

#### Keeping your Child/Student with Autism Safe In the home, school and community

Instructor: Gary Weitzen Executive Director: POAC Autism Services

# How many people wore their seatbelts on the way to this workshop?



It's All About Risk Management. Are You Prepared to Keep Children with ASD Safe?

#### Average Life Expectancy



78.7 Years: Average Life Expectancy



#### For Individuals With Autism?

American Journal of Public Health 2017 Study shows that individuals with Autism are 40 times more likely to die from injury than general population. From a study of 39 Million People

### **Course Objectives**

- Safety in the Home
- Safety in the Community
- Safety in School
  - How to Address Wandering/Elopement
  - Physical Modifications of the Home
  - Fire and Electrical Safety
  - Caregiver Emergency Planning
  - Internet Safety
  - Sexuality and Personal Safety
  - Avoiding Victimization/Bullying
  - School and Transportation Issues
  - Resources for Ongoing Support and Assistance

### Video

- Individuals with Developmental Disabilities are 7 Times More Likely to Come in Contact with Law Enforcement Than Typically Developing Peers
- Preparation Can Greatly Reduce Risk in These Situations

#### Wandering



### **Getting Lost & Wandering Off**

Many individuals find themselves in potentially dangerous situations- where they were going somewhere and then find that they are somewhere- where they don't want to be. This is a common and very serious problem.

- If you have a cell phone there are several ways for someone to help locate you if you are lost.
  - Install a third party tracking app on the phone you want tracked. (GPS Tracking Pro Android & GPS Tracker IOS)
  - Every service provider has their own family phone locator plan. (cost is \$10 a month AT&T Family Map, Sprint Family Locator, T-mobile Family Where, Verizon Family Locator)
  - Get your family and friends signed into the same social network. There are tracking apps that allow you to share your locations with other users in your network. (Find My Friends, Live360, Cozi, Google+, Glympse)
  - You can also use the services to find a lost phone. (Find My IPhone, Android Device Manager), Find My Phone Google)

Another option available to you- is Project Lifesaver or other personal GPS locator device that you can wear.



#### Nadia Bloom, Missing Florida Girl With Asperger's, Emerges From Swamp

A missing 11-year-old central Florida girl with Asperger syndrome was found alive on Tuesday, four days after she disappeared into an alligator-infested swamp **a half-mile from her suburban home.** 





# Tracking Devices to Find a Missing Child with Autism- Pocket Finder-?



# Tracking Devices to Find a Missing Child with Autism- Angelsense



# Buddy Tag



# Tracking Devices to Find a Missing Child with Autism- Gizmo 2 1:04 sec



### Tracking Devices to Find a Missing Child with Autism- I-loc



#### **Use Locks Where Appropriate**

- Exterior Locks
  - It is important to place locks on exterior doors that provide entry or departure to and from the home. For individuals who run away or leave the home without supervision (also referred to as "elopement"), having locks on the doors can prevent them from leaving. Place locks on interior doors and cabinets where the individual should not have free access.
- Interior Locks
  - Some parents feel more secure when their child is locked in his or her bedroom at night to prevent "middle of the night" wandering. If you choose to put locks on the doors, use locks that you are able to open, such as a lock with a keyhole/key, a hook-and-eye lock, or a slide-bolt. Some parents place the lock key above the door frame of the room to have quick and easy access. If a button-knob lock is used on the outside of the door, make sure that the child does not lock you into the room with him or her. It is imperative that you have immediate access to any room where the door is locked in the event of fire or other emergency.
- Locks on Cabinets and Drawers
  - Regarding locks on cabinets and drawers, use safety locks (often plastic devices) to secure items that may be unsafe for the individual. Many parents place these locks on bathroom and kitchen cabinets to prevent access to items in the cabinets.

#### **Safeguard Your Windows**

- If your child likes to climb out of windows, place locks on them. Hardware stores carry special locks for just this purpose.
- If your child breaks glass or pounds windows, replace the glass panes with Plexiglas or Lexan to prevent injury. (storm windows)



#### **BABY-PROOFING THE HOME**



- All new parents baby proof their homes trying to prevent injuries. But injuries are the leading cause of death in children and adolescents in the United States, and for every fatal injury 200 other children wind up in the emergency room.
- Children with autism & other development disabilities seek emergency room care at twice the rate of their typical development peers.

