

Interacting with First Responders



1. Consider registering with your local first responder agencies

What does disclosure look like to your family? Determine if disclosing your loved one's disability is in your family plan. Registering with your local first responders can be an important step in the safety plan.

Many first responder agencies provide an identification form that includes specific information like:

- Allergies
- A photo of your loved one
- Eloping or wandering tendencies
- Medication or dietary needs
- Personality traits
- Sensory behaviors

This information is generally added to an agency's dispatch office, so first responders have this information if called to your home. Currently, families can register with the [Take Me Home Program Summit](#) and [Take Me Home Program Stark](#).



2. Carry identification

It may be beneficial to have your loved one carry an ID or wear a medical bracelet that provides basic information, medical diagnosis, and emergency contact numbers. There are many free resources online to find such ID cards, or you can contact the [Autism Society of Greater Akron](#).

Practice communicating personal information such as name, address, and phone number with your loved one. If they are non-speaking, assist them in adding their contact information to their communication device, or practice writing on paper, or typing their information into a laptop, tablet, or electronic device.



3. Interacting with Law Enforcement

Everyone is expected to follow the law and community safety rules, regardless of disability or circumstances. Preparing ahead of time can help ensure a safe and positive interaction. Social stories and visual aids are helpful tools for practicing these steps:

Tips for Safe Interaction

- **Stay Where You Are**
 - When a first responder approaches, remain in your current space and let them come to you
 - Do NOT walk towards them
- **Keep Hands Visible**
 - Do not put your hands in your pockets
 - Keep your hands where the first responder can always see them
- **Wait for Instructions**
 - Do not reach for ID, medical info, or technology until asked to
- **Avoid Physical Contact**
 - Do not touch or attempt to hug a first responder without permission
 - Sudden moves can be misinterpreted
- **Disclose Your Diagnosis to First Responders**
 - Interactions can be stressful, and first responders may not know the difficulties you are having
 - Tell them verbally, write it down, or hand an Autism ID card



4. Educate your local first responders

Visit your local first responders and introduce your loved one to them. Not only is it important for first responders to get to know your loved one, but this will also facilitate a positive first interaction with first responders.

Encourage your local first responders to conduct regular and meaningful trainings by contacting the Autism Society of Greater Akron at 330.940.1441 ext. 3.