

# Information For People With Autism

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Persons with autism who are able to navigate the community without assistance should strongly consider developing a personal handout for the police. Remember that the initial uninformed contact with police presents the highest potential for a negative outcome.

Some suggestions to consider during sudden interactions with police:

- **Do not attempt to flee**
- **Do not make sudden movements**
- **Try to remain calm**
- **Verbally let officer know you have autism. If nonverbal, use alternative communication tools, such as a simple sign language card, that indicates the need to write**
- **Obtain permission or signal intentions before reaching into a coat or pants pocket, or reaching into a car glove box**
- **If unable to answer questions, consider use of a generic or person-specific autism information card**
- **If you lose the ability to speak when under stress, consider wearing an alert bracelet or necklace that is easy to see--one that lets the reader know you have an information card**
- **Ask officer to contact an advocate, if necessary and possible**
- **For the best protection of all involved, the person with autism who has been arrested should, either verbally or through an information card, invoke the right to remain silent and ask to be represented by an attorney**
- **If you are a victim or are reporting a crime, you do not need to have an attorney present to speak to the police, but you may want the police to contact a family member, advocate or friend who can help you through the interview process**
- **Carry the phone number of an advocacy organization or personal advocate, relative or friend**

Everyone should take precautions to avoid becoming victims of criminal activity. Unfortunately, persons with autism may need to take extra precautions. In order to avoid detection, arrest, and prosecution, criminally bent individuals become skilled at picking out easy victims. Robbers and con artists will notice unusual behavior when they select their next victim. An unarmed robber or con artist will operate in public places. Anywhere

there's regular pedestrian traffic or large public gatherings will afford a criminal the chance to identify or mark victims. If you are threatened or asked to give up money or valuables, do not resist. Give them what they want. These things can be replaced. Once in a safe area, call the police.

To avoid victimization from street crimes or abusers:

- Avoid areas that are unfamiliar to you
- Travel in groups if possible or walk with the crowd
- Do not dawdle or appear rushed in a crowd
- Park in a secure area
- Keep car doors locked
- Take a look around the parking lot before unlocking doors and exiting vehicle
- Arrive with the crowd to work, school, events
- Avoid gawking
- Do not maintain eye contact
- Let someone know of your travel plans
- Do not carry large amounts of cash
- Dress to suit the area
- Stay in well lit areas
- Do not wander or explore off well traveled pedestrian walkways or vehicular avenues

Contact your local law enforcement agency and suggest they contact POAC for ongoing law enforcement training sessions.



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The Education Leader for the Autism Community  
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