Traveling is an essential part of our daily lives. We travel to get to work, to shop, for fun and adventure. When we use the internet, we’re traveling, too. Just as you would when you leave your home, when you travel on the internet, always put safety first!

Today we will review materials found in this handout, view relevant sections of video, and take time for you to ask questions, provide advice, and encourage you to share your experiences and voice your concerns about your personal safety.

During today’s session, you are encouraged to take notes and ask questions. The goal is to answer every question or refer you to resources when we cannot.

We’re here to share and learn from each other!

Pedestrian Safety
It's a really good idea to alert others to your schedule...for the day, or for the next few weeks or more. Whether it's around the block or around the world, it's also a good idea to inform people of your travel plans or itinerary. Whether it's just walking across the street to meet a friend or whether you’re traveling off to another country and spending a month or more away from home.

Write down your expected schedule. Expected departure and arrival times, where you’re going to be staying hotel or with friends, for example. Write down your contact phone numbers. It's also a good idea to alert others to your schedule whether it's for the day, or for the next few weeks or more.

Consider carrying a cell phone and sharing that number with people you trust. You might consider getting a cell phone with a GPS. The cell can then be tracked in case of accident or if you become lost for any reason.

Also resist the temptation to walk off with a stranger. If you become lost, ask for directions, thank the person, and move along.

Avoid the temptation to save travel time or use a short cut and go off a well traveled route - either as pedestrian, driver or passenger in a cab or other transportation. Remember that the bad guys prey upon people who look lost and may lay in wait off the beaten path.

It’s important to learn to tolerate the sensory overload to the greatest extent possible, so that you’re able to travel with the crowd. For your personal safety, even if it means battling against sensory issues, schedule travel during high traffic times, such as rush hour. The more people that are near or around you, the safer you will be. Don’t wander off the beaten path. Learn to go with the flow of the crowd.

It’s important to consider the mode of transportation. When using public transportation, bus, subway, train or in an airport you will often be in close quarters with other travelers. Always be aware of others, but there’s no need to make eye contact or begin or engage in conversation other than simple pleasantries such as a friendly nod or thanks if someone opens a door or gives you some space. With this proximity to others? Silence can be a great asset.

Checklist: • To avoid victimization from street crimes or abusers: Avoid areas that are unfamiliar to you • Consider carrying a cell phone • Travel in groups if possible or walk with the crowd • Do not dawdle or appear rushed in a crowd • Park in a secure area • Keep car doors locked • Take a look around the parking lot before unlocking doors and exiting vehicle • Arrive with the crowd to work, school, events •
Avoid gawking • Do not maintain eye contact • Let someone know of your travel plans • Do not carry large amounts of cash • Dress to suit the area • Stay in well lit areas • Do not wander or explore off well traveled pedestrian walkways or vehicular avenues

Disclosure to Police--direct advice for more independent students
More independent students with autism who are able or become able to navigate the community without assistance should strongly consider developing a personal handout for the police and develop the skills and resiliency to risk necessary to appropriately disclose their need for an accommodation. Remember that the initial uninformed contact with police presents the highest potential for a negative outcome.

What can and should the independent person living on the autism spectrum expect during sudden or even expected interactions with law enforcement, customs and immigration, first responders such as fire rescue, paramedics, hospital emergency room professionals or other security professionals?

You can expect a higher level scrutiny from law enforcement and security personnel when traveling in the twenty-first century community. Expect public or private sector scrutiny at: • Airports • Security checkpoints such as government buildings, schools, any secured facility • Drive-up or walkup guard shacks • Building entrances, campus, shopping malls or districts, sporting events, concerts
In these days of heightened security? Anywhere!

So, what are the best options for the independent spectrum person during a sudden interaction with a law enforcer during an emergency or non emergency? Should you disclose that you have ASD? When? To whom?

Disclosure tools and options
What's the best tool to use when you make the decision to disclose ASD to a police officer? A handout card.
1) Develop a handout card that can be easily copied and laminated
2) The handout is replaceable. You can give it away to the officer on the scene
3) Always carry several copies
4) The handout card can be generic or specific to you
5) Work with an ASD support organization to develop a generic handout
6) Work with persons whose opinions you trust and value to develop a person specific handout

What's the best way to let the officer that you have a handout?
(A) Avoid making sudden movements to reach for the handout card
(B) Obtain permission or signal your intentions before reaching into coat or pants pockets, briefcases or bags, or in to glove compartments of vehicles
(C) Tell the officer that you have ASD and have an information card for them to read. If nonverbal, or if sudden interactions render you nonverbal or mute, consider using a medical alert bracelet for an officer to read that alerts them to your condition of ASD and the fact that you have an information card.

