

Children and Youth Self Protection Handout Materials Grades K- 6

Safety Tips for Parents

As a parent one of your primary concerns is your child's safety, while some dangers – a hot stove, traffic or an electrical outlet – seem easy to explain, dangers that involve violence may seem more difficult to talk about. You may be afraid that you will frighten your child. You may not know how to explain violence or where to start. You may also not want to recognize that your child could become a victim of a crime.

Unfortunately, children of all ages are victims of crime. Any child can be a crime victim regardless of age, gender, religious or ethnic affiliation, appearance, size or strength. The best thing that you can do to try to prevent your child from being victimized is to talk openly and honestly about safety, and about what your child can do if anyone tries to harm him or her.

The old advice, "keep away from strangers," simply isn't enough. It also isn't enough to address the issue of safety only once. Just as each time you cross a street with your child, you remind him or her to "look both ways," there are many ways you can incorporate safety information into your child's daily routine. You can decide when, where, and how you want to start talking about these issues with your child. You could talk to your child alone, involve others in your family, or start by reading a story.

The following tips have been collected from a wide variety of sources, including organizations and individuals that work directly with young victims of crime. The information is divided into several major categories: Keeping Records; Avoiding Abduction; Gun Safety; Safety at Home; Child Sexual Abuse; Preschool or Child Care Center Safety; Safety at School; Halloween Safety; Child Abuse; and If Your Child Becomes a Victim of Crime.

Unfortunately, none of these tips can guarantee safety for your child. However, teaching your child about safety gives him or her the tools to recognize and respond to potentially dangerous situations – tools that could save your child's life.

Basics

- Try to create a climate where your child feels comfortable talking to you. Tell the child that it is okay to talk to you about anything and that you always want to know if someone upsets him or her, even if it is someone you care about. A child needs to know that if she or he tells you something difficult, they will be believed.
- Teach your child his or her full name, telephone number and the address where you live, including the name of the town and state. For smaller children, putting this information to a familiar song can help them remember it.
- Make sure your child knows how to make an emergency phone call and a collect phone call.
- Establish routines with your children that keep you informed about where they are and when they will be home. For instance, if your child has to stay after school or wants to go somewhere after school, make sure they always call you first.
- Create a support system for your child. Help your child make a list of all the people in his or her life to whom they can turn to for help.
- Try to teach your child how to resolve conflicts without violence. You can be a role model by using non-violent discipline techniques, such as time outs, removal of privileges and restrictions.
- Role play situations with your child, so that your child can practice responding to potentially dangerous situations. "What if" games (such as "What if someone you don't know asks you

to see his puppies or find his lost kitten?") can teach your child how to say no to or escape from potential abductors or abusers.

Keeping Records

- Keep a complete and updated written description of your child which includes eye color, hair color, height, weight, date of birth and any unique physical attributes. Include information about glasses, braces, pierced ears and any birthmarks, scars or blemishes.
- Take color photographs of your child every six months that are in good focus and are good, accurate likenesses.
- Make sure that your dentist has on file up-to-date dental charts and x-rays for your child. If you move, get a copy of these records to take with you.
- Know where your child's medical records are kept.
- Have your child fingerprinted by your local police department. Fingerprint accuracy is important, so always have them done by a professional. Keep a copy of the prints in a safe place. (Going to the police station does not have to be frightening for a child. It can be presented as a fun outing and done with friends.)
- Maintain current addresses and telephone numbers of your child's friends and schools.

