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Small Envelope Makes Big Difference

Advocacy Group Brings Safety Initiative to Ohio Roadways

Chillicothe, Ohio - Flashing lights approaching behind your vehicle give all of us a little jolt of anxiety – no matter the situation. Imagine that anxiety amplified knowing that your ability to communicate with officers may be hindered by your disability. Thousands of drivers throughout Ohio know this feeling – and a simple blue envelope can help.

The Southern Ohio Council of Governments (SOCOG) is pleased to announce the launch of the Blue Envelope Program across the state of Ohio. The program uses communication tools to assist individuals with developmental disabilities during interactions with law enforcement and emergency personnel.

The key part of the program is the Blue Envelope itself. The envelope has space on the outside for information about the disability and/or medical conditions of the driver or passenger of the automobile. A copy of a ID/driver's license, vehicle registration, and vehicle insurance card can be kept inside the envelope which would be handed to a law enforcement officer during a traffic stop. Having this information in one place makes it easier to communicate with officers and reduces anxiety during a traffic stop.

The second piece of the program is the Blue Envelope Car Decal. The three-inch decal features the program logo and can be placed on a vehicle's windows to discreetly communicate to law enforcement and first responders that the occupants participate in the Blue Envelope Program. They will be aware that a person in that vehicle may have a disability that could affect their actions or speech. In the event of a traffic accident, the Blue Envelope Car Decal and Blue Envelope allow first responders to access critical information immediately in case you are injured.

The Blue Envelop Wallet Card is included in the packet for people who want a method of communication they can carry in their pocket or purse. It is a smaller version of the envelope that can be used anywhere.

Blue Envelope Packets are available at the offices of County Board of Developmental Disabilities throughout the state of Ohio. The packets are available for free to anyone with a developmental disability.

“The Blue Envelope program promotes inclusion and is a communication tool between law enforcement and community members,” said SOAG co-coordinator Travis Dresbach.

“Disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, dementia, physical disability, or mental health conditions may require additional accommodation or awareness during a law enforcement interaction. It’s amazing that something as simple as an envelope can do so much.”

The flagship Blue Envelope Program was designed by the San Diego Sheriff’s Department and has been implemented nationally with various agencies. The program first appeared in Ohio with a program developed by the Mahoning County Prosecutor’s office in 2024. SOAG learned of the program and wanted to see it implemented throughout the state of Ohio.

Ohio’s Blue Envelope Program was made possible through a collaboration of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, Southern Ohio Council of Governments, and the Southern Ohio Advocacy Group.

For more information about Ohio’s Blue Envelope Program, visit www.socog.org.

Southern Ohio Advocacy Group is a committee of the Southern Ohio Council of Governments that promotes advocacy efforts and encourages people with disabilities to speak up for themselves. The members are made up of people with disabilities, family members, private providers and natural supports. Ohio counties that are represented in the group and serviced by the Southern Ohio Council of Governments include: Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, and Scioto.