



Thanks for your
Patience.
The session will
begin shortly!

IN THE KNOW

Information Session for the IDD Community

Thursday August 7th, 2025 | 1:00pm -2:00pm virtual

Topic: Enhancing Communication In The Community For Individuals With IDD/Autism

Presenters: Melissa Ackernecht, MS & Karleen Haines, MPS

Hosted by: Advocacy & Member Engagement

IN THE KNOW Education Series

Timely and Relevant Information and Resources Specific to and for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).



Our In the Know education series is designed to educate and elevate awareness of timely and relevant topics impacting the quality of life for individuals with IDD.

Using Microsoft TEAMS:

- Remain on MUTE if you are not speaking
- Raise your HAND if you'd like to speak
- Use the CHAT function to write a comment

Those on the phone:

- Press *6 to Unmute your phone
- Facilitator will keep attendees on mute to minimize background noise

Facilitator



Karleen Haines

Chief of Advocacy & Member Engagement

Welcome to our Speaker(s):



Melissa has worked in the human services field for 25 years, under OPWDD, DOH and OMH. She has provided supports within Day Hab., Residential, Medicaid Service Coordination and then Care Management Supervisor capacities. She has been a Behavioral Support Specialist with Care Design's Healthcare Management Team since 2021. Melissa possesses a bachelor's in human development and a master's in Mental Health Counseling. Her specializations within the behavioral/mental health field include Chronic Health issues, Grief, Trauma, Dual Diagnosis and TBI and other neurodiversity.

Overview of the Yellow Dot and Blue Envelope Programs, in addition to the Big Red Box toolkit. These materials are approved by the National Autism Association and the NY Sheriff's Association and assist individuals while out in the community by providing first responders, law enforcement, and others with information to promote understanding, reduce anxiety, and encourage preparedness and safety.

Yellow Dot Program



The **Yellow Dot Program** was developed to alert first responders to vital medical information in the event of an emergency. The Yellow Dot Program is a means of supporting first responders during the “Golden Hour” following an accident or other emergency.

- The person's personal information, vital medical concerns (allergies, etc.), diagnosis, medical and mental health information, religious beliefs impacting medical treatment, and specific support needs are documented on a yellow card which is placed in the glove compartment of a car or in the home (the freezer).
- The first responders are alerted to the presence of the documentation by a yellow dot sticker which is placed on the car window or door of the home.

Getting a Yellow Dot Kit



[Home](#) > [Request A Yellow Dot Kit](#)

A Yellow Dot Kit contains 2 cards and 2 yellow dot stickers, one for your car and one for your home.

The Sheriffs' Association has distributed over 2 million Yellow Dots in New York State so far, all through member donations. To conserve postage, please consider grouping your request by family or other group and having them mailed to a single address. Thanks so much!

Name *

First

Last

Address *

Street Address



**VISIT THE New York State Sherrif's
Organization Website for more info
and request a kit:**

Site:

[Yellow Dot – NY Sheriffs'
Association](https://nysheriffs.org/programs-and-services/yellow-dot/)

[https://nysheriffs.org/programs-and-
services/yellow-dot/](https://nysheriffs.org/programs-and-services/yellow-dot/)

The Big Red Safety Box is a toolkit from the *National Autism Association*, with *six items*.

1) A **Be REDy Booklet** containing the following educational materials and tools:

- A caregiver checklist
- A Family Wandering Emergency Plan
- A first-responder profile form
- A wandering-prevention brochure
- A sample IEP Letter
- A Student Profile Form
- Emotion Identification Cards
- Wandering Quick Tips

Big Red Box (continued)



- 2) Two (2) GE Wireless **Door/Window Alarms** with batteries
- 3) One (1) Road **ID Bracelet** or Shoe ID tag*
- 4) Four (4) Adhesive Stop Sign **Visual Prompts for doors and windows**
- 5) One (1) Safety Alert **Window Cling** for car or home windows
- 6) One (1) **Child ID Kit** from the *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*

Note that there are versions available for First Responders, Care Givers & Teachers on the National Autism Association Website!

