



North Branford Police Department

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Press Release

The North Branford Police Department is excited to announce a new and innovative program called LINKED-Autism Safety Project. NBPD has formed a community partnership with Ashley McClain, North Branford resident and founder of LINKED. LINKED was created to build a relationship between the North Branford emergency responders and the members of our Autism Community. This collaboration has developed into a unique Autism Awareness Safety Project, in which a network of public safety and autism professionals, developing and creating a one-of-a-kind program.

Voluntarily Registration for the North Branford Autism Alert System. Caregivers of the North Branford Autism community can access the registration form from the North Branford Police Department's website at <https://northbranfordct.gov/233/Police-Department>. Upon completing the online registration form, it will be automatically directed to the NBPD coordinator of the LINKED program. This information will provide first responders with important individualized information about the person with autism and allow the responder to create a pre-arrival plan. All registrations are secure and confidential and used only for the response of North Branford Emergency Services.

Each family that registers for the LINKED program will receive a **Family Emergency Planning Folder** with individualized instructions and a guide that includes tips and tools to navigate this program.

Officers will be equipped with a **sensory pack** in every patrol car which contains a variety of sensory products including noise-canceling headphones, fidget spinners, a whiteboard, a stretch sack, and other items that have been proven and recommended by professionals in the field. This sensory pack will also include an **Emergency Picture Exchange Communication System**, which is a picture communication tool for non-verbal residents developed by professionals to assist in the dialogue between the child and emergency responders. This picture communication system has been validated and is currently in use in the North Branford School System, so the child is aware of how the system works. Additionally in the officer's sensory pack will be a **Social Story**, created by professionals, which is a personalized learning tool containing text and

illustration that supports the safe and meaningful exchange of information between parents, professionals, and people with autism of all ages.

The North Branford Police Department is committed to the Autism Community and developing best practices and increasing the quality of services to all our residents. We will continue to provide training to our officers and are seeking new, innovative platforms to further provide greater services.

This program is free to all North Branford residents. We are excited to participate in the LINKED program and would like to thank everyone involved in bringing this to our community and making our job easier. We would especially like to thank Ashley McClain for all her efforts in bringing this great program together. Please share this post with your neighbors and friends.

Deputy Chief James Lovelace

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Lovelace".