

Emergency Services Disability Form

I am a firefighter/EMT and prior to this a paramedic. I have a son with moderate Autism. During my career, which has spanned 32 years, I have seen a huge uptick in patients who have some sort of disability. Some are physical, some developmental. Each can come with their own set of challenges during an emergency and each situation is often different. Yet, even as the majority of dispatch centers in our state have come online with CAD(computer aided dispatch) I have yet to see a standardized resource that would allow a “head’s up” to police, fire and EMS as they respond to emergencies.

Of the 167 towns in CT and 133 dispatch centers we have no standard practice when it comes to collecting information on the needs of people with disabilities within each town.

As I attempted to gain access to someone in each of our towns that could answer my simple question, “Do you have a form/method for people with disabilities in your community to register information regarding their needs during an emergency?”, I discovered that not only didn’t every town have a system in place but that often these systems were hard to find, harder to access and often after the information was gathered it just sat somewhere. Updates to information wasn’t any easier to make.

I would like to suggest that our State consider developing such a form, with input from people with disabilities that span motor, mental health issues, developmental disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. I think family members, guardians, social workers and providers that deal directly with people with disabilities should have input. Police, fire and EMS professionals who have children or grandchildren with disabilities should have a seat at the table. These people can form a team that will take into consideration factors that would affect care in different instances and, I believe, create the most effective document.

I would like there to be easy access and easy drop off procedures once completed. Also, just as parents receive a copy of their rights during PPTs, I think

making people aware of this document and how it can help should be something we strive for across as many fields as possible that people with disabilities or their families would regularly access. An example would be during PPTs. School staff could offer the document and some information about it to parents. Doctors' offices.....the form could be offered along with information. Physical therapy, Occupational therapy, mental health appointments, etc.

I think we are missing an opportunity to serve people with disabilities in a safe and thoughtful manner and we are leaving the public safety community in the dark by not creating the ability to have this type of awareness during emergencies. I hope you will consider helping me make this a reality.

Sincerely,

Leslie Prior