

PFA Tips

Wandering & Elopement Tracking Devices

When a loved one wanders or elopes, we want to know: What can be used to help find them? Technology, such as GPS devices, can be an amazing tool, but tracking should be the **LAST** step. Always start with preventive measures and preparation. Before making any purchase, do your homework on the product, review a variety of tracking devices and consider if your child would remove a device he needed to wear.

Call 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY

If your child is out of site and out of the house, call 911. The longer you wait, the greater the head start your child has. Be TRUTHFUL to the police regarding how long your child has been missing. It's easy to fall into the trap of saying, "It's only been 15 minutes," when it's really been 45. That time frame changes the rescue team's search perimeter. And tell 911 your child has autism. Have a "script" ready and with you at all times so that important information is relayed immediately and not forgotten under stress. Review "PFA Tips: Calling 911 in a Crisis" at <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/safety/calling-911-crisis/>.

Implement safety preparation measures

Remember, tracking devices are only ONE tool. Montgomery County Police actually locate missing vulnerable individuals BEFORE the parents and caregivers realize they are missing in most of their critical missing person cases. They stress that identification tools are more critical than tracking devices. For more information on identification tools, visit <https://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/identification-tools/>. For ideas on additional preventive strategies such as identification tools, door and window alarms or motion sensors, fencing, behavior plans and more, please read, "PFA Tips: When They Wander or Run Away" at <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/safety/pfa-tips-when-they-wander-or-run-away/>.

Investigate Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver is administered through local police agencies. Citizens enrolled in Project Lifesaver wear a small personal

transmitter around the wrist or ankle that emits an individualized tracking signal. If an enrolled client goes missing, the caregiver notifies their local police, and a trained emergency team responds to the wanderer's area. See if Project Lifesaver is available in your area by visiting <https://projectlifesaver.org/about-us/where-we-are/>. If your local police agency offers Project Lifesaver, discuss with them the potential limitations, such as what happens if your child goes missing while in another county or state.

Investigate personal GPS devices

As you investigate personal GPS devices, you may want to consider the following questions, if relevant:

- Does the band have a locking mechanism? Can my loved one remove it easily?
- Can I test the product before purchasing it?
- Is it something my local first responders are familiar with?
- Does the accompanying app work with your phone?
- What is the typical battery life?
- Does the service offer Geo-fence capability?
- Does the product allow for real time mapping?
- What is the cost of not only the device, but the monthly service subscription?

To view a sampling of the products available to help locate and identify your loved one, please visit <https://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/tracking-devices/>.



Funding for Personal GPS Devices

Low Intensity Support Services (LISS)

The Developmental Disabilities Administration's (DDA) Low Intensity Support Services (LISS) provides up to \$2000 to assist eligible children and adults with developmental disabilities with purchasing eligible services and/or items to address their needs. Tracking devices and their related service subscriptions are covered services under LISS. LISS applications are accepted twice a year and awards are issued through a random selection process. For more information visit <https://dda.health.maryland.gov/Pages/liss.aspx>.

Autism Waiver

Tracking devices are covered expenses under Environmental Accessibility Adaptations. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, there are no approved tracking device vendors under the Waiver. We will update this section when vendor options become available.

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DDA Waivers

Tracking devices are covered expenses as Assistive Technology Services under the DDA Family Supports Waiver, Community Supports Waiver, and Community Pathways Waiver. For more information about Maryland's DDA Waivers, visit https://dda.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Medicaid_Waiver_Programs.aspx.

Explore additional funding sources

Visit the Pathfinders for Autism provider database and choose Category>Grants and Funding Sources <http://pathfindersforautism.org/providers-services/>.

Investigate reimbursement through health insurance

Each health insurance plan, and services covered, is different for each person. To see if the expense of the device and the associated subscription plan are a covered benefit, you will need the following information and documentation:

- A diagnosis from a licensed doctor for Wandering
- The CPT codes issued to the tracking device vendor

The ICD-10-CM code Z91.83 Diagnostic Code for Wandering

Effective October 1, 2011, wandering was added to the diagnostic coding system clinicians use, which is known as the International Classification of Diseases. The wandering code is not linked to a specific diagnosis, nor is it part of the diagnostic codes used for autism or intellectual disabilities. The ICD-10-CM

classifies behaviors and risk factors in addition to diseases and syndromes; as such, the wandering code is used in conjunction with other diagnostic and symptom or procedure codes. This code is intended to capture information about individuals, with any condition classified in the ICD, who wander. Wandering should be coded if documented in the medical record by the provider (i.e., physician). To download a Physician Sample Letter (Word document) from the National Autism Association, visit <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/safety/pfa-tips-when-they-wander-or-run-away/> and scroll down to the section The ICD-10-CM code Z91.83 Diagnostic Code for Wandering.

Vendor CPT Codes

A Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code is a unique five digit code that identifies to insurance companies what care was provided to the patient by the vendor. Some device vendors list their CPT codes on their websites with additional insurance information. Some will even offer to work with your case worker. If you do not see the codes on their site, contact them and ask what they can provide for insurance purposes.

Once you have documentation of a Wandering diagnosis and the appropriate CPT code(s), ask your insurance company if the device and associated subscription plan are reimbursable expenses. If they say no, you can request an appeal to their review team. Your insurance company will walk you through that process.

Medicaid

In Maryland, tracking devices are not a covered benefit under Medicaid.

Additional Resources

Tracking Devices <http://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/tracking-devices/>

Visit the Pathfinders for Autism provider database and choose Category>Safety <http://pathfindersforautism.org/providers-services/>

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