

My name is Emily Ball and I am the Youth Outreach Coordinator for PATH P2P Family Voices CT. I am also a member of the Developmental Disabilities Council of the State of CT. I live in Wallingford.

One of the most important things emergency medical personnel and police officers can do is listen to disabled youth on their specific needs. Personally, I have a disability called cerebral palsy that affects my ability to move independently. I use a motorized wheelchair for mobility and on one occasion my mother had to contact the non-emergency police because I was stuck in a large amount of gravel and could not get out. I was very stressed because I had to go to my school to turn in a final exam before the deadline. The policemen were very understanding and made sure I was alright throughout the entire process of freeing me from being stuck. The policemen were very reassuring to my mom and I about freeing me from the gravel. If they had been not so understanding and been dismissive, the situation could have been a lot worse. Empathy is a very important skill to teach first responders.

I hope my insight creates a better understanding for emergency personnel on how to interact with disabled youth.