



V-VICTA®

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VirTra - Virtual Interactive Coursework Training Academy®

***SPECIAL POPULATIONS: ADULTS WITH  
AUTISM***

Training Manual

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**VirTra**

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## TRAINING COURSE CERTIFICATION

This "Special Populations: Autism" training course has been certified by the IADLEST™ National Certification Program on 7/21/2024.

Certification Number: 24833-2407



**ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

## TOPIC

Special Populations: Adults with Autism

## ESTIMATED TIME

2 Hours

## PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

1. Identify that adults and children both can be diagnosed with Autism.
2. Identify behaviors that adults with Autism may display.
3. Learn ways to communicate with adults with Autism effectively and safely.
4. Demonstrate in the simulator proper communication techniques with adults with Autism.
5. Demonstrate in the simulator the ability to pickup on clues that a person may have Autism.

## CLASS SIZE

Designed for a class up to 8 students, with students individually going through the simulator training scenarios.

## SCENARIO BANK TO BE USED

1. "Adults with Autism"
2. "Rock Chucker"
3. "Too Friendly"

## ADULTS WITH AUTISM

**I. INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION**

**II. ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

**A. RATE OF AUTISM IN CHILDREN & ADULTS**

**B. ENCOUNTERING ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

**III. INTERACTIONS**

**IV. BEHAVIORS**

**A. THEORY OF MIND**



B. CUES IN CONVERSATION

C. ROUTINE BEHAVIORS

D. INTERESTS

V. IDENTIFICATION

A. HOW TO IDENTIFY

B. WHEN YOU ARE UNABLE TO IDENTIFY



VI. PARENTS, CARETAKERS & GUARDIANS

A. THE PRESENCE OF A CARETAKER

**B. TRIGGERS & PASSIONS**

**VII. LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIFIC**

**A. ASKING QUESTIONS**

**B. TOUCH**

**C. ARREST**



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## I. INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION

The instructor(s) will introduce themselves to the class. This introduction should be no longer than 5 minutes long and should be used to establish why they are qualified to teach the course and how long they have been with the organization. This is not a moment to brag but to build confidence and trust from the attending students. Students should have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of each section as well as at the end of the lecture.

## II. ADULTS WITH AUTISM

### A. RATE OF AUTISM IN CHILDREN & ADULTS

The CDC estimates 1 in 54 children in the United States have Autism. This is approximately 1.85%. For adults, the CDC estimates 1 in 45 adults have Autism - which is 2.22%.<sup>1</sup>

As a first responder, you WILL encounter adults with Autism, and it's important that you recognize the behaviors and adjust accordingly. Since each individual is unique, it is important to take their actions and the circumstances of the situation into consideration during your interaction.

### B. ENCOUNTERING ADULTS WITH AUTISM

Many adults with Autism are able to live very successful and rewarding lives on their own. Some have successful careers in demanding fields such as:

- Computer technology
- Acting
- Video game production

Others are only able to work part-time while taking advantages of day programs and other resources. There are also some people with Autism so severe that they require constant care.

Many adults on the spectrum have romantic relationships or are happily married. While others are unable to form meaningful relationships with peers.

## III. INTERACTIONS

As a first responder, you will have interactions with a wide range of people, under an incredible number of varying circumstances. Some of your calls for service might include people who:

- Try to flee from you
- Might not be truthful
- May not respond to you at all

While people may assume that only criminals do these things, people with Autism may exhibit these behaviors as well.

A study found that the most common reason for police interaction with a person with Autism was due to aggression. They were even more likely to have a police interaction if they were older, and living outside the family home with no daytime activities or employment.



It is also connected to whether the individual had a history of aggressive behavior and if their family couldn't arrange or afford caretaker assistance.

## **IV. BEHAVIORS**

Every individual is unique and may display some or none of these behaviors. The circumstances surrounding the interaction may also have an effect on what behaviors may or may not be displayed.

