

SAFETY & COMMUNICATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

According to the [National Autism Association](#), accidental drowning was responsible for approximately 91 percent of the total deaths in the U.S. reported in children with autism aged 14 years and younger due to wandering/desertion from 2009 to 2011. Plus, nearly 50 percent of autistic children escape a safe environment. The figure is four times higher than non-autistic children. The Autism Society began the Safe and Sound™ initiative in 2005 to provide much-needed resources on topics such as general safety, emergency preparedness and prevention, and risk management. Safe and Sound works to develop information and strategies to benefit individuals on the spectrum, their families and the professionals who work with them. Another significant aspect of Safe and Sound is to provide information and training to first responders — those who are first on the scene in an emergency.

Ten Things You Can Do Related to Safety — Starting Now

1. **Get to know your neighbors and those who make up your community** (fire, police, grocers, etc.); be a resource so they understand ASD and your child.
2. Fill out a **Personal ID Record** (such as the one offered by the Autism Society) and make various copies to keep in key locations. Flag your address in the 911 system.
3. **Anticipate issues** that could arise and contemplate solutions. When you need assistance, reach out to others in the autism community for ideas.
4. Ensure the individual with ASD has an **effective method of communication**.
5. **Practice providing personal information** — name, address, phone number — in an understandable manner in various situations.
6. Have concrete, detailed and frequent conversations with your child about the rules (e.g. talking to strangers, staying in the yard or with caregivers, etc.)
7. Talk with others about your concerns and rules. **Establish a phone tree and action plan** that can be engaged if the worst happens.
8. **Listen, watch and learn**. Try to understand why your child does things, anticipate potential issues, and develop good solutions.
9. Address issues such as **bullying at school** — ensure policies are in place and increase awareness of autism in the entire student population.
10. **Stress water safety** — it can mean the difference between life and death. Enroll your child in swimming lessons if he/she does not know how to swim.

ELOPEMENT AND WANDERING

The issue of wandering for individuals living with autism remains a serious concern for all of us. This year, it appears that more children living with autism are dying from wandering and as a nation, we must address these tragedies. At the Autism Society, we are very concerned about this alarming trend and doing all we can to help support families and individuals who are living with autism.

The Autism Society has been a leader since the 90's in working with First Responders, launching our Safe and Sound Program in 2005. This program helps First Responders fully understand autism and various other situations requiring an informed and sensitive response, like wandering.



It is a priority of the Autism Society to provide support and guidance to those who are concerned or affected by wandering. In Ventura County, the ASVC works with local law enforcement to provide training to Law Enforcers and Families alike to prepare when crisis situations occur.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura County Sherriff's Department; <http://www.vcsd.org/contact-directory.php>

EMERGENCY: CALL 911

NON-EMERGENCY: CALL (805) 654-9511

SHERRIFF'S PATROL STATIONS

Camarillo Patrol Station

3701 East Las Posas Road
Camarillo, CA 93010
(805) 388-5100 Reception
(805) 388-4280 Patrol Deputies Voicemail
(805) 388-5155 Community Resource Unit

Fillmore Patrol Station

524 Sespe Avenue
Fillmore, CA 93015
(805) 524-2233 Reception

Lockwood Valley Patrol Station

15021 Lockwood Valley Road
Frazier Park, CA 93225
(661) 245-3511 Emergency
(661) 245-3829 Reception

Ojai Patrol Station

402 South Ventura Street
Ojai, California 93023
(805) 646-1414 Reception

East County Patrol Station

2101 East Olsen Road
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
(805) 494-8200 Reception
(805) 449-2760 Thousand Oaks Blvd Resource Center
(805) 375-5630 Newbury Park Resource Center

Headquarters Patrol Station

800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-2890 Reception

Moorpark Patrol Station

610 Spring Road
Moorpark, CA 93021
(805) 532-2700 Reception

Sheriff's Communication Center (SCC)

800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009
(805) 654-9511 Dispatch & Watch Commander

Ventura County Harbor Patrol

Channel Islands Harbor
3900 Pelican Way
Oxnard, CA 93035
(805)382-3000

[Agency Website](#) 

Oxnard Police Department

251 South "C" Street
Oxnard, CA 93030
(805) 385-7740

[Agency Website](#) 

Santa Paula Police Department

210 South 10th Street
Santa Paula, CA 93060
(805) 933-4231

[Agency Website](#) 

Ventura Police Department

1425 Dowell Dr.
Ventura, CA 93003
(805) 339-4400
(805) 650-8010

[Agency Website](#) 

Port Hueneme Police Department

250 North Ventura Road
Port Hueneme, CA 93041-3094
(805) 986-6530

[Agency Website](#) 

Simi Valley Police Department

2929 Tapo Canyon Road
Simi Valley, CA 93063
(805) 583-6700

[Agency Website](#) 

Ventura County Crisis Intervention TEAM (CIT):

Collaboration of local law enforcement and Behavioral Health offices.

