

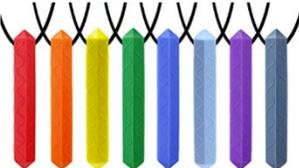
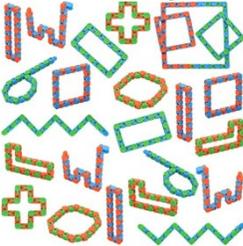
Comfort Kits for People with Disabilities

The Reason for These Kits

People with disabilities are more likely than typically developing peers to have interactions with the justice system and be incarcerated. The Bureau of Justice Statistics published data in 2021 showing that 38% of prisoners had at least one disability.¹ These Comfort Kits are designed to help people navigating an interaction with first responders and others in the justice system by providing calming items that can distract, soothe, and encourage focus. The items in this kit are designed to be offered to someone showing any signs of distress. You can pass along the entire bag and allow the person to select the items that appeal to them. The items should be familiar or be instinctively useful. The kit is designed to be kept by the first responder or justice personnel to whom they are given and re-used over time. All items should be easy to clean and cleaned between uses.

Items in Each Kit

All of the items in this kit should be easy find and purchase at large online merchants, such as Amazon.

<p>Drawstring Bag- Lightweight bag large enough to hold items in the kit, with handles for easy transport</p> 	<p>Noise Cancelling Headphones <i>(in some kits)</i>- Many people with disabilities find auditory input overwhelming, especially in times of stress. These provide pressure on the head and reduce ambient noise.</p> 	<p>Pinwheels- These encourage people to take slow, deep breaths that have a calming effect.</p> 	<p>Bubble Timer- This slow moving bubble timer provides visual stimulation that is slow and soothing.</p> 
<p>Sensory Chew Necklaces- These necklaces are made of silicone as is designed to withstand sustained chewing for oral stimulation. They can be sterilized in a dishwasher.</p> 	<p>Pop Fidget- These durable silicone toys provide repetitive, calming tactile stimulation.</p> 	<p>Click Fidgets- These hard plastic fidget toys provide auditory stimulation and tactile stimulation that many people find soothing and distracting.</p> 	<p>Weighted Blanket <i>(in some kits)</i>- Weighted blankets can calm a whole body down by providing gentle pressure. 10% of body weight is the ideal weight. Kits in the blanket are 7 lbs.</p> 

¹ <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/disabilities-reported-prisoners-survey-prison-inmates-2016>

Additional Items to Include

If you have the means to add additional items to your kit, here are some suggestions.

	<p>If not already in your kit, add the items on page 1, such as noise cancelling headphones or a weighted blanket. Weighted blankets should ideally be 10% of the user's body weight, but we suggest a 7 lb blanket that would work for many children and teens and still provide calming effects for adults.</p>
	<p>Mini Pop Tubes provide tactile and auditory stimulation. They can be linked together to form chains, which can provide a longer distraction for people who may be with you for an extended period of time. They are plastic and similar to a bendy straw, but more durable and can connect to other mini pop tubes.</p>
	<p>Therapy Putty is a tool often used by Occupational Therapists. It gives people something to hold that they can manipulate just to calm themselves, or that they can use to create shapes of their choice.</p>

You can add other items that are made of materials that are safe if broken or swallowed, durable in nature and provide calming, soothing, or distracting benefits. When you are working with someone with a disability, ask them if they have an item in their possession or nearby that they typically use for calming or comfort and encourage them to use it safely.

Resources

To learn more about how to prepare for any interactions with the justice system and to see more on traffic stops, please check out these resources.

- <https://thearcofnova.org/> to ask a question of our team, including how to get more information on these kits.
- <https://strengthenthesixth.org/focus/Persons-with-Disabilities-and-the-Legal-System> for trainings for first responders and justice system employees on identifying and working with people with disabilities, as well as a 30 minute video on how to use these kits.
- bit.ly/DisabilityJusticeVideos for a series of mini-videos on these comfort kits, helping people with disabilities navigate 911 calls and police interactions, and other community resources.
- bit.ly/DisabilityJusticeGuide for a written guide for people with disabilities and their families on finding advocates, supportive resources, and accommodation options available to them to prevent negative interactions with the justice system and find assistance if they are arrested, and a template card people with disabilities call fill out, print, and share to give critical information in an emergency.