

Questions to Consider if Your Child Goes Missing...

Below are questions that may help law enforcement locate your child faster in the event of an emergency.

- Child's name:
- Verbal: Y/N
- Locative technology: Y/N
- Attracted to water: Y/N
- Attracted to active highways? Y/N
- Attracted to trains/flashing lights/firetrucks/heavy equipment? Y/N
- Responds to name? Y/N
- Able to articulate to stranger that they are lost and need help? Y/N
- Hides in small spaces? Y/N
- Adverse to people in uniforms (EMS, firefighter, police, etc.)? Y/N
- Likes dogs? Y/N
- Response to touch:
- Response to overstimulation:
- Methods to calm child:
- Preferred hiding spot type (woods, drainage pipe, etc.):
- Reaction to loud noises:
- Favorite actual location:
- Specific type of location attracted (water, woods, park, etc.):
- Favorite sound/song/stimuli?
- Fears:



Contacts:

Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Missing Endangered Persons Information
Clearinghouse

Phone: 1-888-356-4774

Website: www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICSearch/

2331 Phillips Road
Tallahassee, FL 32308

University of Central Florida
Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

Phone: 1-800-9-AUTISM
Website: www.ucf-card.org



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A Guide to Understanding Law Enforcement Response for Autism & Wandering

The Enhanced Missing Child Alert



Florida Department of
Law Enforcement
(FDLE)

Autism in Children

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders and usually appears during the first three years of life. The disorder refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with socializing and social skills, repetitive behaviors, and speech difficulties. Children with autism are at a higher risk of wandering or running away from a safe setting. Often, they don't understand they are running away or wandering, and may only believe they are returning to a favorite place or stimulus.

Children with autism may...

- Wander, run away, or bolt from a safe environment
- Engage in sensory seeking behaviors (rocking, flapping their hands, putting objects in their mouth)
- Engage in high risk behaviors by seeking unsafe environments such as water, highways and empty buildings
- Exhibit a fascination with lights, vehicles, or other objects in an environment
- May be sensitive to physical touch
- Have difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication
- Not respond to their name being called
- Hide from search teams
- Seek small, tightly enclosed spaces to conceal themselves

As of 2024, ASD is estimated to occur at a rate of 1 in every 44 children and is diagnosed 4 to 5 times more often in boys than girls.

It is important to inform law enforcement of any unique tendencies a child with autism may have. For example, a child may not respond to their name, but may respond to their favorite sound or song.

What FDLE is doing to support the neurodivergent community...

911 Telecommunicator Awareness Training

Children with autism are more likely to wander or go missing. Because of this, FDLE has proactively created 911 Autism Awareness Telecommunicator Training for first line responders and dispatchers.

The training emphasizes the importance of acquiring a determination of autism as soon as possible, as these children are often at an increased risk of endangerment.

The training can be viewed at: www.fdle.state.fl.us/FCJEI/Online-Mandatory-Retraining or by using the QR code.



Enhanced Missing Child Alert

FDLE was one of the first agencies in the nation to create a geolocation alert with strategies to locate children with ASD, communication disorders, or very young children who go missing with the implementation of the 2019 Enhanced Missing Child Alert (EMCA). Your local law enforcement may request an EMCA.

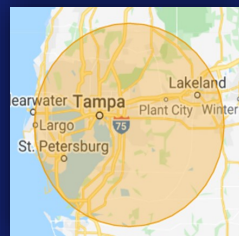
The Autism Society of Florida reports 50% of children with autism wander and those with ASD are 160 times more likely to drown than neurotypical individuals. Individuals with autism often have medical conditions like epilepsy, gastrointestinal disorders, mood disorders, or other system disorders which may require scheduled medication to effectively treat.

The EMCA allows law enforcement to send out a wireless emergency alert (WEA) to a defined geographical or targeted location, such as a neighborhood or community, to quickly notify the public of critical information regarding an endangered child via a link to the missing person flyer. You and your community assist law enforcement in the recovery of the missing child when time is of the essence by being on the lookout.

More information about ASD...

Autism signs and symptoms which may present as impairments or unusual behaviors to neurotypical individuals:

- Delay in, or total lack of development of spoken language or alternative modes of non-verbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, body language, hand gestures)
- Stereotyped/repetitive use of language/ idiosyncratic language (echolalia, using words out of context)
- Lack of varied, spontaneous symbolic play which may affect the person's ability to use their imagination, imitate situations or engage in hypotheticals, sarcasm, or language subtext
- Difficulty initiating or sustaining a conversation (turn taking, spontaneous speech), regulating their emotions (emotional outbursts or body movements), and processing stimuli (such as bright lights, noises, sensations, smells)
- Failure to develop peer relationships (difficulties following multistep instructions, lack of social/emotional reciprocity)
- Preoccupation with personal interests or objects
- Difficulty adjusting to new routines or situations (inability to function outside of structured schedule)
- Stereotyped and repetitive motor manners (often called stimming such as flapping hands, head banging, slapping, twirling, manipulating objects)



If your child with ASD is missing...

Immediately call 911 and inform the operator that the missing child has autism. Operators will direct this information to local law enforcement who may request an EMCA from the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse.

Public safety message

Missing Child Earl
Johnson Park Area
CHECK WATER

<https://www.fdlealerts>