



## **The Arc Launches New Center for Criminal Justice and Disability**

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[The Arc](#), the nation's leading organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), has been awarded a two-year grant for \$400,000 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to develop a [National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability](#), specifically focused on I/DD. This is the first national effort of its kind to bring together both victim and offender issues involving people with I/DD under one roof. According to the [National Crime Victim Survey of 2010](#), the victimization rate is twice as high for individuals with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. And we don't have to look far for examples where law enforcement and people with I/DD could have benefited from this kind of work, including the tragic death of Robert Ethan Saylor in Frederick, Maryland, who died in early 2013 after three off-duty deputies attempted to remove him from a movie theater over a misunderstanding over a ticket.

The goal of this ambitious project is to create a national clearinghouse for research, information, evaluation, training and technical assistance for justice and disability professionals and other advocates that will build their capacity to better identify and meet the needs of people with I/DD, whose disability often goes unrecognized, and who are overrepresented in the nation's criminal justice system – both as victims and offenders.

The Arc is working closely with several other national partners within the criminal justice, legal and victim advocacy communities to research, analyze and replicate evidence-based solutions to the problems of injustice and victimization that have gone on for far too long within the I/DD community. For example, people with I/DD are often unable to report crimes or are not seen as credible witnesses. They are also vulnerable to becoming perpetrators of crime, including sex offenses, and used by other criminals to assist in law-breaking activities. And with many forms of mild I/DD not being easily identifiable, justice personnel may not recognize that someone has a disability or know how to work effectively with the individual. Although organized training is available for criminal justice professionals on mental illness, few resources on I/DD exist. Many law enforcement and other justice professionals do not know the difference between mental illness and I/DD and often think they are synonymous.

The center will consist of an online resource library, which will continually be updated, as well as news and information about criminal justice issues relating to people with I/DD. In addition, the center offers monthly online educational sessions and is in the process of

developing curriculum and trainings for law enforcement professionals. Join us! The next one will be on Thursday, March 27, “Can You Hear Me? Connecting the Dots and Building Collaboration to Support People with Disabilities Who Experience Sexual Violence.” Sign up for this event, and our [April and May webinars](#), find out more about the center’s activities and find archived webinars at [www.thearc.org/NCCJD](http://www.thearc.org/NCCJD).

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