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# Law Enforcement Encounters with Persons who are Developmentally Disabled

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Concepts and Issues Paper

March 2004

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose of the Document

This paper is designed to accompany the *Model Policy on Law Enforcement Encounters with Developmentally Disabled* developed by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center. This paper provides essential background material and supporting documentation to provide greater understanding of the developmental philosophy and implementation requirements for the model policy. This material will be of value to law enforcement executives in their efforts to tailor the model to the requirements and circumstances of their community and their law enforcement agency.

## II. THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSON

### A. Developmental Disabilities

A developmental disability is a potentially severe, chronic disability attributable to a physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments, resulting in substantial functional limitations to major life activities such as understanding and expression of language, learning, mobility, self-direction, self-care, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Developmental disabilities, such as those experienced by persons who have developmental delays, autism, or Tourette's syndrome, are not the same as and should not be confused with forms of mental illness such as schizophrenia or the more common mood disorders.

There are numerous forms of developmental disabilities, but one of the most common forms is autism. Many of the symptoms of persons with autism are the same or similar to persons with other forms of developmental disabilities. Therefore, this document highlights means for dealing with persons with autism, recognizing that the same approaches will be effective for persons with similar developmental disabilities.

As many as 1.5 million Americans are affected by autism—a figure that may grow nearly three-fold over the next decade. Therefore, most police officers will at some time encounter an autistic or otherwise developmentally disabled person. In fact, research indicates that the developmentally disabled (including the autistic) are about seven times more likely than others to come into contact with the police.

Autism, as most developmental disabilities, is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain. The exact cause is not known but is generally regarded to be biologically determined. It is a lifelong disability with no known cure, although some medications can be used to counteract certain symptoms of the disability. With maturity, some autistic persons and others with developmentally disabled are able to enhance their coping mechanisms for the primary functions affected by the affliction, such as communication, socialization, and decision-making. Poor interpersonal and social skills and verbalization are associated with developmental disabilities.

Persons with autism and other forms of developmental disabilities are generally nonviolent, unlike some paranoid schizophrenics, persons under the influence of certain controlled substances, and others suffering from serious mental illnesses.

Unfortunately, autism is a rapidly growing disorder and is the most common of the pervasive developmental disorders. According to the Autism Society of America (ASA), the disability affects between 2 and 6 individuals per 1,000 in the United States.<sup>1</sup> About four times more boys than girls are affected by the malady. This is essentially the only unique social characteristic of the disability, as it is evidenced in all races, ethnic groups, income and educational levels, and lifestyles.<sup>2</sup>

### B. Recognizing Autistic and Other Developmentally Disabled Persons

There is no single medical test that can diagnose autism. The trained diagnostician must rely on observation of an individual's communication skills, behavior, and developmental levels. The trained law enforcement officer will also have to rely on visual and verbal cues from individuals to make an informed judgment as to whether an individual may suffer from autism or similar disabilities. Police officers are neither trained nor expected to be mental health professionals in general or clinical diagnosticians in particular. The best that an officer can be expected to do is to understand the basic behavioral characteristics of developmentally disabled persons and make some basic reasoned judgments about whether a particular person fits the "profile" of an autistic person or is more likely to be suffering from some other form of mental disability, mental illness, or drug abuse. The ASA suggests that the following are the most common traits of autistic persons, and by extension, officers can use these as general char-

acteristics of persons with other forms of developmental disabilities:

- Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
- Difficulty in expressing needs; use of gestures or pointing instead of words
  - Repetition of words or phrases in place of normal, responsive language
  - Tendency to laugh, cry, or show distress for reasons not apparent to others
- Preference for being alone; aloof manner
- Tantrums
- Difficulty mixing with others
- Little or no eye contact
- Sustained odd play
- Spinning of objects
- Inappropriate attachments to objects
- Apparent over sensitivity or under sensitivity to pain
- No real fear of danger
- Noticeable physical over activity or extreme under activity
- Uneven gross or fine motor skills
- Unresponsiveness to verbal commands or cues; appearance of being deaf even though hearing is normal

