

Please circulate Far & Wide!

Dennis Debbaudt's Autism Risk & Safety Newsletter

Winter 2007 Edition!

Here's what's up:

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North Carolina ASD Committee Issues Final Report

North Carolina Senate and House of Representatives Joint Study Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and First Responders Issues Final Report

A year ago, North Carolina's President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives appointed twenty members to the JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD), LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND FIRST RESPONDERS (NC-JSC) to study the inclusion of autism-specific training and education in public safety training as well as in-service training in the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) and the North Carolina Community College System Public Safety and First Responder Continuing Education. In order to help ensure statewide continuity of autism-specific education and training, the Committee also examined ways to distribute autism-specific training and education materials through the North Carolina Community College System collaboration effort with the Criminal Justice Standards Division of the Department of Justice. The Committee also studied ways to increase the availability of appropriate autism-specific education and training to law enforcement personnel, community colleges, public safety personnel, first responder units, judges, district attorneys, magistrates, and related organizations.

The NC-JSC review included issues such as:

- Use and effectiveness of taser with persons with special needs
- Emergency preparedness, evacuation and assistance for persons with special needs during natural or manmade disaster
- The use of state-issued identification cards for individuals who have autism
- Specialized training throughout the state for recruit academies, veteran inservice and school resource officer training programs
- Expanding this training to fire rescue and emergency medical professionals
- Family disclosure of critical information to school responding law enforcement agencies

One direct result of the committee's efforts is the development of a training module on autism by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Academy for its Interacting with Special Populations In-Service Law Enforcement Training. This program will commence in January, 2007.

It's important for us to recognize the efforts of the committee members. The NC-JSC featured among others, legislators, doctors, autism parents and advocates, educators, law enforcement professionals, a police psychologist and State Superior Court Judge--both who are parents of individuals who have autism. The committee heard from experts in the use of taser, educators familiar with privacy law issues, families, and especially, from persons who have autism.

Please send your letter of thanks to the committee to Legislative staff person, Mary Marchman at Rep. Folwell's office: folwell1a@ncleg.net

Senate President Pro Tempore Appointments:

Senator William Purcell Co-chair
Senator John Snow
Senator Tom Apodaca
Senator Jim Forrester
Mr. Steve Bizzell
Ms. Mary Jo Croom
Ms. Tracy McPherson
Mr. Joe Kiesenhofer
Mr. David Munday
Dr. Michael Teague

Speaker of the House of Representatives Appointments:

Representative Ed Nye Co-chair
Representative Bob England, M.D.
Representative Karen Ray
Representative Joe Tolson
Mr. Eddie Caldwell
Mr. Bill Farley
Ms. Marsha Jones
Dr. Gary Mesibov
Ms. Kimberly S. Taylor
Ms. Betsy Thompson

Thank You!

North Carolina Autism & Law Enforcement Committee Member Interviewed on AutismOne Radio

Hear my December 2006 interview with committee member State Superior Court Judge Kimberly Taylor for the Autism Risk & Safety show on AutismOne Radio.

Here's the link:

<http://autismone.org/radio/>

Plan Your Response to an Autism Emergency by Dennis Debbaudt © 2007

The past year also brought with it a predictable spate of autism related wandering. Children and adults all over the world wandered from care and into danger.

Wandering should be a cause for concern for every one of us who advocate for people with autism.

Wandering--and other risks associated with autism--should be included with every information packet offered to families who are new to the spectrum. This information can save lives.

To help ensure safety and lower risk for a child or adult with autism, parents and care providers will need to become proactive and prepare an informational handout.

A leading cause for concern are children and adults who run away or wander from parents and care providers. Tragically, children and adults with autism are often attracted to water sources such as pools, ponds, and lakes. Drowning is a leading cause of death for a child or adult who has autism. Wandering can also lead to high risk field contacts with law enforcement or members of the general public.

Preparing for a wandering incident may seem extreme for some families. After all, their child or adult hasn't wandered or bolted. Yet, for many other families, addressing wandering the first time can be the worst time. These preparations will also be invaluable before, during and after a natural or manmade emergency situation. For example, when a parent or care provider has their own medical emergency and becomes quickly incapacitated.

