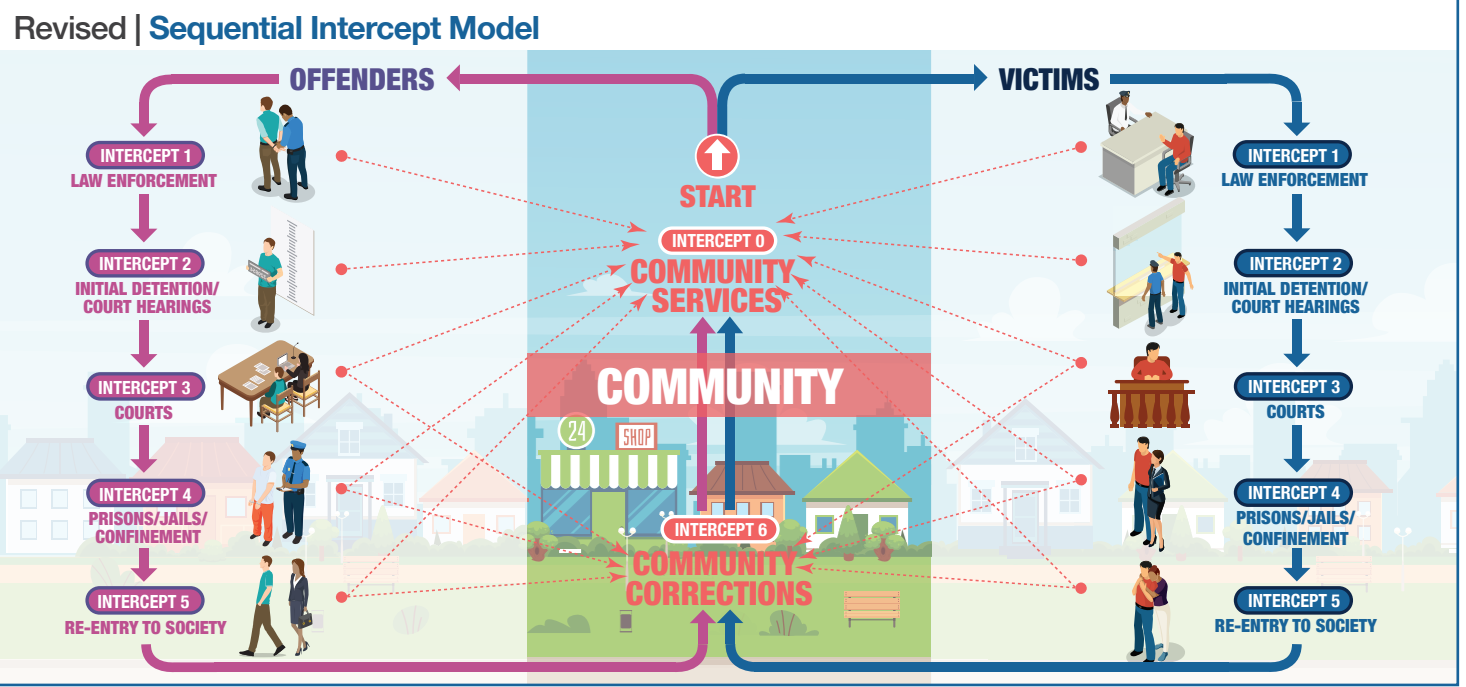


About the Issue: Preventing, reducing, and improving interactions between autistic individuals and the criminal justice system are urgent research and policy priorities.¹⁻³ Research should guide evidence-based programs and policies that limit unnecessary interactions between autistic individuals and the criminal justice system^{4,5} and address documented high rates of victimization among autistic individuals.^{6,7} A diverse team of autistics, family members, researchers, criminal justice system professionals, and policymakers formed the Global Autism and Criminal Justice Consortium to advance policy recommendations that span the entirety of the criminal justice system, which is often disconnected,^{8,9} using an adapted version of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM). The revised SIM, displayed below, illustrates a cyclical process for how autistic individuals as victims and offenders interact with the various steps of the criminal justice system. Arrows at each Intercept point back to the community to illustrate exit ramps, or areas for diversion out of the justice system.¹⁰⁻¹¹

<p>Global Autism & Criminal Justice Consortium Activities</p>	<p>Structured monthly meetings for international collaboration</p>	<p>Learn more about the Revised SIM here</p>	<p>Click here to read a systematic review</p>	<p>Global Criminal Justice Survey</p>	<p>Global Criminal Justice Summit October, 2020 <i>(held in October 2020)</i></p>
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Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*


International protests in solidarity with Black Lives Matter have informed and catalyzed the need to interrupt longstanding, systemic failure of the criminal justice system that impacts individuals, families, and communities.¹² Intersectional approaches advocate an understanding of how racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and other minority groups are disproportionately impacted by negative and violent encounters with law enforcement and elevated risk of victimization. It will be imperative for the autism research community to continue to not only include but prioritize the voices of diverse minority groups in future work. Inclusive research practices that meaningfully involve and partner with neurodiverse minority groups are needed to generate policy change in the criminal justice system, which excessively and disparately harms minority communities.

Policy Recommendations across the Criminal Justice System


To drive clinical care:


 Ensure that autistic victims receive **trauma-informed supports**.¹³

 Offer **training** for autistic individuals and their caregivers to understand available supports in the event of a criminal justice system interaction, and training centered around the lived experiences of autistic individuals for criminal justice professionals and service providers.

 **Address social determinants of health**, such as housing and food security,¹⁴ by investing in communities and neighborhoods to develop programs that prevent criminal justice system interactions and support those with previous justice system experiences.

