

### Individuals with autism may not like to be touched

- Try not to touch an individual or give warning if you must touch them, including where you are touching them

### Individuals with autism may avoid eye contact

- This is a common symptom of autism and does not mean an individual is lying or being deceptive

### Individuals with autism may engage in repetitive behavior (flapping, flicking, pacing or rocking)

- Do not stop this behavior if they are not hurting themselves or others. The individual with autism may be engaging in this behavior as a way to self-soothe



PHILADELPHIA  
AUTISM PROJECT  
*Guiding the Autism  
Community*

[www.phillyautismproject.org](http://www.phillyautismproject.org)

Have a question  
about autism?  
Contact the ASERT  
Resource Center at  
**877-231-4244**  
**[info@paautism.org](mailto:info@paautism.org)**

## Common Presentations of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

How Police Officers Can  
Safely Respond



As a police officer, you may encounter individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in your daily activities. ASD describes a group of brain disorders that affect social interactions, communication, and other behaviors. It's important to remember that every individual with ASD is unique. However, there are some symptom presentations that individuals with ASD may exhibit. This guide provides some of the most common presentations of ASD with suggestions on how you can safely respond as a police officer.

Individuals with autism may not respond when you call their name

- Try to get their attention by getting in their line of vision

Individuals with autism may struggle to follow directions, this is not defiance

- Give one instruction at a time

Individuals with autism may have heightened anxiety, especially in an unfamiliar place or situation

- Approach an individual calmly from the front

Individuals with autism may not be able to communicate verbally

- Use visuals and see if they will point or nod their head

Individuals with autism may have a heightened or lowered sense of danger

- Make sure the scene is secured and safe

Individuals with autism may wander/elope and be drawn to water

- If missing, check local pools and bodies of water

Individuals with autism may have a heightened sensory experience (sound, light, touch)

- Turn off sirens, lights, and speak in a quiet, calm voice

Individuals with autism may not be able to tell you they are hurt

- May need to check closely for injuries