



# What is Neurodiversity?

According to Harvard Health, NEURODIVERSITY describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways of thinking, learning, and behaving. The term is often used to describe autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders such as ADD, Tourette's, Dyslexia, and others. **As of January 2024, the CDC reports that as many as 1 in 36 children has been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and about 1 in 6 have been diagnosed with a developmental disability.** Autism is characterized by social and communication difficulties as well as restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests. Individuals experience autism on a spectrum – each requiring different levels of support and intervention.

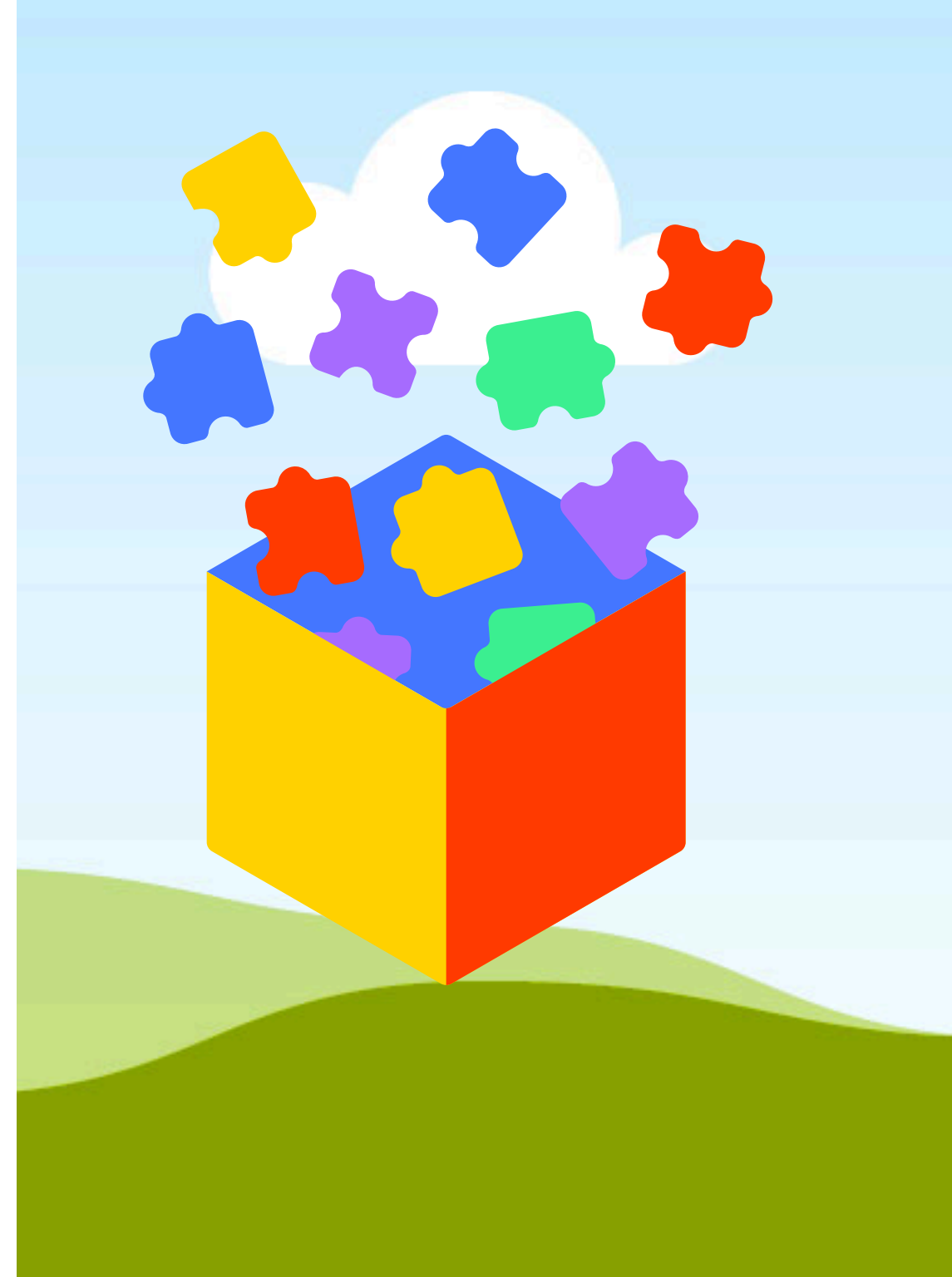
## **Our Mission Statement**

The Crime Stoppers NEEDS (Neurodiversity, Educate, Empower, Deliver, Safety) Project's mission is to champion the safety, well-being, and empowerment of the special needs community by proactively fostering knowledge of risks and safety solutions for individuals and those who live and serve them with the intention of preventing crimes against this vulnerable population.

## **Our Pledge to the Community**

### **Resourceful Online Hub**

We maintain a comprehensive website with vital resources and information for individuals with special needs, their parents, and law enforcement. We provide them with essential knowledge about risk management, crime prevention, and guidance on how to contact authorities or appropriate intervention in case of criminal involvement.



## Real-life Risks Training

We conduct quarterly, in-person training sessions open to the special needs community. These sessions will empower parents, individuals with special needs, and law enforcement personnel to recognize and address emerging threats, avoid scams, and understand the unique behavioral characteristics of individuals with autism and other special needs and how they might be misinterpreted in the public domain. This facilitates more informed and empathetic interactions.

## Community Connection

We serve as a pivotal connection point within the community, forging links with existing resources to enhance safety, knowledge, and service provision. Our objective is to raise community awareness, boost service provision capacity, and facilitate the sharing of resources through being a leader in collaboration for the prevention of crime surrounding special needs individuals.