Avoiding Abduction

- Teach your child the tricks people sometimes use to interest children, such as: offering a ride in bad weather; offering candy or money; asking for help looking for a lost pet; or saying that "your Mommy or Daddy sent me to pick you up." It is important to teach your child that it is not bad behavior to say "no" to someone who asks for help. Talk over alternatives (like calling 911) if someone is hurt.
- Instead of warning your child not to "talk to stranger," explain specific situations that might happen and what your child can do in those situations. Children may not have an understanding of what "stranger" means; for instance, some children think that someone who takes the time to befriend them is not a stranger. This also helps children to understand that certain behaviors are wrong no matter who does them—remember people your child knows are much more likely to harm them than "strangers."
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with someone he or she doesn't know. Also teach your child never to go anywhere with someone he or she does know (such as a teacher, bus driver, neighbor, church official or member, etc.), unless your child heard directly from you that it is okay to go. Explain that sometimes people will say that you sent them or that you are hurt as a trick.
- Role playing situations with your child so they can practice saying "NO" and avoiding dangerous situations. Talk about how hard it can be to say no to an adult, especially if the adult is asking for help or offering something fun to the child.
- Don't put your child's name on any of his or her clothing, school supplies or school bags. A stranger might use your child's name as a way of suggesting that she or he knows your child or you.
- Walk your neighborhood with your child and pick out the safest routes to school, friends' houses or other places your child walks. Identify with your child safe places to go in an emergency, such as a trusted neighbor, open business for fire station.
- Some communities have a "Safe Haven" program, where businesses encourage lost or frightened children to come inside for help. If your community doesn't have such a program, contact your local law enforcement agency about starting one.
- Consider having your child take a self-defense class or study karate. A child can learn ways to react if she or he is ever attacked. A child can surprise an attacker by physically resisting and hurting an attacker in a vulnerable area which allows valuable time to run away. Knowledge of self-defense or

martial arts can increase a child's self-confidence, which may make a person think twice about attempting to harm your child.

- Teach your child what to do if he or she gets separated from you at a store or other public place. Don't leave your child alone (for instance, in a car or in the toy department of a store.) Never leave your child in the car, even if you are "just running in." In addition to kidnappers, carjackers are a threat to your child in this case.
- Keep an eye on your child. Be especially careful at places where you might get distracted such as at an ATM or with the cashier in a store.
- Your child needs to know which strangers can be helpful, such as a police officer, fire fighter, store clerk or cashier, or a mother with small children.

Gun Safety

- Guns are dangerous. If you have a gun in your home or are considering buying a gun, there are a few facts you should consider:
- Studies show that a firearm in the home is more than 40 times more likely to hurt or kill a family member than to stop a crime.
- Every six hours a youth between age 10 and 19 commits suicide with a gun.
- Talk to your child about guns. Even if you don't have one in your house, your child may see them at school or at other people's homes. Explain that guns kill people, even accidentally, and that they should never be touched by children. Ask them to tell you if anyone shows them a gun.
- Teach your child how to deal with anger and conflict. Disagreements that used to turn into a schoolyard punching match could today turn into a schoolyard shooting.
- Explain to your child that guns don't solve problems—they kill or cause life-long disability and pain.
- Talk to your child about the differences between television or movie violence and real-life violence.
- If you keep any types of weapons in your house, keep them locked away out of your child's reach. Do not show them to your child or let your child know where you keep them. If you have a gun, keep any ammunition in a separate locked area.
- Teach your child what to do if they see a gun or hear one being fired.

Safety at Home

- Use a babysitter until your child is old enough to be responsible in a crisis.
- Check out every babysitter. Meet them, and ask for references before you hire them. Let the child meet them too. Set clear rules in front of the sitter and the child together, for instance: "Sarah should not be given a bath and should be in bed at 9:00 on the dot." Do not ask babysitters to bathe your child.
- Have a set of safety rules for your child if he or she is alone in the house. Be sure your child knows never to open the door or to tell someone on the phone that he or she is alone.
- Make rules with your child about bringing home friends and inviting people over when you aren't at home.
- Your child should always check with you before leaving the apartment or house for any reason, unless it is an emergency, such as a fire.
- Keep important numbers posted by each phone, such as 911, a trustworthy neighbor, poison control, etc. Make sure your child can reach the phone and knows what numbers to call in an emergency.
- Keep windows and doors at your home locked. Intruders often enter through unlocked entrances. Make sure your child knows how to work door and window locks.
- Teach your child what to do if she or he comes home to an apartment or house that looks broken into. Tell your child never to go in if it looks like the home has been broken into—the burglar could still be inside. Also talk about what to do if someone tries to break into the house while your child is inside. Teach him or her to get out of the house, if possible, and to run away to seek help.

