

WANDERING SAFETY

Children with Autism may wander away from safe areas. This handout can be used to start a conversation with your child's care team to create a safety plan that's right for them.

ACCESS FREE RESOURCES

[The National Autism Association](#) provides online resources regarding safety and wandering. They also offer free safety boxes that can be mailed to families, and a printable packet that includes stop sign prompts for doors and windows, if appropriate.

[Social stories](#) can be a helpful tool for children who enjoy looking at pictures and being read to. Parents can ask their child's BCBA if a social story may help them to learn about safety skills.

[This checklist](#) provides ideas that caregivers can use to create their own support system. This could include informing neighbors and close family members that your child may wander, and putting a buddy system in place for holidays and special events.

CONSIDER LOCATION DEVICES

There are different types of wearable devices that can help to locate a child in case they should wander from a safe area. Let's take a look at three popular devices.

[Project Lifesaver](#) is a radio-frequency tracking device. Sometimes grant funding will help to cover the cost. One downside to Project Lifesaver is the time it can take for the location team to arrive on site. [AngelSense](#) is a GPS device worn in a pocket or on a special belt. There is a monthly fee as well as a startup fee. It only works in areas that receive a GPS signal. [Jiobit](#) is a small tracking device that also uses GPS, usually available at a lower cost than AngelSense. It is worn on the child's shoe or belt.

Information about other tracking device options is available [at this website](#). Caregivers may wish to talk with their child's care team to see if a tracking device would be appropriate for their child. Additionally, please reach out to your child's BCBA or teacher regarding the use of AngelSense devices during ABA therapy or school.

CONSIDER ALARMS AND FENCING

Different types of alarms can be installed in the home, including window and door alarms, as well as home-monitoring systems with inside or outside cameras. Some home security

companies may offer discounts for families of a child who wanders. [Vivint Gives Back](#) is one such program families could look into.

Fencing for yards and retention ponds is another option to consider. Grant funds may be available through local and national groups.

The Indiana [Family Supports Medicaid Waiver](#) now allows environmental modifications, including alarms and fences, with a lifetime maximum cap for the individual. Ask your child's waiver case manager for more information about whether this would be an appropriate option to pursue at this time.

TEACH WATER SAFETY

Many children with autism are attracted to water and may go into deep water without realizing the danger. Swim lessons can be a very important part of a child's care plan, in order to teach them to float in case they find themselves alone in water due to wandering from a safe location.

CREATE A PLAN

Using the resources above, create a plan that's right for your child and your family. Caregivers may want to reach out to their child's doctor, BCBA, and Waiver Case Manager to help them brainstorm. [AWAARE's blank printable plan](#) includes a place for important contact information and emergency steps, to help families get started. Plans can and should be updated regularly, as each individual and their needs, as well as available resources, change over time.

KEY RESOURCES

[AWAARE](#) The mission of the Autism Wandering Awareness Alerts Response and Education (AWAARE) Collaboration is to reduce autism-related wandering incidents and deaths.

[NAA Be REDy Booklet](#) A free, downloadable toolkit containing extensive resources to help caregivers prevent and respond to wandering incidents.

[Caregiver Checklist Tool](#) Ideas for securing your home, addressing outside functions, and more.

[Family Wandering Emergency Plan](#) Blank template families can use to create a unique plan.

[Elopement Alert Form](#) Cornerstone has created a form with person-specific information for first-responders.