



AUTISM-RELATED WANDERING: KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE

Wendy Fournier
National Autism Association
June, 2013

AUTISM&SAFETY

introduction | video



autism-related wandering



AUTISM&SAFETY

wandering | defined



When a person, who requires some level of supervision to be safe, leaves a supervised, safe space and/or the care of a responsible person and is exposed to potential dangers such as traffic, open water (drowning), falling from a high place, weather (hypothermia, heat stroke, dehydration) or unintended encounters with potentially predatory strangers.

Wandering is also referred to as:

- Elopement
- Bolting
- Fleeing
- Running (Sometimes you'll hear, "My son is a runner.")

wandering | defined



WANDERING: TYPES

- **Goal-directed wandering:** wandering with the purpose of getting to something (water, train tracks, park, an item or place of obsession, etc.)
- **Bolting/Fleeing:** the act of suddenly running or bolting, usually to quickly get away from something, a negative reaction to an event, anxiety, fear, excitement, stress or uncomfortable sensory input.
- **Other:** nighttime wandering, or wandering due to disorientation, transition or confusion.



wandering | dangers



Wanderers may be likely to enter someone else's home. This can be especially dangerous for night-time wanderers.



DANGERS

- Drowning
- Exposure, Dehydration, Hypothermia
- Traffic Injuries
- Falls
- Physical Restraint
- Encounters with strangers
- Encounters with law enforcement



wandering | basics



Wandering Occurs Across All Settings, Including:

- Homes
- School environments
- Daycares
- Summer Camps
- Residential and Day Program Facilities
- Public Places
- Parks, Camp Sites, Hiking Trails
- Vehicles
- Homes of grandparents, relatives, babysitters, neighbors & friends



wandering | basics



Wandering Occurs Under All Types Of Supervision, Including:

- Mothers, fathers, step-parents, foster parents
- Teachers, aides, school staff, therapists
- Grandparents, relatives, neighbors, friends
- Babysitters
- Older siblings
- Residential staff
- Camp or summer counselors
- Mentors, shadows, employers
- Healthcare & service professionals



wandering | basics



Wandering behaviors may show early on:

- Behaviors can begin early on, but may seem insignificant.
- A child may wander from one classroom to another, inside a public setting, or from room to room within a home without responding to his/her name.
- Wandering behaviors can occur in those who have not shown tendencies in the past.

wandering | data



Wandering Data: *Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2012*

PEDIATRICS®

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders

Connie Anderson, J. Kiely Law, Amy Daniels, Catherine Rice, David S. Mandell,
Louis Hagopian and Paul A. Law

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The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is
located on the World Wide Web at:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/10/02/peds.2012-0762>

Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders

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KEY WORDS

autism spectrum disorders, elopement, wandering

ABBREVIATIONS

AD—autistic disorder

ASD—autism spectrum disorder

IAN—Interactive Autism Network

PDD—pervasive developmental disorder

SCQ—Social Communication Questionnaire

SRS—Social Responsiveness Scale

Drs P. Law and Anderson designed and implemented the survey instrument and were responsible for data collection; Drs Daniels, Anderson, and P. Law conducted statistical analyses; Drs Daniels and Anderson drafted the first manuscript; Drs Rice, Mandell, Hagopian, and K. Law made substantial contributions to interpretation of the data and critical review of the manuscript for key intellectual content; and all authors approved the final version to be published.

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Address correspondence to Paul A. Law, MD, MPH, Department of



WHAT'S KNOWN ON THIS SUBJECT: Anecdotal accounts that suggest elopement behavior occurs in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), that injuries and fatalities can result, and that associated family burden and stress are substantial. However, there has been little research characterizing the phenomenon or its frequency.



WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS: Nearly half of children with an ASD elope, and more than half of these "go missing." Elopement is associated with autism severity, and is often goal-directed. Addressing elopement behavior is an important aspect of intervention for many individuals with ASDs.

abstract

OBJECTIVES: Anecdotal reports suggest that elopement behavior in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) increases risk of injury or death and places a major burden on families. This study assessed parent-reported elopement occurrence and associated factors among children with ASDs.

METHODS: Information on elopement frequency, associated characteristics, and consequences was collected via an online questionnaire. The study sample included 1218 children with ASD and 1076 of their siblings without ASD. The association among family sociodemographic and child clinical characteristics and time to first elopement was estimated by using a Cox proportional hazards model.

RESULTS: Forty-nine percent ($n = 598$) of survey respondents reported



AUTISM WANDERING/ELOPEMENT: STATISTICS

- **Roughly half, or 49%**, of children with autism attempt to elope from a safe environment, a rate nearly four times higher than their unaffected siblings
- More than **one third of children** with autism who wander are never or rarely able to communicate their name, address, or phone number
- **Two in three parents** of elopers reported their missing children had a “close call” with a traffic injury
- **32% of parents** reported a “close call” with a possible drowning
- **Half of families with elopers** report they had never received advice or guidance about elopement from a professional





WANDERING: EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY:

- Living under great stress
- Lowered quality of life
- 62% of families with children who elope were prevented from attending/enjoying activities outside the home due to fear of wandering
- 40% suffered sleep deprivation
- Lack of support/understanding/resources
- Fear of accusations of neglect - CPS or Police involvement
- **58% of parents report wandering/elopement as the most stressful of ASD behaviors**





Autism Wandering/Elopement Lethal Outcome Cases from 2009 to 2011:



- accidental drowning accounted for 91%
- 68% died in a nearby pond, lake, creek or river
- 23% were in the care of someone other than a parent
- lethal outcomes in ASD wandering/elopement in girls were twice as high than in boys



WARM CLIMATES A FACTOR?

