

Autism in Criminal Justice Settings

A family's history, crises, and criminal justice lessons.

Class Description

The presenters in this class are a 26-year-old diagnosed with autism (aspergers) at age 11 (Tres) and his mother (Anne Jackson), a career prosecutor with approximately 20 years of experience. They endeavor to show the audience what autism looks like by describing their journey from infancy to adulthood. Interspersed throughout the presentation are stories of the family's interaction with police officers, educators, doctors, and other service professionals one would expect to understand autism . . . along with stories from a career spent prosecuting family violence and crimes against children. Anne talks about how raising a child with autism raised her awareness of neurodiversity and allowed her to make informed decisions in cases in which victims, witnesses and defendants on the autism spectrum were frequently misunderstood by first responders, jailers, nurses, lawyers, probation officers and judges. Tres talks openly about his life on the autism spectrum. The presentation aims to create understanding throughout the criminal justice system about autism spectrum disorder.

Together they have trained over 4,000 professionals in Texas on this subject.

Biographical Information



Michael Leslie Jackson III (Tres) began to exhibit developmental delays at the age of 18 months and benefitted from assistance through Early Childhood Intervention Programs, Headstart Programs, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and accommodations for most state required standardized tests (until high school) and in college. Tres was always mainstreamed into general education classes in public school with special education support. In high school, he participated in the Explorer Program at the Belton Police Department where he gained insight into the world of law enforcement. In 2020, he began presenting on the topic of “Autism and Law Enforcement” and since that time, has trained hundreds of police officers, jailers, dispatchers, probation officers and concerned citizens. Tres graduated from Belton New Tech High School in Belton, Texas in

2018, is employed by FireStreet Pizza and Variety’s Peaceable Kingdom Retreat Center for Children, and recently became a Registered Behavioral Technician

Anne Potts Jackson graduated from Texas Tech University in 1991 and Baylor Law School in 1995. She has been a prosecutor for approximately 20 years, working in the Lubbock, Taylor, McLennan and Bell County District and County Attorney Offices. She has specialized in family violence and crimes against children and has presented on topics ranging from “Emerging Technologies in Domestic Violence Prosecution” to “Family Violence in Military Families” to “Autism and Law Enforcement”. Anne is married to Michael L. Jackson Jr., (Lt. Col., USAF, Ret.), and lives in Belton, Texas with their 3 sons Tres, Read and Cole.

