

ASD Training in Law Enforcement

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“13-Year-Old Boy With Autism Disorder Shot By Salt Lake City Police”

September 9, 2020

“A police officer in Salt Lake City shot a 13-year-old boy with an autism spectrum disorder on Friday after his mother called 911 seeking help for her son, who was experiencing a mental health crisis....”

SLCPD bodycam



What is Autism?

According to the CDC, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or more commonly referred to as autism, "is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less."



Signs and Symptoms

- Avoid eye contact
- Want to be alone
- Not understand how to take, play, or relate to others
- Repeat certain actions continuously
- Either have an interest in other people or no interest at all
- Have trouble expressing their feelings or understanding others' feelings
- Have trouble explaining their needs

Autism is not as easily determined because we cannot see their disability like those with Down Syndrome.



Police Departments



- 28 sworn officers
- 17 officers responded
- 60.7% response rate



- 35 sworn officers
- 14 officers responded
- 40% response rate



Riverton Results

- An Unanticipated Result

Q: How many years have you been working for your *current* department?

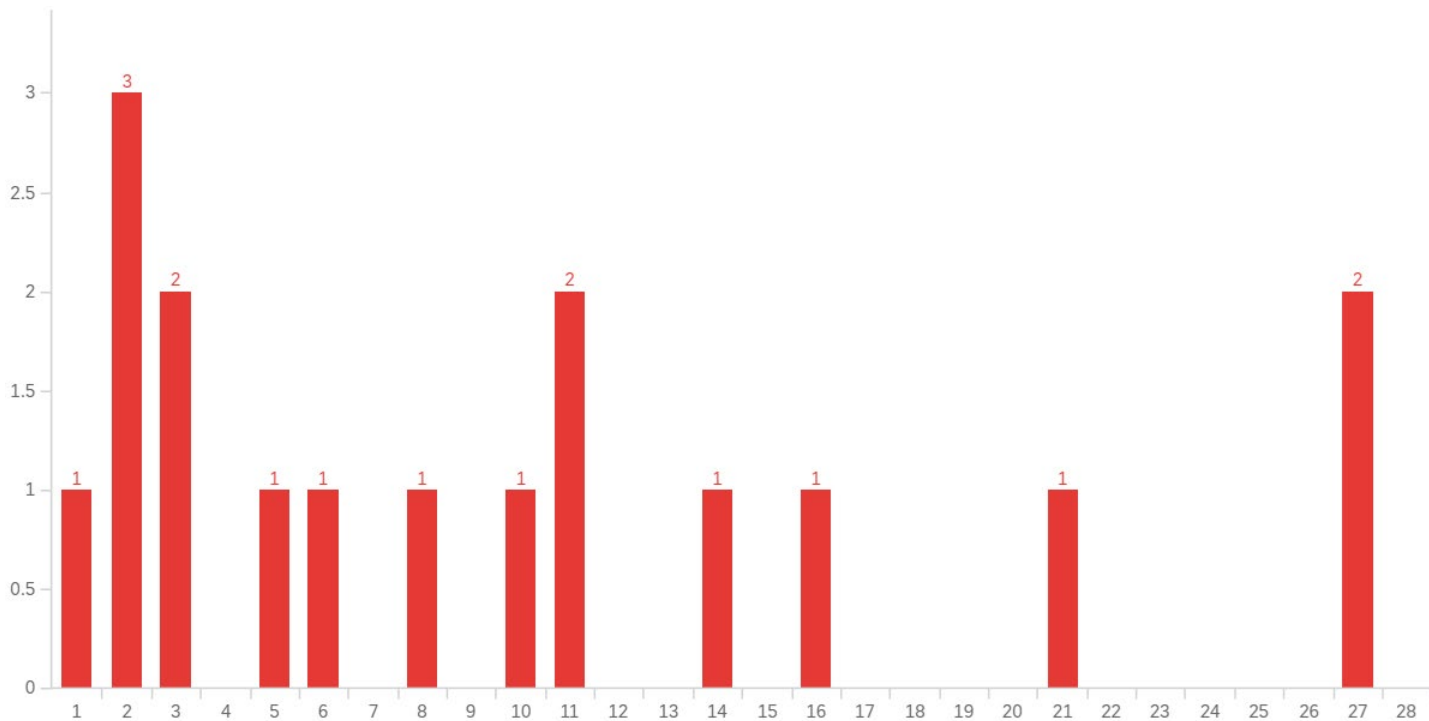
All the responses from Riverton: 2 years.

