Headset & Health

Autism Awareness

April 2026

Hearing Beyond Words

Autism Spectrum Disorder can affect how callers communicate, process information, and respond to stress, especially during emergencies. This may look like delayed answers, difficulty following questions, and even sensory overload. These differences can be easy to misread, but using clear, simple language, with patience, and a calm approach, Communications Officers can better connect with callers and ensure they get the help they need.

Resources

HCSO Peer Support:
346 - 286 - 3175

HCSO Behavioral Health Division:
346-286-3150
Mon - Fri 8a-4p
BHD@sheriff.hctx.net

Text Lines:
Suicide & Crisis Life Line - Text 988

Veterans/Military Crisis Line - Text 838255 or Dial 988 then Press 1

All text lines are available 24/7

Real Talk

"When understanding Autism, it is important to remember that it is a spectrum and not a one size fits all diagnosis. What may apply to one person may not necessarily apply to another. Taking the time to ask for additional details such as aversions to lights or sirens, their history of interaction with law enforcement, as well as possible communication barriers is especially important to ensure a positive outcome."

L. Mendoza CO - 1 Year of Service

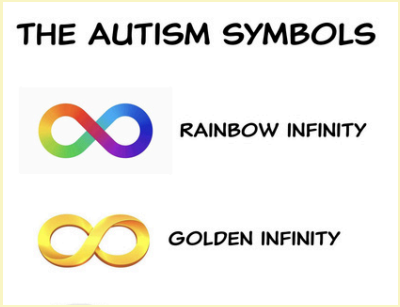
HCSO Resources

Project Guardian - A program to help keep individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) safe. This program is based on Project Guardian developed by the Newport News (VA) Police Department.

Project Lifesaver - A program for individuals with cognitive disabilities such as autism, dementia, Alzheimer's, or traumatic brain injury who have a history of wandering from home. Project Lifesaver International (PLI) is a non-profit that was established in 1999 and is widely used throughout the United States. [Click here for US website].

Light Corner





Headset & Health

Autism Awareness

April 2026



Supervisor's Desk

"Autism is often misunderstood and, at times, unfairly labeled as a burden. It is not. It is a different way of experiencing the world—one that challenges conventional definitions of "normal" and invites us to embrace uniqueness. It is, in many ways, a gift—one that fosters strength, patience, and a deeper understanding of what truly matters. [The] journey is not easy [and] there will be days filled with exhaustion, frustration, and lots of tears and you will question everything. You will [choose to] continue forward, not because it is easy, but because your child depends on you—and because your love gives you no other option."

-Jennifer Blake, 911 Coordinator

Mindset tip of the month

Meet the Caller Where They Are

Callers with Autism Spectrum Disorder may communicate differently from others or need extra time to process and gather information. Slowing down, keeping language clear, and staying patient helps ensure every caller gets the help they need.

Additional Resources

Looking to learn more about autism from voices within the community? Check out these trusted resources:

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN):
Advocacy, education, and support run by autistic adults.
autisticadvocacy.org

Autism Society:
Longstanding U.S. nonprofit offering resources and awareness programs.
autism-society.org

The Mighty: Autism Community
Personal stories, support, and practical tips.
themighty.com/topic/autism

These sites focus on understanding, acceptance, and support, making them great starting points for learning more about autism in everyday life and work.

Coming Next Month:

Mental Health in Action

Next month's issue focuses on mental health and healthy habits – simple ways to take care of yourself and support each other, on and off shift.

"Headset & Health" is created to support the mental health and wellness of our Communications Officers across all shifts. If you'd like to to share a quote, tip or idea for a future issue, reply to this email or Click here to submit suggestions .