



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

# MiNavigator

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[www.AAoMI.org](http://www.AAoMI.org)

Help. Hope. Answers. Today



## Swimming Safety

*Contributed by Natasha Barber, Autism Mom Knows Safety blogger and author*

When my son, Joshua, was five years old, we moved into a home that backed onto a lake. Joshua seemed to be infatuated with the water; I knew immediately that it was going to be a safety risk, so we enrolled him in swimming lessons. Before his first lesson, Joshua decided to test the lock on the front door, found it unbolted, ran to the lake and jumped in. Fortunately, I spotted him running out of the house, raced after him and pulled him out before anything happened; but it certainly could have resulted in a tragedy. It was that day that we installed an electronic keypad on all of our exterior doors to ensure he couldn't wander out again, but also fast-tracked the swimming lessons. We went every day to the pool, and we practiced until he learned how to hold himself up.

One of the most important life lessons, whether your child has a disability or not, is learning how to protect themselves in or near water. Whether a child knows how to swim or not, the reality is that they may not comprehend the hazards of water, discern the differences between different bodies of water, and may simply see water shimmering in the sunlight and be drawn like a magnet to that water or swimming. Our children's jobs are to be playful and imaginative as well as to grow and learn. A parent's job is to make sure a child can accomplish all of that in a safe environment. Enjoy your summer, take the time to work with your children to learn water safety, even those of you who have children that present as fearful or disinterested in the water initially. I hope that Summer of '19 is a safe and happy one for our Michigan autism families.





# Wandering Safety

*Contributed by Trisha Lorimer, MA, BCBA, Autism Spectrum Therapies*

All children wander away from caregivers at some point in time. It can happen in the aisles of a store, at a park, or in your own front yard. These instances typically result in a moment of panic for the parent or caregiver, followed by relief when reunited with the child. Many individuals with autism who wander away from caregivers, however, do not have the self-preservation skills to get back to their parent or caregiver. For example, a child with autism may wander away and avoid contact with others or may not recognize the potential hazards of water or a busy street. Wandering, also known as elopement, is a “high-risk” behavior meaning that the risk of injury or harm is great.

During summer months, as kids are typically on break from school, they may find themselves in less structured or novel routines. That, in combination with all of the excitement and activities that the warm weather brings, may increase the risk of children wandering this time of year. Although not an exhaustive list, these are some tips that may help ensure families and caregivers keep our kids safe.

## ① **Identify Triggers**

As parents, you may be aware of what may entice your child to wander from the area. Other caregivers, such as family members or babysitters, may not have this knowledge. Make a list and share with anyone who may be helping out with care during the summer months. If you are at a family gathering or event where there are a lot of people or your attention may be spread amongst others, it may be helpful to proactively identify others to help supervise.

## ② **Keep Home Secure**

When at home, make sure all exits are kept secure. There are a variety of options including locks, security systems, fences, etc. If your child responds to visuals, you may also want to consider printable STOP Signs or other pictures/text that may remind your child of the expectation.

## ③ **Communication is Key**

Remember all behavior is communication. Continue working on ways for your child to communicate when they want to leave the house to go outdoors or move to a different area when in the community. This could include verbalizations, gestures, pictures, sign language, etc.

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#### ④ **Respond to Safety commands**

Teach your child to respond to directions, such as “stop”, “freeze”, “come here”, “wait”, etc., in both the home and community settings.

#### ⑤ **Teach Personal information**

Helping children to learn basic information, such as name, address and phone number, may help a wandering child be reunited with their caregiver as soon as possible. It's important to not only teach this skill with familiar people, but also novel people as well so that they may learn to respond to a neighbor, community worker, police officer, etc.

#### ⑥ **Keep Identification on Child**

Not only should children learn to provide their own personal information to others, it is helpful for them to have the information on the child at all times. This could be as basic as a wearable tag or bracelet that they have on their body each day.

#### ⑦ **Swimming and Safety Skills**

As with any child, it is crucial to ensure that they learn basic swimming and community safety. This may include crossing the street, locating help in the community, stranger danger, etc.

#### ⑧ **Notify Neighbors and Community Responders**

If you have a trusted neighbor or nearby police or fire department, it may be helpful to share information with them proactively. This may include identifying information, familiar wandering locations the child may gravitate to, fears the child may have, communication modality, etc. If your child does elope from the home, you can then call them immediately to help assist.

#### ⑨ **Tracking Device**

If your child wanders often or typically elopes towards water or other dangerous locations, you may want to consider the use of a tracking device or personal locator. This helps to ensure that the parent/caregiver is able to locate the child ASAP, if they are to leave the area.

