

Resources for Supporting Children on the Autism Spectrum

Presentation for

APCO

April 2022



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
**MISSING &
EXPLOITED**
CHILDREN®

Agenda Topics

- NCMEC History & Mission
- Understanding Children on the Autism Spectrum
- Resources
- Questions



WHO WE ARE

- Founded in 1984
- Nonprofit, non-governmental organization
- Congressionally funded in part to operate 15 programs related to missing and exploited children
- National resource center for families, law enforcement and other professionals



OUR MISSION

Find Missing Children

Reduce Child Sexual Exploitation

Prevent Future Victimization

Hope is why we're here.



Definition & CDC Data

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a **developmental disability** that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges
- The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of children with ASD **varies**
- Some children with ASD need a **lot of help** in their daily lives; others **need less**

In 2018, **1 in 44** children aged 8 were estimated by CDC to have ASD

In 2021, **286** children on the autism spectrum were reported missing to NCMEC

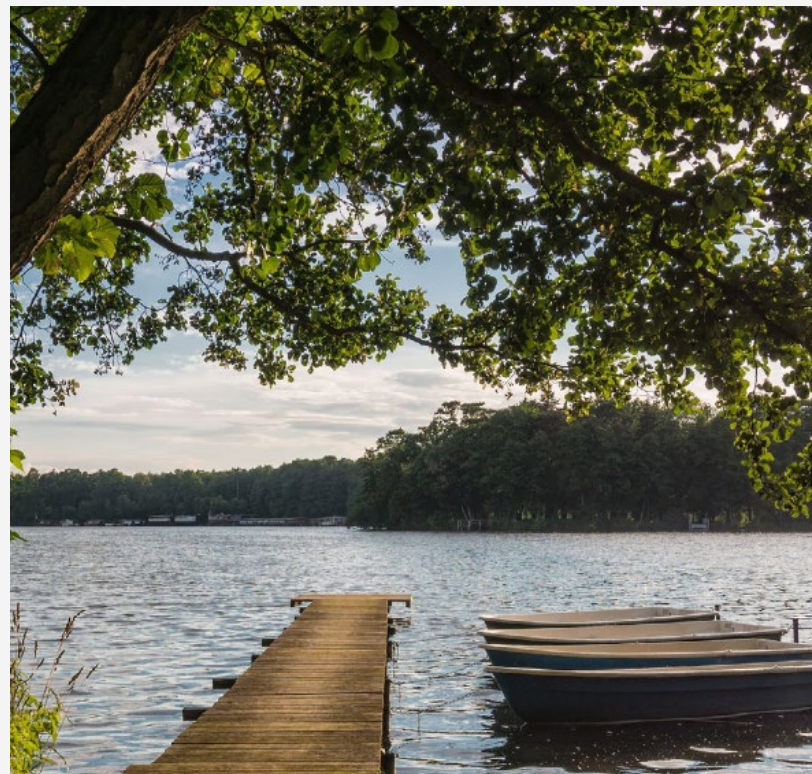
Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>
and <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/ss/ss7011a1.htm> and
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/>



Understanding Children on the Autism Spectrum

A child on the autism spectrum may:

- **Wander** away or **bolt**
- Have a diminished sense of fear or engage in high-risk behavior, such as seeking **water** or active roadways
- Seek small or **tightly enclosed spaces** concealing themselves from search teams
- Be unable to respond to law enforcement because of their **communication style**
- Be at a higher **risk for exploitation** because of their disability



Communication & Sensory Processing

Verbal, non-verbal, minimally verbal

May use alternative modes of communication

May only cite scripts or use echolalia

May only understand direct language

May require additional processing time

Sensory overload (causes bolting)



Behavioral Effects

May have obsessive tendencies or interests, or rigidity

May act impulsively

May show repetitive behaviors that provide sensory stimulation - “Stimming”

