



MEDIA NOTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New PSA to Prevent Drowning in Children with Autism – Features Maryland Mother

Maryland recorded seven drowning deaths of autistic children in summer 2024. Brittany Bledsoe's three-year-old son, Ace, tragically was among them. To raise awareness of water risks for children with autism, as well as the wandering and elopement behaviors often associated with these risks, members of the Maryland Autism Coalition will jointly release a Public Service Announcement on **April 2, 2025, World Autism Awareness Day.**

The PSA is aimed at parents, educators, child care providers, and pediatricians who may not otherwise know of the high rate of drowning correlated with wandering and elopement.

- 49% of children with autism wander or elope (bolt from an area)
- 71% of deaths related to wandering are due to drowning
- 160x greater likelihood of drowning death for children with autism as compared to the general pediatric population

There are many reasons why autistic children may unexpectedly wander or run away from a safe space. They may simply be curious or following something that interests them or feels good to them. Or they could be trying to escape a perceived unsafe space, or a noisy or crowded environment. They may be impulsive and run in order to avoid something uncomfortable.

To prevent injury or death, members of the coalition are offering free resources as well as water safety courses, swim lessons, trainings for swim instructors, and door locks and chimes.

For media inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact **Beth Benevides or Shelly McLaughlin.**

The Maryland Autism Coalition is a coalition of nearly 20 nonprofit organizations and state agencies dedicated to supporting autistic individuals. Brought together to raise awareness of issues affecting this community, coalition members collaborate on a number of campaigns including: World Autism Awareness Day, Autism Acceptance Month, drowning prevention, and wandering and elopement prevention and response.

PSA videos at [MarylandAutismCoalition - YouTube](#)
Learn more at www.MarylandAutismCoalition.org