Disclosure to a police officer
The decision to disclose will always be yours to make. If you have learned through experience that disclosure would be helpful, you may decide to disclose to a police officer. Law enforcers report that they make their best decisions when they have their best information. A good, strong ASD disclosure that includes the use of an information card, contact information for an objective ASD professional, and proof of diagnosis should be considered (Debbaudt, 2006).

Plan and practice disclosure techniques
Plan your response and practice with others for a sudden contact with police. They will happen to all of us. Your preparation is your best chance to have a successful interaction with law enforcement.
1. Discuss these risks with people that you trust
2. Develop a hard person specific disclosure handout
3. Develop a personal plan of how you will use the handout
4. Practice through role playing with people you know and trust
5. Develop disclosure handouts and role play when, where and how you would use them.
6. Adapt and amend disclosure handouts. It's only paper.

Further suggestions for you to consider during sudden interactions with police:
(1) Do not attempt to flee
(2) Do not make sudden movements
(3) Try to remain calm
(4) Let the officer know you have autism. If nonverbal, use alternative communication tools, such as a simple sign language card, that indicates the need to write
(5) Obtain permission or signal intentions before reaching into a coat or pants pocket, or reaching into a car glove box
(6) If unable to answer questions, consider use of a generic or person-specific autism information card
(7) If you lose the ability to speak when under stress, consider wearing an alert bracelet or necklace that is easy to see--one that lets the reader know you have an information card
(8) Ask officer to contact an advocate, if necessary and possible
(9) If you are a victim or are reporting a crime, you may want the police to contact a family member, advocate or friend who can help you through the interview process
(10) Carry the phone number of an advocacy organization or personal advocate, relative or friend
(11) Consider invoking your right to remain silent and ask to be represented by an attorney

(From Autism & Using a Public Restroom by Dr. Liane Holliday Willey, Dr. Stephen Shore and Dennis Debbaudt, 2010)

Social Rules for Using a Public Men’s Room
While singing in the shower at home or in your hotel room’s washroom is perfectly acceptable social behavior, carrying a tune or talking in a public men’s room is not. Silence in the men’s room is expected and normal. Silence, in this case, is golden. Men who violate the rules of the men’s room risk consequences that include others becoming suspicious of the motives of the violator, confronting the violator or reporting the violator to authorities. Worse, perhaps, is that the violator is thought to be someone looking for an illegal sexual liaison. Difficult interactions with sexual adventurers could result. Police conduct undercover operations to root out this illegal activity. Those who get caught in the sting will be questioned, perhaps arrested.

So, what’s a guy to do? What if you are merely unaware of the rules and customs of using a public men’s room and violate them without any illegal or untoward intent? The outcome can range from unexpected delays to having to explain your behavior to startled, angry strangers to unwanted sexual advances and contacts with the police.

The social rules in the public men’s room include: * avoiding eye contact * choosing a urinal or stall as far away from other persons as possible * looking straight ahead or up and down when using a urinal or stall * washing up and walking out without engaging in conversation

Social Rules for Using a Public Ladies Room
The rules differ from the men’s room. Chit chat conversation is normal. For example, asking another woman where they got their blouse or T-shirt or giving a compliment on their appearance is OK. Eye contact is typically acceptable. It is not, however, standard to talk to ladies in the public restroom, once you are using the stall. An exception? Passing toilet paper under a stall divider to a stranger in need who asks is not considered an unusual or suspicious activity.

For Educators: The norms in a ladies room, however, would be considered unacceptable behavior in a public men’s room. Moms and female teachers should carefully consider the male and female social
differences of restroom use. Strongly consider the direction, advice and participation of safe, willing men that can model and teach restroom rules to male students.

Social and Personal Safety Tips for using either a ladies or men's public restroom
A public restroom can be found at interstate rest areas, airports, restaurants and most public buildings. A private restroom is the one at your home and, to a lesser degree, your hotel room. Remember that hotel walls are notoriously thin. The songs you sing can be heard in the next room!

Do not comment on the noises you hear coming from another stall! If someone is ill or needs your help, they will likely speak out to ask for help. If however, you do think someone is in a situation that requires serious help, seek out and ask a restroom attendant, store manager or security personnel for assistance. Anyone using the public restroom is in a vulnerable position that a criminal could easily take advantage of. Teach the student to become aware of their surroundings and do what they can to keep them out of harm's way. For example, when you are all alone in a public restroom, lock your stall door behind you and select a stall near the exit in order to make a fast escape if necessary.

