

## **AUTISM SAFETY TOOLKIT**

**Keeping Our Children Safe**  
**A must-read for all parents and caregivers.**

Autism presents a unique set of safety concerns for parents. [Unlocking Autism](#) and NAA have teamed up to provide the following safety information for parents. If you have suggestions or additions that you would like to submit for this page, please email [nancal@aol.com](mailto:nancal@aol.com). Please note: Not all suggestions listed below are right for every family in every neighborhood. Parents should carefully consider the best safety options for their individual child.

In a recent online survey conducted by NAA, an incredible 92% of the respondents said their autistic child was at risk of wandering. This is a problem that must be addressed in every city and town across America. Please review the following information and contact your local first responders to get a plan in place for your child and others who may be at risk in your community.

### **Are You Prepared for an Autism Emergency?**

To ensure safety and lower risk for a child or adult with autism, parents and care providers will need to become proactive and prepare an informational handout.

A leading cause for concern are children and adults who run away or wander from parents and care providers. Tragically, children and adults with autism are often attracted to water sources such as pools, ponds, and lakes. Drowning is a leading cause of death for a child or adult who has autism.

Wandering can occur anywhere at anytime. The first time is often the worst time. Another concern is preparation in the event that you become incapacitated or injured while caring for a person with autism at home or in the community.

An informational handout should be developed, copied and carried with you at all times--at home, in your car, purse or wallet. Also circulate this handout to family members, trusted neighbors, friends and co-workers. The handout will also come in handy if you are in an area other than your neighborhood and are approached by the police.

If wandering is a concern, contact law enforcement, fire and ambulance agencies. Ask your local 911 call center to "red flag" this information in their 911 computer data base. Dispatchers can alert patrol officers about your concerns before they arrive. When we provide law enforcement with key information before an incident occurs, we can expect better responses.

#### **Alert your neighbors**

The behaviors and characteristics of autism have the potential to attract attention from the public. Law enforcement professionals suggest that you reach out and get to know your neighbors.

- Decide what information to present to neighbors
- Does your child have a fear of cars and animals or is he drawn to them?
- Is your child a wanderer or runner?
- Does he respond to his name or would a stranger think he is deaf?
- Plan a brief visit to your neighbors
- Introduce your child or adult or provide a photograph
- If a neighbor spots your child outside of your yard, what is the best way for them to get your child back to you?
- Are there sensory issues your neighbors should know about?
- Give your neighbor a simple handout with your name, address, and phone number. Ask them to call you immediately if they see your son or daughter outside the home. This approach may be a

call you immediately if they see your son or daughter outside the home. This approach may be a good way to avoid problems down the road and will let your neighbors:

- Know the reason for unusual behaviors
- Know that you are approachable
- Have the opportunity to call you before they call 911

Knowing your neighbors can lead to better social interactions for your loved ones with autism.

### **Prevention**

If wandering is an issue for your family, consider contacting a professional locksmith, security company or home improvement professional.

### **Autism Emergency Contact Handout Model**

- Name of child or adult
- Current photograph and physical description including height, weight, eye and hair color, any scars or other identifying marks
- Identify your child's favorite song, toy or character
- Names, home, cell and pager phone numbers and addresses of parents, other caregivers and emergency contact persons
- Sensory, medical, or dietary issues and requirements, if any
- Inclination for elopement and any atypical behaviors or characteristics that may attract attention
- Favorite attractions and locations where person may be found
- Likes, dislikes--approach and de-escalation techniques
- A list of things that frighten your child
- Method of communication, if non-verbal sign language, picture boards, written word
- ID wear jewelry, tags on clothes, printed handout card
- Map and address guide to nearby properties with water sources and dangerous locations highlighted
- Blueprint or drawing of home, with bedrooms of individual highlighted

For more information, visit <http://www.autismriskmanagement.com/> - by Dennis Debbaudt © 2005

Books by Dennis Debbaudt

Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals:

Recognizing and Reducing Risk Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Debbaudt, D.  
London/Philadelphia. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Chapters In:

Debbaudt, D. (2003) Safety Issues for Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome. In Liane Holliday Willey (ed) Asperger Syndrome in Adolescence: Living with the Ups, the Downs and Things in Between. London - Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Debbaudt, D. (2006) Disclosing to the Authorities. In Dinah Murray (ed) Coming Out Asperger: Diagnosis, Disclosure and Self-Confidence. London - Philadelphia.  
Jessica Kingsley Publishers

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## **Provide local first responders with information on your child.**

<http://www.papremisealert.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/responder.pdf>

Fill out and print this form from Pennsylvania Premise Alert, then deliver it to your local police and fire departments.

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## Teach your child to swim.

Too often children with autism who wander are attracted to water. Be sure your child knows how to swim unassisted. Swimming lessons for children with special needs are available at many YMCA locations. The final lesson should be with clothes on.

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## Get an ID Bracelet for your child.

Include your name and telephone number. State that your child has autism and is non-verbal if applicable. Here are some examples.

<http://www.medicalidstore.com/>

<http://www.mypreciouskid.com/medical-id-bracelet.html>

If your child will not wear a bracelet or necklace, consider a temporary tattoo with your contact information. Tattoos with a Purpose are available at

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/products.php?cat=48>

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## Consider a personal tracking device.

### Gemini GPS Tracking Unit

<http://www.geminitracking.com/>

Personal GPS tracking device works with your computer or mobile phone. Monthly service fee.

