

February 26, 2021

A close friend had to call 911 for help with her adult autistic son, who was aggressive and in crisis. Because the officers were trained in autism, they had a very positive outcome --unlike some of the other scenarios we have had recently in Utah.

We have had some great interactions, and some very unfortunate interactions with police and people on the Autism Spectrum or with mental illness. We are trying to eliminate the negative experiences with law enforcement and autism by giving them the tools they need to recognize the differences in behaviors from a person with mental illness or on the autism spectrum and criminal actions, and have a win-win outcome. I sincerely believe that as much as we autism families do not want to have a negative situation, neither does the officer. This training will give officers real insights into specific behaviors, communication, and de-escalation techniques.

Recently, I have been involved in autism training for law enforcement with the Attorney General's office. Officers tell us they can definitely use the skills they are learning, it's given them a better understanding of behaviors and how to intervene, and they are appreciative of it.

This training will help ensure that our officers and our most vulnerable populations have positive interactions.

Cheryl Smith
Carson's mom