While creating the survey, we didn't foresee that two years ago Riverton Police branched off from Unified Police in June 2019, and 5 officers actually transferred from Lehi Police. Because of this information the responses from Riverton to this question are irrelevant and show inaccurate data as the question specifically asks for the current department.



Lehi Results

How many years have you been working for your *current* department?





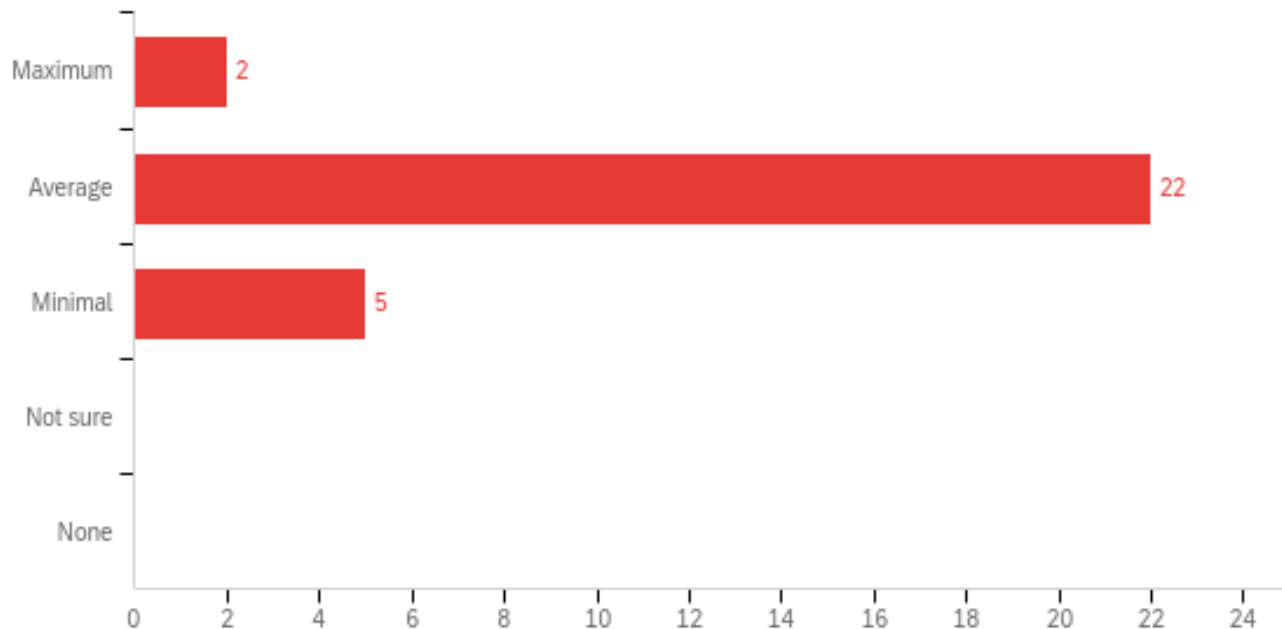
Familiarity with Autism

Lehi	Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Slightly familiar	Not familiar at all
Familiarity w/characteristics	0	4	10	1	0
Recognizing behavioral symptoms	1	4	8	2	0

Riverton	Extremely familiar	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Slightly familiar	Not familiar at all
Familiarity w/characteristics	1	6	5	2	0
Recognizing behavioral symptoms	0	6	6	2	0



What level of training do you feel you have received to deal with situations involving individuals with autism?





Types of Training

POST: Peace Officer Standards and Training

In-Service training: professional training or staff development effort

Supplementary: training approved by council

Special Course: involved in autism training

CIT: Crisis Intervention training

Other : response; working in mental health field.



