

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Resources for Searching for and Protecting Children on the Autism Spectrum

August 2021



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
**MISSING &
EXPLOITED**
CHILDREN®

Agenda Topics

- NCMEC Mission & History
- Definition & Data
- Understanding Children on the Autism Spectrum
- NCMEC Free Resources, Search Protocols, Outreach & Awareness



WHO WE ARE

- Founded in 1984
- Nonprofit, non-governmental organization
- Congressionally funded in part to operate 22 programs related to missing and exploited children
- National resource center for families, law enforcement and other professionals



OUR MISSION

Find Missing Children

Reduce Child Sexual Exploitation

Prevent Future Victimization

Hope is why we're here.



Definition & CDC Data

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a **developmental disability** that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges
- The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD **varies**
- Some people with ASD need a **lot of help** in their daily lives; others **need less**

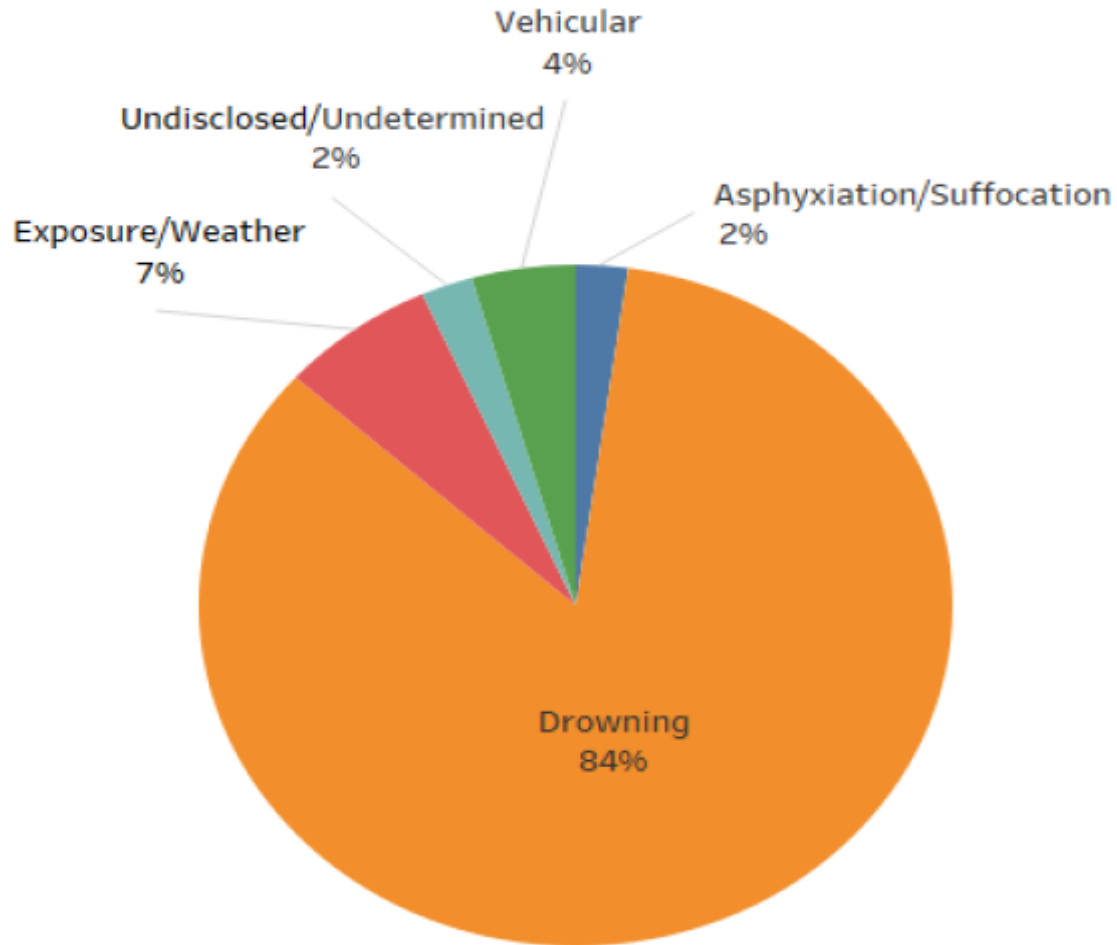
**ABOUT 1 in 54
Children**

WERE IDENTIFIED WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AMONG A 2016 SAMPLE OF 8 YEAR OLDS FROM 11 US COMMUNITIES IN CDC'S NETWORK



NCMEC Data (2011-2020)

Causes of Accidental Deaths



MISSING DURATION

11% were recovered the same day.

