

Safety on the Spectrum[™]

Safety Toolkit Resources



800.328.8476 | AutismSociety.org

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What is Autism?

The Connection Is You™

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. The Autism experience is different for everyone. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees.

While there is currently no known single cause of Autism, early diagnosis helps a person receive resources that can support the choices and opportunities needed to live fully.









Relationships Communication Self-Regulation Social Skills

Autism Signs & Characteristics

- Repetitive behaviors, movements, or phrases
- Lack of response to normal stimuli (i.e. his/her name, visual cues)
- Atypical verbal communication or non-speaking
- Difficulty understanding or expressing feelings
- Avoiding eye contact



Facts & Statistics

Over 7 million individuals in the United States are on the Autism spectrum; Autism is the fastestgrowing developmental disability in the U.S.

1 in 36 children are diagnosed with Autism. Since 2000, the Autism prevalence rate has been consistently increasing from one in 150 to now one in 36.

38% of children with ASD have an intellectual disability, 24% are in the borderline range, and 39% have average to above-average IQ scores.

Over the next decade, an estimated 700k to 1.1 million+ Autistic teens will enter adulthood and age out of school-based services.



Boys are 4x more likely than girls to be diagnosed with Autism.

The cost of caring for Autistic Americans is estimated to rise to \$460+billion by 2025 in the absence of more-effective interventions and supports. An estimated \$175 to \$196 billion of these costs are for adult services.



A Letter to Educators & the IEP Team at School

To Whom It May Concern:

	NAME	has a history	of wandering, mea	ning they may lea	ve a safe area or	
wa	nder away from a responsible car	egiver	NAME	may w	ander for a	
var	riety of reasons which are often go	oal-directed (i.e. c	ommunicate or obt	ain a want/need, s	seek or avoid	
sensory input). It is reported that at least 49% of people with Autism will wander at least once in their						
life	etime. Wandering poses a serious r	risk of injury or de	eath – especially rela	ated to traffic and	water-related	
inc	idents. Because of these risks, saf	ety precautions a	nd preventative sup	pports are importa	ant to be	
ado	dressed by NAME		's IEP and school te	eam.		
Lea	avingNAME	unat	tended puts them a	t an increased ris	k for wandering	
	d potentially dangerous circumsta				_ safe while	
un	der your instructional care, there	must be appropri	ate supports in plac	e.		
2.	Known patterns of wandering:					
	a. Why?					
	b. When?					
	c. Where?					
	d. Why, if known?					
3.	Precipitating factors (things that may happen immediately before wandering, potentially					
	triggering wandering or signaling that wandering may soon occur):					



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4.	What has been known to increase likelihood of wandering? What has been effective in decreasing likelihood of wandering?					
5.						
6.	What is the school's protocol for wandering events?					
	a. When wandering occurs from a school-environment					
	b. When wandering occurs during an off-site event (ex: field trip)					
7.	What level of adult supervision is required to keep safe?					
8.	What additional layers of protection are needed? (ex: visuals, direct instruction, locked doors, alarms, physical barriers)					
Sig	ned,					
Pa	rent/Guardian					



Emergency Identification Sheet

	Date://
Personal Identifying Information	
Name: DOB:/	
Physical Description: i.e., 5'10, 150 lbs., brown hair, green eyes, etc.	
Identifying marks or scars:	PLACE AN UPDATED PHOTO HERE
Do they wear a locative device? ID bracelets? If so, provide some information	
Emergency Contacts	
Name: Phone #:	
Address:	
Name: Phone #:	
Address:	
Medical Information Medical needs or medications: Allergies or dietary restrictions: Other Helpful Considerations Identify locations the individual is likely to go: Be specific: water/pool/lake What does escalation look like? Crying, running, rocking, aggression, etc.	
De-escalation techniques: What has helped in the past?	
Best way to approach individual:	
Identify likes: Favorite toys, characters, songs, tv shows, etc.	
Identify dislikes/triggers: Things to avoid, fears, sensitivities; noises, lights, he	elicopters, etc.
Preferred Communication: Speaking/non speaking, visuals, sign language	
A safe word or any identifier to indicate to the individual that you are a	ı safe person:



