

**Autism
And Emergency
Services
Training Booklet**



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General

September 9, 2005

Project Overview

Dear Readers and Subscribers,

Do you have a child with autism? Do you know someone who has autism? If so, I strongly urge you to read this, because it might save the child's life. My name is Corey Olson and I am going to be a junior at Lenape High School in Medford, New Jersey. This summer I am doing a community service project to promote the awareness of autism in our society. This is because I have an autistic brother. I am concentrating my project on the emergency services of Burlington County. This doesn't mean that if you have an autistic child and are not living in Burlington County you should stop reading!

I have put together a booklet to inform all emergency personnel, especially the firefighters, of Burlington County how to treat and communicate with a child with autism. This is because a child with autism may react different in a fire than a normal child.

This is where you, the reader, must participate. If you have a child with autism or know someone that has autism or an autistic child, please do as follows. Contact your local 911-dispatch station on its non-emergency number. Inform them that you have an autistic child living in your house and ask them to "flag" the house on your dispatch information. Then, indicate to the dispatcher that you would like to have this information passed off to the county dispatch station. So then, in case of an emergency, well at least in Burlington County, the firefighters will be properly informed on how to deal with an autistic child.

I am encouraging any other reader that does not live in Burlington County to do a project like this. This could eventually save a child's life. But please **SPREAD THE WORD OF THIS PROJECT TO EVERYONE THAT IT APPLIES TO!** The bigger the feedback of the project the better!

Thank you for reading and helping with this life-changing project. If anyone has any questions or comments please contact me at:

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What is Autism?

Autism is a biological disorder of the brain that impairs communication and social skills. It encompasses a broad spectrum of disorders that may range from mild to severe. People with autism have been described as being in their “own world”. Many high functioning people with autism describe two worlds; “their world” and the “outside world”. Many people with autism describe their experience as “thinking in pictures”, to quote Dr. Temple Grandin. There are serious sensory challenges that accompany autism, and some say are the source of autism, that must be understood to fully comprehend the disorder

Odd Behaviors

Self-stimulation, spinning, rocking, hand flapping, etc
Inappropriate laughter or tantrums for no apparent reason
Inappropriate attachment to objects
Obsessive compulsive behaviors i.e. lining up objects
Difficulty dealing with interruption of routine schedule and change
Possible self injurious behavior or aggressive behavior toward others

Sensory Challenges

- Hyper (over) or Hypo (under) sensitivity of the five senses (See the discussion below)
- Abnormal responses to the senses
- A lack of response to pain or an overreaction to something seemingly minor such as a door closing

Take these things for granted?

A typical individual has no problem walking down the street with a friend, having a conversation, hearing the sounds of the neighborhood in the background, smelling the blooming spring flowers, and maybe chewing gum, all at the same time.

For an autistic individual, who has a dysfunctional sensory system, this typical experience may be completely overwhelming. The individual may be completely oblivious to the sounds of the neighborhood such as an ambulance screaming by, or may be totally overpowered by the smell of blooming flowers. The sun shining through

the trees may be such an intense experience, it may inhibit the individual from being able to concentrate on walking down the sidewalk.

Thus this inability to mesh the senses appropriately may profoundly impact someone's ability to "act" and communicate in a "normal" fashion.

Source: AutismInfo.com

Who Is Affected by Autism?

Autism is one of the most common developmental disabilities. Individuals are of all races and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Current estimates suggest that approximately 400,000 individuals in the United States have autism. Autism is three to four times more likely to affect boys than girls. Autism occurs in individuals of all levels of intelligence. Approximately 75 percent are of low intelligence while 10 percent may demonstrate high intelligence in specific areas such as math.

Source: The National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov>

Autism Facts

- 1 in 250 births¹
- 1 to 1.5 million Americans²
- **Fastest-growing developmental disability**
 - 10 - 17 % annual growth
 - **Growth comparison during the 1990s³:**
 - o **U.S. population increase: 13%**
 - o **Disabilities increase: 16%**
 - o **Autism increase: 172%**
 - **\$90 billion annual cost⁴**
 - **90% of costs are in adult services⁴**
- **Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention⁴**
 - **In 10 years, the annual cost will be \$200-400 billion⁵**

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¹ Based on prevalence statistics from the National Institutes of Health (2001) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2001).