It should be remembered that persons with autism and similar developmental disabilities are individuals. They have unique personalities and characteristics and are affected by their disability to different degrees. For example, persons who are less severely affected by autism may have only slight delays in speech or response to questions or commands but may have greater challenges in the area of social interaction. Both children and adults affected by autism may exhibit any combination of characteristics common to autism to any degree of severity. For example, contrary to popular conceptions of persons with autism, some children and adults with this disability will make eye contact, show affection, smile and laugh, and demonstrate a variety of other emotions, although to varying degrees. Autism is referred to as a spectrum disorder for these very reasons—because the symptoms and characteristics present themselves in a variety of combinations ranging from mild to severe.<sup>3</sup>

The following are some additional indicators—and variations of those already noted—that might suggest an individual is autistic or otherwise developmentally disabled:

- The individual may speak in monotone without expected inflections.
  - The individual may repeat exactly what an officer says to him.
  - The individual may engage in repetitive physical behavior or actions, such as hand flapping, finger flicking, or object twirling.
  - The individual may rock back and forth, pace, or engage in self-abuse.
  - The individual may have a pigeon-toed gait or running style, or may walk on the balls of the feet or on the toes.
  - The individual may be dressed inappropriately for the weather.
  - The individual may be wearing medical alert tags or possess other written material indicating his developmental disability.<sup>4</sup>

An additional authority adds the following as characteristics of developmentally disabled persons:

- The individual may display self-injurious behavior such as head butting or banging, or biting or scratching himself.
- The individual may exhibit aggressive behavior such as punching, biting, or head butting, particularly if fearful.

- The individual may have an aversion to touch, especially around the neck and face or from behind.

- The person may have an inappropriate fear of animals, especially dogs.<sup>5</sup>

### III. COMMON POLICE ENCOUNTERS

#### A. Characteristics of Autism and Related Disabilities

The foregoing lists of common characteristics suggest that police officers may encounter such persons in a wide variety of situations. The vast majority of these will relate to nuisance calls or situations, unruly behavior, persons acting suspiciously or suspected of being mentally ill or on drugs, or situations in which a crime has been presumed to have been committed even though the person with autism is not aware of his or her wrongdoing.

1. *Wandering.* A "wanderer," is one who has temporarily evaded or escaped from his adult supervisor and struck out randomly on his own. Wandering is a common characteristic of persons with developmental disabilities. Many are very adept at escaping from their parent, guardian, caregiver, or institutional setting whenever the slightest opportunity arises. When it does, they often run aimlessly and may be spotted walking down the middle of a street, inappropriately clothed for the weather conditions, walking through neighborhood yards, entering unlocked homes or cars, or wandering about stores or places of business and creating suspicion by such actions.

2. *Seizure-like symptoms.* Another potential response of the autistic person to the officer's presence and the issuance of verbal commands is to fall to or sit on the ground or floor, curl up in a fetal position or hug himself, begin rocking or rhythmic motions, and avoid eye contact with the officer. Research indicates that between 25 and 40 percent of persons with autism have one or more seizures before the age of 21.<sup>6</sup> Thus, officers often encounter developmentally disabled persons after calls for medical assistance.

3. *Domestic disputes and disturbance calls.* Many, if not most, contacts with autistic persons involve non-criminal activity. Many disabled persons live in supervised surroundings with their parent, guardian, or caregiver. They are often generally functional and hold jobs and conduct somewhat normal yet restricted lifestyles. But, due to their disability, they may overreact to a situation, event, noise, or other incident that would not normally warrant such a reaction. The initial call for assistance to the police may therefore appear to deal with a domestic dispute or a public disturbance in which the caregiver could not control the actions of the disabled person. When regaining control, the caregiver may appear to be fighting with the individual. For example, a common and accepted technique used to calm and control such persons who become combative or excessively agitated is to hug them tightly as one would do in a "bear hug" with their arms pinned to their sides.

In these and most other situations, the officer's best source of information concerning the individual's condition and how best to deal with him comes from those who know him best—a caregiver, parent or guardian, or other responsible adult or supervisor, such as an older brother or sister. When these individuals are available or can be readily contacted, officers should avoid confronting the suspect, move to a safe distance that also provides the individual with a less threatening comfort zone, allow the individual to decompress on his own, and attempt to gather information from knowledgeable individuals.