- Don't hand a house key around your child's neck. It advertises that the child goes home to an empty house. Put it inside a pocket or on a ring in your child's backpack.
- If your child comes home before you, establish a rule that he or she must call you upon arriving home. Get a beeper if you are not reachable by phone.
- Make sure your child knows an adult neighbor, friend or family member that she or he can call in an emergency or if she or he gets lonely or scared.

Child Sexual Abuse

- The most important sexual abuse prevention strategy is good communication with your child. Take the time every day to talk with your child, and make sure that you can really listen and observe your child while he or she talks. Learn about your child's activities, but also about his or her feelings. Encourage your child to always share his or her problems and concerns with you.
- Talk to your child about sexual abuse. Always mention people the child knows as well as strangers. (Remember your child is about four times more likely to be sexually abused by someone she or he knows than by a stranger!) This can increase your child's safety because it is easier for your child to respond to something she or he knows can happen, and it will definitely help your child to talk with you if anything ever happens. Try including this topic in discussions you have about other risks your child may face (such as crossing busy streets, fire safety, or what to do if lost.)
- Reassure your child by emphasizing that the vast majority of adults never do bad things to children and that most adults want to protect children from harm.
- Use the proper words for sex organs, such as penis and vagina. It is hard for a child to talk openly about sexual abuse if she or he doesn't have the words or has been taught that parts of the body are dirty or bad.
- Discuss good and bad secrets – Teach your children that some secrets are okay to keep, but help them to understand that some secrets are bad. Tell them that if anyone wants them to keep a secret about touching, they should not keep the secret and tell a trusted adult if anyone tries to touch them.
- Explain that some areas of your body—the parts your bathing suit covers—are private, and no older person should touch them, except a doctor when you are in the room with them. One way to approach what “private” means is to use things that belong to your child, such as toys, books, bed – anything of your child's someone else should ask permission to touch or use.
- Suggest solutions to your child, such as: “If someone touches you in a way that feels uncomfortable, tell them to stop. If someone pretends that touching you was an accident, move away or firmly take the person's hand off of you.”
- Be Specific. Tell your child that an adult or older child should NEVER:
 - ▶ Put their hands down your pants or up your skirt
 - ▶ Touch your private parts, even through clothes or pajamas.
 - ▶ Ask you to touch their private parts, or ask you to remove their clothes.
 - ▶ Take off your clothes
 - ▶ Take pictures of you with your clothes off.
 - ▶ Take their clothes off in front of you.
 - ▶ Most parents try to teach their children to listen to adults and to “do as they are told.”

Teach your child that there are times that it is okay to say “no” to an adult, and that you will support your child when she or he does so. Even things that seem harmless, like making your child kiss a relative goodbye, can make a child more vulnerable to sexual assault.

- Teach your child that they can always say “no” to someone who wants to touch or hug them—even to you. Practice with your child ways of saying “no” that feel comfortable in various situations.
- Be on the lookout of signs that something is wrong. If your child says she or he doesn't like someone or shows reluctance or discomfort around an adult or teenager, ask why. Ask if the person

has done something to make him or her uncomfortable. A sexually abused child may show unusual interest in sexuality, or may exhibit changes in behavior such as becoming withdrawn or violent.

- Ask your child to tell you if someone touches them in a way that makes them feel funny. Explain that the person may ask a child to promise not to tell or may threaten the child. A child may be told something terrible will happen (such as their Mom or Dad will be killed) if she or he tells anyone about the abuse. Ask your child to report any time an older child or adult asks them to keep a secret.