#### ⑩ **Have a Plan**

If your child has had even one instance of wandering, you know the panic it brings about for the parent/caregiver and often the child. Create a wandering emergency plan ahead of time and review the information on an ongoing basis to ensure it is updated as your child changes and develops.

***Please contact a Navigator Specialist at [navigator@aaomi.org](mailto:navigator@aaomi.org) or 877-463-2266 to discuss a child's unique safety plan, for help finding child 'identifiers,' or accessing AAoM's FREE GPS Scholarship program.***





# JULY AT A GLANCE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> <a href="#">CranHill Friendship Camp (Rodney)</a>	<b>2</b> <a href="#">Self Determination Training (Sterling Heights)</a>	<b>3</b> <a href="#">Therapy and Fun (Grand Rapids)</a>	<b>4</b>  <b>HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY</b>	<b>5</b> <a href="#">What's on Your Mind? Identifying Your Obstacles (Clinton Twp)</a>	<b>6</b> <a href="#">NAMI Mental Health Night with the Detroit Tigers (Detroit)</a>  <a href="#">LEAD Detroit (East Lansing)</a>
<b>7</b> <a href="#">Special Needs Sensory Friendly Jump (Brighton)</a>	<b>8</b> <a href="#">Kids On the Go Multidisciplinary Camp (St. Claire Shores)</a>	<b>9</b> <a href="#">Art of Gardening (Grand Rapids)</a>  <a href="#">Guiding Principles for Highly Effective Families (Harbor Springs)</a>	<b>10</b> <a href="#">Housing Supports: Building Your Creative Toolbox (Troy)</a>  <a href="#">ADA Celebration 2019 (G. Rapids)</a>	<b>11</b> <a href="#">Oakland County Fair Adaptive Day (Davisburg)</a>  <a href="#">TACS adaptive sailing program (Traverse City)</a>	<b>12</b> <a href="#">Better Letters Handwriting-Pare (St. Claire Shores)</a>	<b>13</b> <a href="#">Dreams and Wings (Waterford)</a>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <a href="#">DWMHA-ECLS: Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (Redford)</a>	<b>16</b> <a href="#">Young Spectrum Artist's (Ages 9-14) Multi-Media Workshop (Milford)</a>	<b>17</b> <a href="#">Summer Fun Kayaking &amp; Paddleboarding (Midland)</a>  <a href="#">ACT Family Fun Night at Frederik Meijer Gardens (Grand Rapids)</a>	<b>18</b> <a href="#">Summer Dance Mix (Redford)</a>  <a href="#">TACS adaptive sailing program (Traverse City)</a>	<b>19</b> <a href="#">Teaching Movements for Communication (Muskegon)</a>  <a href="#">YOUTH Mental Health First Aid (Kalamazoo)</a>	<b>20</b> <a href="#">LEAD Lansing (East Lansing)</a>  <a href="#">FREE Autism Caregiver Bootcamp Series: Traverse City/ Surrounding Areas</a>
<b>21</b> <a href="#">LEAD Lansing (East Lansing)</a>	<b>22</b> <a href="#">PODD Alternative Access and Speech Generating Devices (Lansing)</a>	<b>23</b> <a href="#">JCC Special Needs Summer Camp Session 2 (West Bloomfield)</a>	<b>24</b> <a href="#">Employment Services Certificate Course (Lansing)</a>	<b>25</b> <a href="#">Summer Club for Teens with Autism (New Baltimore)</a>	<b>26</b> <a href="#">Team GUTS™ Fun &amp; Fitness Camp (Ferndale)</a>  <a href="#">10th Annual Teen Girls With Disabilities Event (Pinconning)</a>	<b>27</b> <a href="#">Celebration Cinema Sensory Showtimes (Multiple locations)</a>  <a href="#">Adaptive Wakesurf Tour 2019 (Grand Rapids)</a>
<b>28</b> <a href="#">Autism Hero Walk (Royal Oak)</a>	<b>29</b> <a href="#">OUCARES Pee Wee Summer Day Camp (Ages 3-6) (Rochester)</a>	<b>30</b> <a href="#">Mental Health First Aid- Adult (Lansing)</a>	<b>31</b> <a href="#">Mental Health First Aid (Grayling)</a>			

\*\* For more information on any of these events, please contact the MiNavigator line at 877-463-2266.



## AUTISM HERO WALK

July 28, 2019 | The Detroit Zoo  
Register today at [www.AAOMWALK.com](http://www.AAOMWALK.com)



AutismAlliance  
of Michigan  
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