To apply for a Big Red Safety Box®, you must

- Be the primary caregiver of an individual with an autism diagnosis.
- Be 18 years or older and a resident of the U.S.
- Agree to the terms and conditions stated in the application.
- **Be a first-time recipient. Previous recipients are not eligible to apply, orders will be canceled.**
- **Apply only once. Multiple requests will not be processed, limit one box per family.**
- Allow up to 3 weeks for NAA to review your application and deliver your Big Red Safety Box.

Additional Big Red Box info



- You will receive instructions in your Big Red Safety Box to submit a **custom personalization** order for your RoadID bracelet or shoe ID tag. Your ID will be engraved and mailed to you at no charge.
- Regardless of any tools caregivers may have in place, if a loved one's medical condition interferes with their ability to recognize danger or stay safe, it is critical that caregivers maintain close supervision and security in all settings. For more information and ways to prevent wandering-related incidents, please visit the **Autism & Safety tab** on the [National Autism Association](https://www.autism.org/) website.
- Those diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, and who are at risk of wandering from a safe environment, qualify to receive a Big Red Safety Box while supplies allow. **Limit one (1) box per family** – previous recipients are not eligible. Recipients must agree to terms and conditions. Please allow up to three weeks for your Big Red Safety Box request to be processed and delivered to you.

Getting a Big Red Box



[NAA's Big Red Safety Box® - National Autism Association](#)

Big Red Box - Video



The **Blue Envelope Program** was developed to address the unique needs of **drivers with Autism**. Experiencing a situation where an accident or traffic violation occurs can be very overwhelming for people with Autism. When asked for their vital documents, the person may experience additional stress.

The Blue Envelope Program provides the driver with a unique blue envelope where they can place the vital documents and store it in the glove compartment to share with police officers if needed. This initiative supports the individual by:

Blue Envelope Program



- **Enhancing Understanding:** By providing officers with immediate, accessible information about autism, the Blue Envelope aims to promote empathy and patience, leading to more positive interactions.
- **Reducing Anxiety:** Traffic stops can be particularly stressful for individuals with autism. The Blue Envelope serves as a visual cue that helps officers adjust their communication style, thereby reducing anxiety for the driver.
- **Streamlining Communication:** The guidelines on the envelope offer practical tips for officers, making it easier for them to communicate effectively with individuals with autism, even in high-stress situations like traffic stops.
- **Encouraging Preparedness:** For individuals with autism and their families, the Blue Envelope is a tool that encourages preparedness. By keeping their important documents in the envelope and understanding how to present it during a stop, drivers can feel more confident and secure.

Contact your local Sheriff's Department for information

Resources & Links



New York State Sherriff's Association [Yellow Dot Program]; Application & Information

<https://nysheriffs.org/programs-and-services/yellow-dot/>

National Autism Association [Big Red Safety Box]; Application, Information, & Testimonial Video

<https://nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box/>

National Autism Association Website home page; For a wealth of resources

<https://nationalautismassociation.org/>

Angel Sense [Assistive Technology for Safety and Independence] Information, Pricing and Free options

<https://www.angelsense.com/>

Autism Awareness Cards; \$5.00 per pack of 50

<https://nationalautismassociation.org/store/#!/Autism-Awareness-Cards-Pack-of-50/p/13684430>

Questions & Open Discussion



Special THANK YOU to our speakers!

Thank you for joining us today...



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CARE DESIGN NY

<https://caredesignny.org/events>

PARTNERS HEALTH PLAN

<https://phpcares.org/events>

Upcoming Sessions:

Understanding & Managing Hypertension

Wednesday, September 10th
1:00-2:00pm virtual

Flu Season & Vaccines

Tuesday, September 23rd
1:00-2:00pm virtual



WE WANT YOU TO STAY IN THE KNOW

IDD EDUCATION RESOURCES