

National Autism Association Announces Free Safety Box Giveaway to Combat Drowning Deaths

In 2024, over 80 children with autism died after wandering away, with most deaths caused by accidental drowning, according to NAA.

BARRINGTON, RI, UNITED STATES, April 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Autism Association (NAA) announced today it will give away 5000 free safety boxes to combat drowning deaths among children with autism, including 1000 boxes translated [-Grant-Application-with-Optional-2nd-Shipping-Cost-Grant-Spanish-Language/p/735142844">into Spanish](#). The safety initiative is made possible through a grant from the Department of Justice and the Kevin and Avonte Program.



National Autism Association focuses on wandering/drowning prevention

Launched in 2011, NAA's Big Red Safety Box[®] was created to prevent wandering-related drownings and other fatalities in the autism community. Since then, the program has distributed over 75,000 boxes to families and schools across the United States. Each box includes tips, tools, and educational materials, such as door/window alarms, an ID kit from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, a free wearable ID, visual aids, emergency plan, prevention checklist, emergency profile form, social story, guidance on tracking devices and swimming lessons, among other resources.

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Krystal Higgins

In 2024, [over 80 children](#) and adults with autism died after wandering away from safe settings, with most deaths caused by accidental drowning, according to NAA, which has tracked wandering cases and fatalities since the 2000s. Last year's uptick in cases prompted NAA and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to issue an urgent

appeal over the summer. Research routinely shows that nonspeaking children with autism under the age of 14 are at exceptional risk for drowning, with a disproportionate risk among females, and the black and Hispanic populations.

In addition to a record number of drowning deaths, NAA says there have been numerous rescues from water and multiple near-drownings over the last 12 months. "Prevention is crucial, and based on parent feedback over the years, we know these boxes save lives," says NAA Executive Director Krystal Higgins. "We encourage families to use a multi-layered approach to prevent wandering, and to call 911 and search nearby water first if a child with autism is missing."

NAA sounded the alarm on wandering deaths before a federal committee in 2010 after a parent survey and case surveillance over previous years showed a steady increase in incidents and fatalities. The association requested assistance from health agencies to conduct formal research on the topic, which resulted in the 2012 Pediatrics study that showed nearly half of children with autism are prone to wandering/elopement.

Caregivers can request a free safety box for their child or adult with autism on [NAA's website](#).

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