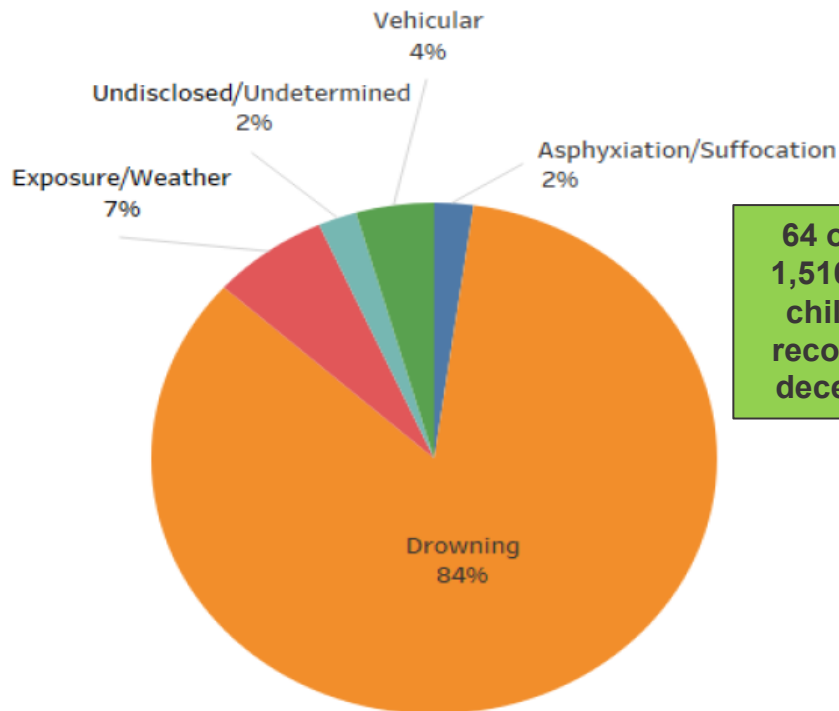
Anxiety can increase stimming

Challenging behavior could be caused by inability to communicate, pain, anxiety



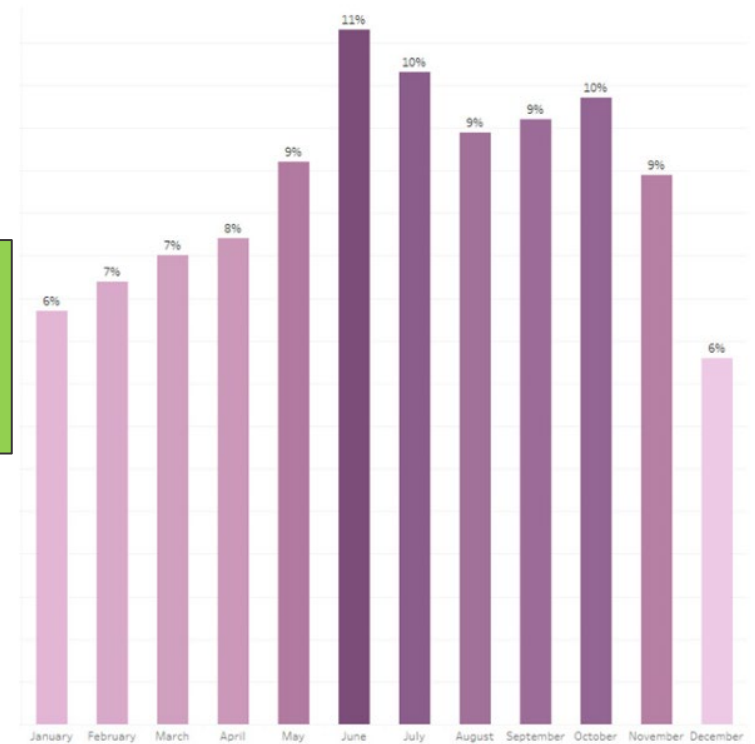
NCMEC Data (2011-2020)

Causes of Accidental Deaths





**64 out of
1,516 (4%)
children
recovered
deceased**

Missing Month Across All Years



NCMEC Data (2011-2020)