52% were recovered within one day.



81% were recovered within one week.

In 2020, 291 children on the Autism Spectrum were reported missing to NCMEC



NCMEC Data (2011-2020)

Most Common Characteristics of Missing Children on the Autism Spectrum

Sex: Male (75%)	Age: 16 (19%) or 17 (19%)	Race: White (60%)	Case Type: ERU (67%)	Case Status: Recovered (98%) 
Missing Month: June (11%)	Missing Location: Home (45%)	Recovery Location: Home (26%) or Outdoor Area (26%)	Recovery Method: Police Investigation (46%) 	Recovered in the Same State from Where They Went Missing: (87%)



Understanding Children on the Autism Spectrum



Which Child Has Autism?



Neurodiversity is not something that presents physically.

“When you have met an individual with autism, you have met **ONE** individual with autism.”

- Dr. Stephen Shore



Characteristics of Children on the Autism Spectrum

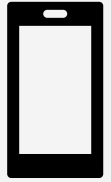
A child on the autism spectrum may:

- **Wander** away or bolt
- Have a diminished sense of fear or engage in high-risk behavior, such as seeking **water** or active roadways
- Elude or **hide** from search teams
- Seek small or **tightly enclosed spaces** concealing themselves from search teams
- Be unable to respond to law enforcement because of their **communication style**
- Have **fears** that may hinder search efforts



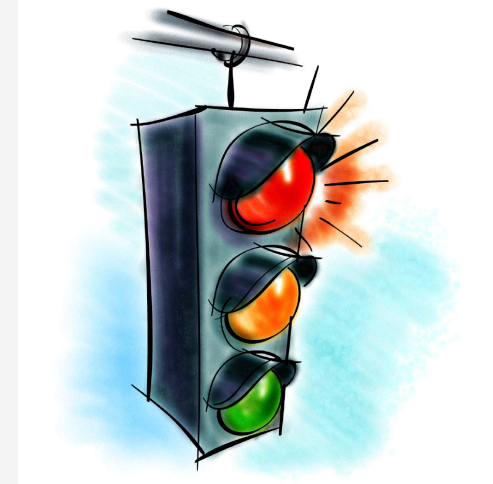
Communication

- Verbal, non-verbal, minimally verbal
- Both verbal and non-verbal
- May use **alternative modes of communication** – iPad, gestures, picture board, sign language
- May only cite scripts or use **echolalia**
- May only understand **direct language**
- May require additional **processing time**



Sensory Processing

- Sensory **overload**
- Hypo- or hyper-sensitivity to sound, light, touch
- Easily over-stimulated or under-stimulated
- May not respond to **pain** in a typical way
- Can lead to **fight, flight, or freeze response**



Social Interaction

- May not make **eye contact**
- May not pick up on **social cues** or body language
- May not understand **personal space**
- May not respond “appropriately” – may laugh or giggle at **inappropriate times**
- **May remove their clothing**
- May not recognize seriousness of the situation



Behavioral Effects

- May have **obsessive tendencies** or interests, or **rigidity**
- May act **impulsively**
- May show **repetitive behaviors** that provide sensory stimulation - “Stimming”
- Anxiety can increase stimming
- Challenging behavior could be caused by **inability to communicate**, pain, anxiety, defense mechanism



