COURSE CONTENT:
- Disabilities defined specific to law enforcement
- Victimization/abuse and the disabled
- Service provision and supports and how to develop a collaborative relationships
- Challenging behaviors and responsiveness
- Municipality role and responsibility
- Progressive approaches to addressing challenging situations
- Proper etiquette and interactions skills
- Alternative forms of communication (i.e. Speech-Generating devices, ASL)
- Comorbid/secondary & tertiary disabilities
- Durable Medical Equipment, Assistive Technology
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specific to law enforcement
- Myths and misperceptions
- Incident review, identifying appropriate response
- NYS Justice Center
- Community resources and networks
- Current trends and topics

PURPOSE: Disability awareness training has tailored a presentation for law enforcement. It brings together education on disabilities while enhancing sensitivity. The presentation includes the history of disabilities, definitions, etiquette and interaction skills, the disabled perspective, challenging behaviors, and current trends and topics, all relevant to police officers.

TEACHING STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES: Disability awareness incorporates sensitivity training so the audience can empathize with the injustices individuals with disabilities face. Videos, extensive materials and resources, federal guidelines, and current best practices will highlight the content and allow for attendees to best respond and interact with all citizens in their community.

Fee for service:
- Western New York full day presentation
- Beyond WNY full day presentation
- 2 day Train the Trainer (Free to New York)
- 4 day Multidiscipline Train the Trainer package

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RELATION AND IMPACT TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS: The ability to respond appropriately to situations, whatever the magnitude, is essential in the initial interaction involving individuals. 50-80% of interactions by an officer involve an individual with a disability and they are most often the first to respond. High profile events have exposed the lack of training and preparedness in responding to this population. This training addresses every area of response and specific interaction skills in encountering individuals with disabilities, challenges faced and how to overcome them, federal/state guidelines and supports provided, victimization, identifying and working with service providers, and the latest initiatives and programs. Attendees will also be provided with an in-depth explanation of why society discriminates against individuals with disabilities and the injustices that occur.
David Whalen founded Disability Awareness Training in 2004. He specializes in training law enforcement, emergency responders, human service providers, public/private/school transportation, corporations and businesses, places of worship and educators.

Mr. Whalen worked for 17 years serving adults with developmental disabilities before working with low-income, medically frail seniors in a Managed Long Term Care program. He served as President of the NYS Association of Day Service Providers. He also sat on the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day committee for 18 years.

Dave is currently the Chair of the Town of Amherst’s Committee on Disabilities, President of Williamsville CSD Special Education Parent Teacher Students Association (SEPTSA), CSE Parent representative for Williamsville CSD and the State of New York, and he sits on the NYS OPWDD Quality Assurance Real Choice sub-committee. He is past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Parent Network of WNY and an active member of the Diocese of Buffalo’s Disability Action Team. In 2010, he was appointed by the Board of Regents to serve on the NYS Independent Living Council (NYSILC) and recently co-founded Access Buffalo.

In September 2010, he received, in collaboration with Niagara University, a NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council grant to develop disability awareness training for First Responders. He currently sits on the NYS Office of Emergency Management human services committee and chairs NYSILC’s emergency preparedness committee. He was appointed to the Erie County Disability Advisory Board and has served on it since 2010. In January 2014, Dave accepted an invitation to join the advisory council of the National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability. Also, he accepted an invitation to join the International Association of Chiefs of Police focus group—Mental Health of Arrestees and How It Impacts Our Officers.

He has a BA in Psychology and a MS in Education in Community Counseling from St. Bonaventure University, where he serves as the Buffalo Alumni chapter President.

David resides in Williamsville, NY with his wife Sandy and their teenage twins, David and Rachel.

Program Background

In September 2010, Niagara University was awarded a three year $550,000 grant from the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to develop curriculum for the training of police officers, firefighters, emergency medical services, and other first responders in the state of New York. Although some states have some versions of this program, no state has developed a fully comprehensive program. Working with the support of the NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the end product will include, but not be limited to, classroom training, a train-the-trainer program, online training, database of all departments and councils, extensive resources, and regional disability contacts and information. We will also explore podcasts and applications, as suggested by some of our first responder partners.