

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)

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 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

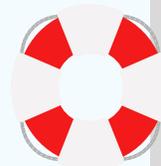


TIPS FOR SEARCH & RESCUE

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?)



The Autism Project
www.theautismproject.org



Public Safety Special
Needs Coalition
www.PSSNCRI.com