

Pathways to Justice™: Video Conversation Guide

“Too many times people with disabilities come into contact with the criminal justice system and the outcome is anything but just.”



Advocates who are looking to fix cracks in the criminal justice system can use this guide as a conversation starter with criminal justice professionals in their state or local communities. The Pathways to Justice video introduces a helpful model to spark lively discussion. Together, professionals and advocates can identify services for both victims/witnesses and suspects/offenders as well as potential gaps in those services.

After watching the Pathways to Justice Introduction Video, use the following guidelines to start a conversation. This is an easy way to provide brief information on the topic of people with disabilities and the criminal justice system. It can be used during weekly staff meetings, roll calls for officers, and in other ways to advocate for more training on this topic for criminal justice professionals. Disability Response Teams (DRTs), individual citizens, and others will find that the Pathways to Justice Introduction Video and conversation guide is a great first step to building strong relationships between disability and criminal justice communities.

General Questions:

- Was there anything that surprised you while watching the video? If yes, what?
- Have you assisted or interacted with people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) before (or do you have any close relationships with people with I/DD)? If so, are there any lessons learned from those experiences?
- Whose story did you find the most compelling? Why?
- Discuss resources at each stage of the Pathways to Justice Model—what is available in your community and what is lacking? Are there promising practices in neighboring areas you could model? Who are the interested parties that could address this issue?



National Center on
Criminal Justice & Disability

For more information, visit our
website at:

www.thearc.org/NCCJD

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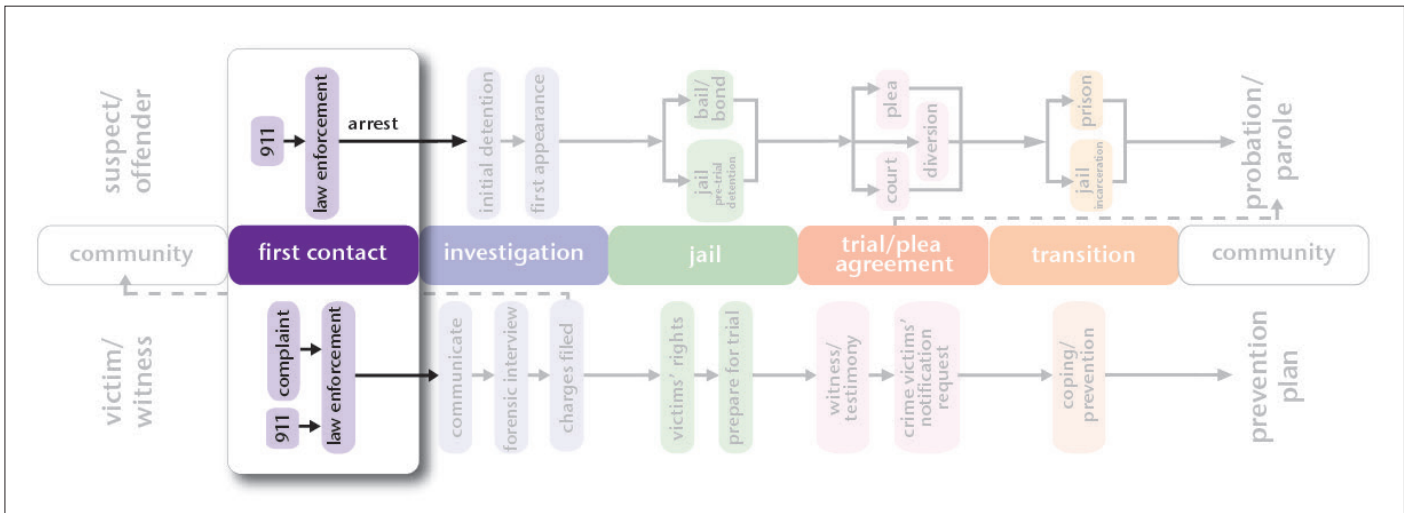
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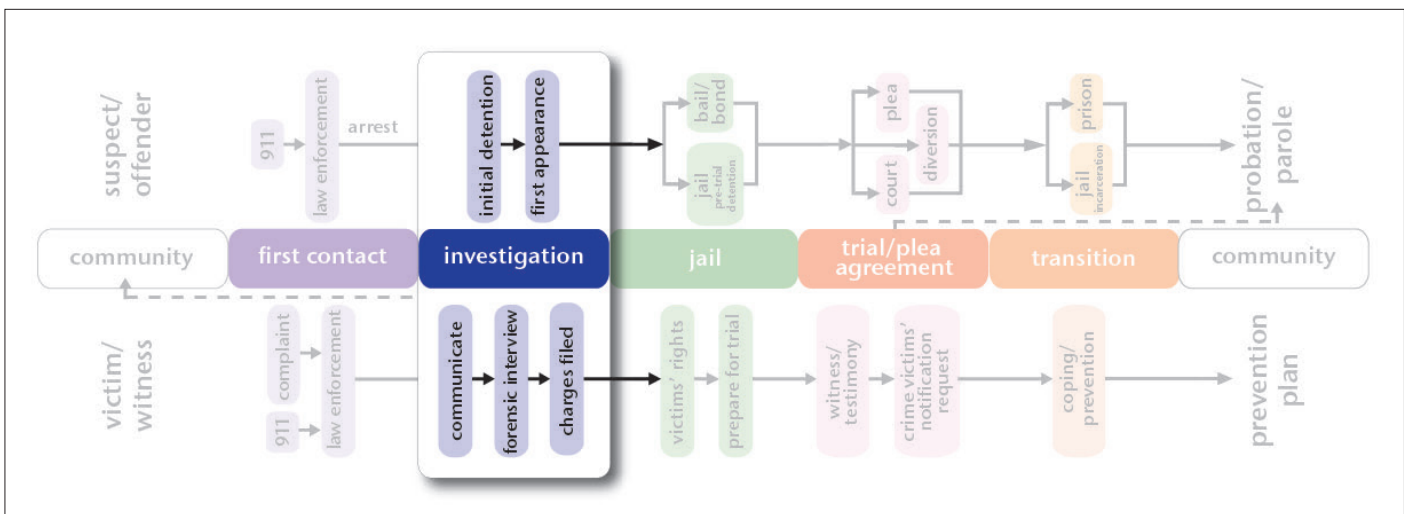


