



## **FIRST RESPONDER TIPS**

Many caregivers may need resources, support, and educational materials. Consider ways to interact with parents of special needs children to share resources and teach safety.

- Host an Autism Safety Day at a local high school, church, etc.
- Host a Special-Needs Safety Booth at a local festival or community event.
- If your agency receives media coverage after announcing Reverse 911, a new Tracking Program, Take Me Home Program, or similar new tool, use this media opportunity to share tips with caregivers, resources, and call-to-action information – “For more information, visit our website or call...”
- Visit special needs schools or facilities in the area to teach safety and educate about dangers. Using safety in the context of a story with pictures, or other kid-friendly visuals is ideal.

### **TIPS ON INTERACTING WITH A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN MISSING:**

- Maintain a relaxed, calm environment.
- Check child for ID – it may be on the shoe or in a pocket.
- Use simple phrases.
- Avoid figurative language.
- Check for favorite things (such as a character on the child’s shirt) and use this as a way to interact.
- Use techniques to enhance communication and ease anxiety, such as First/Then & Fill-in-the-blank...

#### **Example:**

*First/Then Approach:*

*Alex: First, we are going to get into the white car, then you can have your cookie.*

*Alex: First, we are going to put this jacket on you, then we can go to McDonald’s.*

*Fill-in-the-blank Approach: (some children with autism may become over stimulated by questions. Instead of asking questions, position it as fill in the blank.)*

*Instead of:*

*Alex, what is your phone number?*

*Try:*

*Alex, say “my phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.”*

*Follow up all actions with praise – “Great Job, Alex!”*

**Our kids can survive out there a long time.**

**DONT GIVE UP!**