



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

******For Immediate Release******

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Ulster County Launches Project SAFE to Enhance Emergency Response for At-Risk Individuals

KINGSTON, NY - The Ulster County Department of Emergency Services is proud to announce the launch of Project SAFE (Special Alert For Emergencies), a new initiative designed to improve emergency response for individuals with Autism, Down syndrome, Alzheimer's, and other cognitive or developmental conditions, as well as blindness and deafness/hearing loss.

Through this voluntary alert program, families, caregivers, and individuals can submit essential information — including name, address, behavioral considerations, emergency contacts, and preferred response approaches — which will be securely added to the County's 911 dispatch system. When a registered individual is involved in an emergency, a distinct Project SAFE icon will notify dispatchers and first responders, allowing them to respond with greater awareness, sensitivity, and safety.

"Project SAFE is about equipping our first responders with the information they need to serve our most vulnerable residents with compassion and care. A dedicated Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) alert for individuals with Autism, Dementia, and other cognitive conditions, as well as blindness and deafness, ensures responders are informed before they arrive; reducing fear, preventing escalation, and improving safety," **said Everett Erichsen, Director of Ulster County Emergency Services.** "Recent incidents have shown how vital this kind of preparedness is. This program is personal for many of us, and by taking this step, we're making Ulster County a safer, more inclusive place for every family."

"With 1 in 31 children being diagnosed with autism — and as a parent of a son on the spectrum — I know how vital it is to bridge the gap between families and first responders before an emergency occurs," **said Patrick Rose, Ulster County Emergency Services Dispatcher and Lieutenant with the City of Kingston Fire Department.**

“Project SAFE can make all the difference in responding to an emergency effectively and with compassion when an individual in the home has a developmental or cognitive condition, or is blind or deaf,” **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**. “Alerting first responders in advance enables them to be as prepared as possible, enhancing safety, reducing trauma, and promoting trust between families and emergency personnel.”

Community members can now enroll in Project SAFE by completing the official form at <https://forms.office.com/g/fSDBH58jsN>. To support outreach and accessibility, Project SAFE will also be featured at the ThinkDIFFERENTLY Tent at the Ulster County Fair, where families can learn more about the program, ask questions, and complete in-person registrations with the help of trained staff.

For more information, visit <https://participate.ulstercountyny.gov/thinkdifferently>

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