² Based on the autism prevalence rate of 2 to 6 per 1,000 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001) and 2000 U.S. Census figure of 280 million Americans.

³ U.S. Department of Education's "Twenty-First Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (1999).

⁴ Jarbrink K, Knapp M, 2001, London School of Economics study: "The economic impact on autism in Britain," 5 (1): 7-22.

⁵ ASA calculates that the annual cost of autism will increase to \$200-400 billion in 10 years. February 2003

Source: The Autism Society Of America
<http://www.autism-society.org>

What Are the Communication Problems of Autism?

The communication problems of autism vary, depending upon the intellectual and social development of the individual. Some may be unable to speak, whereas others may have rich vocabularies and are able to talk about topics of interest in great depth. Despite this variation, the majority of autistic individuals have little or no problem with pronunciation. Most have difficulty effectively using language. Many also have problems with word and sentence meaning, intonation, and rhythm.

Those who can speak often say things that have no content or information. For example, an autistic individual may repeatedly count from one to five. Others use echolalia, a repetition of something previously heard. One form, immediate echolalia, may occur when the individual repeats the question, "Do you want something to drink?" instead of replying with a "yes" or "no." In another form called delayed echolalia, an individual may say, "Do you want something to drink?" whenever he or she is asking for a drink.

Others may use stock phrases such as, "My name is Tom," to start a conversation, even when speaking with friends or family. Still others may repeat learned scripts such as those heard during television commercials. Some individuals with higher intelligence may be able to speak in depth about topics they are interested in such as dinosaurs or railroads but are unable to engage in an interactive conversation on those topics.

Most autistic individuals do not make eye contact and have poor attention duration. They are often unable to use gestures either as a primary means of communication, as in sign language, or to assist verbal communication, such as pointing to an object they want. Some autistic individuals speak in a high-pitched voice or use robot-like speech. They are often unresponsive to the speech of others and may not respond to their own names. As a result, some are mistakenly thought to have a hearing problem. The correct use of pronouns is also a problem for autistic individuals. For example, if asked, "Are you wearing a red shirt today?" the individual may respond with, "You are wearing a red shirt today," instead of "Yes, I am wearing a red shirt today."

For many, speech and language develop, to some degree, but not to a normal ability level. This development is usually uneven. For example, vocabulary development in areas of interest may be accelerated. Many have good memories for information just heard or seen. Some may be able to read words well before the age of five but may not be able to demonstrate understanding of what is read. Others have musical talents or advanced ability to count and perform mathematical calculations. Approximately 10 percent show "savant" skills or detailed abilities in specific areas such as calendar calculation, musical ability, or math.

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2005 <http://www.comeunity.com/disability/autism/speech.html>

National Awareness

First Ever U.S. Conference on Autism, Law Enforcement First Response & Criminal Justice Issues close to becoming a reality

I had a great deal of response out here about the proposed Autism, Law Enforcement and First Response conference. As a result, Dr. Lloyd Zucker, M.D. and A. Lynn Zucker, BSW, MHA put Dr. John Sullivan Director of Training & Professional Development, Boca Raton Police Services Department in touch with me regarding the conference. When John called, I explained to him the growing safety and risk needs autism families have, and how these needs affect 21st century law enforcement and first response communities. John in turn outlined the city of Boca Raton's new **INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT (ICLAD)**

Here's a bit of history about ICLAD:

In 2002, the City of Boca Raton, Florida purchased an 118,000 square foot facility for the purposes of developing a state-of-the-art training center for police, fire and general municipal services. The purchase was made possible with millions of dollars in seizure monies received in 2001, which resulted from a 1994 drug trafficking case. In addition to the main campus of approximately 9 acres that houses the main building, the Center's venue will also include approximately 21 acres devoted to highly specialized field training for police and fire officials.

The training facility, named The International Center for Leadership & Development, will provide a venue designed to equip future leaders with the skills that ensure the safety of communities, states, and nations. The City's initial investment of \$22 million dollars in the enterprise will create an environment that will be open to public safety professionals all over the world.

