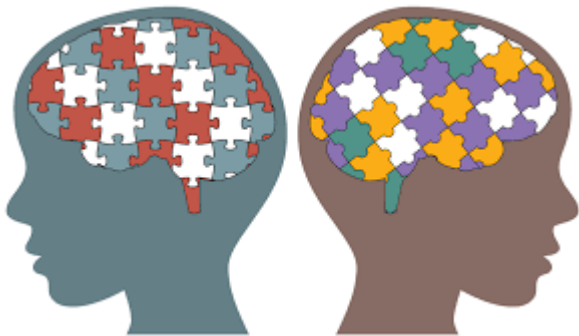
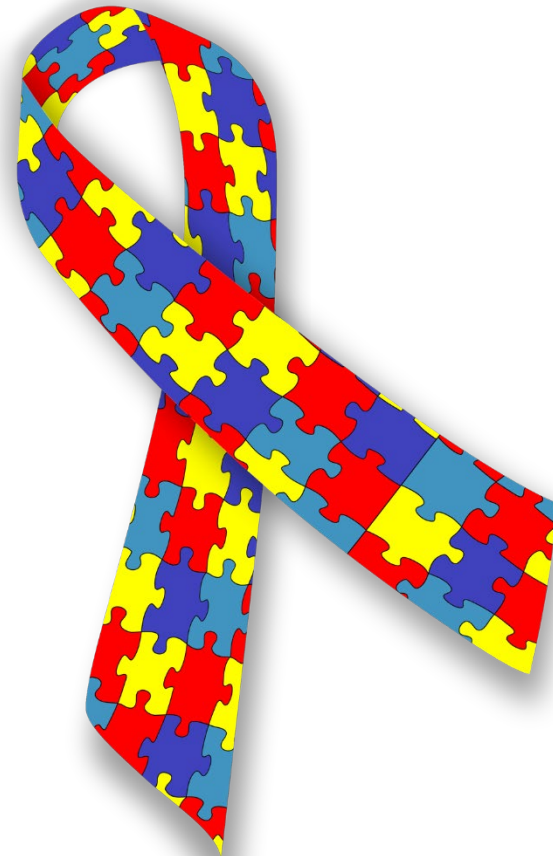




Autism and Police Interaction



- The Department of Social Services Waiver for Persons with Autism provides home-and community-based services to individuals with autism who do not have an intellectual disability (a full IQ score of 70 or higher). To qualify, an individual must have substantial limitations in two or more of the following major life activities: (1) self-care, (2) understanding and use of language, (3) learning, (4) mobility, (5) self-direction, or (6) capacity for independent living. The functional impairments must have been diagnosed before age 22 and be expected to continue indefinitely.



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The following services and supports, which are capped at \$50,000 annually per participant, are available under the waiver:

- Clinical Behavioral Supports
- Social Skills Group
- Job Coaching
- Life Skills Coach
- Community Mentor
- Individual Goods and Services
- Personal Emergency Response System
- Respite
- Assistive Technology
- Interpreter
- Non-Medical Transportation
- Specialized Driving Assessment
- Live-in Companion

Autism Waiver

The Autism Division consists of:

- A program manager
 - 3 case managers
 - 1 administrative assistant
 - 2 Autism Support and Resource Specialist
-
- Currently there are 118 individuals being served by the autism waiver
 - The average case load for a case manager is 39
 - There are approximately 1772 individuals on the wait list
 - Autism Support and Resource Specialist work with individuals on the wait list and their families by providing them with information and resources that may be available in the meantime.

Agencies, schools, advocates, parents, individuals on the spectrum, and other entities do contact our division on a variety of safety issues concerning someone on the spectrum.

- Restraint and seclusion
- Wandering and elopement issues
- Dating and relationships
- Bullying
- Internet safety
- And yes, interactions with law enforcement and other first responders

In a study published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders consisting of 284 Ontario adolescents over an 18-month period, 16 % of people with autism had an interaction with police over that time period.

https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1007/s10803-017-3182-5?author_access_token=rgPW0wy5SGAlwHX0k2Nxa_e4RwlQNc_hNByi7wbcMAY5QqNW5LdCl6q_TH0TCnhB_3VjHX2t9_bINOOgz_mZRA4T9YfneClPVvpm614orkAHm29N5nrA6RUUAKkZHGAABxGMUKUPU71FxQvwHFcOVfOA==

- While almost half of those resulted in a calming effect, a third of those individuals reported an opposite effect.
 - In 19% of police interactions, physical restraints were used. Most of the common reasons for police intervention was due to aggressive behaviors.
 - This appears to be the pattern across the United States as well, where individuals on the spectrum have negative experiences when interacting with police.
 - Bates v. Chesterfield County, VA
 - Champion v. Outlook Nashville, Inc.

