

Press Statement
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Brain Injury Association of America Demands Better Police Training

Vienna, Va. – Susan Connors, president and chief executive officer of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), today called on municipalities to teach police officers and other first responders to recognize the effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI), respond appropriately, avoid unnecessary escalation, and prevent death.

“With more than 5 million Americans living with TBI, civil servants must learn to identify the injury and understand its aftermath so that survivors are not victimized twice. TBI is not a mental health condition or a predictor of criminal behavior. Those living with brain injury are not deranged, and they do not have mental retardation. They are survivors of serious injury that has changed the way they move, act, think, or feel.

For many people, TBI causes fatigue, headaches, difficulty with balance or motor skills, slurred speech, or seizures. TBI can lead to memory loss, concentration or attention problems, slowed learning, or impaired judgment. After injury, people may experience depression, anxiety, impulsivity, or thoughts of suicide.

Too often law enforcement officials incorrectly attribute the effects of brain injury to drug or alcohol use. They misinterpret the failure to follow commands as willful resistance rather than difficulty understanding what is being said.

Rather than aggressively asserting authority, first responders should adopt a less threatening demeanor, employ good listening skills, speak in a calm manner, seek to resolve problems, de-escalate situations, use available resources, and at all times be respectful of the people they’ve sworn to serve and protect.

BIAA calls on policymakers to immediately establish comprehensive TBI training for first responders.

About the Brain Injury Association of America:

The Brain Injury Association of America is the country’s oldest and largest nationwide brain injury advocacy organization. Our mission is to advance awareness, research, treatment, and education and to improve the quality of life for *all* people affected by brain injury. We are dedicated to increasing access to quality health care and raising awareness and understanding of brain injury. Further resources and information related to brain injury are available at www.biausa.org or through the National Brain Injury Information Center (NBIIC) at 1-800-444-6443.