

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Crisis communication card for non-speaking adults

Your non-speaking adult cannot tell the ER doctor that she has a peanut allergy or that flashing lights trigger seizures. The card in her wallet can. Here is how to build one that survives a bad night.

BY JIM PALASTY · 11 MIN READ · FAMILY SAFETY

1 in 4

MINIMALLY VERBAL

Autistic adults are minimally verbal. The card is not optional. It is language.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Build the card



STEP 2

Distribute it



STEP 3

Update it

What each section of the card contains

Identification	Name, DOB, photo, address, guardianship
Diagnosis	Autism level, IQ if known, comorbid conditions
Communication	Verbal words, sign, AAC, PECS, gesture
Medical	Allergies, seizure history, chronic conditions
Medications	Name, dose, timing, prescriber, last dose
Sensory	Trigger list ordered by intensity
Calming	Three specific inputs in order of preference
Contacts	Guardian, case manager, doctor. 24-hour lines

A STORY WE KNOW



Amelia is 31 and non-speaking. She uses her TouchChat app for most communication and has about thirty spoken words for emergencies. The night she had appendicitis she was in a waiting room for four hours. The nurse who finally listened was the one who found the laminated card in her backpack and read the line that said This person points to what hurts. Amelia pointed. Surgery was ninety minutes later.

POINTING IS A SENTENCE

What matters, at a glance

Photo

Recent, close-up, both eyes visible.
Face only. No scarves or hats she does not wear daily.

Diagnosis

Autism spectrum, support level, co-occurring conditions in one line each.

Do not restrain

If restraint history exists, name it in red at the top. Prone holds have killed autistic adults during meltdowns. Say so.

AAC location

Communication device in blue backpack. Ask before removing. She may pull it toward her to escape the sensory chaos of a hospital.

Vocabulary

About thirty spoken words and two hundred signed. List the words she uses under stress and what each one means.

Calming

Weighted lap pad. Song called Stand By Me. Deep pressure to shoulders. In that order.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- | | |
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| ☐ Two laminated crisis cards | ☐ AAC device with charger |
| ☐ Comfort items (weighted lap pad, chewy) | ☐ Change of clothes and underwear |
| ☐ Snacks she will actually eat | ☐ Noise-canceling headphones |
| ☐ Preferred communication book (PECS pages) | ☐ Your ID and guardianship letter |

YOUR MOVE

When she is admitted or detained, here is what you do

- 1 Meet the responders at the door with the card in your hand.
- 2 Read the top line aloud. This person is autistic and non-speaking. Please read the whole card before you speak to her.
- 3 Show them the AAC device. Do not let them take it away.
- 4 Point to the medication section. Read it. Answer their follow-ups.
- 5 Ask for a quiet room. Every hospital has one. They will not offer.
- 6 Stay in the room. If they insist you leave, ask why in writing.

Have three go-bags. Home, car, day program locker. The one you need is always the one you did not think you would need.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

communicationfirst.org · <https://communicationfirst.org/>

Informational only. Not legal or medical advice. Verify current program rules before acting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jim Palasty is the founder of OASIS for Autism and a single father of an adult autistic daughter in Michigan.