#### Lock Dangerous Items Away

- Secure items that are dangerous if ingested, such as detergents, chemicals, cleaning supplies, pesticides, medications, and small items that a child may mouth or chew,
  - It is easy for an individual with autism to confuse a bottle of yellow cleaning fluid with juice based upon appearance or to pour/spill liquids out of a bottle (some of which may be poisonous or toxic). Also, pills that look like candy can easily be eaten by mistake. Place such items out of reach or in cabinets with locks. Keep the poison control phone number in a permanent place that is clearly in view.
- Secure items/materials that are dangerous or unsafe if used without supervision, such as sharp objects/ utensils (scissors, knives, razor blades).
  - When unsupervised, many children like to cut things (clothing, curtains, wires, books, etc.) into pieces with scissors or knives. If necessary, use scissors that have blunted ends (child-safety scissors), and be sure to provide supervision when the child is involved in cutting activities. In addition, secure items that need to be limited (i.e., candy, video games, lighters, matches, TV, DVD player, toilet tank covers) with a lock or ties.
- Look at your child's bedroom. If you have a climber or bed jumper, you need to secure their furniture and arrange their room to minimize injury in case of a fall.

#### Showering and bath time

• In addition to their swimming and water safety lessons, students need to know how to adjust the water temperature so it doesn't burn, how to enter and exit a shower properly, how to put the soap away so the next person doesn't slip on it, even how to hang up their towel.



• **Depending on the child-** consider lowering the temperature on the hot water heater to 120 degrees. It was take ten minutes of running water on skin to burn the child severely at this temp compared to only two minutes at just 125 degrees.

#### **Make Electrical Outlets and Appliances Safe**

- Cover or remove electrical outlets and access to electrical appliances.
- Use plastic knob covers (also available at hardware stores) for doors, faucets, ovens, and stove burners.
- Lock the door to the room or rooms with the washer or dryer, appliances or power tools to limit access.
- Ensure that all wiring for appliances and electronics is concealed in a way that the child cannot play with the wires.
  - Individuals on the autism spectrum often have a curious interest in how things work, but that can be coupled with a pervasive "unawareness" of dangerous situations - a potentially powerful combination when it comes to electrical materials.

**Teach Electrical Safety !** 

#### Home Security Cameras

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#### **Teaching Strategies**

- There are many resources available to help teach your child/student some very important safety skills.
  - Examples of these resources would be:
    - DVD's
    - Books & Training Guides
    - Social Stories
    - Activity Schedules
    - Visual Rules
    - Video Modeling
    - Signs/Charts
    - Peer and Adult Modeling



#### Be Safe The Movie



#### The Safe Side



### **Fire Safety**

It's difficult to predict how someone with autism will act in a crisis. For example, we believe the individual will leave a smoky house, but then he runs into the bathroom and locks the door. This is why advance preparations - and especially drills - are critical.







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- It's difficult to predict how someone with autism will act in a crisis. For example, we believe the individual will leave a smoky house, but then he runs into the bathroom and locks the door. This is why advance preparations and especially drills are critical.
- Don't assume what was taught at school will be applied at home. Teach what to do at home. Make instructions and drills as simple as you can. For instance, when smoke is seen or smelled, or an alarm sounds, exit to a designated spot in the yard.
- Try to foresee where your loved one will go if confused or afraid. Any child may try to go to a "safe place." In a real emergency, assign a family member to guard your loved one, who may panic in the commotion or try to go back inside.
- Safeguard your home without creating traps. Bars have been put on windows to keep children in, only to entrap them when they needed to get out. Use smoke detectors and check batteries. Replace hollow core doors with solid doors, and shut them every night. Use a monitor if closing the door worries you.
- Children and adults with autism often lack an understanding of danger. Obsessions with materials like matches need to be taken seriously. Keep them out of sight and reach, and consult a professional about how to change such behaviors.
- Some individuals can call 911, while others may turn it into a game. Use your best judgment about teaching this skill. 911 systems can locate users of regular phones, so help may be dispatched without details being provided. Calls from cell phones are not as easily traced.

