

Metropolitan Police Academy



8.4 Diverse Populations

October 22nd, 2023

Introduction

The District of Columbia is a diverse place to live, work, eat, shop, and visit. Individuals of different languages, cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds call DC home. As an officer, it is your job to protect all community members, whether they live, work, or visit DC. This means you must be culturally aware of whom you are serving and how to provide the best customer service. You want to make every interaction with community members as positive and respectful as possible. Whether you are giving a ticket, arresting someone, or providing directions, you must always be cognizant of whom you interact with.

The following information is an ever-changing list of the rich and diverse cultures you will experience while working in the District. Please continue to do your own research and self-learning to constantly be in tune with the needs and wants of the community members you have taken an oath to serve.

8.4.1 Define key terms related to special populations

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group is regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

A developmental disorder of variable severity characterized by difficulty in social interaction, communication, and restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior.

Cognitive Disorders

Cognitive disorders (CDs), also known as neurocognitive disorders (NCDs), are a category of mental health disorders that primarily affect cognitive abilities, including learning, memory, perception, and problem-solving.

Mental Health Consumer

A mental health consumer (or mental health patient) is a person who is obtaining treatment or support for a mental disorder, which is also known as a psychiatric disability or psychiatric or mental illness.

Substance Use Disorder

Drug addiction, also called substance use disorder, is a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medication. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine also are considered drugs.

Physical Disability

A physical or mental impairment that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990, amended in 2008)

A civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. The ADA defines an individual with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Homelessness

An individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

"Deaf" means a severe or complete absence of auditory sensitivity, where the primary effective receptive communication mode is visual, tactile, or both.

"Hard of hearing" means permanent hearing loss, which is severe enough to necessitate the use of amplification or other devices to perceive and comprehend oral communications.

LGBTQIA

The acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual and/or Ally.

Lesbian – A lesbian is a woman who is physically and romantically attracted to other women.

Gay – Characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to people of one's same sex. The term is often used to refer to men.

Bisexual – Bisexuality is an attraction to more than one gender. Those who identify as bisexual feel a sexual and/or romantic attraction to people of a different gender as well as their own.

Transgender – Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

Queer – An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual (i.e., romantically/physically attracted to the opposite sex). Historically, it has been used as a negative description for LGBT people, but recently, the LGBT community has reclaimed this word and uses it as a positive self-identifier.

Questioning – Someone who is questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Intersex – An umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations that do not fit into conventional definitions of male or female. Intersex variations may include but are not limited to variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics.

Asexual (Ace/s) – A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or desires. There are diverse ways of being asexual.

Ally – The action of working to end oppression through support of, and as an advocate with and for, a group other than one's own.

Diversity – The range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Immigrant – A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

8.4.2 Understand what resources to use when providing services to special populations

Intersectionality

The term **intersectionality** was coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how class, gender, and other characteristics overlap with one another and how each person experiences life differently than another. For example, a woman experiences life differently than a man. A Hispanic woman experiences life differently than a Caucasian, Asian, or African American woman. A gay Hispanic woman experiences life differently than a straight Hispanic woman or even a gay Caucasian or African American woman. Every overlap creates more different life experiences for someone because of their gender, cultural background and expectations, job, class, and education. The result can place an individual in a place of privilege or disadvantage during their life experiences.

(Discussion: Why is it important to know what this means?

How can you apply this to serving the community of DC?

What about in your personal life?)

Interacting with Special Needs Populations

Police are usually the first to respond to 911 calls, many of which are not crime-related but are service calls for assistance. Service calls can include responding to the following community members living with one of the following conditions.

- **Cognitive Disorders**

Cognitive Disorders are one of many categories in the field of mental health disorders. Cognitive disorders affect someone's cognitive abilities to function, which include problem-solving, learning, communicating, perception, and memory. Some disorders surface over time, such as Alzheimer's, dementia, Huntington's disease, Lewy body dementia, Parkinson's disease, and traumatic brain injury. You may know someone who has or is experiencing one of these disorders, and you know how difficult it can be for the diagnosed person to suddenly be confused, not remember to put the milk away, or find themselves wandering down the street and not knowing where they are. For a person living with such a disorder, being confronted by or interacting with an officer who is not familiar with their situation can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and potentially undesired outcomes.

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "1 in 44 8-year-old children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder." Autism is a neurological disorder affecting the normal function of the brain, which impacts the development of social interaction and communication skills. Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that it affects each individual differently. Every interaction with someone with autism will be different, and you should treat each situation as such.

