

THE CITY OF SUMMIT

N E W J E R S E Y

CITY HALL 512 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE SUMMIT, NJ 07901

News Release

For immediate release

Summit Mayor: Nora G. Radest (908) 273-6400
City Administrator: Michael F. Rogers (908) 522-3600
Police Chief: Steven Zagorski (908) 273-0051
Media Contact: Amy Cairns (732) 713-8964

Summit Police Department implements Blue Envelope Program

SUMMIT, NJ, November 16, 2023 – The Summit Police Department has implemented the Blue Envelope Program, a new countywide program to help people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) during a motor vehicle stop. The primary goal of the program is to assist drivers with ASD with document organization and to educate them about what to do during interactions with police.

If someone with ASD gets pulled over by a police officer, the driver would present the blue envelope containing a copy of a driver's license, vehicle registration, insurance card, and emergency contact information inside. It provides clear instructions for drivers, highlighting where to keep the envelope, how to communicate with officers, and how to respond during a stop, including to keep hands on the steering wheel, the officer may shine a flashlight in the car, and that the police vehicle may have flashing lights.

The Blue Envelope not only assists drivers but also guides police officers on how to approach the situation with sensitivity. Officers are advised to be aware of signs of anxiety, repetitive movements, or unusual eye contact. They are encouraged to use clear and simple language, allow extra time for responses, and notify drivers when the stop is complete. In case of distress, officers can contact the person listed on the enclosed contact card, ensuring a compassionate and professional interaction. A checked box will also indicate whether the driver is verbal or nonverbal.

Individuals with ASD and their family members are encouraged to review instructions on both sides of the blue envelope before adding documents to the blue envelope or placing it in a vehicle.

"Being pulled over by a police officer can make anyone anxious and for someone with Autism or another sensory disorder, it can cause an even greater issue given the heightened situation, flashing lights, sound of radios, and other noises," explains Summit Police Chief Steven Zagorski. "We are trying to avoid any misunderstandings between our officers and these drivers and are very pleased to be implementing the Blue Envelope Program in Summit."

Blue envelopes are available for members of the public from the Summit Police Department Records Bureau window in City Hall, located at 512 Springfield Avenue, or by calling the police department non-emergency number at 908-273-0051.

The Blue Envelope Program was developed in partnership among the Union County Board of County Commissioners, Union County Prosecutor's Office, Union County Sheriff's Department, Union County Police Department, and Union County Police Chief's Association.

More information on the program, including an instructional video, is available at ucnj.org/blueenvelope. More information on the Summit Police Department is available at cityofsummit.org/police.

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