AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: 2016 PA CONFERENCE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Presented by:

Kate Hooven, MS, Justice System Consultant

November 3, 2016
INTRODUCTION
AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. What is Autism?
3. What does the ASERT data say?
4. So What?
5. What’s Next?
What is the ASERT?

**Autism Services Education Resources & Training**

- Funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.
- A unique partnership of public and private entities.
- A key component of the BAS strategy for supporting individuals with autism and their families throughout Pennsylvania.

[Map of Pennsylvania with regions labeled: Western, Eastern, Central]
ASERT EASTERN REGION PROJECTS
AUTISM 101
WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

ASD

Repetitive Behavior

Communication Difficulties

Social Impairments
MALE v. FEMALE PREVALENCE

1 in 68
1 in 42
1 in 189
INCREASING PREVALENCE


1/500  1/250  1/166  1/150  1/110  1/88  1/68
Why is the Prevalence Increasing?

Reasons: unclear

- **46%** Unknown
- **25%** Diagnostic shift
- **15%** Greater awareness
- **10%** Parental age
- **4%** Spatial clustering

Source: nature.com
Autism is not a childhood disorder and does not go away in adulthood, though the symptoms and presentation may change.
**Service Systems Access by Age**

**Pre-Elementary:**
El services are available until age 5

**Elementary:**
Special Ed and BHRS services

**Middle/High School:**
Special Ed until age 22 and BHRS services until age 21

**Adults:**
~500+ slots for the Adult Autism Waiver and Adult Community Autism Program
COMORBID CONDITIONS: WHAT AGES ARE WE SEEING THEM?

**Childhood**
- ADHD
- Behavioral/Conduct
- Anxiety

**Adolescence**
- Intellectual Disability
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar
- ADHD
- Behavioral/Conduct
- Anxiety

**Adulthood**
- Intellectual Disability
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar
- Anxiety

Source: paautism.org/census
Children and Adolescents (under 21)

- ADHD: 46%
- Behavioral/Conduct: 53%
- Stress: 15%
- Bipolar: 8%
- Schiz.: 1%

Adults (over 21)

- ID: 49%
- Anxiety: 29%
- Bipolar: 23%
- Depression: 27%
- Behavioral/Conduct: 25%
- Stress: 11%
- ADHD: 18%

Source: PAautism.org/needsassessment
POLY-PHARMACY

Among 33,565 children with autism

64% of children

35% of children

15% of children

Source: Spencer et al., 2013
Symptom Domain #1: Social Interaction

1. Lack of Attention to Faces
2. Reduced Eye Contact
3. Lack of Social Reciprocity
4. Difficulty in Receiving and Expressing Emotions
5. Difficult in Developing Peer Relationships
6. Difficulty in Using Nonverbal Social Communication
**Symptom Domain #1: Social Interaction**

**Tools/Strategies for Little/No Eye Contact**

- Does not mean they are not listening
- Wait for their response first
- Smile and engage
- Try to capture attention, but do not force it

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ASERT PAautism.org
SYMPTOM DOMAIN #2: COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

- Absence or Delay in Language
- Lack of Social Play
- Deficits in Voice Tone
- Difficulties in Initiating or Maintaining Conversation
- Stereotyped or Repetitive Use of Language
Symptom Domain #2: Communication Difficulties

Tools/Strategies for Lack of/Delayed Language

Picture exchange communication system (PECS)

Alternative Communication
SYMPTOM DOMAIN #3: RESTRICTED OR REPETITIVE BEHAVIOR

- Stereotyped, Repetitive Motor Mannerisms
- Restricted Interests
- Inflexible Adherence to Routines or Rituals
- Preoccupation with Parts of Objects
Symptom Domain #3: Restricted or Repetitive Behavior

Tools/Strategies for Repetitive Behaviors
Characteristics Associated with Autism

- Sensitivity to Light
- Sensitivity to Touch
- Sensitivity to Sound

https://youtu.be/7oe7yNPyf2c
CARLY’S CAFÉ: EXPERIENCE AUTISM THROUGH CARLY’S EYES

https://youtu.be/KmDGvquzn2k
Signs of Possible Overstimulation

- Flapping
- Pacing
- Rocking
- Scripting
- Loud Verbalizations
OVERSTIMULATION CAN LEAD TO...

