

## Seminar in Crisis Safety for the ASD Population

Presented by Scott Fowler, M.Ed.

## Poll

- What is the number one crisis issue you believe occurs in the autism community?

## Biographic Information

- Special Olympics Program Manager
- Classroom Teacher
- Assistant Principal
- Assistant Principal in Charge of Special Education
- Principal/ Special Needs schools
- Central office administrator
- Personal Experience

## Navigating COVID-19



- OAR Resource Listing:
  - <https://researchautism.org/COVID-19/>
- Featured Resource:
  - "Supporting Individuals with Autism through Uncertain Times" Toolkit developed by Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill
    - Discussion and safety training tips
    - How to build and maintain routines
    - Download social stories and visual schedules

## Elopement/Wandering

- **Elopement** in the ASD community is defined as the intentional leaving of a caregiver to pursue a fixation or interest.
- **Elopement** is different from **bolting**, which occurs when the autistic person is anxious, stressed or fearful
- Occurs more in warmer months
- "Eloping" does NOT NECESSARILY reflect poor parenting/monitoring
- Prevalent during gathering holidays (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day) and outdoor family gatherings
- During new transition times involving an outdoor setting (Camping/picnics/family moves to new home/classroom transitions between portables)
- During times of stress – Escalation ("Bolting" vs. Eloping)
- Can't judge danger – running in busy parking lots/can't swim but jump in pool/lost
- Missing Autistic children **DO NOT FIT THE AMBER ALERT CRITERIA (confirmation of abduction)**

## Elopement/Wandering

- 23% were in the care of someone other than the parent\*
- Roughly half, or 48%, of children with an ASD attempt to elope from a safe environment, **a rate nearly four times higher than their unaffected siblings\*\***
- In 2009, 2010, and 2011, **accidental drowning accounted for 91%** (68% died in nearby pond, lake, creek or river) total U.S. deaths reported in children with an ASD ages 14 and younger subsequent to wandering/elopement.\*\*
- More than one third of ASD children who wander/elope are never or rarely able to communicate their name, address, or phone number\*\*
- Two in three parents of elopers reported their missing children had a "close call" with a traffic injury\*\*
- 32% of parents reported a "close call" with a possible drowning\*\*
- Wandering was ranked among the most stressful ASD behavior by 58% of parents of elopers\*\*
- Children with ASD are eight times more likely to elope between the ages of 7 and 10 than their typically-developing siblings\*\*
- Half of families with elopers report they had never received advice or guidance about elopement from a professional\*\*
- Only 19% had received such support from a psychologist or mental health professional\*\*
- Only 14% had received guidance from their pediatrician or another physician\*\*

\*Source – Lethal Outcomes in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Wandering/Elopement: Lori Milwain, Wendy Fournier Jan 2012 – National Institute of Mental Health \*\*Source: Interactive Autism Network Research Report: Elopement and Wandering (2011) - Source: National Autism Association, Lethal Outcomes in ASD Wandering (2012)

## Elopement/Wandering

- Install locks and door chimes at the tops of doors and windows
- Identification – Cards/Shoe Ties/Backpack clips
- Educate Neighbors / Inform Law Enforcement/ EMS
- ABA – Functional Behavior Assessment and implement and train; Get to the root of the wandering

## Law Enforcement

- Law Enforcement – Search Parameters are 1 mile for 30 minutes or less and 3 miles for more than 30 minutes; Law Enforcement and first responders have been trained to treat autism wandering cases as critical emergencies
  - **Search water first** – Parents can pre identify any water sources (creeks, streams, neighbors with pools/hot tubs, etc.)
  - Search areas family recently visited
  - The ASD Population is 7 times more likely to interact with Law Enforcement than the general population
1. Missing person (adult/child – “eloping”)
  2. Victim
  3. Dangerous/aggressive behavior at
    - Home(domestic situation/Caregiver or individual)
    - School (SROs/School Staff) – restraints and seclusion
    - Community (Teens – Medical/Mall/Sports/etc.)
  4. Committed Offense (Mistake – social misread)

## Law Enforcement

- Make your child known to Law Enforcement (visit to station – be sure to pre-arrange this)
- Complete an Autism Emergency Contact Form and provide it Law Enforcement
- Example of AECF at <http://lancasterwisconsin.com/autism>
- Example of Autism ID Card at <http://autismidcard.com/#contribution>
- Emergency Contact Form – American Academy of Pediatrics at <https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/practice-support/Documents/Emergency-Info-Form-for-Children-with-Autism.pdf>

## Fire/EMS/First Responders

- Like Law Enforcement, make your child known to fire/EMS
- Provide Autism Emergency Contact Form
- Wong – Baker Faces Pain Scale will not work
- Be ready to have Fire/EMS demonstrate on you first before your child
- Address tactile sensory issues/Demonstrate care first
- Remind Crews to call ahead to ER to alert them your child is autistic/request a quiet or isolated room/exam area if possible
- Register with Medic Alert

## School Safety

- Educate school staff – Set up a meeting **PRIOR** to the start of the school year
- Don't assume school staff know much about autism
- Ask how the Principal would handle elopement/ get it in writing that the school will contact Law Enforcement **immediately** if your child goes missing
- Discuss your child's specific concerns and your expectations – be honest and help them set up a plan – discuss seclusion/restraint

## Bullying and ASD – 8 Steps

- Educate the Educators – As approximately 63% of ASD individuals have experienced bullying, conference with school staff about your child's needs
- Educate Classmates – Ask school staff to educate classmates about your child/ School Counselor/ Autism Itinerant/ Special Educator and parent if appropriate
- Educators enlist student support – popular classmate / acceptance
- Visual Routines/ Picture Schedules for the class
- Teach and reinforce basic social skills at home – Eye contact/ Personal Space (one arm away)
- Match your child's activities to their strengths – Chess Club/ Computer Club/ Math Club/ Lego Club, etc. Sporting events – start with individual events and build into team events
- Schedule and monitor play dates to 1 – 2 hours; stay close and intervene as needed
- Monitor and plan for non-structured play (i.e. playgrounds at school; parks; community centers, etc.) – Plan ahead and give specifics/ “Structure Starters”

## Questions and Answers

- [www.AutismOutreachNetwork@gmail.com](mailto:www.AutismOutreachNetwork@gmail.com)
- [www.autisable.com](http://www.autisable.com)
- [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org)
- [www.autismsociety.com](http://www.autismsociety.com)

## Additional Resources

- [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org) – Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide To Safety
- Big Red Safety Toolkit: A Digital Resource for Caregivers – <http://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit.pdf>
- Perfect Targets: Asperger's Syndrome and Bullying - <http://www.amazon.com/Perfect-Targets-Bullying-Practical-Solutions-Surviving/dp/1931282188>
- Autism Safety Project - <http://www.amazon.com/Perfect-Targets-Bullying-Practical-Solutions-Surviving/dp/1931282188>
- Safe and Sound – Autism Society of America - <http://www.autism-society.org/living-with-autism/how-the-autism-society-can-help/safe-and-sound/>
- Genetic Testing – Comorbid issues that can lead to safety concerns – <http://firststepdx.com/>