SCHOOL SAFETY PLAINLY

FOR STAFF & PARENTS · K-12

KEEPING AUTISTIC STUDENTS SAFE AT SCHOOL

Wandering and emergency drills are the biggest risks. Here's how K-12 staff and families can help.

IF A STUDENT IS

MISSING

1. **Call 911 right away.** Search the building at the same time. Don't wait to call.
2. **Check near water first:** ponds, retention basins, creeks, pools, ditches. Drowning is the leading cause of death after an autistic child wanders (CDC).
3. **Then check roads,** parking lots and railroad tracks.
4. **Tell responders** the student is autistic. Share a photo, clothing, and what calms or upsets them.

EVERY DAY

PREVENT WANDERING

- **Put a wandering plan in the IEP or 504 plan:** warning signs, who watches, what to do.
- **Know the signs,** like looking at the door. Watch closely at arrival, dismissal, recess and transitions.
- **Train every adult,** including subs, bus drivers, and lunch and recess staff.
- **Map the water** near your campus before you ever need to.

FIRE, LOCKDOWN, WEATHER

DRILLS

- **Tell the student ahead of time.** Use a visual schedule or a social story.
- **Keep headphones and calming items** ready. Practice in small steps.
- **Check in afterward** with the student and the family.

FOR PARENTS

ASK THE SCHOOL

- Does my child's IEP or 504 plan include a safety or wandering plan?
- Do subs, bus drivers and recess staff know my child's needs?
- What happens in the first five minutes if my child can't be found?

A note on wording: we say "autistic students." Many schools say "students with autism." Both are common, so follow your school community and the family's lead. Sources: CDC; National Autism Association. Full post: schoolsafetyplainly.org/autism-safety

In an emergency, call 911 first.

schoolsafetyplainly.org/handouts
Free to copy and share for school and family use.