

# Seven Steps to Preventing Wandering at Your Child's School

## **1. If your child has a tendency to wander, it is critical to address wandering issues in his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP).**

If there is a history of wandering incidents, it's important to call a meeting with school staff, administrators and your child's IEP team to make them aware of these past situations, as well as educate them on the autism wandering issue in general. If something changes or an incident occurs, you as a parent have the right to amend the IEP and adjust the particular items, at any time.

## **2. Write a letter requesting that you always be informed, immediately and in writing, of any wandering incident on or off the campus.**

If your child requires one-on-one supervision, be sure to make this extremely clear to school staff – and clearly documented in the IEP – and emphasize that under no circumstances should your child be left alone at any time.

## **3. Carefully document all wandering-related incidents.**

Sharing this information with the staff at your child's school will help prepare them if such an incident occurs at school. For example, where has your child been found in the past? What are his or her fascinations or obsessions? Where would he/she most likely be drawn to near school or campus?

## **4. Try to eliminate all possible triggers that have led to wandering in the past.**

For example, if your child is drawn to water, be sure that all pools, lakes, etc. in the area of the school are blocked off so that there is no chance your child will be able to access them.

## **5. Ask what the school's policies are on wandering prevention.**

Understand any and all security measures used by the school. If you think something is missing (i.e. a barrier you find necessary that may not be in place), be sure to voice your concerns. Speaking up is often required to ensure your child's safety. A note from your child's doctor noting these incidents could help provide sound reasoning for strong security measures.

## **6. Introduce your child to all security staff.**

Provide the security team with more information about your child, such as how to calm him or her down, whether or not he or she responds well to touch, sound, etc. All security should be aware of your child's tendency to wander so they take extra note on the importance of keeping an eye on your child. [See the Elopement Alert Form in the Autism Speaks Safety Tool Kit](#) to fill out specific information about your child for all first responders including school security.

## **7. In addition to including all wandering-related information, be sure that your child's IEP also includes safety skills and wandering-prevention measures.**

Include these skills in your child's therapy programs if you are able to do so.