

Tips for those driving with Autism

- 1 **Practice driving**, in a remote location, as often as possible.
- 2 **Practice a role-play scenario** as if an officer of the law were approaching your vehicle. Practice the steps of rolling down the window, then keeping your hands in view of the officer (a good place is on the steering wheel). Once the officer asks for your driver license, let the trooper know that you are now going to reach for your purse or wallet to get your license.

“Anxiety can often be reduced (for the driver with Autism) by lots of driving practice in a safe remote location.”

Temple Grandin, Ph.D.
Professor of Animal Science, Inventor, Autism Activist

Tips for the Parents

- 1 **Take your time.** Just because drivers ed is offered (around age 15-16) at Public High School does not mean your child with an ASD should begin at that time. Typically the emotional side takes a couple of years (or longer) to catch up with the physical years. Each child is different but knowing your child's emotional state and when to launch is as important a step as any.
- 2 **Practice, practice, practice!** Allow your son or daughter the opportunity to get behind the wheel in a remote setting. The sooner the better! Driving for someone on the spectrum takes a lot of sensory and memory activity and the more you can practice (in the country or abandoned parking lot) prior to taking a drivers education class, the greater the chances are for success.
- 3 **Get familiar with the driving instructors.** Chances are the instructor has been trained to work with people with impediments, however never assume this and schedule a meeting (I did at the district level) and bring a handout explaining your child's challenges and diagnosis. This will pave the way for your child by preparing all instructors how to best communicate during instruction.
- 4 **Keep driving routes as easy as possible.** Once the license is obtained and your son/daughter begins driving, find the easiest, less congested route to school, college and work. Keeping it simple and as consistent as possible lessens anxiety for the two of you
- 5 **Driving is not for everyone.** For some with ASD the anxiety of getting behind the wheel is too great and you should consider getting familiar with other means of independence such as a consistent mode of public transportation.

Jennifer Allen
Founder Aspergers101

“At the Department of Public Safety, we are uniquely aware that having a driver license can pave the way to independence for many, and we are pleased to provide the “Communication Impediment” notice on Texas driver licenses and ID cards. Protecting the safety of all Texans - on and off the road - is the keystone of our mission, and this driver license/ID card option provides vital information that can serve as a powerful communication bridge between this group of Texans and our officers.”

Steven McCraw
Director/Texas Department of Public Safety



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ASPERGERS101

Your Resource for High-Functioning Autism and Aspergers Syndrome

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THE FACE OF **AUTISM** IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS



BUT THE POTENTIAL CHALLENGES ARE!

Help Minimize These Challenges
by getting:

COMMUNICATION IMPEDIMENT

added to your driver license.



Question :

Why get the “Communication Impediment” Restriction?

Answer :

Those who are diagnosed with a speech or social communication challenge such as High-Functioning Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, Down Syndrome, or stuttering may have issues communicating with officials in multiple ways. If you have a similar diagnosis and are seeking independence through driving, you may consider adding "**Communication Impediment**" to your Texas Driver License. This protective restriction alerts law enforcement officers to challenges the driver might face in regard to speech or understanding social cues.

Texas Transportation Code §521.125 allows the Texas Department of Public Safety to include a notice on the driver license or identification card of those who indicate they have a health condition that may impede their ability to communicate with a law enforcement officer.

- 1 Adding “Communication Impediment” to your driver license is simple: Have your Physician’s complete and sign a Physician’s Statement Form (DL101) affirming the Autism or speech disorder diagnosis.
- 2 Visit your local driver license office for a driver license application (DL14A/S). Complete line 7.

For all Driver License Forms go to:
www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense



Medical Reasons Why A Person Might Need The Restriction

Communication Impediment

“In circumstances such as a traffic stop, an individual with Autism who displays these behaviors (see excerpts from DSM- V criteria below) are at risk for being misunderstood by law enforcement officers.”

A Patricia Del Angel, MD, FAAP ■
Berenice de la Cruz, Ph.D., BCBA-D ■
Loree Primeau, PhD, FAOTA, OTR ■
Autism Community Network

Deficits in Social Interaction

A1 Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity

- Failure of normal back and forth conversation

A2 Deficits in nonverbal communicative Behaviors used for social interaction

- Poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication
- Abnormalities in eye contact and body language
- Deficits in understanding and use of gestures
- A total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication

Excerpts from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)