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In Wake of National Incident, the RICDHH Urges RI Law Enforcement Authorities to Review Current Practices.

(Providence, R.I.) – It is disheartening to learn that Daniel Harris, an unarmed 29-year old Deaf father, was killed by the police earlier last week in North Carolina. Apparently, this is due to the result of poor communication and lack of training to recognize an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. Daniel's story has been on the national TV news and unfortunately, he is not the first unarmed Deaf adult killed by a police officer. At the time of this press release, we are not going to speculate as to what contributed to Daniel Harris' death until the final report of investigation is released and available to the public by the North Carolina police.

It is important to know that approximately **twenty percent (20%) of the RI population** has various degrees of hearing loss. This incident does affect the population because these tragedies can be easily avoidable.

Efforts have been made on behalf of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RICDHH) to contact the RI Department of Public Safety, Municipal Police Stations, and State Police to offer training sessions specifically tailored to how police can respond to situations where deaf and hard of hearing individuals are involved.

The RICDHH hopes to work with these entities to ensure that the police force is prepared and well-trained in handling any situations involving deaf and hard of hearing individuals. In fact, we need to do more on a regular basis to create or update the following areas below:

1. Policies and Procedures
2. Complaint process
3. Miranda Rights - How?
4. Communication Access Services as required by the American with Disabilities Act
5. Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals' rights.
6. Communication and Arrest techniques especially for deaf and hard of hearing community
7. Accredited Training Curriculum on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues.
8. A member of the Municipal Police Academy.

In addition, the RI Police Chief's Association and the RICDHH have approved a Communication Visor Card that can be used to show police officers when a deaf or hard of hearing individual is asked to pull over while driving. Please see the enclosed copy of our communication visor that is going to be distributed next month in September. If you want to have a copy, please contact the RICDHH office at cdhh.main@cdhh.ri.gov or 401-256-5511. Or you want to go to our website, www.cdhh.ri.gov.

About:

The Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RI CDHH) is an advocating, coordinating, and service providing entity committed to promoting an environment in which the deaf and hard of hearing in Rhode Island are afforded equal opportunity in all aspects of their lives. The RI CDHH develops policy; initiates and lobbies for favorable legislation; fosters cooperation and awareness among state agencies and community organizations; and educates and advises consumers, state agencies, and employers about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rights to equal access.

Contact Info:

RI Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
One Capitol Hill, Ground Level
Providence, RI 02908-5850
(401) 256-5511 (V/V) and (401) 222-5736 (FAX)
cdhh.main@cdhh.ri.gov
www.cdhh.ri.gov

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