#### **More Fire Safety**

- Place safety covers over gas stoves and oven knobs so that a child cannot turn them on.
- Always supervise children closely when there is an active fire in the fireplace or when there is a barbecue with open flames. Many community fire departments can provide stickers (called tot finders) for bedroom windows of children, so that in the event of a fire, the firefighters can locate a child's bedroom quickly. While it may be difficult to teach an individual on the autism spectrum about the dangerous nature of fire, it may be possible to teach him or her about how to behave when it comes to fire safety.
- Social Stories
- Visual supports (photos, pictures) can assist the child in understanding what they are not supposed to do and/ or what they are expected to do.

#### In the Car and School Bus

- Some individuals with autism remove their seat belts. Good buckle guards are available on line and sometimes carried by baby stores; local schools can recommend what is used on buses.
- All vehicles now have child locks on rear doors that prevent passengers from opening the door from the inside.
- To alert emergency crews, some families use autism bumper stickers/magnets or window decals stating passenger has autism. In an accident, be prepared for the possibility that your loved one may wander off. Medics may need instructions. If a borderline injury, question the necessity of treatment. It could be more upsetting than it is worth.
- Social stories are great for teaching appropriate behavior.
- Use the school bus information form to help ensure the best ride possible back and forth to school.
- POAC provides free training for bus drivers & aides.
- WHALE, Emergency Visor Form, Bus Driver Info. Form



#### Make Sure Your Loved One Wears or Carries Identification

- The importance of a bracelet, wallet card or other I.D. cannot be overstated for children and adults with autism. Here's why:
  - Many cannot speak or speak well.
  - Even a high functioning individual may be too frightened to answer questions.
  - The Autism I.D. can state that the person has autism, which may help to explain odd behaviors.
  - The best person to assist is someone who knows the individual well. The I.D. lists this person(s).
- If you think your loved one won't wear I.D., try it anyway. Be creative. Don't give up! Put a tag on a shoe or belt. Sew information inside shirt collars. Temporary tattoos. Specialized clothing containing their information.
  <u>www.idpup.com</u>
- Don't be too quick to dismiss I.D., thinking it will make your loved one a victim. It's more likely to help than hurt. However, avoid too blatant I.D. such as "I have autism" in big letters across a T-shirt. But a shirt with other information on it, like your pager or cell number, may relieve your anxiety on a beach or amusement park trip. For higher functioning individuals-consider making id look like name tag
- Important! Even with I.D. in place, teach your loved one how to draw attention to it or answer questions. It's worth the effort.

#### Make Sure Your Child/Student Carries Identification & Know What To Do With It

- The importance of a bracelet, wallet card or other I.D. cannot be overstated for individuals with autism and other developmental disorders. Here's why:
  - Communication may be an issue with some individuals.
  - Even a high functioning individual may be too frightened or anxious to answer questions.











#### Get to Know Your Community

- To prepare for a possible emergency, get acquainted with your local police or sheriff's department, fire department and emergency medical service. Ask the fire department to inspect your home and suggest safeguards. Just having public safety agencies know where you live could be helpful in an emergency. If your loved one has odd behaviors in stores, talk to employees where you regularly shop. Tell them about autism and the potential behaviors. If you are open and positive, you will probably find that people want to help
- Register with your community's 911 center to document that someone with a disability lives at your home. POAC has these forms available on their web site to download for free.
- Some families prepare flyers with a photo, description, emergency contact information, and details like what may upset, and calm, the individual. Special Needs Registry (211)
- Complete Family Emergency Planner



#### Criminal Justice & Disability Case Studies

- In 2010 a police officer approached and then attempted to physically detain Neil Latson based on a report that Latson, then an 18-year-old special education student dressed in a hooded sweatshirt, looked "suspicious" as he waited outside a public library for it to open. Nick has autism and an 69 IQ
- Nick Dubin- adult with high functional autism, Ph.D author, and advocate for Asperger related issues. Arrested for viewing child pornography on the internet.



