

# Challenging Contexts: Autism and Policing

## Studies on Autism and Policing

Numerous studies have explored this challenge, and assessed programs that attempt to address it, going back to the early 2000s. Some of the more recent studies include:

- 2020, “**A Systematic Review of Law Enforcement Training Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder.**”  
Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1088357620922152?journalCode=foab>
- 2021, **Interactions between Individuals on the Autism Spectrum and the Police**  
Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/policing/article-abstract/15/2/950/6008004?login=false>
- 2019, **Measuring Police Officer Self-Efficacy For Working With Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorder**  
Available at: [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=edp\\_etds](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=edp_etds)
- 2023, **The training of New Jersey emergency service first responders in autism awareness**  
Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5363970/>

In addition, the topic has frequently been addressed through user-friendly articles published by the Organization for Autism Research, a scientifically based research organization founded to apply research to questions important to autistic people and their families, as well to disseminate information to the autism community. The link below is one of many articles that can be found on their site regarding autism and law enforcement training.

- 2006, **Autism Spectrum and Law Enforcement Training | OAR**  
Find at: <https://researchautism.org/oaracle-newsletter/autism-spectrum-and-law-enforcement-training>

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## Examples of Legislative Responses

- A federal, bipartisan law enforcement de-escalation training act was signed into law in 2022.  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4003/text>
- Utah has joined other states in requiring autism awareness training. Here's what Utah's training covers: Lawmakers in Utah, like many places around the country, now require new police cadets to have autism training.  
<https://www.ksl.com/article/50166554/law-now-requires-autism-awareness-training-heres-what-utah-police-will-learn>

## Programs and Tools

There are several well-regarded individual consultants available to bring training to departments across the US. It is recommended to do individual research in this regard.

In addition:

- The Autism Program at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital has developed a training program, with more information available here: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/all-childrens-hospital/services/autism-center/autism-training-for-first-responders>.
- A comprehensive guide created for law enforcement officers contains much useful information. It can be downloaded here: <http://mopca.com/wp-content/uploads/Autism-Guide-for-LE-v2.pdf>
- VirTra (a private firm) has partnered with the Southwest Arizona Research and Resource Center to develop an innovative 3-D interactive simulation trainer focused on interactions with autistic citizens. More information can be found here: [www.virta.com](http://www.virta.com).