



## **Law Enforcement**

On a daily basis police officers encounter a multitude of individuals in emergency situations. Just as each emergency differs from the next, so does the individual involved, especially in regards to individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Police are trained to respond to a crisis situation with a certain protocol, but this protocol may not always be the best way to interact with individuals with ASD. Because police are usually the first to respond to an emergency, it is critical that these officers have a working knowledge of ASD, and the wide variety of behaviors individuals with ASD can exhibit in emergency situations.

### **Quick Facts for Law Enforcement**

- Interacting with a child or adult who has an autism spectrum disorder will challenge your experience and training.
- You will hear terms such as low functioning/high-functioning autism and Asperger's Disorder to identify the level of their condition. In most cases, the person will have difficulties following verbal commands, reading your body language, and have deficits in social understanding.
- Law enforcement agencies should 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 make the best use of your valuable time, and avoid mistakes that can lead to lawsuits and negative 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 offers suggestions and options about how to address those risks.

Debbaudt, D. (2003 second edition) *Managing Autism Safety*, Advocate p.29

The Law Enforcement Awareness Network – [www.leanonus.org](http://www.leanonus.org)

Autism Alliance for Local Emergency Responder Training - [www.AutismAlert.org](http://www.AutismAlert.org)

The Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition - [www.sncarc.org/alec.htm](http://www.sncarc.org/alec.htm)

Autism Risk and Safety Management - [www.autismriskmanagement.com](http://www.autismriskmanagement.com)

Community and Law Enforcement Aware Response - [www.clearscv.org](http://www.clearscv.org)

Avoiding Unfortunate Situations - [policeandautism.cjb.net](http://policeandautism.cjb.net)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children – [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

Project Lifesaver – [www.projectlifesaver.org](http://www.projectlifesaver.org)

Caretrak Systems – [www.caretrak.com](http://www.caretrak.com)

Autism Society of America - [Information for Law Enforcement and Other First Responders](#) (PDF)

The Autism Program of Illinois - [www.theautismprogram.org](http://www.theautismprogram.org)

[ASA LAPD Autism Awareness Project](#) - (Document)

[Disaster Prep](#) - (PDF)

[And Justice for All: Unless you have Autism](#) - (Document)

[ALEC Brochure](#) - (PDF)

