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Blue Envelope Program

The Blue Envelope Program is an effort to ease communication between individuals on the autism spectrum and law enforcement during motor vehicle operator interactions.

The Blue Envelope initiative represents a collaborative effort aimed at fostering a safer and more understanding environment for drivers with autism spectrum disorder during traffic stops. This program emerged from a partnership between the [Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association](https://www.masschiefs.org/) (<https://www.masschiefs.org/>), the [Massachusetts State Police](/orgs/massachusetts-state-police) (</orgs/massachusetts-state-police>), [Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts](http://www.afamaction.org/) (<http://www.afamaction.org/>), and [The Arc of Massachusetts](https://thearcofmass.org) (<https://thearcofmass.org>), alongside input from individuals with autism and their families.

Here you can find both [tips of drivers on the autism spectrum](/info-details/blue-envelope-program#tips-for-a-safe-traffic-stop-) (</info-details/blue-envelope-program#tips-for-a-safe-traffic-stop->) and [tips for law enforcement interacting with drivers on the autism spectrum](/info-details/blue-envelope-program#tips-for-a-safe-traffic-stop-) (</info-details/blue-envelope-program#tips-for-a-safe-traffic-stop->).

The core idea of the Blue Envelope is straightforward yet impactful. It involves a specially designed envelope that holds a driver's essential documents—license, registration, and a contact card. However, its significance goes beyond just a storage solution. The envelope features critical communication guidelines on its exterior, specifically tailored to assist law enforcement officers in recognizing and adapting their approach when interacting with a driver who has autism.



This initiative addresses several key objectives:

- **Enhancing Understanding:** By providing officers with immediate, accessible information about autism, the Blue Envelope aims to promote empathy and patience, leading to more positive interactions.

- **Reducing Anxiety:** Traffic stops can be particularly stressful for individuals with autism. The Blue Envelope serves as a visual cue that helps officers adjust their communication style, thereby reducing anxiety for the driver.
- **Streamlining Communication:** The guidelines on the envelope offer practical tips for officers, making it easier for them to communicate effectively with individuals with autism, even in high-stress situations like traffic stops.
- **Encouraging Preparedness:** For individuals with autism and their families, the Blue Envelope is a tool that encourages preparedness. By keeping their important documents in the envelope and understanding how to present it during a stop, drivers can feel more confident and secure.

The Blue Envelope is more than just an envelope; it's a symbol of our commitment to inclusivity and understanding. It represents a step forward in ensuring that every driver, regardless of their neurological differences, can experience a sense of safety and respect on the road. Through this program, we aim to build bridges between law enforcement and the autism community, fostering a culture of awareness and compassion that benefits everyone involved.

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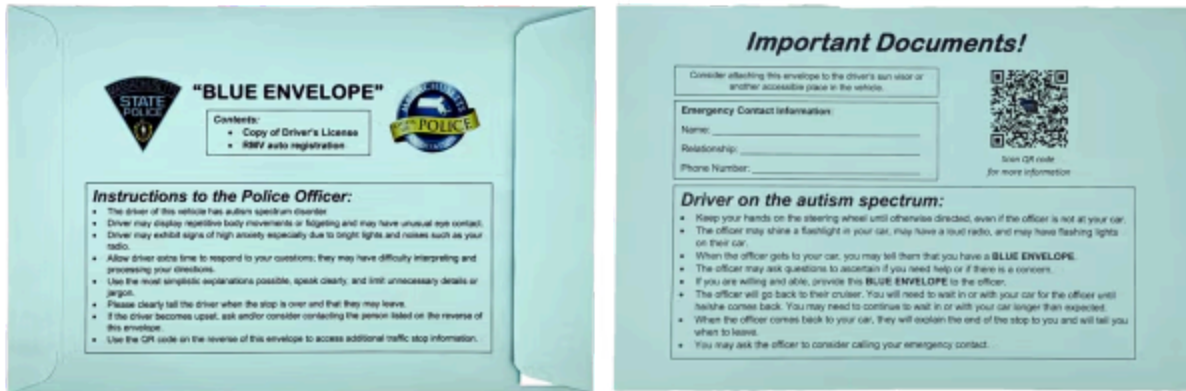
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Getting Your Blue Envelope



