



## SLIDE 11.1 TITLE SLIDE

### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS (SITE VISITS)

**Time:** 210 minutes (3.5 hours)

**Slides:** 2 (additional slides may be created if needed)

**Purpose:** The Personal Connections module involves site visits. Site visits should be designed to help training participants build positive relationships with people with behavioral health conditions and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Site visits can support classroom learning by giving officers an opportunity to engage with people with lived experience and learn about service and advocacy organizations in their community.

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Describe at least two things they learned from their interaction with those living with behavioral health conditions, IDD, and co-occurring conditions;
2. Describe two changes to their approach when responding to someone with mental health conditions, IDD, and co-occurring conditions; and
3. Identify at least two ways that interactions with people with mental health conditions may differ from interactions with those with IDD.



## Organizing the Site Visits:

It is recommended to work with community partners in the coordination of site visits for the training. Local organizations and groups, such as mental health and substance use providers, the local NAMI, Mental Health America (MHA), the local chapter of The Arc, the County Board of Developmental Disabilities, and self-advocacy/peer groups, are often in the best position to organize these site visits. Your training coordinator and lead training facilitator should work together to identify potential partners and site visit locations. Consider the services available in your community and whether their locations are appropriate for a site visit. **Remember that the purpose of the site visits is to provide opportunities for participants to interact with people with lived experiences with behavioral health conditions and IDD.**

Possible sites include:

- Peer groups and services
- Self-advocacy groups and services
- Veterans Affairs (VA) centers
- Day service programs
- Clubhouses
- A local hospital triage center
- Mental health services center
- Crisis stabilization facilities
- Substance use services
- Residential treatment for substance use or mental health conditions
- Chapters of The Arc (Some chapters provide direct service, while others do not. Check this before using it as a site visit location.)
- Group homes
- Centers for independent living
- Community disability organizations (These may or may not provide direct services. Check this before using it as a site visit location.)

Some of these locations, such as VA centers, community disability organizations, county boards of developmental disabilities, centers for independent living, clubhouses, or day service programs, are ideal for providing participants the opportunity to engage with people with lived experience. In contrast, sites such as crisis stabilization centers, addiction services, developmental disability councils, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and hospital triage centers are more appropriate for participants to learn about the facility and engage with professional staff.



Three and a half hours have been allocated for site visits. If several sites are near each other, this timeframe should allow for visits to multiple sites (up to three). To complete multiple site visits in the timeframe, it is recommended that you break your class up into groups. For example, if you have arranged the sites to visit and you have a class of 20 participants, place 10 participants in each group. Group #1 would go to site #1, group #2 would go to site #2 and spend about an hour at each site. Upon completion of the hour, the two groups would switch with group #1 going to site #2 and group #2 going to site #1. The same process can be used if you have three site visits planned, make your groups smaller, and rotate the groups accordingly.

### **Site Visit Participants:**

Work with the professional staff or a volunteer in charge at the site agency or organization to identify people with lived experience at the site who can be part of the participants' visit. Make sure the staff knows that the main objective of the site visit is to give participants the opportunity to engage with people who are living with a behavioral health condition or IDD (depending on the site) and to give people living at the site the opportunity to interact with law enforcement in a safe, non-threatening environment. Participation must be voluntary, and there should be nearly an equal number of people with lived experience to the participants at the visit. Sites should also plan to have a few staff members present to help facilitate and support the visit.

### **Site Visit Preparation:**

In preparation for the site visit, site staff or the designated volunteer should host one or more meetings with the people with lived experience who have volunteered to participate in the visit. During these meetings, they should discuss what these volunteers would like to get from the visit. They should also make sure the volunteers understand the purpose and goals of the visit from the training participants' perspective: which is, to help officers learn more about you, your condition or disability, and your needs during a time of distress or crisis. The volunteers can develop their own questions and/or information they would like to share with the officers about themselves and the services and support they receive. Staff can provide additional support if needed to brainstorm questions. Let the volunteers know they do not have to answer any questions or engage in any discussion with the officers that they are not comfortable with.