Neil Latson 18 years old



- Most individuals with on the Autism Spectrum are sexual beings who don't have the same sexual outlets throughout their development as their neurotypical counterparts.
- People on the spectrum are rarely sexual predators or pedophiles. They tend to be victims of crimes rather than the perpetrators
- Fenclau et al., 2012- Found that adolescents with ASDs are clearly vulnerable to being charged as sex offenders. This study examined thirtyseven male juveniles charged with some type of sexual offense to determine whether any of them were on the autism spectrum. The findings showed that twenty-two of the thirty-seven defendants (60%) were diagnosed to be on the spectrum.

#### We Need To Be Proactive

- Recognize your child is a sexual being. "NOT MY CHILD"
- Make the rules clear-that certain behaviors could land them in serious trouble up/to and including imprisonment. Behaviors like viewing child pornography, stalking, unwanted touching, having meltdowns in public, resisting arrest, and indecent exposure.
- Make sure your child knows that if ever confronted by police, with respect to having committed a crime, he/she need to be polite and ask for a lawyer to be present without making any further statements. Many false confessions occur by our children wanted to please authority.
- We must, must, must provide sex education and intervention to all those on the autism spectrum.
#### **Air Travel Safety**

- Planning ahead and following some simple tips can help make traveling by plane with an autistic child much easier
- Talking About the Trip Beforehand- Social Stories
- Depending on child-Inform security that your child has Autism
- Utilize air assistance plans- TSA Cares
- "Autism Explorers": A unique flight for children on the spectrum
- Lowering Noise- consider earplugs or other sound reducing device
- Bring Entertainment and Necessities- Have ID stating ASD
- Carrier cannot refuse travel because involuntary behavior may offend, annoy, or inconvenience crew members or other passengers- they may only refuse to provide transportation to any passenger on the basis of safety- VIDEO EXAMPLE

## **TSA** Cares

 Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint. Travelers may also request a Passenger Support Specialist ahead of time by calling the TSA Cares hotline.



#### Kicked off The Plane



#### On vacation and in the home





#### **School Issues**

- School resource officers can learn what is normal for your child, which may help in a crisis. Students may need special protection from bullies - a downside to inclusion.
- Support personnel need to be trained. Include bus drivers, aides, school nurses, administration and teachers of specials
- **POAC Autism Services provides FREE training school districts**. At a minimum contact us to provide free training to the transportation staff.
- Inappropriate touching of self or others is common, with innocent acts magnified in puberty. Teach your child what is appropriate and what isn't. Rather than trying to eliminate a behavior like masturbation, teach that it is limited to the bedroom.
- Bullying. Your school needs to have autism awareness campaigns and a very well defined anti-bullying policy. There are many books that deal with bullying, and our kids are victims across the spectrum. The higher functioning and Aspergers individuals are often targeted. Siblings are often teased about their brother/sister

# **Communication Is The Answer**

- Behavior is communication. It is used to express joy, happiness, frustration, fear, desires, needs, good humor, concerns, questions/answers and excitement.
- Often, if a student is assertive or over exuberant about how they express themselves, we read these signs and associate them with negative behavior. This is particularly so with students with special needs.
- The behavior may be perceived as misbehavior, when in fact it may be the student communicating a need.
- You may at times feel extremely frustrated by your inability to understand students with special needs, or by their apparent inability to understand you. During those moments give a thought to the fact that those students are probably frustrated as well. Their behavior is in fact telling you something.
- Some of the students you transport may be unable to speak and may communicate with you differently. We, and they, often use gestures rather than words to communicate with others. For example, we may tap ourselves on the head when we forget something; or raise our eyes with head uplifted or shake our head if we have done something silly. So, use visual clues with students to 'talk' with them.
- Making the trip to and from school an enjoyable and safe journey for students doesn't seem like much does it? However, you provide opportunities for them to enjoy the day ahead and in your own way contribute to their personal, social and educational fulfillment.

