




Understanding Developmental or Intellectual Disabilities: A Training for Corrections



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Why Should You Care?



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Why Should You Care?

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires law enforcement agencies make reasonable modifications in their

- Policies
- Practices
- Procedures

Necessary to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities unless those modifications fundamentally alter the program or service



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Safe, Understood, Included

Explain what it means to be Safe, Understood and Included from the following perspectives:

- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)
- The officer
- The community



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Common Core Disability Characteristics

Disability	Visible Characteristics?	Communication /Language Processing Disorder	Sensory Processing Disorder	Social Interaction	Behavior
Autism	N	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cerebral Palsy	Y	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intellectual Disability	Y/N	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Down syndrome	Y	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tourette Syndrome	N	✓			✓
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	Y				✓



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Spectrum of Supports Needed

Traditional Model

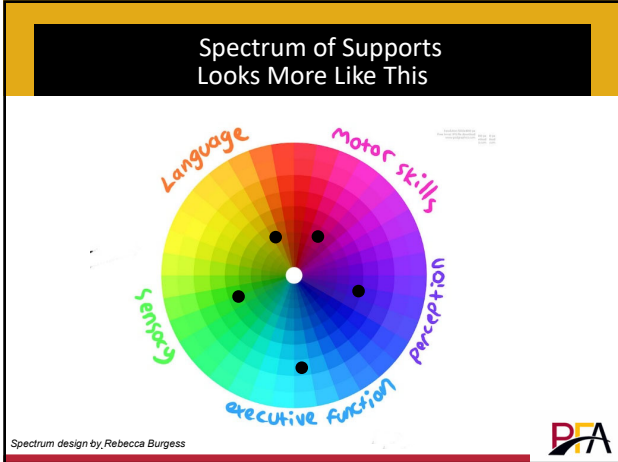


- More impacted by characteristics
- May need more supports
- Mild characteristics
- May need fewer supports

Presume intellect
More supports ≠ low intelligence




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Prevalence Statistics

- About **1 in 36** children has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from the CDC.
 - **1 in 23** boys
 - 1 in 88 girls
 - **1 in 43** children in Maryland
 - **1 in 27** boys in Maryland
 - 1 in 116 girls



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Prevalence Statistics (from CDC)

- **1 in 6** of children age 3-17 have a developmental disability
 - 1 in 83 have an intellectual disability
 - 1 in 345 have Cerebral Palsy
 - 1 in 700 have Down Syndrome
 - 1 in 162 have Tourette Syndrome



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Possible Reasons for Incarceration

- Cyber Crime
- Substance Abuse
- Unknowing participant in crime
- Driving Incidents
- Domestic Disturbance
- Write your name on page four



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Risk of Victimization and Abuse

- Impaired cognitive abilities and judgment
- Physical disabilities and limitations
- Insufficient adaptive behaviors
- Constant interactions with “protectors” who exploit them
- Lack of knowledge of safety and ways to protect themselves
- Living/working in high-risk environments



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Risk of Victimization and Abuse

- Inability to report victimization
- Inability to know how to seek help
- Eagerness to please others
- Inability to recognize an act is a crime
- Belief perpetrator is a “friend”
- Lack of awareness of seriousness of situation



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Risk of Victimization and Abuse

- The individual's reduced privacy
- Lack of teaching regarding healthy sexuality and decision-making
- Write your name on page four
- Reduced expectation by caregivers and others
- Limited friendships and increased social isolation
- Negative attitudes toward those with disabilities



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Seizures

Features can be:

- Muscle jerks
- Eyeball twitching
- Staring
- Inability to respond despite consciousness
- One body part twitching



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Exercise Time



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Possible Reasons for Incarceration

- Cyber Crime
- Substance Abuse
- Unknowing participant in crime
- Driving Incidents
- Domestic Disturbance
- Write your name on page four



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Communication/Language Processing Disorder

- May communicate with or without words
- May use alternative mode of communication – iPad or other assistive technology, gestures, sign language, PECS
- May be verbal, but unable to sustain a conversation
- May only cite scripts or use echolalia
- May use repetitive or idiosyncratic language (ASD and Tourettes)
- Articulation difficulties (ID/Down syndrome and Cerebral Palsy)



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Communication/Language Processing Disorder

- May only understand direct language
 - May be able to speak but answers may seem blunt or tactless
 - May be unable to understand sarcasm, metaphors or euphemisms



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Communication/Language Processing Disorder



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Communication/Language Processing Disorder

- May appear deaf and may not respond to verbal cues
- Receptive and Expressive Language may require additional processing time



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Communication/Language Processing Disorder

