

PATHWAYS FOR JUSTICE™: EMPOWERING CHAPTERS TO CREATE REAL CHANGE



The impact of Pathways to Justice is significant and lasting, because it is filling a gaping hole in knowledge not only for criminal justice professionals, but for the disability community as well.

The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability® bridges the gap between the criminal justice and disability worlds. One of the most exciting initiatives of the center is the Pathways to Justice™ Program.

Pathways to Justice is a comprehensive program that begins with building a community-based response through the creation of Disability Response Teams (DRTs). These teams work to educate law enforcement, victim advocates, legal professionals, and others in the criminal justice system about cracks in the system that can have devastating effects on people with disabilities—especially those with “invisible” disabilities. This first-of-its-kind program is equipping chapters of The Arc to build lasting and meaningful relationships with criminal justice professionals. One shining example is Pikes Peak, Colorado.

The Arc Pikes Peak Region was one of five chapters selected to pilot Pathways

to Justice. The chapter supports people with I/DD who get involved in the criminal justice system and provides direct advocacy within the court system for a number of clients. The chapter was eager to bring Pathways to Justice to their community to bolster their already growing outreach in this area.

Recently, their DRT had the opportunity to put their training into practice by working to divert a suspect with I/DD from the criminal justice system. A staff person from Pikes Peak BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) called their chapter with a crisis. BOCES staff stated that one of their clients—a 19 year old with autism in transition services—met a girl who said she was of age, but was actually only 13. Allegedly, they “hooked up” but did not have sex. However, the girl's friends told their parents who subsequently reported this to authorities. The young man was in trouble, and BOCES staff hoped The Arc could help.