The multi-campus facility will be divided into two primary public safety-training venues: *law enforcement and fire/rescue training*, and a *general municipal services training area*.

The facility and its remote campuses will be dedicated to forming partnerships in order to facilitate growth, intellectual exchange, innovation, and a new way to create strategic alliances that will ultimately deliver new services, new methods, and higher levels of professionalism to the individual citizens who depend on the public sector.

You wouldn't be reading this if you didn't recognize the need for international attention to autism safety and risk issues. The proposed conference is the opportunity for us to get together, share ideas and information, and build the partnerships necessary to address our issues throughout the world.

Source: <http://www.aspires-relationships.com/index.htm>

ASPIRES is an on-line resource for spouses and family members of adults diagnosed or suspected to be on the autistic spectrum.

U. S. Department of Homeland Security hosts Autism Training Sessions at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)

As the result of attending the American Society for Law Enforcement Training (ASLET) conference in January, I met several instructors from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DOH). Discussions about autism issues led to an invitation to present two sessions for DOH trainers at FLETC in Glynco, Georgia in late February. Approximately 35 Department of Homeland Security instructors were in attendance including upper level administrators. The feedback was excellent and there were many fine questions during Q & A. FLETC now has my training materials, book *Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals* and the new *Autism & Law Enforcement* video for use at future training sessions.

FLETC trains over 40 federal agencies including the Secret Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Learn More about FLETC at:

Source: <http://www.aspires-relationships.com/index.htm>

ASPIRES is an on-line resource for spouses and family members of adults diagnosed or suspected to be on the autistic spectrum.

Contact with Individuals with Autism: Effective Resolutions

The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, April, 2001
by Dennis Debbaudt, Darla Rothman Ph.D.

In contemporary 21st century law enforcement, police managers have become increasingly proactive in their efforts to develop officer awareness of volatile circumstances and situations. They want their officers to learn to properly handle these situations not only for the safety of the officers and citizens involved, but also to avoid future potential litigation. Because today's work force is increasingly diverse, new laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensure that persons with developmental disabilities remain a part of that diversity.

Recent research concluded that the developmentally disabled are approximately seven times more likely to come in contact with law enforcement than others. [1] In light of this conclusion, law enforcement officers should receive training to prepare to evaluate information and physical cues or body language that may indicate the person they come in contact with has autism. Because autism affects every sector of society, officers first must understand the condition. Second, they must learn to apply certain techniques in the initial contact or interview, which may increase the probability of appropriate responses and lead to a successful outcome of the encounter.

Source: [Http://www.oregonparentsunited.org](http://www.oregonparentsunited.org)
OREGON PARENTS UNITED

***Autism requires that police 'think outside the box'
Seminars teach law enforcers how to diffuse tense situations.***

PUBLISHED: September 28, 2004
By Frank DeFrank
Macomb Daily (Michigan) Staff Writer

Like most 10-year-olds, Zack Murphy of Grosse Pointe Park is naturally inquisitive.

So when he sees a police officer doing service as a crossing guard in his community, his curiosity takes over.

"He'll go up and grab (the officer's) name tag," said Zack's mother, Joanne Joseph Murphy.

But one day, Zack reached for a different object: the officer's gun. The officer knew Zack -- and knew the boy has autism -- so he simply turned away so Zack couldn't reach the weapon.

Because the officer knew Zack meant no harm, a potential tragedy was averted. Zack's mother was grateful for what didn't happen.

That's why Murphy was one of some 150 persons in attendance Monday at a seminar designed to make police officers and others aware of how to handle situations when they come into contact with individuals such as Zack.

"It's important they understand how to approach (people with autism)," Murphy said.

The seminar, hosted by the Macomb Intermediate School District and the Law Enforcement Awareness Network, featured Dennis Debbaudt, a former Detroit News reporter and father of a 21-year-old son with autism.

Debbaudt has written several books and articles on the subject, and he brought his experience and expertise to Macomb County on Monday.

"When you hear autism is involved, you have to think outside the box a little bit," Debbaudt told his audience.

