

# Reaching Out to Your Police Department

Guide with Instructions, Letter template,  
Sample Writing & Additional Safety Resources



# Before we begin...

This guide was created by **The Autism Program** at **Boston Medical Center's Division of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics**. The purpose is to assist and encourage families to connect with their local police department and all the safety resources they are able to offer.

While we understand that not every family feels comfortable contacting and/or sharing their personal information with the police, the additional context provided can be significantly helpful in case of a future emergency! When your local First Responders are aware of your child's diagnosis, modes of communication and any unique behaviors they may engage in (i.e., wandering in the community), as well as any helpful tips to make sure your child can feel and stay safe, they can be much better prepared to support your child back into safety. Read on to learn more.

*This guide was last edited on October 2024.*

## QR Codes: How-To

Throughout our guide, we will often reference websites that provide helpful information and resources for families. Please utilize the QR codes to reach the websites.

### **If you are reading this guide online:**

Simply click on or scan the QR codes to visit the resource website.

### **If you are reading a hard copy of this guide:**

Open your camera app on your phone or a QR-reader app, and scan the QR code to visit the resource website.



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# Instructions

## #1 Who do I contact?

The first step is to **call your police department** in advance and **let them know that you are a resident of this town with a loved one with autism. Say that you would like to share helpful information about your loved one with autism**, in case of a future emergency, and what the best way to do so is.

Depending on the town that you reside in, there may be a specific officer that will collect the information and/or a place where you can submit it to.



### If you are a **Boston Resident:**

You can directly contact your district's **Community Service Officer.**

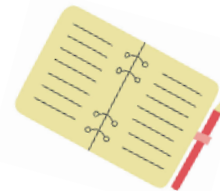
**To find your Community Service Officer's phone number:**

1. Visit the Boston Police Department website to the right →
2. Select your district
3. Scroll down to "Community Service"



### If you are a **Resident Outside Boston:**

Call your **police department's non-emergency number** and let them know that you are a resident of the town with a child/loved one with autism. Ask how you can register helpful information about them in case of an emergency.



## #2 Gather Information

The second step is to **figure out what information about your loved one you would like to share with the police.**

Consider **past and current safety concerns** that you had for your loved one and important details surrounding those concerns. Consider any **specific traits and behaviors** that they can exhibit, especially during stressful situations. Make a list of **strategies** that you have used in the past to work through those situations. And of course, don't forget to grab an **updated photo**, along with their most recent **demographic information**.

Don't hesitate to be descriptive! Any information that you share with the police can be used as helpful and valuable context if the First Responders ever need to interact with your loved one.

### INFORMATION CHECKLIST

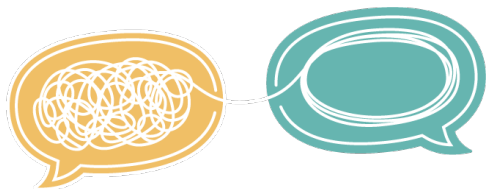
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Name &amp; Date of birth</b><br><i>Also include a photo of your child!</i>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Communication method(s)</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Gender</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Common safety concerns</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sensory needs &amp; sensitivities</b><br><i>What should First Responders look out for?</i>          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Height &amp; Weight</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Specific behaviors &amp; traits</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Hair &amp; Eye Color</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Favorite attractions &amp; places</b><br><i>Any favorite activities/locations in the community?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Home &amp; School address</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Communication strategies</b><br><i>What helps your child understand information?</i>                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Identifying marks/accessories</b><br><i>Does your child have any scars, birthmarks, or tracking devices?</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Calming strategies</b><br><i>What helps your child feel calmer/better?</i>                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Language(s) spoken at home</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Caregiver information</b>   |

### #3 Provide Information to the police

Now it's time to share all the information that you gathered about your loved one with the police. If you are providing the information by mail or e-mail, we recommend that you **follow up in 1-2 weeks** to make sure that the information has been received.

