

# CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM:

## 911 Telecommunicator & Dispatcher Checklist



911 telecommunicators are the first line of defense for ensuring swift and safe recoveries of missing children on the autism spectrum, if and when they wander. With a few simple questions, 911 telecommunicators can provide first responders with critical information that can save lives.

### STEP ONE

Determine if the caller is reporting a missing child and gather all relevant information, including physical description of the child and date and time the child was last seen.

### STEP TWO

Determine if the child reported missing has autism spectrum disorder or any other developmental disability.

**Ask:** Do you know if the missing child is diagnosed with or has traits of autism spectrum disorder?

If the answer is **yes**:

- Advise the supervisor and proper personnel that the missing child is on the autism spectrum.
- Advise first responders to immediately search local bodies of water and secure those sites until the child is located or responders are relieved.
- If available, put out a geo-targeted alert notification.

### STEP THREE

If the missing child is on the autism spectrum or demonstrates clear traits without a formal diagnosis, ask these questions to provide first responders with additional critical information:

#### OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

Is the child affected by flashing lights or sirens?

- If yes, advise responding units of child's response so they can activate or deactivate lights and sirens.

Is the child familiar with the area?

Do they understand the danger? Will they know they are lost?

Has there been a previous missing incident? Where were they found?

- If yes, was there an event, action, or situation which preceded the child going missing?

In the prior event(s), was the child leaving a situation or moving toward a target destination?

Do they have favorite places or locations? If so, where?

Are any bodies of water or construction sites nearby or along travel routes?

Is the child attracted to water?

- If no or unknown, the responder should still check area bodies of water.
- If yes, is there a specific body of water the child is attracted to? If yes, where?

Is the child able to swim?

Is the child attracted to active roadways or highways?

Is the child attracted to trains, heavy equipment, airplanes, or fire trucks?

- If yes, is there a specific one?

Were they dressed appropriately for the weather when they went missing?

#### HEALTH/GENERAL CONDITION

Does the child have medical, dietary issues, or other life-sustaining requirements?

How is their overall health?

How is their overall physical condition?

Do they have any medical or dental issues?

Do they have any mental, physical, or developmental disabilities?

Do they take any medication?

- If yes, what is the dosage?
- If yes, are there any side effects?

What is the impact if the medication is not taken?

## SENSORY OR BEHAVIORAL TRIGGERS

Are there any events, actions, or situations, also known as triggers, that the child reacts to?

Was there a change in routine? (Changes in schedules and routines can be a trigger to wander.)

What do they dislike or fear?

Do they react to sirens, aircraft, search dogs, people in uniform, strangers, etc.? (e.g., will they run or hide?)

What is their typical response to pain or injury?

What is their typical response to being touched?

What methods work to calm the child if they are upset?

Does the child have a favorite song, toy, or character? If so, what or who is it?

Is there any other information that would be helpful?

## COMMUNICATION/LOCATIVE TECHNOLOGY

What is the child's typical reaction when their name is called?

Do they wear or carry any locative technology?

- If yes, can tracking measures be initiated by caregivers, or does it require law enforcement?

Is the child able to speak, or are they non-speaking?

Are they able to use sign language?

Do they use any tools to help them communicate? (e.g., communication board, picture apps, etc.)

Do they respond to the voice of their mother, father, or anyone else?

Do they know the name of their parent or caregiver, and can they communicate that?

Do they know their address or phone number, and can they communicate that?

### The Kevin and Avonte Program: Reducing Injury and Death of Missing Individuals with Dementia and Developmental Disabilities



Through the *Kevin and Avonte Program: Reducing Injury and Death of Missing Individuals with Dementia and Developmental Disabilities*, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), in partnership with [NCMEC](#), [The Arc](#), [Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#), funded by the [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#), Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice, supports local jurisdictions' efforts to reduce the number of deaths and injuries of individuals with forms of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease or developmental disabilities such as autism who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments.

CONTACT US: [homesafe@theiacp.org](mailto:homesafe@theiacp.org)

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[theiacp.org/projects/home-safe](http://theiacp.org/projects/home-safe)

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Visit NCMEC's autism webpage:  
[missingkids.org/theissues/autism](http://missingkids.org/theissues/autism)

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This project is supported by Cooperative Agreement No. 2019-NT-BX-K002 and 15PBJA-22-GK-03582-MAPX awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s) or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.