

Before addressing autistic people

Autism can be invisible. Autistic people may process information differently and therefore need more time or clarity, especially in stressful situations. Someone may appear independent or calm, while still feeling anxious or overwhelmed. Therefore:

- Do not unnecessarily touch autistic people.
- First explain what you are going to do and ascertain whether your words have been understood well before proceeding to action.
- Ask simple and straight questions.
- Avoid irony or sarcasm, and do not use transferred meanings or comparisons.
- Allow autistic people some extra time to absorb your information or to proceed to action.
- Be aware that autistic people do not intend to be impolite by not looking at you.

What is important to know about this autistic person:

- ☐ may respond or behave in unexpected ways
- ☐ may seem inattentive or not respond at all
- ☐ avoids eye contact in case of stress or when under pressure
- ☐ may experience strong emotional responses
- ☐ may seem tactless
- ☐ may seem cocky, stubborn or cross
- ☐ may be extremely docile
- ☐ mostly dislikes physical contact
- ☐ finds body language hard to understand
- ☐ takes proverbs and metaphors literal
- ☐ may use formal, oldish or stately language
- ☐ prefers fixed habits and rules.
- ☐ has a number of specific interests
- ☐ sometimes has difficulty understanding what others think or feel
- ☐ may be extra sensitive to stimuli such as light, sound, smell, and surrounding crowds

Important information for police, care providers and enforcement officers

Autistic people may be particularly vulnerable in certain situations, whether as a victim, witness, or suspect. Differences in communication and social interaction can lead to misunderstandings and anxiety when behavior is not well understood. Consult an expert to ensure autistic people receive adequate help. Autism (including former terms such as Asperger's and PDD-NOS) is recognized as an autism spectrum disorder in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) of the World Health Organization and is classified as a neurodevelopmental disorder. If you think your client/witness/detainee is autistic, please have a psychiatric report be made up for the legal procedure.

For information on autism: <http://www.autisme.nl>