Michigan Autism Safety Training (MAST)

Law Enforcement, Fire and EMS Field Response Training

Funding provided by the Michigan Department of Community Health

MCOLES Approved

Endorsed by: Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police
AAoM Autism Safety Training

Objectives

Law Enforcement, Fire and EMS Professionals will:

- Expand their knowledge of autism and autism behaviors
- Increase recognition skills of persons with autism
- Acquire information and tips on how to safely and effectively interact with individuals with autism and their family/care providers
- Learn community outreach strategies in increase safety and support of those with autism

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism Facts

Research indicates that people who have developmental disabilities, including autism, have up to SEVEN TIMES more contact with law enforcement than a member of the general public (Curry et. al, 1993).

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism: On Duty Situations

- Check Subject
- Wandering/Missing Person
- Intruder
- Out of Control
- Victimization
- Detective Bureau
- Response to Emergencies
  - vehicle accidents, structure fires, medical emergencies

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
On Duty Situation Risks & Behaviors

- May not recognize authority figures or know what is expected of them
- Basic verbal and non-verbal communication challenges
- Echoing instructions and/or questions
- Exhibit behaviors that draw attention
- Misinterpretation of behaviors
- Misleading indicators of guilt such as lack of eye contact, aloof, or indifferent manner; may change topic

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
On Duty Situation Risks & Behaviors

- Lack fear of real danger
- High tolerance of pain
- Sensory issues that may produce fight or flight reaction
- Hypotonia: low muscle tone
- Mechanical or positional asphyxia will require alternate restraint options and techniques

Special thank you to Dennis DeBbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Response Strategies

- Approach in quiet and non-threatening manner
- Assure person is unarmed and check for injuries
- Avoid touching individual
- Look for medical tag or identification
- Speak calmly
Response Strategies

- Use simple and direct instructions: “stand up”, “go to the car”
- Allow for delayed response time
- May need to repeat and/or rephrase
- Additional units to arrive without lights and sirens if not emergency
- Model calm body language and give extra personal space

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Response Strategies

- Give praise and encouragement
- Use pictures, written phrases, and commands
- Use low gestures for attention; avoid rapid pointing or waving
De-escalate Behaviors at the Scene

- May not respond well to uniform emergency responders or change in routine
- Responders should not interpret failure to respond as lack of cooperation
- Seek assistance from family/care provider
- Avoid stopping repetitive behavior unless there is risk to you/others
- May need to remove canine partners, sirens, lights, crowds

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

De-escalate Behaviors at the Scene

- Evaluate for injury; may not ask for help or show pain
- Be aware they may have a seizure – 40% of this population has some form of seizure disorder
- Wait for behavior to calm/de-escalate, stay in geographic area, remove items to keep area safe and keep at a safe distance
- Remain alert to the possibility of outbursts or impulsive acts
- Pepper spray may heighten sensory reaction and escalate behavior

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Precautions with Restraint

- Avoid positional asphyxia – turn person on side to allow normal breathing (due to under-developed trunk muscles-hypotonia-may not support his/her airway)
- The person may not recognize the futility of resistance and continue to struggle. Continue to use communication, de-escalation, and calming response techniques
- For responders’ safety, avoid standing too close or behind. The person may suddenly lurch backwards or forward
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

During Custody and Arrest

- Document autism in your initial report
- Alert jail supervisor, prosecutor and mental health professional for immediate evaluation
- Alert jail authorities and suggest an isolation facility. A person with autism would be at extreme risk in the general prison population (Do we really want them in jail?)
- Contact parents/caregivers for information regarding care and communication with the person
Emergency Room Tips

- Avoid making patient wait
- Require exam room and do not leave alone
- Give patient time to calm down
- Minimize lights, noise, radios and unnecessary personnel
- Advise security
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

Emergency Services Required Reporting

- Talk to caregiver/case manager before reporting abuse
- Mattress only-wedge head between wall and frame for sensory need.
- No furniture
- No sheets, blankets or pillows
- No curtains/decorations (destructive behavior/Pica)