Anti-wandering technology

For many families, securing their home against chronic and dangerous wandering is the first order of preparedness. They may consult with professional security and burglar alarm, locksmiths, and home improvement companies who are familiar with 21st century technology that can help secure a home. Always keep a record of your anti-wandering efforts. You may need to prove to authorities that you are not neglectful parents or care providers.

Environmental Modifications for the Home article available at <http://autismriskmanagement.com>

Contacting 911 Call Centers

In the U.S., some law enforcement, fire rescue, and emergency 911 call centers are willing and able to proactively place this information into their data base. Although not every system or agency is able to provide this service, it is certainly worthy of inquiring about.

If wandering is a concern, ask your local 911 Call Center to *red flag* this information in their 911 computer data base. When a call comes in for response to Alzheimer's, autism, or medically fragile families who participate--911 telecommunicators can alert the first responder *before they arrive* with key information that was provided. When we provide law enforcement with information before an incident occurs, we can expect better responses.

Autism groups can partner with Alzheimer's disease advocacy organizations to approach local 911 Emergency Call Centers. Single family approaches can also be made for families in more rural areas. Remember that you are volunteering this information and privacy may be a concern. This will be your choice to make. There are model programs. *Take Me Home*, developed by the Pensacola, Florida Police Department is one example (see web site contact information at <http://autismriskmanagement.com>). Rutland, Vermont Police Department is another (see link below). Cite these examples when you make your approach. You may need to be persistent, but these are reasonable requests.

When Wandering Occurs

When a wandering incident occurs, and you *are* listed in a 911 special needs database, please be aware that the information is typically linked to your home--to help assist during an emergency *at your home*.---and may not automatically transfer to identify a person who has wandered away from home and is now out in the community.

Before searching, it will be your responsibility to call 911 and inform them that a family member is missing and needs assistance in the community. Be ready and willing to provide information about the person who is missing, either proactively or on-the-spot, to 911 telecommunicators or field officers. This can make a positive critical difference to the response to the field response.

An Autism Emergency information handout should be developed, copied and carried with you at all times--at home, in your car, purse or wallet (see model below). Also circulate this handout to family members, trusted neighbors, friends and co-workers. The handout will also come in handy if you are in an area other than your neighborhood and are approached by the police.

The Autism Society of America's *Safe and Sound* initiative features autism alert stickers for homes and vehicles--and a handy form example for information that can be developed, photocopied, carried by parents, care providers or persons on the spectrum to produce or be found during an emergency--and shared proactively with law enforcement, emergency response agencies and persons that should be contacted during an emergency. Visit www.autism-society.org and type in Safe and Sound.

Planning checklist:

- Prepare and copy your Autism Emergency information handout (model below)
- Keep a copy on your refrigerator and near your phone
- If wandering has occurred, call 911 before you go off to search
- Alert the 911 telecommunicator if you are listed in the 911 Special needs directory
- If not, be prepared to share with the telecommunicator the information from your Autism Emergency information handout

- Plan and practice your response in the event of a wandering incident
- Plan a mock event and your response as you would plan and practice your response for escape from a fire in your home
- Practice the 911 call with a friend
- Keep a written record of your efforts

Autism Emergency Contact Handout Model

- Name of child or adult
- Current photograph and physical description including height, weight, eye and hair color, any scars or other identifying marks
- Names, home, cell and pager phone numbers and addresses of parents, other caregivers and emergency contact persons
- Sensory, medical, or dietary issues and requirements, if any
- Inclination for elopement and any atypical behaviors or characteristics that may attract attention
- Favorite attractions and locations where person may be found
- Likes, dislikes--approach and de-escalation techniques
- Method of communication, if non-verbal sign language, picture boards, written word
- ID wear jewelry, tags on clothes, printed handout card
- Map and address guide to nearby properties with water sources and dangerous locations highlighted
- Blueprint or drawing of home, with bedrooms of individual highlighted (Debbaudt, 2004-07)

ID Options

Some type of ID wear is essential for those with autism, especially if they are non-verbal or are unable or become unable to respond to questions about their identity if they are found.

