

Pathways to Justice Introduction Video: Transcript

(male voice with slight southern accent)

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

Misunderstandings and miscommunications lead to cracks in the system. Pathways to justice become impossible to navigate.

Ethan, a young man with Down syndrome, was excited to see a movie. When the movie ended, he tried to re-enter the theater because he hoped to see a second showing.

Ethan's FIRST CONTACT with the criminal justice system came as a SUSPECT when this was reported as a crime.

3 off duty police officers responded to the theater manager's complaint and, despite requests from Ethan's support staff to wait, things got physical.

The exact sequence of events is in dispute, but before the evening ended, Ethan was dead due to asphyxiation when in prone restraint.

Ethan fell through the cracks, and as a result lost his life. Things could have turned out differently.

False or coerced confessions create cracks that suspects and offenders often fall into, sometimes with devastating consequences.

Joe Arridy was a man with intellectual disabilities known as "the happiest man who ever lived on death row." At TRIAL, Joe was sentenced to death and executed after falsely confessing to rape and murder.

Joe was granted a pardon years after his death. The cracks in the system swallowed up Joe Arridy's life.

Let's consider the path of a VICTIM with disabilities.

James Meadours is a man with intellectual disabilities and also a rape survivor.

Out of fear, James did not report the multiple assaults he experienced as a teen and young adult—fear prevented him from making FIRST CONTACT with police.

It wasn't until James experienced a traumatic rape in his own apartment that he had the courage to speak out about the crimes committed against him.

James's repeated victimization was preventable.

James fell through the cracks.

With support from his local chapter of The Arc and a rape crisis center, James found a pathway to justice and successfully prosecuted the rapist.

Ethan's mother, Patti, has turned the loss of her son's life into a powerful platform for change in the state of Maryland and around the country.

James is a successful advocate for victims with intellectual and developmental disabilities who encourages others to speak out against violence.

And police officers like Andrew and former officer Carolynn Gammichia are using their experiences as both police officers and parents of a child with autism to teach others about people with disabilities.

The Gammichia family is well aware that their son, Nicholas, could easily become a victim or be accused of a crime at any point, and get lost in a system not yet equipped to serve him.

These people, and others like them, are working to fix cracks in the system.

There are too many ways for people like Ethan, Joe, and James to fall through the cracks.

With effective and consistent training, criminal justice professionals can confidently serve ALL people fairly.

For decades The Arc has promoted and protected the human and civil rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. NCCJD wants you to help bridge gaps in your community's criminal justice system.

The National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability is working to connect the criminal justice system with the disability community once and for all.

Learn more at thearc.org/nccjd

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