

# THE ARC OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Serving and advocating for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities

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## **The Office for Victims of Crime Releases Second Training Package Produced by The Arc of Riverside County in Conjunction with National Crimes Victims' Rights' Week**

**Riverside, CA** – The Arc of Riverside County's new training video and educational package for first responders to abuse victims with disabilities has been released by the United States Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and is available for free through that agency. The video, called "Victims with Disabilities: Collaborative, Multidisciplinary First Response" was created and produced by a collection of experts in the fields of law enforcement, clinical psychology and services for people with intellectual disabilities under the able leadership of The Arc's Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D. The free video comes with additional educational materials and can be ordered online at <http://www.ojp.gov/ovc/new/pubs.html>.

According to the OVC, the group's latest film "demonstrates effective techniques for first responders who have been called to the scene of a crime in which the victim has a disability. This educational multimedia package not only provides guidelines for interacting with adult and adolescent victims of crime who have communication and/or intellectual disabilities, but also helps law enforcement personnel gain a deeper understanding of the lives, personal attributes, and abilities of individuals with disabilities." OVC is releasing this DVD to coincide with their observance of National Crime Victims' Rights' Awareness Week that begins the week of April 26.

Along with the outstanding coordination of this project by clinical psychologist Dr. Nora Baladerian, other key contributors included filmmaker Greg Byers and executive director of The Arc of Riverside County, Jim Stream. The trio has worked closely together on a number of projects over the past few years that have focused on bettering the lives of individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. For her body of work, which spans more than 35 years and includes these training films produced with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Dr. Baladerian was honored last year in a ceremony

(Formerly Arc Riverside)

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presided over by U.S. Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey for her extraordinary efforts in direct service to crime victims with disabilities. This is the top award given nationally to victims of crime professionals by the federal government.

Stream has led The Arc of Riverside County for more than two decades, over which time he has been involved in a number of task forces and think tanks that address issues related to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Byers is a Los Angeles filmmaker and is currently producing a series for the Discovery Channel DIY.

Dr. Baladerian's private clinical practice in West Los Angeles specializes in people with disabilities. She serves on the California Think Tank on Abuse of People with Disabilities and is its founder. She also serves on several other state and national forums addressing the abuse of people with disabilities. She is a preeminent national leader in the field of abuse victims with disabilities.

The Arc of Riverside County's earlier production released two years ago focused on how to effectively interview victims with various disabilities. This video, also released by the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime in 2007, is called "Victims of Crime: The Forensic Interview – Techniques for Interviewing Victims with Communication and Cognitive Disabilities." This production, which has been received with great enthusiasm, is also available free and can be ordered online at <http://www.ojp.gov/ovc/new/pubs.html>.

Dr. Baladerian views this latest project with satisfaction, "Working on this video with The Arc team has been extremely rewarding," she said. "People with disabilities are abused and victimized at a much higher rate than those without disabilities, and law enforcement personnel need to understand how best to handle these cases and individuals. Often prosecutors, victims, professionals and law enforcement underestimate the contributions that victims and witnesses with disabilities can make in their own defense and to the criminal justice process."

Confirming Baladerian's claim about abuse rates, what little research exists shows that people with disabilities are abused at rates 3.5 to 10 times more often than those without disabilities regardless of age. Those with intellectual disabilities are particularly affected by this injustice. When they enter the criminal justice system as victims, the perpetrators of crime against them are less often charged. When charges are made, they are less often convicted. If convicted, these studies also show they are given lighter sentences.

This DVD helps these professionals develop knowledge, skills and positive attitudes that enhance the chances of a successful prosecution. Those who can benefit from this DVD include law enforcement officers, child and adult protection workers, forensic interviewers, prosecutors and judges, among others.

The Arc of Riverside County has become a national leader in addressing crime victims with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and their families. The agency's advocacy work includes the CAN/DO Project, which seeks to improve system response to victims of abuse with disabilities and make the community a safer place by implementing proven strategies and training first response professionals.

The Arc of Riverside County is a nonprofit organization that provides services, supports and advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families throughout Western Riverside County. The organization is headquartered located at 8138 Mar Vista Court in Riverside.