



# Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) - Awareness & Safety

According to data from a 2011 study conducted by the Kennedy Krieger Institute, almost half of all children with autism wander. Drowning, along with prolonged exposure and other factors, remain among the top causes of death within the autism population. There are many reasons why someone with autism or ASD might wander or run away. Usually it is to get to something or somewhere they like (water, parks, train tracks) or to get away from stimuli or things that scare them (noise, lights, commotion, etc.) They also may seek enclosed spaces where they feel secure.

## WANDERING PREVENTION IN YOUR HOME

- Consider installation of deadbolts, latches above your child's reach and/or home security style alarms on doors and windows
- Fence your yard with gate latches above your child's reach

## ID TAGS & PERSONAL LOCATING DEVICES

- An ID bracelet or tag sewn in your child's jacket can identify your child's condition and whether or not (s)he is non-verbal; also you may list your name, contact information, and the child's name. (A child's name should never be visible to a casual observer, such as a first name printed on a shirt or backpack.)
- Personal locating devices are worn on the wrist or ankle and emit a radio frequency. Ask local law enforcement if they administer these services in your area. Other types of GPS systems might also be considered.

## ALERT TRUSTED ADULTS & NEIGHBORS

- Talk to trusted adults in your neighborhood about your child's special needs and provide them with written contact information.
- Let them know what your child is afraid of and what (s)he is attracted to – such as cars, animals, traffic lights or waterfronts.
- Tell them of your child's reaction to adverse stimuli or triggers – like loud noises or bright lights.
- What should they do if they should see your child out and unsupervised? How should your child be approached? Will (s)he respond if called by name? Would it be better for the adult to tell the child his or her name first? Should they maintain a certain distance and avoid touch?

## CREATE AN ID FILE and HAVE A PLAN

Create an ID file - or send for a free **Child Find Docupak**- for each of your children with or without special needs. By having information immediately at your fingertips BEFORE an incident occurs, you will be able to expedite a search by providing law enforcement with key information about your child(ren).

Things to include in your file or Docupak include:

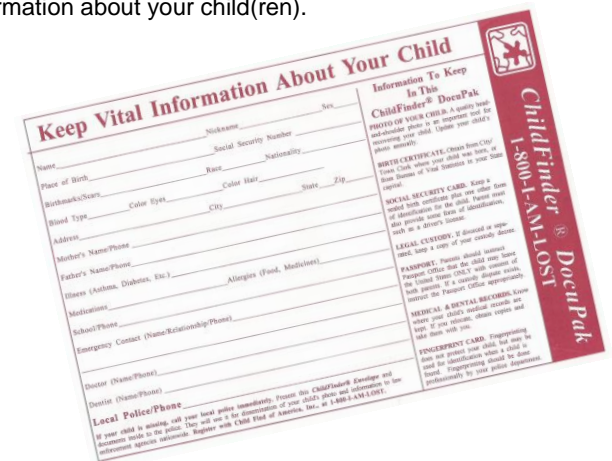
- Child's name, current photograph and physical description including any scars, tattoos, birthmarks etc.
- Names, address(es) phone numbers of parents, caretakers, and/or emergency contacts.
- Medical issues such as allergies and diabetes

For younger and special needs children, identify:

- Likes, dislikes, fears, triggers, and de-escalation techniques
- Any safety code word. If non-verbal, method of communication: sign language? Printed notes?
- Does the child wear an ID bracelet or have a tag sewn in clothing?

For ASD children and adults, identify and *insist* first responders search:

- Nearby bodies of water, parks and favorite attractions/locations where the child may be found.



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PO Box 277 New Paltz NY 12561  
Helplines: 1-800-1-AM-LOST (1-800-426-5678)  
Email: [information@childfindofamerica.org](mailto:information@childfindofamerica.org)

Business Phone: 845-883-6060  
Parent Help: 1-800-716-3468  
Web Site: [www.childfindofamerica.org](http://www.childfindofamerica.org)

**Learn more about Autism & ASD at the National Institute of Mental Health's website:**  
[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders)

PDFs of this and other Child Find safety tips are available to download online at [www.childfindofamerica.org](http://www.childfindofamerica.org)