Autism and Safety

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Safety Plan Checklist

- Is wandering or running a risk?
- Has home and school been evaluated for safety?
- Have preventative measures been put into place?
- Does the individual with autism always have identifying information?
- Do neighbors and community members know about the individual with autism?
- Are safety plans included in the IEP?
- Are safety skills included in the IEP?

Topics for Discussion:

- Safety in the community
- Safety in the school
- Bullying
- Safety in the home
- Sexual safety
- Violence

Wandering is Common

- 46% of children with autism ages 4 to 7
- 27% of children ages 8 to 11
- More than half of children who wander become missing long enough to cause concern
- 65% of wandering incidents involved a close call with traffic
- 24% involved a close call with drowning
- Not related to inattentive parenting
- Half of parents surveyed have not received guidance about wandering

Top Safety Risks

- Wandering
- Pica
- Drowning
- Household toxins

Tips for Wandering

- Use of visuals
- Stop signs
- Tape off areas
- Social stories
- Contact with neighbors
- Prevention in stores
- Safe spots
- Walking programs (“walk” and “stop”)
- Meet with police and fire department personnel
- Identification

Resources

- Big Red Safety Box
  http://nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box/
  1) Educational materials and tools:
     - A caregiver checklist
     - A Family Wandering Emergency Plan
     - A first-responder profile form
     - A wandering-prevention brochure
     - A sample IEP Letter
  2) Two (2) Door/Window Alarms with batteries
  3) One (1) RoadID Personalized, Engraved Shoe ID Tag*
  4) Five (5) Laminated Adhesive Stop Sign Visual Prompts for doors and windows
  5) Two (2) Safety Alert Window Clings for car or home windows
  6) One (1) Red Safety Alert Wristband

Water Safety

- Swimming Lessons
- Education
- No running
- Never enter the pool without adult permission or presence
- Gates with alarms
- Learn CPR
- Know the neighborhood

Safety in the Community

- Crossing the street
- Learning landmarks and directions
- Using public transportation
- Using public restrooms
- Shopping
- Handling money
- Interacting with law enforcement and security personnel
- Using a cell phone
- Buddy system

Safety in the School

- Knowledge about autism and individual students
- Good working relationship with parents
- Classroom accommodations
- Peer education
- Social inclusion
- Use of the IEP
- Strategies for behavioral challenges (positive behavioral supports)

Resources

- Colorado Life Trak Program
  http://www.dcsheriff.net/community/colorado-life-trak/
- Kind Find: Keeping Spectrum Kids Safe
  http://www.kind-find.com/

Resources

- www.autismspeaks.org
- The New Social Story Book by Carol Gray
- The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations by Brenda Smith Myles, Melissa Trautman, and Ronda Schelvan
- The Syracuse Community-Referenced Curriculum Guide for Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities by Alison Ford, Roberta Schnorr, Luanna Meyer, Linda Davern, Jim Black, and Patric Dempsey
Bullying

- 63% of children ages 6 to 15 with ASD have been bullied


Top Ten Facts*

- Students with disabilities more likely to be bullied
- Bullying affects a child’s ability to learn
- May be considered harassment
- Disability harassment is a civil rights issue
- Students who are bullied have legal rights
- Adult response is important
- Resources are available
- More than 50% of bullying stops when a peer intervenes
- Self-advocacy is important
- Your are not alone

*http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/bullying

School-wide goals

- School climate
- Safe reporting methods
- Focus on all types of bullying
- Consider the role of bystanders
- Develop peer support networks
- Adult models
- Active Parent Involvement

Individual Goals

- Early familiarization with school routines
- Practice with logistics (lockers, hall passes)
- Work on social skills
- Build self-advocacy skills
- Buddies during less-structured activities
- Develop peer support
- Accommodations for PE

Resources

- The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone with Autism by Ellen Sabin
- Asperger Syndrome and Bullying: Strategies and Solutions by Nick Dubin
- The Bully Blockers: Standing up for Classmates with Autism by Celeste Shally
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Realistic Strategies for Schools by Susan Swearer, Dorothy Espelage, and Scott Napolitano
- Teaching Anti-Bullying: A Guide for Parents, Students and Teachers by Claudio Cerullo
Websites

- Bullying and Autism: Helping Kids Cope with Getting Excluded [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)
- Interactive Autism Network: Bullying and ASD [www.iancommunity.org](http://www.iancommunity.org)
- Combating Bullying [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

Safety in the Home

- Child Proofing
- Alarms
- Visuals
- Secure furniture and electronics
- Safe Signals (for older teens and young adults)

Strategies

- Teach accurate names of private body parts
- Teach children about body safety
- Help children feel empowered to say “no” when they do not want to be touched
- Make sure children know that adults and older children never need help with their private body parts
- Teach children to take care of their own private body parts
- Educate children about good secrets and bad secrets

Warning Signs

- Increase in sleep difficulties
- Angry outbursts
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Propensity to run away
- Refusal to change for gym or participate in physical activities
- Regressive behaviors
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Sexual knowledge that is inappropriate for a child’s age
- Increase in self-stimulatory, self-injurious, or stereotypic behavior

Sexual Safety

- CDC survey: 1 in 6 boys; 1 in 4 girls
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities four times more likely to be sexually abused (Sullivan and Knutson, 2000)
- Individuals with autism are highly vulnerable

Prevention

- Education
  - Early as possible
  - Direct
- Three main content areas:
  - Basic facts
  - Individual values
  - Social competence
Resources

- Making Sense of Sex by Sarah Attwood
- Asperger’s Syndrome and Sexuality: From Adolescence Through Adulthood by Isabelle Henault
- Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health: A Curriculum for Teaching Adolescents/Adults with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Social Challenges by Catherine Davies and Melissa Dubie
- Autism-Asperger’s and Sexuality: Puberty and Beyond by Jerry and Mary Newport
- Sexual Abuse of Children with Autism: Factors that Increase Risk and Interfere with Recognition of Abuse
  [Link](http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1058/1228)

Internet Safety

- Cyberbullying
  - Teach children
    - Save messages or inappropriate pictures
    - Get off the site, chat room, or IM immediately
    - Take a screen shot while being bullied
    - Tell a trusted adult
  - How to surf the net safely:
  - [www.netsmartzkids.org/](http://www.netsmartzkids.org/)
  - [www.woogiworld.com/](http://www.woogiworld.com/)
  - [www.hectorsworld.com/island/index.html#HOMEPAGE](http://www.hectorsworld.com/island/index.html#HOMEPAGE)

Planned Violence

- No scientific evidence linking ASD with homicide or other violent crimes
- Individuals with ASD are less likely to engage in any kind of criminal behavior of any kind compared with the general population
- Individuals with Asperger syndrome are not convicted of crimes at higher rates than the general population