#### "Anti-Bullying" Bill of Rights

- Reporting and procedural requirements- All schools employees and service providers are required to report incidents
- Schools graded- Districts are required to submit reports on harassment, intimidation, and bullying to public and Dept. of Ed.
- Higher education included- Public institutions of higher education must adopt a policy to be included in the student code of conduct
- The anti-bullying specialist- Principals required to appoint one staff member as school's anti-bullying specialist
- The school safety team- Safety team includes principal, teacher, parent, and other members determined by the principal. Law specifies team parent may not participate in activities that compromises student confidentially

# Bullying

- 94% of children with Asperger Syndrome report that they have been bullied by peers. (Henrichs 2003)
- In addition children with AS are at much greater risk for peer shunning
- We need a whole school bulling prevention program and a schoolwide code of conduct that is enforced.
- The PLAAFP section of an IEP should indicate the students present level of performance as it relates to a student's ability to discriminate when he/she is being bullied. Then short term objectives and annual goals should be set to gain this skill set.
- Boys Town National Hotline- 1-800-448-3000 is a great resource for children (and parents) to talk to a free counselor
- Family Helpline 1-800-The Kids (843-5437)
- Cyberbulling- schools should set up a designated email address example: NoBullying@anytownHighSchool.edu
- <u>www.werekickinit.com</u>

## **Internet Safety**

- 1 in 5 teenagers have been sexually solicited on the internet.
- 1 in 4 children under 17 have been exposed to pornographic images in the past year alone.
- 61% of all teenagers have profiles on sites like my space and ½ of these have posted pictures of themselves.
- 14% of all teens have met face to face with a person they have only known through the internet.
- 71% of teens have received messages on line from strangers and 50% reported that they then chatted with that person.
- 85% of kids have been "cyber bullied"
- 48% of teens state that their parents know "very little" or "nothing" about their online activities.
- Autistic children and adults are at a greater risk of being exposed to internet pornography, online sexual predators, and becoming victims of online fraud. This presents us as parents even more challenges to keep our children safe.

## Autism and the Internet

- <u>www.netdogsoft.com</u> NetDog will block porn websites quietly in the background when your children are on the Internet, protect your children from stumbling into pornography by accident.
- Make it a condition of use that your children must always ask your permission before using the internet.
- Teach your children to never give out personal information online including pictures of anyone.
- Set privacy settings on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc
- Teach your children to think before they click: With whom are they chatting or e-mailing, what are they saying and how are they saying it? Will the person on the other end know they are joking?
- Teach your children to follow the golden rule of cyberspace: Don't do anything online that you wouldn't do in real life!
- No Web Cams on your child's computer.



## **Great Internet Safety Resources**

- www.netsmartz.org NetSmartz is an Internet safety resource from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America that uses the latest technology to create highimpact educational activities for even the most techsavvy kids of any age group.
- Reports may be made 24-hours a day, 7 days a week online at <u>www.cybertipline.com</u> or by calling 1-800-843-5678
- www.thesafeside.com



## Autism and the Internet

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- Think before you click: With whom are you chatting or e-mailing, what are you saying and how are you saying it? Will the person on the other end know you are joking?
- The golden rule of cyberspace: Don't do anything online that you wouldn't do in real life!
- Online Games
- Secure your computer WHENEVER YOU ARE AWAY FROM IT.





#### Rules for the Computer

- Never give out personal information on the Internet, such as their address, telephone number, the name or location of their school, or their parents' names.
- Be cautious when developing a website. Children should know never to post a home address, telephone number, or personal photograph on the site. If children wish to have people contact them, they should post an email address.
- Always inform their parents when they come across anything online that makes them uncomfortable. Parents and children can alert the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children hot line at 1-800-843-5678.
- Never, under any circumstances, agree to meet face-to-face someone they have corresponded with online without a parent's permission. If a meeting is arranged, make sure that it takes place in public and that parents always accompany the child.
- Avoid chat rooms that discuss sex or cults. While these topics may seem interesting at first, they could put a child in danger.
- Be suspicious of anyone they meet in a chat room who tries to turn them against their family, friends, teachers, or religion.
- Choose a gender-neutral online name in a chat room to avoid harassment.
- Never respond to messages or bulletin boards that are sexually obscene, threatening, or make them feel uncomfortable in any way.
- Never send any personal materials to an online friend, such as an address, telephone number, or photograph, without first informing parents.
- Always be reminded that the people they meet online may not be who they say they are.
- Open door policy when using the internet.