### **Site Visit Structure:**

In partnership with the volunteers, site staff should create an agenda to provide some structure and guidance for the visit. Include a brief introduction in the beginning for a volunteer or staff person to welcome the officers and briefly describe the services that are provided at the agency



or organization. The remaining time should be left for discussion amongst the group. For 30 minutes, engage participants in a large group discussion. If the group is large, break the group up into two or three smaller groups. A staff person at the site should start the group discussion by explaining why the officers are there, and what Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT) is. Plan to have a few questions on hand to spark conversation but allow for some flexibility. Only use the suggested questions if there is a need to get conversations going. Some questions you might use could include:

- *Topics about Mental Health Conditions:*
  - How would you describe your experience with mental health conditions (positive and negative)?
  - What are some barriers to accessing treatment, services, and support?
  - If you take medication, do you experience side effects?
  - What are some positive things law enforcement officers have done when you have had an encounter with them related to your mental health condition?
- *Topics about Addiction:*
  - How would you describe your experience with addiction?
  - What has made getting sober or being abstinent difficult?
  - What treatment, services, and support do you find helpful in your recovery?
  - What are some positive things law enforcement officers have done when you have had an encounter with them related to your addiction?
- *Topics about IDD:*
  - How would you describe your disability?
  - What are some things that you want people to know about you/your disability?
  - Are there times when your disability might affect the way you communicate with other people? How would you describe your experience with IDD?
  - What are some positive things law enforcement officers have done when you have had an encounter with them related to your disability?
- *Topics about Treatment and Services:*
  - What types of treatments, programs, and services are helpful to you?
  - How do the services support you in living with IDD, a mental health condition, addiction, or co-occurring conditions?
  - Are there other types of services you access outside of the ones you mentioned? What other services would you like to have access to?
- *Topics about Law Enforcement Response:*
  - Have you had any encounters with law enforcement?
  - Have you ever been arrested or spent time in jail?



- Have you ever been transported by a law enforcement officer to a location for services?
- What have officers done that was helpful to you during the crisis encounter?
- What would you like officers to know that would help you during a crisis or a time of distress?

Sometimes, the preplanned discussion will get “off track” (away from topics originally planned). Unless it changes to something that is inappropriate or makes the conversation unsafe for the participants, don’t discourage this change in topic. Discussing sports, job interests, computers, music, or movies is a real reflection of the human side of our likes and interests, and often creates an understanding that the officers are not so different from people with mental health conditions, addiction, or IDD they are responding to.

If the large group discussion is going well, continue to allow the conversation to flow in the large group format. Otherwise, allow the remaining time for more casual interactions between participants. Another option is to bring the large group back together for reflection at the end of the site visit.

### **Site Visit Logistics:**

It is important to plan site visits logically—according to the number of participants in the class, the number of facilities or sites willing to host your visit, and the hours available. Ideally, every participant would visit at least one mental health-related program (crisis services and a clubhouse or day program, or outpatient program), one IDD organization, program, or group home in the community, and if time permits, one addiction services program or residential facility. Officers should spend at least 45 minutes to 1 hour at each site. If you only have a few sites where officers will be able to engage with the people who access services, make sure you make those the sites participants visit. It is important to allow officers to learn from the lived experience of these individuals.

It is important for the facilitator to prepare the officers for the site visits and make sure they know the following logistics:

- The location of the site and whether there is parking available.
- Appropriate attire for the visit: Officers should not wear their uniforms or carry their service weapons. Officers can wear a shirt with their department’s logo and should make plans to secure their service weapons before arriving at the site.
- The point of contact at each site that the officers can call if they are delayed or are having trouble getting to the site.



- The sensitive nature of the site visits: While officers may be uncomfortable and nervous, the volunteers they are interacting with may be nervous and uncomfortable, as well. Remind officers that someone could be emotionally triggered by the visit, so officers should be prepared to reach out to the lead or volunteer for assistance.
- General guidance on conversations with volunteers: Officers should be encouraged to ask their own questions but, if they need help with conversation starters, they can ask questions about everyday life (e.g., sports, hobbies, family, etc.) or questions about the volunteers' experience living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, or IDD. Officers can also ask volunteers what has been helpful to them when they have an encounter with law enforcement and what would they like officers to know in terms of helping them. However, officers should be reminded that not everyone with lived experience will be comfortable sharing this information.

Each site should have a space where officers, staff, and volunteers can meet and engage in discussion. The space should have plenty of chairs and tables for everyone to participate. You may also want to work with sites to provide light refreshments so that the site visit feels more like a social gathering.

#### **At the Site:**

Have a volunteer or staff person greet the officers when they arrive at the site. Allow for approximately 10–15 minutes to give a tour of the site, to go over what services are provided there, and for the officers to ask questions about services or the program they are visiting. Once the tour is over, have the officers and volunteers interact with each other, as outlined above.

#### **Back in the Classroom:**

If participants are divided to visit different sites, it may be useful to allow time to have all participants debrief, either before the lunch break or after the break in the afternoon.



**Facilitate a conversation using some of the following questions as prompts:**

- What is something that surprised you during the site visits?
- What is something you learned about people with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, or IDD?
- What is something you learned about mental health, substance use, or IDD services available in your community?



- How will this experience impact your work?
- What would you share about your experience with the officers who were in the other groups?



## SLIDE 11.2 MODULE WRAP-UP



**Trainer Note:** Allow participants to ask any questions before moving on to the next module.

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