Preschool and Child Care Safety

- Before entering your child into a preschool or child care program, check with state or local licensing agencies and child care information services to make sure the program is reputable and to check if there have been past complaints.
- Find out about the school or center's hiring policies and practices. Ask how they recruit and select staff. Find out if they examine references, background checks and previous employment history.
- Ensure that you have the right to drop in and visit the program at any time – and then do so!
- Prohibit, in writing, the release of your child to anyone without your authorization. Also give the school or center the name of anyone other than yourself who will be responsible for picking up your child regularly. Introduce this person to the staff so they can recognize him or her.

Safety at School

Throughout the United States, children and teenagers are increasingly carrying guns and other dangerous weapons to school. From small towns to big cities, children have increased access to weapons, and many children feel they need guns for "protection." As a parent, it is important for you to realize that school and playgrounds could be potentially dangerous to your child.

- Encourage your child to talk to you about anything that happens at school, including things that upset him or her.
- School bullies have always been a problem. Nowadays, they might be carrying weapons or be involved with drugs. Teach your child safe ways to handle confrontation, and ask her or him to tell you immediately if anyone bullies or threatens them.
- Reinforce school policies against carrying weapon to school by talking about them with your child. Also talk to your child about his or her fears of safety while at school.
- Other children are not the only threat to your child at school. Child abductors or molesters sometimes take their victims from schools or playgrounds. Remember that "strangers" are not the only potential threat. People who harm children can also be teachers, principals, coaches, counselors, custodians, bus drivers and other types of school employees – all of whom have access to large numbers of children. This threat exists regardless of whether your child attends public, private or parochial school.
- Be involved in your children's school, and attend school board meetings and hearings. Speak out about safety concerns you have. Other parents probably have them too.
- If your school does not automatically contact you when your child does not appear for class, work with other families to get such policies established.
- Encourage professional safety, prevention and support programs in the local school system.

Halloween Safety

- Children's costumes should not keep them from being able to see clearly or move easily and quickly. Avoid masks that block any part of your child's vision.
- Children should trick-or-treat in groups, with a buddy system, and be accompanied by an adult who can remain in the background.
- Stop only at familiar apartments or homes in your neighborhood.
- It's best to trick-or-treat when it's light outside, but if that isn't possible, give children flashlights and keep them in well-lit areas. Always walk on the sidewalks, never in the streets.

- Teach children never to go into anyone's house, apartment or car for candy.
- Give children treats before they go out so they will be less tempted to eat candy you haven't had a chance to examine. Children should not eat any of the treats they receive until they get home. The adult traveling with the children can carry candy for eating during trick-or-treating.
- Eat only treats that are wrapped and unopened. A parent should examine all candy and throw out anything that seems suspicious. Fruits or homemade items should be thrown out.

IF YOUR CHILD BECOMES A VICTIM OF CRIME

- Believe him or her. Many children who tell adults about crimes are afraid they will not be believed. Many aren't. Be sure to take your child seriously, even if a violent crime was not committed.
- Reassure the child that what happened is not his or her fault. A child who was hurt or accosted while breaking a rule (such as being somewhere you said they were not allowed to go) may be especially afraid that you will be upset with him or her.
- Immediately get him or her any needed medical attention. In the case of a sexual assault an injury might not be obvious, and a medical exam is needed to detect internal injuries and screen for possible exposure to disease or infection.
- Try to temper your own reaction. Your child is likely to become very upset if she or he sees that you are upset. They may also think that they did something wrong and take responsibility for your pain. They may decide it is better not to keep talking to you if you exhibit extreme emotions.
- Trying to pretend something didn't happen or telling your child to "just forget about it" will not help. Both you and your child will experience stress related to the crime, whether or not you acknowledge it. The best way to cope with the problem is to talk, listen, and get support.

DO NOT try to take the law into your hands. Your child needs you, and needs to try to get back some normalcy in his or her life. If you try to harm someone who has hurt your child, you could be arrested and even go to jail. Your child must then cope with this added trauma.