Request for the information that you provided to be displayed on the dispatcher's screen/database if a 911 call is ever made about your child and/or from your home address.

*Do you have an **adult/transition-age** child? Consider connecting with the police in your surrounding towns. It can also be helpful to bring your child in to the police station to familiarize themselves with officers in the area.*



### #4 Update information as needed

As your loved one gets older, some information may need to be updated with the police from time to time. This can include **what your loved one looks like** (provide police with an updated photo), their **legal/medical information** (ex: guardianship, durable power of attorney, healthcare proxy, etc), and their **emergency contact information**.

Additionally, you can think about **sharing information with the police departments in your surrounding towns** as your loved one grows older and their range of activities also larger.



# Online Registration

Select police departments across Massachusetts already offer an **online registration form** for autistic individuals in the community.



**Below is a list of some towns across MA that offers an online registration form.** Click or scan the QR code to access the form directly.



**Braintree**



**Hingham**



**Lakeville**



**Leominster**



**Norfolk**



**Peabody**



**Townsend**



**Wareham**



**Westford**

# Letter Template

## How To Use

In the next pages, you will see a letter template that you can use to create a personalized letter for your family. Feel free to print it out, fill it with information about your loved one, and share it with the police directly.

**Make sure to include a photo of your child in the letter!**



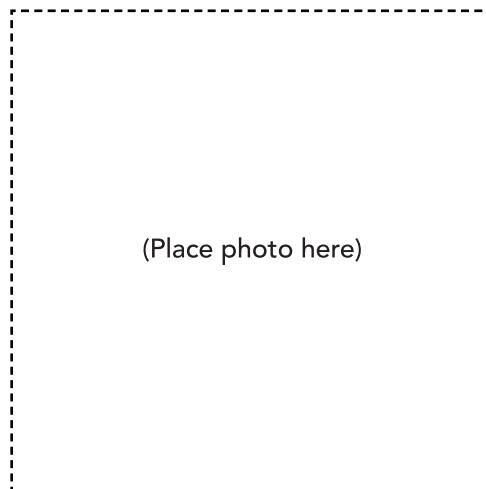
Any questions? Reach out!  
Contact us at  
[autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:autismprogram@bmc.org)  
or (617) 414-3842.



Dear Police Department,

I am a parent/caregiver of an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) residing in this town. I wanted to reach out to provide helpful information about my child for First Responders, in case of an emergency where they need to be redirected back into safety.

Some basic information about my child is as follows - I have also included a photo of my child in this letter for your reference.



Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Race & Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Height & Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Hair & Eye color: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying marks or accessories: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

My child communicates through the following methods: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Primary language spoken at home is: \_\_\_\_\_

My child's most common safety concerns are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My child has the following sensory needs and sensitivities, which will be helpful to keep in mind in case of an interaction: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The best ways to interact & communicate with my child can be to:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It can also be helpful to provide the following calming measures, if possible:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Due to ASD, my child may present certain behaviors such as:

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In case my child has wandered away from a safe environment, they may be found near the following attractions:

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In case of any type of emergency, please make sure to contact me (my child's caregiver and legal guardian) immediately.

Caregiver's name:

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Phone number:

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Home address:

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Please feel free to share all information in this letter to the First Responders in our community. Please also do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions. Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Best,

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### Additional Information:

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# Sample Letter

Dear Police Department,

I hope this finds you well. I am a parent/caregiver of **Jane Doe**, a **9 year old** child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We live in the **South End** and want to reach out to provide some helpful information about my child, in case of an emergency where First Responders may be involved with redirecting Jane back into safety.



My child has a history of wandering away from home and school, as well as eloping in public.

**Jane** (DOB: **10/02/2014**) lives in **801 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston MA, 02118**. She attends **South End School** located at **10 Street Ave, Boston**. She is **female, 4'2", 90lbs., White**, and has **brown hair and eyes**. She has the following identifying marks and/or accessories: **a scar on her left elbow, a medical ID bracelet stating her ASD diagnosis and emergency contact information, and a SafetyNet tracking device from Boston Police Department.**

I have also attached a photo of my child for your reference.