- MedicAlert style bracelet or necklace
- Joggers shoe tags
- ID information laminated card: on belt loops and belt, sewn into pants, sewn into jackets
- hang from zippers
- silk screened into undergarments
- non permanent tattoos

Bracelets, anklets, necklaces, shoe or jacket tags, ID cards, clothing labels or permanent ink ID on t-shirts or undergarments are all good options. The problem with some of these is they may be removed by the person with autism who has sensory issues. An innovative option is the use of prepared, washable tattoos that bear ID information (tattooswithapurpose.com).

If ID wear is used, first responders may not know what autism is. More specific language should be considered in addition to name, address and phone number,

such as, non-verbal, sensitive to light, sound or touch, possible seizure activity, or may not seek help. (Debbaudt, 2002).

Alert Your Neighbors

The behaviors and characteristics of autism have the potential to attract attention from the public. Law enforcement professionals suggest that you reach out and get to know your neighbors.

- Decide what information to present to neighbors
- Plan a brief visit to your neighbors
- Introduce your child or adult or a photograph
- Give your neighbor a simple handout with your name, address, and phone number
- Ask them to call you immediately if they see your son or daughter outside the home

This approach may be a good way to avoid problems down the road and will let your neighbors:

- Know the reason for unusual behaviors
- Know that you are approachable
- Have the opportunity to call you before they call 911

Knowing your neighbors can lead to better social interactions for your loved ones with autism. (Debbaudt, 2004)

NOTE: This article recommends reaching out to and alerting neighbors about a child or adult. Parents have expressed their concerns about doing this. The fear, not unfounded, is stranger abductions or abuse. While these incidents can and do occur, physical and sexual abuse is oftentimes perpetrated by persons well known to the victim families.

Below is a link to information that parents can become familiar with in the area of victim selection and modes of operation of child abusers. Risks are dealt with best when we know about them.

I interviewed Ken Lanning for my 1994 booklet, *Avoiding Unfortunate Situations*. His advice and information is essential for *every* parent to know.

Child Molesters: A Behavioral Analysis

http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/ResourceServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=469

Authored by Kenneth V. Lanning and produced in cooperation with the FBI, the fourth edition of this book is an investigative tool for law enforcement officers and child-protection professionals handling cases of children who are sexually exploited. It provides investigative strategies, the characteristics of a pedophile, and the difficulties often encountered in cases of sexual exploitation. It introduces a typology that places sex offenders on a continuum, from preferential to situational. 160 pp.

Whether we develop an Autism Emergency Plan ourselves or use a template, what's important is our ability, willingness and preparation to use it during an emergency.

Be Proactive!

References:

Debbaudt, D., (2002) *Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals: Recognizing and Reducing Risk Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London-Philadelphia

Debbaudt, D., (2004-07) *Are You Prepared for an Autism Emergency?* Dennis Debbaudt's Autism Risk & Safety Newsletter (Original article in English. Spanish, Japanese and Mandarin Chinese translations at <http://autismriskmanagement.com/r>

Rutland Vermont Database article link:

<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061023/NEWS/610230363>

Locating Technology Research Report Available On Line

McMaster University at Hamilton, Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services sponsored this research project and report.

An executive overview, tip list and full report can be found at the link below.

Essential reading and highly recommended for everyone interested in addressing wandering by using locating technology. Excellent research.

A big hats off to all involved and especially to Autism Ontario advocate Nancy Cherry who spearheaded this effort and participated in the research. Thank you for doing this, my friend!

Here's the McMaster University link:

http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/rehab/pdf/LTP_Report.pdf

Autism & Fire-Rescue and Emergency Medical Response Video Update

Debbaudt Legacy Productions will be finishing field production later this month in San Diego with the San Diego Fire Department and Autism Tissue Project. Field shooting was finished in Massachusetts in 2006. We've received some very nice feedback on the Massachusetts edits. A big thanks to all involved in this project!

Scripting and editing will commence in February. With good fortune and hard work, we expect to have the video completed by April--National Autism Awareness Month.

Please visit <http://autismriskmanagement.com> for information on our Autism & Law Enforcement Video.