NCMEC Resources, Search Protocols, Outreach, & Awareness

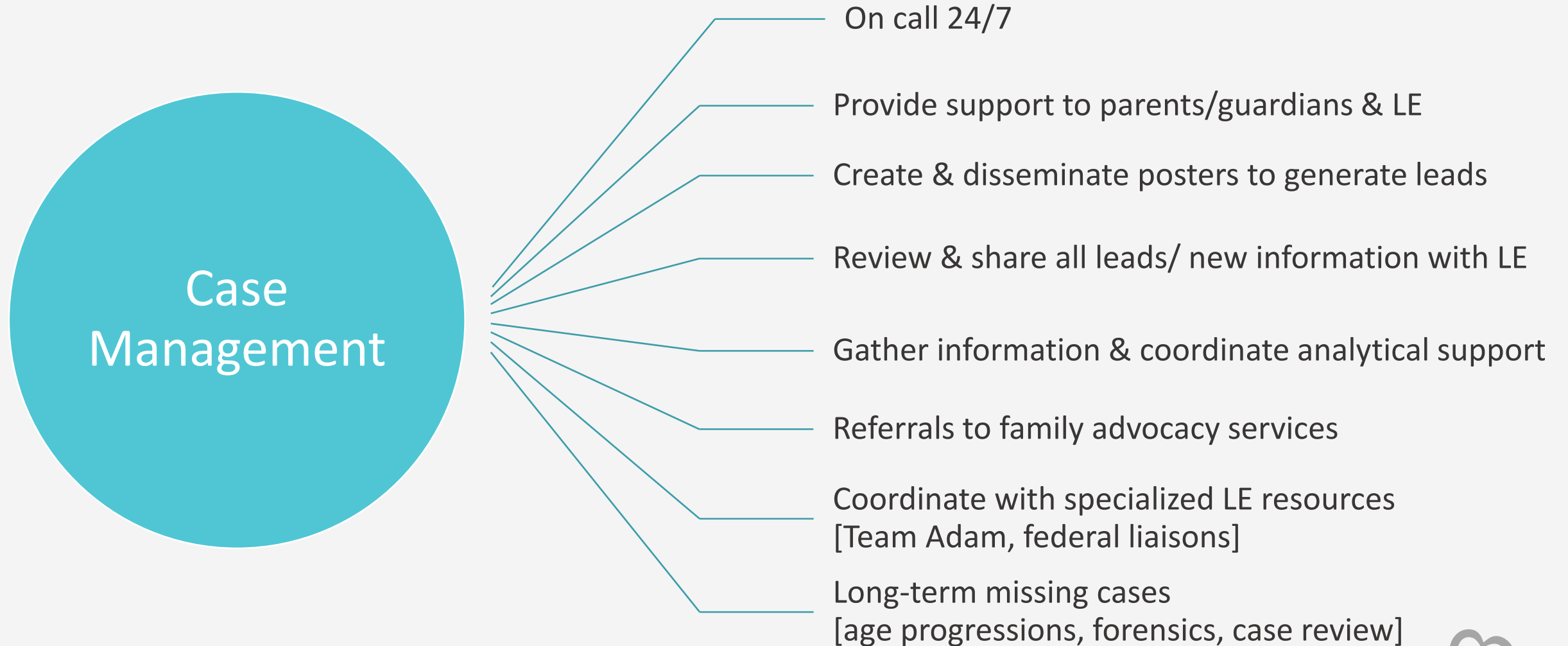


1-800-THE-LOST: 24-Hour Hotline

- Nerve Center of NCMEC
- Located in FL and VA
- ≈350 calls per day
- Reports of missing & exploited children
- Tips & sightings
- General inquiries from the public
- Bilingual Call Specialist and access 180+ languages, TDD



How Does NCMEC Help?



Poster Distribution: 200+ Photo Partners



MISSING

HELP BRING ME HOME



missingkids.org NCMEC: 1237561

Jacob Hoggle



Missing Since: Sep 7, 2014
Missing From: Gaithersburg, MD
DOB: Jul 3, 2012
Age Now: 8
Sex: Male
Race: Biracial
Hair Color: Lt. Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Height: 3'0"
Weight: 30 lbs

Sarah Hoggle



Missing Since: Sep 7, 2014
Missing From: Gaithersburg, MD
DOB: Nov 20, 2010
Age Now: 10
Sex: Female
Race: Biracial
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Height: 3'6"
Weight: 40 lbs

Jacob's photo is shown age-progressed to 4 years. He was last seen on September 7, 2014 at approximately 4:00 p.m. Sarah's photo is shown age-progressed to 6 years. She was last seen on September 8, 2014 at approximately 5:00 a.m. Jacob and Sarah are Biracial. They are Black and White. Jacob was last known to be wearing a white t-shirt and blue shorts. Sarah was last known to be wearing a pink tank top and blue shorts.

Jacob - Age Progressed



Sarah - Age Progressed



DON'T HESITATE!

CALL 911 OR
1-800-8435678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)

Montgomery County Police Department (Maryland)
1-301-279-8000

Follow us twitter.com/missingkids facebook.com/missingkids

Case handled by



facebook


FEDERATION FOR INTERNET ALERTS

ring







Outdoor Advertising Association of America

News Distribution Network



HAVE YOU SEEN ME?



