

CHILD SAFETY



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THE EXPLOITER OR ABDUCTOR:
NOT NECESSARILY A "STRANGER."



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- “Stay away from strangers” is a popular phrase used when discussing safety with children.

- However, this approach can mislead children into believing that they should be concerned only about people who they do not know or who have an unusual appearance.

- Abductors and exploiters are usually “acquaintances”.

- Describing a “stranger” can be difficult for an adult to explain – and is even more difficult for a child to understand.



- Instead, it is more effective to teach children to:

- Avoid people who are not known to parents, and

- Get away from uncomfortable situations involving anyone, including friends and acquaintances.

- Older children are also at risk. As they pursue independence – continue taking steps to promote thinking about safety.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT ABDUCTION AND EXPLOITATION.



- Occasionally take time to remind your children about safety.
 - Strike a balance between avoiding the issue and instilling a sense of fear in your child.
 - The goal is to instill a sense of caution.
 - Also, demonstrate how your thoughts fit into their daily lives.
 - Always remember, “You are your child’s first, best and greatest teacher”.



- Know where your children are and who they are interacting with.

- Be familiar with daily activities.
- Remind older children to occasionally call home.
- Know your children's *friends** and their families.

* "*Friends*" include people who children interact with online (i.e., instant messaging, blogs)!



- Through your words - and actions - teach your children the "life skills" that help them to make sound decisions in many areas, including personal safety.

- Decision-making.
- Risk-taking.
- Assertiveness.
- Consequences.

- Periodically provide reinforcement.



- Be alert to an older child or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your children or giving inappropriate gifts.
 - There may be reason for genuine concern, however the person may just be a person who genuinely likes to be nice to others.
 - Not everyone who pays special attention to children is a pedophile.



- Be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior.
 - They are a signal that you should talk to your children about what caused the changes.
 - When talking, be aware of not only what is said, but what may not be said.
 - Also, observe physical behavior while talking – it may be more telling than the words.



- **Avoid placing your child's name in a visible place:**

- Clothing.
- Backpack.
- Lunchbox.
- Bicycle.

– A child may not realize that someone who knows his or her name may not necessarily be a friend.



- **Do not allow your child to solicit (door-to-door) alone, even for school related fund-raisers.**



Teach your child basic escape techniques.

- If someone holds you or attempts to take you somewhere, immediately:
 - Pull down (versus away) and run.
 - Pull out of your jacket, shirt, back pack, etc. and run.
 - Strike the person, with hands or feet, in a vulnerable place (i.e., face, throat, groin) and run.
 - Hold onto or wrap your arms and legs around anything (bicycle, fence, tree). Don't let go.
 - If someone is following or chasing you in a car, run in the opposite direction of travel.

- If pulled into a vehicle.
 - Open the door and run from the vehicle as soon as it stops in traffic, at an intersection, toll booth, store, etc.
 - If possible, jump into the back seat.
 - Open the door and run when the vehicle stops.
 - The person cannot control you and drive at the same time.
 - If placed in a trunk.
 - Remove or break the taillight bulbs.



- **Babysitters, Day Care and Pre-schools.**

- If you do not know them well, obtain and thoroughly check references.
- Tactfully make unannounced visits.
- Ensure that they understand that your child is not to be released to anyone else, unless release to another individual has been discussed in advance.



- **When using a babysitter in your home, ensure that he or she knows:**

- Your expectations, including duties and responsibilities.
- Family rules and daily routines, including eating and sleeping arrangements.
- How you can be contacted. Write down:
 - Your cellular telephone and/or pager numbers.
 - Alternate contact information.

- **Babysitters should be instructed to:**

- Keep all outside doors locked.
- Never open the door to anyone, unless you have given prior permission.
- Never volunteer information over the telephone.
- Watch the children closely while awake, especially if taken outside.
- Check children regularly after they have gone to sleep.



- **Parents are responsible for ensuring that:**

- The children know what rules are to be obeyed when a babysitter is in charge.
- The babysitter knows who the children may play with or visit.
- The babysitter knows the names and telephone numbers of neighbors who can be called for help.
- The babysitter knows your expectations regarding having visitors (friends) at your home.

