



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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For Immediate Release

Autism Awareness Decals For First Responders

(Paulding County, GA) Autism awareness is extremely important for all first responders, especially law enforcement officers. Several years ago, the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (P.O.S.T.) implemented the Governor's Initiative Training program. The Governor's Initiative Training program was implemented to include specific mandatory training for every law enforcement officer in Georgia. Some of the training includes de-escalation, autism awareness, use of force, community policing, cultural awareness, along with several other courses.

While taking the training a couple years ago, one of our Detectives had an idea. Detective Tiffany Bennett stated, "The idea struck me in 2019 while I was taking the annual Autism & De-escalation course through GPSTC (Georgia Public Safety Training Center). I wanted to create a way for law enforcement officers to be able to easily identify individuals with autism. My idea was to create a decal that would be a visual cue so first responders would know that an autistic person either lives in a home or could be in the vehicle. The intent was to create a decal to grab attention but still be discreet in the sense that it doesn't say "Autism"."

The goal of this decal is for it to be immediately recognizable, which will give first responders a few extra seconds to prepare themselves for their interaction with the autistic occupants of the vehicle or home. With the training that law enforcement officers go through combined with the visual cue of an Autism decal, it could help a law enforcement officer be more prepared for an encounter. There are different types of decals which highlight the different triggers for each autistic person: Hyper-Sensitivity, Non-Verbal, Echolalia, etc.



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This is an idea that we hope will take flight amongst public safety agencies across Georgia as well as across the nation. If you would like more information on how you can obtain some decals for your agency, please contact Detective Tiffany Bennett at tiffany.bennett@paulding.gov or call her at (770) 443-3015. When first responders see these decals, they will be better prepared for the encounter which will help it go more smoothly.

