

## CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

### Keeping Summer Safe

Dear CASD Families and friends,

Building on the theme to help autistic individuals navigate summer break successfully ([see CASD CHAT for June 2021](#)), our current CHAT has suggestions for keeping summer safe (Allison Ratto, PhD, Meagan Wills, PhD, and Angela Bollich, PhD with the support of research assistant Jessica Smith, BS). As summer begins, the change in usual routines can also lead to increased safety challenges and risky behaviors for some children. Wandering, also called “elopement,” is a common challenge for many children and adults on the spectrum, as well as for their families and caregivers who are trying to keep them safe. Families are understandably frightened when an autistic child wanders off, and it’s often unexpected the first time it happens. Increased access to water activities increases the risks. Fortunately, there are many resources and strategies families can use to help keep their children safe.

1. **Teach clear safety rules.** Use clear, direct language like “Ask a grown-up before walking outside” or “Hold hands in the parking lot.” Use visual supports and signs around the home to remind children not to leave. A stop sign printed out and put on the inside of doors leading outside can be surprisingly effective! Praise your child for asking before going outside, and reward them by saying yes and going out with them whenever possible.
2. **Use simple safety measures.** If your child is prone to wandering at home, considering installing interior locks high on doors leading outside, so that your child cannot open the door. If you have an alarm system, see if you can set it to sound when a door is opened from the inside. Be sure to use child locks on car doors. If your child tends to wander in public, teach rules about holding hands consistently. It’s also a good idea to dress your child in bright colors, so you can easily spot them outdoors or in crowded places. **Identification bracelets are also a helpful tool.** Soft, rubber bracelets can be purchased easily online and customized with your child’s name, key medical information, and contact information. This is a particularly useful tool for children on the spectrum, who may struggle to communicate in stressful situations, even if they often show good language skills in daily circumstances.
3. **Build your safety net.** Despite putting safety measures in place, some children persistently manage to wander off. For those children, it’s often helpful to alert neighbors to be on the lookout. Share a photo of your child with your neighbors, along with your contact information, and simple instructions for how to approach and speak with your child and keep them safe until you arrive.

Contact your local police department and ask if you can register your child with them. Introduce your child to local police officers and teach them how to safely approach an officer to ask for help, either by speaking or by showing an identification bracelet.

4. **Spot the patterns.** If your child is prone to persistent wandering or elopement, try to take note of the patterns in your child's behavior. Do they tend to wander at certain times of day, or in response to particular triggers or events? Where do they tend to go when they wander? When they elope, what helps them to feel safe and calm? If your child works with a behavioral therapist or psychologist, consult their provider for help understanding their behavior patterns and designing a plan to keep them safe. If your child tends to elope at school, work with their school team to implement consistent strategies at home and school to reinforce safety.
5. **Teach water safety.** The most common way that children are seriously injured or killed due to wandering is by drowning. Many children with disabilities are drawn to water, and too few have the necessary skills to keep them safe. It is critical for all children to learn water safety skills. Create and reinforce rules about staying away from water unless an adult is present. Ensure gates to pools are locked (but recognize that this is not sufficient to deter a kid) and that toys are removed from the pool. Contact your local recreation department to ask about adapted swimming classes, including programs designed to address the needs of individuals with ASD. There are also private agencies and swimming instructors in many areas who specialize in swimming instruction for children with disabilities. Other suggestions include the following:
  - Risks are present even when adults are present to supervise. Assign adults to supervise the pool, trading off every 15-30 minutes to help ensure focused supervision.
  - Don't assume safety in shallow water or because a child has a life jacket on. Adults who are supervising children who are not strong swimmers should ensure the child remains within "arm's length."
  - These and additional safety tips can be found in this NPR article: You Could Save A Child From Drowning This Summer. Here's How <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/07/03/1012270779/you-could-save-a-child-from-drowning-this-summer-heres-how?sc=18&f=1001> [npr.org]

Elopement and wandering can be an overwhelming challenge. For many children, however, these simple strategies can drastically reduce the behavior and increase their safety. For more tips and resources specific to the autism community, including free toolkits, safety checklists, and emergency profiles, visit the AWAARE Collaboration's website at <http://awaare.autismassociation.org>.

