

RISK IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING

COMPETENCIES: EVALUATION AND OBSERVATION; CRISIS PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION; SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with Autism, like other individuals with disabilities, may be considered a “vulnerable” population. Identifying when someone you support is engaging in behavior that puts him or her at risk is critical to your support role. People with disabilities, including autism, are vulnerable to developing a variety of risk behaviors. This is because they may experience cognitive differences that make differentiating risk behaviors from safe behaviors difficult. Additionally, some may have endured past trauma events, such as abuse, bullying or discrimination that, if untreated, can lead to significant problems in mental health or misuse of drugs or alcohol. Finally, living daily with the challenges that the social-communication characteristics of autism pose can lead to low self-esteem, self-destructive behaviors or aggression. Risk behavior is anything that places the person at increased risk of suffering a particular condition, illness, or injury. Consider the categories of risk behaviors mapped below. Make notes, if you have observed chronic or emerging behaviors that could be described as “risk behaviors.”



1. Behaviors that lead to unintentional injuries or violence
2. Misuse of alcohol or drugs
3. Sexual behaviors that could lead to increased vulnerability to predators, unintended pregnancy, or sexually transmitted diseases
4. Unhealthy diet or eating behaviors
5. Inactivity
6. Inappropriate use of Internet or social media that increases likelihood of law enforcement involvement or vulnerability to predators

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

- 1 Once you have completed your notes, be sure to share these with a supervisor immediately so that the individual can be referred for additional services by professionals trained to help.
- 2 Your vigilance is important. Being proactive in your observation and reporting can prevent crises and foster safety for someone who may not be able to figure it out or take steps on her own. It's better to err on the side of reading behavior incorrectly (which a supervisor can assist in interpreting) than it is to delay reporting.