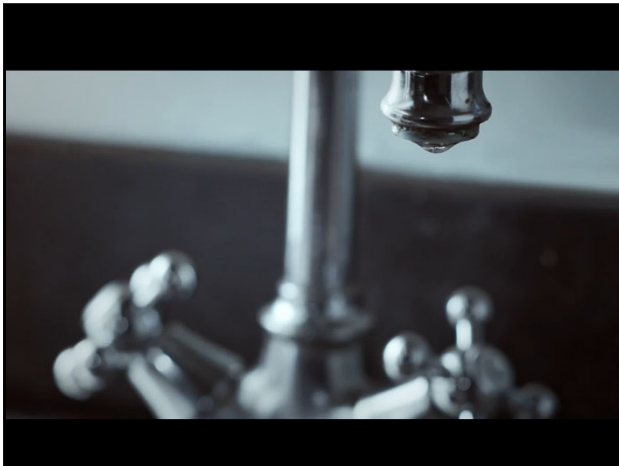


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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

The diagram features two vertical arrows. On the left, a black arrow points upwards with the word 'ANXIETY' written vertically inside it. On the right, a red arrow points downwards with the word 'PROCESSING' written vertically inside it. The PFA logo is in the bottom right corner.

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The Jail Environment

A photograph of a jail interior. Inmates wearing orange jumpsuits are sitting on metal bunks. The room has blue walls and numbered doors (203, 204, 205, 206). The PFA logo is in the bottom right corner.

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The Jail Environment

“When Drew Harrison was in prison, just sitting in his cell overloaded his senses. To dim the fluorescent lights, he covered the bulbs with toothpaste or paper. To mask overwhelming odors, he wrapped his uniform around his head.”



<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/11/02/prison-is-even-worse-when-you-have-a-disability-like-autism>



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Sensory Processing

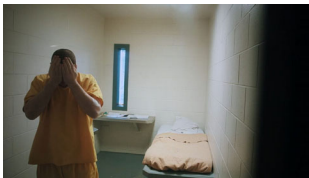
- sensitivity to sound, light and touch
- easily over-stimulated
- under-stimulated
- difficulty with body awareness and balance



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Social Interaction

“Another time, he said he requested placement in solitary confinement so he wouldn’t have to interact with people, which he found stressful.”



<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/11/02/prison-is-even-worse-when-you-have-a-disability-like-autism>



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Social Interaction

- May not make eye contact
- May not pick up on social cues or body language
- May not understand personal space
- May be huggers or kissers
- Down syndrome – may be overly social and not recognize the seriousness of situation



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Social Interaction

- May lack social or emotional reciprocity
- May not respond “appropriately” – may laugh or giggle at inappropriate times
- Cerebral Palsy – may not be able to show signs of emotion
- May not develop peer relationships



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Behavioral Effects

- May have obsessive tendencies (passions)
- May act impulsively
- Anxiety creates repetition
- Medication effects




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“Bad Behaviors”

- All “behaviors” should be seen as communication
- People may engage in “acting out” or “aggressive behavior” because of:
 - The inability to communicate ideas, pain or mental health experience in ways that are effective, reliable and universally understandable*
 - Difficulty adjusting to new routine or situation

*From William Stillman, “Presuming Intellect”



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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .






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Scenario

You are working in the IPC when a new prisoner comes in with the arresting officer. The officer, who seems frustrated, advises he can't get any information from the subject and he believes the prisoner has some type of disability. How can you proceed from here?



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Corrections Considerations

Individuals with a developmental disability MAY --

- Not want their disability to be recognized (and try to cover it up)
- Pretend to understand their rights when they don't
- Seem less credible as a result of behaviors
- Say what they think you want to hear



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Corrections Considerations

Individuals with a developmental disability MAY --

- Invade your personal space
- Reach for your badge or gun due to curiosity
- Not react well in emergency situations or recognize real danger (may enter area where there is a fight, etc.)
- Appear to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs

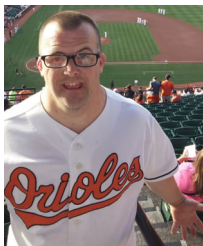


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LE/Corrections Considerations

Individuals with an I/DD MAY --

- Have a high tolerance for pain
- Evaluate for injury toe to head



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Corrections Considerations

Individuals with a developmental disability MAY –

- Be overwhelmed by officer presence
- Not recognize the uniform as a sign of authority
- Not know what to do or how to seek help
- Be confused about who is responsible for the crime



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Corrections Considerations

Individuals with a developmental disability MAY –

- Repeat words or mimic gestures of the officer
- Have difficulty describing facts or details
- Not respond to “stop” or other commands
- React with “fight”, “flight” or “freeze”
- Answer “no” or “why” to all questions

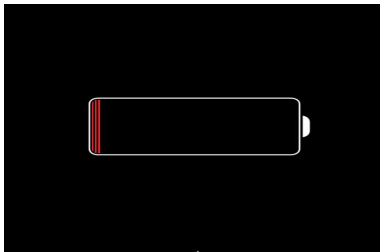


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Crisis

Real or Perceived?