Most Common Characteristics of Missing Children on the Autism Spectrum				
Sex: Male (75%)	Age: 16 (19%) or 17 (19%)	Race: White (60%)	Case Type: ERU (67%)	Case Status: Recovered (98%) 
Missing Month: June (11%)	Missing Location: Home (45%)	Recovery Location: Home (26%) or Outdoor Area (26%)	Recovery Method: Police Investigation (46%) 	Recovered in the Same State from Where They Went Missing: (87%)



Recommended Resources



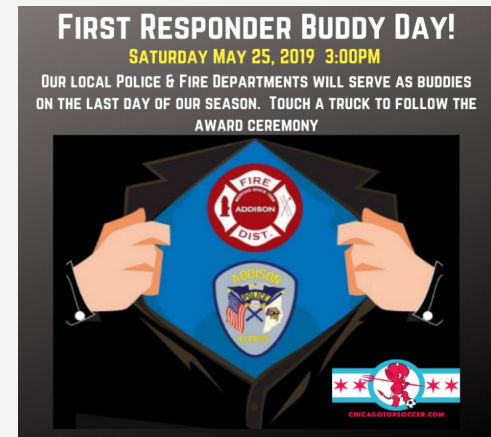
Core Components of Outreach & Awareness

Officer Training

Community Education & Outreach

Community Partnerships & Events

Communication



Recommended First Responder Programs & Community Partnerships



Many local law enforcement organizations provide opportunities for caregivers to **alert officers** of a child's wandering behaviors



PREMISE ALERT PROGRAM



Recommended Resources for Caregivers



Red Cross swim lessons are offered at 3,500 aquatic facilities throughout the U.S.



“Water safety isn’t just fun – it’s essential.”
Lindsay Mondick, director of innovative priorities at Y-USA.



NCMEC Resources

Investigative
checklists &
search protocols

Tips for
Caregivers

Key Information

Team Adam

Team HOPE



Understanding Children on the
Autism Spectrum: A Guide for First
Responders



Search Protocols and
Questionnaire for First
Responders



Supporting Children on the Autism
Spectrum: Tips for Caregivers



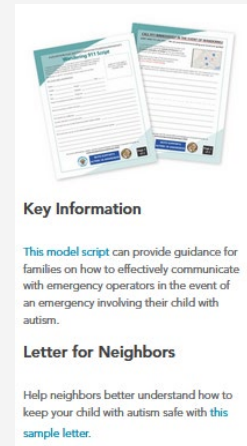
Tips for Caregivers

Identify the risks for your child and let those who are close to them know where your child may go.

Make a plan with your child's school in the event they leave the classroom. Wandering can be addressed in your child's Individualized Education Program.

Be familiar with local bodies of water, proximity to highways, and other landmarks near your child's residence and school. Encourage your child's school to keep relevant maps in the main office so they are readily accessible in case of emergency.

Help others understand that children on the autism spectrum may not speak, be non-responsive to their name being called, or fearful of any close contact with people they do not know.



CHILD ID KIT

When searching for a missing child, the most useful tools for law enforcement are the child's photo, physical description, and contact information. This kit provides a template for a letter to neighbors, a map of the neighborhood, and a list of emergency contacts. It also includes a section for the child's medical information and a section for the child's school information.

Letter for Neighbors

Help neighbors better understand how to keep your child with autism safe with this sample letter.



NCMEC Resources

- Model Programs & Resources for LE & Families:
<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/autism>
- 2011-2020 Report on Missing Children on the Autism Spectrum
- 4 NCMEC CONNECT Modules:
<https://connect.missingkids.org/>
- 4 Blogs on Swimming Safety, Searching Water, etc.
- Partnership with National Autism Association
- IACP Locative Technology Grant
- ADAM Program



How to Search for
and Protect Children
on the Autism Spectrum

Thursday, July 29th
10:00 am to 11:00 am ET



Key Takeaways

Children on the autism spectrum go missing & are recovered deceased at a rate higher than other children

Immediately search water & encourage swim lessons

Sign up for the ADAM Program

Simple measures can save lives



Training & Professional Development

Welcome to NCMEC CONNECT

Your virtual gateway to trainings, resources and best practices related to missing and exploited children. Build your knowledge set around these issues to better protect children in your community

connect.missingkids.org



FREE on-demand trainings, resources and best practices related to missing and exploited children.



