

Save Your Family with SMART911

By Radha Selvester, CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services

With shaking hands and pounding heart, you reach for your phone and dial 9-1-1. When the operator asks “What is the address of your emergency?” you draw a momentary blank even though you’ve lived in the same place for months or years. Once that information is given, the 9-1-1 operator asks other questions about the current crisis. You try to explain what is going on but maybe there is a backstory that can’t be explained in your distressed state of mind. You just want your loved one to be healthy and safe and you wonder why help is taking so long to arrive!

This was my personal experience a couple years ago when my daughter collapsed on the kitchen floor, wailing in pain. We had just moved into a place in the country with a long state road kind of address and I had barely just learned it. I lamented NOT taping the address to the wall when we moved in as I struggled to remember all those numbers in the right order!

It appears I am not the only one to have struggled with remembering critical information in a crisis as Alachua County now participates in the SMART911 program. SMART911 is a secure database that is only accessed by 9-1-1 operators when you call from a registered phone number. 35 states in the USA have counties participating in this database with the number growing. With SMART911, potentially critical seconds or minutes can be saved as emergency rescue personnel have the information they need even if the caller can’t communicate.

Here is the kind of information that can be stored in the database:

- **Telephones** all of your family’s phone numbers can be included in one profile – a 911 call from any phone will bring up the profile that can include all the information that follows
- **People** and any of their special physical or mental health needs, physical description, photos, medications used, domestic violence risk, etc
- **Addresses** for home, work, or school including description of the location like stairs, where the breakers and water mains are located, and phone number of landlord
- **Animals** such as pets or livestock that need to be considered
- **Emergency Contacts** so loved ones can be called right away in case of emergency
- **Vehicles** owned or leased by the people in your family

You can enter the information you want and are not required to fill in all the fields. The database is completely inaccessible EXCEPT when a participant calls 911 from a registered phone. Their profile information will only remain accessible on the computer for up to 45 minutes. Here is a list of ways in which lives can be saved by having your profile on SMART911:

- **Missing Child** – if your child’s photo has been uploaded to SMART911, it will be sent out to every law enforcement officer via their computers so they can begin searching as soon as the child has been lost.

- **Mentally Ill Family Member** – If someone you love has a mental health crisis their behavior may look “criminal” bringing the full wrath of the law down onto them, but with SMART 911 law enforcement is alerted to this health condition and can bring appropriate crisis intervention trained people to assist in subduing the individual and getting them to the hospital instead of to jail.
- **Elderly or Chronically Ill** people can have all their diagnosis & medication information in their SMART911 profile reducing the risk of inappropriate or delayed treatment. Having emergency contact information in the profile will also save time locating family members.

I just created a safety profile with SMART911 and found it to be a simple and user-friendly site. My daughter has a chronic illness. I am glad to know that all her relevant health history is contained in this profile. If she has a crisis, this information will be seen by EMT or police. Even if I am not with her, if she dials 9-1-1 from her cell phone, all this information will come up.

We are fortunate to have SMART911 in Alachua County but even if you dial 9-1-1 when you are out of town, if that geographical area has SMART911, your information will appear on the dispatcher or operator’s computer screen. Eventually, SMART911 will be available all over the United States. Imagine what an asset this will be in case of crisis or lost child while traveling anywhere in the USA!

I urge everyone to create their safety profile TODAY. If you don’t do it today, you won’t have time when a crisis occurs. This delay could cost someone you love their life! www.smart911.com

For a different kind of crisis, when children or teens are defying authority, breaking the rules, running away, or acting out, please call CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services. CDS offers FREE Family Action counseling for children age 6-17 and a FREE residential program for adolescents age 10-17 called Interface Youth Shelter. Call 352 244 0628 (business hours) or 352 244 0618 (24/7) for assistance. www.cdsfl.org

