



# Online Training Now Available

## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY



In an emergency, public safety personnel who are first to respond to the scene may encounter individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). To meet these individuals' unique needs, increasing their safety and minimizing trauma, first responders will benefit from knowing how to recognize their characteristics and learn ways to effectively interact with and respond to them.

The need for autism-specific training for public safety personnel is evidenced both nationally and locally. Almost daily, AMBER Alerts are issued for children with autism who have wandered from their homes. And, much too frequently, the search for those children ends with tragic results. Also, without specialized training, misunderstandings, miscommunications, or mishandling of situations may occur and cause harm, possibly including injury and death to individuals with ASD and/or to first responders.

Through the generous support of the Missouri Department of Mental Health, the Office of Autism Services partnered with Dennis Debbaudt, a nationally known expert on this subject, and the University of Missouri Extension, Fire and Rescue Training Institute, to produce *Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for Public Safety*, a web-based training module that meets continuing education requirements for Missouri peace officers and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel.

This training aims to provide credible information to public safety personnel who encounter individuals with ASD in a "first responder" role, minimizing risk to all involved and maximizing positive outcomes of such encounters, and it will be offered to qualified users at no cost for a period of three years.

While training for public safety personnel occurs throughout Missouri every year, this training represents a systemic effort to offer individuals the opportunity to increase knowledge and expand skills at a time and place of their choosing. It also avoids the challenges of staff turnover and shift work that preclude attendance at face-to-face presentations occurring during traditional business hours. Video footage and case studies embedded in the training contribute to learner engagement and help compensate for the more traditional classroom training format.

Given the certainty of public safety personnel encountering individuals who have ASD within their communities, it is prudent to provide positive strategies to them through a formalized statewide training program. Both individuals with ASD and the community will benefit from greater understanding, which supports improved outcomes.

To access this training, click on: <http://mufrti.org/online/index.shtml>.



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