

Autism and Mental Health Awareness Training

One of our goals is to help our clients manage the service risks that involve individuals with mental health issues. There are several programs that have been designed to assist the law enforcement community with the challenges of dealing with persons who have autism and mental health illnesses.

Autism Awareness Training:

In the United States, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in 68 children has an autism spectrum disorder. The reported prevalence of the condition has increased over the past 30 years, according to the study. This increase may be due to a change in how persons are diagnosed with autism, but the reality is that individuals with developmental disabilities are seven times more likely to come in contact with law enforcement than the general population. According to the CDC, New Jersey has the highest Autism rate in the nation.

POAC Autism Services (www.poac.net) provides “**Autism Shield Training**” to law enforcement and first responders at no cost to the department. Training is conducted on-site, and they have provided training for first responders in every county in New Jersey. Trainers will come to your department and present the course on-site.

Mental Health/Illness Awareness Training:

The **New Jersey Crisis Intervention Team** (www.cit-nj.org) is a nationally acclaimed best practice pre-booking jail diversion program designed to help the law enforcement and the mental health system’s response to persons in crisis. This 40-hour course’s curriculum includes classroom instruction, community site visits, and practical exercises. There are no registration or training fees.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police has developed a program “**Improving Police Response to Persons Affected by Mental Illness.**” (www.theIACP.org). The **IACP’s One Mind Campaign** creates incentives for police agencies to adopt four promising practices to improve law enforcement’s response to persons affected by mental illness. The belief is that the strategies identified in this training when implemented properly will better serve and improve the well-being of persons affected by mental illness.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). "Improving Police Response to Persons Affected by Mental Illness." Report from the March 2016 IACP Symposium.