

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

Vision Loss Video Transcript

Rabia Khedr: I'm blind, I have a congenital eye condition called Leber's amaurosis, so it's something that has been there since I was born, it evolves over time. First responders should keep in mind when interacting with someone who is blind, is that if in doubt, ask the question. If you don't know what to do ask the individual what they need you to do to accommodate them best. I've been in situations where I've played a role of being the one with the information, providing the information to medical professionals about someone in my family with a disability and it's often not understood that I as a support person need accommodation. The one thing 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.

Maik Ahrens, York Regional Police: I had a very positive interaction with a person with a disability. It actually occurred very, very early in my career. As a police officer, generally, we go to most calls alone. To investigate things that have happened after the fact. So I was called into a residence to investigate a complaint of harassing phone calls. I'm met at the door by a lady who shows me into a dining room where there was a gentleman seated. And I sat down with him and we chit chatted about the case. I generally prefer to write the statement as the person is talking, so that it's a nice verbal flow. And we completed that, a nice three page long statement and then my habit is to turn the page around slide it across the table and have the person proof read it and sign it. So I slid it across the table and the person said "Ah I can't read that." I thought he was joking with me and I said, "My handwriting really isn't that bad," you know, ha ha. He looked at me very seriously and he said "No I can't read that I'm blind." I recovered very quickly and we worked through it very well. We asked the wife to come in , proof read it, he was comfortable that what I had written is indeed what he had said and he did sign the statement and we moved on.