- Tantrums (e.g. yelling, flapping)
- Eloping (running away)
- Self Injurious Behavior (biting self, hitting head)
- Aggression
SEXUALITY AND ASD: BACKGROUND

- Difficulties with interpersonal relationships
- Impact of communication deficits
- Curiosity about sexuality
- Impact of social isolation
- Rejection from their peer group
- Access to sex education may be an issue
INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

- Lack of socio-sexual knowledge
- Confusion about privacy and intimacy
- Issues of consent
- Restricted interest and sexual obsessions
PREVENTION: SEX EDUCATION

- Limits and boundaries
- Appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
- Theory of mind and notion of consent
- Illegal behaviors and their consequences
- Body parts, hygiene, self-esteem, intimacy, steps in a relationship, expression of emotion, communication and positive relationships
PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

- Guidance and support in friendship abilities
- Prevention of bullying
- Guidance on aspects of puberty and sexuality
- Self-acceptance
- Acceptance by family members
- Training of psychologists and psychiatrists in sexuality and ASD
AUTISM PREVALENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Applying CDC Prevalence

Almost tripled!

2009: 19,862
2014: 55,830
2014*: 188,000

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JUSTICE TRAINING | 34
**Juvenile Justice Charges:**

1. Simple Assault - Bodily Injury
2. Harassment - Strike/Shove
3. Disorderly Conduct - Fighting
4. Simple Assault
5. Crime of Violence - Intent to Terrorize

**Top 5 Charges**

**Ages with Highest Number of Charges**

10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21

PA
Juvenile Justice by Charge Type:

- **Offense Against Person**
  - 48%
  - Includes Assault, Harassment, Stalking etc.

- **Offense Against Property**
  - 30%
  - Includes Arson, Theft, Trespassing etc.

- **Other**
  - 22%
  - Includes Drug Charges, Driving Offenses, etc.
Juvenile Justice by Charge Severity:

- **Felony**
  - PA-27%

- **Misdemeanor**
  - PA-56%

- **Summary**
  - PA-17%
SURVEY DESIGN

Who?

Where?

What do you know?

What do you need?
**Respondents**

- 365 Respondents
- Representation from many systems and professions
- Largest proportion of respondents from probation

![Graph showing respondents by profession](chart.png)
MAP OF RESPONDENTS

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## General Autism Knowledge Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading facial expressions may be difficult for people with autism.</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with autism often have a set of focused and specific abilities or skills.</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally individuals with autism do not easily understand or relate to the feelings and thoughts of others.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism affects both males and females equally.</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many individuals with autism do like being touched.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The symptoms of autism do not change with age.</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people with autism can easily understand sarcastic language.</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with autism generally make good eye contact with other people.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training Experience

- Received Training: 27%
- Did not Receive Training: 73%
# Training Needs

*Training topic area by priority*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Topic</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to communicate with individuals with autism</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to navigate challenging behaviors related to autism</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems and services available to individuals with autism</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad training on the core deficits of autism</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to interact with parents/caregivers of individuals with autism</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying autism in adolescents</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SO WHAT?
YOUR ROLE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Kate Hooven
SENSORY EXPERIMENT
## Balanced Approach to Restorative Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Protection</td>
<td>- Right to safe and secure community&lt;br&gt;- Being more educated about autism helps to provide safe environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>- Accountability to community and victim may look different in person with autism v. neurotypical person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Development</td>
<td>- Competencies will need to take diagnosis into account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualization</td>
<td>- Each case presents unique circumstances and the response by the system must be individualized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A better understanding of autism will help keep you, the individual, and the community safe.

