



Family Resource, Information & Education Network
for Down Syndrome • Frederick County, Maryland



Press Release

March 27, 2013

Reference: Department of Justice, F.R.I.E.N.D.S. official statement

12:00pm (EST)

On March 26th, representatives from the Family Resource Information and Education Network for Down Syndrome (F.R.I.E.N.D.S.), the National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC), the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) and the Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI), and members from the Saylor family met with the Community Relations Service (CRS) of the US Department of Justice. The discussion centered around what a future training program targeted to law enforcement and first responders might look like and how to make it available.

With the Ethan Saylor case high on their watch list, CRS initially reached out to F.R.I.E.N.D.S. to offer their services which resulted in yesterday's meeting. After 2 hours of very intensive, open and honest dialog, all parties agreed that training in dealing with individuals with disabilities, particularly Down syndrome, should be a very important part of the training curriculum for all law enforcement and first responders. This meeting initiated a process to develop such a training. Some issues that the group identified and agreed on were:

- A formal web-based training program would be preferable although there should also be some component that would allow for in person interaction with individuals with Down syndrome.
- There will be challenges in implementing a nationwide program to reach 18,000 plus law enforcement agencies across the country, not including first responders and contracted security firms.
- Funding issues could create hurdles in the development and roll-out of such a program.
- And we will be competing for training time with many other worthy topics.

All parties agreed that this would be a collaborative effort, requiring inputs from F.R.I.E.N.D.S., NDSC, NDSS, KKI and members from the Saylor family to create such a program. The ultimate goal, which was supported all parties, is to create a program that can be easily accessed and flexible enough so that all law enforcement and first responders can participate in this future training.

In the meantime, F.R.I.E.N.D.S., NDSC and NDSS would like to encourage all law enforcement and first responders to reach out in their respective communities and become engaged with organizations that support individuals with Down syndrome.

F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is a voice for individuals with Down syndrome. We will continue to educate, advocate, and raise awareness about Down syndrome within our local communities and across the nation. For further information please visit our website at www.friendsoffredco.org or find us on Facebook at [F.R.I.E.N.D.S.](https://www.facebook.com/F.R.I.E.N.D.S.)