More ASD wandering/elopement deaths happened in locations with heavier seasonal transitions as opposed to climates that are consistently warm year-round.

One reason for this could be that home security patterns change with the seasonal patterns, especially during transitions from winter to spring and into summer months.

Open doors, screen doors, open windows, cooling units, outdoor activities and general changes in the home layout or routine may be an explanation.





AUTISM WANDERING/ELOPEMENT: TRENDS NOTED

- Cases in young children routinely spiked in early spring and rapidly declined in early fall
- Winter: fewer missing-person reports of younger children; slight increase in school-related incidents
- Little to no seasonal changes in the frequency of missing adults or teenagers





Based On NAA's Monitoring Of Missing Person Cases, Autism-related Wandering Incidents Happen Most:

- During warmer months
- During holidays such as Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and other warm-climate holidays
- During family gatherings, other gatherings, or outdoor activities
- Camping & hiking outings
- Visits to non-home settings, such as a friend's home or vacation setting
- After a family moves to a new home
- When adjustments have been made to a home to accommodate warmer weather, especially window screens, window fan units, A/C units and screen doors.
- During classroom transitions from one classroom to another, or during other transitions.
- During times of stress or when escalation triggers arise (typically the child/adult will bolt)

effects on the family



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effects on family



Wandering: Effects On The Family

Living under great stress; Lowered quality of life; Unable to leave home; **Sleep deprivation**; Lack of support/understanding/resources; Fear of accusations of neglect - CPS or Police involvement

- **58%** report wandering/elopement as the most stressful of ASD behaviors
- **62%** of families with children who elope were prevented from attending/enjoying activities outside the home due to fear of wandering
- **40% of parents had suffered sleep disruption due to fear of elopement**



effects on family



What We Often Hear:

"My house is like Fort Knox."

"It's Alcatraz at our house."

"Our house is a fortress."

"We lock down our windows have keyed locks on both sides of the door."

"It's a fire hazard, but my child would more likely get hit by a car."

"I can never die."

"I have to live just one day longer than my son."





Autism Wandering/Elopement Stories

“Any advice or help you can offer would be gratefully received. My son is 11 and has been running all his life. Our house is usually locked down and a complete fire hazard with all windows and doors locked.

We didn't realize he had gone until the police arrived. He knows to keep quiet and we just didn't hear him go. He was trying again last night, shaking the front door in frustration at 2am shouting 'where's the key.’”



Autism Wandering/Elopement: Stories

*I have an autistic grandson who wanders off at every chance. He has twice been pulled from a body of water in Florida. He has been picked up wandering in the street more than once. He has **no understanding of the dangers of traffic or strangers.***

*I lost valuable time with my other child, not to mention many heartaches in parking lots and public parks. **Oh yes, there's that stigma of the harness for her safety and my sanity.***

I am a paraeducator at the elementary level, and see this a lot!

*My son has wandered at airports, on ferries, in hotels, it's terrifying. **He waits until your attention is elsewhere for a moment, then he's gone.***

effects on family



Comments from a parent:

“His main stimulus for eloping is to go see dogs, even though we have a service dog for him.”

“Our house is a fortress: punch keycode locks (double-sided) on all the doors, windows bolted from opening too far, fence in the backyard faces in so he can't climb it, etc. His latest episode was actually picking (not learning the keycode) the lock with a knife to escape!”

“Being a 14 year old, who is very tall for his age, our fear is that he will enter the wrong house pursuing dogs and become seriously injured.”

“My son has wandered at airports, on ferries, in hotels, it's terrifying. He waits until your attention is elsewhere for a moment, then he's gone.”