For example, officers should determine the extent of the individual's disability and whether he is or can be aggressive, is in

possession of a potentially dangerous item. Officers should also establish whether he responds negatively to certain types of stimuli such as touching, responds positively to other types of actions, and has another person at home, work, or in an institutional setting that he feels comfortable with and more responsive to. In these and related settings, if a mental health crisis intervention team or specialist is available, that team or person should be called to assist in the intervention.

4. *Strange and bizarre behavior.* Debbaudt and Rothman, two specialists in this field, offer several other common scenarios that are worth considering.<sup>7</sup> They note that

*"[Calls often] involve complaints of strange behavior, such as being in an unfamiliar place or just wandering around or doing unusual things. Developmentally disabled persons have not developed the social awareness usually expected by others in the community. Law enforcement must not forget the characteristics of individuals with developmental disabilities when responding to calls. For example, if they receive a call for assistance involving a stranger sitting on a porch swing or rocking chair or looking into the windows of a house, it may not indicate a person on drugs or a potential burglar, but rather an individual with developmental disabilities who just wanted to self-stimulate through rhythmic motion or to see what was inside the house."*

In another example, a complaint from a store owner of a person rearranging items or display objects may not be a shoplifter, but, instead, a person with autism engaging in the obsessive-compulsive behavior of "ordering" those items in some sequence that other individuals may not notice.

While responding officers always must consider their own safety, as well as that of others, in such circumstances, presence of police officers may cause further inappropriate behavior by individual with autism.

5. *Offensive or suspicious persons.* Persons with developmental disabilities do not understand social conventions and appropriate social behavior. This may trigger suspicion on the part of those who witness offensive or suspicious actions in public and who subsequently call for police assistance.

For example, a developmentally disabled adult, like some retarded adults, may be drawn to a playground in order to use the swings (because this repetitive motion provides pleasure) and be seen by others as a stranger playing with young children. The developmentally disabled person would not recognize that it is considered inappropriate for an unknown adult to play with children, but parents or others would understandably feel uncomfortable, if not threatened, by this. Not aware of the person's autism, parents may feel that the adult may be a potential child molester or that their children are being stalked or are otherwise at risk and call for police to intervene.

The autistic person's lack of understanding of acceptable social conventions may manifest itself in other ways. Some persons have normal sexual urges and drives but often lack the understanding of when, where, or how to act upon these feelings. Thus they may engage in public masturbation, nakedness, or apparent lewd behavior, or may touch others inappropriately, not necessarily for sexual stimulation or pleasure but from curiosity.

In other cases, the autistic or otherwise developmentally disabled person may be attracted to or infatuated by someone of the opposite sex and attempt to speak with or follow that person. Developmentally disabled persons do not understand the emotions of others and have never learned to key in to them. Therefore, facial gestures, body language, subtle remarks, or attempts to extricate oneself—signals that most individuals would easily recognize as indications that

another person does not want to interact with them—are not understood by the autistic person. The simplest form of verbal exchange may lead a person with autism to believe that he has established a new and close friend. In such cases, the "new friend" may experience repeated, unannounced, and unwanted visits at home, at work, or in public and believe that the person is a stalker.

Persons with autism or other developmental disabilities are also often drawn to water and may be found swimming or splashing in public fountains or in public restrooms turning faucets on and off continuously. Their unusual and inappropriate attachment to objects often leads them to pick up an item at a store simply because it catches their attention or interest—an act that often leads to charges of shoplifting.

Inappropriate social skills such as unwarranted laughing or crying, walking on one's toes while staring into space, turning lights on and off repetitively, and becoming mesmerized by a ceiling fan for endless periods of time are examples of public behaviors that can scare persons, make them believe that the autistic person is on drugs or is perhaps a dangerous mentally disturbed person, and thus result in a request for police intervention.

Little or no fear of danger can place persons with autism and other developmental disabilities in precarious spots and dangerous situations. They may climb to high places such as ledges or bridges. Injuries from these and related types of actions can also involve police in responding to perceived suicides, endangered persons, or accident situations.

## **B. General Rules for Deescalating Encounters**

If officers remember some of the most significant factors that underlie a developmentally disabled person's fears and anxieties, officers can generally resolve a situation without allowing or causing it to escalate into a more serious situation.

