

## Presenters

**David Whalen** has worked in the disability field for most of his career. He spent 17 years at Opportunities Unlimited of Niagara serving individuals with developmental disabilities, and founded Disability Awareness Training (DAT) in September 2004. In the fall of 2010 he wrote a collaborative grant with Niagara University and received a NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council grant to develop Disability Awareness Training for First Responders. In January 2014 he joined the advisory council of the National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability. He served on the International Association of Chiefs of Police focus group, "Mental Health of Arrestees and How It Impacts our Officers", and attended the Senate Hearing on April 29, 2014 "Law Enforcement Responses to Disabled Americans: Promising Approaches for Protecting Public Safety" while also providing written testimony. He is the President of the Board of the Williamsville Special Education Parent Teacher Student Association (SEPTSA), and is a past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Parent Network of WNY, a non-profit agency serving parents of children with disabilities. He resides in Williamsville, NY with his wife Sandy and their twins David and Rachel.

**Dr. Laura Stough**'s professional career has been spent addressing disparities in the provision of educational and social services for people with disabilities. Her current research investigates the psychological and social effects of disaster on individuals with disabilities. Dr. Stough serves as the Assistant Director of the Center on Disability and Development and Interim Chair of the Division of Learning Sciences for the Department of Educational Psychology. Dr. Stough is also Director of Project REDD: Research and Evaluation on Disability and Disaster, which has investigated the impact of disasters. Dr. Stough's research has been supported by grants through the Centers for Disease Control, the Association for University Centers on Disability, the Department of Education, and the National Disability Rights Network. Dr. Stough provides education and outreach through her participation in the State of Texas Disability Task Force on Emergency Management as well as presentations and training on disaster preparedness and disability throughout Texas.

**Lieutenant Jeffrey Bradford** has worked for the Pittsfield Police Department since 1993. His work history includes experience in narcotics investigation, the department's field training program, and in internal affairs and use of force investigations. He has also served on the Berkshire County's Special Response Team (SRT). Lt. Bradford is currently assigned to the Patrol Division as a shift commander. He has a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Boston University.

**Richard Collins** obtained his Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology at Antioch New England Graduate School in 1996. Mr. Collins began his work with the Brien Center in 1997 providing comprehensive risk assessments, intervention, and stabilization service for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use disordered issues. Over the course of the past 3 ½ years he has become a co-responder with the Pittsfield Police Department, riding along and or responding independently with police presence to Psychiatric and Substance Use related calls. Overdose, threats of harm to self/others, and generalized well being checks are a few of the intricate calls responded to during his work day. Mr. Collins has worked diligently training additional clinicians as co-responders who are now covering the Northern and Southern portions of Berkshire County.

**Michelle Kerr** began working as a Master Trainer in the 911 discipline for the First Responder Disability Awareness program in March of 2016. She began working as a 911 call taker in 1977, became a shift supervisor in 1980 and spent the last six years as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Director. She retired from public safety in December 2015 after more than 38 years with Erie County (NY) Central Police Services. Ms. Kerr lectures at the Erie County Law Enforcement Academy on 911 Communications for each new class of police cadets, and volunteers as president of Elma Community Emergency Response Team, Inc.

**Maria Walker** had been a Firefighter/Paramedic with the Albany Department of Fire & Emergency Services for almost 30 years. She joined the ranks in October 1989. She was the first woman in the history of the Department to reach the rank of Captain in 2011 as well as the first woman to reach the rank of Deputy Chief in 2016. Retiring in August 2019, she took a job teaching EMT classes at Hudson Valley Community College. She has memberships to various advisory boards and committees. Ms. Walker was an active Charter Member of the Board of Directors with Fire Service Women of NYS & has recently been re-elected to the Board.

**Renee Nicholls** was a Police Officer with Rochester Police Department for 20 years. In addition to regular assignment duties, she was the RPD Liaison to the Deaf Community, a Field Training Officer, PT and DT instructor as well as a general topics instructor for the recruit academy and in-service. While a police officer with the Rochester Police Department, she also became an instructor through Niagara University, teaching Disability Awareness to Law Enforcement throughout the county. She retired from the Rochester Police Department in Nov. 2015 and immediately started work at the Monroe County District Attorney's Office as an Investigator. In 2019, Ms. Nicholls was promoted to Senior Investigator.

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# Enhancing Response, Protecting Dignity:

## *Disability Tips and Tools For First Responders*



PRESENTED BY

**THE WESTERN REGION HOMELAND  
SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

*Wednesday, December 11, 2019*

UMASS AMHERST CAMPUS CENTER



# PROGRAM

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	REGISTRATION
8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	OPENING REMARKS / WELCOME Lt. Col. Thomas Grady, <i>Berkshire County Sheriff's Office; Chair, WRHSAC</i> Chief Tyrone Parnham, <i>Assistant Vice Chancellor/Chief of Police, UMass Amherst</i>
8:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	KEYNOTE ADDRESS David Whalen, <i>Project Director, First Responders Disability Awareness Training, Niagara University</i>
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.	BREAK
10:15 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.	TIPS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS TOOL Raine Brown, <i>WRHSAC Homeland Security Program Manager</i> Dr. Laura Stough, <i>Director, Project REDD (Research and Evaluation on Disability and Disaster; Assistant Director, Center on Disability and Development; Associate Professor of Educational Psychology; Texas A&amp;M University</i>
10:50 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	BREAK
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	EMBEDDED MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR PROGRAM Lt. Jeffrey Bradford, <i>Pittsfield Police Department</i> Richard Collins, <i>LMHC, The Brien Center of Berkshire County</i>
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	LUNCH
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	FIRST RESPONDER DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING <i>Breakout room assignments will be announced</i>

DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING BREAKOUTS:  
*(room assignments will be announced)*

LAW ENFORCEMENT The ability to respond to individuals with disabilities has posed varying challenges to officers across the country and high-profile cases have exposed the need for more involved awareness and education. As the population increases and more individuals are active in the community, the need to ensure accurate and appropriate response is critical. The Recognition-Identification-Approach-Interaction-Response Model will be introduced and exemplified in select disabilities.
FIREFIGHTERS/EMS While recognizing each discipline has unique roles in emergency response, the combined program will address outreach, fire safety planning, and disabilities defined specific to fire, rescue, and medical needs. Communication barriers, means of egress, and other challenges will be discussed in line with the Recognition-Identification-Approach-Interaction-Response Model.
9-1-1 TELECOMMUNICATORS/DISPATCHERS Being the first to respond, the telecommunicator can initiate a positive response if educated in disability awareness and provided the proper tools and resources. The presentation will introduce the three components within this content; understanding and response to speech disabilities, awareness of how disabilities present, and interface with first responders to address a positive outcome. The Americans with Disabilities Act, general effective communication and relay services will also be presented.
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTORS Including people with disabilities and access and functional needs in emergency preparedness. Considerations include ADA compliance, breakdown of lawsuits to NYC, LA, and Oakland, accessibility/universal design, FEMA identified model, national advocacy organizations, and inclusive planning and active participation.

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council  
offers its thanks to :

The Brien Center  
Niagara University & First Responder Disability Awareness Training  
Pittsfield Police Department  
Texas A+M University & Project REDD  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

To learn more about WRHSAC and its initiatives visit [www.wrhsac.org](http://www.wrhsac.org)