Katherine Yoder
Bexley

Katherine Yoder is Executive Director of Adult Advocacy Centers, which serves adults with disabilities who are alleged victims of, or witnesses to, a crime.

Led by Yoder, the organization has undertaken several initiatives to ensure equal access to services when there are allegations of a criminal component. Statistically individuals with disabilities are at a higher rate of victimization, yet there are few victim service programs specifically created for adult crime victims with disabilities.

The Adult Advocacy Centers have created the first specialized forensic protocols for adults with disabilities. The protocols are a collaboration with national, state, and local partners, and are being lauded as “best practices” by their ability to consider an individual’s disability, mental health disorder, assistive technology, language capacity, and cultural background. The curriculum is designed to help forensic interviewers gather information from alleged victims in the most reliable and legally defensible manner.

A recently released forensic interview protocol is designed to interview individuals with disabilities who do not speak. This is the first specialized training that establishes baselines for individuals with non-traditional communication methods. The training has sparked international interest.

To help combat the COVID-19 pandemic, Adult Advocacy Centers supported the recruitment of volunteers to create masks with a clear panel for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. These masks were sent throughout Ohio to individuals, facilities, schools, and hospitals. They also created an Amazon Wishlist for individuals living in the State of Ohio’s psychiatric hospitals and developmental centers and created a resource guide for Ohioans with disabilities to support health and safety during the pandemic.

Yoder’s nominator called the services provided by the Adult Advocacy Centers vital to ensuring justice and protection for these individuals and added its expertise has been sought by other states and counties.

Yoder’s nominator said her accomplishments as leader of Adult Advocacy Centers align with Dr. King’s principles of expanded rights, promoting justice, and deterring violence by seeking to educate and inform individuals with disabilities to support inclusion and nonviolent interactions.

“Ms. Yoder’s tireless efforts to support, inform, and provide opportunities for justice for individuals with disabilities is unquestionable.”