

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

Resource Guide



PACT

Although we encourage you to reach out to us through our contact form to inquire about trainings or get individualized consultation on using our resources to address the needs of your community, we have put together this resource guide to make it easy for you to see what is available.

We encourage you to make our resources your starting place.

Individualize them for your community, adapt them for your needs, and make them your own. If you have any questions or need help with this process, please reach out!

THE UNIQUE POSITION OF A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO):

SROs are responsible for ensuring that the school, and *all* children within it, are safe. Understanding how autism affects children is essential for SROs so that they can better serve students on the autism spectrum and support the challenges that they may face while at school. SROs are in a unique position and serve as the first line in establishing positive relationships with special needs students in schools. SROs develop and promote positive relationships with students through daily interactions, such as eating lunch with students or reading to the class. In addition, by partnering and collaborating with the community, parents, school administrators, and teachers, SROs can help keep autism community members safe.

WANT US TO HELP YOU WITH TRAINING IN YOUR COMMUNITY?:

- We conduct trainings virtually and face-to-face, when possible
- Our training model provides trainees with the skills, knowledge, and resources to effectively train other first responders in their communities, increase autism awareness, and improve interactions between first responders and the autism community
- Contact us through the form on our [website](#) under the “CONTACT” tab

READY TO HOST YOUR OWN TRAINING?:

- **Here** is a PDF used to train and educate school resource officers (SROs)
 - This presentation highlights the key topics that are covered during a PACT training
 - Feel free to contact us for the PowerPoint version that you can adapt for your own purposes
- Visual supports are designed to help police officers or other first responders communicate with someone that may not use verbal speech, or may be too stressed or anxious to communicate verbally
 - **Widgit Health Police Symbol Board**
 - **Afirm Module** on visual supports
 - Autism Program - **Visual Communication Board**
- **Here** is the National Center for School Safety's Autism Spectrum Disorder School Resource Officer (SRO) Video Series that covers the following topics:
 - Identifying the signs of autism
 - Understanding the potential behavioral characteristics of autism
 - How to de-escalate and support students with autism

MEET & GREETs:

- Planning and Running a PACT Meet & Greet

The purpose of a meet & greet is to engage school resource officers and the autistic community in positive interactions so that during an emergency, each group feels more aware and comfortable. This is typically done after training and can be repeated as often as possible. Our informal research has shown us that it is this step that makes a difference to the autistic community and really helps officers become more understanding and aware.

- Organize a Meet & Greet in your community using these easy steps:

- **PICK A COMMUNITY LOCATION**

- Decide where the event will be held. If inside, consider choosing a quiet space with limited doors so that families can come without worry of multiple exits. If outside, again, choose a quiet park that has clear boundaries (fences) for safety. We recommend holding meet & greet events at schools or local community centers.
 - If you choose to hold the event at school, consider conducting meet & greet sessions with individual classes to maintain a familiar environment for students and to allow for more intimate interactions. Work with school administrators and teachers to arrange these sessions.

- **GATHER SUPPLIES**

Be prepared to set up tables of engaging materials for all ages. We suggest police themed coloring pages, sensory play, Legos, building/construction, trains, and police themed books. If providing food, consider allergies. We suggest sticking to drinks (coffee, water, juice boxes). We also suggest you have safety materials set up for the autistic community. Ideas of these can be found on our website. If holding the event at school, partner with school administrators and teachers to gather any additional materials.

- **INVITE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

- Find ways to engage and invite the autism community in your area. Ensure that police officers or other law enforcement members will come, dressed in uniform. They will need to be briefed on the goal of the event - to mingle, get to know the autistic community, and give everyone a chance to be in the same space.

■ THE EVENT

- Encourage interactions between officers, school administrators, teachers, and community members. Help autistic community members to sit near or say hello to officers. Have scripts ready so they can practice saying "hello" and giving personal information. Allow families to ask questions and vocalize worries. Enjoy interacting with each other!
- **Want to know more?** PACT team members are happy to consult with you on the details of your own event. Just submit a form on our website and we will reach out to you!
- **Here** you will find a PDF of the directions listed above on how to run a meet and greet
- **Meet & Greet with Lexington Police Department**
 - Example of advertisement for local meet and greet event

MORE RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

- National Center for School Safety - **School Resource Officer Poster**
- Autism Speaks - **School Community Toolkit**
- Campus Safety – **Interacting with Autism: A School Resource Officer Approach**
- Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT) – **COPS Information Sheet**
- Autism Informational Badge Hangtags can be a useful tool for SROs
 - See these hangtags created by HANDs in Autism **here**
- Sensory Kits can be a great tool for police officers to help individuals regulate during a stressful emergency situation
 - Examples of things to include:
 - Fidget spinners
 - Fidget cubes
 - Bubbles
 - Stickers
 - Pop-its
 - Laminated communications boards
 - **Example** of a Sensory Kit

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