

Court Judges Current Perception of Individuals with Disabilities

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Objective:

To discover court judges' current perception of individuals with disabilities.

How does this effect the outcomes for people with disabilities?

Method:

Literature review using The University of Iowa Libraries InfoHawk+ and Google Scholar to search databases such as EBSCO, SAGE, AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities), DSQ (Disability Studies Quarterly), Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, and more. Keywords searched included, but not limited to, judges, courts, disabilities, mental, cognitive, peer reviewed, study, perception, law. Review conducted over the past two semesters.

Results/Conclusion:

There are limited studies conducted on perception of people with disabilities held by court judges. This is especially concerning because people with disabilities are twice as likely to be a victim of crime. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, they are four times more likely to have mental illness. In other words, the likelihood of a person with disabilities facing the court is higher than the neurotypical person. In some courts, it is presumed as long as a person has communication skills, he/she has the skills to serve as a witness and/or testify. This decision is made with little consideration to limitations in communication skills, including ability to correctly understand what is being asked. It is up to the judge to discern if someone needs a facilitator or other communication assistance. This potential deficit of communication skills puts a person with disabilities at greater risk while defending themselves or accurately testifying. This could negatively impact the outcome of a case. Additional research conducted on the attitudes of court judges and the impact of those preconceived ideas on people with disabilities could improve outcomes for this population.