated; the medical history must be obtained at reception; new diabetic prisoners should see a nurse and be given a supply of jelly beans to keep for hypoglycaemic incidents rather than waiting for their first buy-up (as well as insulin if they have arrived without it); insulin and food must be provided to diabetic prisoners at set times to avoid hypoglycaemia and possible coma (which requires allowing for time to get searched and make their way through multiple gates to get to the clinic)
- Information needed to make the required reasonable adjustments meet the needs of the person with disability
- Awareness of health professionals, emergency contacts, legal representatives, communication personnel, resources and supports that are available for people with disabilities, and how to access them
- Training in First Aid and training in how to act in different scenarios. For example, recognizing the possibility that a person who seems to be intoxicated could instead have cerebral palsy; or acting with professional calm as you assist someone with Tourette Syndrome while they report a theft in between swearing loudly
- Training in how to liaise with people with disabilities, their families, health professionals, disability workers, service providers, advocacy and community groups
- Training in how to interact appropriately with women, children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities who face additional challenges when accessing the criminal justice system
- Training in how to make resources such as suitable assistive technology available, and how to improve the availability of such resources so that all people with disabilities receive support. For example, a court could procure adequate infrared hearing loops and the personnel to help fit them so they are available upon request (not relying on people with disabilities to book this service several days beforehand)
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- Access to simple and straightforward procedures for interactions with people with different disabilities in various situations, as found in suitable publications including codes of practice, policies and procedures manuals, guidelines and police manuals.

### **Training for people with disabilities**

When people with disabilities interact with police, they will ideally convey their disability to the police so that any unexpected responses are taken into account. This is not a matter of 'Blame the potential victim' but rather a wise way to avoid being Tasered, thrown to the ground, restrained or even shot. People with disabilities may sometimes be confused, flustered and afraid when confronted with the police, especially if they have had traumatic experiences in the past. Simple and reinforced training is therefore advisable so that people with disabilities know what to say (for example: 'I'm disabled. I've got a card in my pocket/wallet. Can I take it out?') and know not to suddenly thrust their hand into a pocket to retrieve the card without first receiving permission to do so.