Where did you receive your training on ASD? Riverton

POST : 10.71%

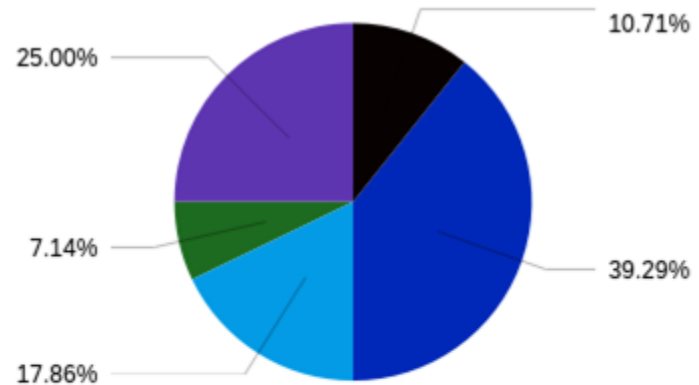
In-Service training : 39.29%

Supplementary: 17.86%

Special Course: 7.14%

CIT: 25.00%

Other : 0



POST

In-Service Training

Supplementary Training

Special Course

CIT

Other (Please specify)



Where did you receive your training on ASD? Lehi

POST : 15.79%

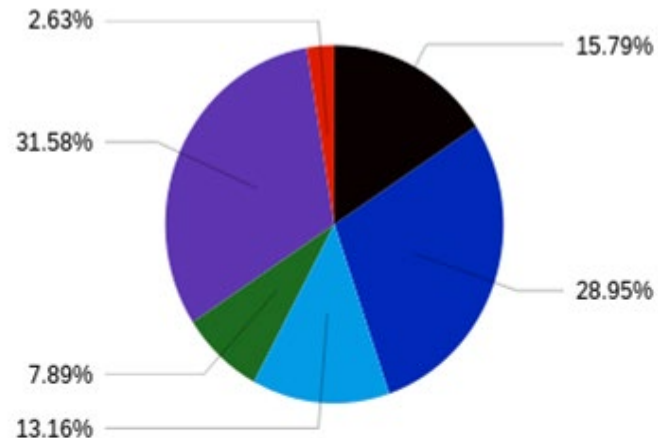
In-Service training : 28.95%

Supplementary: 13.16%

Special Course: 7.89%

CIT: 31.58%

Other : 2.63



POST

In-Service Training

Supplementary Training

Special Course

CIT

Other (Please specify)

Autism awareness training for Riverton

According to a press release for The City of Riverton Police, that stated police training on autism has been limited, therefore “Given this limitation, the new in-depth training has provided an enhanced framework and specific strategies that can be employed when officers interact with individuals with autism.”

In October and November of 2020, all 35 of Riverton’s sworn police officers have now completed a in depth training on ways to interact with individuals who are in the autism spectrum.

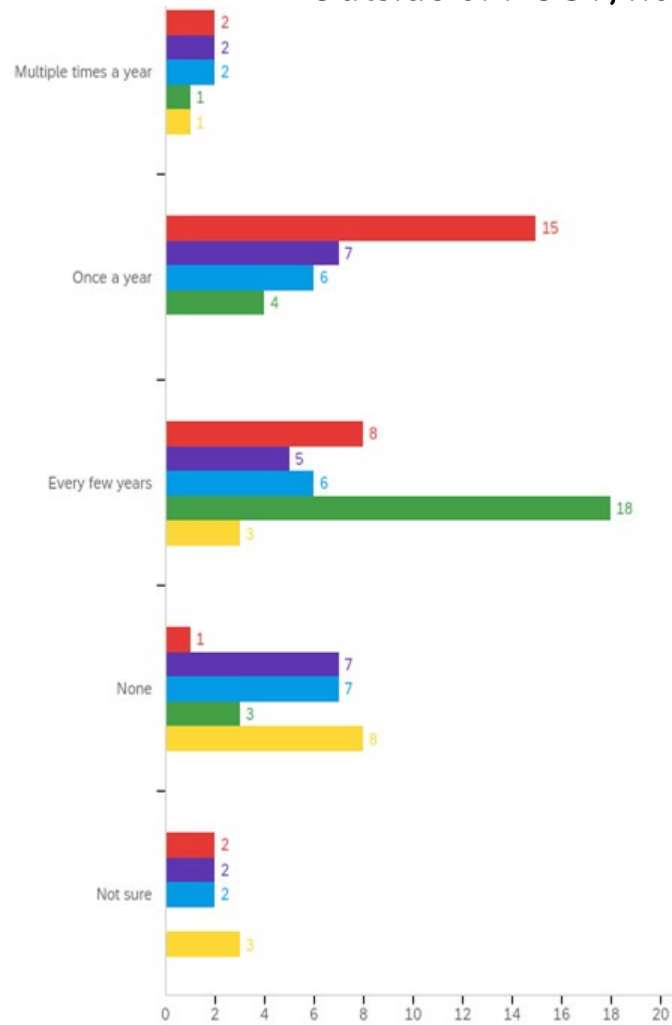
Purpose

- Department believes it will help when responding to calls for service that involve individuals with autism.
- How to understand and react with behaviors