As our program expands, so will our range and breadth of services. We anticipate extending our programming to include targeted bullying prevention training and exploring specialized courts for special needs cases.

The Crime Stoppers NEEDS Program is dedicated to preventing crimes against vulnerable special needs individuals and equipping them and their families with the tools to avoid criminal involvement, particularly when cognitive capacities are diminished, and harmful intent is not present. Together we can provide support and resources to help special needs individuals thrive free from victimization and criminal activities.



## Statistics

### Sexual Assault Statistics for the Autism and Neurodiverse Community



It is challenging to discuss the topic of sexual assault and exploitation when it comes to neurodiverse young adults. These individuals have unique characteristics that can make them more susceptible to such incidents. They often struggle with understanding social cues, have a strong need for acceptance, and tend to trust others easily. Moreover, neurodiverse young people typically receive less education on sexual health and have limited exposure to the intricacies of their peers' dating culture. As a result, they may become targets for sexual assault and exploitation, and at times, unknowingly engage in behaviors that violate sexual ethics.

- 89% of autistic individuals experienced at least 1 victimization in childhood
  - Autistic youth are 3-4 times more likely to be sexually victimized Compared to non-autistic youth
  - 75.4% of autistic adults reported sexual harassment
  - One study shows as many as 9 out of 10 autistic women experienced sexual violence. 75% of these women claim their 1st experience occurred during childhood
  - Suicide rates in autism range from 11% – 66% and significantly more premature deaths are caused by suicide in autism than in the general population
- <https://autism.org/sexual-victimization-in-autism/>

There are several possible approaches to prevent sexual abuse among neurodiverse populations. These include:

Educating Individuals about the correct terminology for private body parts, not solely emphasizing the concept of "stranger danger,"


Providing sexual health and abuse education to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs),

Teaching children with autism alternative methods of communication,

Establishing protocols to accurately assess instances of abuse, and

Developing strategies to aid in the healing process for affected children.

