

# **Questions Police Dispatchers Will Ask When Dealing with an Autism Subject Who Is Missing**

When a person with autism goes missing, gathering the correct information quickly is essential. Asking the right questions can help first responders understand the individual's behaviors, preferences, and possible locations, significantly improving the chances of a safe recovery. The following questions are designed to guide families, caregivers, and professionals in providing critical details during these urgent situations.

## **Initial Information**

1. **Where and when was the person last seen?**
  2. **What is the missing person's name, age, and gender?**
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## **Physical Description**

5. **What is their height, weight, hair and eye color?**
  6. **What are they wearing (clothing, shoes, accessories)?**
  7. **Are they carrying anything (backpack, toy, tablet, etc.)?**
  8. **Do they have any physical disabilities or medical conditions in addition to autism?**
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## **Autism-Specific Behaviors**

9. **How does their autism affect them (verbal/non-verbal, sensory sensitivities, behavioral triggers)?**
  10. **Do they respond to their name or to verbal commands?**
  11. **Are they likely to approach strangers, or will they hide?**
  12. **Do they have a history of wandering or running away?**
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## **Safety & Risk Assessment**

13. **Are they drawn to specific dangers (e.g., water, traffic, trains, high places)?**
14. **Do they have any known fears, phobias, or reactions that may cause harm to themselves or others?**
15. **Do they take any medications or require care on a schedule?**
16. **How much time has passed since they went missing?**
17. **Would seeing an Officer in uniform trigger anything or cause additional fear?**

## **Communication Preferences**

- 17. Are they verbal or non-verbal?**
  - 18. If non-verbal, do they use sign language, a device, or other methods to communicate?**
  - 19. Are there specific phrases or topics that may comfort them or encourage cooperation?**
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## **Search Considerations**

- 20. Have they gone missing before? If so, where were they found?**
  - 21. Are there favorite places they like to go (e.g., parks, neighbors' homes, water sources)?**
  - 22. Do they have a GPS tracker or any tracking device?**
  - 23. Have you already begun searching? If so, where have you checked?**
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## **Contact & Support**

- 24. Who is their legal guardian or primary caregiver?**
- 25. Is there a recent photo available for responders to use?**
- 26. Can you stay on the line or be reached immediately if officers have follow-up questions?**

Thank you to the Buena Park Police Department for their assistance in creating this resource.