

SAFETY TIPS FOR A DAY AT THE PHILADELPHIA ZOO

*Prepared with care by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*

An outing to the zoo can be an exciting adventure to learn about animals, but for many families there are real concerns about safety that can make the outing really stressful! Elopement and wandering are unfortunately very common for children with developmental disabilities. The Philadelphia Zoo leadership and staff have partnered with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for extra training about autism and other developmental conditions and want to help families have a fun and safe day together. We understand that behavioral challenges are hard to navigate, and we are here to support you.

Tips that may be helpful for today's outing at the Philadelphia Zoo:

- Write your phone number in a visible spot on your child's arm (ask the staff for a marker if you need one!) so someone can call you if your child is lost
- Decide on a meeting place if your child were to get lost - make sure everyone in your group, including your child, is aware of the meeting point (you can point out on a map or use a single buzzword like "train")
- Point out to your child what the uniforms and badges look like for Zoo staff. Let them know that a Zoo staff member is a safe adult to approach if they get lost. You can practice with an introduction to a Zoo staff member near the entrance.
- Take a picture of your child right now that clearly shows their outfit and colors so if they are lost this picture can be shared quickly with Zoo staff

Contact us:
CHOP Developmental and
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Scan the QR code or visit

[tinyurl.com/
CHOPASDSafetyBasics](https://tinyurl.com/CHOPASDSafetyBasics) for
more safety information!



For your future outings in the community (including the Philadelphia Zoo) you might want to consider these tips that can be helpful with a bit of preparation!

- Consider an ID bracelet which includes child's name, your telephone number, and a description of your child's communication ability or needs.
- If your child will not wear a bracelet or necklace, consider a temporary tattoo with your contact information, for use during outings. Check online stores like Etsy.
- There are GPS trackers available that attach to clothing or shoes, often requiring a monthly subscription.
- Work with your behavioral therapist or other professional to teach your child games about impulse regulation like "Freeze Dance" and "Red Light Green Light"
- Children often respond very well to visual cues. You can use a cut-out of a red paper stop sign as an example. You might practice taping the stop sign on the inside of the front door or near the stove, or using a stop sign taped to a popsicle stick as a visual you can bring with you on an outing (i.e. hold it up as they are getting out of the car and need to wait in the parking lot).