(805) 383-4806 <http://www.venturacountycit.org/index.html> Email: VenturaCo.CIT@ventura.org

CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS TEAM)

Services available for a person in crisis are the same services that are available for anyone served by the Regional Center. However, when a person is in crisis, a different mix of services may be required to meet his or her short-term needs. When a person served by the Regional Center experiences a crisis and the IPP needs to be revised to meet the new needs, the Planning Team must be convened and agree upon a plan of action before new services are authorized. This meeting can happen quickly and by phone, if necessary.

A crisis intervention agency that is available on a 24/7 basis assists TCRC in responding to crisis situations. They can make home visits, help to defuse volatile situations and provide advocacy for services from generic resources, such as mental health. TCRC has a manager on-call when the offices are closed to assist in developing appropriate crisis plans, including:

- Crisis Prevention as part of CSS
- Prevent and De-escalate Crisis
- Non-Aversive and Non Confrontational Methods
- Assessment for Crisis Potential
- Assist with Transitions
- Remain available for Support and Assurance
- Stabilize and Maintain Placement
- Avoid Hospitalization and Police Involvement
- Assist with Hospitalization and Police Involvement when necessary
- Prioritize Crisis based on Severity and Available Resources

Ventura County (24/7): 888-566-1666 or 911

Tell the Operator to "Call" the Crisis Team and give them your name and number along with the individual's name and a brief description of the issue. Calls are returned as quickly as possible, if you do not receive a response within 5-10 minutes, call again to ensure your message was received by the CSS Team. For prevention appointments call Monday through Friday 10am-6pm

Ten Crisis Prevention Strategies

1. **Be Compassionate:** Avoid being judgmental to individual's feelings. Their feelings are real even if they are not based on reality.
2. **Reflective Listening:** Listen to what is being said, ask reflective questions, listen attentively and respond with a feeling statement
3. **Verbal Venting:** Allow individual to release as much energy as possible by communicating out loud when appropriate.
4. **Avoid Overreacting:** Remain calm, rational and professional. Your response will directly affect the individual's behavior.
5. **Personal Space:** Invading personal space increases anxiety and may lead to escalated behavior. When possible stand at least one arm length away from individual.
6. **Body Position:** Standing toe to toe and eye to eye with individual sends a challenging message. Standing off to the side of the individual will be more successful.
7. **Non-Verbal Cues:** More attention is paid to non verbal communication. Be aware of gestures, facial expressions, movements and tone of voice.
8. **Setting Limits:** If the individual becomes argumentative, defensive or disorderly, communicate the directives and limits concisely and clearly.
9. **Redirect Challenging Questions:** When an individual challenges your policy, position or training, redirect the individual's focus to the presenting concerns. Answering these questions can create a power struggle.
10. **Least Restrictive:** Use the least restrictive method of intervention possible.

WATER SAFETY #1 GOAL - WHY IS WATER SAFETY SO IMPORTANT?

ASVC strongly believes that teaching individuals how to be safe around water is not a luxury; it is a necessity. We have partnered with local YMCA and other swim programs to provide training to instructors on how to best work with individuals with ASD.

The YMCA's Safety Around Water program can help parents and caregivers make sure individuals learn essential water safety skills, which can open a world of possibilities for individuals to satisfy their curiosity safely. Through learning how to perform a sequenced set of skills over eight lessons of 40 minutes each, the risk of drowning is reduced, giving your child confidence in and around water.

A typical session includes:

- Exercises to help kids adjust to being in water
- Instruction in "Jump, Push, Turn, Grab" and "Swim, Float, Swim," two skill sets kids can use if they unexpectedly find themselves in the water
- Specific safety topics, like what to do if you see someone in the water who needs help
- Fun activities that reinforce skills

WATER SAFETY CLASSES - HELPING CHILDREN FEEL COMFORTABLE

Talk to the child about swimming. Use a social story to talk to your child about learning how to swim and what to expect at their swimming lesson. Social stories are an effective way to get your child accustomed to the idea of taking swimming lessons.^[6]

- You can find books at the library or examples of social stories online that you can adapt to your child's situation, or you can write your own.
- Include each step of the process, including the days and times the child will be participating in swim lessons, where those lessons will take place, how they'll get there and back home again, and what will happen at the lessons.
- For example, your story might start: "My name is Andy. Each Saturday I take swimming lessons at the YMCA. My mommy drives me to the YMCA in the blue car. We say hello to the person at the desk. I go to the locker room and change into my wetsuit. My mommy keeps my things for me while I go to the pool. At the pool I meet my instructor. I stand beside the pool until my instructor says I can get in the water."
- Read the story with the child several times before the lessons begin and answer any questions he or she might have about the process. You may want to incorporate some of those answers into the overall story.

Show the child photos or videos of people swimming. Use pictures to augment your social story and continue the process of getting your child used to the idea of swimming lessons.^[6]

- Photos and videos can be particularly beneficial to children who are nonverbal or who are visual thinkers generally.
- It can help to go to the pool where the child will be taking swimming lessons and take pictures there.