Absent proper training, Debbaudt said, police officers, emergency room personnel and other first responders to an incident can't know whether they're dealing with a truly hostile person or simply somebody with autism possibly having a seizure. If an officer guesses wrong, a problem that might have been easily defused can escalate into a potentially dangerous situation.

"We made accommodations for people who we know have disabilities," said Debbaudt. "But what do you do to make accommodations for disabilities you can't see?"

By conducting seminars, Debbaudt hopes to shed some light and alert authorities to some of the signs. Among some basic things he said police officers must understand about people with autism:

- Basic verbal and non-verbal communication is difficult
- They may understand the significance of a police uniform, badge or vehicle and may not understand what's expected of them
- Don't demonstrate fear of danger
- Likely have been victimized by bullying, teasing or taunting
- Have insensitivity or high tolerance to pain
- Appear as if they're deaf, or cover their ears and look away

In addition to the obvious benefits -- avoiding injury or harm to people with autism as well as the officers themselves -- Debbaudt said training can help police avoid finding themselves on the wrong end of a lawsuit.

"If you want to ignore that they have autism, it can be big trouble for you," he said.

Beth Alberti, director of center programs for the MISD, said Monday's seminar is part of the intermediate school district's efforts to bring to the community's attention issues and challenges physically and mentally challenged residents face.

"We have a real focus in the county to make people aware," she said.

Source: <http://www.oregonparentsunited.org>
OREGON PARENTS UNITED

Law Enforcement

Avoiding Unfortunate Situations

By Dennis Debbaudt

SECTION A: A Definition & A Law Enforcement Handout

A definition from the Autism Society of America:

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. The result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, autism and its associated behaviors have been estimated to occur in as many as 2-6 of every 1,000 individuals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). Autism is four times more prevalent in boys than girls and knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries. Family income, life-style, and educational levels do not affect the chance of autism's occurrence.

Autism interferes with the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Children and adults with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. The disorder makes it hard for them to communicate with others and relate to the outside world.

For more information about autism, the Autism Society of America's website is linked at this site. Or call them at: 1-800-3-AUTISM

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC... and Law Enforcement

A Handout originally developed in 1996 by Dennis Debbaudt for the Wayne County, Michigan Workshop Series For Trainers & Officers of Law Enforcement and updated for the publication of Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals by Dennis Debbaudt, 2002. See section C at this site.

Law enforcement responders may unexpectedly encounter or be asked to find a person with autism. Recognizing the behavior symptoms and knowing contact approaches can minimize situations of risk--risk or victimization of the person with autism, and risk to the interveners.

Recognizing Persons With Autism

- May be non-verbal (approximately 50% of this population is non-verbal); or may only repeat what is said to them; may communicate with sign language, picture cards or use gestures and pointing.
- May not respond to "Stop" command, may run or move away when approached; may cover ears and look away constantly.
- May have seizure disorder that is not apparent to responder.
- May toe walk, have pigeon-toed gait or running style.
- May appear as high on drugs, drunk or having a psychotic episode.
- May react to sudden changes in routine or sensory input- for example, lights, sirens, canine partners, odors- with escalation of repetitive behavior, such as,

pacing, hand flapping, twirling hands, hitting self, screaming (temper tantrums are an expected response to fear, confusion, or frustration as an effort to stop the stimuli).

- May attempt to present an autism information card; may wear medical alert jewelry or have information sewn or imprinted on clothes or on non-permanent tattoo.
- May not recognize danger or hurt; may possess weak help-seeking skills; may not be able to distinguish between minor and serious problems, may not know where/how to get help for problems; may not be able to give important information or be able to answer questions.
- May not recognize police vehicle, badge or uniform or understand what is expected of them if they do.
- May have difficulty recognizing and repairing breakdowns in communication such as asking for clarification or responding to a request for clarification; may not understand or accept officers' statements or answers.
- May appear argumentative, stubborn, or belligerent; may say 'No!' in response to all questions; may ask 'Why?' incessantly.
- May repeat exactly what the officer says.
- Will have difficulty interpreting body language, such as command presence or defensive posture, or facial expressions, such as, raised eyebrows, rolling eyes, smiles and frowns; and have difficulty recognizing jokes, teasing and verbal/non-verbal emotional responses.
- May be poor listeners: may not seem to care what you have to say; their lack of eye contact may give you the feeling they aren't listening or have something to hide.
- May have passive monotone voices with unusual pronunciations; often sound computer-like; will have difficulty using the correct volume for the situation.
- May have difficulty judging personal space; may stand too close or too far away; may not differentiate different body parts; may stare at you or present atypical fixed gaze.
- May perseverate on favorite topic when uncomfortable in the form of repeated questions-for example, What if? What's your name? -arguments, or apparent ramblings about favorite sports teams, train, bus or plane schedules, city names, etc.
- May have difficulty in seeing things from a different point of view; may have difficulty predicting other persons' reaction to them.
- Are usually very honest, sometimes too honest; have behaviors limiting credibility with others but do not or ably tell lies; often very blunt, not tactful.