Jane is **non-verbal** and best communicates through her **AAC device (iPad)** and **PECS (Picture Exchange Communication Systems)**. The primary language spoken at home is **English**. She has the following sensory needs and sensitivities, which will be helpful to keep in mind in case of an interaction: **sensitive to lights (flashing police lights will be overwhelming), loud noises (such as police siren), authoritative body language and tone.**

The best way to interact with Jane can be: **Asking yes/no questions, breaking down requests into single-step actions, turning off police light and siren, providing non-verbal cues like gestures.**

It can also be helpful to provide the following calming measures: **providing sensory items (fidget spinner, weighted blanket, sunglasses), turning on Elmo videos on YouTube & talking about Elmo, removing crowds & other distractions.**

Jane may also present with certain behaviors due to ASD, such as: **Avoiding eye contact, engaging in repetitive behaviors, lack of response to name and verbal commands.**

In case Jane has wandered from home/school, she may be found near her favorite attractions: **T-stop (she loves trains) and/or Dunkin Donuts (enjoys getting a delicious treat from there).**

In case of any type of emergency, please contact me immediately, **John Doe**, the child's caregiver and legal guardian.

**John Doe**

**(123) 456-7890**

**801 Massachusetts Ave, Boston MA 02118**

Please feel free to share all information in this letter to the First Responders in our community. Please also do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions. Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Best,

**John Doe**

# Police Safety Resources

## Project Lifesaver (For Boston Residents: SafetyNet)

**Project Lifesaver** and **SafetyNet Tracking Systems** both provide radio frequency-based tracking bracelets that can be worn on the child's wrist or ankle. The bracelet emits an **individualized frequency signal that can be monitored and tracked if the child wearing it happens to go missing.** This way, once a child is reported missing, trained police officers can narrow down and locate the child in a short amount of time.

Select police departments across Massachusetts have partnered up with Project Lifesaver and SafetyNet to provide these devices to families of children with ASD (and others) at affordable to no cost. Families must officially enroll with their local police department to receive the device. **Please reach out to your police department directly to inquire.**

### What to Say When You Call Your Police Department

**Police Representative:** Hello, this is *[Police Representative's Name]* from *[Police Department]*.

**Caller:** Hello, my name is *[Your Name]*, and I'm calling to inquire about the Project Lifesaver/SafetyNet Tracking Program. I'm interested enrolling my child and getting a tracking device. Could you provide information about the enrollment process?

The police representative should then guide you through the necessary steps to enroll your child, or transfer you to the appropriate representative. You may then be required to fill out forms as well as provide more information and documentation for your child.