**For more information or to schedule a presentation contact us:**



**According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the rate of violent crimes against people with disabilities was 4 times the rate of people without disabilities.**

## **Criminal Justice Statistics**

In the year 2016, the United States witnessed the arrest of almost one million individuals who were under the age of 18. It is concerning to note that a significant proportion, ranging from 65% to 75%, of these young individuals involved in the juvenile justice system face various challenges related to their mental, emotional, behavioral, and/or physical well-being.

Many people with disabilities find themselves on websites they don't fully understand nor do they realize they could be arrested for viewing. If arrested, they may have a record for the rest of their lives, which has serious consequences for them and their families.

The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD) responds to a steady stream of information and referral calls related to people with IDD being accused of online sex offenses, such as viewing child pornography. An image may pop up on a person's screen and the person is drawn in and curious; one click can lead to another, and individuals find themselves on websites they don't fully understand nor can they appreciate the fact they could be arrested for viewing.

If arrested, they are placed on a sex offender registry, most likely for the rest of their lives, which has grave consequences for them and their families. There's a growing problem of financial scams that often hurt people with disabilities. These scams can come from people they know or from strangers, through the internet, phone calls, and other ways. The scammers might pretend to be someone else, try to take things unfairly, or steal from them.

“Researchers agree that most individuals with high functioning ASD are law-abiding citizens who are more likely to be victims of crimes than commit crimes, but they are still seven times more likely to intersect with the criminal justice system than individuals without ASD (Berryessa, 2014)”





Individuals with autism spectrum disorder have a higher likelihood of interacting with the criminal justice system, however, not due to an increased propensity for committing crimes.

- Misunderstanding Social Cues: People with autism might act in ways law enforcement misunderstands, like not following verbal commands or avoiding eye contact, which can seem suspicious.
- Sensitivity to Overstimulation: Emergencies can be too intense for individuals with autism, causing stress or panic and leading to responses that attract police attention.
- Communication Challenges: Communication difficulties in people with autism can cause misunderstandings or conflicts with police, escalating situations.
- Lack of Awareness: Police may not be trained in understanding autism, leading to inappropriate interactions with autistic individuals.
- Vulnerability: People with autism can be more easily manipulated or exploited, sometimes resulting in their unintended involvement in illegal activities.
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- (Cannot find source)

Although people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are not more likely to commit crimes, they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system as reported by Howlin (Autism and Asperger syndrome: Preparing for adulthood, Routledge, 2004). This may, in part, be due to unfavorable interactions with the criminal judiciary. Evidence suggests the autistic population are perceived unfavorably in adjudicative proceedings resulting in harsher penalties. The present study explores whether ASD offenders (ASD-O) receive longer sentences compared to national sentencing data. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34313907/>

# Who to Call



Did you know that each school district has anti-bullying resources?

Spring Branch ISD <https://www.springbranchisd.com/studentsfamilies/support-services/bullying-prevention>

Clear Creek ISD <https://www.ccisd.net/prevention-services>

CyFair ISD <https://www.cfid.net/Page/1962>

Goose Creek ISD <https://www.gccisd.net/page/StudentServices.Bullying>

Houston ISD: Student Supports / Anti-Bullying Resources | Phone: 713-556-6000.

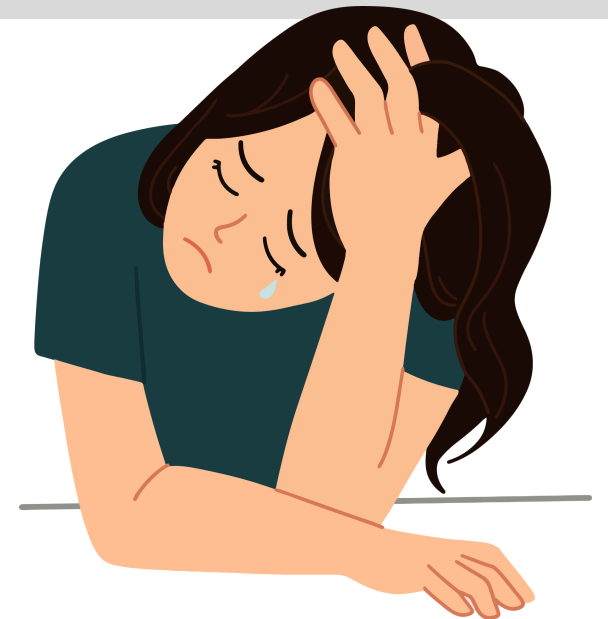
Katy ISD: <https://www.katyisd.org/Page/4123> | Phone: (281) 396-2902