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For Law Enforcement

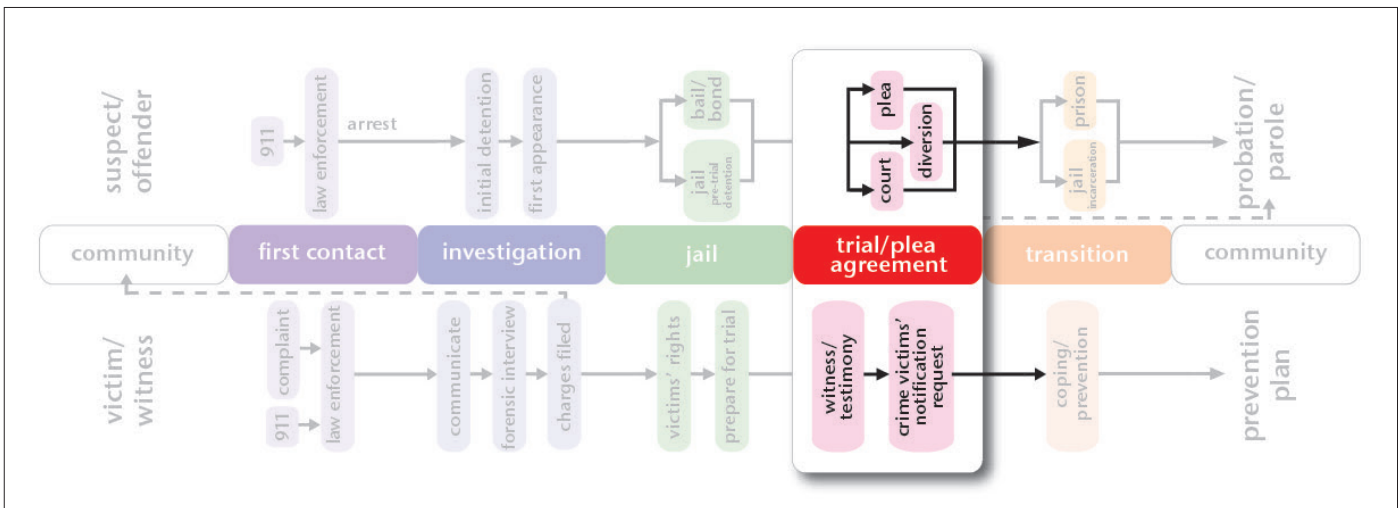


- Regarding Ethan Saylor’s story, what would you have done in this situation? Would the noticeable fact that the suspect had Down syndrome made a difference in your response? Why or why not?
- During First Contact, what are some strategies officers could have used to change the outcome?



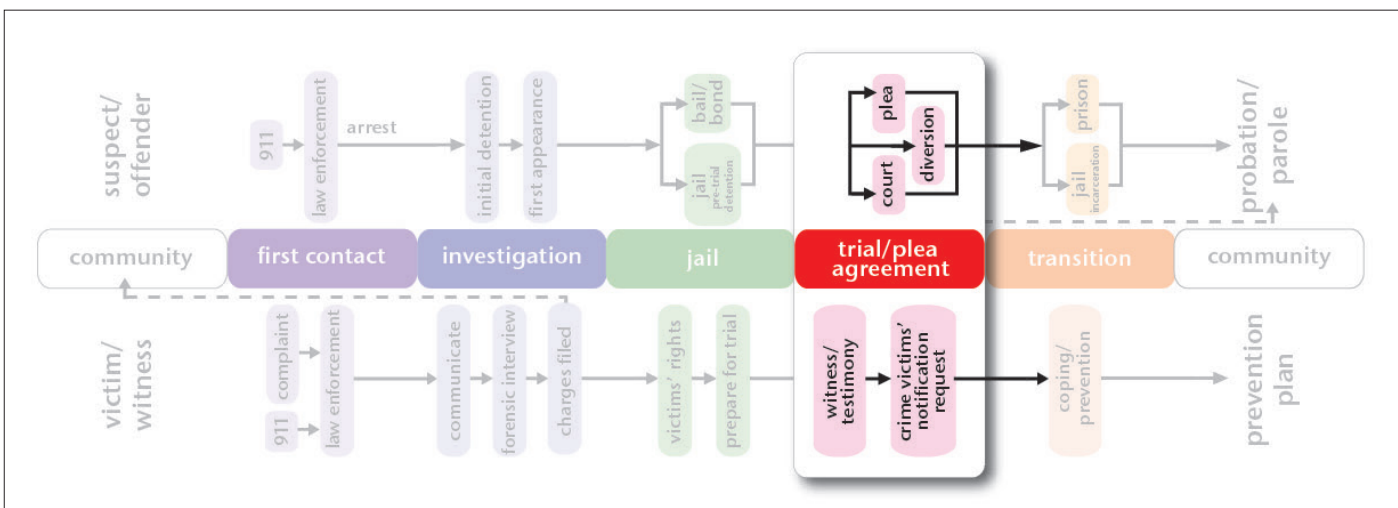
- Joe Arridy was convicted and sentenced based on a false confession—the actual killer was left free in the community to reoffend. As a law enforcement officer, what is your stance on false confessions? How can you avoid them in the future? What would you do if, in retrospect, you realized you had been part of obtaining a false confession?
- What type of information would you like to receive if you were given more training about serving people with I/DD?

