



Press Release

Human Services, Office of the Attorney General, & Motor Vehicle Commission Announce Efforts to Assist Law Enforcement when Interacting with Residents with Autism & Communication Disorders

Drivers' License Designation Now Available for Residents to Indicate Disability Status

February 21, 2025

(FLEMINGTON) – Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman, State Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, and Acting Motor Vehicle Commission Chief Administrator Latrecia Littles-Floyd today announced new efforts underway to assist law enforcement officers to communicate effectively and avoid misunderstandings during encounters with individuals who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or a communication disorder.

The officials held a press conference at the Hunterdon County Historic Courthouse where they announced the release of new guidance to help law enforcement identify individuals with ASD or a communication disorder so they can adjust their communication approach as needed; and unveiled the new designation available to individuals with ASD or a communication disorder who want to indicate their diagnosis on their driver's license or non-driver ID. They were joined by Hunterdon County Prosecutor Renée Robeson, Hunterdon County Chief of Detectives Timothy Drew, Hunterdon County Sheriff Frederick W. Brown, local Hunterdon County Chiefs of Police, and representatives from Hunterdon Medical Center and The ARC of Hunterdon.

In 2023, Governor Phil Murphy signed [legislation](#) allowing New Jersey residents with ASD or a communication disorder to request through the Motor Vehicle Commission an official indication of their diagnosis on their state driver's license or non-driver identification. The law also tasked Human Services and the AG's Office to create related guidance for law enforcement. The guidance can be found [here](#).

“Law enforcement often interact with individuals in stressful circumstances, making clear communication essential. Individuals with autism and other communication disorders often have different communication needs they may not be able to express and which may go unrecognized today. This guidance provides law enforcement with information and education that can help prevent potential misunderstandings or conflict, as well as build trust and understanding. Recognizing when individuals may need accommodations to help them communicate effectively and having the knowledge and tools to modify communication helps prevent escalation and leads to better outcomes,” **said Human Services Commissioner Adelman.**

“Law enforcement encounters can be stressful for everyone involved,” **said Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin.** “The new designation for driver licenses and state IDs offers an additional way for New Jerseyans with communication challenges to express their needs. And, by helping our law enforcement officers better understand the needs of a civilian, we hope to create a more productive and safer environment for both law enforcement officers and the people with whom they interact.”

“The Motor Vehicle Commission is delighted to join with our partners in the Department of Human Services and the Attorney General’s Office in announcing this new option for New Jersey driver’s licenses and non-driver IDs,” **said Acting NJMVC Chief Administrator Littles-Floyd.** “We all share a common goal in making our state’s roads and communities safer for each and every resident, including those diagnosed with ASD or a communication disorder. We are happy to offer this voluntary notation on licenses and IDs, which can be added at a walk-in visit to any NJMVC Licensing Center. Before you visit, please check our website for more detailed instructions and to make sure you bring all the required documents.”

Constituents with autism spectrum disorder or a communication disorder can request to have their license updated at any NJMVC Licensing Center. Individuals should be prepared to provide 6 points of ID. The individual or their guardian will have to submit an attestation of their diagnosis. No medical documentation is required.

A detailed explanation for how individuals with ASD or a communication disorder can add the notation to their license or ID is available [here](#) at the NJMVC website.

The marking will appear as the [number 5 in the Restrictions section](#) on the license or ID. The NJMVC also will issue the individual a Code 5 Description Card — a [“Pink Card”](#) — that they must carry with their license or ID. The “Pink Card” will indicate if the person has ASD, a communication disorder, or both. This will help law enforcement identify individuals with these disorders, and allow officers to adjust their communication as appropriate for the ease and safety of both parties.

Over the past year, Human Services took lead on developing the law enforcement guidance in close collaboration with the AG’s Office and NJMVC, as well as [Autism NJ](#) and the [New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#). In addition to consulting with these advocacy

organizations, the Department also sought feedback from people with disabilities, hosted a stakeholder webinar, and consulted with other groups such as Human Services' [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#)' Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee.

The guidance explains the legal requirements for providing accommodations to individuals with disabilities; it describes what ASD and communication disorders are, and common characteristics of these disabilities; and provides best practices to ensure calm and effective communication between law enforcement and residents.

It also includes information for law enforcement on how to effectively communicate with individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired. Driver's license designations are also [available](#) to individuals with significant hearing impairment.

"This effort aims to expand the perspectives of law enforcement officers by redefining what is considered 'typical' versus 'suspicious' behavior. Interactions improve when officers recognize and adapt to diverse communication needs, ensuring that all individuals are truly understood," **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.**

ASD is one of the most common developmental disabilities in both the country and New Jersey. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 35, or approximately 3 percent of 8-year-olds in New Jersey have been diagnosed with ASD. Given these rates, law enforcement will commonly interact with individuals with ASD in the course of their daily duties, and, while ASD occurs on a spectrum, many of the common symptoms of ASD make communicating effectively with others more difficult.

Communication disorders encompass conditions that cause persistent challenges in understanding and using both verbal and non-verbal language, including symbols and images. Like ASD, communication disorders are common yet often misunderstood. Speech and actions by individuals with disabilities may be wrongly perceived by officers as suspicious, illegal, or uncooperative. Enhancing law enforcement awareness and communication skills is crucial for identifying these conditions and adapting interactions accordingly. The types of communication disorders range from those associated with difficulty understanding language and the meaning of words to difficulty making speech sounds, stuttering, and difficulties communicating or using language in social situations.

