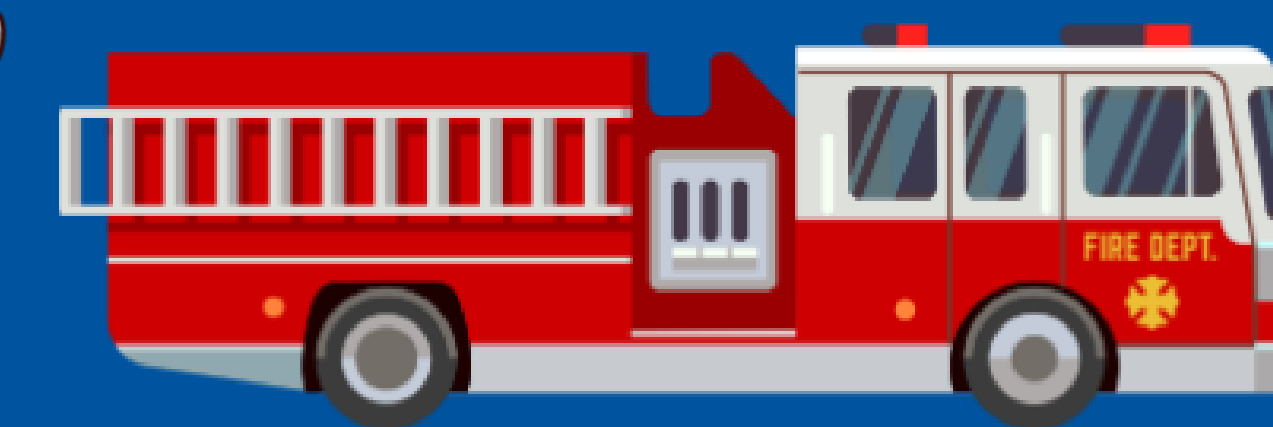


Strengthening Communication Between First Responders & Autistic People

Alisha Fletcher, LCSW; Lt. Charles Sawchenko, (Ret.), MSW; Sarah B. Mallory, Ph.D.



Center for
Disabilities Studies

Purpose

A first responder who is sensitive and understands the nature of autism is better prepared to assist and make positive changes for people with autism and their families.

Training Model

Expertise & Experience

Our lead trainer is a

- retired State Police officer;
- parent of an autistic child; and an
- expert in policing, behavioral health, and crisis de-escalation.

Situational Scenario-based Learning

Our training format is a

- 3.5-hour training that effectively combines didactic content with applied learning opportunities by utilizing videos of actual situations involving autistic individuals and law enforcement.

Flexible Availability

We offer training

- throughout the state;
- three times a year; and
- for individual departments and agencies during their training academies and scheduled in-services.

Evaluation & Follow-up

We use an evaluation to collect

- post-training knowledge and preparedness gains; and
- training satisfaction.

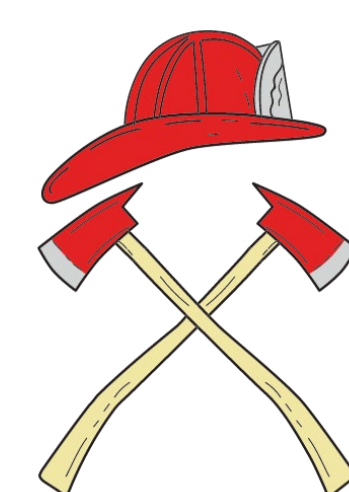
and

- We request permission to contact trainees in the future to ask them about their practical application of the training information in supporting individuals with autism.

Training Materials & Resources

We provide

- a copy of the PowerPoint,
- visual supports related to fire safety; and
- a sensory bag with fidgets to keep in emergency vehicles and police cars.



Taking a Statewide Approach

Training for First Responders



First Responder Training Objectives

- Understand autism spectrum disorder and how it impacts people differently;
- Understand effective strategies to respond, interact, and de-escalate; and
- Limit liability and mistakes when interacting with those who have an intellectual or developmental disability.



Mock Driving Traffic Stop Program

A program for autistic drivers and passengers that provides driving resources and the opportunity to take part in a practice traffic stop.

