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The Oklahoma Family Network, Inc.**

Safety For Children With Special Needs

What is Project KEEP: Kids in Edmond with Emergency Priorities?

Children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders or those with hearing impairments may not respond to verbal commands when a police officer responds to a 911 call. A child in a wheelchair requires special assistance from fire personnel when they respond to an emergency. Knowing this information in advance can help emergency services prepare so they can respond appropriately and quickly in situations where every second counts.

To assist families who have children with special needs, Edmond's Central Communications/911 Center is implementing a new program called Project KEEP – Kids in Edmond with Emergency Priorities. Parents voluntarily provide information about the nature of their child's disability and the information is placed in the 911 system and computer aided dispatch (CAD) data base. The information is then available to first responders and emergency services so responders are aware that a child who has been diagnosed with special needs is in the home.

Edmond's 911 Center is working with the Edmond Public School System, the Miracle League and other organizations in the community to make the parents and guardians of children diagnosed with special needs aware of the program.

Nancy Goosen, Director of Special Services for the Edmond Public School System, said they provided information and forms to the parents of the children in the Extended Summer School Year (ESY) program. "The ESY program is for children with the type of special needs that the Project Keep program is targeting. They are children with autism, cognitive deficiencies, hearing impairments or children who are medically fragile." Goosen said it is important when an officer enters a home to know that a child cannot communicate with him or her.

"The parents have been very pleased about the program and think it is a great idea," Goosen said. There are approximately 300 to 400 children in the Edmond Public School district that have the types of special needs targeted by the new program. About 50 parents have registered their children for the Project Keep program.

The information about the child and contact information is entered into a secure computer system used by emergency personnel only. When a call is made from the residence, the call taker immediately sees vital information about the child and can relay it to first responders. In the CAD data base, notes appear in the call taking screen and on the laptop of first responders when the address is used in an emergency/non-emergency situation.

Parents can contact the 911 Center for more information or to register their child for the Project KEEP program by calling Toni Strader, Communications Supervisor, at 359-4375.

The information contained in this document is intended only as a resource and should be used as a guide. It is not medical or legal advice or an endorsement of the programs or services referenced. You must determine what is best for your child and your family. You are strongly encouraged to seek additional information from other resources, including your physician, social worker, and insurance company.

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