

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders

An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

General Tips Video Transcript

John Saunders, Canadian Red Cross: One of the things that I think is most important to keep in mind, when dealing with people with disabilities is to think first of all, of them as human beings and not to focus so much on the disability.

Rabia Khedr: The one that I would want first responders to know is that I very clearly know what I need and I am able to articulate that, so they should just be open to listening to what I need and respond to that.

Stephane Malo, Mississauga Fire & Emergency Services: As a person with a disability, if I want to be thinking on their behalf then I would like to be treated exactly like anyone else.

Roberta Scott, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: You wanna let people know that what you're going to do before you do it, and that's really important with anyone and certainly people with disabilities.

Maik Ahrens, York Regional Police: What I find works really well, is just to ask the person with the disability, "What can I do to help you through this process?" rather than volunteering solutions to my perceived problem that they may have.

Bruce McIntosh, Father & Autism Advocate: You've got to learn the signs of what normal isn't, and pick up on those cues.

John Saunders, Canadian Red Cross: Talk to the person, try to communicate with them first what it is you want to do, what it is your trying to accomplish, and see if they can assist you in telling you how best to do it.

David Ralph, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: The most important thing we need to keep in mind with dealing with people with disabilities is to listen, right; that may be through a keyboard that may be through verbal communication; but we have to listen.

John Saunders, Canadian Red Cross: In a critical situation we are trained to act and react. The average civilian isn't. So when somebody does have a disability they are quite often even more sensitive than the average person would be to what is happening to them and the sense of losing control over what's happening to them.

Liz Cohen, Mother & Autism Advocate: Keep in mind about the anxiety. Because that is really tough and it's not something that, you know, you think, "Oh come on now snap out of it." It's very hard for a child with autism to pull themselves out of that.

Roberta Scott, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: You know we reassure them that we're there to help them, that's what we always do, we always say you know, "We're to help you, we're not going to hurt you, we just want to help you, you know what can we do to help you," if they want to express themselves. So it's just being patient not coming in a way that's threatening and startling them.

Maik Ahrens, York Regional Police: It's very important not to get into their personal sphere too quickly, so I always try to resist the urge to touch them physically, unless I've asked them if I may touch them and guide them to a safe spot.