



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Justice Center Urges Public to Take Action if You See a Person with Special Needs Alone in a Vehicle in Summer Heat

New Toolkit Highlights Dangers of Unattended Vehicles

As temperatures rise, so does the risk of heatstroke and other serious injuries to individuals with special needs and disabilities who are left alone in a hot vehicle.

The NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs today launched the second in a series of *Spotlight on Prevention* toolkits designed to raise awareness of this warm weather danger and provide safety tips that can be used by drivers, transport aides, provider agency personnel and the public to prevent an accidental tragedy from occurring.

“We are often reminded of the dangers of leaving children in cars when temperatures soar,” said Special Prosecutor/Inspector General Patricia E. Gunning. “However, people may not realize adults with special needs who are left in a vehicle under the same conditions may not be able to seek help for themselves. The case study and strategies introduced in this toolkit are designed to serve as a reminder that during the summer months, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise to dangerous levels in just 10 minutes and special care must be taken to ensure occupants, especially people who are vulnerable, remain safe.”

Since its inception on June 30, 2013, the Justice Center’s 24/7 toll-free hotline for reporting allegations of abuse and neglect has received more than 160 reports of individuals with special needs being left unaccompanied in a vehicle. None of the individuals suffered serious injury.

The Justice Center not only works to seek justice for individuals receiving services who have been victimized -- the agency also develops innovative strategies to prevent abuse or neglect from happening. *Spotlight on Prevention* is one of its prevention initiatives.

Heatstroke Safety Tips for the Public

If you see someone in a closed vehicle -- do something:

- Do not assume that an adult in a closed vehicle has the ability to exit without help.
- Do not assume that an individual in a vehicle can communicate with you.
- Do not assume that individuals who appear sleeping are not in distress.
- Do not hesitate to call 911 for help. (Take down the vehicle's license-plate number.)
- Do not worry about whether the person is left intentionally in a closed vehicle or unintentionally- either can have a tragic outcome.

Heatstroke Safety Tips for Drivers and Facility Staff

- **Never** leave a person unattended in a vehicle.
- **Always** “look before you leave” to make sure no one has been left behind.
- **Call 911** if you see a person alone in a vehicle.
- **Contact** the Justice Center at infoassistance@justicecenter.ny.gov if you have questions.

The *Spotlight on Prevention* toolkit includes:

- Case study
http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SOP_unattended_Article-v.pdf
- Fact Sheet for Individuals, Self-Advocates, Families & Friends
http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SOP_Unattended_Vehicles_Fact_Sheet_Individuals.pdf
- Fact Sheet for Drivers, Transportation Aides & Staff
<http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/spotlight-prevention/toolkits/unattended-vehicles/fact-sheet-drivers>
- Fact Sheet for Provider Agencies
http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SOP_Unattended_Vehicles_Fact_Sheet_Providers.pdf
- Infographic Poster on Heatstroke Dangers
<http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/InfographicPostervehiclesafety.pdf>
- Vehicle Inspection Safety Tips
<http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/InfographicPostervehiclesafety.pdf>
- Hang Tag Order Form
<http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/HangTagOrderFormFillable.pdf>
- Video Gallery: Heatstroke Danger in Vehicles
<http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/spotlight-prevention/toolkits/unattended-vehicles/video-gallery>

The content of the toolkit is the result of an analysis of incidents reported to the Justice Center. Systemic failures that either contribute to dangerous events or -- if not corrected -- are likely to lead to such events in the future are identified. The toolkit provides information about the risk of such failures, the lessons learned, and simple, common-sense practices to help individuals, family members, staff members and provider agencies take a proactive approach to creating safe, supportive environments for people who receive services.

To learn more about the Justice Center's prevention efforts, visit the Abuse Prevention Resource Center at: <http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/spotlight-prevention/home>

About the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs

Established by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the Legislature, the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs is dedicated to supporting and protecting people with special needs and disabilities.

The Justice Center serves as a law enforcement agency which seeks to ensure that individuals who receive services from a facility or provider that is operated, licensed or certified by six state agencies, are protected from abuse, neglect and mistreatment. Assessing risks to the health and safety of individuals receiving services, and supporting commensurate action to prevent potential abuse and neglect are critical components of the agency's independent oversight role.

Through its advocacy-related services, the Justice Center also provides information, technical assistance and training to support and empower individuals with disabilities of all ages, in all settings.

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