### Ion Kids Tracking Wristband

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/products.php?cat=34>

<http://www.ion-kids.com>

Provides notification to parent when child wanders past a pre-set distance. Allows parent to track child while still within a 500 sq. yard area. Waterproof wristbands are available.

### Project Lifesaver Tracking Systems

<http://www.projectlifesaver.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8eZf9nzJ28> Video

Project Lifesaver works in coordination with local rescue personnel. Search equipment is housed and maintained by local police or fire departments. At-risk individuals are provided with a transmitter wristband which is replaced monthly. Initial setup and personnel training costs approximately \$7,000. For a program DVD and package to present to your local first responders, please contact Project Lifesaver at [www.projectlifesaver.org](http://www.projectlifesaver.org).

### Recent article about Project Lifesaver Tracking System

<http://www.nj.com/news/gloucester/local/index.ssf?/base/news-6/1180077153288140.xml&coll=8>

### Care Trak Transmitters

<http://caretrak.com/>

Care Trak utilizes the same technology as Project Lifesaver, but tracking equipment is operated by the caregiver and not local law enforcement or first responders.

### Angel Alert Child Distance Monitor

<http://www.walmart.com/catalog/product.do?cpnocode=11-29124948->

[2&dest=9999999997&product\\_id=2476229&sourceid=150000000000002993980&srccode=cii\\_16435691](http://www.walmart.com/catalog/product.do?cpnocode=11-29124948-2&dest=9999999997&product_id=2476229&sourceid=150000000000002993980&srccode=cii_16435691)

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## Secure Your Home

Prevent your child from slipping outside unnoticed by:

- Installing secure deadbolt locks that require keys on both sides
- Install a home security alarm system
- Install inexpensive battery-operated alarms on doors and windows to alert you when they are opened - for an example visit: <http://www.mypreciouskid.com/wireless-door-alarm.html>. These are available at stores like WalMart and Radio Shack.
- Place hook and eye locks on all doors, above your child's reach
- Fence your yard

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## Helpful Links - Please visit these websites for more safety ideas.

### Autism Risk Management

<http://www.autismriskmanagement.com/>

### Pennsylvania Premise Alert

<http://www.papremisealert.com/>

The Premise Alert Program gives families the opportunity to provide critical medical information to first responders before a crisis. Families can have a difficult time relating necessary information in times of extreme stress. This program also gives first responders advanced knowledge of special needs individuals in their community allowing them to respond with greater accuracy which increases positive outcomes.

### The Law Enforcement Awareness Network

<http://www.leanonus.org>

It is the mission of L.E.A.N. On Us to provide first responders with information and resources that will allow them to better serve individuals within their communities affected by hidden disabilities and mental illness.

### My Precious Kid

<http://www.mypreciouskid.com/>

Child Safety Products

### Tips for First Responders

[http://cdd.unm.edu/products/tips\\_web020205.pdf](http://cdd.unm.edu/products/tips_web020205.pdf)

### Service Dogs

<http://autismservicedogsofamerica.com/>

<http://www.4pawsforability.org/autismdogs.htm>

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## Tips From Parents

I come from a large family and we have instituted a "hand-off" process with Luke - when we are at family gatherings, you look the person in the eye, ask them if they have Luke and they confirm. At that point, that person knows their primary responsibility is Luke, not side conversations etc. We put this in place after Luke managed to find his way out of a house filled with 32 people. It was winter and the neighbors spotted him running thru the woods - no shoes, no jacket, and they grabbed him. I have also put hook locks on all of the doors which at the moment he can't reach.

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Get double key sided dead bolts for every out going door in your house or apt. Never let your child see where the keys are kept. My

son has attempted to get out that way. He knew exactly what key to use. Never underestimate your child with autism.

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I spoke to all the county firemen and EMT on search and rescue of an Autistic child. I quickly covered tons of material and I also stressed that from everything I have gathered, drowning seems to be the number one cause of accidental death in Autistic children. I stressed to them time and time again, that each and every near water source should be checked as a first priority. I went into full detail about all the other places they could hide...If injured how they more than likely could not respond to EMT questions etc. etc. It was only 2 months later did they get to test their new found knowledge. A 4 year old ASD child wandered off from his house, his parents called 911 after about a 20 minute search. The Fire Dept followed my advice and found him in less than 10 minutes standing on the edge of the River Bank. He was safe and not to happy about leaving the waters edge. The towns Fire Chief called me after the fact and gave me the news. He said that without learning these things, he would have instructed all his men to search the parks and ball diamond first, in the opposite direction of the river!, instead he sent a few to the park and the others to the swimming pool, river and sewer treatment facility.

My point is, just one hour with a group of firemen probably saved the life of a child. I volunteered my time, no experts where hired and not a dime was spent. If we can get others to do the same, what a huge difference it could make for the ASD community.

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I recently came up with an idea of making magnets with my daughters picture and my husbands and my cell phone on it. I plan on making cookies and going door to door in my neighborhood with both of these. I plan on talking to my neighbors personally, and just saying "hi" and letting them know my daughter has autism and where we live. I plan on leaving them with cookies in the hopes that if they see chrissy, they will offer her a cookie and take her into their car, home and call me.

I have had issues with flight risk behavior and my neighbors have had chrissy walk into their home and start eating ice cream out of their freezer and they didn't know what to do. The next time she tried to do this, they actually would not let her in the house and this was very dangerous!! I have felt weird about talking to my neighbors so I came up with this idea. I hope this idea makes in into your kit, our behavioral supervisor thought it was a great idea and after the news on Benjy, I am going to stop stalling and do it asap.