Klien ISD <https://www.kleinisd.net/departments/student-services/counseling-whole-student-wellness/prevention-wellness-resources>

**When a neurodiverse individual is contemplating suicide: CALL 988 | SUICIDE CRISIS HOTLINE**

## CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY TO REPORT

- Cyber Crime
- Sexual Assault
- Drugs
- Harassment
- If someone is trying to get a neurodiverse individual to commit a crime



# How do you Spot Financial Abuse



**We Offer Training for Law  
Enforcement**

**For more information or  
to schedule a presentation  
contact us:**

Financial fraud, rapidly increasing and often targeting individuals with disabilities, involves exploitation by both acquaintances and strangers through online, phone, and other methods. This abuse includes impersonation, extortion, theft, and exploitation. Awareness of these malicious activities is crucial to protect those who are vulnerable and unable to defend themselves. Follow this link for more detailed information on phishing and other financial fraud. <https://www.specialneedsalliance.org/the-voice/financial-abuse-of-individuals-with-disabilities>.

**The following are signs that someone may be the victim of financial abuse:**

- The individual becomes increasingly isolated.
- The agent or caregiver suddenly acquires costly items.
- Missing cash, valuables or financial statements.
- Lavish spending, monetary gifts to others, transferring of assets.
- Unpaid bills or termination of utilities.
- Finances are suddenly handled by others, without explanation.
- Unexplained changes to estate documents.

<https://www.specialneedsalliance.org/the-voice/financial-abuse-of-individuals-with-disabilities/>



## What to Do if You Suspect Someone is Being Financially Abused

If the victim lives alone, with family, an aide, or in an unlicensed facility, contact Adult Protective Services (APS). The National Council on Elder Abuse maintains a database of all state APS contacts, which can be accessed by calling the Elder Care


Locator service at 1-800-677-1116 during regular business hours, or by visiting <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>.

If APS determines that there is abuse, they will, with consent from the individual or their agent, arrange protective services. Unfortunately, APS agencies are so overwhelmed that, as long as the individual has a roof over his or her head, they may not investigate the allegations fully.

Another option if the financial abuse was committed by a family or household member, or a paid caregiver, is to obtain a protective order through the courts.

If the victim lives in a facility that is licensed, certified, funded or operated by the state's Department of Human Services or Medicaid, including long-term care facilities, contact the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) or Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO). A state-assigned investigator will then become involved on behalf of the resident. Once notified that a complaint has been made, the facility must take immediate protective action. If the OIG or LTCO believes abuse has taken place, suspected employees cannot have contact with any residents until an investigation has been concluded. The Elder Care Locator service also maintains contact information for these state agencies in its database.

If the abuse occurs in a hospital, report it to the Department of Public Health.



**Law enforcement encounters can be overwhelming for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), leading to misunderstandings and potentially dangerous situations. Unfortunately, incidents of police mistaking individuals with ASD for defiant or unruly can have serious consequences, such as physical altercations and unnecessary restraints. Both law enforcement and individuals with ASD must receive proper training to prevent these misunderstandings and ensure safe interactions.**

A tool guide titled "Meet the Police" from the National Autism Association is available with helpful interaction tools you can use with your loved one.

