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UofL\_Stripe

Autism Considerations for Emergency Responders

Heidi Cooley-Cook, KATC

Major John Gosper, Lexington FD

Patrick Branam, Lexington EMS

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Learning Agenda

•Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder

•Characterics of ASD

•Impact of characteristics of ASD on

emergency situations

•Simple strategies to engage an individual

who may have autism

•Discuss how to build relationships with the

autism community

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What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental

disability, resulting from a neurological

disorder that affects the brain

functioning.

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1 in 68

March 2014 CDC report

Prevalence of Individuals with

ASD

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http://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/prevalence-autism-rises

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Demographics

•Knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries

•May not be any physical characteristics

•Five times more prevalent in boys (1 in 42) than girls (1 in

189)

•Usually affects sensory and motor processing systems of

the brain

•Varying degrees of severity in different individuals

-Centers for Disease Control, 2014

If you’ve met one person with autism,

you’ve met ONE person with autism

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Autism is…a spectrum disorder

Asperger's

Syndrome

PDD-NOS

Autism

Childhood Disintegrative

Disorder

Rett’sSyndrome

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ASD

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Autism affects how an

individual thinks,

communicates, and

interacts with others

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Triad of characteristics

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Autism is NOT…

•A mental illness

•The result of bad parenting

•Unruly individuals who choose not to behave

•Always associated with mental impairment

•Always associated with behavioral challenges

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Children do not “outgrow”

autism, but…

Studies do show that early diagnosis and

intervention lead to significantly improved

outcomes.

(IDEA for Partnerships)

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Communication

•Non-verbal communication

•Receptive language (understanding what

is being said)

–Sarcasm & Idioms –literal understanding

•Expressive language (communicating

wants and needs)

–Idiosyncratic language

–Scripting

–Echolalia

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Social Interaction

•Eye Contact

•Personal Space

•Appear Unresponsive

•Body Language

•Unspoken social rules

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Restricted or Repetitive

Behaviors & Interests

•Restricted behaviors and interests

–Inflexible adherence to routines/schedules

–Special interests

•Repetitive behaviors/movements/speech

–Lining up of items

–Rocking, hand flapping

–Humming, Echolalia

•Sensory differences

–Hyper or Hypo sensitive –sound, smell, lights, tastes, textures

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Other

•Over-selectivity –tunnel vision

•Theory of Mind –perspective taking

•Executive Functioning –using history to influence

present actions

•Magnified response to simple requests

•Generalization

•Emotions

–Emotional regulation

–Identifying own and other’s emotions

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When would you encounter an

individual with ASD

•Motor vehicle accident

•Fire

•Emergency at school

•Wandering/elopement

•Medical emergency

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Emergency Situations

•Check windows for ASD sticker, license

plate, awareness ribbon

•Check glove compartment or visor for

fact sheet on individual with ASD

•Harness may be used

•Seatbelt covers may be utilized

Motor Vehicle Accident

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Emergency Situations

•Secure home environment

–Shatter-resistant windows

–Bars on windows

–Locked exterior and interior doors

–Rules/routines for leaving house

Be aware they might try and get back into

the house even after rescue

Fire at Home

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Emergency Situations

•Talk to teacher and/or para-educator

•Specific routines/rules for leaving school

building or classroom

•Ask for specifics on what was

happening before the behavior

Emergency at school

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Emergency Situations

•4 times more likely than their typical

peers to elope

•May be pursuing special interest

•May be escaping undesired

environment

•May be lost

•Make sure to check areas of water

Wandering/Elopement

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Emergency Situations

•Communication

–Unable or struggle ‘telling’ or showing what

hurts

•Sensory differences

–Sounds

–Lights

–Pain perception

Medical Emergency

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Medical Emergency

•Due to underdeveloped trunk muscles

there is a higher chance of positional

asphyxia during restraint

•May be at increased risk for seizures

•If possible identify one responder to

stay with them till delivered to hospital

or caregiver

Emergency Situations

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Tips for First Responders

•Stay with the individual

•Look for identification –ID bracelet or anklet,

temporary tattoo, ID or information card, QR

code

•Look for tracking device –Project Keepsafe,

Protect and Locate, etc

•Engage using special interest –look at

clothes or language

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Tips for First Responders

•Keep verbal communication to very short

phrases

–2-3 words

•Allow time for responses

•Draw pictures or use their communication

device or put picture cards on emergency

apparatus

•Responses may be ‘blunt’ or ‘rude’

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Tips for First Responders

•May also have seizure disorder

•May have poor muscle tone –do not restrain

•Do not try and stop repetitive motions

•Work with community organizations and

schools to identify people on the spectrum

that are high risk for emergencies

•Be aware of how your are communicating

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•Invite the families affected by autism to fire

stations and police stations to familiarize

them with firefighters and police officers

•Visit schools and special education classes

•Use available resources to educate

emergency responders and parents on ways

to aid in interaction with first responders

Community Outreach

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•National Autism Society

•National Autism Association

•Autism Speaks

•Center for Disease control

•Many local Autism support groups and

organizations

•Project Lifesaver

•Protect and Locate

Other Recourses

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Questions?

Contact info:

Heidi Cooley-Cook

(502) 852-6401

hacool01@louisville.edu

Kentucky Autism Training Center

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Center contact info:

Telephone: (502) 852-2467 or

800-334-8635 ext. 852-4631Fax: (502) 852-7148E-mail: katc@louisville.edu

https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining

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Major John Gosper

(859) 539-0995

Gosperj@Lexingtonky.gov

Other Presenters

2013BadgeGold

Patrick Branam

(859) 613-3124

Branamo@Lexingtonky.gov

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Stay Connected to the KATC

Visit or web site:

www.louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining

Join our listserv send a note to

katc@louisville.edu

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