



TITLE: Pathways to Justice: How Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Impact Court Proceedings

SESSION DATE: October 7, 2021

SESSION TIME: 3:30 – 4:45 PM

SESSION DESCRIPTION:

Individuals with disabilities are far more likely to have interactions with every aspect of state and local criminal justice systems and have many unique challenges when interacting with these systems, including in the courtroom. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local law enforcement, legal professionals, and other criminal justice professionals to ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to access the services provided by these governmental entities, as well as ensure effective communication. Whether legal professionals are interacting with crime victims, witnesses, arrestees, detainees, or just members of the public, they must take steps to ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in the legal process. This presentation will help judges and other legal professionals provide effective communication and equal access in their courtrooms to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The session will also provide an overview of The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability's innovative Pathways to Justice® program.

SPEAKER:



Ariel Simms (she/they), Senior Program Manager & Attorney, Access, Equity, & Inclusion, The Arc of the United States

Ariel Simms (she/her or they/them) is a queer and multiply disabled social justice advocate and educator that works to promote equity, justice, and meaningful inclusion of marginalized communities. They currently lead The Arc of the United States' equity work as the Senior Program Manager & Attorney for Access, Equity, & Inclusion, ensuring that The Arc's advocacy is intersectional and responsive to the needs of multiply marginalized communities. The Arc is one of the nation's largest and oldest civil rights organizations for people with developmental disabilities. At The Arc, Ariel also advocates for people with developmental disabilities with multiply marginalized identities who become entangled in the criminal legal system as victims, suspects, defendants, witnesses, and incarcerated persons. In addition to these roles, Ariel is a Scholar in Residence with the Philosophy & Religion Department of American University, where Ariel teaches Human Rights & Disability and Disability Law & Ethics. Ariel also serves on the Board of Directors for the Disability Rights Bar Association. Ariel completed their Juris Doctor degree at Harvard Law School.

INTRODUCER & FACILITATOR:



Hon. Karen Romano, Senior Judge, Fifth Judicial District of Iowa

Senior Judge Karen A. Romano, Johnston, IA, was appointed as an Iowa District Court Judge in December 2001. She retired from full-time service April 1, 2019. She received her bachelor's degree from Creighton University in 1983 and her law degree from University of Iowa College of Law in 1986 with distinction. Judge Romano worked for a private law firm before serving as an Assistant Polk County Attorney from 1987 to 1996. She served as a District Associate Judge from April 1996 until her appointment as a District Court Judge. Judge Romano is a member of the Polk County, Iowa State, and American Bar Associations. She is also a member of Polk County Women Attorneys, Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys, Iowa Judges Association, and National Association of Women Judges. Judge Romano served as the chair of the Polk County Courthouse Security Committee (22 years) and a member of Iowa Supreme Court's Court Interpreter Policies Advisory Committee (20 years) until her retirement in 2019. As part of the Iowa Senior Judge program, Judge Romano works part-time covering for judges on vacation or other leave. Judge Romano speaks frequently to legal, civic, and school groups on various areas of the law.

PRODUCER:

Hon. Karen Romano, Senior Judge, Fifth Judicial District of Iowa