

# Children with Developmental Disabilities: A Training for First Responders

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## This training will address

- ▶ An overview of developmental disabilities
- ▶ Common characteristics of people who have Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ▶ Frequency rates in which people with disabilities interface with first responders
- ▶ Issues that first responders face when they serve people with developmental disabilities
- ▶ Tools and resources for first responders

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## What is a Developmental Disability?

- ▶ A developmental disability is a disability which:
  - ▶ Occurs before the age of 18
  - ▶ Is expected to continue indefinitely
  - ▶ Constitutes a substantial disability

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### What is a Developmental Disability?

- ▶ Developmental Disability is an umbrella term that covers
  - ▶ Intellectual Disability
  - ▶ Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - ▶ Epilepsy
  - ▶ Cerebral Palsy
  - ▶ Conditions closely related to Intellectual Disability

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### Intellectual Disability (ID)

- ▶ Sub-average general intellectual functioning
  - ▶ An IQ score of 70 or below
- ▶ Significant limitations in adaptive functioning
- ▶ Onset before the age of 18

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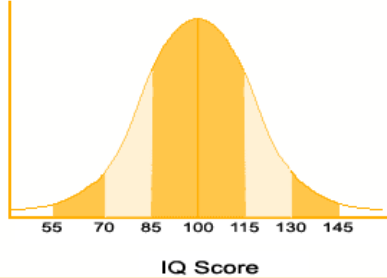
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Distribution of IQ scores



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### Intellectual Disability (ID)

- ▶ 1-3% of the general population have ID
- ▶ An additional 1-2% have conditions similar to ID
  - ▶ IQ scores in the 70s, low adaptive functioning, immature social skills, serious learning problems
- ▶ 85% have a mild form

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### Video example



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### People with ID

- ▶ People with moderate and/or severe ID are more likely to be living in the community
  - ▶ Developmental Centers are closing
  - ▶ People with ID have a right to be in community and to live as independently as possible
- ▶ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djuH\\_NplHao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djuH_NplHao)

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### Intellectual Disability (ID)

- ▶ People with ID are grossly overrepresented as victims of crime
- ▶ Some evidence suggests that people with ID are more likely to commit petty crimes and more serious crimes than the general population
- ▶ They are overrepresented in jails and prisons

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### National Crime Victimization Survey

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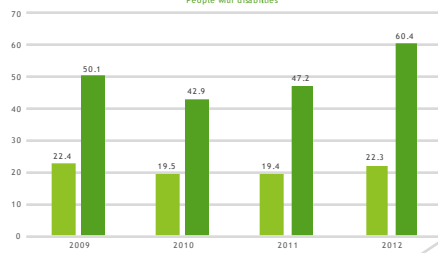
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Violent crime rate per 1,000  
People without disabilities  
People with disabilities



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### Sexual abuse and people with ID

- ▶ Children with ID are 4 times more likely to have records of sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000)
- ▶ Children with behavior problems have an even higher risk (Shakeshaft, 2004)




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### Sexual abuse and people with ID

- ▶ People with ID maintain a high vulnerability to sexual abuse throughout their adulthood
- ▶ Adults with ID continue to be targeted for sexual abuse at rates similar to those of children with ID
- ▶ 64% of adult females and 50% of adult males with ID report being targets of sexual exploitation (Zemp, 2002)

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### People with ID as perpetrators of crime

- ▶ Researchers began observing the relationship between intelligence and incarceration in the 1920s
  - ▶ 50% of inmates had subnormal intelligence (IQ score below 90)
  - ▶ 30% had IQ scores of 75 or below
- ▶ The relationships between subnormal intelligence and incarceration appears to be even stronger for juvenile offenders. 78% of juvenile offenders have subnormal intelligence. 20-25% have IQ scores below 75

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### People with ID as perpetrators of crime

- ▶ Some researchers argue that the relationship between intelligence and crime is not strong. They report that people with ID have risk factors
  - ▶ People with ID are 2 to 3 times more likely than the general population to have a psychiatric or behavioral disorder
    - ▶ 30-40% of people with ID are also diagnosed with psychiatric disorders (Reiss, 1997)
  - ▶ People with ID are at very high risk of living at or below the poverty line
    - ▶ 28% of people with disabilities live below the poverty line
    - ▶ Poverty= An annual income less than \$11,139
- ▶ People with ID are not likely to have paid legal representation
- ▶ They are not likely to do well when questioned by police
  - ▶ Immediately admit what they have done

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### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ▶ ASD is a complex disorder of brain development that is characterized by difficulties in social-communication, verbal and non-verbal communication, and repetitive behaviors

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### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ▶ 1 in 68 newborns will be identified with ASD (1-2% of population)
- ▶ The rate of ASD appears to be increasing
- ▶ People with ASD are much more likely to be diagnosed with other disabilities and psychiatric disorders than the general population
- ▶ More and more people with ASD have a mild form and participate in the community in a typical way (work, live independently etc.)

