



For Immediate Release: April 17, 2024
Contact: ADOT Public Information Office
news@azdot.gov

Arizona Department of Public Safety PIO Office
PIO_Unit@azdps.gov

UAPD Public Information Office
UAPDMediaRequests@arizona.edu

Blue Envelopes help drivers with autism during traffic stops *Rollout of enhanced communication includes law enforcement training*

PHOENIX – Arizona is launching a program through which drivers on the autism spectrum can place their credentials in special blue envelopes to enhance communication with law enforcement officers during traffic stops.

This voluntary program, which includes education for law enforcement officers, follows a model used successfully in Connecticut. The envelope will have instructions for the driver and law enforcement officer to follow and advise the officer that the driver may respond differently to instructions in situations that can increase anxiety.

To provide the necessary groundwork and training, the Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division is partnering with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (AZDPS) and the University of Arizona's Police Department, Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, and Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (ArizonaLEND) training program.

"When I heard about this program in Connecticut, I was extremely fascinated and intrigued to see if we could incorporate it here in Arizona," ADOT MVD Director Eric Jorgensen said. "MVD is thrilled to be partnering with DPS and the University of Arizona Police Department to help calm what can otherwise be potentially stressful situations."

This program will function similarly to the one Connecticut established in 2020. The blue envelope is a voluntary way to hold important vehicle documents such as insurance and registration, while also being a communication tool between the driver and law enforcement during an interaction.

"This program provides explicit support for drivers who choose to participate," said Jennifer Casteix, UArizona Clinical Professor and ArizonaLEND faculty member. "Better understanding of communication differences should positively impact these interactions."

After his interim appointment at the University of Arizona in May 2023, Police Chief Chris Olson shared his desire to bring the Blue Envelope Program to the university. Creating partnerships with University of Arizona units that specialize in autism research and caring for the community have been key in laying the groundwork for this program at the University of Arizona.

According to Chief Olson, "The Blue Envelope program is an outstanding public safety initiative that seeks to improve communication between police officers and autistic drivers during traffic stops."

Director Jeffrey Glover of the Arizona Department of Public Safety said, "The AZDPS is proud to support and be a part of the Blue Envelope Program. A program like this, seeking to enhance safety for both members of the public as well as all law enforcement officers in the State of Arizona, is absolutely invaluable."

"We are implementing this program with an evidence-based approach to better support law enforcement and autistic drivers to improve safety outcomes," said Dr. Nell Maltman, UArizona Assistant Professor with the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Training with officers and volunteer drivers to simulate a traffic stop with the blue envelopes will be happening next week at the University of Arizona's Tucson campus.

The envelopes are expected to be available through ADOT MVD offices, various law enforcement locations as well as other locations across the state starting in May.

For additional information about this program, please visit azdot.gov/BlueEnvelope.