(The City of Riverton Police)

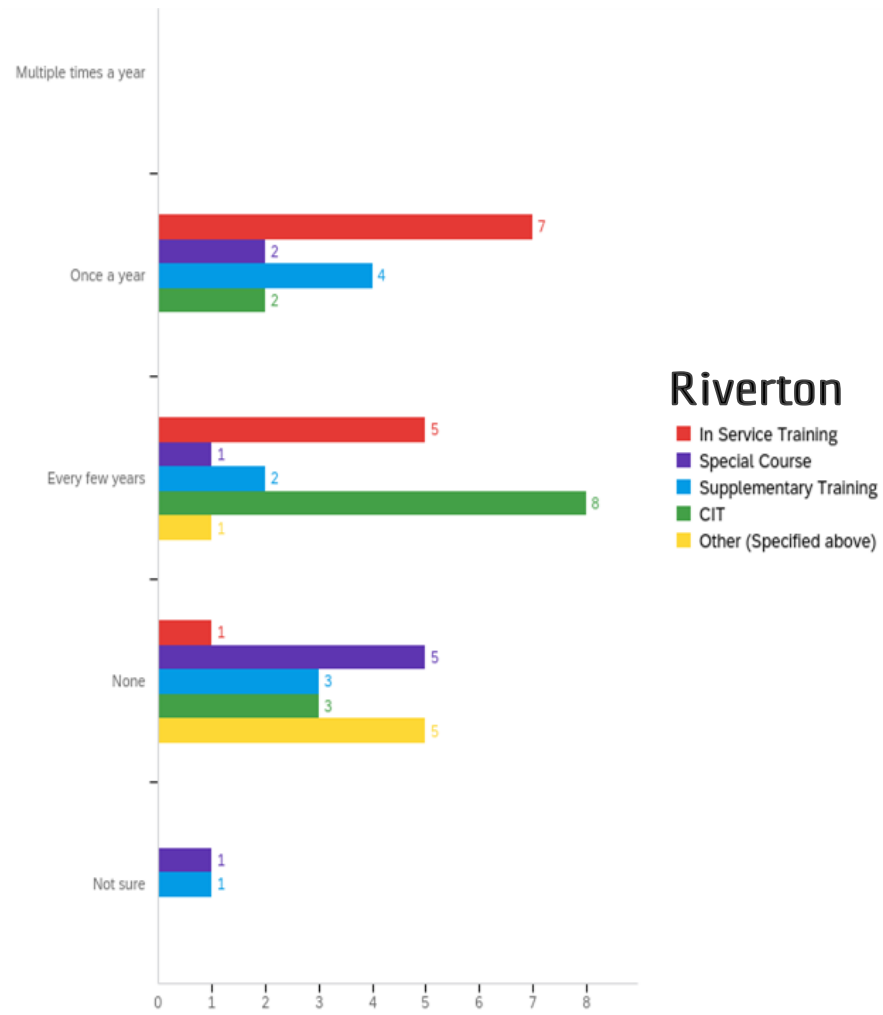


Outside of POST, how regularly is this training received/reinforced?



Lehi

- In Service Training
- Special Course
- Supplementary Training
- CIT
- Other (Specified above)

