



## Elopement and Being Lost

- Elopement is leaving a designated area where you are supposed to be, without warning, without permission, without telling anyone.
- People that might elope are individuals with special needs, individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's. It could be a brain injury. There are several types of people that might elope.
- Call 911 the second your child is missing. If you don't, you are putting your child's life at risk. Anytime an individual who is not fully able to care for themselves goes missing, it's a huge risk. Emotional, physical...every aspect of it. And it's something that we truly need to be more proactive as a community.
- When it comes to special needs, we have to realize that there's triggers to this.
- That they are going somewhere, or avoiding something, or it might be a sensory. Running in itself is a sensory input. So that might be why they are doing it.
- It could be something as simple as someone wanting to look at a tree, like a transit bus going by. And getting so excited and jumping up and down and so happy seeing something that is important to that individual. And the thing that it is important to always understand what is important for Tommy, may not be important to Johnny, or Sue or Steve, you know. It's all about the individual. Although the need is the same, my need is different from your needs, of course.

- If you know these child's triggers, you can prevent them from eloping. One of the things I think that is very important is a safety plan. It has a lot of different components. It can have a safety action to it. Which may be to call a family member or friend. It may also have contact numbers, places where they may go, if they have preferred interests.
- Safety skills in general with any special needs individual, needs to be part of their education plan or their plan as an adult. It's critical and that's something as a community and by community, I don't mean Alzheimer's community, autism community, I mean the world needs to agree we really need to stress and teach and have our individuals that we care about learn safety skills.
- Education can save lives as well as teaching the individual not to be afraid of police officers. Not to fear the badge, not to fear the uniform because we are here to help.
- You are not alone. You are part of our family and we are all interconnected. So if you need help, reach out you know and if you don't get the help there, reach out again. You know, we are in this together and we are not going anywhere except but by your side.

---

Let's live safely together.

The information contained in *Living Safely with Disabilities and Special Health Needs (Living Safely)* is provided for educational and informational purposes only. The content contains general information and may not reflect a person's individual needs or current legal developments or information. Children's Specialized Hospital makes no guarantee, either communicated or implied, about the accuracy, application, appropriateness, or completeness of the information within *Living Safely*, or at any other website to which it is linked. Children's Specialized Hospital specifically relinquishes all liability with respect to any person's actions, taken or not taken, based upon any or all of the information or other contents from *Living Safely*.

Thank you to POAC Autism Services, the Roselle Park Police Department, and the students and staff and FilmAcademy360 production team.

Children's Specialized Hospital, an RWJBarnabas Health facility, is the nation's leading provider of inpatient and outpatient care for children from birth to 21 years of age facing special health challenges- from chronic illnesses and complex physical disabilities like brain and spinal cord injuries, to a full scope of developmental, behavioral, and mental health concerns.

This initiative was funded in part by an Inclusive Healthy Communities grant from the Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services.  
[nj.gov/humanservices/dds/home](https://nj.gov/humanservices/dds/home)