Additional general resources are also available through Project Lifesaver (<http://projectlifesaver.org>), including information about how to determine if GPS tracking is appropriate for your child.

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## Profiles Celebrating

This month features Viktor Bevanda, a 12-year-old autistic and nonverbal individual, whose oil paintings have become a recent social media sensation. Viktor is a

# Neurodiversity

self-taught artist who developed his passion for painting at the very young age of 5. He currently has over 141,000 followers on TikTok and more than 48,000 followers on Instagram. His collection features a range of exotic animals, mythical creatures, vibrant portraits, and modern landscapes. His work is truly remarkable! To learn more about Viktor or to purchase some of his art, please visit: <https://vichysart.com>.



[Photograph of Viktor Bevanda holding on of his paintings].

Vichy's Art.

<https://vichysart.com/blogs/blog/viktors-family-is-blessed-because-he-found-a-way-to-communicate-through-his-art>

## 2021 Calendar of Events

### **Ivymount IvyMoves Club**

**Where:** Ivymount School

**When:** Thursdays 4-4:45 pm

Featuring a mix of stretches, beginner's yoga, and fitness exercises along with music to get you moving and shaking at home. Ivymount's own Adapted Physical Education teacher, Mr. M, will be leading the fun! During each class, participants will engage in upper body, lower body, cardio or strength training movements. Fitness challenges and rewards will be celebrated throughout the session. [Register here.](#)

### **Free Parent Support Group**

**Where:** Virtual

**When:** every Monday at 1 PM EST

Dr. Dan Shapiro, friend of CASD, will be offering a free parent support group, every Monday at 1 PM EST. To register, [click here.](#)

### **TGIF Yoga Series**

**Where:** Virtual

**When:** Once a Month every Friday at 4:30p

Pathfinders for Autism and [Child's Heart Yoga](#) are teaming up for a series of FREE yoga classes to try and provide a much needed mental health break for everyone during this hectic time.

Starting on Friday, March 12th at 4:30 p.m. and continuing once a month until September, please join us for a free, virtual, all ages, family friendly yoga class taught by Bridget Strama of [Child's Heart Yoga](#).

The event(s) are free, but a one-time registration is required. Please register below. A

Zoom link will be sent out before each class to join in. You only need to register once to sign up for the series. Feel free to attend one or all of the classes! For more details, [please see here.](#)

### **Webinar & Traffic Stop Practice Session**

**Where:** Virtual Webinar and In-Person Practice Session (Hunt Valley, MD)

**When:** Webinar (7/19/21 at 6p), In-Person Practice Session (7/20/21 from 2:30 to 6:30p)

Everyone feels anxiety when they see that police car light up behind them. You begin to wonder, “Am I in trouble?” “What did I do wrong?” It can make slowing down your brain difficult in that moment and think about what you need to do. So it’s time to start thinking about what you should do BEFORE you get pulled over. The goal is to have a safe interaction during a traffic stop.

Attend the 1-hour webinar and then practice being pulled over with Baltimore County Police.\* This program is offered to licensed drivers or drivers with a learner’s permit with the required supervision.

\*You can register for the webinar only, but you MUST participate in the webinar to attend the practice session. You must attend BOTH to receive a \$25 gas gift card. For more details, [please see here.](#)

### **Autism Day with the Aberdeen Ironbirds**

**Where:** Leidos Field at Ripken Stadium

**When:** July 25, 2021, gates open at 1:05p

Enjoy an afternoon with PFA and the Aberdeen Ironbirds! And don’t miss a visit from Pathfinders’ Dip Tour Challenge Bus! FREE to attend, however, you MUST register. [Please click here for more details.](#)

### **Pathfinders for Autism**

(<https://pathfindersforautism.org/calendar/>) provides a list of programs for all ages including video group for spouses/partners of adults with Asperger's; Social clubs divided by ages ranging from 6 years to adult on July 10; Baby Navigator - what every parent needs to know on July 15 and more!