### **A. THEORY OF MIND**

When speaking to an adult with Autism, they may have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling, or they believe that everyone thinks like they do.

An interaction can be just as frustrating for the person with Autism as the first responder. This can cause issues when an officer or other first responder is asking them questions. This behavior can stem from their inability to interpret facial expressions, body language or social cues.

This can also lead to a difficulty in maintaining the natural "give and take" style of a conversation, where the person may focus in on a particular topic or subject.

### **B. CUES IN CONVERSATION**

Other cues that may occur during a conversation might include:

- Difficulty in regulating emotion
- Difficulty in regulating inflection that does not reflect their true feelings.

For example, they may respond to a simple question, such as "What is your name?" with a response that may sound angry or upset. This does not necessarily mean that the person is upset or trying to be difficult, and you need take that into consideration.

Giving the person time to respond and some space may help alleviate stressors that the person is feeling.

### **C. ROUTINE BEHAVIORS**

Individuals with Autism may have a tendency to engage in repetitive or routine behaviors. Adhering to a strict consistency in their daily routines can help them reduce stress and anxiety.

If their routine is interrupted by an incident that involved law enforcement or EMS personnel, it can lead to outbursts when changes occur. This is why it's important to try and tell them what's coming next or show them what is going to happen.

### **D. INTERESTS**

You may encounter an adult with Autism who exhibits a strong, special interest in something. This might be something as simple as being fascinated by your police car. This strong interest can be a distraction to the person, making a conversation or even answering simple questions difficult.

While an interest in a police car may not be of much concern, other strong interests may come off as socially

unacceptable. Some adults may show behaviors where they are interested in conversations or interactions with children. This can appear to be suspicious, but to the person with Autism, they may just feel more comfortable speaking to a child or may relate to them more than another adult.

## V. IDENTIFICATION

As a first responder, it's important that you are able to identify the person you are speaking to, and this is no different if the person has Autism.

### A. HOW TO IDENTIFY

Identification may be as easy as:

- Asking the person their name, birthdate and address
- They may have a license or government-issued ID card
- Some may tell you to call a family member, caretaker or friend

When asking, try not to ask open-ended questions such as "is there someone I can call?" Instead, be specific. Asking "can I call your mom?" may be better because it is very direct.

### B. WHEN YOU ARE UNABLE TO IDENTIFY

If the individual is unable to answer identification questions or provide an ID, you may have to check them for something that a caregiver or parent has placed for identification purposes.

Before attempting to touch them or search their belongings, it's extremely important that you assess their comfort level. Many times, people with Autism do not like to be touched or grabbed.

#### **When They are Comfortable**

Once you have established that the person is comfortable, you can check their clothing for identification. This could be in the form of a tag sewn to their shirt or a card inside a backpack or on a luggage tag. In some cases, caretakers apply temporary tattoos with their contact information.

With some patience and understanding, you shouldn't have much trouble obtaining identification from the individual. Just remember to remain friendly, be patient, and ask simple, straightforward questions.

## VI. CARETAKERS, PARENTS & GUARDIANS

When encountering a person with Autism, they may have a parent or caretaker with them. Sometimes the caretaker might not be immediately by their side, but within the general area. If you are attempting to interact with someone who has Autism and they are having difficulty communicating, you may want to ask them if they are with anyone.

### A. THE PRESENCE OF A CARETAKER

If a caretaker or parent is around, they will generally tell you who they are and can offer assistance as needed. It is important to understand that a caretaker does not want to obstruct your efforts. They want to help it go as smoothly as possible for everyone involved.

When there is a caretaker with the individual, it does not mean that you can't attempt to communicate with the individual. The caretaker may help with alternate forms of communication, if the individual's method of communication is not verbal. They may also be able to provide information on triggers or passions (see section B).

Many caretakers have gone through training regarding contacts with law enforcement and other first responders. They may be familiar with the types of information that might be needed and questions that might be asked. Some may even know why law enforcement was called, as they are familiar with the person and if they have any behaviors others may see as not being within social norms.

