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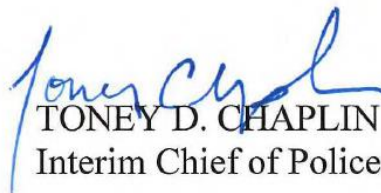
## Autism Awareness

As police officers, we respond to hundreds of calls for service each day and encounter individuals involved in emergency situations under the influence of substances, engaged in fights or arguments, or those who are victims and witnesses to criminal acts. Among those people we encounter are those individuals in our community who are on the autism spectrum. People who are on the autism spectrum can exhibit mannerisms and characteristics that can be easily misinterpreted by law enforcement. Being aware of the range of ways autism presents will allow you to better assist these members of the public and more safely carry out your job.

The Department has recently collaborated with the Autism, Asperger's Spectrum Coalition for Education, Networking and Development (AASCEND) to create a training video for law enforcement. The video discusses some of the common characteristics exhibited by people on the autism spectrum and how those characteristics may be misinterpreted by police. The video also provides strategies to effectively interact with people on the spectrum when responding to calls for service. In addition to the video, the Department has created the attached resource sheet that lists common traits and how they may be misinterpreted. This sheet also provides a list of resources for autism information and services.

Members shall view the training video and can access the training video by using the following link: <https://youtu.be/EMEn187QiQw>

Training coordinators will provide roll-call training with the necessary training video and material, as well as the attestation form to document that members have received, viewed, and understood the policy. Signed attestations and acknowledgement forms shall be maintained by the training coordinators at the unit. Training coordinators must enter all members into HRMS to document the training received (under the course code, course session, course description).

  
TONEY D. CHAPLIN  
Interim Chief of Police

*Per DB 15-141, both sworn and non-sworn members are required to electronically acknowledge this Department Bulletin in HRMS. By acknowledging this Department Bulletin in HRMS, members are also confirming that they have read the resource sheet that lists common traits and how they may be misinterpreted, and viewed the training video.*



January 5, 2017

RC2017-0001

## Autism Awareness for Law Enforcement (video)

San Francisco police officers respond to hundreds of calls for service each day and encounter a multitude of individuals who sometimes are involved in emergency situations or are victims of crimes. Some members of our community require special care and attention. People who are on the autism spectrum can exhibit mannerisms and characteristics that can be easily misinterpreted by law enforcement.

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Training coordinators must enter all members into HRMS via:

Enterprise Learning / Student Enrollment / Enroll by Group  
Course Code RC2017, Session 0001.

Per DB 15-141, **both sworn and non-sworn members** are required to electronically acknowledge this roll-call training in HRMS. **By acknowledging this roll-call training in HRMS, members are also confirming that they have read the resource sheet that lists common traits and how they may be misinterpreted, and viewed the training video.**



Video Source: SFPD Video Production Unit, L. Pai  
Training Type: ROLL-CALL TRAINING/VIDEO

## Autism Police Training

Autism is a spectrum condition. Not every autistic individual exhibits every trait. These traits are easily misunderstood.

Autistic Trait	Possible Inaccurate Interpretation
1. Does not make eye contact	Could be interpreted as being shifty or lying
2. Poor auditory processing, so may miss and not respond to commands	Could seem uncooperative or resistant
3. Loud monotone voice	Could seem belligerent
4. Expressive language difficulties, so may not be able to answer questions or explain quickly or clearly	Could appear uncooperative
5. Poor spatial abilities, may stand or sit too close to someone, may hold up hand to keep the area around self clear	Could appear threatening
6. Uncoordinated or jerky body movements or gait	Could be interpreted as being drunk or on drugs
7. Difficulty multitasking or responding to more than one command at a time	Could be interpreted as being uncooperative
8. Does not understand social big picture or social relationships	May seem not to respect authority
9. Often unable to read facial expressions	May appear unwilling to engage
10. Easily overwhelmed by loud language or multiple commands. Might put hands over ears.	Could appear to be refusing to cooperate
11. Honest and literal	Could be interpreted as being personally rude or sarcastic
12. Inappropriate laughter	Could be interpreted as mocking or disrespectful
13. Can be unusually sensitive to touch, may experience touch as pain and pull away	Could be interpreted as resisting or fighting
14. May not show facial expression or smile	Could appear angry or dangerous
15. May be drawn to shiny or reflective objects such as badges or eyeglasses	Might seem to be invading officer's safety zone

