

# Wandering and Elopement

## Supports for individuals who may wander from safe areas.

**Teach Water Safety** Many individuals are attracted to water and may walk into deep water without realizing the danger. Water safety lessons can be an important part of an individual's care plan to teach them how to float and to avoid water areas when alone. In case an individual goes missing, always search water first, then areas that pose a high threat, such as nearby streets, train tracks, and parked cars.



**Alarms** Different types of alarms can be installed in the home to alert family that an individual has left the home. These include window and door alarms, home-monitoring systems, or outside cameras. Remote supports through FSW or CIH Waiver may be considered as another monitoring option, or home security companies that offer discounts, such as Vivint Gives Back: [vivint.com](https://www.vivint.com).

**Fencing** for yards and retention ponds: grant funds may be available through local and national groups. The FSW and CIH Waivers do allow for fencing an individual's yard, with a lifetime maximum cap and a limited length. Check with your Waiver Case Manager for more information.

**Location Devices** such as Project Lifesaver, AngelSense, and Jobit are popular tracking options used in case an individual should need to be located quickly. Some devices could be available through waiver, such as Apple Air Tag, Leonard Mountain GPS, or GeoZilla GPS; the individual may need to pay the cost of monthly monitoring services for the device.



**Stop Signs and Social Stories** can support visual and auditory learners. The *Be REDy Booklet* from the National Autism Association includes a social story template and examples of other strategies such as calming tools, identifying triggers to elopement, and wearable identification. [nationalautismassociation.org/store](https://nationalautismassociation.org/store)



**Create a plan** that's right for the individual you support. This could include informing neighbors and close family members that an individual may wander, and putting a buddy system in place for holidays and special events. Caregivers and care teams may want to use a template such as the one included in the *Be REDy Booklet*, which includes a place for important contact information and emergency steps. Plans should be updated regularly, as each person and their needs, as well as available resources, can change over time. A multi-layered approach to prevent, and respond to, wandering emergencies may be necessary.

**Additional Resources** The National Autism Association offers free safety boxes when grant funds are available, and free downloadable toolkits for caregivers, teachers, and first responders: [nationalautismassociation.org](https://nationalautismassociation.org). The Alzheimer's Association's website offers additional strategies to consider for adults with dementia: [www.alz.org](https://www.alz.org).