Auto Document Envelope

- Opportunity to identify one's disability
- Emergency contact and health care information
- *About My Autism* card

Driver Resource Guides

- *What to do During a Traffic Stop or Car Crash*
- *Talking to a Police Officer About My Autism*

Mock Driver Program

- Pre-driving webinar
- Mock driving traffic stops

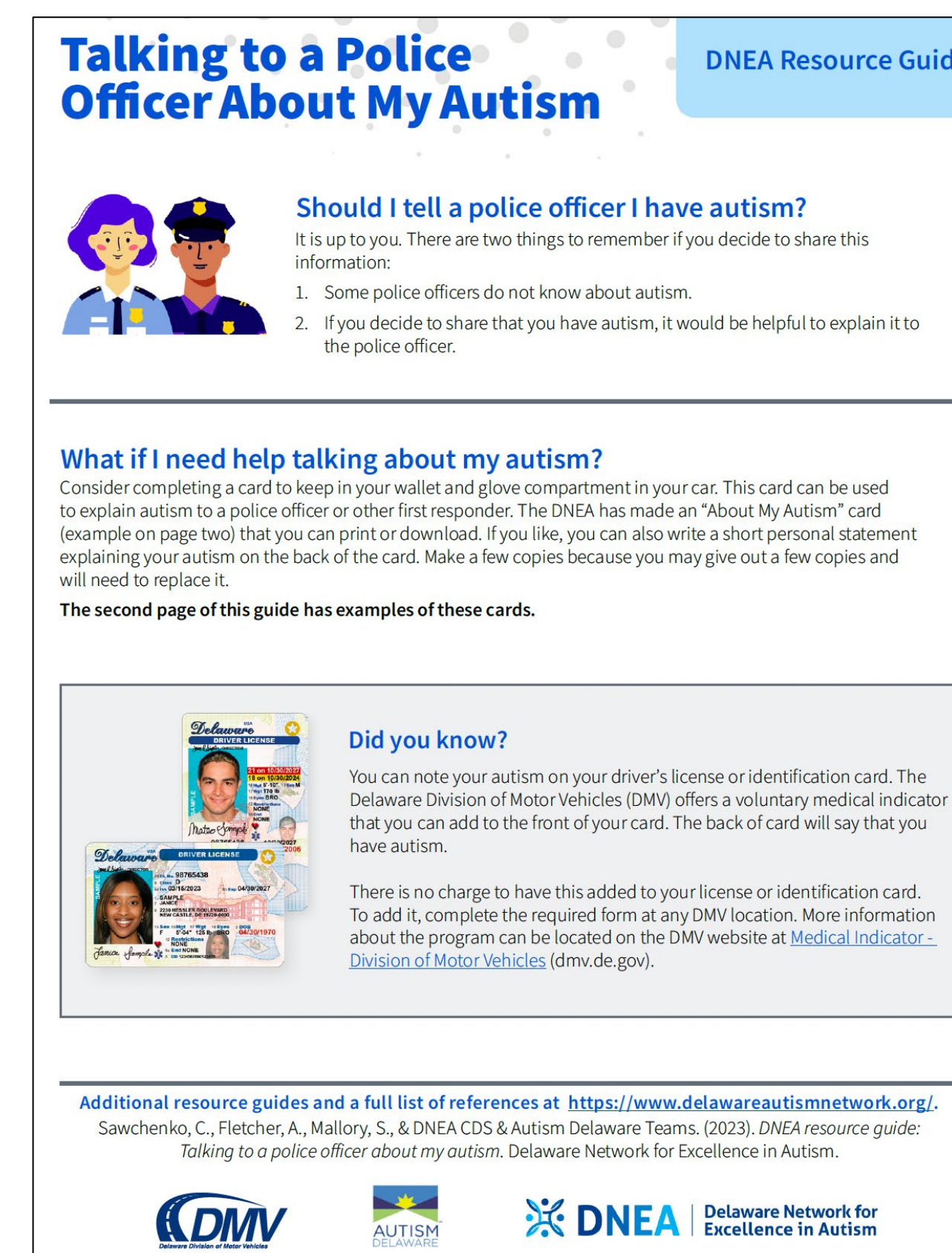
Outreach to Other State Sectors

Partnership with State Disaster Preparedness Efforts

- Shared recommendations to *Children in Disasters Workgroup*
- Planning statewide autism training for disaster preparedness personnel

Educating the Criminal Justice System

- *Delaware Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Integration Summit*
- *Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder: What You Need to Know*



Quotes from Trainees

“Win the heart and confidence of the parent; [use] common sense, patience and understanding”

“I believe that this training should be mandatory for all first responders”

“I plan to include more resources about autism when working in disaster emergency preparedness and planning”

Training Data

- Since November 2022, over 100 Delaware first responders have participated in the training from more than 40 agencies and departments.
- Over 75% of participants reported post-training knowledge gains across all measured topic areas and increased preparedness when supporting a person with autism.

Acknowledgment

DNEA | Delaware Network for
Excellence in Autism

The Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) was established by Senate Bill 93 to provide training and technical assistance that benefits individuals with autism, their families, and the professionals who serve them. The DNEA is funded annually by the Delaware Health Fund Advisory Committee via pass-through funding from the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services within Delaware Health and Social Services.



Visit
<https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/training-events/first-responders/>