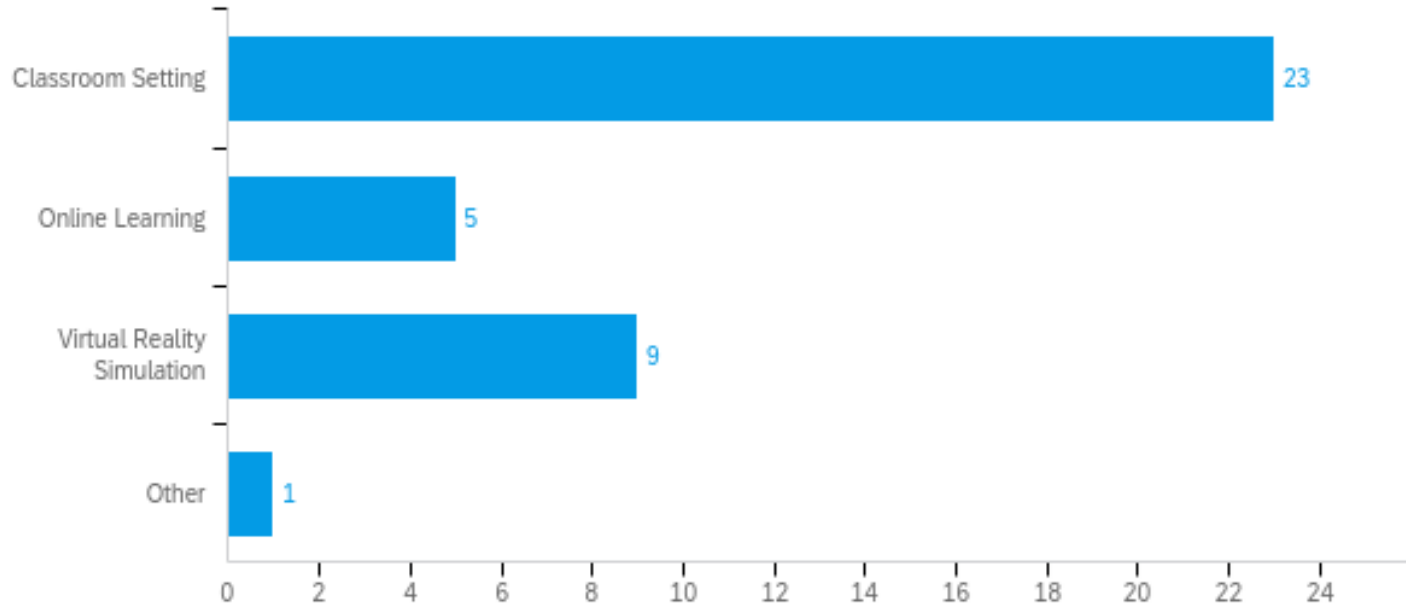


Riverton

- In Service Training
- Special Course
- Supplementary Training
- CIT
- Other (Specified above)



What would you find most helpful?

