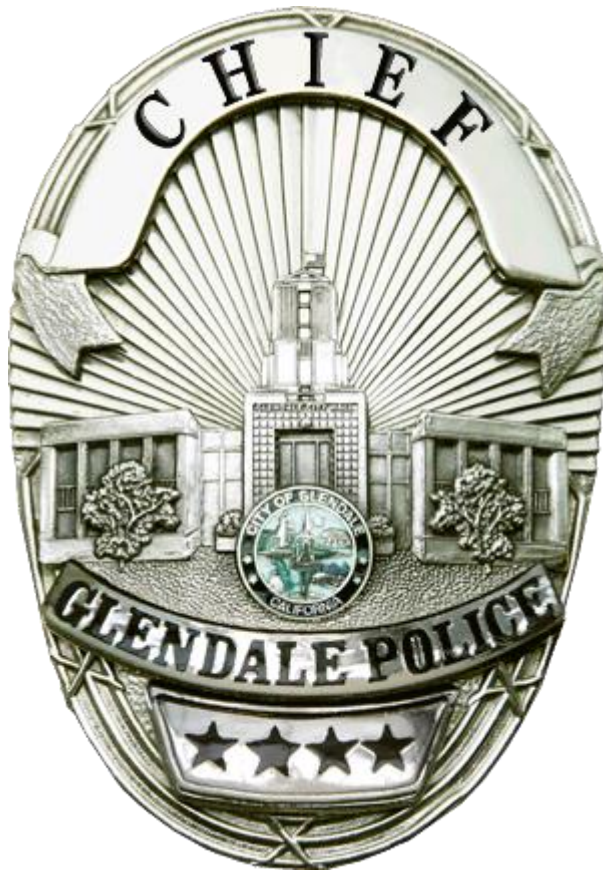


Glendale Police Department



Autism and Developmental Disabilities Training

Prepared by: Sergeant Traci Fox

Training Summary

In 2011 the Glendale Police Department began exploring topics of training to enhance our current training two year cycle. During discussions we found that we had been having numerous encounters with individuals with Autism as well as other developmental disabilities. It was quickly learned that several of these encounters did not go as well as we would have liked. The decision was made to include training in developmental disabilities in one of our scheduled training days.

The Glendale Police Department contacted Autism Speaks and requested assistance in finding an instructor who would be willing to come out and do several trainings focused specifically for law enforcement. We were introduced to Kate Movius, who was working closely with them. During our meetings with Kate it was decided that we would do a one hour training course titled "Autism 101" to give each officer a base foundation of what Autism is and some suggestions on handling encounters in the field. The goal was to do a follow up training several months later to expand their knowledge.

We conducted 5 one hour training sessions to train all officers currently assigned to patrol (approximately 90 officers). Officers were very engaged in the training and open about their contacts in the field. This allowed for other officers to see errors that had been made by their partners in previous encounters and learn from them. Kate helped to facilitate the discussion with the officers and offered her perspective as a parent.

Immediately following the first training day we began to see results. Not only did officers continue to dialog about the training, they requested more training. Almost immediately we began hearing about officers encountering individuals and remembering their training. Instead of being more aggressive in their contacts, they began to identify certain characteristics about these individuals and started slowing down their encounters. This allowed for situations to deescalate on their own without resorting to force. Instead officers stepped back and allowed the individual to calm down by giving them space and protecting them while they did so. Officers continued their education by having more open conversations with caregivers and parents in the field so they could better learn how to handle these individuals in future encounters. Officers also began sharing their field experiences with other district officers so they could identify these individuals and know how to handle them in future incidents.

With the success stories and positive feedback we began looking at phase two of our training. With the assistance of Kate Movius we decided to do a longer training session for the second phase. This training would include portions of the Autism 101 course as a reminder to officers. The majority of the training would include individuals and families with developmental disorders and Autism. Kate reached out to families in the community and asked if they would like to be involved in the training. The response was overwhelming. Families were excited and eager to share their stories with officers in the hopes that it would prevent future negative contacts.

In August 2013 we again conducted 5 sessions of training, this time making the training a two hour session. Again close to 90 officers attended the training. At each training we had a family of a high functioning individual and a low functioning individual to demonstrate to the officers the variety of abilities along the spectrum. Each family spoke to the officers about their experiences with police and

what it is like to raise a child with these disorders. In the case of the high functioning individuals, they personally spoke about their encounters and what helped them in police contacts. At the conclusion of the training we brought a couple officers up to the front and had them attempt to gain basic information from the individual like they would in a field situation. They quickly learned that this was not easy regardless of where the person fell on the spectrum.

One of the additional gains from this training was the relationships that officers began building with the families that presented in the training. By bringing in families from within the city, officers got firsthand experience with individuals that they may encounter in the field. This also allowed these families to become acquainted with officers who work where they live and become more comfortable and trusting of the police.

Tools to add to the Training

The Glendale Police Department continued their dialog with Kate Movius and Autism Speaks. During one of these conversations the discussion centered on tracking devices for individuals with cognitive disabilities. The Glendale Police Department had also received requests from the community for programs related to these tracking devices. After some research, the Glendale Police Department purchased the Project Lifesaver program. This program consisted of wristbands which work on radio frequencies. These wristbands are worn by the clients 24/7. Should one of the clients go missing or walk away from their family or caregiver they notify the police department. Officers respond with receivers programmed to the client's frequency. Officers can then search for the client.

In order for this program to be a success, the family/caregiver works closely with an officer from the Glendale Police Department. That same officer responds out to the client's location every 60 days to change out the battery on the wristband and meet with the families. The goal of these visits is not only to change the battery but to build a relationship with the family and the client. That way in the event of an incident both the client and the family/caregiver are not afraid to contact police for help. This also allows the officers to learn about patterns of the client's behavior that they might not know about if that relationship were not built.

To date the Glendale Police Department has 13 clients on the program. We have had several successful searches since this program was brought online in January of 2014. The Glendale Police Department receives calls on a weekly basis from families in other cities requesting this program be brought to their city to assist their loved ones. Since this program can easily be moved across city boundaries or state lines because of the basic technology it is the perfect system to use countywide. This allows agencies to assist each other with searches without having to change equipment.

An added benefit to this program is that all officers are required to be trained in cognitive disorders like Alzheimers and Autism. This training was accomplished by bringing in counselors from the Glendale Adventist Geriatric unit for Alzheimers and the training by Kate Movius on Autism. Each officer was required to have an hour of training in each subject along with the technical training which included a hands on exercise in which they had to locate transmitters within a limited time frame using the equipment. In all officers attended four hours of training. All patrol officers were trained to use this

equipment (90+ officers). Every two years officers go thru an update refresher course on using the equipment. This update consists of a hands on search using the equipment. This is approximately 1-2 hours of training.

Follow up Training

In March/April 2015 the Glendale Police Department brought in Brian Herritt a former police officer and father to a son with autism. Brian conducted 2 four hour training sessions with over 60 officers from our agency. During this training officers again learned about the basics of Autism and learned techniques to use in dealing with situations in the field.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Glendale Police Department that all agencies in the County be given training on Autism, cognitive disorders and developmental disabilities. This training has been of great value to the Glendale Police Department in many ways. First off officers are taking time to assess the situation better and slowing it down when they see indicators of one of these situations. Secondly and almost more importantly this training has brought together the community and the Glendale Police Department. Building relationships between the two that might not have been built without the training, education and understanding by our officers.