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University of Cincinnati Center for
Excellence in Developmental Disabilities



A Guide to Interacting with Police

for Individuals with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities

People with intellectual, cognitive or developmental disabilities get involved as both victims and suspects/offenders with law enforcement and with the criminal justice system.

The police are ready to help in many different ways to help us feel safe. Police travel in cars, on motorcycles, on bikes on horses and even by foot.

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There are several items you will see when you see a police officer



Uniform: Special clothes worn by officers—shirt, pants, hat, boots



Badge: Hand sized piece of metal that shows the person is a police officer



Handcuffs: Two metal rings that open and close to lock on the wrists to keep a person from moving their arms and hands



Gun: A weapon that fires bullets



K-9: A dog that is trained specifically to work with officers



Radio/Mic: This is how the police officer communicates with the dispatch center and other officers.



Taser: A weapon that releases electric shocks

Things to remember when meeting police

1. Keep your hands to yourself and do not touch their badge or body.
2. Do not touch any of the equipment the police use to do their job.
3. NEVER touch a police officer's gun or any other weapon.

Telling the police about your disability

When you meet a police officer you can let them know you have a disability and any special needs you have. If you have a card in your wallet that explains your disability or special needs you can ask the officer to show it to them.



When you interact or are questioned by the police

DO these things:

- Pay attention and stay focused when the police talk to you
- Listen to what the police say
- Follow their directions
- Stay calm when the police approach you or talk to you
- Stay where you are (do not walk or run away)

DO NOT do these things:

- Ignore the police
- Run from the police
- Fight with the police
- Argue with the police
- Disobey the police



If you are arrested:

You have the Right to Remain Silent. Once you have identified yourself you do not have to discuss what happened with the police.

- Follow all police instructions
- Put your hands in the air or wherever police tell me to
- Hold still while the police do a pat down. They will touch your body for hidden weapon.
- Hold still while the police put hand cuffs on. This may feel uncomfortable.
- Let police check your ID
- Get into the police car
- Sit quietly in the car
- Talk to the person in charge (tell them about your disability)
- Listen to what officers say (if you are charged with crime)
- Listen to your rights
- Ask to speak to a lawyer or someone you trust (a parent)
- Wait patiently and quietly in the jail cell and avoid talking to people about your case