



# Alvin Police Department

October 16, 2014

# Our Mission



The Arc of the Gulf Coast supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in their quest for self-determination, ensuring that they have meaningful lives in the communities where they live, learn, work, play and worship - responding to their needs, one person at a time.

Service area: Galveston and Brazoria Counties

# Our Values



## **People First**

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are defined by their own strengths, abilities and inherent value, not by their disability.

## **Community**

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities belong in the community and have fundamental moral, civil and constitutional rights to be fully included and actively participate in all aspects of society.

## **Equity**

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are entitled to the respect, dignity, equality, safety, and security accorded to other members of society, and are equal before the law.

## **Diversity**

Society benefits when people with diverse abilities and cultural backgrounds work together for positive change. The Arc respects beneficiaries, donors, staff, and other implementing agencies as partners. The Arc embraces diversity among staff, partners and the communities where we work, without discrimination, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or political affiliation.

## **Self-Determination**

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, with appropriate resources and supports, can make decisions about their own lives and must be heard on issues that affect their well-being.

# Individual Advocacy



Educational advocacy

Family education

Surrogate decision-making and planning

Information on guardianship and alternatives

Transition planning

Resources and referrals

# Community Advocacy



Self-Advocates

Parent groups

Policy makers and legislators

School districts

Community resource groups for Brazoria and Galveston

First responders

# Limited Financial Assistance



Rent

Utilities

Food

Medical care/prescriptions

Assistive technology and or materials for work/school

Miscellaneous emergencies

# Quick Facts on Autism



Did you know ...

- ☐ Autism now affects 1 in 68 children and 1 in 42 boys  
Autism prevalence figures are growing
- ☐ Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.
- ☐ Autism costs a family \$60,000 a year on average
- ☐ Boys are nearly five times more likely than girls to have autism
- ☐ There is no medical detection or cure for autism

See more at: <http://www.autismspeaks.org>

# What is Autism?



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or autism is a developmental disability considered the result of a neurological condition affecting normal brain function, development and social interactions. People with autism find it difficult or impossible to relate to other people in a meaningful way and may show restrictive and/or repetitive patterns of behavior or body movements. While great strides are being made, there is no known cause, or a known singular effective treatment for autism.

People with autism have challenges in the areas of communication, socialization and restricted/repetitive behaviors. A few examples:

# What is Autism?

## Communication

- ☐ Development of language is significantly delayed
- ☐ Some do not develop spoken language
- ☐ Experience difficulty with both expressive and receptive language
- ☐ Difficulty initiating or sustaining conversations
- ☐ Robotic, formal speech
- ☐ Repetitive use of language
- ☐ Difficulty with the pragmatic use of language

# What is Autism?



## Socialization

- ❑ Difficulty developing peer relationships
- ❑ Difficulty with give and take of social interactions
- ❑ Lack of spontaneous sharing of enjoyment
- ❑ Impairments in use and understanding of body language to regulate social interaction
- ❑ May not be motivated by social reciprocity or shared give-and-take

# What is Autism?

## Restricted/Repetitive Behavior

- ☐ Preoccupations atypical in intensity or focus
- ☐ Inflexibility related to routines and rituals
- ☐ Stereotyped movements
- ☐ Preoccupations with parts of objects
- ☐ Impairments in symbolic play

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ When an autistic child or adult becomes missing from their family or caregivers it must be considered a priority in the handling of the investigation. Time is of the essence. These individuals are prime targets for abuse and wandering without recognizing dangerous situations.
- ❑ Individuals with autism can't be identified by appearance. They look the same as anyone else. They're identified by their behavior.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Individuals with autism tend to have an under developed upper trunk and are at higher risk of positional asphyxiation. When restraint is required officers need to be aware of this medical fact and act accordingly, and be sure to adjust position often.
  
- ❑ Some individuals with autism do not have the normal range of sensations and don't feel the cold. They may not seek shelter if lost out in the cold. This will affect the way a search for a lost child with autism is conducted.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Individuals with autism may engage in self stimulatory behavior such as hand flapping, finger flicking, eye blinking, string twirling, rocking, pacing, making repetitive noises or saying repetitive phrases that have no bearing on the topic of conversation. This behavior is calming to the individual, even if it doesn't appear calming to the officer. If these behaviors are NOT presenting a danger to themselves or others it is in the officer's best interest not to interfere with it. Allow it to continue as long as they are safe and safe to be around. Trying to stop it may cause the individual to act out aggressively.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Speak in short clear phrases “get in,” “sit down,” “wait here.” An individual with autism may take longer to respond to directives, and that can be because they don’t understand what’s being demanded of them, or even just because they’re scared; they may not be able to process the language and understand a directive when fearful.
- ❑ Individuals with autism should be kept away from the general prison population whenever possible, including time in holding tanks. Their lack of understanding of social situations makes them candidates for abuse.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ These individuals may have a weak understanding of cause and effect. They have little concept of consequences.
- ❑ 50% of individuals with autism are nonverbal throughout their life span; another 20% may present as nonverbal when highly stressed.
- ❑ 40% of individuals with autism will develop epilepsy or some other seizure disorder by the end of adolescence. Know that when dealing with an individual with autism, they may experience seizures.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Officers may encounter autism by other names, which are not important for officers to know. But they should that these are one form or another of autism:
- Autism
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Asperger's Syndrome and/or NVLD (Nonverbal Learning Disorder)
- PDD- Pervasive Developmental Delay
- PDD NOS- Pervasive Developmental Delay Not Otherwise Specified

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Officers need to remember to use their Silent No More communication boards if they're faced with an individual who seems unable to communicate meaningfully.
  
- ❑ Individuals with autism are strongly attracted to water. Drowning is a leading cause of death among children and adults with autism. Officers should check area pools, ponds and streams when looking for a lost child. Hoses, irrigation systems and fountains would also be very attractive to them.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Whenever possible, avoid touching these individuals. Some, but not all individuals with autism, will become more agitated and possibly aggressive when touched.
  
- ❑ There are certain times of the year that officers will be more likely to receive calls from our families. That would be early June, late August and the end of December. This is because of the school calendar. These times are traditional breaks in programming.

# ID Methods



- ❑ Families use any number of ways to help children be identified.
- ❑ Medic Alert Bracelets are one way, but often individuals with autism won't wear the jewelry because they are sensory defensive.
- ❑ Families will thread the ID into a shoelace, into a belt, or as a zipper pull. It may also be a necklace.
- ❑ Some families put a business card into a small case and put it in a pocket of their children's clothing.

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ ID tags are sown or stamped into the back of collars.
- ❑ On vacation or in large crowd settings many of our families create temporary tattoos with the child's' name and their cell phone numbers and place it on the upper shoulder.
- ❑ When an officer asks for identification use short simple questions, "What is your name?" or "What is your address?" may be more effective over the range of the spectrum than "Give me your identification."

# Autism 101 for Law Enforcement



- ❑ Extra words or long difficult words make it more difficult for these individuals to understand what is being asked. Use short simple words. Wait 3 seconds, and then ask it again. Processing requests takes time for these kids. If they are nonverbal or appear to be nonverbal, they may be able to write or type the information you need, offer a pen and paper or computer. They also may be able to read above their speaking ability. Writing questions may be helpful in gathering information.

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[http://autismlink.com/pages/emergency\\_police/](http://autismlink.com/pages/emergency_police/)



# Contact Us!



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