To request a Blue Envelope, you may either:

- Visit [one of our barracks \(/info-details/massachusetts-state-police-troop-boundaries\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-state-police-troop-boundaries) to request one in person; or
- Complete our online form to have an envelope mailed to you

Request a Blue Envelope

(<https://www.mass.gov/forms/request-a-blue-envelope---unpublished?auHash=onvgLP1Qg4gvjwr7CIR6us-66rfw7fi-vj9ukSJ1pA>)

Preparing Your Envelope

Once you have your Blue Envelope, the next step is to prepare it properly to ensure it serves its intended purpose during a traffic stop. This preparation not only involves placing the right documents inside but also knowing where to keep the envelope in your vehicle for easy access. Here's how to get your envelope ready:

1. **Gather Your Documents:** Collect your copy of your current driver's license and vehicle registration
2. **Place Documents Inside:** Insert these documents into the Blue Envelope. The design of the envelope ensures that your documents are secure yet easily retrievable.
3. **Consider Attaching to Your Sun Visor or Ensuring Accessibility:** For ease of access, consider attaching the Blue Envelope to the sun visor on the driver's side of your vehicle or any other easily accessible and visible location. This placement ensures that the envelope is readily available, should you need to present your documents quickly. The envelope is designed to be easily noticed by law enforcement, signaling them to adjust their communication approach.

4. **Inform Family Members:** If you share your vehicle with family members or friends, inform them about the Blue Envelope and its purpose. This is crucial for ensuring that anyone who might be driving your vehicle knows where the documents are and understands the importance of the envelope.
5. **Regularly Update Your Documents:** Make sure to replace any documents in the Blue Envelope with their most current versions. Keeping your information up-to-date is essential for avoiding any complications during a traffic stop.

Taking the time to properly prepare your Blue Envelope is a proactive step towards ensuring a smooth interaction during a traffic stop. This preparation not only helps to reduce stress for the driver but also assists law enforcement in recognizing and adapting their approach to accommodate the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. By having your Blue Envelope ready and accessible, you contribute to creating a safer, more understanding environment for everyone on the road.

Remember, the Blue Envelope is more than just a holder for your documents; it's a communication tool designed to bridge the gap between drivers on the autism spectrum and law enforcement. Taking these steps to prepare your envelope ensures you're ready to use this tool effectively whenever it's needed.

Tips for a Safe Traffic Stop

Navigating a traffic stop can be challenging for anyone, but it can be particularly stressful for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and for officers who wish to handle the situation with care and understanding. Here are some tips for both parties to ensure a safe and respectful traffic stop:

For Drivers on the Autism Spectrum:

1. **Stay Calm:** Try to remain as calm as possible. Deep breathing can help manage stress levels.
2. **Use Your Blue Envelope:** When the officer gets to your car, say "I have a Blue Envelope". Keep your Blue Envelope in an easily accessible and visible place, like the sun visor. When the officer tells you, slowly get the Blue Envelope. If the officer is unaware of the purpose of the Blue Envelope, politely request that they scan the QR code to learn more.
3. **Follow Instructions:** Listen to the officer's instructions and try to follow them as best as you can. If you don't understand something, it's okay to ask for clarification.
4. **Waiting:** When the officer needs to go back to their cruiser, you will need to wait in your car for the officer until they come back. You may need to wait up to 10-15 minutes. When the officer comes back, they will explain the end of the stop and will tell you when to leave.
5. **Safety First:** Always keep your hands visible and avoid making sudden movements. Inform the officer if you need to reach into your pocket or glove compartment for anything.
6. **Hand Placement:** Keep your hands on the steering wheel until otherwise directed, even if the officer is not at your car.
7. **Flashing Lights and Noise:** Remember that the officer may shine a flashlight in your car, may have a radio, and may have flashing lights on their car.

