

# LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRST RESPONDERS

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

Whether it is an emergency or routine, here are some strategies for working with law enforcement and emergency personnel while living with a brain injury.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The first thing to remember is that law enforcement's goal is to help and protect you. Being in a situation where law enforcement is involved is stressful and managing this stress can be more difficult after a brain injury. Keep in mind:

- Law enforcement personnel are trained to be assertive, and their goal is to ensure that you listen and cooperate with their instructions.
- Law enforcement are trained to use their voices and commands first to get cooperation. If this is unsuccessful, physical control may be considered.

#### Strategies to help with stress:

- Be respectful of the officers and their job.
- Let the officer know that you have a history of brain injury.
- Try to keep yourself calm, take slow breaths and ask questions if you don't understand what the officers want you to do.
- Keep your hands visible and held in a non-threatening way.
- Always ask for permission before you make any movements or reach in your pockets or purse for any reason.
- If you have anything in your hands that could be considered a weapon, tell the officers and wait for direction of what to do.
- Follow all police instructions to the best of your ability.
- If officers tell you to sit or lie down and you cannot, tell them why.
- Keep your voice slow and calm.
- Tell officers about any vision, hearing or speech difficulties that you have.

- Explain to the officers that too much noise or too many instructions can confuse you or may make it hard for you to understand what is being said.
- Ask that only one officer speak at a time.
- Ask the officer to speak slowly and use simple words.
- Explain that you need additional time to think and respond and you want to cooperate.
- Let officers know that you may need things repeated to fully understand.
- If you have balance or movement difficulties, let officers know.
- If you need help, ask the officer to let you call your case manager, caregiver or family member.
- DO NOT argue, threaten, touch the officers, turn away or try to run. Even if you are scared, try to keep your voice calm and your speech slow.
- Remember that police officers are people and the more information you give them the more they can help.

## **EMERGENCY PERSONNEL**

In addition to information about your current needs, be sure to tell first responders:

- That you have a history of brain injury and any difficulties you currently have
- Notify them of any medications that you take
- Let them know if you have a history of seizures
- Tell them if you get overwhelmed by too much noise and ask one person to talk at a time

Prepared in collaboration with:

