The LEAD Act™ (Laila's Elopement Awareness & Dissemination Act)

A statewide initiative designed to ensure coordinated prevention, response, and training for lifespan-related elopement.

Key Components

- Increase awareness through education, outreach, support, and community engagement
- Develop proactive safety plans to manage elopement risks
- Provide mandatory training for care setting staff and first responders
- Increase awareness and improve access to assistive safety technology and family support resources
- Strengthen statewide visibility into elopement incidents through annual data collection and progress reporting



Some of Maryland's First Steps: **Purple Alert (2024) & Ace's Law (2025)**

01 Implemented an emergency notification system for missing persons with Intellectual and Development Disabilities (Purple Alert, House Bill 195)

02 Required schools to notify families, document incidents and create prevention plans for elopement (Ace's Law, House Bill 1204)

03 Both laws are great initial steps to a more comprehensive approach between first responders, family caregivers, and professional caregivers

Statewide Goals: **2026-2028**

- Train at least 25,000 professional caregivers and first responders
- Equip at least 5,000 family caregivers with valuable resources and information
- Achieve zero fatal elopement incidents in Maryland
- Position Maryland as a national model for elopement safety and response across the lifespan

Empowering Families and Communities

- Fosters trusted safety partnerships among families, care providers, and public safety agencies
- Establishes standardized, lifespan-inclusive crisis response frameworks
- Strengthens coordinated communication across families, care settings, and public safety systems
- Safeguards the privacy of children and adults while enabling effective parental and caregiver collaboration

Together, we can prevent tragedy.

Support **The LEAD Act™** in Maryland's 2026 General Assembly.

Encourage local adoption and training programs.

Join the Laila's Gift® Advocacy Network.

Share your story to LEAD change.

Time to **LEAD**, let's **ACT** now!

Contact:

info@lailasgift.org

lailasgift.org/lead

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Copyright © 2025 Laila's Gift Incorporated.

LAILA'S GIFT

Celebrating One Gift at a Time



LAILA'S GIFT®

Leading Maryland's Response to Lifespan-Related Elopement

The Wandering Crisis: Leading the Way to Safety

Each year, children and adults with autism, dementia, or other non-apparent disabilities wander from safe environments, often ending in tragic outcomes. Laila's Gift (alongside other community LEADers) is leading a statewide mission to prevent these tragedies through **A**ccess, **C**oordination, and **T**raining

Together,

we can LEAD Maryland toward a safer future for those who need it most.

Elopement Crisis Overview

Approximately 49% of children diagnosed with autism are likely to elope, some as frequent as once per week. This behavior typically starts around age four

60% of individuals (6 in 10) living with Alzheimer's dementia or other forms of dementia will elope at least once during the course of the disease

1 in 3 children are nonverbal or unable to communicate personal information

Individuals face an increased risk of serious injury or death

Families report emotional trauma and burnout





How Maryland Can LEAD the way through the ACT Framework

- LEAD by expanding **A**ccess for family caregivers to resources, education, and vital elopement risk-mitigation information across the lifespan
- LEAD through **C**oordination by establishing a unified, statewide framework for elopement preparedness, prevention, response, and reporting across the lifespan
- LEAD with consistency **T**raining by aligning elopement response training and protocols across counties, districts, & care settings

Nationwide Autism and Dementia Statistics

Autism:

- **1 in 31 children,** roughly **2.9% of U.S. children** are on the autism spectrum
- **17**% of autism-related elopements are fatal
- In **2024, 91%** of fatalities were due to drowning

Dementia:

- There are four common types of dementia. Alzheimer's is the most common, making up **60-80%** of all dementia diagnoses
- In 2025 an estimated **7.2 million Americans** age 65 and older were living with Alzheimer's dementia
- Alzheimer's dementia is **not just a disease of old age.** Early-onset Alzheimer's affects people youngerthan 65

Statistics shown above are based on estimates from a collection of data sources.

Data Sources

- **National Autism Association. (2022).** Autism & Wandering: Data Summary and Safety Toolkit.
- **National Autism Safety Council. (2023).** National Report on Autism Elopement, Fatalities & School Safety Preparedness
- **Anderson, C. et al. (2012).** Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Pediatrics
- **CDC (2023).** Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.
- **U.S. Census Bureau (2023).** National Population Estimates
- **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. (2023).** Missing children statistics and safety risks. NCMEC Research Division
- **Maryland at a Glance.** MarylandPublicSchools.org. **"**In school year 2022-23, over 889,900 students enrolled in Maryland public schools from Pre-K to high school**"**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023).** Maryland: Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network (Surveillance Summary). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
- **Alzheimer's Association.** (n.d.). What is dementia? Symptoms, causes & treatment. Alzheimer's Association
- **Alzheimer's Association.** (n.d.). Early-onset/younger-onset Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's Association
- **Dhana, K., Franco, O. H., Ritz, E. M., et al.** (2023). Prevalence of Alzheimer's disease dementia in the 50 US states and 3142 counties: A population estimate using the 2020 bridged-race postcensal from the National Center for Health Statistics [Abstract]. Alzheimer's & Dementia

Copyright © 2025 Laila's Gift Incorporated.

Statewide Autism and Dementia Statistics (Maryland)

- An estimated **1 in 43 Maryland Children** have autism, based on prevalence among 8 year oldsprevalence among 8 year
- Maryland ranks **as the top state in Alzheimer's prevalence** among adults aged 65 and older, an estimated **127,200 adults aged 65 and older** have Alzheimer's disease
- In Maryland, elopement is currently not viewed as a lifespan risk, The LEAD Act highlights the lifespan risk & establishes statewide emergency preparedness and response system among state-based family caregivers, care settings, and first responders

Note: *As the prevalence of autism and dementia continues to rise, the need to ACT is increasingly urgent.*

Statistics shown above are based on estimates from a collection of data sources.