

Schizophrenia

*Adapted from Schizophrenia Fact Sheet:
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)*



A bridge for law enforcement
and community collaboration

What is it?

- A brain disorder that affects approximately 2 million Americans (1-2% of the population.)
- Research suggests it is caused by abnormalities in brain chemistry and brain structures. May also be caused by viral infections early in life, mild brain damage from complications during birth or genetic predisposition.
- Severely impairs person's ability to think clearly, manage his or her emotions, make decisions and relate to others.
- In most cases, symptoms begin to appear between adolescence and age 30.

Symptoms:

THESE SYMPTOMS MAY LIMIT THE PERSON'S ABILITY TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO POLICE COMMANDS. A "COMMAND" VOICE OR DYNAMIC ENTRIES MAY MAKE SYMPTOMS WORSE AND MAKE THE SITUATION MORE DANGEROUS FOR THE OFFICERS AND OTHERS INVOLVED AS WELL AS THE AFFECTED INDIVIDUAL.

- **Psychosis:** person has lost touch with reality
 - ◆ Delusions: belief that others are reading their thoughts or plotting against them; secretly monitoring them and threatening them.
 - ◆ Hallucinations: Auditory—hearing voices in one's head or visual—seeing things that are not there.
 - ◆ Auditory hallucinations can include commands for the person to kill oneself or others. They are mostly self-deprecating in nature and can cause extreme emotional pain.
- **Disorganization:**
 - ◆ Confused thinking and speech; trouble communicating in coherent sentences
 - ◆ Difficulty in making sense of everyday sights, sounds and feelings
 - ◆ Slow movements
 - ◆ Rhythmic gestures, walking in circles, pacing
- **Lack of feeling:**
 - ◆ Emotional flatness; lack of expression
 - ◆ Inability to start and follow through with activities
 - ◆ Speech that is brief and lacks content
 - ◆ Lack of pleasure or interest in life

THE PSYCHOTIC FEATURES OF THIS DISEASE ARE THE MOST LIKELY CAUSE OF CALLS FOR POLICE INTERVENTION. Medications can stabilize these symptoms, however, the disease removes the person's ability to have insight. The person may believe he or she does not need the medication to function. In fact, they may believe that the medication is part of a plot to control them. When intervening, **DO NOT** tell the person you will take them to the hospital for medication. You want to take them to a safe place where they can get help for the problem they are facing.