Editorial: It's Time to Become Active

Sure, there will always be work for us to do, but for those of us who may consider autism educational partnerships with law enforcers, first responders and juvenile and criminal justice professionals in 2007 and beyond, let's take note and look to the experience of the fine people in North Carolina who donated their time to make their state safer and more informed for persons who have autism and the professionals they are likely to meet during their lifetimes.

Several recent tragic stories out of Miami and Portland, Oregon describe contacts between law enforcers and persons with autism with sad endings.

These stories highlight the need for not only law enforcement and first response training, but awareness, training and emergency preparation for families, care providers people who are on the spectrum.

I've reported in this newsletter on the similarities between a person with autism and the behaviors described in training to identify and respond to a Suicide Bomber. Those similarities between persons with autism and responses to persons can be found in training to recognize and respond to persons that display the characteristics found with excited delirium. Those similarities can be, for example:

Suicide Bomber Profile

- clothing, gender or age out of place within the context of the environment
- use mannerisms that do not fit in
- repeating movements
- act oddly
- circling area on foot
- pacing back and forth
- evasive movements
- avoid eye contact
- unusual gait
- appearance of drug use such as fixed stare (Bunker, 2005)

Excited Delirium Characteristics

- incoherent thought processes
- off (clothes) and sweating
- resistance to (your) presence/dialog
- (violent toward) inanimate objects/shiny/glass
- tough, unstoppable, super-human strength
- yelling (Curtis, in Remsberg, 2006)

Of course it's difficult to ask officers to field diagnose autism or other disabilities. But we can offer some basic training on how to:

understand the meaning of the words when heard or dispatched
recognize the behaviors and characteristics of ASD
use specialized tactics when responders know they are interacting with someone on the spectrum and;
respond well and work proactively with our advocacy organizations so everyone can be prepared for field interactions with persons with autism and other disabilities.

We can offer training to law enforcers about persons who also may fit other populations, for instance, the exceptions to suicide bomber or excited delirium profiles. Agencies that consider implementing training for personnel to respond to suicide bombers and persons with excited delirium, should be encouraged to strongly consider pre or combined training about persons with disabilities who may also display similar characteristics. Along with encouragement, advocacy organizations can assist by making high quality training and training tools available to their partner law enforcement and first response agencies.

The risks of not doing so could compromise officer and citizen safety, be an ineffective use of time and resources, and lead to tragedy, negative media headlines and litigation.

While our national advocacy organizations are addressing this issue, the most effective partnerships are those between *local* advocates and families and law enforcement, first response and criminal justice agencies.

Tips to get started

Is your autism Organization thinking about forming a training partnership with local law enforcement, first response and criminal justice agencies?

Here's something you can do *right now!*

Identify and reach out to ASD contacts within these professions through direct contact with membership at meetings or phone calls and through your newsletter, e-mail and/or web site.

Ask your members if they are or if they know others who work in these professions:

- * Patrol and investigative law enforcement professionals
- * Police training officers
- * School resource officers
- * Detective bureau
- * Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) members
- * Juvenile justice and victims rights specialists
- * Correctional, prosecution, judicial and forensic criminal justice professionals
- * Parole & Probation
- * Fire-Rescue
- * 911 dispatchers
- * EMS/EMT, paramedics and emergency room professionals
- * Retail and private security professionals

Going through this process will help you and your group discover/identify parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, neighbors, co-workers who have a direct connection to autism.

These persons can become your best contacts for entrees into law enforcement and other agencies. They can help you find a local referral to the best person for your initial contact or phone call.

References:

Bunker

For IACP Training Key #581 - Suicide Bombers, Part One visit:

<http://www.theiacp.org/pubinfo/IACP581SuicideBombersPart1.pdf>

For IACP Training Key #582 - Suicide Bombers, Part Two, visit:

<http://www.theiacp.org/pubinfo/IACP582SuicideBombersPart2.pdf>

Remsberg

<http://www.policeone.com/writers/columnists/CharlesRemsberg/articles/119587/>

New Autism Ontario Resource Manual

Living With ASD: Adolescence and Beyond (2006) Autism Ontario. Toronto, Ontario

This comprehensive 317-page manual offers great information for persons all across the spectrum, families, educators and professionals. Chapters include full reports, tips, options on person-centered planning, dual diagnosis, epilepsy in ASD, psycho-social issues for the more able population, social skills, sexuality and sex-education, success in post secondary education, employment, recreation and leisure, day activities, cooking, independent living, personal reflections from persons on the spectrum and more.