NAME: Stacey Kelekoma

FROM: Anahola, HI

DOB: 10/01/71

HAIR: Brown

SEX: Female

HT: 5'5" (at age 28)

DATE MISSING: 08/18/86



AGE: 42

EYES: Brown

Photo age-progressed to 41 years

Thank you for caring about kids

RedPlum and The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

CALL THE TOLL-FREE HOTLINE: 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678) 24 hours a day or report a sighting online: missingkids.com



ADAM™

Automated Delivery of Alerts on Missing Children
LexisNexis® Risk Solutions



Team Adam Consultants

- **Deploy and provide on-site assistance**
- **Critical Case Assistance**
 - Rapid deployment
 - On-site assistance
 - Search assessment/management
- **Long Term Case Assistance**
 - Organization & analysis
 - Investigative strategies
 - Lead development



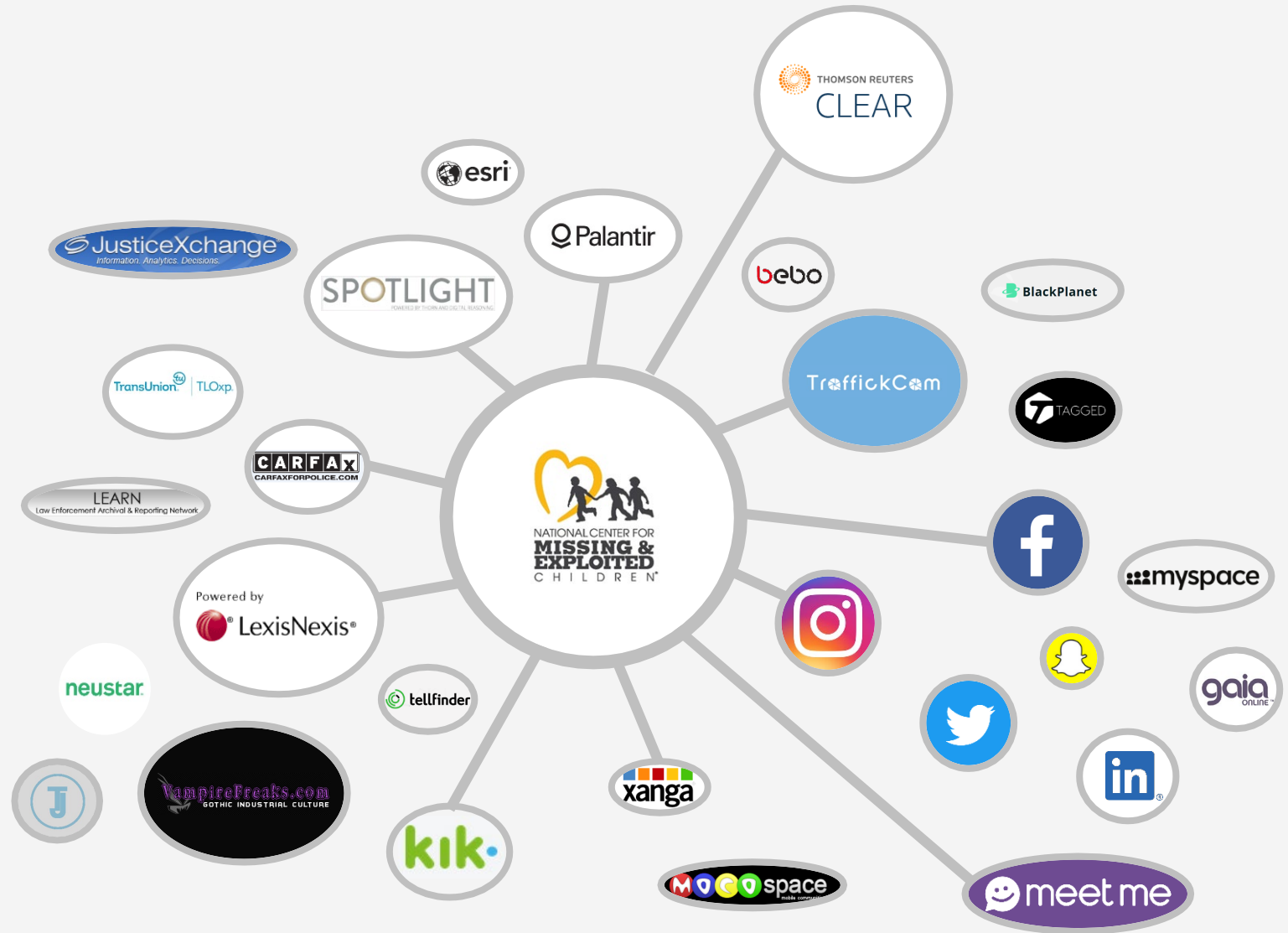
Analytical Support

Corporate data partners, data resource management, & public record accounts

Leading data analytics & public records database organizations in the U.S.

