



## SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN

While most kids pass through childhood without ever experiencing physical harm, some are frightened or hurt by crime. As a parent, one of your responsibilities is to teach your children how to protect themselves and respond to threatening situations. Always take the time to listen carefully to your children's fears and feelings about people or places that frighten them or make them feel uncomfortable.

### FIRST, COVER THE BASICS

- Rehearse with children their full name, address, and phone number (including area code) and how to make emergency phone calls from home and public phones.
- Walk the neighborhood with your children. Show them safe places they can go to in an emergency, like a neighbor's house, or an open store. Check areas that threaten children's safety, like brush in wooded areas, overgrown shrubbery, abandoned buildings, bad lighting, and vacant lots littered with debris.
- Make sure your children are taking the safest route to school and friend's houses, one that avoids danger spots like alleys, new construction, and wooded areas. To test, walk it together.
- Tell children never to accept gifts or rides from someone they don't know well. Tell your children to stay away from strangers who hang around playgrounds, public restrooms, and empty buildings.
- Teach children to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if you become separated in a store or shopping mall. Tell them to never go into the parking lot alone.
- Accompany your children to public restrooms.

### AT SCHOOL AND PLAY

- Encourage your children to walk and play with friends, not alone, and to stay in open areas where others can see them.
- Don't hang a house key around your child's neck. It's a telltale sign that you won't be at home when they return from school. Put it inside a pocket or sock.
- Teach your children to walk confidently and stay alert to what's going around them.
- Encourage your children to look out for other kids' safety and report anything they see that doesn't seem right.
- Teach your children to write down and report to you the license numbers of people who offer rides, loiter around playgrounds, or appear to follow them.

### AT HOME ALONE

- Make sure your children can reach you by telephone. Post your work number or where ever you are, along with numbers for a neighbor, the police and fire department, and the poison control center near all your home phones.
- Have your children check in with you at work or with a neighbor when they get home. Agree on rules for having friends over and going to someone else's house when no adult is present.
- Work out a safety plan in case of a emergency of a disaster (i.e. fire, earthquake)
- Tell your children never to answer or open the door even when the parent is present. Give your child specific instructions. Caution them about answering the phone and accidentally letting a stranger know they are alone. Children can always say their parents are busy and take a message.
- Make sure they know how to work the door and window locks and that they use them when they are inside alone.

## **WHAT IS A STRANGER?**

- Explain to your children that stranger is someone they don't know well. A stranger can be a man or woman, well-dressed or shabby, kind or threatening, pretty or ugly. If a stranger tries to follow them or grab them, they should run away, scream, and make lots of noise. Tell them to run to the nearest place where there are people and to shout "This person is trying to hurt me" or "Stay away from me," instead of "Help."

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

- Tell to your children about touches that are appropriate and ones that make them feel uneasy. Stress that they can always talk to you when someone's been touching them in a bad way. Children rarely lie about being the victim's of sexual abuse, but some may be too confused or frightened to talk directly about it.
- Be alert when a child describes someone as "weird" and trust their instincts. Tell your children to stay away from anyone who makes them feel uneasy or asks them to keep secrets.
- If your child has been sexually abused, do report it to the police or a child protection agency. You may save other children from being harmed. Seek counseling for your child from a community mental health, child welfare, or sexual abuse treatment program.

## **CHOOSE DAY CARE WISELY**

- In any child care situation, if your child is routinely left under the care of someone else find out as much as you can about the program's reputation and whether there have been any past complaints. Is it licensed or regulated in any way.
- Make sure you have the right to visit anytime, with out an appointment. It is a good idea to stop in unannounced periodically.
- Never give the organization blanket permission to take your child off the premises.
- Finally, talk with your child daily about how things are going and investigate problems that worry you or become chronic. Compare notes with other parents.

## **EXPLORING COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

- Many voluntary groups run a "Phone Friend" or "Warm Line" that children at home above can call if they're scared or lonely.
- Some youth organizations or local agencies teach "survival skills" classes for kid 6 to12 years age who may sometimes be at home alone. They cover handling emergencies and basic safety measures.
- Many schools, with the help of volunteers, operate callback programs to inform parents, at home or on the job, if their children are not in school.
- Schools, recreation, departments, churches, or community organizations like the Boys Club or YMCA'YWCA sponsor after school programs for elementary school children and "drop-in" centers for teens.

## **TAKE ACTION TODAY**

- If your child's school doesn't have a school callback program encourage them to do so.
- Lobby for sensitive treatment of child victim's.
- Invite the crime prevention specialist from the Sheriff's Department to talk about children's safety to a neighborhood meeting of parent and children.

**WOULD YOUR CHILD KNOW WHAT TO DO?**

**EMERGENCY** and non-emergency numbers

**All EMERGENCIES**  
**(Fire, accident, crime**  
**in progress, ambulance, etc.)**

**9-1-1**

**Sheriff (non-emergency)**

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**Parents' work numbers**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Friend**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Neighbor**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Close relative**

\_\_\_\_\_

**School**

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