- What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?
 - Autism is a brain development disorder that results in impairment in communication and social interactions.
 - Individuals on the spectrum frequently engage in restricted and repetitive behaviors, most often comfortable when engaging in routines.
 - Individuals on the spectrum can become easily agitated and upset with a disturbance to their routine and being presented with a new situation.
 - Examples: presence of unknown person, loud noise, or unanticipated surprises

- The outcome or response by an individual on the spectrum may vary and can result in a “melt down”. Some behaviors you might observe include:
 - Acting out
 - Engaging in ritualistic behaviors
 - Inappropriate or disjointed verbal statements
 - Aggressive behaviors
 - Quietness or not responding to “stop” or other commands
 - Avoiding eye contact
 - Reacting with “fight” or “flight”

- These responses by someone with autism can be perceived by others as the person being:
 - Hostile
 - Having criminal intent
 - Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
 - Being non-cooperative or non-compliant

- Training and a guide for police interactions between individuals with autism can be helpful.
 - Identifying autism is key
 - Police obviously are not expected to diagnose someone with autism, however, looking for and understanding the common characteristics of autism may help police officers respond appropriately to an escalated situation
 - If you met one person with autism, you met one person with autism. Although each person with autism is different, some common characteristics include:
 - Limited or no ability to speak (non-verbal)
 - Avoiding eye contact
 - Insistence on routine, resistance to change
 - Obsessive attachments to objects
 - Self-soothing behaviors such as hand flapping, hand slapping, body rocking, jitters, scratching, or attachment to objects
 - Inappropriate behaviors (laughing during confrontations, inappropriate body gestures, etc.)
 - No sense of fear during dangerous situations
 - Over or under sensitivity to pain
 - Temper tantrums or escalated behaviors not relatable to the situation
 - Preference to be alone
 - Repeating words or phrases
 - Not understanding requests or commands

Guide for Police and Other First Responders Video

- The following video provides a guide for police officers and other first responders who may encounter a person with autism
- Presented by the Allegheny County Chiefs of Police Association
 - <https://www.police1.com/autism-spectrum-disorders/articles/autism-training-for-police-officers-the-basics-of-response-fGVNvZAkRptSTS1S/>

- Be patient
- Give the person space
- Try not to touch the individual if possible
- Model the behavior you want the person to display
- Use a calm, quiet and non-threatening voice
- Use simple language
- If possible, turn off sirens and lights
- Give the person time to process your question or request
- Give the person time to respond
- Take notice to signs of agitation or increased frustration
- Avoid quick movements or loud noises
- Use information from a parent/caregiver if available to best interact with the individual



Avoid leading questions that might incriminate, for example



Develop an understanding of the person's communication style



Plan questioning based on ability level



Ask questions that rely on narrative responses. "yes" or "no" responses could be unreliable, and the person may respond the way they think they want you to respond

- Follow departmental protocols but please consider the following tips to maintain safety for yourself and the individual on the spectrum:
 - People with autism may have a difficult time supporting their airways during restraint due to underdeveloped chest muscles
 - Keep in mind many people with autism are prone to seizures
 - Be prepared for resistance and/or aggressive behaviors. People on the spectrum may not understand what is going on and how resisting might make things worse.
 - Try to speak in a calm manner.

Resources for Parents/Caregivers

Teaching individuals with autism and families of how to interact with police is just as important. Below are some resources parents/caregivers can use to teach their children the skills needed to interact with police.

Pathfinders for Autism: PFA Tips: How to Interact with Police <https://pathfindersforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/How-to-Interact-with-Police.pdf>

National Autism Association (NAA): Meet The Police: A Guide to Introducing Children and Adults with ASD to Local Law Enforcement <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13175/MeetThePoliceToolkitNAA?bidId=>

If the Police Stop me: A Social Story <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/6d69396c-2663-4b7e-bfec-bb0731ab2b46/downloads/If%20The%20Police%20Stop%20Me%20.pdf?ver=1592836380755>

- Individuals on the spectrum, parents and caregivers are encouraged to contact their local law enforcement department to determine what types of trainings police officers have taken on interacting with individuals with autism.
- Request a tour and have your child meet officers from the police department
- Inquire about identification cards or systems in place to help law enforcement identify an individual with autism if interaction is needed.

The Blue Envelope

Effective January 1, 2020, The “Blue Envelope” was created by a new state law to enhance communication between a police officer and a driver with autism.

The purpose of the envelope is to have the driver place their insurance card, registration and driver license in it so it can be handed to the officer during a stop.

The outside of the envelope provides helpful tips and instructions for both the officer and driver on how to successfully communication with each other.

The envelopes are available at all DMV locations, police stations, driving schools and through autism advocacy groups.

- **National Autism Society (NAA) First responder Toolkit:**
<https://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit-FR.pdf>
- **Autism Speaks- First Responder Information**
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/information-law-enforcement>
- **Dennis Debbault: Autism Risk and Safety Management-** Training for first responders <https://autismriskmanagement.com/>
- **North Carolina Autism Society First Responder Training** (a 15 minute film on what first responders can expect when encountering individuals with ASD)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIflwT7Thpg>

- The DSS ASD unit has created an online resource library which contains a section dedicated to topics surrounding safety. There you will find documents such as ‘Safety- Law Enforcement and First Responders’ and ‘Safety- Autism Identification and Tracking Resources’ (elopers, for example)
- Go to **portal.ct.gov/DSS** > select **Programs and Services** > select **Autism Spectrum Disorder- ASD** > select the **Related Resources** tab > choose **Autism Resource Library** > then select the **‘Safety’** tab

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