Protect

Reduce

Prevent

Executive Leadership Series on Missing & Exploited Children



MissingKids.org/Training

Course designed for executives and managers in law enforcement agencies, emergency communications centers, and state clearinghouse managers to:

- Familiarize leaders in public safety with current issues related to missing and sexually exploited children
- Learn about effective policies and practices, emerging trends, and resources for responding to and investigating these unique cases





Missing Kids Readiness Program (MKRP)



MissingKids.org/MKRP

Free program that promotes policies and best practices for responding to calls of missing and sexually exploited children. Once training and policy elements are met, member agencies are publicly recognized by NCMEC.

Eligible agencies

- Law enforcement agencies
- Emergency communications centers

Requirements

- Agency leader completes CEOMEC, PRPL or MKRP course
- All sworn personnel or telecommunicators complete required online modules
- Adoption of Model Policy or alignment with industry standards

**Training for
Professionals** | MKRP



Check out Our Website & Social Media



The Issues

**Autism &
Wandering**



#AutismAwarenessMonth



NCMEC Contacts

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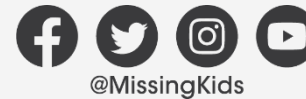
Missing Children Division

jepaluska@ncmec.org

1-800-THE-LOST



**For more resources, please visit
MissingKids.org/autism**



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For complete copyright and grant information, visit MissingKids.org/Legal



Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT



FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse

Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Inspector Chad Hoffman

1-888-FL-MISSING



*

Autism Awareness for Law Enforcement and Communications



Inspector Chad Hoffman

FDLE: TYPES OF ALERTS THAT DEAL WITH KIDS (3)

AMBER

America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response



Named after Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old child who was abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas in 1996

In 2000, FDLE, along with our state, local, and private partners, developed a plan to establish the AMBER Alert.

MCA Criteria

Missing Child Alert
Established to 2003

- The child must be under 18 years of age
- The local law enforcement agency has a well founded belief based on an active investigation, that the **child is in danger of death or serious bodily injury**
- There is a detailed description or photograph of the child
- The local law enforcement agency recommends activation

