

# Talking to a Police Officer About My Autism



## Should I tell a police officer I have autism?

It is up to you. There are two things to remember if you decide to share this information:

1. Some police officers do not know about autism.
2. If you decide to share that you have autism, it would be helpful to explain it to the police officer.

## What if I need help talking about my autism?

Consider completing a card to keep in your wallet and glove compartment in your car. This card can be used to explain autism to a police officer or other first responder. The DNEA has made an “About My Autism” card (example on page two) that you can print or download. If you like, you can also write a short personal statement explaining your autism on the back of the card. Make a few copies because you may give out a few copies and will need to replace it.

**The second page of this guide has examples of these cards.**



## Did you know?

You can note your autism on your driver’s license or identification card. The Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offers a voluntary medical indicator that you can add to the front of your card. The back of card will say that you have autism.

There is no charge to have this added to your license or identification card. To add it, complete the required form at any DMV location. More information about the program can be located on the DMV website at [Medical Indicator - Division of Motor Vehicles](https://www.dmv.de.gov/medical-indicator) (dmv.de.gov).

**Additional resource guides and a full list of references at <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>.**

Sawchenko, C., Fletcher, A., Mallory, S., & DNEA CDS & Autism Delaware Teams. (2023). *DNEA resource guide: Talking to a police officer about my autism*. Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.

# Talking to a Police Officer About My Autism

## DNEA About My Autism Card

I have autism. I may have difficulty communicating and answering questions. I also need more time to process your requests. You can help me by:

- speaking calmly;
- telling me that I am safe;
- taking more time to explain everything to me in simple and concrete terms; and
- telling me when I am free to go.

Please consider contacting the person on my envelope if I become too upset or do not understand the situation well.

Thank you and please have a safe day.

## Tip

**DNEA About My Autism cards can be ordered free of charge from the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.**

Front

Back



## Personal Statement Example

My name is Chuck, and I am autistic. I get extra anxious in unfamiliar situations. I may need help communicating and answering questions. At times, I may need more time to process your requests. I'm very sensitive to loud sounds and bright lights. When I'm nervous, I tend to have poor eye contact. To help me calm down, I sometimes flick my fingers in front of my face.

It helps if people speak quietly and explain things to me slowly. Please consider contacting the person on my envelope if I become too upset or do not understand what you are trying to tell me.

Thank you.

## Interested in participating in a practice traffic stop?

The Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) offers traffic stop practice sessions for drivers and passengers. Visit [cde.udel.edu/dnea/mockdriving](https://cde.udel.edu/dnea/mockdriving) for dates and times.

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