Social media & open-source searches

NCIC / NLETS searches



Call-Intake Questions

- Is the child attracted to **water**? Can he or she swim?
- What other **attractions** or fascinations has the child displayed?
- Does the child have a **favorite place** to visit?
- Who or What will the child respond to ?
- Has the child wandered away before?
- Does the child have any specific dislikes, fears or **behavior triggers**?



Search & Rescue Measures

- Activate **SAR** and **CART** along with LE First Responders
- Access the search area, segment into **searchable segments**
- **Preserve the PLS** or Crime Scene
- Provide a briefing to SAR personnel including child's behaviors, (**likes, dislikes, fears, attractions, reactions to strangers, noise, K9's etc.**)



Recovery and Reunification Measures

- Approach the child at their level, be **calm** and supportive
- Determine **health** of the child
- Reunite child with Parent or Caregiver ASAP
- **Do not assume** the child understands you
- Utilize communication tools if needed
- Contact **National Autism Association**




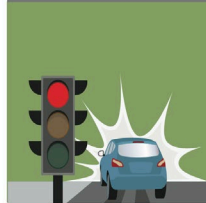

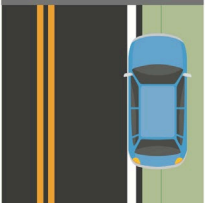

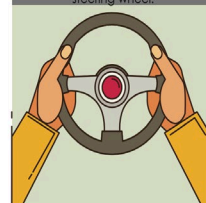
Core Components of Outreach & Awareness

- Officer Training
- Community Education & Outreach
- Community Partnerships & Events
- Communication












Communication & Awareness Tools

Traffic Stop, Part 1: What to Expect

<p>If I don't follow a traffic law, I may be stopped by the police.</p> 	<p>This might be driving over the speed limit or driving through a red light.</p> 	<p>The police officer will turn on the lights and siren of the patrol car.</p> 
<p>This is how I will know I should pull my car to the side of the road.</p> 	<p>When I see the police car lights behind me and/or hear sirens, I should safely and quickly pull my car to the side of the road.</p> 	<p>When the police officer walks up to my car, I should put my window down and keep my hands on the steering wheel.</p> 




<p>Do you need the bathroom?</p> 	<p>Stand Still</p> 	<p>Sit down</p> 
<p>What is your address?</p> 	<p>Can you talk?</p> 	<p>Are you afraid?</p> 
<p>Stop</p> 	<p>Do you take medicine?</p> 	<p>Do you have allergies?</p> 

PREMISE ALERT PROGRAM



NCMEC Free Resources

- Investigative checklists & search protocols
- Team Adam
- Wandering tips
- Key Information



Key Information

This model script can provide guidance for families on how to effectively communicate with emergency operators in the event of an emergency involving their child with autism.

Letter for Neighbors


Help neighbors better understand how to keep your child with autism safe with this sample letter.



Community

Ring's mission is to help make neighborhoods safer. NCMEC missing child posters are featured directly on the [Neighbors App by Ring](#) to reach millions of engaged community members who can help bring more children home.

[Click here](#) to read about how Ring's Neighbors App can help when children on the Autism Spectrum go missing.



How to Host a Sensory Friendly First Responder Event for Children with Autism

Missing Children on the Autism Spectrum Search Protocols

Missing Children with Special Needs Lost-Person Questionnaire



Resource Links

NCMEC Autism Page

<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/autism>

NCMEC CONNECT

<https://connect.missingkids.org/>

Missing Kids Readiness Program

<https://www.missingkids.org/education/training/missing-kids-readiness-program>

National Autism Association **Big Red Safety Box**

<https://nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box/>

International Association of Chiefs of Police Home-Safe Project

<https://www.theiacp.org/projects/home-safe>

The Issues

**Autism &
Wandering**



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1-800-THE-LOST



For more resources please visit
MissingKids.org



@MissingKids

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