### Possible Distinguishing Characteristics

- Odd, perhaps wooden or jerky body movement
- Poor eye contact
- Repetitive body motions like hand flapping
- Voice too loud or soft

### Tips for Interacting with Autistic Adults

- Minimize sensory stimulation of lights and siren.
- Give calm, clear commands, one at a time, with time to comply after each command.
- A victim may need an advocate to explain what happened.
- If arrested, a person with autism should NOT be put with other prisoners. People with autism can be socially naïve and easily victimized.

## Resources for Autism Information and Help

**AASCEND** - A support and action organization for autism spectrum adults, their families, educators and professionals P.O. Box 591021, San Francisco, CA 94159-1021 [www.aascend.org](http://www.aascend.org)  
[info@aascend.org](mailto:info@aascend.org)

**Autism Society SF Bay Area** - Advocacy and resources for autistics and their families (650) 637-7772  
PO Box 249, San Mateo, CA 94401 [info@sfautismsociety.org](mailto:info@sfautismsociety.org)

**Golden Gate Regional Center** - Services and support to individuals with developmental disabilities including autism in Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo County. 1355 Market Street Suite 220, San Francisco, CA 94103 Phone: (415) 546-9222 **After-Hours Response: (415) 517-4503** [www.ggrc.org](http://www.ggrc.org)

**People with Disabilities Foundation** - Education and advocacy for people with psychiatric and/or developmental disabilities, with or without physical disabilities. 507 Polk St, Suite 430, San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 931-3070 [info@pwwdf.org](mailto:info@pwwdf.org)

**STAR Center for Autism** - Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute, medical, psychological counseling and diagnostic services. 401 Parnassus Ave, San Francisco, CA 94143 Phone: (415) 502-3500  
[star@ucsf.edu](mailto:star@ucsf.edu)

**Support for Families of Children with Disabilities** - Support, advocacy and resources for families of children with disabilities. 1663 Mission St., SF, CA 94103 (415) 282-7494 [info@supportforfamilies.org](mailto:info@supportforfamilies.org)

**The San Francisco District Attorney Victim Services Division** - Advocacy, Victims Compensation Claims, and Restitution. The goal is to ensure safety; help victims of crime mitigate the trauma of crime, navigate the criminal justice system and rebuild their lives. (415) 553-9044 850 Bryant Street, Room 320 SF, CA 94112 [victimservices@sfgov.org](mailto:victimservices@sfgov.org) [sfdistrictattorney.org/victim-services](http://sfdistrictattorney.org/victim-services)

**The Mayor's Office on Disability** - Information and resources, 1155 Market Street, 1st Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 554-6789 TTY: (415) 554-6799 [mod@sfgov.org](mailto:mod@sfgov.org)

**Bay Area Autism Consortium** - Advancing the understanding and treatment of autism spectrum disorders by supporting multidisciplinary collaboration among researchers, care providers, and the Bay Area's technologically innovative community. 15250 Hesperian Boulevard, Suite 100 San Leandro, CA 94578 [bayareaautismconsortium.com](http://bayareaautismconsortium.com) [baacprogrammanager@yahoo.com](mailto:baacprogrammanager@yahoo.com)

**PACE** (Pacific Autism Center for Education) - To enhance the lives of people impacted by autism, through innovation, exceptional education and compassionate care. [www.pacificautism.org/](http://www.pacificautism.org/)  
This link takes you to a link of many autism resources, some of them mentioned above:  
<http://www.bayareaparent.com/Article/How-To-Navigate-Special-Needs-Resources/>