

## RESPONDING TO PERSONS WITH AUTISM

-  Give only one command or direction at a time
-  Repeat or rephrase
-  Be Patient
-  Speak slowly, in a non threatening manner.
-  Ask the person to repeat their rights back to you
-  It may be necessary to listen for a long time before important facts emerge.

### REMEMBER... The person may:

-  Not be able to understand commands or police procedures
-  Not understand their constitutional rights or be able to give informed consent.
-  Enjoy the attention and be focused on gaining your friendship
-  Confess to anything if they feel it would make you happy.

**PLEASE REMEMBER:**  
Once equilibrium of the situation has been established, remain calm. Remaining calm will create calm with the individual since they will be watching you for cues.

To Contact the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida (CARD-USF):

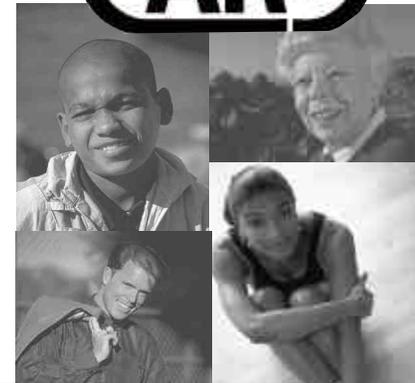


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Please feel free to call or email us with any questions or concerns. Our services cost nothing to you!



For more information or obtain training requests:  
(813) 974-9880 or toll free (800) 333-4530 extension 9880.  
Based on your needs, we will provide a comprehensive training for emergency responders.



## TIPS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

### To Respond to Citizens Who have Autism or other Related Developmental Disabilities

A Guide to assist Law Enforcement Officers and Criminal Justice System Officials in recognition of and response to persons who have developmental disabilities.

For more information:  
**(800) 333-4530**

## Characteristics of People Who Have Developmental Disabilities

### Inability to Communicate, Understand Rights, Proceedings, and Consequences:

Concepts and terms such as "rights" or "waiving" may be taken literally and not understood. A person's limited ability to understand words, concepts, and process constructive ideas can result in the inability to provide informed consent and comprehend legal representation.

### Communication:

A person having communication problems may not be able to follow more than one brief direction at a time. It is important to simplify any commands and wait before giving the next command.

### Impaired Judgment:

This can prevent a person having the ability to accurately understand how their behavior is perceived by society.

### Language:

Individuals may not be able to respond to spoken language, possibly giving non-relevant answers. Some individuals are unable to communicate verbally.

### Sensory Overload:

Individuals with autism may be sensitive to touch and overreact. Lights and sounds may be intensified for the individual and can escalate the situation.

### Desire to Please Persons in Authority:

An individual with a disability may seek approval and may give whatever answers they think will please the authority figure-even if it means giving the incorrect answer.

### Memory and Time Gaps:

It may be difficult for the individual to state when and where an incident occurred. Short and long-term memory may be impaired.

**Autism is a neurological disorder,  
not a mental illness.**

## Who is CARD and how can we help?

### Who are We?

**C**ARD stands for the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities. Although we are called a Center, we are not a place where people with autism and related disabilities come to stay or to receive services. **CARD's** purpose is to enhance the lives of individuals we serve by helping them become valued members of their communities. Our staff members travel to visit our constituents in their homes, schools, communities or wherever assistance is needed. **CARD's** efforts are focused on finding ways to change the behaviors and perceptions of individuals with disabilities in ways that will allow them to successfully learn, work, and communicate.

**B**ecause our program is funded by the Florida Legislature, all of our services are free. Referrals are accepted from families, legal guardians, medical professionals, schools and community agencies.

### How can we help?

- Provide trainings, workshops, and in-service with follow up technical assistance.
- Collaborate with the community to form partnerships.
- Augment local services through sharing of expertise, support, and training.
- Refer to other agencies for additional supports and services.



## The Americans with Disabilities Act (1992)

**E**nables persons with disabilities to participate fully in the mainstream of community life. Having a developmental disability does not excuse criminal behavior. This brochure provides information that will enable emergency responders, law enforcement agencies, and criminal justice representatives to recognize, better understand and communicate with persons having disabilities. Resources are available to assist authorities to interview, represent and perhaps offer effective diversionary alternatives.

**Q**uestions/Notes:

