Supporting Vulnerable People in Emergencies: A Guide for Individuals, Families and Caregivers

You know yourself and/or the person you are caring for best. This guide explains how to prepare for emergencies, share information that may help responders, and understand the upcoming change to the Vulnerable Persons Registry.

In an emergency, call 9-1-1.

If someone is in immediate danger, needs urgent medical help, or is missing and may be at risk, call 9-1-1. Do not wait. People who are Deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability may be eligible to register for Text with 9-1-1. Register for Text with 9-1-1.

Changes to the Vulnerable Persons Registry

The Vulnerable Persons Registry will close on November 3, 2026. This guide will help you prepare for the change and keep sharing the information responders need to support the person you care for. **Section 5 highlights the alternatives and how to register.**

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1. Why This Guide

Emergencies are easier to manage when you have prepared ahead of time. This guide helps you get ready before an emergency happens. It is for people who may need extra support during an emergency, and for their families, caregivers and supporters.

There is no shame in sharing a diagnosis. Knowing about a condition helps responders ask the right questions and give the right support.

Individuals who can make their own decisions should be involved in decisions about sharing their personal information. Ask for the person's preferences and consent wherever possible.

2. Key Terms

Vulnerable Person: a person who, by nature of an emotional, medical, psychological or other physical condition, may exhibit patterns of behaviour that pose an increased risk of danger to themselves or others, and who may require assistance from emergency services.

This may include people who:

- live with dementia or memory loss
- are autistic or have an intellectual or developmental disability
- have a brain injury
- have a mental health condition
- are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-speaking or communicate differently
- have a serious medical condition
- are older and may need support during an emergency

Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR): a voluntary Toronto Police Service registry where a parent, legal guardian or person with power of attorney could share information about a vulnerable person with police. The registry closes on November 3, 2026.

Person in Crisis: a member of the public whose behaviour brings them into contact with emergency services, either because of an apparent need for urgent care within the mental health system, or because they are otherwise experiencing a mental, emotional or substance use crisis involving behaviour that is sufficiently erratic, threatening or dangerous that emergency services are called in order to protect the person or those around them. This includes persons who may require assessment under the *Mental Health Act*.

Caregiver: a family member, friend, support worker or other person who helps care for someone.

3. Be Proactive

Planning ahead helps you share useful information quickly if an emergency happens. We recommend you set up emergency information on your phone, as described in Section 5, and review your information every few months.

If you are a caregiver for a vulnerable person:

- **Write down key information about the person you care for.** Include details such as medical conditions, allergies, medications taken and mobility needs (see the list in Section 4).

- **Set up emergency information on your phone.** See Section 5 for Apple and Android steps. If this is already set up, tell the 9-1-1 call taker and responders.
- **Keep a recent photo and key information** on your phone and a printed copy at home.
- **Review your information every few months,** or whenever something changes.

For a template on creating information kits, visit Finding Your Way Ontario.

The more responders know, the better they can support the person you care for.

4. When Emergency Services May Be Needed

Every emergency is different. A vulnerable person may come into contact with police or other emergency services for many reasons. For example, they may become lost, wander from a safe location, or experience a medical or other type of crisis.

In these situations, the information you share can help responders better understand the person's needs and determine the most appropriate response. Examples of helpful information include:

- Medical conditions, allergies, or medications
- Languages spoken, communication preferences or barriers
- Known triggers, behaviours or de-escalation strategies
- Mobility or accessibility needs
- Places the person may visit or seek out when distressed

For more information, visit the Toronto Police Service Missing Persons Guide.

5. Technologies Available for Vulnerable Persons Registration

There are different options available to help keep you and those you care for safe. You can choose the options that best meet your needs, and you can use more than one. Participation is voluntary.

Options to Consider

Option	How It Can Help and What to Know	Cost
Emergency information on a phone (Apple Medical ID or Android Emergency Settings)	Stores medical information and emergency contacts that may be shared during a 9-1-1 call. Availability depends on the phone, settings, and 9-1-1 system.	Free

Option	How It Can Help and What to Know	Cost
Keep important information on your phone	For caregivers, save details about someone in your care to share with responders when needed. Responders cannot access this information automatically.	Free
MedicAlert	Provides medical identification and information that responders may be able to access. Police do not automatically receive this information.	Paid subscription

Setting Up Emergency Information on a Phone

Apple Device

Apple Medical ID lets you save health information and emergency contacts. Depending on your device, settings and the available emergency systems, some details may be shared during an emergency call.

To set up Medical ID:

1. Open the Health app on your device.
2. Tap your profile picture in the upper-right corner.
3. Tap Medical ID.
4. Tap Get Started (or Edit).
5. Add the information that you wish to include, such as medical conditions, emergency contacts, and other information.
6. Turn on Share During Emergency Call.
7. Tap Done.