A better understanding will help prepare you for interacting with individuals with autism to better support them and their families.
WHAT MAY IMPACT SAFETY

Misreading Social Cues
- May not understand sarcasm
- May not understand seriousness
- May not understand friendliness

Difficulty understanding Social Rules
- Difficult to respond appropriately

Sensory Issues
- Self-stimulating behavior
- Perception of being inebriated or high
WHAT MAY IMPACT SAFETY (CONT.)

**Processing Delay**
- May not respond to command immediately
- Perception of insolence

**Lack of Eye contact**
- Due to social interaction difficulties
- May have little to no eye contact
- Perception of insolence

**Scripting /Repetition**
- Individual may repeat lines of a movie, TV show to handle overstimulation
- Perception that individual is not focusing or paying attention

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JUSTICE TRAINING | 49
WHAT MAY IMPACT SAFETY (CONT.)

**Emotional Regulation**
- May not be able to handle stressful situation
- May have meltdown or tantrum
- Perception of purposeful disruption

**Executive Functioning**
- Deficits in organization, planning
- Difficulty organizing thoughts
- Poor impulse control
## Trauma

Consider Possible Traumas to an Individual with Autism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
<th>Emotional Abuse</th>
<th>History of Restraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[ASERT PA autism.org logo]
QUESTIONS?
How to Approach Someone with Autism

1. **Slowly and cautiously**
2. **Give verbal warnings**
3. **Keep your voice quiet and calm**
4. **If possible, do not put your hands on the individual**
5. **Ask if they understand what you are saying**
6. **Ask to repeat back what you said**
IN OTHER WORDS...

**Be**

- **S.** Stay calm
- **A.** Ask clearly
- **F.** Facilitate Understanding
- **E.** Explain the Process
- **R.** Repeat commands
An Individual with Autism May:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act deaf, not respond to your commands or his/her name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an impaired sense of danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a heightened flight or fight response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have heightened sensory perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not tell you if they are hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be drawn to water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in repetitive behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to touch your badge, handcuffs, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com
The Do’s For A Positive Interaction

**Do’s**
- Do maintain a safe distance
- Do look for autism identifiers (bracelet, card)
- Do remain calm
- Do reassure that you are there to help
- Do model the behavior you are requesting
- Do turn down/off radio, siren, lights and keep canine in car

**Don’ts**

Source: Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com
Do’s CONTINUED

**Do’s**

- Do ask if they are hurt
- Do use pictures or visuals if possible
- Do ask if they have autism
- Do recognize that change is very difficult

**Source:** Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com
AND THE DON’T’S

Don’ts

- Don’t stop repetitive behavior if not injuring self or others
- Don’t touch the individual
- Don’t take preferred items or objects if not dangerous
- Don’t use quick or sudden movements
- Don’t give too many commands or choices
- Don’t interpret their silence or failure to respond as non-compliance

Source: Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com
Don’t force eye contact
Don’t assume lack of eye contact means deception

Source: Debbaudt, Dennis. Autism Safety Education & Training: aset911.com
Ten Domains of De-escalation

1. Respect personal space
2. Do not argue with the person
3. Establish verbal contact
4. Be concise and repeat yourself
5. Identify wants and feelings
6. Listen closely
7. Agree or agree to disagree
8. Set clear limits
9. Offer choices and optimism
10. Debrief individual

Adapted from:
De-escalation techniques that may help resolve a crisis:

- Attempt to reduce stimulation
- Keep your voice calm
- Avoid overreacting
- Listen to what the person is communicating
- Do not argue or contradict the person
- Express support and concern
- Do not force eye contact
- Do not prevent, block ritualistic / repetitive behavior, unless behavior is dangerous
- Ask how you can help
De-escalation techniques that may help resolve a crisis:

- Keep stimulation level low
- Move slowly approach from the front
- Offer options instead of contingencies or taking control. Use First / Then approach
- Avoid touching the person unless you ask permission
- Be person and supportive
- Give verbal or visual cues before initiating any action
- Give the person space
SAFETY: EXAMPLE
**LANGUAGE**

