

Form Name: Commission Budget Recommendation Form
Submission Time: March 17, 2020 11:14 am
Browser: Chrome 80.0.3987.132 / Windows
IP Address: 75.34.101.112
Unique ID: 590770653
Location: 30.341899871826, -97.53279876709

Your Information

Your Name Robin Orlowski

Your Commission Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities

Email bc_robin.orkowski@austintexas.gov

After question three, which questions from the flowchart are you prepared to answer?

- Is there funding?
- Which department holds the funding?
- Which orgs receive it?
- How is success measured?
- What are the impacts, and gaps?

Root Cause Analysis

Story: What did you hear from the community?

Austin, being home to both the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Texas School for the Deaf and Criss Cole rehabilitation Center and the Austin State Hospital, among other smaller facilities., has a very large population of people with disabilities. In 2019, people with disabilities were 103,634 of the Travis County population including the City of Austin . The percentage of people with disabilities living within the City of Austin is expected to grow as the population both increases and ages. People with disabilities do not necessarily have the same needs and/or life experiences as a person without disabilities. Their distinct need and culture need to be acknowledged and considered including by the Austin Police Department.

The Austin Police Department was already providing and continues to provide Americans with Disabilities Act training both to all incoming cadets and active officers. In response to prior constructive criticism from the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities and acknowledged by APD management, internal revisions such as increasing counselor screening for mental health calls were implemented. However the disability community still experiences bias from APD and the City of Austin. This bias adversely impacts people with disabilities quality of life and access to justice. People with disabilities continue having a systematically different experience with the department than people without disabilities.

Officers currently give crime victims with disabilities cards without braille and/or TDD access with no way to effectively communicate follow up after arriving on the scene. The disability community has a difficult/impossible time figuring out the status of their case without accessible cards. Because they cannot directly communicate with APD, they were treated 'differently' even if this was not the department's and/or management's deliberate/conscious intention. There are other consequences

A 2019 report issued by the University of Texas Law School Human Rights Clinic found that out of the 15 largest United States cities, the City of Austin had the highest rate of people with ID/DD being shot by law enforcement who were dispatched mental health related calls. The Austin Police Department was faulted for limited use of appropriate de-escalation techniques when interacting with ID/DD individuals who might be unable to clearly understand and/or then comply with that arriving officer's direction. The person they are working with may not be having a 'crisis' persay' but just may not have the cognitive/functional skills needed to properly comprehend the officer's directions in order to avoid being injured and/or killed according to conventional law enforcement norms. Culture is the shared norms, values beliefs of a group of people and police culture traditionally has operated with an 'us vs them mentality'. This by default places people with disabilities in an op positional position to the police officer.

An officer who is themselves fully fluent in disability culture could assist both their peers in the department and community groups who work with/for people with disabilities in developing and providing appropriate and comprehensive disability outreach training for organizations especially

servicing people with disabilities. People with disabilities and APD personnel learning how to safely interact with each other develop mutual trust.

Because they are part of the department and the police culture, a designated community liaison can also help peers and the department understand that bias takes many different forms.

Problem: What is the problem you identify?

People with disabilities continue being treated 'differently' by the Austin Police Department in interactions even while the police department currently does provide ADA and other disability law training to cadets and officers.

People with disabilities then get viewed as the 'other' by an arriving officer who does not necessarily obtain familiarity and/or comfort with people with disabilities including an understanding of disability as being a distinct culture.

Limited personal experience with disability and disability culture can make an arriving officer more likely to shoot people with disabilities despite receiving initial and ongoing training in ADA and other disability laws. Laws do not necessarily mean de-escalation will be used and/or used appropriately by the arriving officer.

Unlike a person without disabilities an individual with I/DD may not be able to otherwise cognitively understand the arriving officer's directions and/or clearly process what will in fact actually happen to them during an incident with an officer if they do not immediately comply despite actually wanting to be a 'good person' and please others. Following an officer's directions is a traditional law enforcement prerequisite in several instances but if somebody with ID/DD does not cognitively know how to easily follow directions and the arriving officer does not know how to already properly work with somebody with ID/DD the outcome can become fatal.

People with disabilities who are not ID/DD also experience unequal treatment since they cannot tell the officer what is happening/has happened to them or obtain timely follow up. Law enforcement needs to understand not every person encountered has the same intellectual and/or emotional processing skills even if somebody is physically an adult.

How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

1) people with ID/DD are being shot at a high rate because of communication problems with the arriving officer

2) people who are blind/deaf also cannot obtain service from APD because of communication barriers such as inaccessible communication. Cards which do not have braille and officers who are not proficient in ASL. Austin has a sizeable deaf/hearing impaired community and blind/vision impaired community.

Is there funding to address the problem?

Yes