### Important Notes

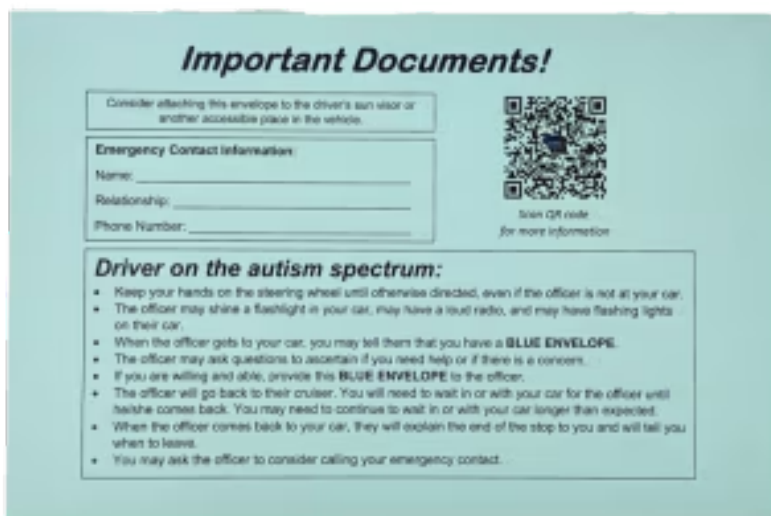
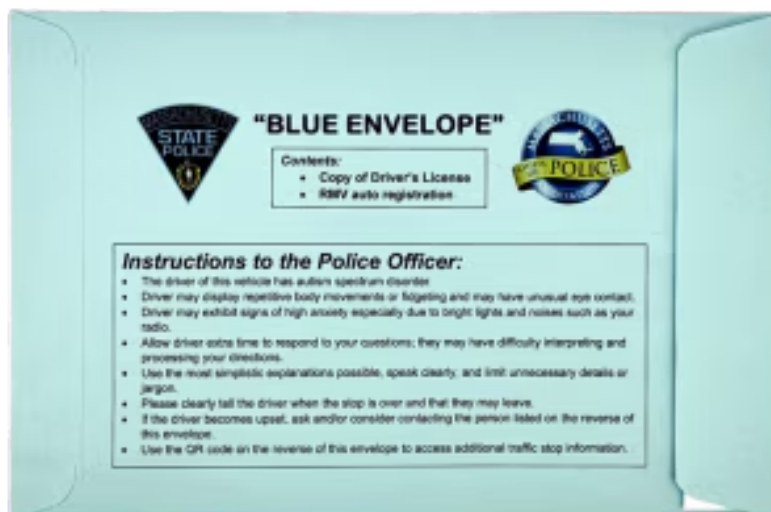
- **ONLY** the police department and Project Lifesaver/SafetyNet is able to track your child's location during an emergency.
- The device is highly water *resistant*, but **not completely water proof.**
- Costs can vary depending on town.

## Blue Envelope Program for Drivers with ASD

**The Blue Envelope Program** was created by the MA Chiefs of Police Station, MA State Police, Advocates for Autism of MA, Arc of MA, alongside input from self-advocates.

It is essentially a "blue envelope" that is specifically designed for drivers with ASD. **It allows drivers to hold all essential driving documents (license, registration, contact card, etc.) in one place, while also letting law enforcement to easily recognize a driver on the spectrum.**

The envelope also lists helpful communication guidelines for the police officer on one side as well as tips on interacting with police for the driver on the other side.



### To request a Blue Envelope:

- ▶ Complete an online request form & have it mailed ⇒
- ▶ Visit a MA barrack near you to request one in person

Please e-mail the Blue Envelope Program directly at [blueenvelope@mass.gov](mailto:blueenvelope@mass.gov) with any questions about the program or how to request an envelope for a driver.