Wandering Letter

Dear	RE	ECIPIENT					
Our		is Autistic. Their na	ame is	NAME		·	
As of today,	DATE	, they are	AGE	years old and are	INCHES	_ in height and	
weigh	LBS	·					
Individuals wi	th Autism c	an wander from k	nown locati	ons and from the	most supe	rvised of settings.	
	NAME	has a tend	ency to wan	der, elope or bolt	from enviror	nments that you	
	ceive as safe	e. Wandering, like al					
		e likely to be found i gerous for individu	=		ound traffic.		
	NAME	is prone to	wandering	and therefore req	uires careful	supervision.	
If you see	NA	^{ME} ur	nsupervised,	please stay with t	hem and im	mediately	
call me	NAME	^{ME} ur	ntact informa	ation is below).			
In addition, ple	ease call 91 :	L and tell them tha	t you have fo	ound	NAME		
Here is some ad	lditional info	rmation about	NAME	and v	ways you can	help support them	
Thank you.							
My Contact In	formation		Autisti	c Individual		Se alle	
Name:				Name/Nickname:			
Phone Number:				Age:			
Relationship to Autistic Individual: Height: Weight:							
			•	optional)			



Wandering History Log

Date:	Loca	ation:							
Time:	Wea	ather:							
Responsible person:									
Where did they wander from? Where did they wander to? Events or behavior leading up to the wandering:									
							Presumed function of wander	ring (seeking, avo	oiding, etc.)
							When where they found?		
Where were they found?									
Medical needs: (Were they up to	to date on medica	tion, on a new medication, sick,							
noticeable behavior difference									
Was law enforcement involve	d? ☐ Yes ☐ No	Notes:							
Was medical care required?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Notes:							
Was social services involved?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Notes:							



Wandering History Log

Is locative technology used, if so, what device?				
Was locative technology part of finding your loved one?				
In your own words, describe what happened:				
NOTES:				



Wandering Prevention Checklist

Communication	Routine and Predictability
Teach and practice communication skills to express needs, wants, or discomfort.	Establish and maintain consistent daily routines. Predictability can reduce anxiety and the
Community Awareness	likelihood of wandering.
Inform neighbors and local businesses about the individual's tendencies and share emergency contact information.	Safety Education Educate the individual about safety rules and the dangers of wandering. Use visual aids and social stories to reinforce concepts.
Emergency Preparedness	stories to reinforce concepts.
Create an emergency plan with neighbors, local law enforcement, and first responders. Provide them with relevant information about the individual.	Secure Environment Install secure locks on doors and windows. Consider alarms or chimes to alert you when
Environmental Modifications	doors are opened.
Make modifications to the home environment to reduce potential hazards. Remove or secure items that may be dangerous to the individual.	Sensory Needs Address sensory sensitivities to minimize discomfort. Provide sensory-friendly spaces
Identification and Documentation	and tools for self-regulation.
Ensure the individual carries identification with contact information. Keep recent photographs and medical information accessible.	Social Engagement Encourage social engagement and activities that
Monitoring Technology	provide a sense of connection and fulfillment. Loneliness can contribute to wandering.
Explore wearable GPS devices, tracking apps, or monitoring systems to keep track of the individual's location.	Supervision Plan Develop a supervision plan based on the
Physical Exercise Incorporate regular physical activities to	individual's needs and tendencies. Establish clear guidelines for caregivers and support personnel.
channel energy and reduce restlessness.	Tracking Tools
Professional Guidance Consult with professionals, such as behavioral therapists or autism specialists, for personalized	Keep recent photographs, medical records, and detailed information readily accessible for use in case of an emergency.
strategies and support.	Visual and Auditory Cues
Regular Check-ins Regularly check on the individual, especially during potentially challenging times, to ensure their well-being.	Use visual and auditory cues to signal transitions or changes in routine. This helps the individual anticipate and adapt.



Legal and Advocacy Resources

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Organization	Website	Description
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)	AAIDD	Offers resources and information on legal issues related to intellectual and developmental disabilities, including publications and professional development.
The Arc	The Arc	Offers advocacy for and supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Provides resources and information on legal rights.
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)	ASAN	Offers resources and support in navigating legal issues for people with disabilities.
Autism Society of America Helpline	Autism Society Helpline Information	Offers information and referral line with dedicated information and referral (I&R) specialists who can provide referrals, discuss options, and share materials and tools, by email, our website, and through our toll-free number, 1-800-328-8476.
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)	COPAA	Offers information on protecting and enforcing legal rights for students with disabilities.
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)	DREDF	Offers resources and legal support, advancing civil and human rights for people with disabilities.
National Council on Disability (NCD)	NCD	Offers education in policies and practices ensuring equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, including legal rights and advocacy.
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)	NDRN	Offers protection and advocacy services at national, state, and local levels, while promoting the legal rights of people with disabilities.
Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. (P&A)	<u>National Disability</u> <u>Rights Network</u>	Offers state by state advocacy for the rights of individuals with disabilities. Locate the P&A system in your state for local assistance.
Wrightslaw	<u>Wrightslaw</u>	Offers information in special education law, education advocacy, and legal resources for parents and professionals.



