

Safety Tips



for families with persons with autism.

Elopement is one of the most serious problems facing parents of children with autism, especially with nonverbal children. The Kennedy Krieger Institute estimates that 49% of children with autism over the age of four will wander away from a safe place.

It is essential for parents and caregivers to understand the risks of elopement and to have an action plan in place in case a child does wander off.

Talk to Local Emergency Service Providers (Police, Fire and EMS).

Introduce them to your loved one with autism. Provide them with key information (Contact info, likes, dislikes, behaviors etc). Ask if they have a registry for persons with disabilities. Ask about GPS or other program for locating persons with disabilities whom have wandered away from home. Some electronic tracking companies require police involvement before providing information on your child's location.

Make sure contact information is available.

The The Kennedy Krieger Institute 2011 report estimates that more than one-third of children with autism who wander/elope are never or rarely able to communicate their name, address, or phone number. You can place a business card in your child's wallet, backpack, or purse that has this information printed on it. Some children communicate with smart phones or tablets, which can also hold emergency information. Remember that police and first responders are trained to look for ICE (In Case of Emergency) contacts on these devices.

Take a walk through your home and neighborhood using the "eyes" of your loved one with autism. You know your child better than anyone - evaluate where they would go: What hazards will they gravitate toward? Pay attention to backyard pools and waterways.



Equip your home

Invest in a good locksmith and secure your home. Consider Alarms or Window Tint on exterior facing windows.

Find Allies

If you have trusted neighbors involve them in your emergency plan. Provide them with emergency forms. Involve other family members in planning.

Create an emergency packet including all vital information. Name, age, contact information, school attending, allergies, medications, etc. Place emergency packet on refrigerator, in glove box in vehicles and with emergency kit. Buy extra comfort items and foods and store for just emergencies. Stickers stating "I have autism" " I am non-verbal" etc.

For Additional Resources on Safety:

- National Autism Alliance, *The Big Red Safety Toolkit*
<http://nationalautismassociation.org>
- **Autism Wandering Awareness Alerts Response Education (AWAARE)** Website has downloadable information including Autism-Wandering Prevention Brochure; First Responder Notification Form; Family Wandering Emergency Plan (FWEP) Template and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Sample Letter www.awaare.org



Thank you to Brian Herritt for compiling this information. Brian has worked as a law enforcement officer in Southern California for 11 years and has son with autism. He is a consultant and presenter for Autism Risk and Safety Management for the Debbaudt Legacy Productions, LLC. and presented across the United States. His presentation is useful for parents, school staff, case managers, and any agencies that work with people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He has taught numerous safety and training courses to law enforcement professionals and community members. Brian's course is approved for California POST credits.

Contact Information:

Brian Herritt Consultant / Presenter Autism Risk & Safety Management Debbaudt Legacy Productions, LLC (951)553-4878 autismcop@yahoo.com
<http://www.autismriskmanagement.com>