effects on family




 Recommend

16k

 Tweet

432

 Share

61

 +1

38



Email



Print

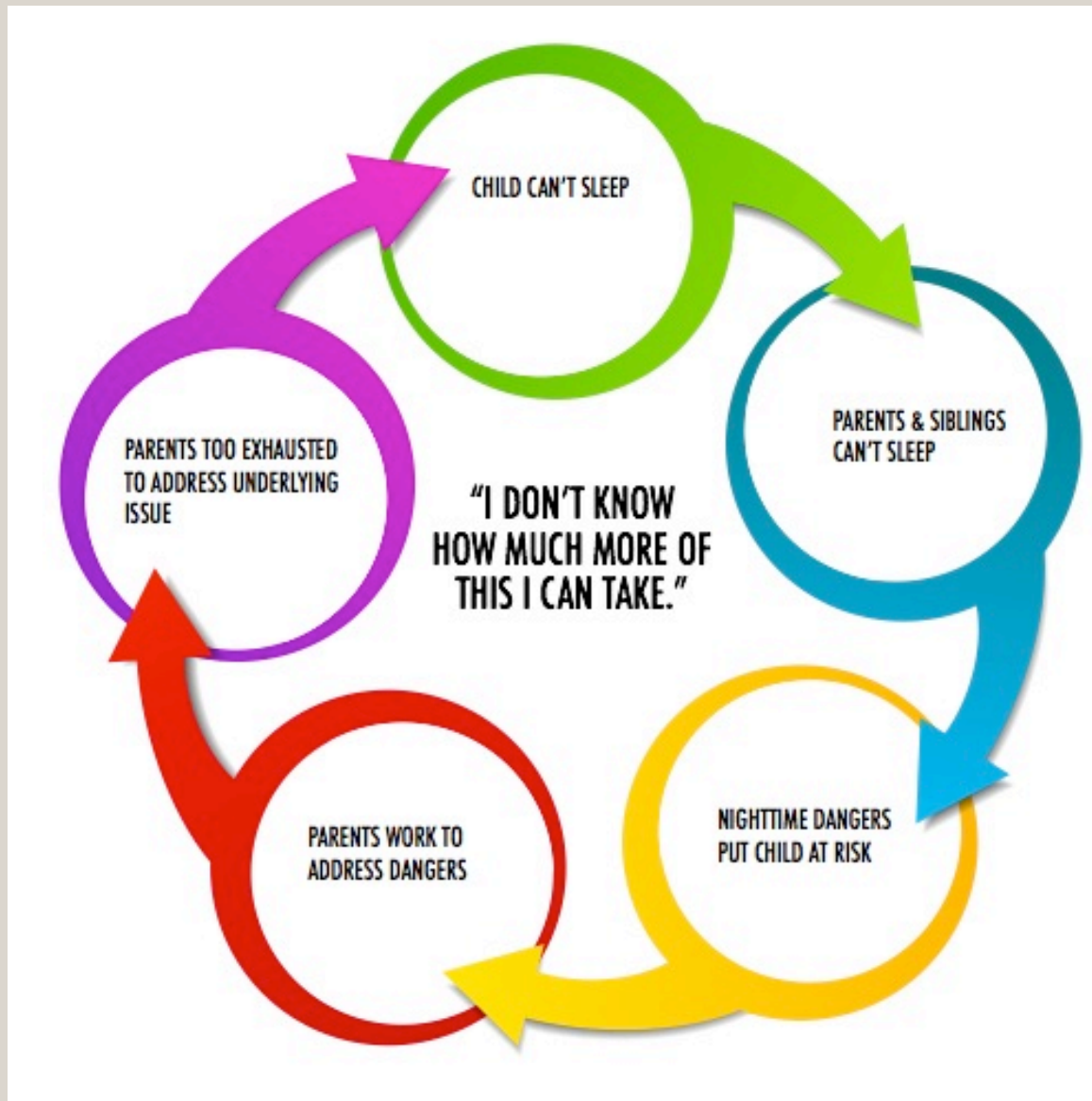
Autism Moms Have Stress Similar To Combat Soldiers

By MICHELLE DIAMENT
November 10, 2009

Text Size **A** **A**

Mothers of adolescents and adults with autism experience chronic stress comparable to combat soldiers and struggle with frequent fatigue and work interruptions, new research finds. These moms also spend significantly more time caregiving than moms of those without disabilities.

effects on family



vicious
risk
cycle

case studies



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case study



Case Study: Prolonged Exposure

- Logan Mitcheltree - Age 9
- South Williamsport, PA
- December 2004
- Slipped out of home unnoticed
- Found frozen to death in the woods after a 3-day search
- **Tracking device likely would have prevented lethal outcome**

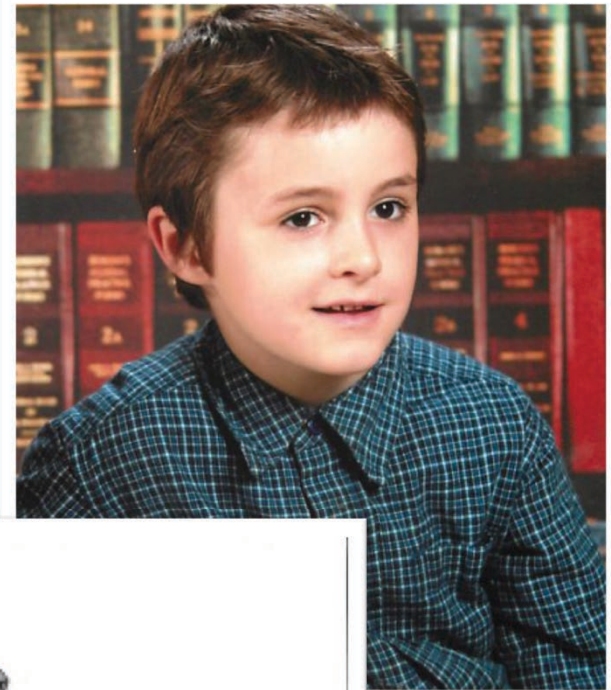


case study



Case Study: Prolonged Exposure

- James Delorey – Age 7
- South Bar, Nova Scotia
- December 2009
- Slipped out of home with his dog
- Found unconscious after 2-day search
- Died that evening in hospital
- Nova Scotia now has Project Lifesaver Tracking