Real!



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Scenario

You are working in a direct supervision housing area. One of the inmates in the area appears to behave somewhat childish. You notice that they “flaps” their arms quite a bit and often asks for “a hug”. Also, this person frequently wants to enter the restricted space around the officers’ post. How do you address these behaviors?



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Possible Signs of Escalation

- Increasing resistance to requests
- Refusal
- Questioning
- Challenging
- Change in tone and volume of voice
- Focus on technology
- Sense of loss of control
- Increasing physical activity
- Loud
- Self-talk
- Swearing to self



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It’s Not About Being Politically Correct

It’s about **Respect**

- Rosa’s Law 2010
 - replaces “mental retardation” with “intellectual disability” in federal health, education, and labor policy
- People First Language
- Treat adults as adults



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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

De-escalation techniques

- Be patient and give the person space
- Be alert to signs of increased frustration and try to eliminate the source if possible as behavior may escalate
- Use passions to redirect
- Avoid quick movements and loud noises
- Do not touch the person unless absolutely necessary



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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

- Be aware that the person might have low/under-developed muscle tone



- If in custody, alert jail authorities



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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

- Remain realistic and honest
- Explain your actions in advance
 - I am going to place you in handcuffs
 - I am going to call for an ambulance
- Don't make promises you can't keep



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Intake process should include psychiatric and developmental questions
 - Ex. "Did you receive special education services in school?" If yes, "Why?"
- Person with mild ID may not stand out from other inmates
- Benefits of facility's structure/routines



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Build a positive relationship – find out what the person is interested in
- Each day might be different
- Might need extra time during transports
- Inability to read threat assessment



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Shakedowns - remove person from housing area prior to shakedown
 - Will reduce person's anxiety/reduce chance of meltdown
 - Will not present security risk for officers
 - Individual can be placed in separate holding area or Medical Unit
 - Common area can be loud and chaotic



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Shakedowns - remove person from housing area prior to shakedown
- Having property disturbed/moved/searched can create anxiety
- Explain what is happening with their property so they are prepared



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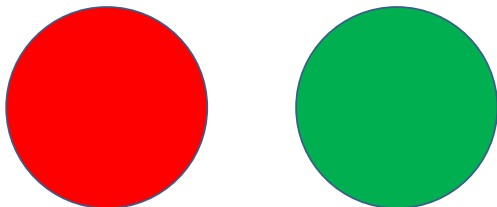
When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

- Use simple sentences-avoid metaphors and sarcasm
- Ask questions one at a time
- Provide paper for the person to write/draw responses
- Give plenty of time for the person to process the information and respond
- Answering individual's questions may minimize anxiety



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When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .



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What's Wrong with this Interview?



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Conducting an Interview

Use his name at the start of each sentence so they know you are addressing them

Explain how long the interview is going to last, and what will happen at the end

Allow for frequent breaks

Maintain a calm environment; minimize distractions, e.g., sensory

Use clear, concise and simple language – no sarcasm, metaphors

Ask questions one at a time

Allow time for the person to process and respond



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Inmates with Physical Challenges
 - Any individual with a physical disability
 - Limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina
 - Amputee, Cerebral Palsy, spinal cord injuries, musculoskeletal, injuries etc..
 - Medication
- Housing / Who Determines?
 - Which unit(s)?
 - Top or bottom bunk?
 - Will they be able to have access to bedding, toilets or showers?
- Is there a safety/security factor involved?



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Elderly Inmates
 - (of a person) old or aging
 - Aging offenders are prone to; mobility issues, dementia, impaired vision and hearing, difficulty adjusting, taken advantage of
 - Medication
- Housing / Who Determines?
 - Which unit(s)?
 - Top or bottom bunk?
 - Will they be able to have access to bedding, toilets or showers?
- Is there a safety/security factor involved?



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Special Considerations for Corrections

- Transgender Inmates
 - Is someone whose gender identity or gender expression does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth
- Housing / Who Determines?
 - Which unit(s)?
 - Special Confinement Status?
 - Classification!
- Is there a safety/security factor involved?
- Easily victimized or,
- Be the aggressor



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FOR MORE INFORMATION



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