

STEPS TO FOLLOW

- Follow Department procedures. Learn proper interviewing techniques.
- Keep your language simple and direct. Do not use words with double meanings. They will not tell you that they don't understand or ask for clarity.
- Try to be calm, unemotional, and non-confrontational.
- Ask if there is someone you can call to assist (parent, caretaker, mentor, etc...) then call them.
- Ignore disrespectful, blunt, threatening or unusual language.
- If they threaten suicide or aggression make a quick assessment. Often autistic individuals will do this when they don't know how to deal with the situation. Explain, in simple concrete terms, that you are trying to understand and help.
- They may see you as threatening even in the best of circumstances. If they feel threatening, even when you don't mean to be, they may try to run, be aggressive, or hide.
- Investigate any acknowledgement of guilt carefully, it may not be true. They will agree to things they don't understand or will agree to get you to stop talking. They may have been put up to illegal behavior by someone else. These are vulnerable individuals with poor problem solving skills.
- They have difficulties perceiving responsibility or the issue from someone else's perspective. Allow them to explain the situation. What seems to be common sense to us will not be for them.
- Allow them time to process your question. They may not understand what you are asking of them. Stress or emotions will slow down already delayed processing. If they seem evasive it may be due to the stress.
- They usually have a high tolerance for pain. Assess for injury and be careful when placing in hand-cuffs. Remember that they are at a high risk for asphyxia.
- Tell them before you touch them. What may seem like a comforting touch to you may exacerbate their anxiety.
- Do not stop self-stimming behavior if possible. Do not expect eye contact.
- Back off if possible. A show of force will only increase the likelihood of a poor outcome. Move them to a quiet environment. Try not to have sirens, lights, or shouting. Avoid pointing or hand waving. Many are very sensitive to external stimuli.
- If you have to take them into custody, to reduce the risk of abuse and/or injury, segregate them from the other detention/jail population.