Case Study: Extraordinary non-lethal outcome

- Robbie Wood – Age 8
- Hanover County, VA
- October 2011
- Found alive nearly six days after he wandered away from his family in a wooded park.
- Found in a fetal position in quarry
- Suffered minor injuries
- ***Project Lifesaver was available, but Robbie was not enrolled.***



case study



Case Study: Struck, Killed by Vehicle

- Sean Taglione – Age 12
- Troy, MI
- January 2012
- Struck and killed by Vehicle.
- Wandered from home at around 6:00 PM.
- **Police were called; while a search was being done, officers came across an accident scene.**
- Sean had run into the road directly in the path of a vehicle and was struck.
- Pronounced dead shortly after midnight.



case study



Case Study: Found Safe

- Scotty Meyer – Age 5
- Prescott, WI
- July, 2012
- Slipped away from home during a moment of distraction
- Found alive by a volunteer searcher the next day near railroad tracks and a river
- ***Project Lifesaver was available, but Scotty was not enrolled.***

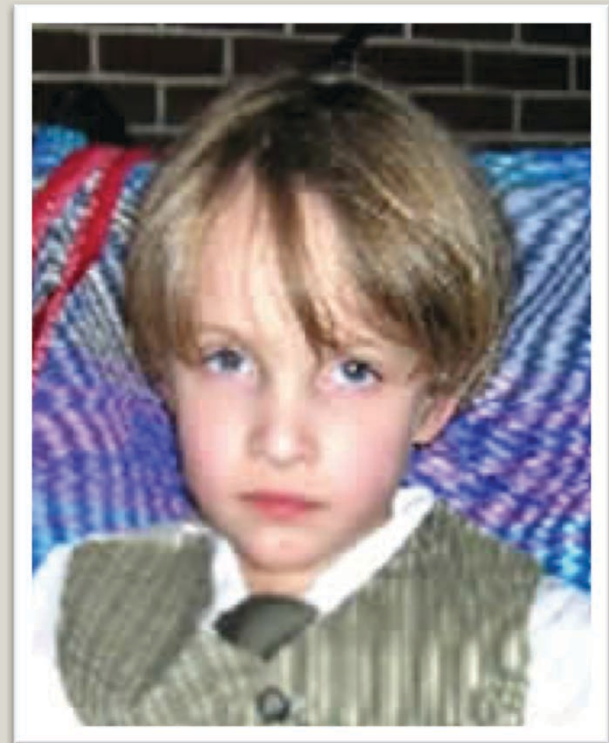


case study



Case Study: Drowning, Creek

- Benjy Heil – Age 7
- Wisconsin Rapids, WI
- June 2007
- Slipped out of his home
- 6-day search ended when Benjy's body was found in a nearby creek
- Benjy had been seen by a neighbor.
- **Endangered Missing Advisory or AMBER Alert may have prevented worst outcome**



case study



Case Study: Drowning, Pool

- Ashley Brock – Age 6
- Brunswick, ME
- May 2008
- Slipped out of yard during family gathering
- Drowned in neighbor's unsecured pool
- **Searchers missed her at first check**





Case Study: Drowning, River

- Adam Benhamama – Age 3
- Laval, Quebec
- April 2011
- Slipped away while playing outside at friend's home
- **Search lasted three days and was called off**
- Adam's body was found 5 ½ weeks later



68% of autism drowning deaths in the U.S. over last three years were in a creek, river, pond or lake.



Case Study: Murder, Stranger Encounter

- Leiby Kletzky – Age 9
- Brooklyn, New York
- July 2011
- Walked home from day camp for first time on his own.
- Parent prepped him, practiced route.
- Reported missing after he did not return home from day camp.
- **Had become lost, asked man for directions.**
- Dismembered body found in man's apartment.





Case Study: Extraordinary Non-Lethal Outcome

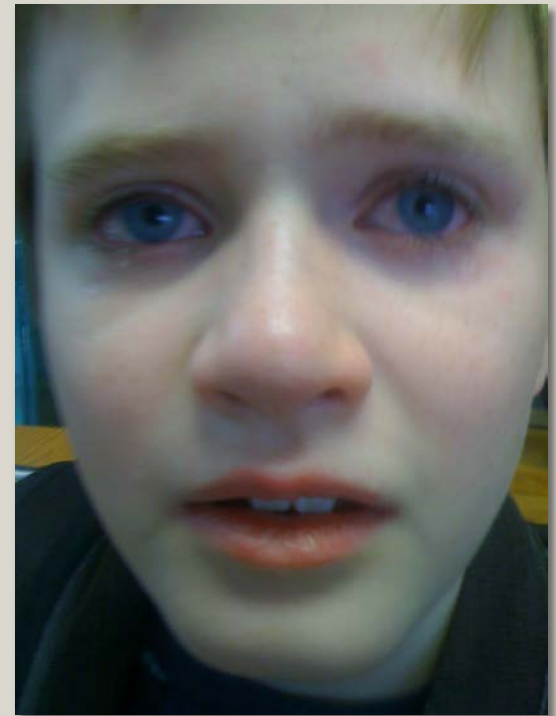
- Joshua Robb – Age 8
- San Bernardino County, CA
- September 2011
- Squeezed through the metal bars of his school playground and ran into a nearby forest.
- Missing overnight during lightning storms.
- Dehydration was noted.
- **The boy's favorite music was played to draw him to safety.**





