



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) 516 West Loockerman St., Dover, DE 19904  
302-739-4553 (voice) 302-739-6126 (fax) <http://www.gacec.delaware.gov>

June 25, 2025

Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST)  
Attn: Amishia Bucknor, POST Administrator  
1128 S. Bradford Street  
Dover, DE 19901

**Re: Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) Reg. [29 DE Reg. 861 (June 1, 2025)]**

Dear Ms. Bucknor:

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security's Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST), formerly the Council on Police Training (COPT) proposal to amend the 801 Regulations of the Delaware Council on Police Training. The proposed amendments seek to modify requirements regarding the number of qualification shoots for less lethal weapons and the number of rounds to be used for shotgun qualifications. The amendments also replace references to COPT with POST. Council notes that while the proposed changes do not necessarily impact Delawareans with disabilities negatively, this amendment gives us the opportunity to share our observations on the need for increased disability related trainings.

Although Delawareans with disabilities make up only 20% of the population, it is estimated that people with disabilities make up between 30 to 50% of individuals subject to police use of force. Also, people with psychiatric disabilities are 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement during a police encounter. Currently, section 15.17 mandates an eight-hour training on Interactions with Persons with Disabilities. According to this regulation, the purpose of this course is to identify behavioral factors, which the officer may encounter, to discuss the influence of group behavior or individual behavior, and to emphasize the importance of understanding unusual behaviors in order to handle that behavior most effectively. It also includes a review of the 24-hour commitment procedures.

Council commends DSHS for adopting this critical training to enable police officers to identify the signs that indicate a person may have a behavioral health disability, or be in a mental health crisis, but it is concerning that this training focuses entirely on the **behavior** of persons with disabilities. Not every disability affects behavior. Furthermore, not every disability is visible. This is especially true of hearing and visual disabilities, cognitive disabilities and many medical disabilities. There are many known instances of interactions between law enforcement and persons with disabilities that were escalated simply because of a lack of communication. The

training provided to law enforcement has limited to no information on how to recognize and communicate with individuals with disabilities who are not exhibiting behavioral issues.

Council notes that there is no training on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law (DEAL). These are fundamental laws that protect people with disabilities from discrimination when attempting to access public accommodations, employment, education and housing. These laws also require state and local governments to provide effective communication to people with disabilities. These statutes require individuals with disabilities to be offered reasonable accommodations or modifications to promote equitable treatment. The ADA applies to nearly every action a police officer may take, including receiving citizen complaints; interrogating witnesses; arresting, booking, and holding suspects; operating telephone (9-1-1) emergency centers; providing emergency medical services; and enforcing laws.

Even when a police officer can identify a person with a disability, this regulation does not address training to prevent discrimination based on that disability. For instance, a police officer might be able to identify that a person is deaf from their speech, but that police officer should also know how to utilize interpretation services to communicate with that person effectively. Or that an individual with an intellectual disability may need additional time to process and understand the instructions given by an officer. Council therefore recommends DSHS add training that informs police officers on when and how to offer effective communications, as well as reasonable accommodations and modifications when interacting with the public.

Additional training is necessary to prevent future incidents of police misconduct against people with disabilities. Police misconduct creates distrust in law enforcement and makes it much harder for police to do their jobs effectively. In addition to adding requirements around the ADA and 504-compliance training, Council would also recommend additional recurring refresher training focused on de-escalation techniques and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Delaware's police forces have an important job to do but part of keeping all Delawareans safe is ensuring that they do so in a way that does not place people with disabilities in jeopardy of harm or discrimination.

Thank you for your consideration of our observations. We would like the opportunity to discuss the need for additional training with you. Please contact Pam Weir or me at the GACEC office if you have any questions on our requests.

Sincerely,

*Ann C Fisher*

Ann C. Fisher  
Chairperson

ACF: kpc

CC: The Honorable Joshua Bushweller, DSHS Secretary  
Kimberly Chandler, DSHS Deputy Secretary