

WANDERING PREVENTION KIT

QUOTE FROM OFFICER TIM JONES: "FACES DON'T CHANGE BUT CLOTHES MAY.
ALWAYS HAVE A PHOTO READY."



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD WANDERS OFF:

1. Call 911 and don't wait.
2. Give first responders as much information as you can.
3. If you have neighbors that can help aid in searching the neighborhood, contact them and ask them to let you know the areas they have searched.
4. Search bodies of water and high traffic areas first.

INFORMATION YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT MAY NEED TO KNOW:

- What clothes do they have on? They will ask for the most recent photo.
- Favorite places your child might want to go to: (Relative houses, parks, stores, school etc.)
- If your child responds to instructions or specific names
- How might they act when approached by someone (should they call out their name, will they run from someone in uniform, etc.)
- What strategies work to make them more comfortable (talk calmly, offer a juice box, sing etc.)
- Are there any medical needs they should be aware of?
- Are there any sensory or behavioral needs they should know about? (Can they handle sirens, bright lights, etc.)
- Does your child hide or are they more likely to be walking somewhere?
- What can someone say/offer that will be the most effective way to get your child to leave a hiding spot or approach a responder?
- Any hazards that are close by (bodies of water, woods, abandon houses)

PREPERATION STRATEGIES

Purchase Needed Safety Supplies:

1. Buy a pressure sensitive mat and put it outside your child's bedroom door to alert you if they leave their room in the middle of the night.

2. Invest in two-way key locks, locks that require a number code that can be changed whenever necessary, or door alarms.

3. Drive around your neighborhood and look for any potential hazards such as bodies of water or roads with heavy traffic. Find a neighbor who you can message if your child wanders that is nearby. The sooner you search those key areas the better.

4. Purchase an id bracelet, iron on tag, shoelace tag, safety tattoo (SafetyTat), or scannable clothing tag (ifinedhelp.org) for your child to wear.

5. Print contact information or a QR code that is linked information on iron on paper. Iron it on back packs, shirts etc. Be sure to place it where a first responder won't miss it.

PREPARE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEARCH:

1. Take note of what your child is wearing each day. Take a picture each morning or write it down.

2. Create a handout that is preprinted and ready to be given to first responders with a current photo, medical needs, places that your child may wander to, names they respond to, any behavioral/sensory information that may be relevant or helpful. Always have it handy.

3. Take your child to the local fire or police precincts so that first responders are aware that they have autism and your child is more likely to feel comfortable if approached by a first responder if they have been introduced to the idea while not under distress. As these are the people that will be responding if they do wander.

4. Consider enrolling your child in a safety program such as lifesaver or AngelSense.

5. Inform your neighbors that your child has autism, and they may wander. Identify any that might be willing to help search if needed.

PREVENTIONS STRATEGIES:

Skills That You Should be Working on with Your Child:

1. Safety Skills such as *Water Safety*
2. Traffic Safety Skills
3. Responding to their name
4. Communicating their name and address
5. Responding to commands such a "stop"
6. Reciting a phone number
7. Pointing to an ID bracelet or safety tag
8. Building rapport with community helpers
9. Staying close to caregivers

UNDERSTANDING THE BEHAVIOR WHEN YOUR CHILD WANDERS: WHAT'S THE FUNCTION?

Are they trying to go somewhere specific?

Are they trying to get something they want?

Do they prefer being outside?

Do they like when people are chasing after them?

Is the environment they are leaving noisy or stressful in some way?

Is there a trigger you can identify (ex. time of day, change in routine, transitions, noisy environments)?



TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR HOME

Monitor your child frequently and make sure they have plenty of outside time.

Give praise throughout the day for various successes (when your child doesn't elope/wander) to minimize the value of the attention they receive if you have to chase after your child.

Work on requesting to go outside.

Practice them responding to "stop" and reinforcing this with praise and fun things.

