

# AUTISM & WANDERING PREVENTION TIPS

*Promoting Safety In the Home & Community*



Similar to wandering in people with dementia, people with autism spectrum disorder may wander or elope from a safe environment. Because people with ASD have challenges in areas of sensory processing, impulse control and bodily autonomy, it is critical for parents and caregivers to understand ways to keep loved ones with autism safe.

 *Prevention*  
 *Education*  
 *Response*

## Install Home Safeguards



Install secure locks (exterior doors), home security system or door/window chimes; fence yard; secure gates; keep garage opener out of reach; use baby monitors and visual prompts like simple stop signs.

## Identify Triggers/Teach Self-help



Be aware of any known triggers that could prompt fleeing (loud noises, bright lights, fears, etc.) and work towards teaching your child safe alternative ways to respond.

For an individual who demonstrates bolting behaviors due to fear or stress, etc., use aids, such as noise-cancelling headphones, and teach calming techniques using favorites topics or items.

## Secure Personal Safeguards



Have wearable identification on your child; Temporary Tattoos are great for field trips and other outings; Check with local law enforcement to see if they offer Tracking Devices.

## Teach Safety Skills



Enroll your child into swimming lessons. Final lessons should be with clothes and shoes on.

Use social stories to teach individuals with autism ways to stay safe, and use favorite objects or tools to demonstrate when it's outside time versus inside time.

Pursue forms of reliable communication, and seek a therapist who can help with impulse control and purposeful motor skills.

## Create Community Awareness



Alert trusted neighbors, and introduce them to your child; fill out an alert form for local police, include a current photo and unique characteristics, likes, fears, and behaviors; alert the school, and bus drivers.

## Call 911



Remain calm and always call 911 immediately if an individual with ASD is missing; law enforcement should treat each case as "critical." Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) for additional assistance.

## Remain Hyper Vigilant



Stay on extra high alert during warmer months, holidays, vacations, camping trips, transition periods, outdoor gatherings, a recent move to a new home or school, visiting an unfamiliar setting, public outings.

Initiate a "tag, you're it" system during family gatherings and transitions. Tag one responsible adult to closely supervise your child for an agreed-upon period of time.

## Search Water First



Immediately search areas that pose the highest threat first, such as nearby water, busy streets, train tracks, and parked cars.

