



## OUR INITIATIVES &gt;

# Criminal Justice

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## Overview

Just like anyone else, individuals with IDD come into contact with the criminal justice system as suspects, defendants, incarcerated persons, victims, and/or witnesses.

People with disabilities are more likely to experience victimization, be arrested, be charged with a crime, and serve longer prison sentences once convicted, than those without disabilities. Individuals with IDD with other marginalized identities (e.g., people of color, members of indigenous communities, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+), are even more likely to get caught up in the system.

Once entangled, they face unique challenges, bias, and inaccessible services, which only perpetuate the cycle of criminal justice involvement.



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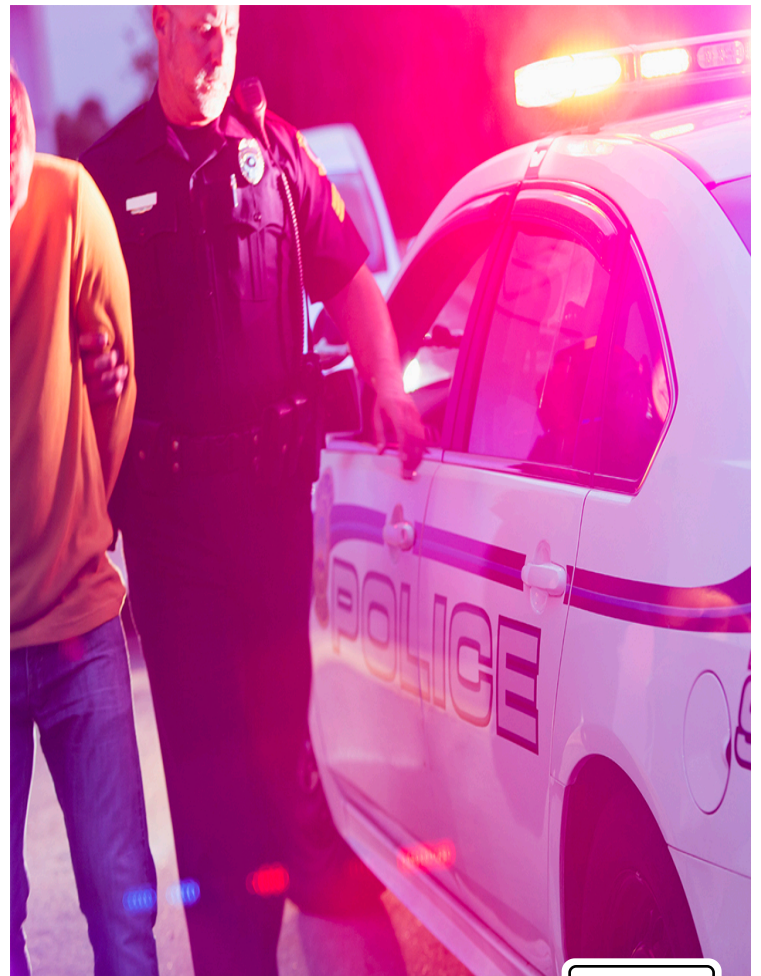
## Why It Matters

People with disabilities are too often overlooked or forgotten when they get involved in the criminal justice system, as victims or as suspects/defendants.

They often face fear, prejudice, and a lack of understanding or resources when they do become entangled in the system. Justice professionals may lack experience and accurate knowledge about IDD, leading to misidentification of disability, a heightened risk of false confessions, inaccurate assumptions about competency and credibility, inappropriate placement in institutions, and the unknowing waivers of rights.

Individuals with disabilities are valuable, and they have the right to access justice. They should not experience discrimination or mistreatment in any justice system. They should also have meaningful access to criminal justice services and programs. People with disabilities should be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of criminal justice involvement or any other status or identity.

Read The Arc's [position statement on criminal justice](#).



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## What The Arc Is Doing

The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability® (NCCJD®) serves as a bridge between the criminal justice and disability communities. NCCJD pursues and promotes safety, fairness, and justice for people with IDD, especially those with hidden disabilities and marginalized identities, as victims, witnesses, suspects, defendants, and incarcerated persons. To ensure access to justice for those with IDD, NCCJD is working to:

1. Advocate with and for people with IDD, especially those with other marginalized identities, facing criminal justice involvement, by providing [information and referral](#)

[services](#)

2. Empower The Arc's chapter network to become the go-to resources on criminal justice and disability in their communities, through [Pathways to Justice](#)® and peer learning
3. Increase training, knowledge, and awareness of criminal justice professionals about people with IDD, including their legal obligations toward the disability community, through Pathways to Justice and other learning platforms
4. Ensure people with disabilities are leading the charge on all policy and related efforts to reform the criminal justice system
5. Support effective research and evaluation to promote innovative best practices, including the collection and publication of [key resources](#) for the field

Pathways to Justice: Start the Con...



## Pathways to Justice

People with IDD, especially those with other marginalized identities, often do not have access to justice, because criminal justice professionals often lack the knowledge and experience to interact effectively with these individuals. Without access to justice, individuals with disabilities will continue to be overrepresented in every part of the criminal justice system. To address this critical issue, NCCJD created Pathways to Justice, a comprehensive, community-based program that improves access to justice by creating and building relationships between the criminal justice and disability communities.

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## How You Can Help

The Arc continues to seek innovative, creative, and cost-effective ways to support individuals with IDD who become justice-involved. Join us in creating pathways to justice for all!



**BRING PATHWAYS TO YOUR COMMUNITY**



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The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.



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