

Pathways to Justice™: *Disability Response Teams*

The key to implementing and sustaining NCCJD's Pathways to Justice™ Training



What is a Disability Response Team (DRT)?

Disability Response Teams (DRTs) were created through the National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD) to address issues raised by overrepresentation of people with I/DD in the criminal justice system as both victims/witnesses and suspects/offenders. Based on the evidence-based multi-disciplinary team (or MDT) model, DRTs bring professionals from both disability and criminal justice together to share expertise and provide training using a team approach, with the goal of becoming the go-to resource in their community or state on issues related to criminal justice and disability. The initial goal of the DRT is creating greater awareness about disability related issues through shared training via NCCJD's Pathways to Justice training program (*turn over to see DRT graphic*).

What are the benefits of using a multi-disciplinary team approach?

This approach incorporates cross disciplinary training, allowing everyone to operate from a common set of shared principles. Traditionally, criminal justice professionals attend training programs that address issues specific to their profession—law enforcement receive training at the academy and roll call, victim service providers at conferences, and attorneys in law school and through CLEs. By forming DRTs, all three professional groups are able to work together and hear the same, consistent message through the Pathways to Justice program. It is crucial that professionals from differing backgrounds and training come to understand and respect each other's work and professional abilities; DRTs are the channel that make this happen.

What are the Steps in creating a Disability Response Team

1. *Examine existing programs in your community.*

Do your homework. Find out regular meetings already take place on these issues within mental health or other fields. Do not recreate the wheel. Find out how you may be able to work with existing teams or resources. It is also important to find out what kind of training law enforcement, victim service providers, and legal professionals are provided related to disability issues. What are the gaps in current training (for example, most Crisis Intervention Training only provides 2 hours of training on I/DD issues out of a 40 hour week long training.)

I.E. Call your local law enforcement agency and ask to speak to the Training Officer. Ask if I/DD is currently being covered in their training, and to what extent. Offer to meet with the police department/law



National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability

For more information, visit our
website at:

www.thearc.org/NCCJD

Contact us:

Phone: 202.433.5255

Toll free: 800.433.5255

Email: NCCJDinfo@thearc.org



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Disability Response Teams (DRTs)

enforcement agency, use the Pathways to Justice brief introduction video and conversation guide to introduce the topic, and explore opportunities to incorporate Pathways to Justice training into their training academy or in-service training. Do this for each target audience to determine where the need or desire for this training is greatest.

2. **Identify and interview possible members/stakeholders.**

Create a list of key people in your community or state who may be most sensitive to this issue and willing to join the DRT. While answering question #1 above, many of these names will come up. Potential members may already be participating in other initiatives, committees, or task forces related to these issues. Informally “interview” prospective DRT members to determine availability and degree of commitment to addressing disability and criminal justice issues.

3. **Write a mission statement including goals/specific tasks for your DRT.**

Develop a shared mission statement related to providing training and other related tasks. Define the scope of actions or intervention that the team can offer, and include possible solutions in the training. Define the top 3 core issues that your team would like to address through the training, and work with NCCJD staff to customize the training. The customization process helps create a sense of buy-in from all team members. For example, one doable goal is to develop a phone tree/list of resources specific to your community/state that will be used in the Pathways to Justice Training. DRTs are encouraged to work closely with NCCJD to ensure these resources are placed on the state-by-state map of resources found here: <http://www.thearc.org/NCCJD/resources/by-state>

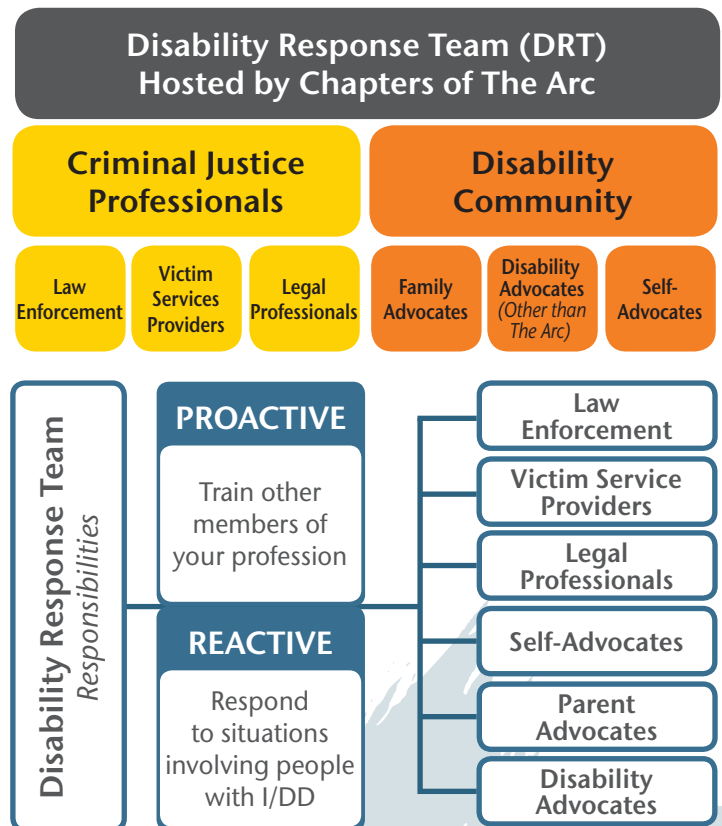
4. **Build collaboration through regularly scheduled meetings and pre-training session.**

Consider holding monthly (frequency depends on DRT member availability) phone or in-person meetings to foster collaborative relationships, particularly if team members have never worked together before or are new to these issues. These meetings should begin before the DRT pre-meeting with NCCJD and continue after the training is completed. The goal of the DRT pre-meeting is to ensure all DRT members are fully prepared to participate in the initial on-site training event.

5. **Brainstorm ideas and discuss DRT goals beyond training day.**

Discuss ways to sustain your training efforts beyond the initial training. How will the DRT continue to

provide training and “build a market” either locally or statewide for this training? Where are the gaps in services or supports that demand greatest attention at this time and how can your DRT best address those issues? Use the Pathways to Justice model to walk through this process and discover primary goals for your community or state. Arrange to follow up with NCCJD post-training to discuss these issues and develop next steps for your DRT.



For more information on forming MDTs:

Intellectual Disability and the Criminal Justice System: www.amazon.com/Intellectual-Disability-Criminal-Justice-System/dp/1489591389

OVC's Multidisciplinary Response to Crime Victims with Disabilities: www.ovc.gov/pubs/victimswithdisabilities/index.html

Vera Institute of Justice Guide for Rape Crisis, Domestic Violence and Disability Organizations
www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/Collaboration-pub-v4-corrected.pdf