# About this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help raise awareness about ways to keep children who wander safe.

Wandering behavior is more common in children with Autism. When coupled with an attraction to water, wandering behavior can be deadly. New pages on Mass.gov provide information that can help caregivers navigate services and resources. It also provides information about how providers, educators, first responders, and community members can help.

Spread the work by copying and pasting the suggested social media posts below or develop your own customized posts. Below, please find audience specific content, suggested hashtags and sharable images.

To Learn More, visit <https://www.mass.gov/autism-wandering-and-water-safety>

Read the [FY24 Child Fatality Review Annual Report](https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy24-child-fatality-review-annual-report/download)

Or contact Meg.Crowley@mass.gov

# Audience Specific Content:

## Content for Care Givers

If your child sometimes tries to flee a situation, you aren’t alone! Wandering (also called elopement and bolting) is stressful and difficult to manage. Tools and tips for keeping your child safe are available on https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-caregivers

🏡 Nearly 50% of children with autism wander from safe places—and eloping to water is the biggest danger. Drowning is the leading cause of death for children with ASD.
💡Learn how to secure your home and prepare for emergencies to support your child’s safety. [Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety](https://massgov.sharepoint.com/sites/OCA-TEAMS-CQI/Shared%20Documents/Child%20Fatality%20Review/Annual%20Reports/FY24/FY24%20Implementation%20Planning/Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety)

Water safety saves lives—especially for children with autism.
Learn more at [mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety](https://massgov.sharepoint.com/sites/OCA-TEAMS-CQI/Shared%20Documents/Child%20Fatality%20Review/Annual%20Reports/FY24/FY24%20Implementation%20Planning/Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety)

Worried about your child’s wandering behavior? There are resources that can help! Check out the Autism, Wandering & Water Safety webpage for information about safety equipment, adaptive swim lessons, therapies, financial support and more that can help keep your child safe. [Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety](http://www.Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety)

## Content for Educators

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are at increased risk of drowning. Help them and their caregivers by talking about emergency preparedness and prevention. The Autism, Wandering & Water Safety webpage has resources to help. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-providers-educators>

DESE reports a 6X increase in the number of Massachusetts children with Autism Spectrum Disorder receiving special education since the 2002-2003 school year. This growing population, and their caregivers need tailored support for complicated systems navigation. You can help. Learn more at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-providers-educators>

IEPs can help address wandering behaviors in children with ASD. Learn how and why this is important at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-providers-educators>

## Content for Medical and Therapeutic Providers

Only 1/3 of parents of children with autism report formal counseling on elopement behavior, even though up to half of children with autism express this behavior. You can help change that. [Provider Fact Sheet Link](https://www.mass.gov/doc/provider-educator-fact-sheet/download).

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Have you asked about your pediatric patient’s wandering behavior? You can help their caregiver navigate resources including safety equipment, adaptive swim lessons, therapies, financial support and more that could save a life. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-providers-educators>

## First Responders:

🚨 First responders: Do you know what to do when a child with autism is reported missing?
🌊 Drowning is the leading cause of death, and time is critical.
Find tools and tips on our website <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-emergency-responders>

When a child with autism goes missing, every minute counts. Water is the #1 risk—and it should be the first place you check. Find tools and tip on our website <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/autism-wandering-and-water-safety-information-for-emergency-responders>

## General Content

🏊 Children with autism are drawn to water—but may not understand the danger.
Parents, educators, doctors, therapists and first responders work *together* to prevent drowning.

[Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety](http://www.Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety)

Worried about your child’s wandering behavior? There are resources that can help! Check out the Autism, Wandering & Water Safety webpage for information about safety equipment, adaptive swim lessons, therapies, financial support and more that can help keep your child safe. [Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety](http://www.Mass.gov/AutismWaterSafety)

Children with ASD are at a 160-time increased risk of drowning compared to peers. More information and prevention tips are available at <https://www.mass.gov/autism-wandering-and-water-safety>

### Newsletter Blurb

**New Resource on Autism, Wandering, and Water Safety**

Research shows that up to 50% of children with Autism may leave a safe environment without telling anyone—a behavior known as wandering, elopement, or bolting. This can occur for a variety of reasons, including trying to get something they want or like, trying to escape overwhelming feelings or sensations, or simply exploring their surroundings.

Many children with ASD are also drawn to water, which significantly increases the risk of drowning—the leading cause of death among children with autism.

To help address these critical safety concerns, the Department of Developmental Services, in collaboration with the Office of the Child Advocate, Department of Children and Families, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and other partners, has launched a new online resource:
[**https://www.mass.gov/autism-wandering-and-water-safety**](https://www.mass.gov/autism-wandering-and-water-safety)

This webpage offers tailored information for families, educators, service providers, and emergency responders. It outlines evidence-informed strategies and practical tools to build layers of prevention and improve safety outcomes for children with autism.

# Hashtags

#ASD, #Autism, #AutismAwareness

#DrowningPrevention #WaterSafety #AutismWaterSafety

#AutismWandering #AutismSpectrumDisorder #AutismSupport

#AutismAcceptance, #AutismCommunity #AutismFriendly

#WanderingSafety

# Sharable Images

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