



## Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

**For Immediate Release:** 2/22/2019

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### **New York State Launches ID Cards for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities *Communication Tool Expected to Improve Interaction with First Responders***

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) today announced that standardized identification (ID) cards for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are now available upon request. The goal of the I/DD ID cards is to help first responders -- such as law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical services personnel -- better understand and interact with people with developmental disabilities who may not be able to communicate their situation effectively.

Senator Pamela Helming (R) and Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara (D) sponsored the legislation for the I/DD ID cards. Santabarbara was inspired by the need for this tool by his son, who has autism. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed the legislation into law in 2018, and OPWDD was charged with making the cards available to New Yorkers. The I/DD ID cards are optional for people with developmental disabilities and are free.

"With this new initiative, New York is taking another critical step to help find solutions to the challenges those with disabilities face each day," said Assemblyman Santabarbara, Chair of the New York State Assembly's Sub-Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorders. "Offered as a communication tool, the first-of-its kind Disability Identification Card is unique and easily recognizable throughout the state, replacing locally issued identification and the homemade notes we have seen in the past," Santabarbara added. "Whether it's an interaction at the airport, in a crowded theme park, or with first responders during an emergency, the cards can help individuals, parents or guardians easily communicate important information about a person's diagnosis and describe some of the challenges they may face during an emergency."

"This optional identification card will allow an individual with a developmental disability, such as autism, to more easily communicate important information about their diagnosis. As someone who began my career managing services for those with developmental disabilities, I know firsthand how important this initiative is," said Senator Helming. "By creating one standardized card, individuals who choose to obtain such a card will have a new tool at their disposal when interacting with law enforcement officers or first responders. This initiative will help keep the public and our emergency personnel safe and will help keep those with developmental disabilities safe. It was great to work together with the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities to implement this worthwhile program."

The front of the I/DD ID card displays the statement: I have a developmental disability. I may have difficulty understanding and following your directions or may become unable to respond. I may become physically agitated if you prompt me verbally or touch me or move too close to me. A developmental disability is not an excuse for illegal behavior. I am not intentionally refusing to cooperate. I may need your assistance. Please see the back of this card.

The back of the card includes the card bearer's name, address, date of birth and emergency contact information. People with developmental disabilities or their loved ones can request a card by visiting <https://opwdd.ny.gov/iddidcards>.

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