For example, knowing that persons with autism are hypersensitive to loud noises and flashing lights, officers should turn off emergency lights and sirens, and avoid using their vehicle's public address system to issue directions. Knowing that a developmentally disabled person frequently speaks in monotone, cannot follow detailed instructions, or may repeat instructions, commands, statements, or questions, officers should be alerted to the fact that the person may be developmentally disabled and that this is common behavior, not an effort to be incorrigible, belligerent, or noncompliant.

In many instances, first responding officers will encounter situations in which an individual is highly agitated. There may be signs and symptomatic behaviors that lead an officer to feel the person is mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or suffering from a combination of problems. But, while the individual is highly agitated and distressed, it is not possible to make an informed judgment about the nature or seriousness of the individual's condition and to take remedial action. Therefore, the first objective in these conditions is to de-escalate the overall situation. Following are some steps that officers should and should not take to do this:<sup>8</sup>

- *Look for a personal ID.* Many autistic persons do not like to wear tags or bracelets because of their hypersensitivity to the feel of objects. So look for ID tags on shoes, belts, or other objects. In some cases, a card may be found on the individual noting that he is autistic or otherwise developmentally disabled and possibly that he is nonverbal. It should also provide a contact name and telephone number.

- *Call the contact person.* The contact person is an officer's best ally in dealing with developmentally disabled persons, as he or she can provide specific advice on means to calm the person and things that the officer should or should not do until the contact

person arrives on the scene.

- *Prepare for a long encounter.* Dealings with autistic persons cannot be rushed unless there is an emergency situation. Officers should inform their dispatcher and/or supervisor that this may be the case if circumstances dictate.

- *Remain calm both verbally and in body language.* The sternness and volume of your voice will have no effect on a developmentally disabled person. Use body language. Keep your voice calm and keep your hands to your sides. If the individual must be read his *Miranda* rights, he may not understand what they mean even if he says that he does.

- *Keep the commotion down.* Eliminate, to the degree possible, loud sounds, bright lights, and other sources of over stimulation. Turn off sirens and flashers, ask others to move away, or, if possible, move the person to more peaceful surroundings.

- *Keep animals away.* Keep canines in their vehicle and preferably away from the area and ensure that other dogs are removed.

- *Repeat short, direct phrases in a calm voice.* For example, rather than saying something like "Let's go over to my car where we can talk," simply say "Come here," "Come here," "Come here" while pointing until you gain his attention and compliance. Gaining eye contact in this and related situations is essential. To do so, simply start by saying "Look at me," "Look at me," "Look at me" while pointing to his eyes and yours.

- *Don't touch or take by the hand.* Unless the person is in an emergency situation (e.g., has been seriously injured or is in imminent peril), use verbalization to gain compliance and work with the person in a quiet non-threatening manner.

- *Use soft gestures.* When asking the person to do something, such as look at you, speak and gesture softly.

- *Use direct and simple language.* Slang and expressions (e.g., spread 'em) have no meaning to persons with autism. Normally, they will understand only the simplest and most direct language (e.g., come, sit, stand).

- *Don't interpret odd behavior as belligerent.* In a tense or even unfamiliar situation, a person with autism will tend to shut down and close off unwelcome stimuli. For example, he will often cover his ears or eyes, lie down, shake or rock himself, repeat your questions, sing, hum, make noises, or repeat information in a robotic way. This behavior is a developmentally disabled person's protective mechanism for dealing with troubling or frightening situations. Don't stop the person from repetitive behavior unless it is harmful to him or others.

- *Be aware of different forms of communication.* For example, some autistic persons carry with them a book of universal communication icons. Pointing to one or more of these icons will allow the individual to communicate where he lives, what his mother's or father's name is, what his address is, or what he may want, like a drink. Picture cards can be used in the same basic manner.

- *Don't get angry at antisocial behaviors.* For example, when asked a simple question like "Are you all right?" the disabled persons may scream, "I'M FINE!!" They just don't understand that this is not appropriate, as the author of these guidelines points out.'

- *Maintain a safe distance.* Provide the individual with a zone of comfort that will also serve as a buffer for officer safety.

### **C. Taking an Autistic Person into Custody**

Officers should take all reasonable steps to avoid taking an autistic or otherwise developmentally disabled person into custody. Normally, when it is known that one is dealing with a person with such a disability, this information can be explained to complainants who may have a cause of action. With this infor-

mation, many of them will be understanding and allow the police officers to deal with the situation in their own way. This normally involves release of the person to the care of a parent or other authorized caregiver.