When you encounter a person with autism, remain as calm as possible. Loud noises, lights, sudden movements, other stimulus, and stressful situations tend to exacerbate the person's reaction. People with autism tend to be attracted to water, do not like to be touched, and often repeat themselves or what was said to them.

If you notice that a community member is not responding, seems to be very disoriented, and/or is distraught, you must approach carefully and tactfully to ensure the situation does not escalate. If you are not trained in crisis intervention, then you need to call for a Crisis Intervention Officer (CIO) who is trained to recognize and interact with individuals suffering from various illnesses and disorders and who can assist you in helping the community member. Once training is available for you to become certified, you may complete the week-long course to become a Crisis Intervention Officer.

Your interaction with a person with autism should be a very slow and patient process. Use simple commands/sentences and ensure you give the person plenty of time to respond. Keep the situation very calm. If agitation or frustration is occurring, remove whatever stimulus is causing the distress, if possible. The distress might be you, and you need to recognize that. If this is the case, get another officer to take over and de-escalate the situation. Also, avoid touching the person; touch only if doing so is absolutely necessary. Be aware that someone with autism might be scared of your uniform or very interested in and want to touch your shiny badge.

As mentioned before, autism is a spectrum disorder, so everyone is different. One person may need constant eye contact to affirm your facial expressions, whereas another person may not look you in the eye.

Mental Health Consumers

In any given year, an estimated 18.1% (43.6 million) of US adults ages eighteen (18) years or older suffer from mental illness and 4.2% (9.8 million) suffer from a seriously debilitating mental illness.² A mental health consumer is a person who an MPD member reasonably believes is suffering from a mental illness and that mental illness is impairing their judgment, behavior, perception of reality, and/or ability to cope with the ordinary demands of life. The behavior witnessed by the member might be mood swings, aggression, avoidance, non-communicativeness, lack of eye contact, fear, confusion, disorientation, and/or the need to leave the situation. When you witness these types of behaviors, it is best to de-escalate the situation as quickly as possible. The person needs help calming down and processing what is happening. Creating chaos and scaring the person more by yelling and not giving them time to process will only make this worse for you and the other person.

While you are de-escalating the situation, you need to call for a Crisis Intervention Officer (CIO). If none is available, you must proceed with the situation as MPD policies dictate. If a CIO arrives, they will assume responsibility of the assignment and complete all applicable reports. If a CIO does not arrive, the first responding officer will handle the scene and apply all appropriate MPD policies.

You may also contact the DC Department of Behavioral Health (**DBH**) **mobile crisis services at (888) 793-4357 (1-888-7-WE HELP)**.

When interacting with a person who is experiencing a mental health crisis, whether it be from Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, or any other reason, you must be calm, alert, and understanding of the situation. Your main goal is to create a safe environment for you, the person experiencing an episode, and other community members.

Substance Use Disorder

Substance use disorder is considered a mental health disorder because it affects a person's brain and behavior, which leads them to lose control of their use of the chosen substance. The substance can include, but is not limited to, legal or illegal drugs, alcohol, and prescribed medications

(www.nimh.nih.gov). Various substances can be abused including, alcohol, opioids, marijuana, synthetic drugs, benzodiazepines, hypnotics, methamphetamine, cocaine, Ecstasy (a.k.a Molly or MDMA), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), phencyclidine (PCP), and inhalants.

About 21 million people in the United States suffer from substance use disorder. The most commonly misused substance is alcohol. Only 10 percent of reported and diagnosed substance use disorders receive treatment, and about 20 percent of the population that has been diagnosed with a substance use disorder also suffers from a mental health disorder such as depression or anxiety (addictioncenter.com).

The **Pre-Arrest Diversion (PAD)** program aims to connect non-violent, low-level offenders with addiction and mental health treatment and social services instead of arresting and processing them into the court system. Members must be trained in PAD procedures and will exercise discretion in diverting individuals who can benefit from PAD services.

How you respond to someone with a substance use disorder can provide a positive experience for the community member and their family, a negative experience, or the worst possible outcome—injury or death.

Physical Disability

According to the CDC, “61 million Americans have a disability that impacts their daily life. Mobility is the most common disability, and it affects 1 in 7 adults and only increases with age. Two (2) in five (5) adults aged sixty-five (65) and older are affected by some sort of mobile disability.”³ Any interaction you have with a person with a disability should be handled carefully to prevent injuring the person.