ENHANCED MCA CRITERIA

Enhanced Missing Child Alert
Established to 2019

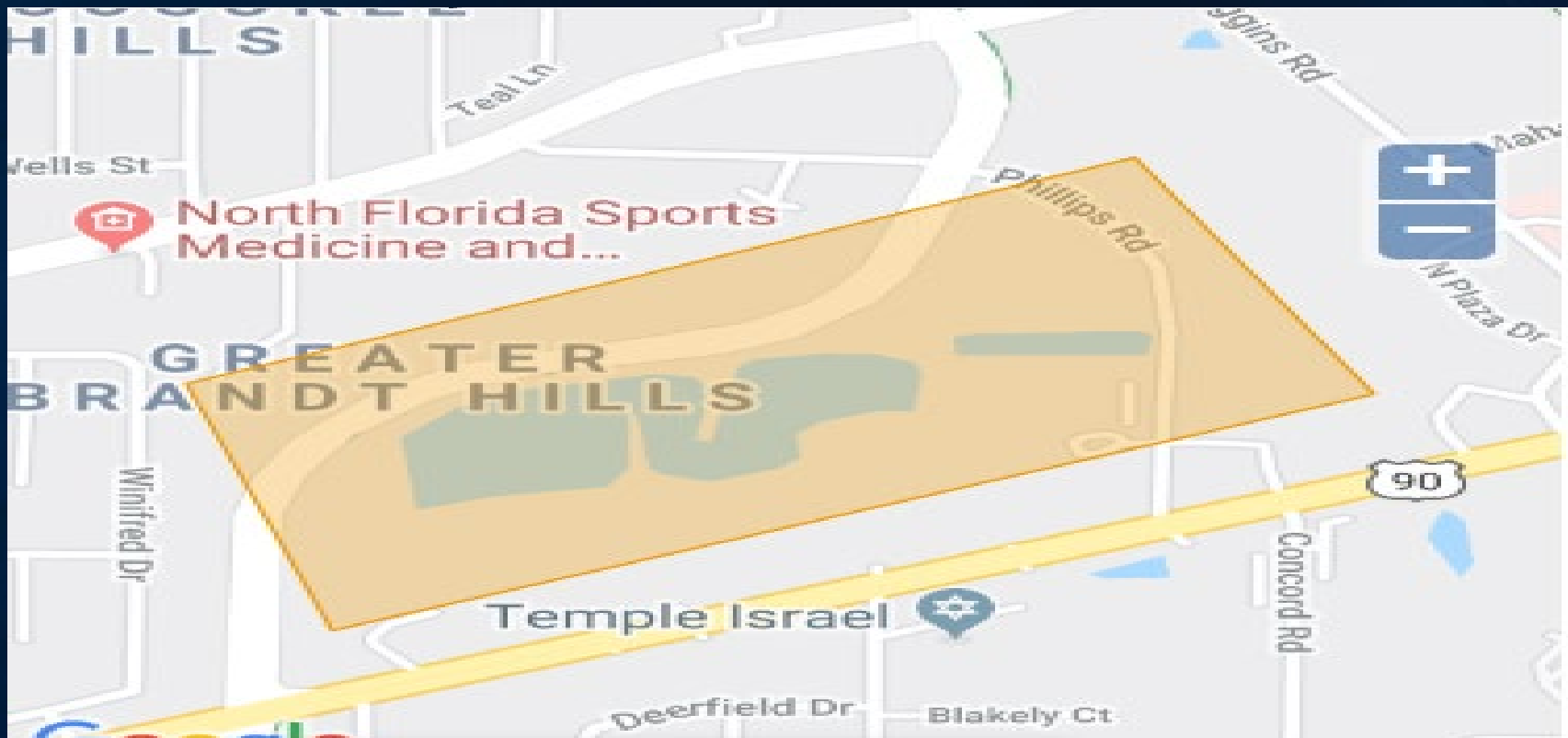
- The child must be under 18 years of age
- The local law enforcement agency has a well founded belief based on an active investigation, that the child is in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury
- There is a detailed description or photograph of the child
- The local law enforcement agency recommends activation

ENHANCED MISSING CHILD ALERT

- Primarily utilized for missing children who have been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum.
- Intended for cases where law enforcement believe the child is still in close proximity (up to five miles)

ENHANCED MCA

"WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERT"



**THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL/RESOURCE FOR
FINDING MISSING KIDS WITH AUTISM.**

METHODOLOGY FOR ENHANCED MCA (Before 2022)

- 911 receives call
- 911 notifies police agency to respond to the scene
- Initial investigation, supervisor involvement, resources added, Missing Persons Investigator called out, command post, etc.
- Law Enforcement Agency notifies the FDLE and requests MCA
- **INVESTIGATION MAY OR MAY NOT DISCOVER THAT THE CHILD HAS AUTISM**
- **TIME DELAYS SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE**

"TIME IS TRULY EVERYTING ."



