

# WANDERING PREVENTION AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

Children and teens with autism and other developmental disabilities are much more likely to wander or run off than other children. Knowing more and being prepared can prevent wandering and accidents, including drowning. Here are some things you can do.

You and your clinician can pick a way to get started:

## DO SOMETHING TO PREPARE:

- **Prepare your neighbors:** Introduce your child to their neighbors and share with them information on how to communicate with your child and reach you. If your neighbors have a pool, check that it's fenced and locked.
  - **Example:**  
[http://bit.ly/neighborhood\\_profile](http://bit.ly/neighborhood_profile)
- **Prepare first responders:** Provide information about your child to police, fire and ambulance services.
  - **Example profile sheet:**  
[http://bit.ly/emergency\\_profile](http://bit.ly/emergency_profile)
- **Teach your child to swim:** Teach your child how to swim and how to be safe around water. Many school districts and community centers offer affordable swim lessons. Consider water safety classes.
  - **Family Autism Center or YMCA swim lessons:**  
[http://bit.ly/water\\_safety\\_classes](http://bit.ly/water_safety_classes)
- **Teach safety skills:** If your child can talk, make sure your child knows how to reliably answer important questions like "what's your name?" and "what's your phone number?" Also, teach the meaning of universal signs, such as **Stop** signs.



## DO SOMETHING TO PREVENT:

- **Keep your child busy:** Engaged and busy children may be less likely to run off. Provide them something to do on outings and during transitions.
- **Create routines:** Create routines around transitions during the day.
- **Increase supervision:** Plan to have a responsible adult monitoring the child at risk. At social events, create a plan for adults in charge, and ensure the monitoring adults' hands are always free.
- **Use visuals:** Simple deterrents like Stop signs on doors and windows can help.
  - **More help with visuals:**  
[http://bit.ly/visual\\_support](http://bit.ly/visual_support)
- **Physically arrange:** Make it harder for your child to run off by changing the arrangement of their seating or furniture.
- **Consider locks:** Locks could be put on doors and windows, such as deadbolts or hook/eyes.
- **Consider fencing:** You could have a fence put around yards. Pools should always be fenced.



## GET SOMETHING TO IMMEDIATELY ALERT YOU IF YOUR CHILD DOES WANDER:

- **Perimeter Alarms:** Can alert you when your child leaves the yard or premise.
- **Door Alarms:** Can alert you when your child exits a room or house/building.
- **Alarm Mats:** Can be placed outside your child's bedroom or doors.



## CONSIDER A WAY TO LOCATE YOUR CHILD IF THEY DO WANDER:

- **Identification:** Consider ways for others to identify your child easily, especially if your child can't talk. There are a number of methods to use, such as medical alert bracelets or necklaces, clothing labels, or identification tags on a backpack.
- **Consider a locating device:** Commercially available GPS devices come in all shapes, sizes and price ranges. Your local police department may be able to help you.
- **Phone applications:** if your child carries a phone, there are some applications you can use to help locate them.
  - **Some resources for ways to locate your child can be found here:** [http://bit.ly/safety\\_products\\_and\\_services](http://bit.ly/safety_products_and_services)
- **You can also see if your county participates in Project Lifesaver:** <https://projectlifesaver.org/>



### Have an Emergency Plan in Advance!

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/creating-safety-plans-people-autism>

### Additional Resources:

- <https://researchautism.org/resources/a-guide-to-safety/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/wandering.html>
- <https://www.safety.com/autism-safety/>
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/wandering-prevention-resources>
- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/autism-safety-project>
- <http://awaare.nationalautismassociation.org/>
- **Talk to your Care Coordinator for help with acquiring funds for wandering prevention.**

**What is the first step you will take to ensure your child's safety?**