



**STEPS FOR AUTISM PARENTS/CAREGIVERS:**  
***GETTING A FIRST-RESPONDER FACILITATED TRACKING PROGRAM IN YOUR COMMUNITY***

If you're the caregiver of a child/adult with autism, and your loved one demonstrates wandering/ elopement tendencies and is at serious risk, you may be interested in obtaining a personal locating device, or "tracking device." While many options are available, National Autism Association prefers programs implemented by professionally trained emergency response personnel such as Project Lifesaver and LoJack SafetyNet. Below are steps you can take to identify any existing programs in your area, or start the process of implementing these services through your appropriate local agency.

For more information about tracking technology, visit [click here](#).

**- Check to see if Project Lifesaver is in your area:**

1. First [click here](#)
2. Type in your zip code.
3. Scroll down to see results.

**- Check to see if LoJack SafetyNet is in your area:**

1. First [click here](#)
2. Type in your zip code.

**If no first-responder tracking program is available in your area, follow these steps:**

1. Call Project Lifesaver International at 877-580-LIFE (5433) and request that informational materials about Project Lifesaver be sent to your address.
2. Present the materials to your local agency,\* along with other helpful information that may include:
  - a documented history of your child's wandering/elopement patterns/incidents
  - information about autism and wandering [click & print](#)
  - any news stories or documented cases in your area involving a missing child/adult with autism, or other cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's.
  - a customized **LETTER OF INTENT** (use template below\*\*)
  - any signed petitions or letters from other members of your community in need of this service. It's helpful to illustrate the need.

## **FIRST-RESPONDER FACILITATED TRACKING PROGRAM CONT'D**

3. If your local agency cannot or will not implement Project Lifesaver because of budgetary constraints, consider holding a community fundraiser through:
  - Local churches, civic groups, autism support groups or organizations
  - Car washes, chili cook offs, spaghetti dinners can be great ways to raise this money.Typically to implement Project Lifesaver, a county will need around \$4000 to \$5000.

*\* Your local agency for search and rescue will likely be the Sheriff's office, which you can Google using your county's name. Google: (Your County & Your State) + Sheriff's Office. You may also try searching (Your County) + Search and Rescue. When calling, request to speak to the person who handles search and rescue, or the Sheriff.*

### **\*\*PROJECT LIFESAVER LETTER OF INTENT**

Date

Dear (Put Prospective Agency name here);

On behalf of the community from (Community/County) we wanted to take a moment to describe a community relations program that would be a wonderful addition to our local agency. It's called Project Lifesaver.

Project Lifesaver is a not for profit organization that offers a public safety program that trains and certifies local law enforcement and first responders to search for loved ones with cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's, dementia, Autism, and Down syndrome. The program includes two days of training on cognitive conditions, how to communicate effectively with those who have a cognitive condition, and how to use radio technology to track at-risk individuals that wander. **This technology has proven to be successful for many years and a helpful tool in search in rescue, which without tracking technology can cost significant man-hours, money, and usually produce negative outcomes, especially for those who have cognitive conditions and are more prone to wandering.**

After review of this informational packet, DVD, and material, you will see why your local residents have brought this program to your attention. We have grants available for those agencies that are unable to afford starting the program. If your agency would like to move forward please feel free to contact Chief Tommy Carter at [tcarter@projectlifesaver.org](mailto:tcarter@projectlifesaver.org) or at 757-435-8494 with any questions you may have.

We thank you for your time and consideration and we all can work hard to keep our communities a safer place.

Sincerely,

Chief Gene Saunders

CEO & Founder

Project Lifesaver International



## **ABOUT TRACKING TECHNOLOGY**

There is a wide range of tracking devices available. However, there is not one solution that is appropriate for everyone. Some children will wear a wristband, some will not. Some need a waterproof device, some do not. Some areas do not have reliable cellular service, which is vital for many of these units. For some children, who are at risk only in certain situations, it may be okay for them to be frequently unprotected while their unit is sitting on a charger, others are at risk around the clock. There are simply too many variables in products, and a wide scope of individual needs for our children for us to make specific recommendations.

