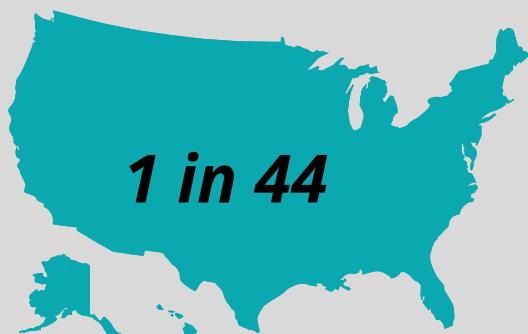


ABOUT AUTISM: TIPS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS



In the United States, 1 in 44 individuals has a diagnosis of Autism. (CDC, 2018)

People with developmental disabilities have 7X more contacts with police.

(Organization for Autism Research, 2014)



1 in 5 youth with ASD have been stopped and questioned by the police before the age of 21.

(Rava, Shattuck, Rast, & Roux, 2017)

TIPS FOR INTERACTION

Don't Assume: Do not assume the individual will respond to 'stop' or other commands or questions

Allow Space: Give the individual time and space, and avoid the use of restraint

Stay Calm: Maintain a calm and relaxed demeanor, if sitting, get down on their level

Offer Water/Snack: Hold it out to the individual

Simplify Language: Use simple, literal phrases

Reassure: Even if the person is nonverbal, offer reassurance

Offer Tools: Offer a phone, iPad, or paper/pen to communicate— these items may also calm the individual



WHAT IS AUTISM

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental diagnosis that impacts how a person communicates, learns, and experiences their world. Autistic people often have:

- challenges communicating with others
- restricted interests and repetitive behaviors
- difficulty regulating emotions (especially in challenging situations)
- atypical experiences of / responses to sensory input (lights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.)



Autism is known as a spectrum disorder because there is wide variation in the way that people experience the above characteristics.

49% of children with autism attempt to elope from a safe environment

(Phillips, Briggs, Fisher, & Greer, 2018)



23% of individuals with ASD have had interactions with first responders due to wandering or eloping.

(Engaged Scholars, v. 7, 2019)

TIPS FOR SEARCH & RESCUE

Act Quickly: People with autism may head straight to water, traffic, or abandoned cars/areas, so treat each case as critical regardless of age

Search Water First: Search any type of nearby water, including waste water

Ask Questions: Ask the caregiver if the individual will respond to his/her name, and about likes/dislikes (Will they be drawn to certain music, favorite characters, fire trucks, mom's voice? Or afraid of certain noises, sirens, search dogs?)