# We Must Teach Skills

- Taking Care Of Myself: A Healthy Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum For Young People With Autism: by Mary Wrobel (Future Horizons) This is incredible book with detailed Info for parents and teachers to use in building healthy hygiene, puberty issues and safety/sexuality concerns
- Autism & PDD: Safety by Pam Britton and Nena Challenner (Lingui Systems) Great book with hundreds of simple safety lessons. Excellent starting point.
- A 5 Is Against the Law Social Boundaries: Straight Up! by Kari Dunn Buron (Autism Asperger Publishing Company) A great practical guide for social situations and regulations for teens & young adults
- Autism-Asperger's & Sexuality- Puberty and Beyond: by Jerry and Mary Newport (Future Horizons)
- Stranger Safety and Internet Safety- DVD's The Safe Side Company (<u>www.thesafeside.com</u>) Love these- great for mid to high functioning.

# Some Guidelines for Teaching

- Think ahead and be proactive
- Be concrete
- Serious, calm, supportive
- Break larger areas of information into smaller, more manageable blocks
- Be consistent, be repetitive
- Consider using multiple instruction mediums
- Incorporate the social dimension of sexuality when and wherever appropriate
- Teach all steps and in the correct order

Source: L. Mitchell, RCSW, The Cody Center

#### If not sure, ask! If sure, let others know.

- Students need to know that the behavior you expect from them is the same behavior their teachers and others expect.
- If you're not sure how to deal with a student with a special need, ask someone. Ask someone from the school to assist you. Ask parents what they do. Seek those strategies that work with the student which might help you.
- While it may take a little of your time to ask, in the long term you will be better able to deal with issues which may arise with the student. You will also develop a broader picture of the student's disability or special need.
- View **parents and schools** as **partners** in providing safe and enjoyable travel in your vehicle. Let them know:
  - when students have been positive
  - about worrying behavior
  - as soon as concerns arise don't wait until the issue is so large that no one knows how to resolve it.
- Students respond well to people in responsible positions who:
  - respect and like students
  - provide clear boundaries and set realistic expectations
  - give praise and are positive
  - explain things to them answer the 'whys?'
  - they feel safe with
  - see fun as important
  - show them ways in which to manage their behavior and meet their needs
  - provide options.

# Teaching Sexuality and Personal Safety

- Personal safety is a real concern for most parents.
- 70-80% of all females with autism are molested or sexually abused by the time they are 18 years old.
- 40-50% of all males with autism are molested or sexually abused by the time they are 18 years old.
- During their lifetime the likelihood of abuse may rise further.
- Realize these numbers apply to the entire spectrum: All are at risk.

## Sexuality Education Needs to be Proactive

- Griffiths, (1999) notes that most learners with a developmental disability only receive sexuality training after having engaged in sexual behavior that is considered inappropriate, offensive or potentially dangerous. This is like closing the barn door after the horses have run out.
- Think ahead be proactive ("pre-teach")
- Be concrete (talk about the penis or vagina, not the birds and bees)
- Be consistent and repetitive about sexual safety
- Find someone of the same gender to teach the basics of safety and hygiene
- Be sure to address the social dimension of sexuality
- Strongly reinforce for all appropriate behavior
- Redirect inappropriate behaviors. For example, if a child is likely to masturbate in class or in public, give him something to carry or hold, etc.

\*Source: Peter Gerhardt, Ed. D. The Organization for Autism Research

#### What to Teach and When General Guidelines

#### **Preschool to Elementary**

Boys v. Girls Public v. Private Basic facts- including Body Parts Introduction to Menstrual Care

#### Middle School to High School

Puberty Menstruation Ejaculation and Wet Dreams Appropriate v. inappropriate touching How to say No Attraction and sexual feelings Masturbation

Source: Schwier, K.M., & Hingsburger, D. (2000) Source: Peter Gerhardt, Ed. D. The Organization for Autism Research

## What to Teach and When General Guidelines

#### High School and beyond

Relationships and dating Personal responsibility and family values Love v. Sex

Sexual preference

Laws regarding sexuality

Pregnancy, safe sex, birth control



Source: Schwier, K.M., & Hingsburger, D. (2000) Source: Peter Gerhardt, Ed. D. The Organization for Autism Research

#### Lets Play the Urinal Game





# Thank you!

From Christopher's Dad.

