

Wandering

What to know



Who is at Risk?

- Individuals with Autism, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Alzheimer's or related dementias.
- **91% of accidental drowning deaths** in children with Autism under 14 are due to drowning after wandering has occurred.
- **Almost 50% of people with Autism may wander.**

What is Wandering?

- Wandering is defined as leaving a safe area or caregiver.
- Wandering is also known as elopement or bolting.

Where: Common Locations

- Individuals with Autism, developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's, or related dementias may wander from home, school, parks, stores, etc.
- Those who wander are often found near water, traffic, wooded areas, or favorite places.

When Does Wandering Happen?

- Wandering can happen within seconds, often during transitions, or chaotic situations.
- It can occur under any supervision and at any age.

Why Does Wandering Occur?

- Wandering may occur when someone experiences barriers to effectively communicating wants, needs, feelings, ideas, etc.
- **To regulate one's sensory system:**
 - **Sensory Seeking:** May seek small, enclosed spaces, places of special interest, or environments that provide a range of sensory stimuli (calming or arousing) like water (pools, canals, oceans, ponds, lakes, etc.) or traffic.
 - **Sensory Avoiding:** May wander to avoid an overwhelming scenario or environment.
- Wandering can occur in connection with an activated fight/flight/fright stress response.
- Individuals may not understand the risks or potential dangers involved.

Drowning

What to know



Who is at Risk?

- Drowning is a leading cause of death for individuals with Autism, who are **160x more likely to drown** than their neurotypical peers.



What is the Connection to Wandering?

- **49% of individuals** with Autism wander from safe environments and **24% of those individuals** have experienced a close call with drowning.
- **91% of accidental drowning deaths** in children with Autism under 14 are due to drowning after wandering has occurred.



Where Does it Happen?

- Drowning can occur in all bodies of water: pools, canals, oceans, ponds, lakes, etc.



Why Are Individuals with Autism Drawn to Water?

- Water provides both sensory stimulation and enjoyment, making it appealing to many Autistic individuals. Sensory input and feedback from water may include:
 - **Sound:** Calming and quiet
 - **Feeling:** Gentle and enclosed, like a hug (hydrostatic pressure)
 - **Visual:** Reflective patterns
 - **Buoyancy:** Feeling light and free
 - **Deep Pressure:** The sensation of being underwater

Locative Technology

What to know



Who Could Benefit?

- Individuals with Autism, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Alzheimer's or related dementias who are at increased risk of injury or death due to wandering and drowning.

What is Locative Technology?

- Tools like tracking devices, wearable tech, **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)**, or **Global Positioning Systems (GPS)** that help locate individuals.

When to Consider Locative Technology?

- The use of locative technology is a personal choice for each family and individual.
- It can enhance safety for individuals at risk of wandering and can be part of a comprehensive safety plan.
- It may also raise privacy and autonomy concerns.
- Consider developmental appropriateness, required law enforcement involvement, and the device's compatibility with the local environment.

Where is Locative Technology Used?

- Different technologies may be more suitable depending on the setting (urban vs. rural).
- Some locative devices are waterproof but not all devices are effective in the water.

Why Use Locative Technology?

- Helps reduce the time needed to locate a missing person, reducing the risk of injury or death.

❓ How Does Locative Technology Work?

- **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID):**
 - Uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects.
 - Used by law enforcement and caregivers.
 - Strong signal unaffected by obstacles.
- **Global Positioning Systems (GPS):**
 - Uses satellites to provide geolocation and time information to a GPS receiver.
 - Accurate but requires a clear satellite path.
 - High battery demand.
- **Hybrid Tracking Systems:**
 - Combine technologies for areas with limited satellite access.
 - Useful for geofencing.
- **Bluetooth:**
 - Uses small wireless transmitters using low-energy Bluetooth technology to send signals.
 - Accurate within short range.
 - Small and lightweight.



📋 When Choosing Locative Technology, Consider:

- **Vendor Reliability:**
 - Check the vendor's history, focus, and stability.
 - Ensure the vendor understands the needs of Individuals with Autism, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Alzheimer's or related dementias.
- **Emergency Communication:**
 - Decide if you want the device to transmit data to law enforcement or just family members.
 - Ensure compatibility with local law enforcement systems.
- **Cost:**
 - Some devices are free through programs such as the Kevin & Avonte grant and available at local nonprofits or law enforcement agencies; others require purchase.
 - Consider ongoing costs for subscriptions or maintenance.
- **Input from the Individual:**
 - Discuss the decision openly with the individual who will be using it.
 - Address potential stigmatization or discomfort with the device.
- **Maintenance:**
 - Regularly charge or replace batteries and maintain the device.
 - Have a backup safety plan during maintenance.
- **Water Resistance:**
 - Decide if a waterproof device is necessary, especially for those drawn to water.
- **Privacy Concerns:**
 - Balance safety needs with privacy concerns.

Voluntary Database Systems

What to know



Who May Benefit?

- Individuals with Autism, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Alzheimer's or related dementias, or mental health conditions that require individualized approaches to engagement with law enforcement.



What Are They?

- Volunteer database systems allow individuals and families to voluntarily register with law enforcement, providing detailed information so that first responders are better equipped to respond to emergencies, such as wandering incidents or crises.
- Police departments typically use waivers to ensure data is used solely for emergency responses and to address liability concerns, but there may still be concerns about data usage, privacy, and confidentiality.



Where to Find Them?

- Contact your local law enforcement agency to check if they offer a voluntary registration system.



When Are They Used?

- They can be used to help officers interact more effectively and can reduce the need for information gathering during emergencies.
- They can be used to expedite searches for individuals who have wandered.
- It's essential to keep the registry information current and updated.



Why Consider Them?

- These systems can provide an extra layer of protection and quicker response times, helping to ensure the safety of individuals prone to wandering.
- Can provide information to law enforcement to help facilitate person-centered approaches for safe interactions.