- Speak clearly and concisely
- Speak in a calm, quiet voice
- One command at a time
- Ask if they understand
- No slang or abstract language
- Give them time to respond
- Repeat or rephrase
- One person talks at a time
Miranda Rights

“..anything you said can and will be held AGAINST you…”

- Miranda Rights are extremely wordy
- Language is vague and could be confusing
**Searches**

- Provide adequate warning and thorough explanation
- Sensitivity to touch make body search difficult
- Disrupting property in searches may upset need for routine
SEARCHES

Provide adequate warning and thorough explanation

Sensitivity to touch make body search difficult

Disrupting property in searches may upset need for routine
Searches (cont.)

Additional Considerations

- Language Difficulty May Play a Role
- May Need Extra Time to Process Information
- Consider Item Fixation
QUESTIONS?
CUSTODY/ARREST

S. Stay calm
A. Ask clearly
F. Facilitate Understanding
E. Explain the Process
R. Repeat commands

Demonstrate what you are going to do on your partner

Turn down radio volume
Conceal your pepper spray, firearms

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To decrease anxiety:

- Turn down radio volume
- Turn off siren
Do not be alarmed if you witness the following coping mechanisms:

- Spinning
- Flapping
- Scripting
- Atypical body or facial movements
Fingerprinting/swabbing may present sensory issues for an individual with autism.
Motivational Interviewing: Challenges

- Open ended questions may be challenging
- "Chatting" may be difficult due to language deficits
- Individuals with autism may be rigid in their thoughts and behavior
- Eliciting empathy may be a challenge
- Cognitive behavioral skill building techniques may not be as effective for someone with autism.
Motivational Interviewing
Tools/Strategies for Motivational Interviewing

Positive reinforcement versus confrontation will be the best motivator.

Find some type of activity, hobby, interest that the person has and use that as a motivator.

Make an appropriate referral to an expert who has experience working with people living with autism.

Take into account the impact autism has in all areas when developing a case plan.
**Intake Interview**

- Allow extra time
- Be specific
- Ask one question at a time
- Do not use sarcasm, idioms, metaphors
- Have parent present if possible
- Have as many records as possible
- Consider wait times for evaluations
Seeking an Autism Referral

County Psychologist or Standard Referral Process

ASERT Resource Center
877-231-4244
QUESTIONS?
Appearing in Court

- Increased Stress
- Language Issues
- Extra Processing Time
- Metal Detector
- Courtroom Attire
- Victim Empathy

JUSTICE TRAINING | 79
** Appearing in Court (cont.) **

Tools/Strategies for Supporting Individual in Court

- Provide visual schedule in advance
- Continually remind individual about court date
- Prompting if questions are vague
- Prepare court staff about autism diagnosis
If called to the home, help parents understand the importance of PLAN for future incidents.
TYPES OF WANDERING

Goal-Directed Wandering

Fleeing/Bolting

Other
WANDERING STRATEGIES

- Alert local law enforcement/EMS about individual’s wandering
- Alert neighbors and local businesses
- Enroll child/adult in swimming lessons
- Explore areas of fascination in a safe, supervised way
- Create visuals such as Stop Signs by all doorsy
RULES OF PROBATION

Be specific
- Provide examples
- Be literal

Provide Visuals
- Next to each rule

Sensory issues
- Electronic bracelet may be a challenge
- Consider community service options

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WRAP UP
Doing your Own Research

The amount of information on ASD available can be overwhelming.

Make informed decisions while doing your research.

ASAT Online
www.asatonline.org

CDC
www.cdc.gov

ASERT
www.paaautism.org
Creating a paautism.org Account

A website for Pennsylvanians with autism, their families, communities, and the providers who support them.
FOLLOW-UP TRAINING?

Email us!
ASERT@drexel.edu

Call us!
215-571-3181 or
215-571-3449
ASERT is funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, PA
Department of Human Services