Suggested Responses

During law enforcement patrol situations or encounters with persons with autism, the following responses should be considered:

- Talk in direct, short phrases, such as 'Stand up now. Go to the car.'
- Allow for delayed responses to questions or directions/commands.

- Avoid literal expressions and random comments, such as 'give my eye teeth to know', 'what's up your sleeve?', 'are you pulling my leg?', 'spread eagle', 'you think it's cool?'
- Talk calmly and/or repeat. Talking louder will not help understanding. Model calming body language, slow breathing, hands low.
- Person may not understand your defensive posture/body language; may continue to invade your space. Use low gestures for attention; avoid rapid pointing or waving; tell person you are not going to hurt them.
- Avoid behaviors and language that may appear threatening.
- Look and wait for response and/or eye contact; when comfortable, ask to 'look at me'; don't interpret limited eye contact as deceit or disrespect.
- If possible, avoid touching person, especially near shoulders or face; avoid standing too near or behind; avoid stopping repetitive behaviors unless self-injurious or risk of injury to yourself or others.
- Evaluate for injury; person may not ask for help or show any indications of pain, even though injury seems apparent.
- Examine for presence of medical alert jewelry or tags; person may have seizure disorder.
- Be aware of person's self-protective responses to even usual lights, sounds, touch, orders, and animals.
- If possible, turn off sirens, flashing lights and remove canine partners or other sensory stimulation from scene.
- If person's behavior escalates maintain a safe distance until any inappropriate behaviors lessen, but remain alert to the possibility of outbursts or impulsive acts.
- Consider use of sign language, or picture or phrase books.
- If you **take an individual into custody and even remotely suspect the person may have an autism spectrum disorder**, to reduce the risk of abuse, and/or injury, ask jail authorities to segregate the individual and not to place them in the general incarcerated population before a mental health professional has evaluated them.

Source : Dennis Debbaudt; <http://policeandautism.cjb.net/handout.html>

For Law Enforcement Officers

The rate of occurrence of autism has increased in the past ten years from 2 to 6 in ten thousand persons, to *2-6 in one thousand persons*. Persons with autism and other developmental disabilities are estimated to have up to *seven times more contacts with law enforcement agencies during their lifetimes* (*Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services News In Print, Winter, 1993*). You can expect to have an increasing number of interactions with them. Interacting with a child or adult who has an autism spectrum disorder will challenge your experience and training.

People with autism are as different from each other as we all are. Persons with autism will present the behaviors and characteristics described at this website and elsewhere in different combinations and degrees. Each person will have a different level of independence as well. Some persons with autism will have a caregiver with them at all times. Others will live semi or fully independent lives. You will hear terms such as low functioning autism, high functioning autism, and Asperger's syndrome to describe the condition. In most cases, the person will have difficulties, following verbal commands, reading your body language, and have deficits in social understanding

You will meet people with autism anywhere in the community, but be prepared to respond to children and adults who will wander away, very much like some Alzheimer's patients. Other common responses will be to persons who are in a neighborhood or location where they are unknown to others and display unusual behaviors, at retail settings, and at schools.

Law enforcement agencies can proactively train their sworn workforce, especially trainers, patrol supervisors, and school resource officers, to **recognize** the behavioral symptoms and characteristics of a child or adult who has autism, and learn basic **response** techniques.