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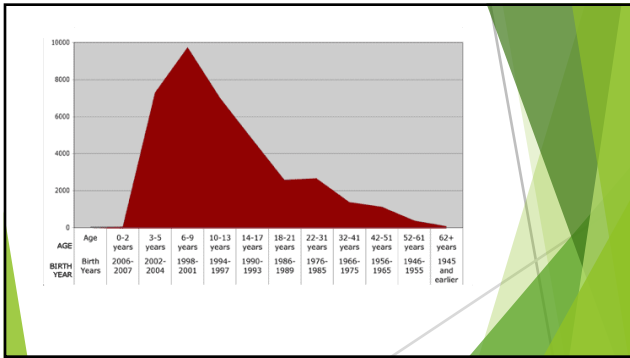
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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_AMHwU-m0w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_AMHwU-m0w) (body movements)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_08vyrSt0Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_08vyrSt0Q) (finger movements)

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### People with ASD as victims of crime

► National Crime Victimization Survey

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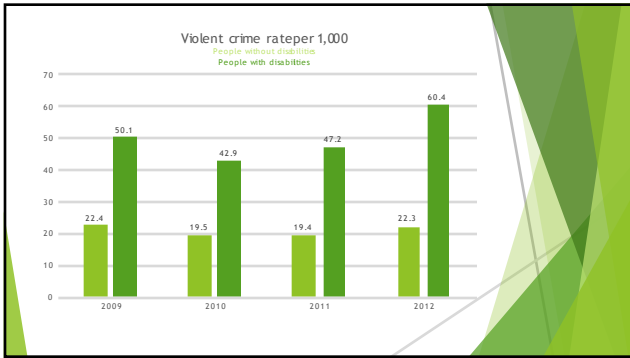
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### People with ASD as perpetrators of crime

- ▶ Not very much research on criminal behavior and ASD
- ▶ Preliminary research suggests that adults with ASD are less likely to engage in law breaking behavior
- ▶ Youth with ASD may be more likely to engage in crimes against persons and less likely to engage in crimes against property
  - ▶ More likely to be diverted into pre-trial interventions
  - ▶ Less likely to be prosecuted

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### People with ASD and the need for first responders

- ▶ People with ASD may engage in behaviors that lead to the involvement of police
  - ▶ Yelling, disruptive behavior, or poor emotional control
- ▶ More likely to have medical conditions that require emergency responses (30% of people with ASD will have a seizure)
- ▶ May use body movements that alarm other people
- ▶ Language or repetitive words that alarm other people

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Interviewing People with ID/ASD

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Minimal Facts Interview

- ▶ Assess child safety and welfare
- ▶ Conduct complete detailed interview with reporting party
- ▶ Determine jurisdiction and basic elements of crime
- ▶ Make limited contact with child

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First Responder Mindset

- ▶ Responder's attitude
- ▶ Nonverbal victims
- ▶ Family member information
- ▶ Communication/Interpreters
- ▶ Hidden disabilities

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### Initial Contact

- ▶ How long does responder spend with adults before addressing victim directly?
- ▶ Facial expression
- ▶ Tone of voice, choice of words and conversation style
- ▶ Body language
- ▶ Physical position
- ▶ Eye contact

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### Distractions

- ▶ Be aware that your police equipment and uniform can be a big distraction
- ▶ Attempt to remove any additional distractions such as loud radio or television
- ▶ Locate quietest space available
  - ▶ Gather information from reporting party and/or parents to determine additional space needs

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### Recording

- ▶ Audio record interview
- ▶ Explain to victim need for recording and ask permission
- ▶ If denied note on report but don't push to record
- ▶ Remember minimal facts interview

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**During the interview**

- ▶ Do not talk down to child
- ▶ Make introductions and explain process
- ▶ Spend extra time establishing rapport
- ▶ Ask one question at a time and assess ability to respond to abstract questions
- ▶ Match his language and be patient
- ▶ Notice changes in behavior and signs of fatigue
- ▶ Proceed slowly
- ▶ Do not make assumptions

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**During the interview**

- ▶ Provide overview of interview structure
- ▶ Explain roles and process
- ▶ Allow space for agitation within limits
- ▶ Allow space for withdrawal
- ▶ Take breaks or temporarily engage in another activity
- ▶ Acknowledge difficulty in discussing topic

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**Reassure victim**

- ▶ Responder is there to help
- ▶ The victim is not in trouble
- ▶ The perpetrator is the responsible party
- ▶ Explain further process for investigation

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### Language Considerations

- ▶ People with ID and ASD have communication differences
- ▶ Special considerations are necessary during the interview
  - ▶ Minimize distractions in interview room
  - ▶ Use short sentences
  - ▶ Allow for long silences
  - ▶ Pay attention to eye contact and body language
  - ▶ Stop periodically to determine if child understands questions
  - ▶ Acknowledge communication challenges
  - ▶ Listen to child's use of language/word selection
  - ▶ Repeat back what child tells you
  - ▶ Clarify pronouns and use identifiers

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### ASD communication difficulties

- ▶ Very limited vocabulary or vocabulary that does not fit the conversation
- ▶ Exaggerated focus on one topic of interest
- ▶ Inability to read body language/facial expressions
- ▶ Literal interpretations
- ▶ Avoid use of slang, jokes or sarcasm—it may not be understood
- ▶ Avoidance of eye contact, unusual speech and or flat intonation are common

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### Touch

- ▶ Be mindful that some people with disabilities may have inappropriate boundaries with touch
  - ▶ May not want to be touched at all
  - ▶ May want to touch you a lot
- ▶ Avoid touching victim
- ▶ Maintain appropriate boundaries
- ▶ Determine from reporting party/parents if a handshake is appropriate

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### Eye contact

- ▶ Allow victim to initiate eye contact
- ▶ Be aware that training regarding normal eye contact between individuals does not apply
- ▶ Eye Contact for victims with certain types of disabilities can be painful and unpleasant
- ▶ Do not presume lack of eye contact as suspicious or untruthful

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### Voice

- ▶ Speak in a normal regular voice
- ▶ Use appropriate tone and volume

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### A successful interaction

- ▶ Rapport development
- ▶ Communication strategies
- ▶ Open-ended questions
- ▶ Closure

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CASE 1



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CASE 2



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Resources

- ▶ People First
  - ▶ <http://www.peoplefirst.ca.org/>
- ▶ Autism Speaks
  - ▶ <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- ▶ National Crime Victimization Survey
  - ▶ <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dc&id=245>



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