However, there may be situations in which complainants are not as understanding or do not have the authority to dismiss the incident. For example, a person who is autistic carries an item out of a store and the police are called in on a report of shoplifting. The cashier on duty may not have the authority to dismiss the incident. In this and other cases, store employees may be required under a "zero tolerance" company policy to seek arrest and prosecution of all shoplifters.

In some cases, an officer may be required by law or departmental policy to make an arrest. In other situations, an officer may not be able to determine within the context of the incident that an individual is developmentally disabled and may make an arrest accordingly.

If an officer recognizes or strongly suspects that a person is developmentally disabled and an arrest must be made, particular care should be given to the manner in which the person is placed in physical custody. Recognizing that an arrest in general and constraints in particular may elicit a strong physical and emotional response from the individual, officers should, where possible, contact the next of kin, an authorized adult caregiver, or other responsible person to assist in the arrest and accompany the subject to the police station or jail.

If caregivers are not readily available, officers should attempt to summon a community mental health professional, a mental health crisis intervention worker (such as may be available through the local chapter of the ASA), or an on-duty officer who has had experience in dealing with autistic persons and those with similar disabilities. In all cases, a supervisor should be summoned to the scene. If an officer must take a person into custody, he or she should determine, preferably with the aid of a supervisor, whether handcuffs or other restraints are required. Physical sensations, even odd clothing textures, can cause such a person great anxiety and agitation. If departmental policy provides for leeway in handcuffing prisoners, and it is determined that the person can be controlled by means short of physical constraint, handcuffs should not be used.

If a crisis worker or other individual mentioned above is available, that person may be able to gain voluntary compliance of the person. If not, officers should tell the person that they are taking him with them to a safe place and reinforce this by using calm and reassuring language and gentle handling. If the person resists, officers should take only those measures reasonably believed to be necessary to gain compliance. However, officers should be cautioned to avoid placing excessive body weight on the person in the handcuffing or restraint process. Many autistic persons suffer from asthma or related respiratory problems. Excessive weight applied to their rib cage can be physically damaging or result in a respiratory attack. By the same token, such persons should not be transported or temporarily constrained in the so-called "hog-tie" or four-point restraint position with hands and feet bound behind their back. While this is not advisable for prisoners in general unless they are placed on their side, the potential respiratory difficulties of developmentally disabled persons make this a particularly dangerous restraint alternative.

If the individual is not handcuffed, two officers should accompany him, one of which should sit with the person and continue to monitor him and provide reassurance. If at all possible, the arresting officers should be the individual who transports the subject based on the understanding that autistic persons do not adapt

well to change and the fact that the arresting officers will know the person best at this point in time and have hopefully gained some level of trust. If a mental health professional or volunteer can assist in this effort, he or she should be allowed to do so.

Whether at a jail or at a police facility, a person with autism should never be incarcerated in a general holding facility, "bullpen," or lockup with the general population. This will almost invariably further confuse the individual and may precipitate a serious emotional or physical reaction. Lockups and jails are replete with persons, odors, uncommon surroundings, and noises that are inherently abhorrent to persons with autism. Moreover, an autistic person placed in these conditions is highly susceptible to being victimized physically, emotionally, or otherwise. Persons with such developmental disabilities are very compliant and easy targets for victimization. The developmentally disabled person should be segregated from others until alternative arrangements can be made, such as transfer to the custody of an institution, parents, or other authorized and responsible caregivers.

Calming techniques should be used during this period until things can be sorted out and a decision made on final disposition. If a responsible caregiver can be reached by phone prior to arrival, he or she may be able to provide basic information on the likes and dislikes of the individual and some directions on calming techniques that normally work for that person. If information of this type cannot be obtained readily, the person should be taken to a quiet location. Lights should be subdued and the location should be as free from odors as possible. Many autistic persons respond in negative physical ways to strange odors. So, for example, locations when persons are cooking, eating, or smoking or where there are strong disinfectant or other odors should be avoided where possible. Normally, a vacant office where the lights can be dimmed and the door shut to reduce the noise is suitable.

