

A close-up, over-the-shoulder shot of a child with curly, light brown hair. The child is wearing a dark blue and white striped knit sweater. They are looking out over a blurred background of a beach and ocean under a bright sky.

Autism & Wandering: The Road to Prevention

*Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee
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Wendy Fournier
President



What We've Learned

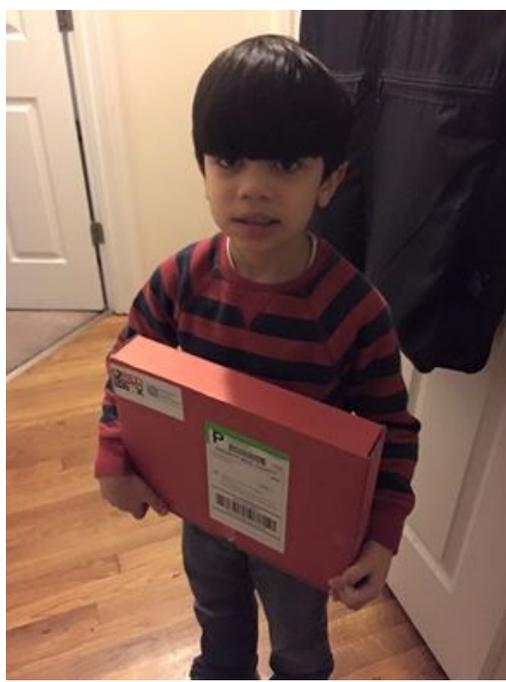
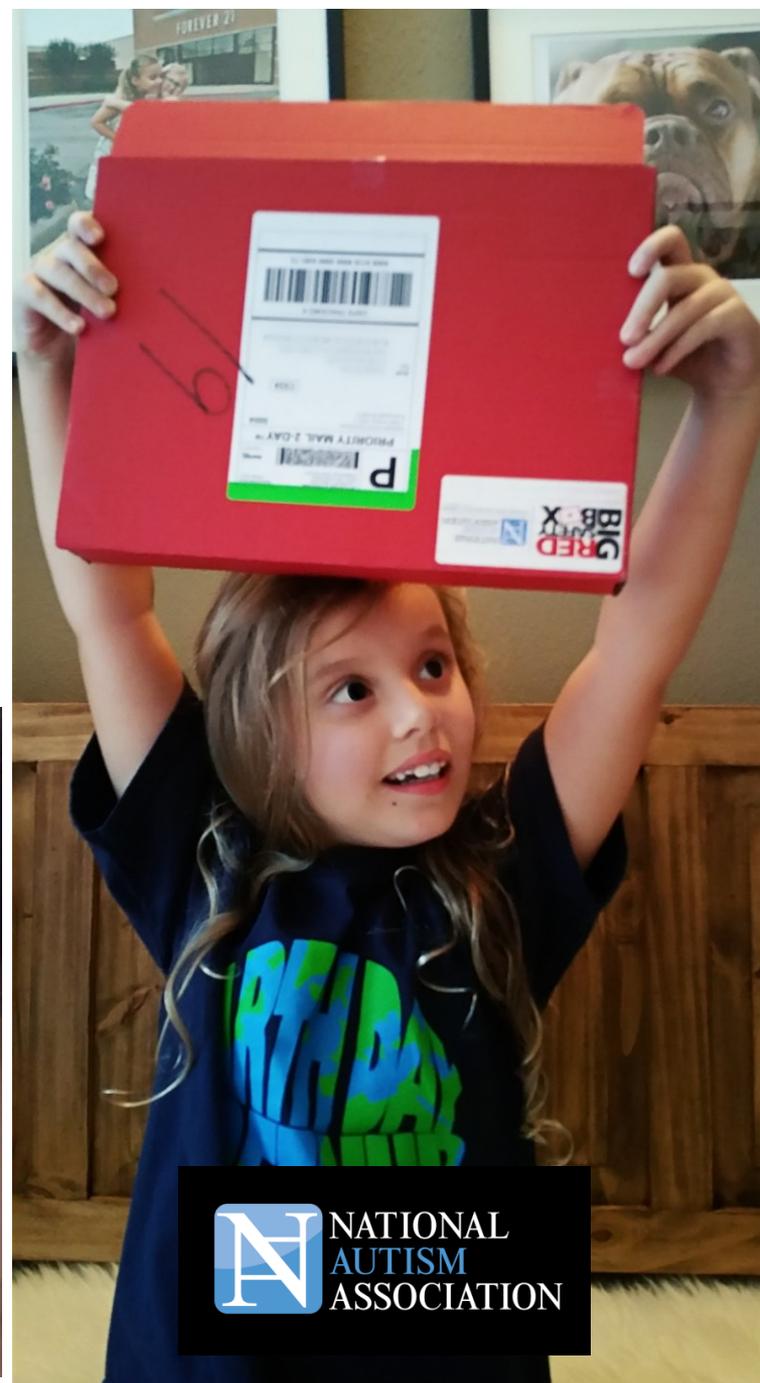
NAA 5-Year Data Collection