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Interviewing a Person with Autism

- The person with autism may be a victim, witness or a suspect
- Plan for your interview
- You can overcome communication barriers during interviews when you learn the communication style and background
- Review records and talk to people who know him/her—parents, teachers and caregivers
Interviewing a Person with Autism

- Get to know the person’s communication style through casual conversation before any attempt before getting recollection of an event
- Develop a good rapport – use first name
- Use simple and direct language
- Assure the same meaning to the words being used in the interview
Interviewing a Person with Autism

- Assure you and the person being interviewed understand who is being referred to when using pronouns
- Seek permission to and consider recording the interview
- Consider having someone he/she trusts in the interview
- Plan questioning based on person’s ability level
- Deal with one issue at a time
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

The Interview

- Have the victim recreate the context in his/her own words – Ask questions that require a narrative
- Plan for this interview to be longer than usual and you may have to plan to interview the person more than once
- Be alert to non-verbal cues that suggest the victim does not understand, is confused, or does not agree with the question you asked or the statements made to him/her (restlessness, frowning, and extremely long pauses)
- Use visuals (pictures) if needed

Special thank you to Dennis DeBbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

The Interview

- The victim may not want to answer questions more than once – explain first that you may have to ask questions more than once
- You may have to avoid uniforms and authority clothing depending on the person’s reaction
- Let the victim know that it is okay to say “no” to a question
- Avoid leading questions

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism: Techniques to Reduce Liability

The Interview

- Learn person’s schedule and determine events through this context, rather than asking “what time did it happen”
- Common to have short attention span; consider several short interviews
- Be alert to a spontaneous disclosure of evidence

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Increasing Autism Safety in the Community

Community Outreach

- Visit schools, businesses, recreational facilities, and homes where there are people with autism
- For responders/community safety and to reduce liability, create opportunities to meet people who have autism, their families, and support organizations
- Responders and persons with autism can learn from each other during these controlled, safe and non-stressful interactions

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Increasing Autism Safety in the Community

Autism Emergency & Behavior Response
School and Home Safety Plan

3 Forms

- Autism Profile and Emergency Contact
- Emergency Situation and Annual Drills
- Common Behaviors and Responses

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Increasing Autism Safety in the Community

- Encourage families to have emergency plans and packets for home, school, and transportation
- Have families enter information of family member with autism in 911 data base
- Use the reverse 911
- Promote autism awareness stickers and decals for home and vehicles
- Have annual autism training
- Refer families to the Mid Michigan Autism Association (MMAA)/local network

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Techniques to Reduce Liability

These are the best approaches to ensure emergency responder and citizen safety, make the best use of your valuable time and resources, and avoid litigation.
Autism and Responders: Final Thoughts

- Relax and role model behavior.
- Speak in short, direct calm words.
- Be patient – refer to autism card.
- Ask for assistance from someone who knows the person.
- Get to know the families with autism.
- Promote registering in the 911 database.
- Continue education - roll call video, staff, partners and community.

Special thank you to Dennis Debbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Autism Resources

- Autism Alliance of Michigan
  www.autismallianceofmichigan.org

- Autism Risk & Safety Management:
  http://www.autismriskmanagement.com/

  https://sites.google.com/site/emergresptest/

Special thank you to Dennis DeBbaudt for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. ©2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.
Thank you – You are important to families, communities and Michigan!

Sgt. Scott Schuelke, Retired-Lansing Police Department
Autism Safety Specialist, AAOM
517/927-2298 // scott.schuelke@aaomi.org

Anthony Ianni, Autism Advocate - AAOM
517/420-2827 // anthony.iani@aaomi.org

Stacie Rulison, Vice President & COO AAOM & Michigan Autism Council
989/834-5878 // stacie.rulison@aaomi.org

Special thank you to Dennis Debbautd for his national leadership and videos, and to Mid-Michigan Autism Association for development of portions of the content used in this presentation. @2012 Autism Alliance of Michigan. All rights reserved. Content can only be used with permission from the Autism Alliance of Michigan. Contact info@autismallianceofmichigan.org.