



SLIDE 8.1 TITLE SLIDE

FAMILY AND PEER PERSPECTIVES PANEL

Time: 110 minutes

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

Purpose: The Family and Peer Perspectives Panel is intended to be an opportunity for participants to hear personal stories from people living with behavioral health conditions and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Stories often include details about barriers to accessing services, positive and negative interactions with law enforcement, and feelings about the stigma and bias related to behavioral health conditions and disabilities. The goal is to have participants learn directly from those with lived experience. Family members or others who support people with behavioral health conditions and disabilities can be a helpful addition to the panel, but they should not replace the perspectives of those with behavioral health conditions and disabilities.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Discuss the experience of people with behavioral health conditions or IDD from their perspectives;
2. Identify at least one barrier people face to accessing behavioral health and disability services;
3. Identify at least two areas of concern when individuals with behavioral health conditions and disabilities interact with law enforcement in the community; and
4. Identify at least three strategies for more effectively communicating and interacting with those with behavioral health conditions and IDD.



Trainer Note: Make sure enough time is allotted for the introduction of the panel activity and all the panel speakers. The specific length of the panel will be determined by the number of panelists identified to share their stories during this segment of the training. Be sure to allow enough time for the question-and-answer session following the panel. Use the notes below to guide your organization of the panel and preparation of panelists.

Resource: NAMI's ["The CIT Coordinators' Guide to the Peer and Family Perspective Panel"](#)

Organizing the Panel:

The Family and Peer Perspectives Panel is best organized by local mental health and disability advocacy organizations. These organizations may include your local NAMI, local Mental Health America (MHA), chapters of The Arc (<https://thearc.org/find-a-chapter/>), developmental disabilities councils, county boards, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and/or peer and self-advocacy groups in your community. These groups may offer a variety of resources and support for the organization of the panel. For example, NAMI offers various presenter programs that prepare peers and family members to share their mental health stories with various audiences, including the "Sharing Your Story with Law Enforcement" program or "In Our Own Voice." Contact your local NAMI (<https://www.nami.org/Find-your-local-nami>) to see if they currently offer "Sharing Your Story with Law Enforcement." Service providers may also be helpful in identifying panelists.

Panelists: Your panel should be made up of both peers (i.e., people living with behavioral health conditions, including serious mental illness and substance use disorders) and self-advocates (i.e., people who identify as living with IDD who choose to advocate for themselves and others with disabilities), as well as family members. Panel diversity is key—individuals with behavioral health conditions and disabilities are members of various communities, and panelists should reflect the diversity of the surrounding community by race, ethnicity, age, preferred language, religion, gender identity, and other important characteristics.

Do not include mental health or other service professionals on your panel. The purpose of the panel is to focus on the experiences of people living with behavioral health conditions and IDD as well the impact on families. Focusing on the professional perspective can take away from the impact of the panel.

Size of the Panel: Depending on how many presenters you can identify, your panel should have



at least two, but no more than five, panelists. If there are too many people on the panel, there will be less of an opportunity for each person to share their personal experience.

If you are only able to get two panelists, you will want these individuals to have lived experience with behavioral health conditions and with IDD.

It is recommended to designate a panel moderator. The moderator will be responsible for keeping the panel moving forward so that each panelist has time to share their story and for facilitating the question-and-answer session at the end of the panel.

Logistics for the Day of the Panel: Make sure that you are in contact with your panelists and/or your panel coordinator (if a local organization is tasked with preparing this module) several weeks before the day of the panel. Provide them with information about the training location including the address, whether there is parking onsite, and if they will have to go through security to get into the building.

Have the panelists arrive at least 20 minutes before the panel (more if they will have to go through security), so there is time to answer any last-minute questions. Provide them with a point of contact in case they are running late or are no longer able to participate in the panel.

It is recommended that panelists wait outside of the training room and enter during the break following the previous module. This can help prevent panelists from being exposed to potentially triggering content such as videos, scenarios, and tabletop exercises that may be upsetting without prior content warnings.

Preparing Panelists:

It is recommended to hold at least two meetings with your panelists and with the panel coordinator (if a local organization is tasked with preparing this module) before the training. It's important to understand how comfortable each panelist is with public speaking, what experiences they will be speaking about, and if they have had interactions with law enforcement. It is particularly helpful when panel members have positive views of law enforcement. For those with negative experiences, consider the potential trauma of reliving that experience in a room full of officers.

The number of panelists will determine how much time each person should prepare to share their personal experiences. If you have two panelists, you will want to ask them to come prepared to share for 20–25 minutes each. If you have a larger panel (4–5 people), they should each be prepared to share their personal stories for 10–15 minutes.



Panelists should be told that you are not expecting them to “instruct” officers about how to handle behavioral health- or developmental disability-related crises. Provide the bullet points below to guide panelists in the preparation of their stories.

If the panelist is a self-advocate or a person with a behavioral health condition or developmental disability, their story should describe:

- Anything they would like to share about their condition or disability and how it has impacted their lives;
- Difficulties in accessing support, help, or services;
- Positive or negative interactions with law enforcement;
- Strategies or communication techniques that they have found helpful;
- The impact of being incarcerated or hospitalized; and
- For those with mental health conditions, any experiences or difficulties they have had with taking medication.

If the panelist is a family member, their story should describe:

- Their own experience and perspective as a family member of someone with a behavioral health condition and/or disability. Emphasize that family members should not speak for their loved ones;
- How their family member’s behavioral health condition or disability has impacted their lives, both positively and negatively; and
- Tips for officers on how to communicate more effectively with those with behavioral health conditions and/or IDD.

Hearing stories from people with lived experience can help officers identify tactics that may or may not work when interacting with people with behavioral health conditions and/or IDD. ***When discussing prior interactions with law enforcement, encourage the panelists to:***

- Focus on what the interaction was like for them,
- Consider the role their condition or disability played in the interaction,
- Identify tactics used by officers that were less helpful and possibly escalated the situation, and/or
- Consider what an officer did that helped de-escalate the crisis or kept the situation from escalating to a crisis, leading to a positive resolution.

Ask your panelists what support they may need to successfully participate before and during the training. Keep in mind that local partners may be able to provide additional support. Every time you meet with your panelists, answer any questions or concerns they may have. You can



also use these preparation meetings to allow the panelists to get to know each other and briefly share some of their stories. Make sure to ask them how you can best support them and if there is anything they might need on the day of the panel.



Facilitating a Successful Debrief Session: An important part of the Peer and Family Perspectives Panel is the question-and-answer session at the end. This is an opportunity for officers to continue to learn from the panelists. This exchange can have a significant impact on their understanding of the experiences of people living with behavioral health conditions and/or IDD.

Sometimes, the panel will transition smoothly into the question-and-answer session—the officers will feel engaged and have lots of questions. Other times, they might be more reserved.

The panel moderator should come prepared with debriefing questions that can also be used as “conversation starters.” Below are a few questions you can use to start a conversation:

- What are some key takeaways from the panel today?
- What did you hear today that might change the way you engage or approach someone with a behavioral health condition or developmental disability?
- What resources did you learn about that may be helpful to you?
- Were there parts of the panelists’ stories that helped to reinforce the training that you have been receiving? Which parts?
- What were some things you learned that can help you be more successful in your encounters?



Module Wrap-Up

Questions?

This curriculum was created through support by Grant No. 2020-NT-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

SLIDE 8.2 MODULE WRAP-UP



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

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