Make sure to involve parents and caretakers as much as possible for a successful outcome for everyone.

## B. TRIGGERS & PASSIONS

**Triggers** are things that make the person react in a negative way or shut down. Some examples include flashing lights or loud noises. Making sure your squad lights are off and your radio volume is turned down can help reduce or eliminate these triggers.

**Passions** are interests the person has. They may include talking to the person about an interest, like video games or a favorite TV show. This helps the individual begin communicating, making the interaction easier.

## VII. LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIFIC

Law enforcement officers will come across situations unique to them when interacting with adults with Autism. Understanding some of the following items can help make the contact go as smooth as possible.

One of the most common things an officer will have to do is identify the individual they are talking to. For people without Autism, when an officer tells them to "Give me your info", it's a simple response. The person will give their name, date of birth, address and a phone number. To some people with Autism, this question may be too open ended.

### A. ASKING QUESTIONS

When asking questions, it is best to use as few words as possible and get straight to the point. Questions such as "what is your name?" or "what is your address" may be more effective.

When asking questions, give the person time to respond - more time than you would expect a person without Autism to respond.

Another helpful approach is to offer the person something to write on. Some non-verbal people are able to communicate by writing their questions and answers down.

### B. TOUCH

If you need to touch a person, such as for identification, injuries or even arrest, it is important to explain to them exactly what you are going to do. After explaining, ask them if it is OK for you to do so. Here is an example:

1. You want to check a person's pockets for a wallet or ID card.
2. Explain that you want to check their pocket, even mentioning which one. It may sound something like, "I would like to check your back pocket for a wallet."
3. Ask them if it is OK. "Is it OK if I check your back pocket for a wallet?"
4. Give the person time to respond, then carry out the search of the wallet if the person said it was

## ADULTS WITH AUTISM

- OK to do so.
5. If the person is not comfortable with you touching them, ask them if they can take anything out of their pockets and show you.

## C. ARREST

If you are in a situation where an arrest is necessary, it is important to take a number of things into consideration.

First, it has already been discussed that people with Autism usually do not like being touched. This may cause an outburst or even a violent response. Officers need to be aware that this can happen, and that the intent is not to harm the officer or even escape.

### Restricting Movement

Officers will need to weigh the need to secure the individual versus alternative methods of restricting their movements. Individuals with Autism may have a weak understanding of cause and effect and have little concept of consequences. They may not understand that pulling their arm away from an officer that is trying to arrest them could lead to them being forced to the ground, pepper sprayed or Tased.

If the person is being handcuffed, it's important to know that many individuals with Autism tend to have an under developed trunk, and are at higher risk of potential asphyxiation. Make sure to move the person to a sitting or standing position as soon as possible to avoid any breathing issues.

### Jail

Finally, if you are bringing an individual with Autism into a holding cell or jail facility, they should be kept away from other prisoners. Many times, their lack of understanding of social situations and appropriate behaviors can make them prime candidates for abuse.

## VIII. QUESTIONS?

## IX. SCENARIO UTILIZATION

"Adults with Autism" - The training event "Adults with Autism" is designed to be experienced as a typical presentation with no input from the instructor. The students will watch this presentation inside the Simulator. The course material and classroom material are boosters for use outside of the classroom.

"Rock Chucker" - The scenario "Rock Chucker" will be used as a guided experience with the trainees. The Simulator's high-fidelity environment enables scenarios to be used in a play-pause format, where behaviors associated with Autism can be demonstrated in a contextual setting and highlighted by the system operator. This event allows for the signs of Autism to be experienced in the context of human behaviors and realistic settings.

"Too Friendly" - "Too Friendly" allows for recall and application of the material. The attached rubric is to be used.

