



## ***AAC Awareness for Law Enforcement: Field Reference Guide***

### **What is AAC?**

- AAC = Augmentative & Alternative Communication
- Used by individuals who are non-verbal or have communication challenges (e.g., autism, cerebral palsy, apraxia)
- Includes tablets with apps, symbol boards, speech buttons, or letterboards

### **Why It Matters**

- Communication access is a *right*, not a luxury
- Misunderstanding = escalation risk
- Respecting AAC builds trust and safety

### **Common AAC Features**

- Voice output
- Picture or text-based layouts
- Core phrases: “Yes,” “No,” “Help,” name, sensory needs

### **DOs**

- ✓ Speak directly to the person
- ✓ Ask how they prefer to communicate
- ✓ Allow extra response time
- ✓ Treat the device as their *voice*

### **DON'Ts**

- ✗ Don't take the device without permission
- ✗ Don't assume non-speaking = low comprehension
- ✗ Don't interrupt or talk over device output

**Bonus Tip:** Ask, “Is there another way you'd like to communicate?”

