

## New Funding for Tracking Devices for Children with Autism: What Does It Mean?

After the tragic loss of Avonte Oquendo, Senator Charles Schumer advocated for necessary government-funded supports to be put in place to prevent such terrible incidents from happening again. On January 29, 2014, Senator Schumer announced that the U.S. Department of Justice will immediately allow existing grant funds to be used to fund voluntary tracking devices for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.

The funding will be made available through the Justice Department's Byrne grant program, an existing program that law enforcement agencies use to pay for various programs, equipment, trainings, etc. A similar system is currently in place for devices for individuals with Alzheimer's. This new announcement does not mean any additional funding; it just means that the funds awarded through this grant program can now be used for tracking devices for those at risk of wandering.

The funding, from the Byrne grant program, will go directly to law enforcement agencies, not directly to families. Police departments and law enforcement agencies will need to apply for funding from the Byrne program to pay for these devices, as well as education and training related to wandering. The agencies will then administer their own program and determine who will receive the tracking devices and how many will be distributed.

While tracking devices are just one of many strategies families use to prevent wandering and may not work for everyone, this announcement is a big step toward ensuring the safety of all individuals with autism.

Visit [AWAARE.org](http://AWAARE.org) to learn how to take action in your home and community. You can also call our Autism Response Team at 888-288-4762 or email [familyservices@autismspeaks.org](mailto:familyservices@autismspeaks.org) for resources and more information.