Case Study: Stranger and Police Encounter

- Connor – Age 13
- Cary, NC
- Multiple goal-directed and bolting incidents from three different schools
- Will flee following certain triggers
- Two identical school incidents involving unescorted transitions from speech therapy to classroom (fire code prohibits locked doors)
- Picked up by a man in a car after wandering from school playground
- School did not contact police
- Police had to search for where he belonged, did not recognize his autism, or note autism in police report
- **ID would have spared the additional trauma**



case study



Case Study: Goal-Directed Wandering

- Aly – Age 13
- Portsmouth, RI
- Drawn to water
- Also a “bolter”
- Home “secure”
- Pulled out screen, jumped 7 feet down into our back yard
- Neighbor brought her home



- **NEVER HAVE A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY**

prevention resources



AUTISM&SAFETY

WORKING TO PREVENT WANDERING INCIDENTS AND DEATHS WITHIN THE AUTISM COMMUNITY



contact us | promote this initiative



AUTISM
WANDERING
AWARENESS
ALERTS
RESPONSE
EDUCATION

HOME :: AUTISM & WANDERING :: FAQs :: SAFETY MATERIALS :: ABOUT US :: RESOURCES



BECOME AWAARE

With little public understanding about autism-related wandering, coupled with a lack of resources to combat occurrences, drowning deaths associated with autism elopement remain a leading cause of fatalities among children and adults on the autism spectrum. Although no formal data exists about the number of wandering incidents per year, cases are becoming increasingly common and awareness alone can play a major role in reducing occurrences. To learn more, [click here](#).

RESEARCH

Autism is a diagnosis that represents many symptoms, some of which can lead to serious health and safety risks, including death. In 2008, Danish researchers found that the mortality rate among the autism population is twice as high as the general population. In 2001, a California research team attributed elevated death rates in large part to drowning. Drowning, prolonged exposure, and other wandering-related factors remain among the top causes of death within the autism population. Currently, no estimates exist and no formal methods are in place to track how many children and adults wander per year, but in a 2007 online poll through the National Autism Association, 92% of parents reported that their child/ren with autism have a tendency to wander.

DOWNLOAD & SHARE

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE WANDERS

- Call 911
- Implement your [Family Wandering Emergency Plan](#) (FWEP)
- [Click here for more information](#)

QUICK LINKS

- [Autism Risk Management](#)
- [Project Lifesaver](#)
- [A Child Is Missing](#)
- [AWAARE Brochure](#)
- [Social Stories](#)

NEWS, ALERTS, BLOGS

- [News Stories](#)
- [Join our Facebook Group](#)

:: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
:: HELPFUL MATERIALS
:: TRACKING TECHNOLOGY
:: WHERE TO FIND SWIMMING LESSONS
:: PARENT STORIES
:: FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS
:: FOR PHYSICIANS AND THERAPISTS
:: FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

prevention resources



NAA's Big Red
Safety Toolkits
for Caregivers
& First Responders
at AWAARE.org



prevention resources





- **Go to AWAARE.org** – our site dedicated to autism-related wandering
- **Teach Your Child About Wandering Dangers:** dangers of traffic, water, and encounters with strangers; how to respond if they find themselves alone or lost. Use lingo they respond to, favorite characters, props, visual prompts if needed
- **Home Security is a Must.** Install secure dead bolt locks; Install a home security alarm system; Place hook and eye locks on all doors above child's reach; Fence yard; Safeguard pools – self-latching gates, motion sensors; Use Baby monitor; Get inexpensive (but very effective) door chimes

prevention resources



TEACH YOUR CHILD TO SWIM!



Home About Autism » Family Support » Treatment » Autism & Safety » About NAA » Get Involved » Shop

Swimming Instructions

YMCA Locations that offer Special Needs Swimming Instructions
(Sorted alphabetically, by State)

YMCA	Contact	Email address	City	State	Zip
Anchorage Community YMCA	Debra Reger	debra@ymcaalaska.org	Anchorage	AK	99507
YMCA of Calhoun County	Brandy Sanders	brsanders@cableone.net	Anniston	AL	36201
Birmingham YMCA	Jennifer Dick	jdick@ymcabham.org	Birmingham	AL	35242
Hogan Family YMCA	Wendi Scott	Wendl.Scott@ymcahuntsville.org	Madison	AL	35758
Glendale- Peoria YMCA	Shelly Smith	slbrown@vosymca.org	Glendale	AZ	85306
Southwest Valley Regional YMCA	Kristina Campbell	kcampbell@vosymca.org	Goodyear	AZ	75395
Ahwatukee Foothills YMCA	Deborah Rothstein	djrothstein@vosymca.org	Phoenix	AZ	85048
Prescott YMCA	Trisha Soriano	aquatics@prescottymca.org	Prescott	AZ	86301
Ott Family YMCA	Kate Saavedra	kates@tucsonymca.org	Tucson	AZ	85710



Understand and Avoid Triggers:

- What type of wandering best describes your child?
- What triggers may cause your child to flee?
- Work on calming/de-escalation methods to help your child cope with triggers and provide alternatives to running/fleeing
- Address known triggers with other caregivers and advocate for de-escalation techniques to be implemented in all settings
- Understand your child's goal – water, trains, park, favorite food, etc.
- Allow safe exploration of obsessions in supervised, safe environment
- Document specific fascinations and share with first-responders, school staff, family, neighbors, etc.

prevention resources



- **Use a “Tag, You’re It” System:** Many incidents occur during a family gathering, camping trip, school function or transition. Encourage parents to establish a “tag” strategy to identify the adult who is primary supervisor during a period of time. Use physical tag prompt, eye contact and verbal acknowledgment. Make sure tagged caregiver understands responsibilities and expectations.
- **Use a “Bookends” Approach:** If hiking or walking outdoors, make sure two responsible adults act as bookends – one adult on each side of the child, or one in front and one behind.
- **Use a Double Shoulder or Arm Lock:** Maintain physical contact when walking through parking lots or other busy public places.



prevention resources



STAY EXTRA VIGILANT...