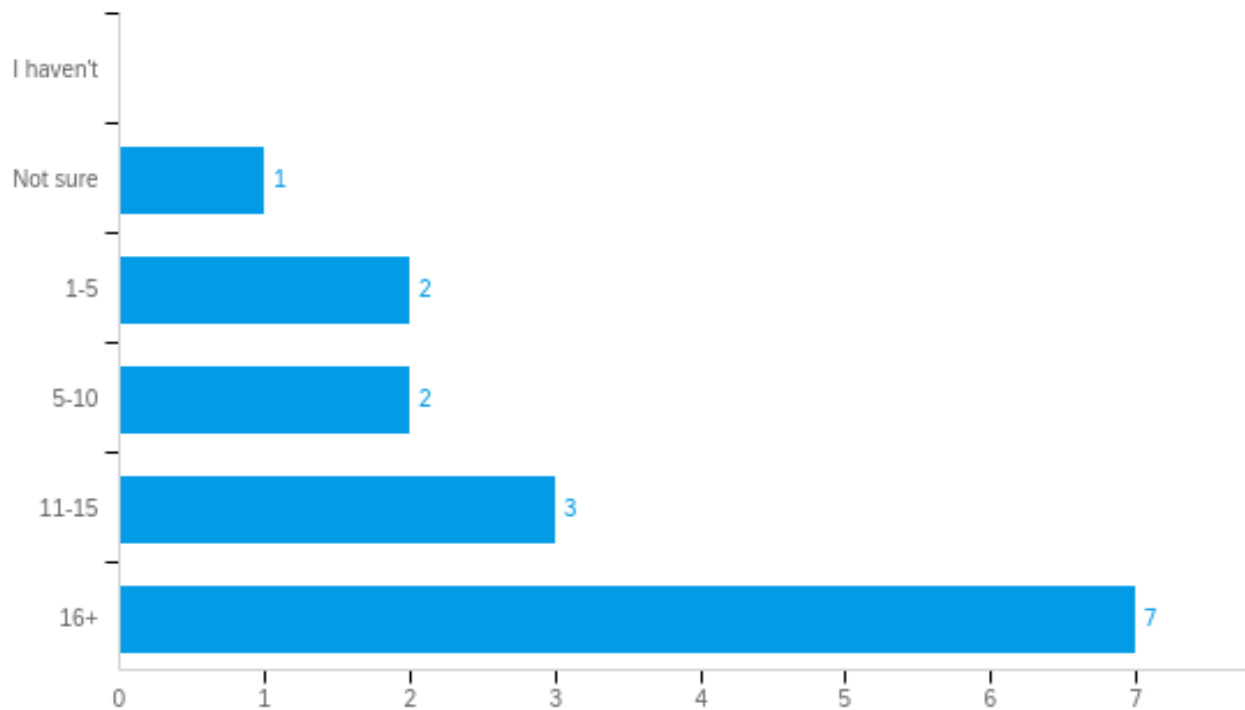




“It is recognized that autistic individuals can fall anywhere along a spectrum, and their condition is not always clear. However, within your policing experiences with your current department, how many times have you dealt with an individual you felt was autistic?”

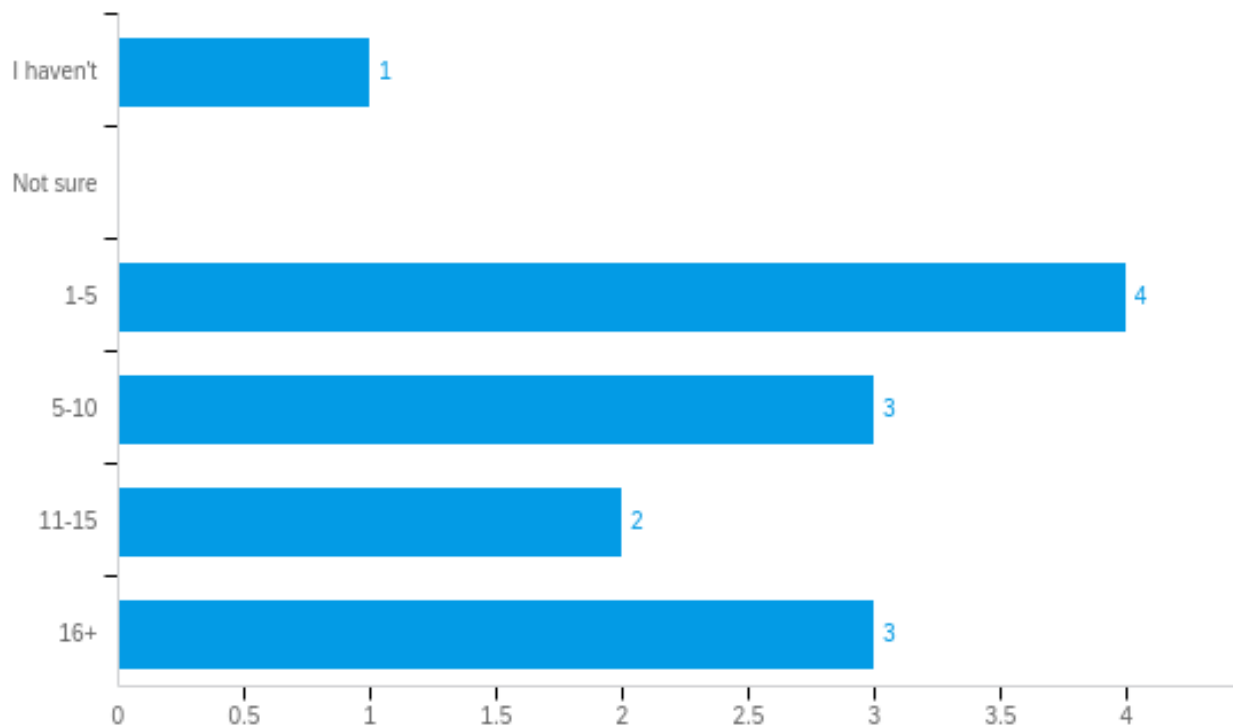


Lehi





Riverton





“Did you feel adequately prepared in those situations?”

