

Developmental Disabilities

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What to know for First Responders

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Emergency responders in Lawrence County may unexpectedly encounter or be asked to find a person with developmental disabilities. Recognizing the behavior symptoms and knowing contact approaches can minimize situations of risk or victimization of the person with DD, as well as risk to the responder. You may learn the person has DD from dispatch, family member or someone at the scene, or the person himself or herself, or you may determine the disability yourself. Each person with DD will have a different level of independence as well. Remember that a mental illness is NOT the same as DD.

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Tim Sexton is the Investigative Agent for LCDD. Tim's current position is to investigate, interview, provide security and report all incidents involving individuals enrolled in LCDD programs. To contact Tim regarding incidents, please call **740-532-7401**

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What to Look For

Each individual with DD will display different behavioral traits. Here are a common few to look for:

May not communicate at age level

- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulty understanding or answering questions
- Inability to read or write
- Mimics responses or answers

May not behave at age level

- Prefers young persons for friends
- Inappropriate interaction with peers
- Easily influenced by and anxious to please others
- Difficulty making change, using phone, telling time, etc.
- Low frustration tolerance

May not behave appropriately in emergencies

- May not understand rights
- May be overly willing to confess
- Difficulty recalling facts
- Tendency to be overwhelmed by authority
- Says what they think others want to hear
- May have sensory issues, such as being touched

How to Respond

- Use simple language; speak slowly
- Avoid questions that tell the person the answer you want
- Avoid “yes” or “no” questions
- Ask for concrete descriptions, colors, etc.
- Give praise and encouragement
- Avoid frustrating questions about complex sequences
- Never make fun of the person in the slightest; they can sense it and not cooperate.
- Sometimes individuals with DD will have behavior outbursts... remain calm and give some time! Though it may seem like a threat, it most likely isn't.



**Growing
Possibilities**
Lawrence County Developmental Disabilities

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