MOVING TO A NEW HOME? We've seen multiple deaths occur following a move to a new apartment/home.

VISITING A RELATIVE OR FRIENDS? We've seen multiple deaths occur during a visit to another home setting.

HIGH ALERT DAYS:

Mother's Day

Father's Day

Memorial Day

July Fourth

Labor Day

ALWAYS USE "TAG, YOU'RE IT" SYSTEM



prevention resources



- **Wearable Identification:** A medical ID bracelet or other wearable ID is crucial. State-issued IDs are an option, as are Shoe ID tags. Temporary tattoos are ideal for vacations, amusement parks, field trips.
- **Alert Trusted Neighbors:** It is recommended that caregivers plan a brief visit with trusted neighbors to introduce child or provide a photograph. Knowing neighbors can help reduce the risks associated with wandering.
- **Adhere Visual Prompts to Doors, Windows and Gates.** Stop Signs can be a very effective reminder for children with autism. Simply Google “Stop Sign”, download the image and print.





Develop a Family Wandering Emergency Plan

- Download a Family Wandering Emergency Plan (FWEP) at AWAARE.org
- Designate an emergency point person to help contact neighbors, police, and assist in making arrangements for other children, provide them with copy of your FWEP
- List the places your child may be likely to go, and areas of potential danger
- Assign “search angels” with designated locations
- Keep phone numbers for “search angels”, law enforcement, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and local media on hand



Talk with Local First Responders

Providing key information before an incident occurs may improve response

- Download a First Responder Alert Form at AWAARE.org
- Provide name of your child, current photo, physical description
- Provide complete contact information for all caregivers
- List favorite places or attractions, include map with dangerous locations highlighted
- Note likes, dislikes fears, triggers and de-escalation techniques
- Explain your child's method of communication if non-verbal, ability to respond to his/her name
- Provide a copy of NAA's Big Red Safety Toolkit for First Responders



AUTISM ELOPEMENT ALERT FORM

PERSON-SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Date Submitted: _____

Individual's Name _____
(First) (M.I.) (Last)

Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Date of Birth _____ Age _____ Preferred Name _____

Does the Individual live alone? _____

Individual's Physical Description:

___ Male ___ Female Height: _____ Weight: _____ Eye color: _____ Hair color: _____

Scars or other identifying marks: _____

Other Relevant Medical Conditions in addition to Autism (check all that apply):

___ No Sense of Danger ___ Blind ___ Deaf ___ Non-Verbal ___ Mental Retardation

___ Prone to Seizures ___ Cognitive Impairment ___ Other

If Other, Please explain: _____

Prescription Medications needed: _____

Sensory or dietary issues, if any: _____

Attach current
photo here

prevention resources



Prevention at school, camp, other settings:

- Ask what protocols are in place to prevent and respond to wandering incidents and other emergencies
- Periodically ask teachers, aides, counselors, school administrators, residential caretaker, etc. if your child has wandered
- “Has my child ever wandered outside school building?”
- “Has my child ever fled from a teacher or been left unattended during transitions?”
- Take a tour of the school/facility and note possible areas of concern, ask for each area to be addressed
- Write a letter requesting that you immediately be informed of any wandering incident, prevention and response protocols – include this information in IEP
- Consider asking physician about wandering diagnosis code **V40.31** (Wandering in Diseases Classified Elsewhere) went into effect in October 2011.

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Sample IEP Letter available at AWAARE.org:

My child, Alyssa attends XXX School and has a diagnosis of autism. She is prone to wandering, elopement and fleeing incidents. **Aly's sense of danger is impaired and all measures must be taken to ensure her safety.**

Due to Aly's tendency to wander, **she requires constant one-on-one adult supervision and should never be allowed to independently transition to or from any school setting.**

Aly wears a Project Lifesaver bracelet that emits a unique radio signal once per second. Should Aly wander from adult supervision, the **Fire Department should be called IMMEDIATELY** to respond with receiving equipment that can locate Aly's wristband. School staff is not to delay in contacting the Fire Department in an attempt to locate Aly on their own.