Lehi

- Extremely: 3
- Somewhat: 7
- Mixed Feelings: 5
- Not Really: 0
- Not at all: 0

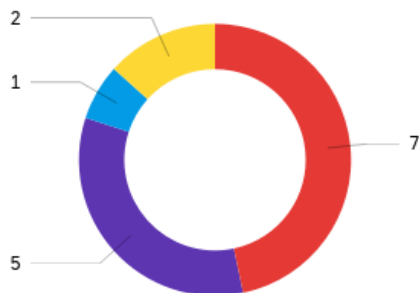
Riverton

- Extremely: 0
- Somewhat: 8
- Mixed Feelings: 4
- Not Really: 0
- Not at all: 0



Did your training assist in the outcome of the situation?

Lehi



ASD training contributed significantly to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

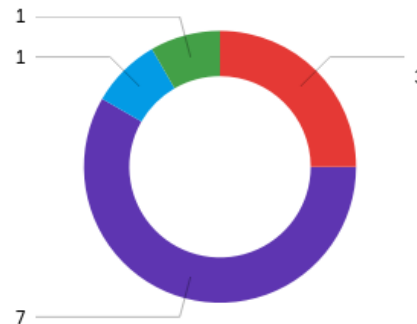
ASD training contributed marginally to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

ASD training contributed minimally to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

ASD training did not contribute to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

Not sure

Riverton



ASD training contributed significantly to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

ASD training contributed marginally to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

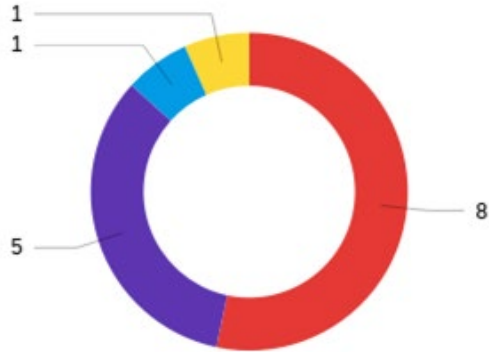
ASD training contributed minimally to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

ASD training did not contribute to how I was able to resolve ASD-related situations.

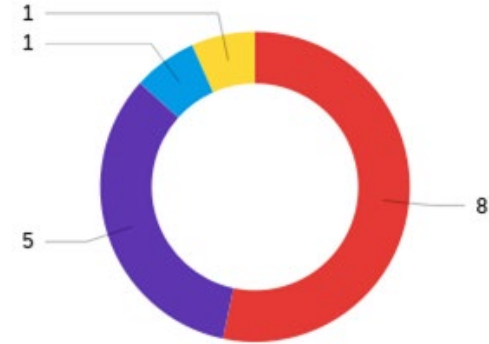
Not sure

"Additional ASD training should be made available to law enforcement."

Lehi



Riverton



Do you feel like this topic needs to be addressed in law enforcement?

In a report on law enforcement's training with ASD, Gardner et al., (2018) said their "[r]esults indicated that most officers received between 400 and 770 h of total training at the basic recruit levels, of which only 3-12 h were focused on mental health disorders." They also acknowledge that ASD is not a mental disorder and justifies specified training (Gardner et al., 2018).

Based on the responses from our survey and the report that was done, law enforcement does need to make some changes to their trainings with ASD. There needs to be more focus on recognizing those with autism so they can be handled in a better way.





Conclusion

Those who have ASD are more frequently resistant to change and like to stick to their routine, they have a strong dislike of new situations.

When there is an interaction with someone in law enforcement, this creates a new situation for them outside of their regular routine and can increase their stress significantly and/or cause a “mental shutdown”.

As officers receive training on how to best handle situations involving those with autism, they can feel more adequate and prepared for any situation they may encounter.



Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, March 25). *What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>.

Gardner, L., Campbell, J. M., & Westdal, J. (2019). Brief Report: Descriptive Analysis of Law Enforcement Officers' Experiences with and Knowledge of Autism. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 49(3), 1278–1283.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.uvu.edu/10.1007/s10803-018-3794-4>

Riverton Police Department Completes Comprehensive Autism Awareness Training. (n.d.). https://www.rivertonutah.gov/blog_detail_T55_R128.php.