A training program should be designed to allow officers to better protect and serve the public (and go home safe to your families), make the best use of your valuable time, and avoid mistakes that can lead to lawsuits and their negative trappings-media scrutiny, loss of confidence from the community, morale problems, and lifelong trauma for all involved. A good autism recognition and response workshop is designed to inform law enforcement professionals about the **risks associated with autism**, and will offer suggestions and options about how to address those risks.

Included in those risks are:

- Behaviors that draw attention
- A misinterpretation of those behaviors and characteristics as evidence of drug abuse or psychosis, defiance or belligerence, or criminal behavior or activity
- Person may lack fear of real dangers
- Person may not recognize uniform, badge or police vehicle or understand what is expected of them if they do
- Inherent condition may present as misleading indicators of guilt such as a lack of eye contact, an apparent aloof and indifferent manner, will change topic of conversation
- Responders not being aware of associated medical conditions such as seizure disorder, asthma, or low muscle tone
- Sensory sensitivity issues that may produce fight or flight reaction
- Basic verbal and nonverbal communication difficulties
- Restraint issues such as hypotonia, high tolerance for pain, mechanical asphyxia will require alternate restraint options and techniques
- Un-addressed or high tolerance for bullying, teasing, taunting and torment in school settings, especially for those with higher functioning autism or Asperger's syndrome who are in regular education classrooms
- Dilemmas in the interrogation room including possibility of false confession or misleading statements
- High likelihood of victimization; lack credibility as victim-witness, will require alternate victim-witness interview techniques
- Autism issues remain un-addressed in standard police officer training programs

In any case in which a person is found to have autism and is taken into custody, it is **critical** for the first responder to follow procedure and **document that he or she has learned that the person has autism.**

If in custody, **persons with autism may be at risk if housed with the general prison population. Ask jail authorities to segregate persons with autism from the general prison population** and seek counsel from the prosecuting attorney and an evaluation from a qualified health professional.

Source : <http://policeandautism.cjb.net/handout.html>

Police Training Sessions

Autism presentations to law enforcement agencies can help advocates establish a network of community contacts that can be useful in the future. Stay available as an autism resource to the law enforcement community. Your assistance will not be forgotten.

Understanding and education are the keys to avoiding unfortunate situations. Public understanding of the unique behaviors, associated vulnerabilities, and issues of concern to individuals and families affected by autism will continue to be our most effective weapon against misunderstandings and unfortunate incidents. We must also empower our loved ones with autism by teaching them to understand the legal system to their fullest capabilities, and to respond as appropriately as they are able when encountering law enforcement officials.

Source: <http://policeandautism.cjb.net/avoiding.html>

Autism and Police Officers

Basic Autism Information for Police Officers:

- Officers will come into contact with a person with a hidden disability in 10-20% of their calls.
- Individuals with autism are 7 times more likely to come in contact with police than their typical peers.
- Individuals with autism can't be identified by appearance. They look the same as anyone else. They are identified by their behavior.
- Individuals with autism tend to have an under developed upper trunk and are at higher risk of positional asphyxiation. When restraint is required officers need to be aware of this medical fact and act accordingly.
- Some individuals with autism do not have the normal range of sensations and don't feel the cold. They may not seek shelter if lost out in the cold. This should affect the way a search for a lost child with autism is conducted.
- An individual with autism may not respond to directives, and that can be because they don't understand what's being demanded of them, or even just because they're scared, and the fact that they're scared is the only thing they're aware of -- they may not be able to process the language and understand a directive when fearful.
- These individuals may have a weak understanding of cause and effect. They have little concept of consequences.
- 50% of individuals with autism are nonverbal throughout their life span another 20% may present as nonverbal when highly stressed.
- 40% of individuals with autism will develop epilepsy or some other seizure disorder by the end of adolescence. Know that when dealing with an individual with autism, they may experience seizures.
- There are certain times of the year that officers will be more likely to receive calls from our families. That would be early June, late August and the end of December. This is because of the special education school calendar. These times are traditional breaks in programming, even in residential schools. Many residential schools CLOSE for breaks. Children who have been placed in residential settings do come home and the family may or may not be able to handle the situation. Some will have been placed due to behaviors that put themselves or others at risk. Another time is during summer camp season. There are new people, a new setting, and less structure. These kids thrive on routine. Any change in routine can cause behaviors to erupt.
- Individuals with autism are strongly attracted to water. Drowning is a leading cause of death among children and adults with autism. Officers should check area pools, ponds and streams when looking for a lost child. Hoses, irrigation systems and fountains would also be very attractive to them.