Families should thoroughly research the features of personal locating devices before deciding on which is best for their child. We suggest the following considerations:

- *Battery Life - does the unit have to be charged? If so, how often? Is your loved one unprotected during the charging process?*
- *Water Resistance - can the unit be worn when bathing, showering, swimming?*
- *Efficacy in water – will the unit transmit a signal under water?*
- *Is the unit removable by the wearer?*
- *Is geofencing/perimeter notification available?*
- *Cellular service in your area - will the unit work in the area of your home, school, etc?*
- *Does the system involve trained emergency response personnel?*
- *Is the manufacturer accessible in case you have critical questions or challenges? Are they interested in your child's specific needs? Do they support a multi-layered approach to safety?*
- *What are the costs involved, are there monthly fees?*

Lastly, if parents choose to use a personal locating device, they should be sure to field test the equipment in different locations, terrain and various types of weather as if it were a real-life situation. For more, please visit [awaare.org](http://awaare.org).



## TYPES OF TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

There are various types of tracking technology, though pricing, coverage, efficacy, battery life and other features vary greatly between locating devices. Please feel free to [contact us](#) with specific questions.

**Global Positioning System (GPS)** Many location management services rely on GPS technology. GPS depends on satellites to provide positioning and navigation information. The device communicates with satellites and figures out the distance to each and then uses this information to deduce its own location. In order for GPS to work, there must be a clear line of sight between the device and the satellites. **Advantages:** GPS is not dependent on the availability of a network and can provide very precise, worldwide outdoor positioning information at any time of day. Users can set up Geofencing and receive notifications when their loved one steps outside of a designated perimeter. **Limitations:** Natural barriers, such as mountains, thick foliage or clouds, and artificial obstructions, such as large buildings and dense communities, can hinder satellite signals. For this reason, GPS tracking inside buildings is seldom possible. Also, GPS tracking in large cities is not always reliable. Like a cell phone, these units require frequent charging, leaving the user unprotected during those times. GPS units are not waterproof.

**Network Assisted GPS (A-GPS)** A-GPS technology works in conjunction with GPS by using cell towers to triangulate locations. **Advantages:** A-GPS can provide indoor positioning information with greater accuracy and is usually faster than unassisted GPS. Users can set up Geofencing and receive notifications when their loved one steps outside of a designated perimeter. **Limitations:** A drawback to A-GPS is the availability and reach of the cellular network it gets its boost from. If you travel out of the network's reach, your device won't be able to pick up the signals. Before choosing a device, find out if the network the device depends upon is reliable where the person with Autism lives and in the areas he or she is likely to travel. Like a cell phone, these units require frequent charging, leaving the user unprotected during those times. A-GPS units are not waterproof.

**Radio Frequency (RF)** RF works through the transmission of radio waves between a transponder, an antenna and a receiver. The RF chip transmits a signal to the receiver through the antenna and provides data on a person's location. **Advantages:** The device does not have to be removed for charging. RF transmitters typically use small watch batteries. Batteries are replaced once per month. RF transmitters do not need to be removed when bathing or swimming. **Limitations:** Key limitations of RF are the need for multiple pieces of equipment and a limited signal range. Additionally, most systems using RF technology offer the service through local law enforcement so it is necessary to determine whether your community supports a RF location system. RF technology does not allow the option of perimeter notifications or Geofencing.

**Uplink Time Difference of Arrival (U-TDOA)** U-TDOA is a position-location technology for mobile phone networks. It uses advanced triangulation techniques to determine the precise location of a mobile phone. U-TDOA has been widely embraced by major U.S. GSM carriers to meet the government's E-911 requirements. **Advantages:** A small, single-purpose wireless device that upon remote activation dials 9-1-1 and reports its location directly to emergency responders. **Limitations:** Must call 911 and open missing person's case before system can be activated and signal given to emergency response personnel.

For more, visit [awaare.org](http://awaare.org).