8. **Calling Contact:** In a situation where you feel overwhelmed or may not be able to communicate clearly, you can request the officer to contact your designated emergency contact.

For Law Enforcement Officers:

1. **Recognize the Blue Envelope:** The Blue Envelope is a signal that the driver is on the autism spectrum. Note the communication tips provided on the envelope.
2. **Exercise Patience:** Understand that the individual may need more time to process information and respond. Avoid rushing them.
3. **Clear Communication:** Use simple, direct language and give one instruction at a time. Avoid idioms or phrases that might be misunderstood. Allow drivers extra time to respond as they may need more time to formulate their response. Clearly tell the driver when the stop is over and that they may leave.
4. **Be Observant:** Pay attention to non-verbal cues that might indicate the driver is feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Drivers may exhibit signs of high anxiety, especially due to bright lights and noises like your radio. Individuals on the autism spectrum may display repetitive body movements or fidgeting and may have unusual eye contact. Additionally, note that they may exhibit unusual speech patterns, especially under stress.
5. **De-escalate When Necessary:** If you notice signs of distress, consider ways to de-escalate the situation, such as reducing sensory inputs (e.g., turning off sirens, speaking calmly). If the driver becomes upset, ask and/or consider contacting the person listed on the contact card.

Creating a Positive Outcome

By following these tips, both drivers on the autism spectrum and law enforcement officers can contribute to a traffic stop that is safe, respectful, and positive for everyone involved. It's about building mutual understanding and adapting traditional procedures to accommodate the needs of all community members.

Remember, the goal of the Blue Envelope program is not just to facilitate smoother traffic stops, but also to foster a sense of security and confidence among drivers on the autism spectrum. For law enforcement officers, it's an opportunity to demonstrate compassion and enhance their ability to serve and protect all individuals in the community.

Through awareness, preparation, and empathy, we can all contribute to making our roads safer and more inclusive spaces.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Who can request a Blue Envelope?

A: Any individual with autism spectrum disorder residing in Massachusetts can request a Blue Envelope. If the individual is a minor, a parent or guardian may request it on their behalf.

Q: How much does a Blue Envelope cost?

A: The Blue Envelope is provided free of charge. It's part of our commitment to ensuring that all drivers with

autism have the tools they need for safer interactions during traffic stops.

Q: What documents should be kept in the Blue Envelope?

A: Your Blue Envelope should contain a copy of your driver's license and vehicle registration. These are the documents typically requested during a traffic stop.

Q: Can I get more than one Blue Envelope?

A: Yes, if you have multiple vehicles or if there's a chance your envelope might be misplaced, you can request additional envelopes. It's important that you have one in each vehicle you drive regularly.

Q: How do law enforcement officers know about the Blue Envelope program?

A: We've partnered with law enforcement agencies across Massachusetts to provide training and information about the Blue Envelope Program. Officers are briefed on the significance of the envelope and how to use the guidelines provided to communicate effectively with drivers on the autism spectrum.

Q: What should I do if an officer seems unaware of the Blue Envelope during a traffic stop?

A: If you encounter an officer who is not familiar with the Blue Envelope, calmly explain its purpose and point out the communication tips provided on the envelope. The information is designed to be clear and helpful for officers who may not have encountered the envelope before.

Q: How can I help spread the word about the Blue Envelope program?

A: Sharing your experiences and information about the Blue Envelope on social media, with friends, and family can help raise awareness. Additionally, advocacy groups and community organizations can distribute information to broaden the program's reach.

Q: I have an event and would like to distribute Blue Envelopes and/or would like to include the Massachusetts State Police as part of this initiative.

A: Please contact us at blueenvelope@mass.gov (mailto:blueenvelope@mass.gov).

Contact

Blue Envelope Program

Online

Blue Envelope Program blueenvelope@mass.gov (mailto:blueenvelope@mass.gov)

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RELATED

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Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (<https://www.masschiefs.org/>)



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