



## Safety in the Community

- Many children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have a tendency to run or escape suddenly from an area, unlock or open protected environments, or wander away from a responsible caregiver. These children may find themselves in an unsafe place or situation, involved in unfamiliar social situations, or lost without the ability to seek or ask for help. It is important for children with ASD to carry a form of identification with them at all times.
- If your child has communication challenges, teach him or her ways to answer simple questions like “What is your name?” or “Where do you live?” You can also teach your child to present an identification card when asked these questions. Because a person’s reaching into clothing can be misinterpreted, you can fasten the I.D. card to a retractable keychain and attach it to the outside of clothing so that it remains visible to all. A medical identification bracelet with the person’s name and contact information can also be worn.
- Many regions throughout the country have electronic tracking systems available which serve to help locate a person who is wandering. These tracking devices can be purchased or rented. Once a family is enrolled, they can notify the emergency team when the person is missing. The tracking device is worn on the person’s wrist or ankle and emits a electronic signal so that a Search & Rescue team can find the person sooner.
- Children with ASD are often attracted to water and may not know how to swim. These children may not understand the danger of drowning. Work with community recreation providers to coordinate swimming lessons and water-safety skills for your child.
- Get to know some of your local police officers, firefighters, and rescue workers. Let them meet your child and help them to understand some of his or her challenges. Help your child learn to recognize their uniforms, interact with them, and know that they are “safe people” to go to for help and listen to during an emergency.
- Many states, counties, and towns have established special needs registries which inform emergency responders about the location and needs of people with disabilities in the area. These registries provide vital information for emergency service agencies so that they can prepare necessary resources and respond appropriately. Register your child by providing details about his or her particular challenges and needs before a disaster happens.
- Discuss your child’s safety challenges with your family, friends, and neighbors. Safety skills may not be transferred to other locations or with other people. It is in your child’s best interest to have as many people as possible understand information related to the safety of your child and the concerns of your family.

- As a means of preparation and prevention, purchase or compile a child identification kit containing your child's fingerprints, current photo, and other means of identifying your child. Your local police department may be able to prepare a kit for your child.
- Using visual tools such as picture cards, social stories, and video modeling can help teach and practice safety skills. Role playing can also help children to practice ways to act safely and interact with people in various situations. Ask your child's educational team to include some safety goals as part of your child's IEP. These skills should be practiced at school, at home, and in the community to increase understanding and to reinforce the skills in multiple environments.

More autism and safety resources are available at:

[www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness](http://www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness)

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