Wandering Incidents 2011 – 2015

- Cases involving children age 9 & under ended in death 44% of the time
- Cases involving children age 13 & under ended in death 31% of the time
- 2015 was the deadliest year on record since 2009. Fatal outcomes nearly doubled from the previous year
- Our children die quickly (drowning, hit by vehicles)
- Prevention is key

PREVENTION SAVES LIVES

"I really believe the door chimes in the Big Red Safety Box saved my son's life when he bolted from the house and onto a busy street a few years ago. Because of that door chime I was alerted and able to get to him just in time." -Kelly R.



NAA Big Red Safety Box Program Launched in 2011 23,000 Boxes Shipped to Date



It single handedly put an end to Avery's elopement issues at home. And it kept him safe when he was struggling.
Nicole H.

I got one a couple years ago and we use the alarms and stop signs daily.
Edward L.

Door alarms meant I could finally sleep.
Anne Marie H.

My son's RoadID tag on his shoe from the Big Red Safety Box just brought him home safely after he wandered. I have never been more grateful.

What We've Learned

- Construction headphones can pose secondary safety risks and may impede language development
- We need to develop discrete technology that is customizable to the wearer (See Kickstarter campaign: [HERE Buds](#))
- Must not impair hearing or compromise safety



What We've Learned

- Wandering/Elopement is a non-verbal form of communication: “I want, I need, I don’t want...”
- In many cases, we believe that an Acute Stress Response and loss of control is involved: “I NEED to get out of here RIGHT NOW!”
- Auditory Hypersensitivity is painful and can trigger Fight or Flight/Acute Stress Response

“He understands he is not supposed to wander or run off, but during times of acute stress, he may not understand these rules, his surroundings, or how to stay safe.” - Lori McIlwain, NAA Co-Founder



What We Need

- Development of effective, safe technology in the short-term – Who can help with this?
- Research on the link between seizures and auditory triggers
- Research on Fight or Flight: What's happening on a biological level?
- Let's think out of the box: Sympathetic nervous system, TRPV1 protein affecting Fight or Flight?
- Effective treatment of Acute Stress Response could be the ultimate wandering prevention strategy

Conclusions

- There is compelling evidence between AH and Elopement that should be used to help develop prevention strategies and technology
- 42% of children respond to AH by trying to run, and 33% of elopers overall are trying to escape an anxious situation, indicating an Acute Stress Response
- Acute Stress Response in ASD may go far beyond the elopement issue; contributing to some of the most potentially dangerous symptoms of ASD including Seizures, Emotional Dysregulation, Lack of Impulse Control, Aggression, Self-Injury, Depression and Suicidality
- Acute Stress Response may be one of the most important areas of research to increase safety and improve quality of life for individuals with ASD today



Thank You!

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