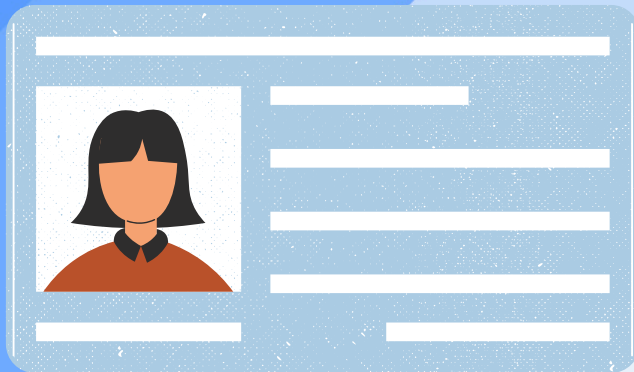
<https://nationalautismassociation.org/meet-the-police/>

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## Safety Resources

**ID Kits:** ID Kits allow parents to easily record and collect specific information on physical characteristics, fingerprints, and pictures that can immediately be used to provide to law enforcement if your autistic or neurodiverse family member is missing. Currently, ID Kits are held by the parents and caregivers as there is currently no database for this information.

You can download ID Kits [HERE](#)



Laminated Wallet Cards can be carried by an autistic or medically fragile individual, and they can be customized to address each person's unique behavioral, sensory, and communication challenges. The cards can include emergency contact information for the individual including names and contact information of family members.



# RESOURCES

Finding the appropriate resources for your loved one can indeed be a daunting task. To assist you in this endeavor, we have compiled a list of reliable links. Remember, you are not alone in this journey.


- <https://www.autismsafety101.com/the-wallet-card>
- <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/home/my-child-has-autism-wallet-cards/>
- <https://www.easyidcard.com/Template-551/Autism-Spectrum-ID-cards>
- <https://www.jamcard.org/#:~:text=JAM%20Card%20allows%20people%20with,a%20private%20and%20easy%20way>

Autism GPS Monitoring and Tracing Devices provide maximum safety and accurate live GPS Tracking. Please look online and find the bracelet that fits your needs as there is a wide array of bracelets and voice monitoring tracking devices.

Take Me Home Program was developed for police departments to maintain a voluntary database of individuals who need assistance if found alone.

Local municipalities developed Project Lifesaver to provide training and GPS bracelets and anklet tracking devices. <https://projectlifesaver.org/>





**Family to Family** strives to provide programs that empower families of children & youth with disabilities as they navigate the complex special education, health care, and disabilities services systems. Family to Family Network helps individuals with disabilities and their family members define and achieve success for themselves and their loved ones. Through the guidance and training of parents and young adults, we transform lives by helping them discover possibilities, see their potential, and advocate for what they need to achieve their dreams. Our organization helps families to see potential where others see barriers. By changing attitudes and mindsets about disabilities, our organization changes lives to make sure every individual gets to live THEIR best life. <https://f2fn.org>

**Autism Rescue Angels** is a non-profit providing financial assistance to autism families in the Houston area for medical, therapeutic, or respite needs of teenagers 15 years or older with autism spectrum disorder. Home - [Autism Rescue Angels](#)

**Children's Assessment Center** is a Houston advocacy center for children who are believed to have been abused, molested, or maltreated. <https://cachouston.org>

Spectrum Linx is an online community and resource for autistic and neurodiverse individuals. [spectrumlinx.com](https://spectrumlinx.com)

- **Ensure the special needs individual knows their neighbors and has a safe place to go if the parents/guardians are not home.**
- **Ensure the special needs population gets to know first responders!**



# Texas Guardianship

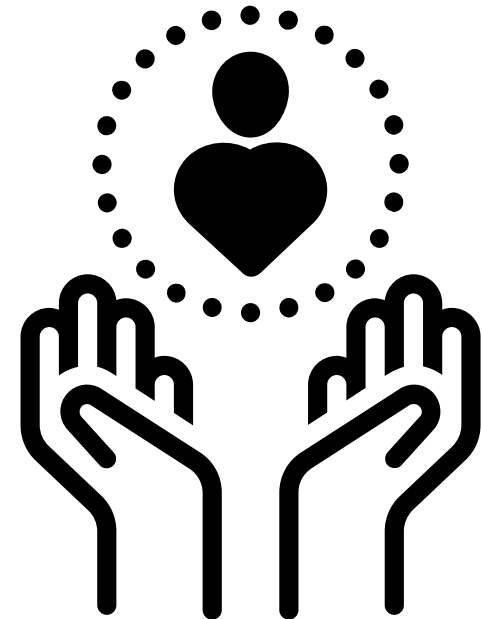
## What is Guardianship?