We require immediate parental notification at [phone #] of ANY wandering incident, including incidents where Aly may have wandered unsupervised within the school building. **All incidents must be documented in writing** including when and how the occurrence took place so that appropriate prevention methods can be developed and implemented.

prevention resources



TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

- Radio Frequency/GPS/Cellular
- Local law enforcement agencies may use Project Lifesaver, CareTrak or LoJack SafetyNet programs – check to see if they are available
- Several GPS devices on retail market – caregiver implemented



prevention resources



TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

Radio Frequency

Pros:

Run by Trained Law Enforcement
Waterproof
Long Battery Life/No Charging

Cons:

No geo-fencing alert capability
Not available in all areas

GPS

Pros:

Geofencing alerts
Available in most areas

Cons:

Not waterproof
Child frequently unprotected while unit is charging
Caregivers are primary search team
Subscription/Monthly Fees



AUTISM
WANDERING
AWARENESS
ALERTS
RESPONSE
EDUCATION

► tracking technology

	PROJECT LIFESAVER	LOJACK SAFETYNET	VARIOUS GPS UNITS
TECHNOLOGY	radio frequency	radio frequency	A-GPS
DIRECT TO CONSUMER	no	no	yes
BATTERY LIFE	30 days	30 days	average 2-3 days
WATERPROOF	yes	yes	no
WEARABLE	yes - wristband	yes - wristband	depends on unit
REMOVE TO CHARGE	no	no	yes
GEOFENCING/ PERIMETER NOTIFICATIONS	no	no	yes
SOS BUTTON	no	no	depends on unit
CAREGIVER MONITORING/ LIVE TRACKING ONLINE	no	no	yes
POLICE INVOLVEMENT NECESSARY	yes	yes	no
SET UP FEE	\$300	\$99	\$69.95 - \$300
MONTHLY FEE	None for first year. Agencies may charge small fee for battery and wristband replacements.	\$30	\$20 - \$40

prevention resources



TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

- What is Geofencing?
- Customizable parameters
- Electronic notifications via cell call, text or email
- Multiple geofences are possible for home, school, camp, etc.



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ESSENTIALS

- ✓ Locks
 - ✓ Door/Window Chimes & Alarms
 - ✓ Stop Signs (awaare.org)
 - ✓ Swimming Lessons (nationalautism.org)
 - ✓ ID's
 - ✓ Tracking device if necessary
 - ✓ ICD-9 if necessary
 - ✓ Social Stories (awaare.org)
 - ✓ Family Emergency Plan (awaare.org)
 - ✓ External safeguards/protocols
-
- ✓ FINDING OUT THE WHY
 - ✓ ADDRESSING THE WHY



prevention resources



prevention resources



CAREGIVER CHECKLIST

- I Have Secured My Home** (*Adequate Locks, Hook & Eye Chains, Inexpensive Door Chimes, Stop Signs on all doors/windows/gates, Pools & Neighbors' Pools secured, Home Security System if able, Baby Monitors, Fenced Yard if able*)
- I've Identified Reasons Why My Child Wanders/Bolts** & Am Teaching My Child About Dangers and Ways to Stay Safe
- I Have Enrolled My Child Into Swimming Lessons** (*YMCA listing of special-needs lessons @ nationalautism.org*)
- I Have Looked Into Tracking Devices** (*projectlifesaver.org; safetynetbylojack.com*)
- I Have Alerted My Trusted Neighbors** (*neighbor-notification sheets at awaare.org*)
- I Have Alerted My Local First Responders** About My Child, Nearby Water Sources, & Reverse 911 (*free for law enforcement -- achild dismissing.org; first-responder forms at awaare.org*)
- I Have Talked To My Child's Doctor** About the Wandering Diagnostic Code V40.31 (*use code only if necessary*)
- I Have Obtained A Wearable ID** For My Child That Contains All Of My Contact Information
- I Have Completed My Family Wandering Emergency Plan** (*available at awaare.org*)
- I Will Initiate A "Tag, You're It" System** During Family Gatherings, Commotion, Transitions
- I Will Monitor Any Changes In My Home's Security**, Especially When Warmer Weather Or Seasonal Transitions Affect My Home's Layout (*Windows, Screen Doors/Windows, Window Units*)
- I Will Remain On High Alert** After Moving To A New Home, On Holidays, Vacations, During Outdoor Activities & Visits To Friends/Family's Homes, Public Places, Parks, Other Non-Home Settings
- I Have Addressed Wandering** At School, Summer Camp, and Other External Settings
- I Continue To Reassess** As My Child Grows and/or Learns New Ways To Possibly Exit
- I Continue To Document** Actions Taken To Protect My Loved One

incident response



AUTISM&SAFETY

incident response



- ✓ **Stay calm**
- ✓ **Call 911**
- ✓ **Implement your FWEP**

incident response



***SEARCH
WATER
FIRST***



first responder resources





resources



Cover Story
FBI Magazine
Nov/Dec 2012

Missing Children With Special Needs

Finding and safely recovering a missing child with special needs often presents a unique and difficult challenge for families, law enforcement, first responders, and search teams. The behaviors and actions of a missing child with special needs are often much different than those of a missing nonaffected child. While the behaviors will differ from child-to-child, missing children with certain special needs may

- Wander away, run away, or bolt from a safe environment
- Exhibit a diminished sense of fear causing them to engage in high-risk behavior such as seeking water or active roadways
- Elude or hide from search teams
- Seek small or tightly enclosed spaces concealing themselves from search teams
- Be unable to respond to rescuers

A special-needs condition may be characterized by debilitating physical impairments, social impairments, cognitive impairments, or communication challenges.