There are six (6) disability types recognized:

- **Mobility** – serious difficulty moving
- **Cognition** – serious difficulty with brain function/processing
- **Hearing** – serious difficulty hearing
- **Vision** – serious difficulty seeing
- **Dependent living** – difficulty doing errands or daily tasks on one’s own
- **Self-Care** – difficulty taking care of oneself, such as bathing, dressing, eating, etc.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and amended in 2008. It is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability. The ADA’s requirements apply to many situations encountered in everyday life, such as working, participating in daily activities, receiving medical attention, or receiving service from the police. You are mandated by federal law to provide service for someone who is disabled.

During your career, you may interact with a person who has a physical disability, and you may need to provide assistance. In a non-criminal matter, provide assistance to the best of your ability, or, if you cannot you need to find a resource that can provide the assistance.

In the unfortunate event that a person who is physically disabled is involved in criminal activity, you will need to treat the situation accordingly. You must follow very specific guidelines found in **GO-PCA-502.01 (Transportation and Searches of Prisoners)**.

If a prisoner requires a Wheelchair Accessible Van (WAV), please follow guidelines from **EO 20-049 - Transporting Prisoners**. This policy discusses how to arrest, transport, and process someone who is physically disabled and relies on a support apparatus, such as a walker, wheelchair, cane, etc.

Homelessness

Being homeless or experiencing homelessness is not a crime. As of January 2020, DC had a total homeless population of about 7,000 people. This includes families, veterans, unaccompanied young adults and persons experiencing chronic homelessness (www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/dc/). You will have interactions with a person experiencing homelessness at some point during your career, and you should follow **GO-308.14 (Interactions with Homeless Persons)** when you do.

The first policy you need to understand is that anyone has the right to peacefully be in a public space in DC as long as their activities are lawful. This means that a person experiencing homelessness has the right to be in a public space as long as they are not breaking the law.

When interacting with a person experiencing homelessness, you shall treat them, their situation, and their personal belongings with respect and dignity. You may contact social services and provide assistance, but it is up to the person whether or not to accept. If the personal belongings pose a health hazard, you need to notify your watch commander. In the event that a person experiencing homelessness needs to be arrested, you shall follow MPD policy and training.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Someone may be born deaf or hard of hearing, or this might be something that occurs over the course of a lifetime. You may personally experience this in your lifetime, with friends or family, or with community members as an officer. You should read **GO-OPS-304.14 (Interacting with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons)** to ensure that you follow MPD policy and effectively communicate with a deaf or hard of hearing person.

MPD has several tools you can use to make sure you are able to communicate, such as an in-person interpreter, the Language Line App, the Video Remote Interpreter (VRI), and a teletypewriter. In addition, MPD has a **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit (DHHU)** that specifically focuses on this particular community. That does not mean that an officer cannot respond and provide assistance themselves; it simply means that a DHH community member can request a Special Liaison officer after initial contact has been made.

LGBTQIA

Washington, DC, has the highest population of individuals identifying as part of the LGBTQIA population in the US, which is about 10 percent of the District's 689,545 residents.⁴ The **Special Liaison Branch** is a dedicated MPD unit that serves, protects, and responds to calls from and involving the LGBTQIA community. That does not mean that an officer cannot respond and provide assistance; it simply means that an LGBTQIA community member can request a Special Liaison officer after the initial contact has been made.

There are several General Orders, Executive Orders, and Special Orders that you should read to educate yourself so you are familiar with MPD policy and procedures about your response to a hate/bias-related crime, gender expression, and identity and interactions with transgender individuals. The complete list can be found in the reference section of this lesson.

When interacting with individuals, you may notice that they gave you a different name than appears on their ID. You may politely clarify which name they would like to be called. You shall take note of this in any reports you make to ensure that both names are identified and which is the correct name to use. Every

state has a different rule about changing names and the sex assigned at birth, so take note of everything and refer to the person based on their preference.

If an arrest and transport if needed, you must transport the person based on their identified sex and follow all MPD policies and procedures for transporting a prisoner as found in **GO-PCA-501.02 (Handling Interactions with Transgender Individuals)** and **GO-PCA501.02 (Transportation and Searches of Prisoners)**.

Your interaction with a community member must always be positive and respectful. If you are not successful with your interactions, it can tear down the relationships that the department has established and break the trust other officers have worked so hard to create.

Diversity Groups – Asian, Hispanic, Muslim, and Immigrants

According to the 2019 census for Washington, D.C. the population breakdown is as follows:

- Black – 44.2%
- White Non-Hispanic – 37.3%
- Hispanic-Latino – 11.3%
- Asian – 4%
- Two or more – 2.6%
- Other – .3%
- Native American – .2%
- Pacific Islander – .1

As you can see, Washington, DC, is a very diverse place. Different races, genders, ages, cultures, and backgrounds are what make the District a great place to live! When you start to explore, work, and live in D.C. you will notice the variety of neighborhoods and the layout of the city. There are different ways you will interact with different community members, and different tools and services are provided to you to ensure a positive interaction.

