



FIRST RESPONDER CHECKLIST

- Treat each case as CRITICAL. *Children with autism have an impaired sense of danger and face immediate risk.*
- Interview and listen to caregivers, they know best the areas their child may be seeking.
- Ask if the child wears a tracking device. If so, immediately initiate tracking measures.
- SEARCH WATER FIRST. *Immediately dispatch personnel to nearby bodies of water. Ask about any pools, rivers, ponds, etc. in the area to which the child may be especially drawn.*
- Ask about other dangers that the child may be attracted to; busy roads, highways, construction sites, etc. and immediately dispatch personnel to secure those areas.
- Ask about child's likes that may assist in search efforts – will they be drawn to certain music, favorite characters, fire trucks, etc.
- Ask about child's dislikes and fears or sensory issues that may hinder search efforts (Dogs, Sirens, Aircraft, Lights, Shouting)
- Ask if the child will respond to his/her name when called.

- Immediately implement Reverse 9-1-1 (achildissing.org)
- Issue an Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA)
- Continue search efforts even when all hope is lost. Past cases have shown that children/adults with autism can survive a long time.

Once the child/adult is found:

- Maintain a calm and relaxed environment.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice using simple phrases.
- Bring caregiver to the recovery site as quickly as possible.
- Avoid the use of dangerous restraints.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has recently published an important document (included in this toolkit) for first responders and search and rescue personnel for cases involving an individual with special needs. Please print and share this document with your staff. For more information visit awaare.org/lawenforcement.htm