



911 Centers

In most emergency situations, the first step taken by the individuals involved is to call 911. 911 telecommunicators play a key role in figuring out the type of emergency that is occurring and determining the proper staff and equipment needed in the particular situation. It is extremely important for these professionals to understand autism and the types of behaviors that individuals with autism might display in emergency situations. With the proper training, 911 officers will be able to provide the best and most effective response to ensure the safety of individuals with autism.

Quick Facts:

1. First of all, it is essential to determine if the person you are talking to on the phone has autism or the person who is in need of emergency personnel has autism.
2. Listen very carefully to how the person is speaking. Listen for key words and phrases.
3. A person with autism may speak differently. They might repeat the same words or only say one word or short phrases and the call may sound very different from all other calls the operator receives.
4. Though at first you might think the individual on the phone is incoherent or impaired in some way, make sure to take each call seriously and listen as intently as possible.
5. Per normal procedure, make sure to find out as much as you can – who, what, where, when and how.
6. Try to get information from the caller about the person – what they are afraid of or, what to do, and what to avoid.
7. Remember that a high percentage of people on the autism spectrum are non-verbal, so make sure to clarify this and ask if the individual in question will answer to their name.
8. Advise a supervisor and proper personnel that the person they are attending to has autism and remind them to respond accordingly.

Resources for 911 Telecommunicators:

- [Avoiding Unfortunate Situations](#)
- [Autism Society of America](#): Information for Paramedics and Emergency Responders
- [Project Lifesaver](#)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#)
- [The Law Enforcement Awareness Network](#)
- [Autism Alliance for Local Emergency Responder Training](#)