Identifying an Individual with Autism

- Officers may encounter Autism by one of its many other names. The differences are not important for officers. What is important is that they will be familiar enough to know that these are one form or another of Autism:
 - Autism
 - ASD -Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Aspergers Syndrome and/or NVLD (Nonverbal Learning Disorder)
 - GDD- Global Developmental Delay
 - PDD- Pervasive Developmental Delay
 - PDD NOS- Pervasive Developmental Delay Not Otherwise Specified
- ID methods. Families use any number of ways to help children be identified.
 - Medic Alert Bracelets are one way but often individuals with autism won't wear the jewelry because they are sensory defensive.
 - Families will thread the ID into a shoe lace, into a belt or as a zipper pull. It may possibly be a necklace.
 - Some families put a business card into a small case and put it in a pocket of their children's clothing.
 - ID tags are sewn or stamped into the back of collars.
 - On vacation or in large crowd settings many of our families create temporary tattoos with the child's name and their cell phone numbers and place it on the upper shoulder.

Working with an Autistic Person

- *Officers need to remember to use the communication boards if they're faced with an individual who seems unable to communicate meaningfully.
- Whenever possible, avoid touching these individuals. Some, but not all individuals with autism, will become more agitated and possibly aggressive when touched. Talk when you can. If possible write questions if talking isn't working.
- Work quietly and gently when dealing with these individuals. Call for assistance from Crisis Intervention if you are dealing someone with autism. In Chester County we are currently developing an Autism training specifically for CI that should be in place very soon.
- When an officer asks for identification use short simple questions. "*What is your name?*" or "*What is your address?*" may be more effective over the range of the spectrum than "*Give me your identification.*" Extra words or long difficult words makes it more difficult for these individuals to understand what is being asked. Use short simple words. Wait 3 seconds, then ask again. Processing requests takes time for these kids. If they are nonverbal or appear to be nonverbal, they may be able to write or type the information you need. Offer a pen and paper or computer. They also may be able to read, so writing questions may be helpful in getting information.

Source: <http://www.dol.net/~srz/police.htm>
Silent No More Inc.

The Autism Society of Maine's Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- Follow Department Procedures. Check the department database to see if the person has Autism or another disability.
- Be specific and very direct in your questioning. Speak slowly. Ask person for his/her name. Ask for address. Ask if they live alone or with someone. Try to ascertain whether they are under someone's care.
- As soon as possible, call family, agency, or case worker for assistance in dealing with a problem. They will be happy to help.
- Keep your language simple and direct. Autistic people have difficulty understanding language nuances and may interpret figures of speech literally.
- Ignore unusual or disrespectful language from the person.
- If they threaten suicide, make a quick assessment. Remember that Autistic individuals frequently refer to suicide when they are upset, since they don't know how to deal with many emotions. The feeling doesn't last. Try to explain that you understand how he is feeling and that you are trying to help.
- Investigate any acknowledgement of guilt carefully. It may not be true
- Thoroughly investigate the veracity of any charges against persons who have Autism.
- Allow time for the individual to process during questioning. If the individual feels pressured former questions build up and may overwhelm him.
- It is critical that you advise the jail that the individual has Autism and should be segregated as soon as possible from the general population.
- Autistic individuals have a high tolerance for pain and may not express that they are injured. If you suspect injury request EMS.
- Try to strongly consider the validity of an Autistic individuals family or case workers if they state that they didn't intentionally do whatever they are charged with. Most parents have gone through hell with their child, especially in terms of treatment from professionals.