Autism Spectrum Awareness Telecommunicator Training

**“ IDENTIFY
&
NOTIFY ”**



Methodology for Enhanced MCA (AFTER 2022)

Accelerated Protocol

- 911 receives the call for a missing child
- Utilizing the 911 Autism Telecommunicator Training, 911 Operator asks specific questions in reference to the child having Autism
- If 911 Operator discovers child has Autism, the following entities are notified immediately:
 - 911 Supervisor
 - Law Enforcement Agency responding to the scene
- Law Enforcement Agency notifies the FDLE's MEPIC Unit to begin the process of an **ENHANCED MCA**

"IDENTIFY"

SG08 – MISSING PERSON

"NOTIFY"

1. Where are they missing from?

2. How old is the missing person?

3. How long have they been missing?

4. What is their description?

(Name, DOB, Race, Sex, Height/Weight, Hair/Eyes & Clothing)

5. Does the person have an Autism Spectrum Disorder, a developmental disability, or a learning disability associated with Autism that law enforcement needs to be aware of?

IF YES: Ages 17 and under notify Communications Supervisor

a. Are they verbal or nonverbal?

If Nonverbal: What is their mode of communication?

b. Do they have a sensory issue to touch or sound?

6. Are there any bodies of water nearby?

7. Are they missing, or did they run away? (habitual)

VERIFIED RETURNED / LOCATED MISSING PERSONS:

If FCIC/NCIC entry was made, a unit **MUST** respond to confirm the return of the adult or juvenile. Add the original case number to the comments field.

1. Verify the adult/juvenile is in FCIC/NCIC

2. What is the case number?

3. Are they causing a disturbance? Known to be violent?

AUTISTIC CHILD:

The communications supervisor on duty will contact FDLE 888-356-4774 and inform them to standby for a possible request for Enhanced Missing Child Alert.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Priority 1: Endangered Criteria: Ages 12 and under, elderly; serious medical conditions; special needs such as Alzheimer's, Dementia, Autism.

Priority 2: Runaway or ages 13-17





12:30 PM-
TOMMY LEAVES SCHOOL PREMISES

12:40 PM-
SCHOOL NOTIFIES 911 DISPATCH

12:45 PM-
FIRST OFFICER ARRIVES ON SCENE

Google Earth

**POLICE RECOVERY & RESPONSE: (12:50) LAW
ENFORCEMENT AND TEACHERS STILL SEARCHING
IMMEDIATE AREA NEAR SCHOOL.**



**POLICE RECOVERY & RESPONSE: (1:30 PM) LAW ENFORCEMENT
CANVASSING NEARBY AREA AROUND SCHOOL.**



POLICE RECOVERY & RESPONSE: (2:30 PM) LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL CONTINUE TO FLOOD AREA, K-9 DEPLOYED, AS WELL AS HELICOPTER.