Heightened Risk Factors Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorders

One such cause for these types of impairments and challenges is autism. Generally speaking, no two children with autism are alike — each child is unique. The symptoms vary from the most severely affected child who may be nonverbal and low functioning, to those with milder forms, such as Asperger's Syndrome or Pervasive Developmental Disorder–Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), who may be higher-functioning. This does not suggest all missing children diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome or PDD-NOS are not at risk — the risk factors must be weighed for each individual child regardless of the diagnosis. It is also important to note the chronological age of individuals with autism is often irrelevant to their level of functioning. For example a 15-year-old may have the cognitive function of a much younger child.

For reasons not entirely clear, missing children with autism, especially those who are severely affected, have a tendency to wander or elope from a safe environment and will often seek bodies of water such as streams, ponds, lakes, rivers, creeks, storm-water retention/detention basins, and backyard and public swimming pools. According to the National Autism Association, in the United States between 2009 and 2011, accidental drowning accounted for 91% of the total deaths reported in children with autism ages 14 and younger subsequent to wandering or elopement.¹ Children with autism may also exhibit other interests or fascinations posing similar dangers such as going to active roadways/highways, trains, heavy equipment, fire trucks, roadway signs, bright lights, and traffic signals.

In the event of an extended missing episode the children are also at risk of exposure to weather and environmental hazards; dehydration; lack of adequate nutrition such as food and medication; traffic-related injuries/accidents; falls, especially down steep terrain; and even potential encounters with child molesters or others who would intentionally try to take advantage of or harm them.

Because of the tendency for children with autism to wander or elope it is vitally important to quickly identify the unique interests of the child and create

¹Autism & Safety Facts. Attleboro Falls, Massachusetts: National Autism Association, accessed on July 24, 2012, at nationalautismassociation.org/resources/autism-safety-facts.

resources



National Search &
Rescue Guidelines
NCMEC

missingkids.com

incident response



This information is taken from a directive developed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) with the assistance of the National Autism Association (NAA)

- **TREAT EACH CASE AS CRITICAL**
- If child has a tracking device, immediately dispatch personnel with receiving equipment to last known location
- Immediately dispatch personnel to **search and stand-by** any nearby bodies of water
- Identify and dispatch personnel to other hazards in the area and known areas of interest for the child
- Utilize Reverse 9-1-1 program to alert the local community via a rapid-response neighborhood telephone alert system.
- Establish containment of any suspected routes the child may take
- For missing children that do not meet requirements for an Amber Alert, consider issuing an Endangered Missing Alert

incident response



- Children will sometimes seek out small, tight spaces.
- ***Avoid known triggers.*** If child fears loud noises or dogs, consider this during your search. Children with autism may sometimes avoid search team members because of their fears.
- **Use “favorite things” to attract child** in hiding or to engage child when found. Does the child like Winnie the Pooh? PLAY AUDIO. Does the child have a favorite song or phrase? PLAY OR SAY IT. Favorite food? SAY IT. “Time to get ice cream!”
- Each child with autism is different - are they attracted to anything unique? Train Tracks? Park swings? Museum?
- Night-time can be used to project lights, patterns, or favorite visuals that may draw in a child with autism.
- Our kids can survive out there a long time. Don’t give up too soon!
- **Listen to the parents.** They have critical information that could help find the child...

case study



Case Study: Drowning, Pond

- Mason Medlam – Age 5
- Colwich, KS
- July 2010
- Slipped out a window left open for a fan
- **Mom was at work, told police to go to neighbor's pond**
- Mom went straight to pond where she found her son's lifeless body
- Mason was revived, but passed away in the hospital two days later





Case Study: Extraordinary Non-Lethal Outcome

- Ryan Pham – Age 7
- Australia
- February 2012
- Wandered away while visiting a friend's home
- Sparked major overnight search effort
- Found naked in a creek
- **Rescued by a News Crew who heard mom speak about his “fascination with water.”**



first responder resources



- **NCMEC, TEAM ADAM**
1.800.THE.LOST | missingkids.com
- **Reverse 9-1-1 – A Child Is Missing**
Geo-targeted Local Phone Alerts; Free to Law Enforcement
AChildIsMissing.org | Contact Claudia Corrigan | Phone: 954.763.1288 |
E-mail: ClaudiaC@achildismissing.org
- **Project Lifesaver**
Chief Gene Saunders | projectlifesaver.org
- **Take Me Home Database Software**; Free to Law Enforcement
You enter detailed information on individuals at risk in the community.
Can be searched by name or description.
Contact Officer Jimmy Donohoe at 850.436.5416 or at
jdonohoe@ci.pensacola.fl.us

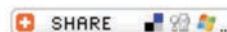
first responder resources



WORKING TO PREVENT WANDERING INCIDENTS AND DEATHS WITHIN THE AUTISM COMMUNITY

AWAARE
COLLABORATION

[contact us](#) | [promote this initiative](#)



AUTISM
WANDERING
AWARENESS
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RESPONSE
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SAFETY MATERIALS



NAA has created two new safety toolkits that can be downloaded here:

[Caregiver Toolkit](#) | [First Responder Toolkit](#)

Questions?



VISIT US ONLINE:

www.NationalAutism.org

www.AWAARE.org

CONTACT US:

e-mail: naa@nationalautism.org

phone: 877-622-2884