

Florence Police Department Special Needs Advocacy Program

Program Policy & Guidelines

Purpose

The Florence Police Department's Special Needs Advocacy Program is a voluntary program designed to assist officers when interacting with individuals who may have developmental, intellectual, cognitive, medical, or other conditions requiring additional communication, patience, or accommodation.

The program allows participating individuals or caregivers to voluntarily provide information that may help officers respond safely, respectfully, and effectively during emergencies or routine encounters.

Participation in this program **does not** provide any special legal status, immunity, or guarantee of a particular law enforcement action.

Eligibility

Individuals who reside, attend school, work, or regularly spend time within the City of Florence may participate if they have a condition that could reasonably affect interactions with first responders.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities
- Down Syndrome
- Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease
- Cognitive impairments
- Significant communication disorders
- Sensory processing disorders
- Other diagnosed conditions that may affect communication or behavior during routine or emergency interactions with law enforcement.

Our department recognizes that not all disabilities are visible.

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Voluntary Participation

Participation is completely voluntary.

Applicants may withdraw from the program at any time by contacting the Florence Police Department.

Registration Process

Applications may be submitted by:

- The individual (if an adult)
- Parent
- Legal guardian
- Caregiver
- Person with legal authority to act on the participant's behalf

Applications may be submitted:

- Online
- In person

Applications are valid for 1 year beginning January 1st each year.

- **All program participants must reapply each year to remain eligible**

Information Requested

Participants **may** be asked to provide:

- Name of individual
- Date of birth
- Photograph (optional but encouraged)
- Home address
- Emergency contacts
- Medical diagnosis (If this information can better express the needs of the individual)

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- Communication preferences
- Behavioral triggers
- Calming techniques
- Wandering concerns
- Mobility considerations
- Service animals
- Other information that may assist responding officers

Only information relevant to public safety and officer response will be collected.

Verification

To maintain the integrity of the program, applications will be reviewed by the Department Program Coordinator or their designee (Community Engagement Unit).

Verification may include one or more of the following:

- Government-issued identification
- Confirmation of residency
- Parent or guardian verification
- Review of supporting documentation (if provided)
- Follow-up interview or telephone contact

The department generally **will not require medical records**

The department reserves the right to deny or remove applications determined to contain false or misleading information.

Approval

Once verified:

- The participant will be entered into the department's Special Needs Advocacy Program.
- Emergency contact information will be recorded.

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- The participant will receive program materials to include any approved window decals or identification stickers.
- Upon approval, participants are eligible for 1 year beginning January 1st each year.

Updating Information

Participants should notify the department whenever there is a significant change, including:

- Address
- Telephone number
- Emergency contacts
- Caregiver information
- Medical or behavioral information

The department may periodically request participants to verify that information remains current.

Privacy

Information submitted through this program will be used only for legitimate law enforcement and emergency response purposes.

Access to participant information will be limited to authorized personnel and maintained in accordance with applicable laws and department policy.

Program Limitations

Participation does not guarantee:

- Special treatment
- Exemption from enforcement
- Emergency response priority
- Responding officers will always have immediate access to program information

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The program is intended solely to improve communication and officer awareness. Every effort will be made to extend consideration to individuals who are enrolled in the program.

Removal from the Program

Participants may be removed if:

- Requested by the participant or guardian.
- Information is repeatedly not updated.
- Fraudulent information is provided.
- Abuse of the program is discovered.
- The participant is deceased.
- The participant relocates outside the service area and no longer has a connection to the city.

Internal Department Responsibilities

The Program Coordinator (designated by the Chief of Police) along with the Community Engagement Unit will:

- Review applications.
- Verify eligibility.
- Maintain participant records.
- Coordinate updates.
- Provide community education.
- Distribute decals and program materials.
 - Supplemented by the records division
- Ensure information remains secure.