UTILYZING NEW TELECOMMUNICATOR TRAINING AND STANDARDS

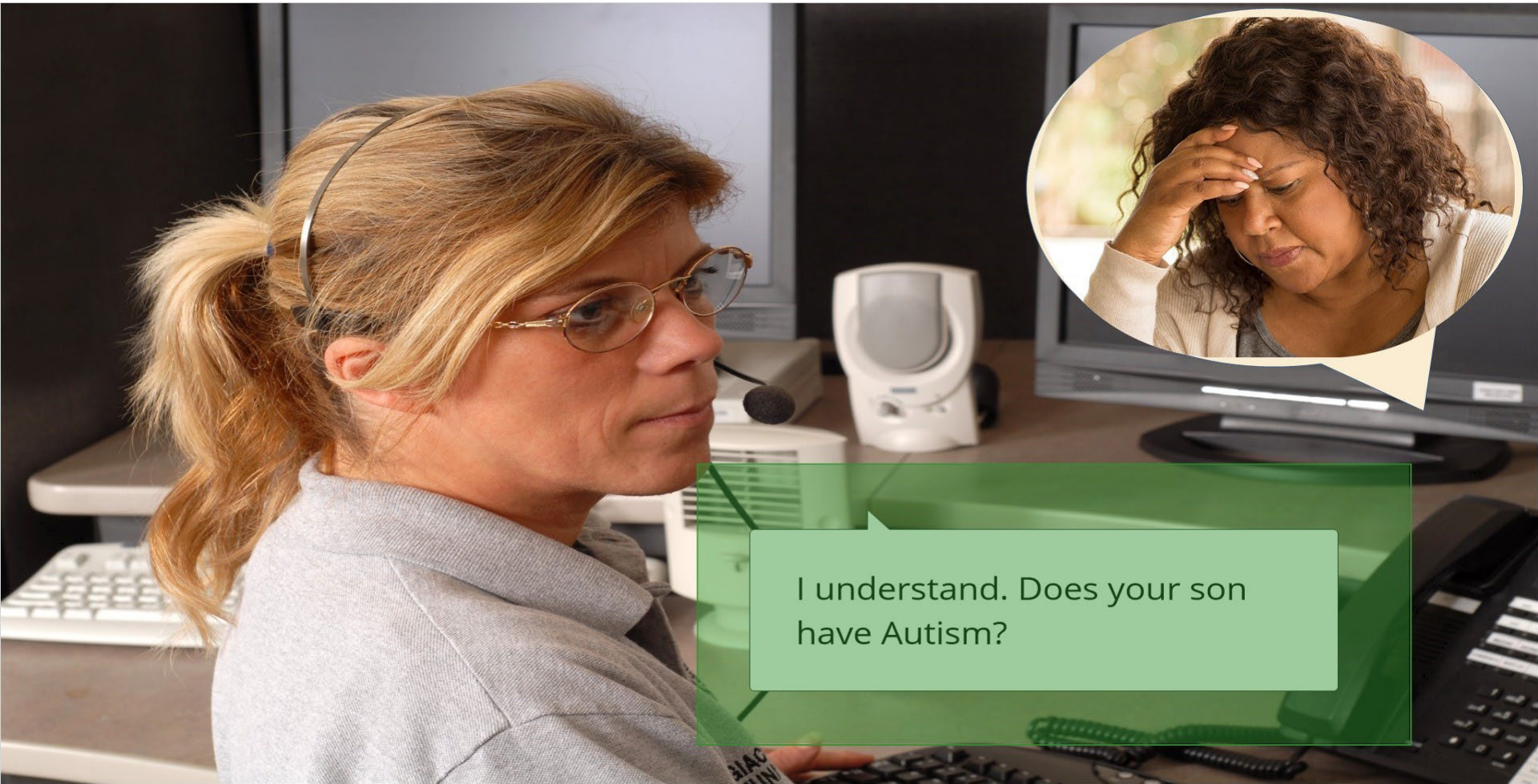
911 DISPATCH BECOMES THE MOST CRITICAL
COMPONENT TO FINDING A CHILD WITH AUTISM



“MINUTES MATTER”

IDENTIFYING CHILD HAS AUTISM IS CRITICAL

"From HOURS to MINUTES."



12:40 PM CALL IS RECEIVED

12:41 PM CHILD IDENTIFIED AS HAVING AUTISM

An aerial photograph showing a large, dark pond in the center. The pond is surrounded by a thick forest of green trees. To the right of the pond, there is a paved road with a yellow curb. Several cars are parked along the road, and a red car is visible. In the background, there are houses with grey roofs and white walls. The text is overlaid on the pond area.

12:30 PM-
TOMMY LEAVES SCHOOL
PREMISES

12:40 PM-
SCHOOL NOTIFIES 911 DISPATCH

12:45 PM-
FIRST OFFICER ARRIVES ON
SCENE

Google Earth

Enhanced MCA

INITIATED AT 1:00 PM



“GEO-FENCING” AN ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD

Google Earth

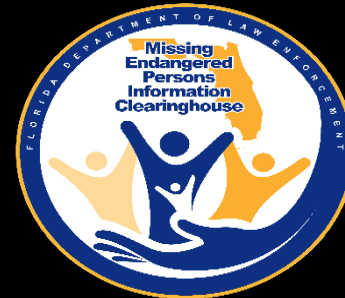


FINAL OUTCOME





Questions, PHASE TWO ??



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850.251.4017

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Media/BPDTraining/AutismTelecommunicator/story.html>