Visit Apple Support: Set up your Medical ID for further information and instructions about this feature.

Android Device

Android phones may let you save medical information and emergency contacts. How this information can be accessed or shared varies by device, settings and emergency systems.

To set up your emergency information:

1. Open Settings on your phone.
2. Look for Safety and Emergency (or Emergency/Medical Information on some devices).
3. Select Medical Information (or Medical Info).

4. Add the information you want to include, such as medical conditions and emergency contacts.
5. Where available, make sure your emergency information is set to be accessible during an emergency.

Some Android devices may also have a Personal Safety app that can be used to manage emergency information. Because Android settings vary by device, check your device manufacturer's support information if these options do not appear on your device.

6. How We Are Prepared to Help

Toronto Police Service works to understand each person's needs and provide appropriate support, particularly when responding to people who may be vulnerable or in crisis.

Training

Officers receive training on interacting with persons with disabilities as part of the Service's Fair and Unbiased Policing course.

Communications Services

As Toronto's Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), TPS Communication Services members play an important role in supporting community members during an emergency and are often the first voice heard during a crisis. Call takers and dispatchers use specialized tools and technology, including RapidSOS's Safety Network tool, to access critical information and coordinate the appropriate police response. Their role is to help connect individuals with emergency services and community-based supports, providing reassurance and guidance during challenging situations.

Real Time Operations Centre (RTOC)

The Real Time Operations Centre (RTOC) supports frontline officers by helping gather and share timely information during emergencies. The information available depends on the situation and the systems involved. The centre can support the coordination of police resources in urgent situations, including missing-person investigations and responses to people in crisis.

Crisis and Community Support

Depending on the situation, specialized crisis-response teams and community services may be available to provide additional support.

Toronto Community Crisis Service: free, 24/7 support from trained crisis workers for people experiencing a mental health crisis. Call 2-1-1 to reach the service.

7. Changes to the Vulnerable Persons Registry

Toronto Police Service is moving toward a more real-time responsive way of sharing important information with emergency responders to ensure we can assist the person in a supportive and timely way.

What Happens to Existing Information?

- Existing registry records will be kept for up to one year after November 3, 2026, before being disposed of.
- Information will not be automatically transferred to another service or application.
- Registry records will no longer be accessible through the registry system after November 3, 2026.

What Can You Do Now?

- Review the available options in Section 5 and choose what works best for your circumstances.

8. Your Information, Your Choices

- Participation is voluntary. You choose which options to use.
- Share only what is needed. Include information that may help responders provide appropriate support.
- You remain in control. You can update or delete information stored on your phone at any time.

9. Support and Resources

The following organizations offer information, services, and support for individuals, families, and caregivers.

- MedicAlert Foundation Canada: medical identification services that help share important health information during emergencies.
- Alzheimer Society of Toronto: support for people living with dementia and their caregivers, including the Finding Your Way program to help prevent and prepare for missing-person incidents.
- Autism Ontario: information, resources, and support for autistic individuals and their families.
- Victim Services Toronto: free, confidential crisis support for people affected by crime or sudden tragedy, available 24/7 at 416-808-7066. You can call them directly or ask a police officer or the 9-1-1 call taker to connect you.
- 211 Ontario: connects individuals and families with community, health, and social services. Call 2-1-1.

10. Common Questions

Find answers to common questions about the Vulnerable Persons Registry closure and preparing for emergencies.

Do I need to register for another service?

No. You can call 9-1-1 in an emergency whether or not you use an emergency information service. All options listed in this guide are voluntary.

What if the person does not have a phone?

You can keep important information and a recent photo on your own phone or in a printed safety plan. MedicAlert may also be helpful. However, these options do not guarantee that responders will have access to the information during an emergency.

Are these options free?

Some options, such as storing information on your phone, are free. MedicAlert requires a paid subscription. If the person receives disability benefits, such as the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D), or has private health insurance, we encourage you to check whether any costs may be covered. Please contact the services directly for more information and/or eligibility criteria.

- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP): 1-888-999-1142
- Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D): 1-800-277-9914

Alternatively, if you are connected with a community-based organization, we encourage you to discuss funding options and/or opportunities for financial supports and programs that might be available to you if you do not qualify for government assistance.

Could sharing information with police cause harm to the person I care for?

Our priority is the safety and well-being of the person. The information you share helps responders understand the person, meet them where they are, and respond to their needs. If a situation involves a possible crime, the person's needs will be taken into account, and available options will be discussed as part of that process.

11. Contact Us

- **Emergency:** 9-1-1
- **Non-emergency:** 416-808-2222 (*8-7-7 on mobile)
- **TPS Accessibility:** accessibility@tps.ca, 416-808-AODA (2632)

Accessible formats: This guide is available in alternate formats and with communication supports on request. Contact TPS Accessibility using the information above.