## X. REFERENCES

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United States. Retrieved from Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/features/adults-living-with-autism-spectrum-disorder.html>
2. Rodden, J. (2021, August 25). Autism in Adults: Spectrum Disorder Symptoms & Signs. Retrieved from Additude Mag: <https://www.additudemag.com/autism-spectrum-disorder-in-adults/>

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The rate of Autism in children is higher than adults.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
2. You should never handcuff an adult with Autism.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
3. The most common reason an officer has an interaction with an adult with Autism is:
  - A. Theft
  - B. Traffic violations
  - C. Illicit drugs
  - D. Aggression
  
4. If you are having difficulty communicating with a person with Autism, you may want to see if there is a \_\_\_\_\_ that can facilitate
  - A. Lawyer
  - B. Interpreter
  - C. Caretaker / parent
  - D. Service animal
  
5. Which of the follow would be the best way to ask an adult with Autism to identify themselves?
  - A. "Give me your info"
  - B. "Who are you?"
  - C. "What is your name?"
  - D. "Do you have an ID?"

**PRE-TEST KEY**  
1. B 2. B 3. D 4. C 5. C

**Passing score: 70% or more**  
Any written test and rubric scoresheets shall be kept in department records for 30 years.

**ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The CDC estimates that 1 in \_\_\_\_ adults have Autism.
  - A. 10
  - B. 50
  - C. 45
  - D. 65
  
2. An adult with Autism may have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling, or they believe that everyone thinks like they do. This is known as:
  - A. Dissociative Mind
  - B. Absence of Mind
  - C. Feelings of Mind
  - D. Theory of Mind
  
3. An adult with Autism is unable to form loving relationships with others or maintain employment.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
4. If you must handcuff a person with Autism, which of the following should be of concern:
  - A. They may have a violent outburst
  - B. They may be at a higher risk of asphyxiation
  - C. They may not understand that pulling away/resisting could lead to additional uses of force
  - D. All of the above
  
5. Adults with Autism may have difficulties in regulating the following when speaking to you: (Choose all that apply)
  - A. Tone
  - B. Emotion
  - C. Inflection
  - D. Eye contact
  
6. The most common reason for police interaction with an adult with Autism is:
  - A. Aggression
  - B. Theft
  - C. Sexual assault
  - D. Traffic violations

7. Which of the following is the best way to ask for identification?
- A. "Give me your ID"
  - B. "What's your first name, DOB and address?"
  - C. "Last name, first name middle initial and birth date please"
  - D. "What is your name? What is your last name? What is your birthday?"
8. Which of the following are locations you might find identification on an adult with Autism that has limited communication?
- A. Paper in their shoe
  - B. Name tag on their backpack
  - C. Temporary tattoo on their arm
  - D. B and C
9. A "trigger" is:
- A. Something which can make the person react in a negative way, or even completely shut down.
  - B. A way to get a person with Autism to speak.
  - C. Something a person with Autism values.
  - D. A technique a caretaker uses to have a person with Autism answer questions.
10. When a person with Autism has a caretaker/parent/guardian with them, you should NEVER attempt to speak to the person with Autism.
- A. True
  - B. False