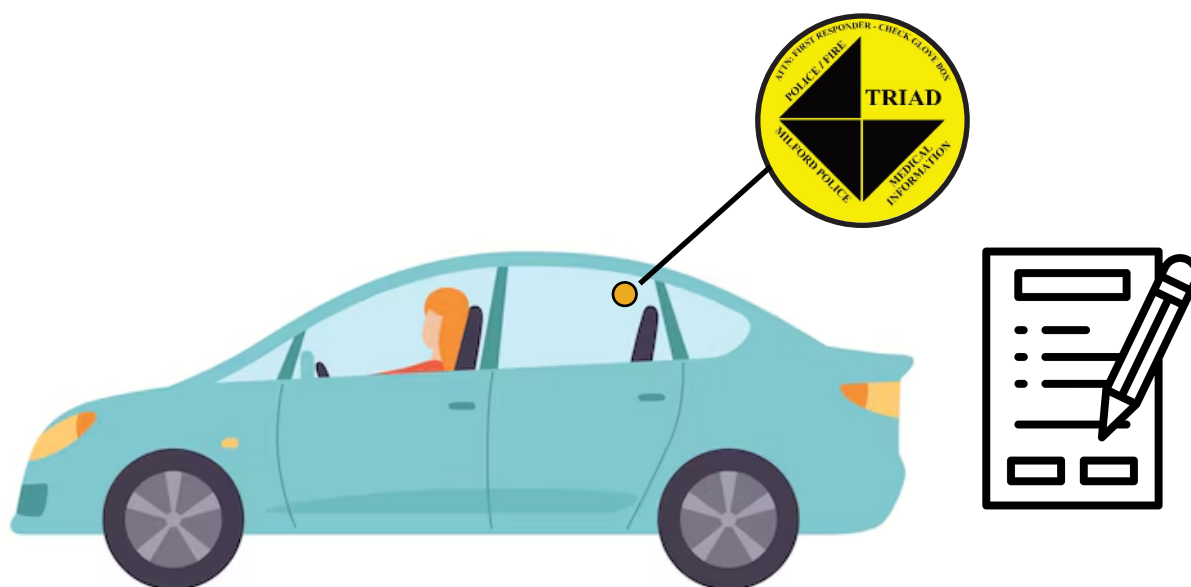


## Yellow Dot Program

**Yellow Dot** is a free program designed to help First Responders quickly recognize that someone in the vehicle has vital medical information stored in their glove department.

This can be helpful in case First Responders need to use the information to find out if the individual has a medical condition that affects one's communication and/or to consider the current medications/pre-existing medical conditions to administer any emergency medical treatments.

The Yellow Dot kit will contain two items - a **health information card** and a **Yellow Dot decal** for your vehicle. Complete the personal information card, with a recent photo of yourself attached, and then place the card in a visible location inside of your car's glove department. Finally, place the Yellow Dot decal on the **rear window on the driver's side**.

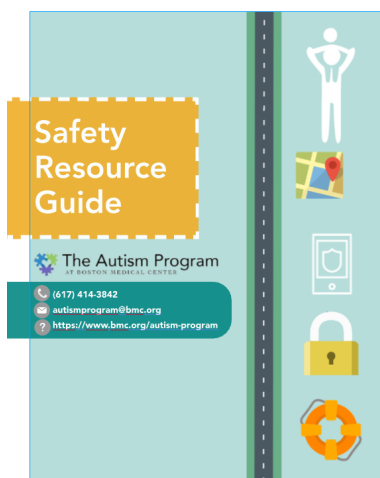


### To request a Yellow Dot Kit:

- ▶ Contact your local police department and ask how you can receive a kit

# The Autism Program

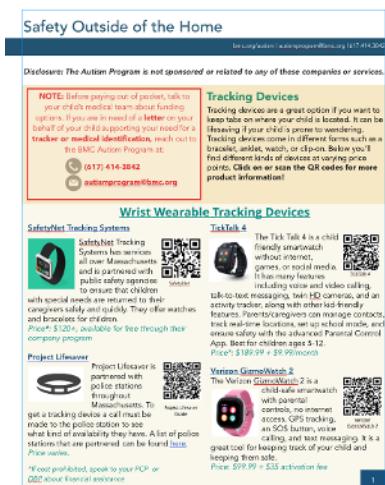
The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center has developed numerous resources that go over various safety resources for individuals with ASD. We encourage you to explore the following guides on our website by clicking each picture or resource title.



## Safety Resource Guide

This guide shares information and suggestions on various topics related to your child's safety, in and outside the home, along with information on internet safety, tracking services, water safety and much more.

Available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, Portuguese, Chinese, and Vietnamese. (Click each language to reach the version.)



## Tracking Devices Guide

This two-page resource goes over 11 common tracking services for children, categorized by wrist wearing, clip-on, and short-range Bluetooth type devices.

We have tons of helpful resources for families of individuals with ASD on **our website**, all publicly available at no cost! Visit us today to access.





**617.414.3842**



**autismprogram@bmc.org**



**<https://www.bmc.org/autism-program>**