

My name is Emily Cowen. I am the youth coordinator for CT KASA. I live in Fairfield, Connecticut. I think first responders can have a large impact on youth based on how they treat them. As a disabled person, I think police officers and first responders should interact with disabled people just as they would interact with an able bodied person. I believe that they should talk to disabled people just as they would if they were talking to a non-disabled person, even if the person has a cognitive disability. Also, it's important for first responders to speak directly to the person with the disability. With that being said, in order to make that happen, first responders need to have patience with the disabled person. Specifically in my case, I have a physical disability called cerebral palsy that affects my speech and I am unable to walk independently. So, I would highly suggest that first responders take the small amount of extra time to listen to me about how to move my body properly. A tip that I can suggest to disabled people to kind of do their part so to speak is to contact your fire department in your town. Then, explain that you have a disability and would like the fire department to know that a disabled person lives at that address. A fire marshal will also come to your house and discover where the disabled person mostly resides by looking at the layout of the house. This makes it easier in case of an emergency because that information will be in the computer system. So, that's my insight on how I think first responders should interact with disabled people.