Some people may need a guardian if they are unable to make decisions, care for themselves, or manage personal or financial affairs due to a mental or physical disability. Once an autistic or neurodiverse child turns 18, parents and caregivers cannot make decisions if there is a medical emergency. If your autistic or neurodiverse loved one is incapable of making medical decisions, guardianship is necessary and very important in the case of an emergency.

Guardianship is a legal relationship where an individual (the guardian) is appointed by a court to make decisions and manage the personal and financial affairs of an incapacitated person (the ward). The guardian is typically responsible for ensuring the well-being and best interest of the person. In Texas, guardianship includes:

- Hiring a lawyer
- Filing an application with a court
- Attending a hearing
- Having a judge decide if guardianship is necessary
- Guardianship takes away a person's rights. Before filing a guardianship application, other options are usually tried first, such as: Securing money management services or related tools to help the person manage money
- A supported decision-making agreement
- A power of attorney to help the person make decisions, including health care decisions
- Enrolling the person in available community services, including Medicaid programs

Once a guardian is appointed, it takes court action to change the guardianship.



To learn more about the guardianship process in Texas, read [A Texas Guide to Adult Guardianship \(PDF\)](#).

**English:** A Texas Guide to Adult Guardianship [\(PDF\)](#)

**Spanish:** Manual sobre la tutela de adultos en Texas [\(PDF\)](#)

**Vietnamese:** Hướng dẫn về Quyền Giám Hộ cho Người lớn ở Texas [\(PDF\)](#)

## **Texas HHS Guardianship Services Program**

The Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) has a Guardianship Services Program and becomes involved in guardianship in one of two ways:

- The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) refers adults 65 years or older, adults with disabilities, or youth aging out of conservatorship to HHS who they believe need a guardian.
- In certain limited circumstances, the court directly requests HHS to be a guardian.
- HHS is appointed guardian of individuals who have been impacted by abuse, neglect (including self-neglect), and/or exploitation.

### **When someone is referred to the Guardianship Services Program, HHS:**

- Determines if the person meets the Texas Estates Code definition of an incapacitated person and eligibility requirements of the Texas Administrative Code.
- Identifies less restrictive alternatives to guardianship.
- Identifies other people or organizations that are willing, able, and appropriate to serve as guardians.
- Applies with the court to be appointed guardian when all alternatives have been exhausted and the person meets HHS criteria.

To request information or assistance please [email](#) the Guardianship Services Program.

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/regulations/legal-information/guardianship>



## Common Terms Related to Early Intervention, Developmental Delays, & Autism

[https://f.hubspotusercontent20.net/hubfs/7692624/Sunny\\_Days\\_August\\_2020/PDFs/Glossary\\_Download.pdf](https://f.hubspotusercontent20.net/hubfs/7692624/Sunny_Days_August_2020/PDFs/Glossary_Download.pdf)

<file:///C:/Users/mmhei/OneDrive/VRW%20Membership%202024/VRW%20Membership%20payments/Glossary%20of%20Developmental%20Disability%20Terms.html>

### I'd Like To:

#### Schedule a presentation/training

- Parent Groups
- Law Enforcement (TCOLE Hours)
- School Personnel
- Community Events
- Caregivers

#### Request Crimestoppers NEEDS To Set Up A Booth

(Describe request in more detail)

## Calendar of Events

June						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						