For Victim Services Professionals



- Each of the three men—Ethan, Joe, and James—were victims in some way in the criminal justice system. For James who experienced a rape, what kinds of supports would you offer him if he walked into your office as a point of first contact?
- How would you help James find supports, travel through the crime victim rights process, and successfully prosecute his rapist?
- If James agreed to provide testimony at his own trial, how would you assist him? Do you think he would be seen as a credible witness in court, why or why not?
- What type of information would you like to receive if you were given more training about serving people with I/DD?

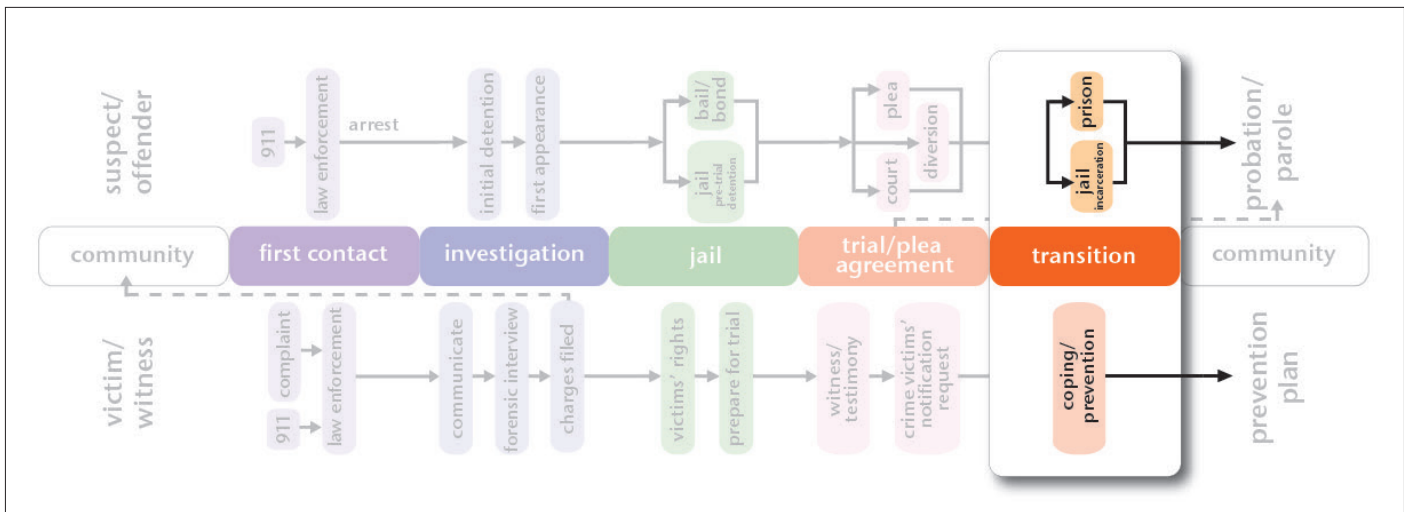
For Attorneys



- At trial, Joe was sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. If, as an attorney, you found yourself either prosecuting or defending someone who had a disability, what kinds of things would you want to account for to ensure a just outcome was reached?

- How do you feel about culpability when a person has an intellectual or developmental disability? Do your feelings influence your practice?
- Do you think people with I/DD can be credible witnesses, why or why not?
- What type of information would you like to receive if you were given more training about working with clients with I/DD?

For Family and Self Advocates



- Transition can happen at any point that someone with a disability enters or leaves the criminal justice system—either as a victim/witness or a suspect/offender. Keeping James’ story of victimization in mind, how do you think you could support someone who has come forward as a victim with transition?
- What are some preventive measures you can take to ensure that interactions with the criminal justice system are as positive as possible?

Conclusion

After viewing the video, thank the individuals for taking the time to learn more about this issue and offer to provide further training. Gauge their level of interest in becoming part of the solution by joining a Disability Response Team (if applicable) or agreeing to work together on a particular goal. If professionals express interest right away, begin using the Pathways to Justice Model to identify the most pressing needs or gaps in services in their community. Remember to use NCCJD as a resource as you move forward in creating solutions: www.thearc.org/NCCJD.