

Douglas County Sheriff's Office

Project Lifesaver

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Need

Current estimates are that over 5.3 million Americans have Alzheimer's, with an expected increase to over 7 million by 2030. It is the most common form of several related dementias. Wandering, the most life-threatening behavior associated with Alzheimer's, affects 59 percent of patients and 45 percent of those cases end tragically in death if the person is not located within 24 hours. Douglas County is a prime location for implementing the project. The percentage of elderly in our population continues to increase, as does the number of individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia. Lawrence's nationally recognized autism support programs serve another group of individuals likely to benefit from Project Lifesaver.

Why Project Lifesaver

The Lawrence Pilot Club and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office have joined together to offer Project Lifesaver to the citizens of Douglas County. The primary mission of Project Lifesaver is to provide timely response to save lives and reduce potential injury to adults and children who wander due to Alzheimer's, autism, and other related cognitive disorders.

What is Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver International (PLI) is a non-profit organization that since 1999 has developed a network of more than 1,000 law enforcement and other public safety agencies nationwide. PLI provides training and equipment to participating agencies on the use of specialized electronic search and rescue equipment, technology and procedures, as well as teaching rescuers how to communicate with people afflicted with cognitive conditions, all of which are essential to the successful rescue of missing persons who wander or otherwise become lost. They certify search and rescue personnel and provide ongoing management to participating agencies.

Who Can Enroll?

Project Lifesaver enrollment is open to persons diagnosed with a brain disorder which leads to wandering, i.e. Alzheimer's/other types of dementia, Autism, Down Syndrome, or other cognitive disorders.

How Does It Work?

The enrolled participant wears a small personal transmitter around the wrist or ankle that emits a tracking signal. The transmitter is a small circular radio device on a band, about the size of a wristwatch. It is worn 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is difficult to remove without appropriate tools. If an enrolled client goes missing, the care provider contacts the Douglas County Sheriff's Office by calling 911. Sheriff's Office patrol units form a search and rescue team and respond to the wanderer's area and start searching with the mobile locator tracking system. The Project Lifesaver technology allows search times to be significantly reduced.

How Much Does It Cost?

Project Lifesaver is fully funded by the generous financial support of the Lawrence Pilot Club. A Transmitter with a year's supply of batteries and bracelets costs \$300. After the first year it costs \$10/mo. to replace batteries and bracelets. Clients enrolled in the program are encouraged to cover whatever costs they can comfortably afford. The Pilot Club has provided funds for individuals who would otherwise not be able to participate.

How Long Do We Keep The Bracelet?

For as long as the transmitter is needed. If your needs change, the bracelet and transmitter are returned to the Sheriff's Office

How Do I Know The Transmitter is Working?

Caregivers are trained to do daily transmitter checks. Volunteers make monthly visits to replace batteries and check the bracelets. If anything is wrong between visits, caregivers can call the Sheriff's Office for help.

How Do I Enroll My Loved One In Project Lifesaver?

If you are interested in enrolling a friend or loved one in the program, contact the Douglas County Sheriff's office at 841-0007. We will then contact you and schedule a visit with the care giver and the person with wandering issues. During the interview the applicant will complete a client profile questionnaire which will help determine if the program is appropriate for your needs. Once accepted and enrolled in the program, Project Lifesaver team members will schedule a second visit, at which time the client will receive the transmitter and the care giver will be trained in testing the equipment.