- Report the crime – even a suspected crime – to the police.
- Get support. Contact a local crime victim agency or child advocacy center. They can offer you and your child support and important information about your rights. Don't try to handle this alone. There are many organizations that can help you.
- Your local phone book, law enforcement agency, or hospital can help you find local services. Or you can call the National Center for Victims of Crime's INFOLINK program, a toll-free crime victim referral service at 1-800-FYI-CALL.

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HANDOUT MATERIALS FOR GRADES 7-12

Social Networking

“It’s 10:00 p.m. do you know where your children are?”

Remember that phrase from your own childhood? It’s still a valid question, but now, it comes with a twist: “Do you know where your kids are—and who they’re chatting with online?”

Social networking sites have transformed into a mainstream medium for teens and adults. These sites encourage and enable people to exchange information about themselves, share pictures and videos, and use blogs and private messaging to communicate with friends, others who share interests, and sometimes even the world-at-large and that’s why it’s important to be aware of the possible pitfalls that come with socializing online.

Quick Facts

- ▶ Help your kids understand what information should be private;
- ▶ Explain that kids should only post information that you –and they—are comfortable with others seeing
- ▶ Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child’s website;
- ▶ Remind your kids that once they post information online, they can’t take it back;
- ▶ Talk to your kids about avoiding sex talk online; and
- ▶ Tell your kids to trust their gut if they have suspicions, if they ever feel uncomfortable or threatened by anyone online, to tell you immediately.

This information was collected from: On Guard Online.gov

Cyber Bullying

Cyber Bullying is defined as:

Threats or other offensive behavior sent online to a victim or sent or posted online about the Victim for others to see (Wolak, Mitchell, Finkelhor et al. 2006)

- ◆ It can take the form of a message on email or instant messaging or a social networking site from someone who is threatening to hurt you or beat you up.
- ◆ It might be rumors posted on your profile or spread online for others to see.
- ◆ It might be the deletion of you on a friend’s “buddy list” to make you feel left out.
- ◆ It could be a profile made by someone pretending to be you.
- ◆ Or, someone hacking into your profile and writing comments pretending they’re from you.

In general, cyber bullying is bullying or harassing that happens online. Much of it is similar to what teenagers experience offline in schools or the community, but has the additional aspect of the internet.

Who is targeted by Cyberbullies

- ❖ Boys and girls appear to be equally likely to be targets of harassment online. There is some indication that girls might be more likely than boys to be targeted.
- ❖ Older teens seem to be more likely to be involved than younger teens in fact, a recent national survey of youth reports that the average age of a teenager involved in cyberbullying is 15 years old.
- ❖ Teens who are harassed online may also be experiencing harassment offline.

You should know that teens that are targeted by harassment are more likely than teens who are not harassed to report harassing others online. Often this can be because of retaliation. Also, remember if someone sends you a mean or harassing message doesn't mean it's not harassment if you do the same thing back.

What to do about Cyberbullying

If you are being cyberbullied there are things you can do to stop it:

- ✓ Ignore the person: Sometimes the easiest thing to do is to ignore the person and go on about your business
- ✓ Log off: If the harassment is bothering you, log off.
- ✓ Block or delete the person: If it is happening on instant messaging or some other place online that requires a "buddy list", you can block certain users based upon their username, or delete them if they are in your buddy list. You can also block emails that are being received from specific email addresses.
- ✓ Change your information: If someone has hacked into your profile, change your password. If someone repeatedly sends you messages (like "add me to your buddy list over and over). Consider changing your username or email address.
- ✓ If there is a profile that was created about you without you knowing, contact the company who runs the site to have the profile or language taken off.
- ✓ If you are upset about what is being said, talk to someone you trust. Don't feel like you're alone.

When to talk to an adult:

Many times teens are able to take care of the cyberbullying on your own. Sometimes it gets out of hand though, and it is helpful to talk to an adult about what is going on. If you feel scared or overwhelmed, maybe even trapped it's definitely time to talk to an adult.

If you don't feel comfortable speaking with a parent seek out another adult or authority that you trust such as a teacher, coach, school counselor, a youth group leader, or another adult family member like an aunt or uncle.

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