



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT DC'S DISABILITY COMMUNITY

From the Disability Community and Policing Working Group as convened  
by the DC Developmental Disabilities Council

Presentation to the DC Police Reform Commission's Building Up Non-  
Police Health and Safety Interventions Committee

December 10, 2020

# BACKGROUND

## Who are we?

- People with and without disabilities, including family members of people with disabilities, convened by the DC Developmental Disabilities Council, a local disability advocacy organization. Ronald Hampton chaired the group.

## What did we do?

- We met for 12 weeks to learn together and discuss what we felt was needed to support our community.

## Why did we convene?

- People of color who also have disabilities are disproportionately represented in the number of people who have been harmed by police officers. We know that there are groups and individuals that have been working on these issues for many years and as people with disabilities and family members of people with disabilities, we wanted to contribute to that work and make sure our voices were heard.



# JEANNIE STURGESS AND STEVEN POWE

Why is this work important to you as a person with a disability?

What do you want police officers, or people trying to change how police officers work, to know about people with disabilities?



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Main objectives:
  - Reduce the need for police and ensure that when police officers are interacting with people with disabilities, those interactions remain respectful and safe.
  - Eliminate all murders committed by police officers.
  - Encourage better responses to behavioral health and disability related crises by involving unarmed individuals with specialized expertise and a deep understanding of disability and behavioral health issues.
- Recommendations target the following agencies/groups:
  - Department on Disability Services (DDS)
  - Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)
  - Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)
  - Office of Unified Communications (OUC)
  - Non-governmental community groups (Community)

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO MPD

- MPD: Appoint at least one person with a disability or a family member/caregiver of a person with a disability to MPD Chief's Advisory Council (made up of Chairs of District Citizens Advisory Councils, plus 4 members selected by the Chief) and include this requirement in policies and procedures that establish and govern the Chief's Advisory Council.
- MPD: Provide education to all staff that includes best practices in working with people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in any and all types of interactions they may have, including crime investigations involving witnesses, survivors, or accomplices who may have been manipulated by people they thought they could trust.



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO MPD (CONT.)

- MPD: Establish a policy that deadly force is NEVER used with people with disabilities and develop alternative practices that preserve and protect people's lives.
- MPD: Create a Disability Liaison Unit that is designated to work with the disability community and explore whether it should be combined with the existing Deaf and Hard of Hearing Liaison Unit.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO MPD AND PARTNERS

- MPD/DBH: In addition to broad crisis-intervention training (CIT) for all police officers, establish more specialized, dedicated crisis-intervention teams made up of behavioral health and disability professionals who can provide an unarmed response to behavioral health and disability-related crises.
- MPD/DBH/DDS: Police officers should receive education directly from people with disabilities on issues that are important to them and strategies for working with people with disabilities. Police should also receive education alongside behavioral health professionals, disability services workers, social workers, etc. Possible training curriculums or programs include:
  - Curriculum developed by the Ethan Saylor Alliance in Maryland (<http://mdod.maryland.gov/about/Pages/Saylor-Alliance.aspx>)
  - The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability's Pathways to Justice Program (<https://thearc.org/our-initiatives/criminal-justice/pathway-justice/>)



# RECOMMENDATION TO OUC

- OUC: Ensure that dispatchers receive education from behavioral health and disability services professionals to appropriately identify a behavioral health or disability-related crisis and dispatch unarmed behavioral health or disability professionals who can best respond to those situations.



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO DDS

- DDS: Develop education and information for Service Coordinators, Direct Support Professionals, and other service provider staff about ways to more effectively support people who have had or are likely to have interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, including alternatives to calling the police. This could include, but may not be limited to extensive training on de-escalation, recognition of different types of disabilities, basic intervention techniques, mobile crisis teams, strict staffing patterns that include effective matching for people who have had police called on them before, etc.
- DDS: Provide education to people with disabilities and their families/caregivers regarding their rights as it relates to interacting with the police, which should include, but may not be limited to, fourth and fifth amendment rights and information about Smart911 so they can make an informed decision about whether or not to provide their information to Smart911.



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL

- All DC Government and Council of DC: Consider the extensive recommendations provided by DefundMPD to shift funds from MPD to social services that support the health, well-being, and peacefulness in our communities. This includes enhancing funding for DBH, DDS, DACL, and other community building agencies.
- Community groups: Create a public awareness campaign that supports awareness of disability issues, the names and lives of people with disabilities who have been harmed or killed by police officers, alternatives to calling the police, and information to encourage and support people with disabilities and their families/caregivers to join their local Citizen Advisory Council.



# QUESTIONS AND CONTACTS

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