**TEST KEY**

1. C 2. D 3. B 4. D 5. A,B,C&D  
6. A 7. D 8. D 9. A 10. B

**Passing score: 70% or more**

**Any written test and rubric scoresheets shall be kept in department records for 30 years.**

**ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

### XIII. RUBRIC

	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Below Expectations</b>
<b>Pass the written examination</b>	Score 70% or better on the final Adults with Autism examination.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Successfully complete the "Too Friendly" Scenario</b>	Student will successfully navigate the "Too Friendly" scenario by using a variety of tactics that include slowing down, using appropriate language and understanding. The scenario will be considered successful when the adult with autism is allowed to return home without any further law enforcement intervention.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Identify that adults with autism may display behaviors that a first responder will have to work with in order to have a successful outcome</b>	The student can explain in detail the most common behaviors adults with autism may show during an interaction with first responders. The student can give several examples with each behavior.	The student can generally explain the most common behaviors adults with autism may show during an interaction with first responders. The student can give a few examples with each behavior.	The student can briefly explain the most common behaviors adults with autism may show during an interaction with first responders. The student can give an example for some of the behaviors.	The student can not explain the most common behaviors adults with autism may show during an interaction with first responders. The student cannot give any examples for each behavior.
<b>Identify that there may be different styles of communication and ways to obtain identification for individuals with autism</b>	The student can explain in detail that some people with autism have non-verbal ways of communication. The student can cite numerous examples of how a first responder can obtain identification from an individual with autism.	The student can generally explain that some people with autism have non-verbal ways of communication. The student can cite a few examples of how a first responder can obtain identification from an individual with autism.	The student can briefly explain that some people with autism have non-verbal ways of communication. The student can cite one or two examples of how a first responder can obtain identification from an individual with autism.	The student cannot explain that some people with autism have non-verbal ways of communication. The student cannot cite any examples of how a first responder can obtain identification from an individual with autism.



<p><b>Identify the role of a caretaker, parent, etc. and what resources they can give during an interaction.</b></p>	<p>The student can explain in detail what the role of a caretaker, parent or provider is during a contact. The student can describe in detail what a caretaker, parent or provider might provide to a first responder during a contact. The student can provide several examples.</p>	<p>The student can generally explain what the role of a caretaker, parent or provider is during a contact. The student can generally describe what a caretaker, parent or provider might provide to a first responder during a contact. The student can provide a few examples.</p>	<p>The student can briefly explain what the role of a caretaker, parent or provider is during a contact. The student can briefly describe what a caretaker, parent or provider might provide to a first responder during a contact. The student can provide only one or two examples.</p>	<p>The student cannot explain what the role of a caretaker, parent or provider is during a contact. The student cannot describe what a caretaker, parent or provider might provide to a first responder during a contact. The student cannot provide any examples.</p>
<p><b>Identify law enforcement specific interactions with adults with autism. Understand how an arrest should be completed on a person with autism.</b></p>	<p>The student can explain in detail the specifics that are unique to a law enforcement officer when having contact with a person with autism. The student can describe in detail considerations that should be taken if an officer must arrest an adult with autism.</p>	<p>The student can generally explain the specifics that are unique to a law enforcement officer when having contact with a person with autism. The student can generally describe considerations that should be taken if an officer must arrest an adult with autism.</p>	<p>The student can briefly explain specifics that are unique to a law enforcement officer when having contact with a person with autism. The student can briefly describe considerations that should be taken if an officer must arrest an adult with autism.</p>	<p>The student cannot explain the specifics that are unique to a law enforcement officer when having contact with a person with autism. The student cannot describe considerations that should be taken if an officer must arrest an adult with autism.</p>

**ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

#### XIV. STUDENT ATTENDANCE ROSTER

TOPIC: ADULTS WITH AUTISM DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Last	First	Badge	Email	Officer's Initials

I certify that each person listed on this roster was present in class for the entire number of training hours reflected, and if not, their training hours have been adjusted and recorded accordingly.

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

*ADULTS WITH AUTISM*

**XV. CLASS SURVEY**

**TOPIC: ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

INSTRUCTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS

CLASS CONTENT	Excellent	Above Average	Good	Below Average	Poor
Class organization					
Class objectives were clearly stated					
Practical activities were relevant to objectives					
All materials/resources were provided					
Topic area was important to Law Enforcement					
CLASS INSTRUCTION					
Instructor was prepared					
Instructor was knowledgeable in the content area					
Manner of presentation of the material was clear					
Effective teaching strategies were used					
Instruction met class objectives					
STUDENT PARTICIPATION					
Level of effort you put into the course					
Your skill/knowledge of the topic at start of course					
Importance of the topic to your assignment					

**ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

## XVI. CONTACT VIRTRA

If you have any questions/issues with any part of this manual, please see contact below:

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