



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Public Safety Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Autism Awareness Training for First Responders Coming to Louisiana

Baton Rouge, LA – On April 24, 2014 the Department of Public Safety, Office of State Fire Marshal will host a training seminar designed to better educate law enforcement and other first responders on how to interact with and effectively communicate with persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The seminar will be held at the Pennington Biomedical Research Facility in Baton Rouge and participation in the seminar is limited to first responders.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the fastest growing neurobiological condition in the world. With prevalence numbers rising exponentially over the last six decades, more and more families are living with ASD than ever before. In the United States, one in every 50 American children will have ASD.

Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

People with ASD are more likely to have a 911 encounter than a typical person. The number of responses is increasing nationwide at an alarming rate. These calls can be high risk calls for the responder and a person with ASD. Injuries and in some calls, death has resulted due to the lack of understanding about a person with ASD.

This seminar will provide first responders with an overview of ASD, growth rates, theories, common characteristics, effective communication methods, behavioral symptoms, sensory issues, and some practical skills on how to effectively interact and respond to an emergency involving a person with ASD.

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Instructors will provide information on how first responders can recognize an individual with ASD, and discuss how actual incidents were handled. Special tactics, response techniques, rescue techniques, patient care, search and rescue, and actual incidents will be discussed. Incidents discussed will highlight police responses, fire rescue, rescue from heights, motor vehicle crashes, and emergency medical responses.

"This training seminar goes hand-in-hand with our commitment to raising awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder," said Colonel Mike Edmonson, Deputy Secretary for the Department of Public Safety. "The program is aimed at improving the public safety professional's ability to recognize and assist those persons on the spectrum in emergency situations." State Fire Marshal Butch Browning said, "We are pleased to have the opportunity to bring such a quality training program to the capital city."

First responders interested in taking advantage of this valuable training opportunity are urged to register online before April 21st. Space is limited to 374 participants and there is no cost. Simple steps to register are as follows:

To register for this class go to the Louisiana State Fire Marshal web site,

<http://sfm.dps.louisiana.gov/>, and follow the instructions below;

- Click on Education,
- Click on Training and Event Calendar,
- On the calendar go to April 24th 2014, click on Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition Training,
- Click on Sign up at the bottom of the page,
- Enter information and click register at the bottom of the page. A follow-up e-mail confirming your placement in this class will be sent to you once your request has been processed.

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