Additional Social and Personal Safety Tips for using either male or female public restrooms: • Keep stall doors locked • Watch your purse, briefcase, wallet and personal belongings • Use long strap with pull twist to secure your bag to the stall door hook • Do not carry large amounts of cash • If possible, carry a cell phone
If the student may lose the ability to speak when under stress, suggest wearing a MedicAlert bracelet or one that lets the reader know this and that they have an information card.

Develop a Plan for Safe Use of a Public Restroom
1. Discuss the risks with people that the student and you trust
2. Develop a personal plan of how the student will use the restroom
3. Practice safe use of the restroom with people the student and you know and trust
4. Develop a generic or personal disclosure handouts
5. Role play when, where and how the student would use them
6. Create video and photograph examples of public restrooms

Don't forget, when you're using a public restroom, safety is about you and your belongings!

Internet Safety for More Independent Students
Would you approach a stranger in a park, on a subway platform or on a bus and announce your full name, address and phone number? Of course, not! Just as you would when you leave your home, when you travel on the world wide web, always put safety first! Here are a few tips to help you manage internet safety and risk:
1) Create a nickname or user name when using social networks. For example, Dennis Debbaudt in Port Saint Lucie could easily become ddinpsl.
2) Keep your computer in a common area, such as a living room.
3) Ask your internet service provider about blocking offensive or potentially illegal sites and phrase blocking services. Consider internet filters for security and help you limit access to "bad neighborhoods". You don't want to wander in neighborhoods where you are not known. The same is true for internet neighborhoods, if you're not sure about the site or chat room, don't go there.
4) Do not open email attachments, respond to giveaways or “free” stuff, or visit links provided in unsolicited email. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is!
5) Use chat rooms and social media websites that friends and family in real life recommend and use.
6) If you are ever in doubt about where you are at on the internet or the people who send email, invite you to chat respond to instant, it's OK to leave the site, shut down your computer and call or talk to a trusted friend or family member about your concerns. If your instinct is telling you that something isn't quite right? Follow your gut feeling!
Further tips for individuals on the spectrum • DO spend more time with real life friends than virtual friends
• DO tell an adult if someone online harasses you or wants to talk about sex • DO cut off contact with
anyone who pressures you for your personal information (name, age, size, photo, address, family
information) • DO be careful of strangers who try to turn you against your family while promising to be
your best friend (they may send you gifts and give you lots of compliments, but at the same time, they
become possessive of your time and critical of your parents). • Do NOT exchange pictures with strangers
through the Internet • Do NOT open e-mails and instant messages or download attachments from people
you don’t know • Do NOT fill out your information to win free stuff • Do NOT go to meet someone you
don’t already know in real life
Tips for Parents • Do speak with your child about their Internet habits and your safety concerns • Do set a
limit for how much time your child can spend online • Do keep the computer in a public place • Do install
safety software and monitoring software and keep it updated • Do NOT overreact or threaten to take away
the Internet if your child tells you about something bad that they experienced online • Do encourage your
child to teach you what they know about the Internet • Do NOT allow your child to have an online profile •
Do NOT hesitate to get help if you think a predator may be targeting your child • Do get to know your
child’s online friends as you would their real-life friends

Signs that you may be at risk online
Spend large amounts of time on-line, especially at night.
You find pornography or other “banned” material on your computer.
You or your child receives telephone calls from someone you don’t know.
You or your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from a stranger.
You or your child turn(s) off computer or changes the screen when you come in the room.
You or your child become(s) withdrawn from the family

Eight Further Safety Tips 1. Talk about using the internet with people you trust. 2. Get to know the web
sites and social media you are using. 3. Keep track of online time. 4. Never give out identifying information
such as: home address, school names, grade, age, or telephone number. 5. Never arrange a face-to-face
meeting with someone. 6. Never respond to messages or bulletins if they are from an unknown source.
7. Remember that everything you read online is not always true. 8. If you receive inappropriate messages
report them to law enforcement. If possible save and print out the information.

References:
Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders, London-Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Syndrome in Adolescence: Living with the Ups, the Downs and Things in Between. London-Philadelphia: Jessica
Kingsley Publishers
Students with ASD. Autism Spectrum Quarterly
January-February 2006 edition
and Self-Confidence London-Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Contact Information for Dennis Debbaudt:
772-398-9756
ddpi@flash.net
autismriskmanagement.com
debbaudtlegacy.com