## **Free Unstuck Parent Resources**



### **Unstuck at Home: Parent Support**

**Through COVID-19** is a project to support parents as they help their child to manage disappointments and unexpected changes, stay on track with learning, and stay calm when faced with a challenge. These supports were designed to specifically help parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many parents have been navigating distance learning with their children.

Additionally, these videos can be used in conjunction with *Unstuck and On Target!* intervention groups for home generalization.

Our videos are ready to be launched to the public, and we are so excited to share them with you! The final set of videos will launch soon and will be added to the below playlists. Check back in late July to see the final set!

CASD is currently recruiting for a new online study in collaboration with Georgetown University. Eligible participants are adolescents 14-18 years old with or without autism spectrum disorder. The study takes place entirely over Zoom and involves completing a few tasks and answering some questionnaires with a member of the research team. Parents will also be asked to report on their child's behavior. Parents and children will be compensated up to \$80.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about our study please contact Rebecca Handsman at [rhandsman@childrensnational.org](mailto:rhandsman@childrensnational.org).

## Community Resources & Events

The Drexel Autism Institute is seeking youth **ages 13-29 on the autism spectrum** who are transitioning to adulthood. They are also looking for these youths' **caregivers and providers** to participate in a study about **Team Trestle, an application for transition planning and coordination**. This virtual tool is designed to help autistic individuals meet their life goals by engaging autistic youth/young adults, their parents/legal guardians, and providers in the collaborative process of **implementing and achieving goals during the transition to adulthood**. For more information, check out the flyer. If you're interested, fill out the Interest Form at <https://tinyurl.com/TrestleInterest> [[tinyurl.com](https://tinyurl.com)] or email our team at [sodi@drexel.edu](mailto:sodi@drexel.edu).

The Autism Institute at Drexel University is seeking parents/caregivers OR preschool/daycare providers of autistic children aged 24-60 months who have trouble speaking and use a communication tool (i.e., PECS, AAC device). We want **to better understand the use of communication tools** and how collaboration occurs about communication tool use in home/school settings **for minimally verbal preschool students with autism**. During a 90-minute focus group or interview we want to learn how teams work together to support children who use communication tools. If you are interested, please fill out the Interest

### Advocacy Resources

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network-Navigating College: A Handbook on Self Advocacy](#)

### Resources on Racism/Supporting Black People

[Spectrum Support's Social Stories on Racism](#)  
[ASAN's What is Police Violence?: A Plain Language Booklet](#)  
[@TheMorganCruise Worksheets for Black Children](#)

### COVID-19 Safety Resources

[Behavioral Directions LLC's Safety Teaching Protocol](#)

### COVID-19 National and Local Government Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)  
[World Health Organization](#)  
[DC Department of Health](#)  
[Maryland Department of Health](#)  
[Virginia Department of Health](#)  
[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)  
[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

Visit Children's National Hospital's COVID-19 Resources



Visit Ivymount 2021 Special Needs Resource Guide: Highlighting 70+ Local Organizations Find Information about Behavioral

Form

at <https://tinyurl.com/EPICfocus> [tinyurl.com] or email [sodi@drexel.edu](mailto:sodi@drexel.edu) and we will contact you.

Services, ABA Therapy,  
Assessment & Treatment; Schools  
Educational Programs, Advocacy;  
Social, Recreational,  
Fitness; Transitioning Youth &  
Young Adults; Accessibility,  
Inclusion, Safety,  
Health; Therapeutic Services;  
Camps; Financial Planning,  
Insurance