



If your children walk to school, walk the route to and from school with them, pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they're being followed or need

help. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to school, using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas.



If your children take a bus, visit the bus stop with them and make

sure they know which bus to take. It is also a wise idea to have a trusted parent or adult stay with your children while waiting for the bus and waiting at the bus stop when the children return from school to ensure their safety.

RULES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN TO STAY SAFE

I **KNOW** my name, address, telephone number and my parent's names.

I always **CHECK FIRST** with my parents or the person in charge. I tell them before I go anywhere or get into a car, even with someone I know.

I always **CHECK FIRST** with my parents or a trusted adult before I accept anything from anyone, even from someone I know.

I always **TAKE A FRIEND** with me when I go places or play outside.

I **SAY NO** if someone tries to touch me or treat me in a way that makes me feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

It's **OK TO SAY NO**, and I **KNOW** that there will always be someone who can help me.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

- Keep a complete description of your child.
- Take color photographs of your child every six months.
- Keep copies of your child's fingerprints.
- Keep a sample of your child's DNA – a baby tooth, lock of hair, etc.
- Know where your child's medical records are located.
- Have your dentist prepare and maintain dental charts for your child.



If your child is missing, **immediately** call 911 to report this to the Suffolk Police Department, who will enter information into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Persons File. Limit access to your home until law enforcement arrives and has the opportunity to collect possible evidence. Give police investigators all information you have on your child including fingerprints, photographs, complete description and the facts and circumstances related to the disappearance.

Suffolk's Commonwealth's Attorney is proud to provide the community with information about keeping our children safe. Children are our most precious resource, and it is our responsibility to safeguard them and to teach them the skills to be safe.



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KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE



An Information Guide for Parents

provided by

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INTRODUCTION



In light of recent local attempted abductions and child murders nationwide, now more than ever it is important to teach our children safety and protection measures.

Children are our most precious resource, but they often lack the skills to protect themselves. Take an active interest in your children and *listen to them*. Teach them that they can be assertive in order to protect themselves against abduction and exploitation. Make your home a place of trust and support that fulfills your child's needs. Together, we can protect our children by teaching them to be **smart, strong** and **safe**.

ABDUCTION: WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO YOUR CHILD?

- Children of every age, gender and race are vulnerable to child abduction.
- When the abductor is unrelated to the child, the abductor is just as likely to be someone known to the child or family as to be a stranger.
- **BE ALERT!** Recent statistics show that over 50% of the children kidnapped in non-family abductions were taken from the street, in a vehicle, or from a park or wooded area. Almost 75% of those children kidnapped in family abductions were taken from their own or another's home or yard.

DISCUSSING SAFETY WITH YOUR CHILD



A parent is the best person to teach a child about personal safety. There is no perfect age when parents should begin teaching children about personal safety, as the child's ability to comprehend and practice safety skills is based on their age, educational and developmental levels.

- It's important to LISTEN to your children.
- Know their daily activities and habits.
- Encourage open communication.
- Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation.
- Set boundaries about places they may go, things they may do, and people they may see.
- Reinforce the importance of the "buddy system".
- It's OK to say NO – tell your children to trust their instincts.
- *Get involved*. Know where your children are at all times.
- Your children should check in with you if there is a change in plans. There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.

SAFETY AT HOME, AT SCHOOL, IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND ON THE INTERNET



Children should know their full name, home phone number and how to use the telephone. Post your contact information where your children will see it: office phone number, cell phone, pager, etc. Children should have a trusted adult to call if they're scared or have an emergency.

Choose babysitters with care. Obtain references from family, friends and neighbors. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was, and listen carefully to their responses.

Make a list with your children of their neighborhood boundaries, choosing significant landmarks. Interact regularly with your neighbors. Tell your children whose homes they are allowed to visit.

Don't drop your children off alone at malls, movie theaters, video arcades, or parks.

Children should learn that adults, particularly those they don't know, shouldn't be asking for a child's help. Rehearse with them. Ask them, "If someone came up and asked you to help them find their lost puppy, what would you do?" That's exactly the line that was used a few years ago when 5-year-old Samantha Runnion was snatched from her Stanton, California townhouse and later killed.

Never leave children unattended in an automobile. Children should never go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.

Be careful when you put your child's name on clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes or bicycle license plates. If a child's name is visible, it may put them on a "first name" basis with an abductor.



Children should never give out personal information such as phone numbers, home addresses or where they go to school over the Internet. Children should never respond to a message or bulletin board item that is suggestive, obscene, threatening or makes them feel uncomfortable. Never allow children to arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user. Do not post photographs of your children on websites that are available to the public. Remind your children that people online may not be who they seem. Someone indicating that "she" is a "10-year-old girl" could actually be a 38-year-old man.



Make the Internet a family activity. Keep the computer in the family room rather than your child's bedroom. Get to know their "online friends" just as you would any other friend.