Language Access Line

The Language Access Act of 2004 requires MPD to provide oral language services to all persons with limited or no English proficiency who seek to access or participate in the services, programs, or activities offered by MPD. During your training, you will complete an online learning module and learn more about the department's **Language Access Line**. When encountering a person who is Limited-English Proficient (LEP) or Non-English Proficient (NEP), you need to take necessary steps to establish effective communication as required by MPD policy. In order to identify a person's language, you will use your **Language Lines Identification Card** and have them point to and identify the language they choose to use. Community members may request a copy of the report in their chosen language and must visit the district station to make this request. MPD members at the station will follow guidance from EO-23-010 (Report Translation Requests) to ensure community members receive the requested report in a timely manner.

Religious Breakdown of Washington, DC

- Christian - 65%
 - Evangelical Protestant – 14%
 - Mainline Protestant – 15%
 - Historically Black Protestant – 12%
 - Catholic – 19%

- Mormon – 1%
- Orthodox – 2%
- Jehovah’s Witness – <1%

- Non-Christian – 10%
 - Jewish – 4%
 - Muslim – 2%
 - Buddhist – 2%
 - Hindu – 1%

- Unaffiliated – 25%

When interacting with community members, you must consider their religious clothing, head coverings, and any other item pertaining to their religion/faith. In general, and in most cases unless it is a safety or security issue, community members are permitted to wear their articles of faith. In the event that a search is necessary, you must proceed with respect, provide accommodations when needed, and allow the community member to re-wear their articles of faith as soon it is safe and there are no security issues. Most importantly, you must be aware of how to conduct searches. It is common practice that an officer be of the same sex when conducting a search on a community member, when possible. This is particularly true for community members wearing religious clothing or head coverings—they must be searched by a member of the same sex in a private setting as practical given the circumstances and take all steps to assure that persons of the opposite sex are not present during the search.

Immigration in DC

MPD does not enforce or assist with civil immigration laws. The only time an MPD member will assist is when there is a verified criminal warrant or criminal judicial order in effect.

When interacting with community members, you are not allowed to and should not inquire about their immigration status unless you are investigating crimes involving the criminal smuggling and harboring of immigrants or another crime in which immigration status is an element.

Special Liaison Branch Contact Info

Central Location: 801 Shepherd Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20011

Number: (202) 727-5427

- **African Affairs Liaison Unit (AALU):** (202) 727-9099
- **Asian Liaison Unit (ALU):** (202) 724-8009
- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Liaison Unit (DHHU):** (202) 553-7874
- **Interfaith Liaison Unit (IFLU):** (202) 727-9099
- **Latino Liaison Unit (LLU):** (202) 673-4445
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Liaison Unit (LGBTLU):** (202) 727-5427

Summary

You serve all our community members regardless of color, race, socioeconomic status, age, sex, gender identity, citizenship, place of residence, etc. You have taken an oath to “serve the community, to safeguard lives and property, ... I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, political beliefs, ... to influence my decisions.” This means you will serve and protect all those who visit, live, and work in Washington, DC.

You will receive more in-depth training on these topics at various points during your time at the Academy, and professional development training from outside experts.

References

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GO 502.04	Pre-Arrest Diversion Program	04/24/2019
CIR 21-10	Cold Weather Reminder (updated annually)	October – May
EO 20-049	Transporting Prisoners with a Wheelchair Accessible Van (WAV)	09/25/2020
SO 00-19	Compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act	08/16/2000
GO 308.14	Interactions with Homeless Persons	10/31/2011
GO 304.14	Interactions with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons	11/27/2013
EO 20-045	Limitations on Consent Searches	08/15/2020
SO 11-15	Special Liaison Division	07/13/2011
GO 304.15	Unbiased Policing	03/19/2007
GO 501.02	Interactions with Transgender Individuals	01/05/2015
GO 502.01	Transportation and Searches of Prisoners	03/28/2014
EO 17-012	Gender Identity and Expression Anti-Discrimination Policy	04/28/2017
EO 17-032	Response to Bias – Related Crimes and Incidents	11/17/2017
SO 11-22	Bias – Related Hate Crimes	12/01/2011
SO 12-03	Religious Head Covers and Other Articles of Faith	01/27/2012
GO 304.18	Language Access Program	10/14/2020
EO 21-007	Immigration Enforcement Reminder and the Sanctuary Values Amendment Act of 2020	03/25/2021
EO 23-010	Report Translation Requests	09/08/2023

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