

Navigating 911 Calls for People with Disabilities

Background

People with disabilities are more likely than typically developing peers to have interactions with the justice system and be incarcerated. That can start right from a 911 call the person makes, or a call that is made regarding someone with a disability. Planning ahead to create positive interactions can create life changing differences.



Preparing

Prepare Ahead

Enter a profile with your local Marcus Alert system so they know you and your needs.

Save emergency and non-emergency contacts in your phones or written down.

Write down your information, like name, address, diagnosis, and somethings first responders should know (e.g., if you like sirens or lights, if you have medications that need to stay refrigerated) and practice saying them. Keep copies on the fridge and in the glovebox of all cars.

Contact your local non-emergency line and ask to go through a practice call or practice text to 911.

Tell/Show/Give 911 and First Responders

Your name and location (address, intersection, landmarks, directions to their room in the home). Have a number at which they can call you back if you get disconnected. Call from a landline if possible.

Urgency and who you need. Is it an emergency? Should police, fire, and/or rescue come?

Diagnosis and needs of the person with a disability. Do they speak or communicate another way? Do they have a medical or medication history that responders must know? Do they have a weapon? Refer back to the Marcus Alert profile. If you have this written down, give responders a copy when they arrive.

Stay on the line. They can help find you and gather more information this way.



Resources

- <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA> for a series of mini-videos on navigating justice interactions for people with disabilities
- <https://thearcofnova.org/programs-services/library/#c-i-s> for a written guide on justice statistics, rights, resources, and ideas and a card you can customize to give to an officer, as well as a template for an emergency information card
- Marcus Alert systems in your area to tag an informational profile to your address or other information (will be available throughout Virginia by 2022)

