



Montgomery County
Down Syndrome Interest Group
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NEWS
For Immediate Release

Local Down Syndrome Group to Train Conshohocken Police Department

(Lansdale, Pa., April 27, 2016) — The Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group (MCDSIG) will conduct a training program for the Conshohocken Police Department on how to interact with individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. The program will take place at the Conshohocken Police Department on April 29, 2016 at 1:00 PM.

Encounters with police and other first responders can be a frightening experience for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and a challenging one for public safety officials. This training will provide the Conshohocken Police Force with tips and strategies for successful, safer interactions. The training will educate the police department on recognizing when an individual has a developmental disability, like Down syndrome, and how to effectively approach, communicate with, and solicit information from the individual. The training will also discuss the tragic death of Ethan Saylor, a man with Down syndrome, who died when moonlighting off-duty Frederick County, Md. sheriff's deputies attempted to remove him from a movie theater, and how police can learn from that tragedy.

"Individuals with Down syndrome are now more included in the community and they may react differently in unfamiliar situations", said Michele Hoenig of the Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group. "Helping first responders prepare for situations involving individuals with Down syndrome or other intellectual disabilities can result in safer, more productive interactions that preserve the dignity of the individual."

"It's really important that our force be fully trained on how to work with people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. We're getting training on autism awareness as well," said Michael Orlor, Conshohocken Chief of Police. "Part of our mission is to promote dignity and respect of our residents and keep them safe."

Interactions between public safety officials and individuals with intellectual disabilities can be frustrating and challenging for both parties. The Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group will prepare the Conshohocken Police Department to make such interactions easier, safer, and more productive.