I co-authored the chapter on Safety in the Community with Ottawa-based Regional Support Leader, Anne Wittich.

An essential guide for autism organizations and advocates! Well done, Autism Ontario!

For more information, visit the Resources Section at Autism Ontario's web site: <http://www.autismontario.com/>

Book Reviews

Prescription For Success: Supporting Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Medical Environment

By Jill Hudson, 2006, Autism Asperger Publishing Company, Shawnee Mission, Kansas

Jill Hudson combines good common sense and a sharp eye for detail to create a usable guide for successful interactions during visits to the hospital. Parents and hospital professionals alike who read this book will come away with a much better understanding about ASD may affect the interaction, more importantly, how to be prepared for the visit and the patient. Highly recommended.

Order Link:

<http://www.asperger.net>

Zinger Bug Zoe: Living with Autism

By Gayle L. Betz, 2006, AuthorHouse. Bloomington, Indiana
ISBN: 1-4259-5963-6 (sc)

Every so often a book comes along that absolutely catches your attention. Zinger Bug Zoe is one of them. Written for young children on the spectrum, first time author Gayle Betz uses rhyme and the rhythm of every day life to explain the frustration of social interactions and ASD sensory issues in a simple, fun read for children, families, siblings and friends. Great illustrations by Dawn Baumer. Get it!

Order Link:

<http://www.authorhouse.com>

2007 Hidden Curriculum One-A-Day Calendar: Items for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations

By Brenda Smith Myles, 2006, Autism Asperger Publishing Company, Shawnee Mission, Kansas

When this calendar arrived in the mail, my son 23-year-old Brad - who has autism - took an immediate interest in it. Although he was getting ready to leave for work, he sat down in a chair and read it half way through. When he came back from work he finished his read. I asked him what he thought. He replied, "It was really good".

Nuff said!

Also recommended is the original **The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations** (2004) book by Brenda, Melissa Troutman and Ronda Schelvan. This book is a must read for all of us who understand the place of life skills for people with ASD. Explanations and teaching tips to recognize the meaning and significance of facial expressions, body language, social rules and tons more abound in this work.

Get the calendar and book!

Order Link:

<http://www.asperger.net>

Web Sites Updates!

The web site now features links to useful products and services including Take Me Home - free software for law enforcement, Silent No More communication boards for police and first responders, When Words Are Not Enough video and curriculum and Tattoos With A Purpose.

The *Are You Prepared for an Autism Emergency?* article translations in Spanish, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese in PDF are up as well as the April, 2001 FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin article *Contacts with Individuals with Autism: Effective Resolutions* and an ASD and Juvenile Justice handout.

Also look for the the Autism and Emergency Preparedness Handout designed for Emergency Staffers.

More to come soon at <http://autismriskmanagement.com>

Now Booking 2007 Dennis Debbaudt Conference and Training Session Dates:

Inquiries? New bookings or to schedule an event. Some Spring dates available!

E-mail: ddpi@flash.net or call 772-398-9756

(Brad may answer the phone. Tell him Hi!)

Check the web site calendar for updates!

<http://autismriskmanagement.com>

A Big Thanks!! to: You!

I'm dedicated to seeing autism issues represented professionally to law enforcement, first response, criminal justice, and emergency response professionals everywhere. We've come a long way on this since the early 90's-- yet there's still a long way to go. With your help, we'll get there.

Again and always, I want to thank my wife Gay and son Brad for allowing me to get out here and do this work.

Have a Safe and Happy 2007!

I'm always seeking feedback, advice and information. Please send it my way!

Check out the web site while you're here!

This newsletter is sent out occasionally. To subscribe or be removed, send an E-mail to ddpi@flash.net

Please circulate Far & Wide!