Wandering Emergency Plan Information



1. Identify/ Assess

Bring awareness to caregivers and other key stakeholders that the individual wanders. Identify potential triggers for wandering and ways to increase safety.



2. Make a Plan

Sample plan:

- Identify who will be calling 911.
- Identify who will alert the neighbors or key stakeholders (relatives, school, educators, etc.) to search.
- Identify the places that the individual is likely to wander to (water, movies, drains, etc.).
- Identify who is going to search identified places and in what order.



3. Implement

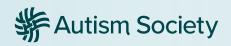
Call 911, alert key stakeholders, implement the plan, check water first, and search identified favorite spots. Follow the plan as practiced.



4. Fine Tune/Adjust/Modify

Continue to monitor the individual for changes in behavior, changes of favorite spots or interests, and keeping information up to date so that the plan can be as useful as possible.

Emergency planning is one of the many ways that you can practice safety in your community.



Caregiver Tips: Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers





1. Consider registering with your local law enforcement agency.

What does disclosure look like for your family? Determine if disclosing your loved one's disability is in your family plan. Registering with your local law enforcement agency can be an important step in your family's safety plan.

Many police and sheriff agencies provide an identification form that includes specific information like:

- Allergies
- A photo of your loved one
- Eloping or wandering tendencies
- Medication and dietary needs
- Personality traits
- Sensory behaviors

This information is generally added to an agency's dispatch office, so officers have this information if called to your home. Contact your local Autism Society affiliate for additional information.



2. Carry Identification

It may be beneficial to have your loved one carry an ID card or medical bracelet that provides basic information, medical diagnosis, and emergency contact numbers.

There are many free resources online to find such ID cards and you can also contact your local law enforcement agency or Autism Society affiliate.

Practice communicating personal information such as name, address, and phone number with your loved one. If they are non-speaking, assist them in adding their contact information to their communication device, or practice writing onto paper, or typing their information into a laptop, tablet or electronic device.



3. Interacting with a Law Enforcement Officer

Everyone is expected to obey the law and rules in your community, regardless of disability or circumstance. Social stories and visual aids can be helpful in practicing safe and appropriate interactions with law enforcement.

Share these tips to assist your loved one in interacting with a law enforcement officer to ensure a safe and positive interaction.

- When an officer approaches, stay where you are.
 - Do your best to stay in the space you are in and allow the officer to approach you.
 - Do not approach the officer.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets.
 - It is good practice to keep your hands where the law enforcement officer can always see them.
 - Do not reach for your identification or anything unless the officer asks you to do so.
- Do not attempt to touch or hug a law enforcement officer.
 - Law enforcement officers carry guns and tools on their person.
 - They may mistake your gesture for trying to grab their gun or personal items.
- Disclose your diagnosis to the officer.
 - It is understandable that an interaction with law enforcement can be a high stress situation.
 - The officer may not understand the difficulties you are having.
 - Disclosure can create an opportunity to advocate for your needs.



4. Educate your local police or sheriff's department.

Visit your local precinct and introduce your loved one to officers and staff.

Not only is it important for law enforcement to get to know your loved one, but this will facilitate a positive first interaction with law enforcement.

Encourage your local police department to conduct regular and meaningful law enforcement trainings or work with your local Autism Society affiliate.



Trusted Neighbor 101



Developing trusting relationships with those in your neighborhood can be helpful as you consider strategies for keeping your loved one with Autism safe.

Trusted neighbors, familiar with neighborhood routines and close by in emergencies, serve as valuable resources to help create a sense of community and safety for those with Autism and their caregivers.

After you've identified which neighbors to include in your safety plan, consider talking to the neighbor, sharing your safety concerns, and asking for their help in your safety plan.

Be specific about how you'd like them to help. If a neighbor agrees to help, introduce your loved one to the neighbors and facilitate a familiar relationship as much as possible.

How Neighbors Can Help in a Safety Plan:

- Watch for loved ones leaving their home without a guardian.
- Help search for an individual if they are missing.
- Act as a safe place an individual can go in emergencies.

What Information to Consider Sharing with Trusted Neighbors:

- Emergency Identification Sheet
- Wandering Letter
- Tendencies / what is typical for them
- Likes / dislikes
- Sensory Information what is comforting and what can be triggering?
- Who to call if the neighbor sees something concerning or if they see the individual alone without a guardian, or with someone they haven't seen before
- Guidance for ways to interact with individual



Emergency Communication Board





















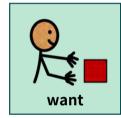




















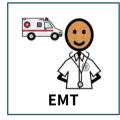








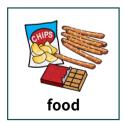






















Emergency Communication Board



A B C D E F G H I

J K L M N O P Q R

S T U V W X Y Z

YES

SPACE

NO