To inform spending priorities:

 Develop and ensure access to coordinated **community-based services**, including mental health supports, skill building, and job supports, to fortify support systems that respond to individual needs across the justice continuum including, prevention, safety, and effective transitions.

 **Substantial investment** in research, resource development, and programs with evaluative components that generate economic evidence of costs and benefits.

To affirm human rights:

 All nations should ratify the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

Policy Recommendations by Intercept



COMMUNITY SERVICES: INTERCEPT 0

Supports that prevent criminal justice system interactions for autistic individuals as victims or offenders.

- Develop **data-sharing mechanisms** for service providers across community and education settings to comprehensively be informed of individual and family needs.
- Develop and implement **safety goals** in service plans for autistic people that focus on healthy relationships, cyber security, community safety, and interacting with law enforcement.
- Utilize public health messaging about the broad autism spectrum to **promote equitable access** to community spaces, social opportunities, and awareness of non-emergency options for support.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Clearly described justice system information from [New Zealand](#).
- Resources from [Pennsylvania](#) to encourage safety and prevent sexual victimization.



LAW ENFORCEMENT: INTERCEPT 1

Interactions between autistic individuals as victims, offenders, or witnesses and law enforcement.

- Address violent police interactions through 1) recurring training on **de-escalation** tactics to reduce use of force, handcuffing, and deaths, 2) provision of non-lethal weapons as an alternative to firearms, and 3) accountability for police-related deaths.
- **Utilize alternatives to police** via responder models led by mental/behavioral health providers/ social workers who follow up with vital services and supports in non-criminal or non-violent interactions.
- Establish tools for autistic citizens to **share information** voluntarily and securely about their diagnoses and other needs to aid first responders.
- Offer **social opportunities** to build trust among the autism community and law enforcement.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Examples for an alternative responder model in the [United States](#) and training opportunities for law enforcement from the [United Kingdom \(UK\)](#).



INITIAL DETENTION/COURT HEARINGS: INTERCEPT 2

Activities prior to initial court hearings and entry into initial prison/jail/confinement including data matching, screening, pretrial supervision, diversion services.

- Provide **police-assisted diversionary programs** that offer services and supports, in place of charges, for autistic individuals and those with social and communication support needs.
- Implement evidence-based communication and environmental modifications in interview practices to **preserve basic legal rights**.
- Follow nations that have enacted [Appropriate Adults](#) and [Intermediaries](#), originating in the United Kingdom (UK), to ensure disability justice.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- [Canadian](#) resource to identify social communication needs.



COURTS: INTERCEPT 3

Activities autistic offenders, victims, and witnesses experience during a trial in a court setting.

- **Divert** offenders from courts to communities based on individual needs, history, and case severity.
- Link courts and disability services using **community service resource lists** to highlight existing access points to facilitate and identify supports.
- Implement **modifications to court rooms** based on sensory needs that align with best practices or offer virtual or remote participation alternatives for autistic individuals so long as this consistent with country-specific rights and protections.
- Offer certified court advocates that facilitate communication, participation, and system navigation.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Accessible and virtual court experiences in [Europe](#).



PRISONS/JAILS/CONFINEMENT: INTERCEPT 4

Supports for autistic offenders incarcerated in prisons, jails, detention centers, or confinement, and continued care for autistic victims.

- Develop or determine an existing tool to assess social communication, executive functioning, and sensory considerations, for intake and transfer staff to help determine support needs and potential accommodations.
- Offer alternative and sensory-friendly **living situations** for autistic individuals.
- Utilize peer [mentoring programs](#) to support autistic offenders and autistic victims.^{15,16}



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Guidance on accommodations to confinement settings from the [UK](#).
- The [US Department of Justice](#) provides resources for victims with a convicted offender.



RE-ENTRY TO SOCIETY: INTERCEPT 5

Supports autistic offenders and victims upon release from prisons/jail/confinement through transition planning and connections to trauma-informed community supports.

- Develop or adapt **exit and re-entry programs and resources** to be individualized, assessment-based, and utilize universal design, such as enhanced communication and visual components.
- **Coordinate service delivery needs**, and prioritize continuity, between confinement settings, community-based service providers, and natural supports, including family, for effective transitions.
- Reduce suicide and recidivism risk by ensuring **transition planning** across life domains (e.g., health care, housing, food access, employment, community participation).
- Integrate data systems of courts, prisons/jails/confinement settings, and service provider programs to **ensure that court-mandated services are actively implemented**.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Facilitated discharge planning from [Canada](#).



COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS: INTERCEPT 6

Supports that prevent autistic individuals from re-offending such as parole/probation and established community services.

- Proactive, individualized planning, routine assessment, and re-assessment are essential to evaluate service and support needs, and to provide stability, which reduces recidivism risks.¹⁷
- Link system navigators or social workers to corrections officers so parole/probation interfaces with community-based supports and community connections.
- Prioritize immediate access to employment and needed services, including housing, transportation, medical care, and community-based mental health services.
- Adapt existing practices for specialized caseloads (i.e., individuals with mental health diagnoses) for probation/parole officers who interact with autistic offenders.



INNOVATION IN ACTION

- Program to link probation/parole to community and psychiatric services from [Canada](#).

* This brief was submitted on April 12, 2022. The Policy and Analytics Center at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute strives for inclusivity and acknowledges that language preferences evolve over time.

Closing

We thank INSAR for emphasizing equitable justice for autistic individuals. The Global Autism and Criminal Justice Consortium that generated these interdisciplinary recommendations was led by the Policy and Analytics Center at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute. For more information and citations visit: www.drexel.edu/autism/criminaljustice. Please contact PAC@drexel.edu with questions.

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