Emergency Responders’ Training in Working with Individuals with Disabilities

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Background

• Disability is common in modern society (Boyle et al., 2011)
• Law enforcement receives little training in how to effectively serve and interact with individuals with disabilities (McAfee & Musso, 1995)
• Little research available on training that other first responders receive
• Lack of training can have devastating impacts, up to and including death
  • Paul Childs (Osborn, 2008)
  • Evacuation during natural disasters (Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities, 2006)
Purpose

• RQ1: What training do first responders in Connecticut receive on characteristics of individuals with disabilities and on how to effectively interact with these individuals on the job?

• RQ2: Do first responders feel adequately prepared for interactions with individuals with disabilities?

• RQ3: Is disability training for first responders useful in helping them to better serve individuals with disabilities in their communities?

[Brief description of your research- what was your main research question? Why did you decide to research this topic?]
Methods

• Recruitment: E-mailed surveys to employees listed under the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection on CT.gov
  • Inclusion criteria: Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, CT State Police, or Police Officer Standards and Training Council
  • Exclusion criteria: working at a different agency under the Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection
  • Final sample \( n=65 \)

• Analysis
  • Descriptive Statistics
  • Chi-square
RQ1: What training do first responders receive?
Have you received training in interacting with individuals with...?

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Intellectual Disability
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Communication Disorders
- Hearing impaired or are...
- Another physical...
- ADHD
- Epilepsy
- Low vision or are blind
- Down Syndrome
- Cerebral Palsy
- Fragile X Syndrome

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure what that is
- Missing
RQ2: Do first responders feel adequately prepared?
RQ3: Is disability training for first responders useful?
RQ3: Is disability training for first responders useful?

How useful would receiving training in working with individuals with disabilities be?

- Not at all useful
- Not so useful
- Somewhat useful
- Very useful
- Extremely useful

Bar chart showing the distribution of responses for the usefulness of disability training.
Discussion

• Training appears inadequate
  • Only 40% found the training they received very or extremely useful; 40% stated their training was inadequate, and 14% stated they weren’t sure
  • Training primarily given in less effective ways; interaction rare
  • Primarily focuses on major mental illnesses, intellectual disability, and ASD

• Limitations
  • No fire safety officials responded; primarily descriptive; entirely self-report

• Future directions
  • Address limitations around self-report and lack of fire safety officials
  • Provide training for law enforcement officials and study effectiveness
  • Policy advocacy
References


QUESTIONS?