

PFA Tips

Calling 911 in a Crisis

Under extreme stress and anxiety, our ability to cognitively process is diminished. It can be difficult to recall the most basic of information - your child's height/weight, what they are wearing that day, their triggers and coping mechanisms. It's important to practice what to say when it's time to place that 911 call for help and have helpful documentation filled out and easily accessible prior to a crisis.

Call 911 IMMEDIATELY

If your loved one is demonstrating behaviors that could be dangerous for themselves or others, do not wait to call 911.

Remain calm

Easier said than done. This is where practicing during a non-crisis time what you might say on a call will be helpful. 911 call takers need to be able to understand your call in order to dispatch the appropriate personnel. Officers will be more able to listen to and assist you if you are calm and in control.

Be an advocate

Provide the call taker and responding officers the diagnosis of your loved one. Be prepared to describe your loved one's triggers, coping strategies, passions, and preferred method of communication.

Be clear about your needs

Focus on the critical information you need to provide the 911 call taker and the arriving officers. Explain what type of assistance you need in order to help your loved one. Do you only need time? Space? Support?

Identify threats

If there is a threat (the individual has a weapon, or is threatening to hurt himself or others), please let officers know. The more information officers have when responding, the better they will be equipped to provide an effective/safe outcome.

Assign roles to family members

Make sure all family household members from siblings to grandparents have a "mental mindset" of their roles in a crisis. All members of the household should feel comfortable calling 911 and should know what to say and ask for.

Calling 911 about a Critical Missing Person

Call 911 IMMEDIATELY

If your child or loved one is missing, the longer you wait to call 911, the greater the headstart your child has.

Prepare BEFORE your loved one goes missing

It is best to fill out a First Responder Form and keep multiple copies on hand as more than one responder may request a copy. <https://bit.ly/39mrj2h>. Elopement behavior can begin at any age. Just because your child has never eloped before, does not mean your child will not at some point. For more information on preventive strategies for wandering and elopement, please read "PFA Tips: When They Wander or Run Away" at <https://bit.ly/2KZK3eU>.

Be as accurate as possible

Be truthful to the police regarding how long your child has been missing as this changes the search radius.



Offer clues if your child has eloped in the past

- Does your child have a favorite or typical place where they go? (Or has expressed a desire to go?)
- What are your child's triggers, fears and passions? Include specific resources used by search teams – K9s, helicopter, police, police cars, etc.
- Will your child respond to their name?
- Do they have any form of identification on them?
- Do they have sensory issues? What about tolerance for lights, sounds, touch?

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