Don'ts

- If person is not listed in the database he/she may still have Autism. Be patient. Be aware that an Autistic individual may not have control over unusual behaviors.
- Do not assume they understand what is happening and what you are requesting. They may not understand what you mean when you ask for "identification"
- If the person is reluctant to give you information or make eye contact do not assume he is evasive. He/she may not be able to respond under pressure, even though he/she may talk quite well under more favorable circumstances.
- Don't use long explanations. Don't use figures of speech. Don't say anything that you can't follow through with.
- Don't be offended by rude or "smart" remarks. Autistic people usually talk the same to everyone, whether or not they are authority.
- Don't take unusual measures to protect the Autistic person from himself just because suicide was mentioned. Use your assessment skills and try to determine actual risk, or if the statement was simply a matter of confusion and bewilderment.
- Don't accept acknowledgement of guilt from Autistic individuals. They may acknowledge guilt in an attempt to please or do what they feel is expected of them.
- Many charges against people who have Autism are misguided and often stem from fear, frustration, and misunderstandings on the part of others.
- Do not interrupt any self-stimulating behaviors if at all possible.
- If at all possible move the individual to a quiet environment. Autistic individuals are hyper sensitive to stimuli and can be distracted by background noise, fluorescent lights, and frequent movement.
- If you need to arrest or take down an individual with Autism remember that many Autistic individuals have under developed trunk muscles and are at an especially high risk for positional asphyxia.
- Don't be fooled by the similarity between an Autistic individuals behaviors and that of delinquents or petty criminals. The Autistic person is likely to be put on an illegal job by street wise people who knew what they were doing.

Source: <http://www.asmonline.org/dosanddents.htm>

Autism & Law Enforcement Video

*Reviewed in FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin
Featured in Law Enforcement Product News magazine
In use by Philadelphia Police Department*

The March, 2005 edition of the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin features two reviews of the Autism & Law Enforcement video. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin has a readership of over 200,000, and is considered the world's leading cutting-edge publication on law enforcement issues.,

The reviews will be online soon at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/leb/leb.htm>

Here are excerpts:

Mary Otto, Oregon Police Corps:

"The video *Autism and Law Enforcement* provides a quick and engaging education in autism that can help increase safety for both officers and individuals with autism, as well as minimize the potential for litigation that could occur as a result of a misunderstanding. Interviews and vignettes involving people with autism concretely convey the reality of how challenging they can be to interact with and how vulnerable to crime and exploitation they are.....After viewing this video, officers will be better equipped to consider autism when assessing behavior during personal encounters."

John M. Skinner, Chief, Port St. Lucie, Florida Police Department

"My review of *Autism and Law Enforcement*, a 21-minute video, not only enlightened me as a police chief but made me immediately recognize it as a valuable resource for all law enforcement officers. The producer, a law enforcement veteran and father of a son with autism, maintains viewer interest by providing clear concise bullet points about the nature of the disability; how officers should approach an individual with autism; and what to expect as a response from an officer's field interview....*Autism and Law Enforcement* is an excellent tool that can raise awareness to promote successful encounters with people who have autism. The complexities in the mission of today's street officer demand an astute response to the differing needs of citizens. This training video helps accomplish that goal."

Law Enforcement Product News (LEPN) also featured the video in its March-April 2005 edition. We've had a great deal of response as a result. This also stemmed from discussions at the January ASLET conference.

To subscribe to LEPN <http://www.tradepub.com/free/lepn>

Susan Rzucidlo, a board member of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the Autism Society of America reports that the Philadelphia Police Department is now using the *Autism and Law Enforcement Video* and handout--in addition to the Silent No More communication boards and GPC-ASA materials--to train all sworn officers on autism. All materials were provided by the GPC-ASA.

For information visit:

Silent No More Web site at <http://www.dol.net/~srz>

Video Information and ordering options at:

<http://www.autismriskmanagement.com/>

Inquiries? Email ddpi@flash.net or call 772-398-9756.

Source: <http://www.aspires-relationships.com/index.htm>

ASPIRES is an on-line resource for spouses and family members of adults diagnosed or suspected to be on the autistic spectrum.

****PLEASE ORDER THIS VIDEO!** I'm sure you could fit it in your budget because it is very inexpensive. Also email Dennis (ddpi@flash.net) and ask to be subscribed to his free newsletter. It comes out twice a year and it's full of useful information about autism and it tells you what the country is doing to promote the awareness of autism. ******