In addition, some persons who are autistic carry items with them that are analogous to security blankets. For example, many such persons gain pleasure and comfort from squeezing specific items such as a plastic ball or a foam rubber object. This provides a soothing sensation that reduces anxiety and aggression. If the person had such an item in his possession when contact was first made, it should be made available to him.

#### **D. Interviews**

The diversity among autistic persons can create its own set of problems because some persons may not clearly show signs of their handicap until they are questioned more closely. In these types of cases, a police interviewer may sense that there is something unusual about the manner in which the person acts or responds to questions. These behaviors, previously noted, can cause interviewers to make assumptions about the person that are untrue or misleading. Even high-functioning autistic persons retain aspects of the auditory, sensory, communication, and related problems that have been noted previously.

For example, the persons' inability to gain or maintain eye contact would understandably be seen as an indicator that the person is attempting to hide something or is being untruthful. Interviewers and interrogators may attempt to solicit more information by showing great personal appreciation and friendliness, mock sympathy, or personal understanding for their "situation," or may plant suggestions to gain responses. Autistic persons may have a variety of reactions to such interview and interrogation techniques. For example, they may believe that the officer who shows personal friendship, sympathy and helpful understanding is a true friend. As such, the disabled person may simply go along with whatever suggestions the officer may make under the belief that a "friend" would

not be wrong or misguide them. Persons with autism may respond affirmatively to suggestions that they saw things, committed acts, or were accomplices in activities to please their "friend."

Persons who are autistic are typically guileless, honest, and straightforward in their approach to others and believe that others are the same with them. They do not understand trickery or deceit just as they typically do not comprehend innuendo, jokes, slang, or sarcasm. For example, if an autistic person was warned to "watch yourself, buddy," he might start looking at himself, or, if he was told "You and Jim took that car, didn't you?" he might simply respond with "Yes" or "Jim"—the last thing he heard.

Common interview and interrogation techniques that are designed to pry information from individuals by stating half-truths or using trickery can lead an autistic person and the investigator down the wrong road. An autistic witness may simply agree with statements that he hears from an investigator, parrot or agree to assumptions about events made by officers, or just change the subject entirely, leaving the officer to believe that the individual is being evasive.

Because of these factors, officers who are questioning victims, witnesses, or suspects suspected of being developmentally disabled should go out of their way to be as straightforward as possible. They should avoid jumping to conclusions, making off hand suggestions, completing sentences or thoughts for slow-to-respond persons, and using trickery or subterfuge to gain information or extract confessions. When an officer or investigator begins to establish that something is not quite right with the interviewee and that it may involve a mental disability, he or she should seek the assistance of a trained mental health professional or volunteer. In cases where criminal charges are pending, investigators should consult the prosecutor's office to determine, among other things, whether the suspect could even willingly and knowingly waive his right to counsel. A developmentally disabled person may have no understanding of the "right to counsel" or "the right to remain silent."

## **V. DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS AS VICTIMS**

One cannot forget that developmentally disabled persons are more likely to be victimized because of their lack of social skills and awareness, their susceptibility to suggestion from others, and their lack of full appreciation for the difference between lawful and unlawful acts. In the case of a developmentally disabled "runner," the disabled person may find himself lost in an unsafe neighborhood or environment, suffer exposure to the elements due to inappropriate clothing or contact with dangerous substances, or, in some cases, suffer abuse or neglect from caregivers in private or institutional settings.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> K. Curry, M. Posluszny, and S. Kraska, "Training Criminal Justice Personnel to Recognize Offenders with Disabilities," *Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services News in Print*, Winter 1993.

<sup>2</sup> As most persons with autism are male, the textual references to these individuals are masculine. However, statements made are applicable to males and females alike.

<sup>3</sup> "Common Characteristics of Autism," Autism Society of America, [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org), accessed January 22, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis Debbaudt and Darla Rothman, Ph.D., "Contact with Individuals with Autism: Effective Resolutions," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, April 2001, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Davis and Wendy Goldband Schunick, *Dangerous Encounters: Avoiding Perilous Situations with Autism*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, 2002, pp. 34-38.

<sup>6</sup> See notes 3.

<sup>7</sup> See note 7, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis Debbaudt, "Autism, Advocates, and Law Enforcement Professionals: Recognizing and Reducing Risk Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders," Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002, pp. 29-30.

Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this model policy incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no "model" policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors.

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