

# **Autism Awareness for the First Responder**

## **Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition (ALEC)**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the fastest growing neurobiological condition in the world. With prevalence numbers rising exponentially over the last six decades, more and more families are living with ASD than ever before. In the United States, one in every 54 American children will have ASD.

Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

People with ASD are more likely to have a 911 encounter than a typical person. The number of responses is increasing nationwide at an alarming rate. These calls can be high risk calls for the responder and a person with ASD. Injuries and in some calls for service, death has resulted due to the lack of understanding about a person with ASD.

This workshop will provide first responders with an overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), growth rates, theories, common characteristics, effective communication methods, behavioral symptoms, sensory issues, and some practical skills on how to effectively interact and respond to an emergency involving a person with ASD.

The instructors will provide information on how first responders can recognize an individual with ASD, and discuss how actual incidents were handled. Special tactics, response techniques, rescue techniques, patient care, search and rescue, criminal justice issues, public safety issues, and actual incidents will be discussed.

The instructors will provide information on how responders can develop relationships with the autism community by working proactively with families, advocacy organizations and school systems, through community days (open house for families of people with ASD), 911 registrations, and how responders can help families prepare for a 911 emergency. Model programs already in use will be reviewed.

### **Learning Objectives:**

To prepare First Responders for a response to an emergency involving a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

How to identify characteristics and behaviors of a person with ASD.

How to effectively communicate with a person with ASD.

Discuss special tactics, rescue techniques, and patient care.

How to build relationships with the ASD community.