- **Upon returning home, parents should always:**

- Ask the babysitter about occurrences during your absence.
 - Child's behavior and activity.
 - Telephone calls.
 - Anything out of the ordinary.
- Talk to your children about what happened while you were gone (after the babysitter has left).
 - Did anything make them feel uncomfortable?

- **Visiting friends' homes.**

- Prior to allowing a child to visit an unfamiliar friend's home without you, make it a point to get to know the friend and his or her parents.
- With younger children, it may be appropriate to accompany your child on the first visit, to become acquainted with the child, his or her parent(s) and their habits/rules.



A FEW RULES TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD.



- Trust your feelings - you have the right to say "no" when something feels wrong.
 - Get away quickly if a situation is uncomfortable.
 - It is more important to get out of a threatening situation, than it is to be polite.
 - *"Say No, Then Go and Tell".*
- Never take anything or respond in any way if approached by someone who you don't know.



- **Run away from danger, never toward it.**
 - If someone in a car follows you, turn around and run in the opposite direction.
 - Run to a safe place (i.e., any place where there are other people) - not a wooded area or unoccupied building.



- **Before going anywhere, always tell a parent or the person in charge (i.e., teacher, babysitter) where you are going.**
 - If plans change, check first.
 - Never accept a ride before getting approval.



- If you become “lost”, do not wander.
 - Immediately go to a “trustworthy” person (i.e., cashier, security guard, bus driver) and ask for help.
- Stay away from people in cars, vans or trucks.
 - You don’t need to go near the car to talk to the people inside.

- Use the “buddy system” and avoid going places alone.
 - There really is strength in numbers.



- **No one should:**
 - Ask you to keep a “special” secret.
 - Touch you in the parts of your body covered by a bathing suit (nor should you touch anyone else in those areas.)
 - Take your picture without asking your parents or other caregiver before asking you.
 - Promptly tell a trusted adult if someone touches you or does anything else that makes you feel uncomfortable.



- **Finally ... set a good example with your own actions by consistently following established rules. For example:**
 - Keep doors and windows locked.
 - Always see who's at the door before opening it.
 - Avoid dangerous areas and situations.
- **Again, you and your child need to be careful ... but you do not need to live with fear.**

BEING PREPARED.



- Ensure that you can accurately describe your child.

- Gender.
- Race.
- Hair color/length.
- Eye color.
- Height.
- Weight.
- Date of birth.
- Specific physical attributes.
 - Braces.
 - Scars.
 - Birthmarks.
 - Tattoos.
 - Others.



- Know what your child is wearing – every day.



- Carry a color photograph of your child (head and shoulder portraits, such as those taken by school photographers are best).
- Obtain and have your child carry some type of personal identification.



- Give some thought as to how you would react if your child disappeared. For example:
 - Where would you look first?
 - How long would you look before calling the police?
 - Who else would you call for assistance?

Keep a list of names, telephone numbers and addresses of:

- Your child's school and teacher(s).
- The school transportation coordinator (bus drivers see a lot).
- All of your child's friends' and parents' names.
- Your child's workplace, if applicable.
- All family members and relatives.
- Babysitters.
- Non-custodial parent or birth parent, if applicable.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRIES: THE BASICS AND HOW THEY CAN HELP.

- It is extremely important to remember that sex offender registries are a tool in promoting child safety, but not an answer.
- Registries do not include information about everyone who has committed a sex offense - only people that have been arrested and convicted of a designated offense appear on registries.



- **The New York State Sex Offender Registry**
 - The registry is located within the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services.
 - Effective January 21, 1996. Applies to persons:
 - Under sentence on that date.
 - Convicted of a designated offense on or after that date.



- **Risk Levels.**
 - Level 1 – Low risk to re-offend.
 - Level 2 – Moderate risk to re-offend.
 - Level 3 – High risk to re-offend and a threat to public safety.
- **Designations.**
 - Sexually Violent Offender – conviction of a listed sexually violent offense (s.v.o.).
 - Sexual Predator – conviction of a listed s.v.o. and mental abnormality and personality disorder.
 - Predicate Sex Offender – previous conviction of a sex offense (need not be registered for prior).

- **As of January 18, 2006:**

Risk Level
 +
 Designation
 =
 Community Notification
 +
And Duration of Registration

- **Risk Levels and Designation**

- Determined by the sentencing court.
- Level 1 offenders with no designation register for 20 years.
- All other offenders register for life.

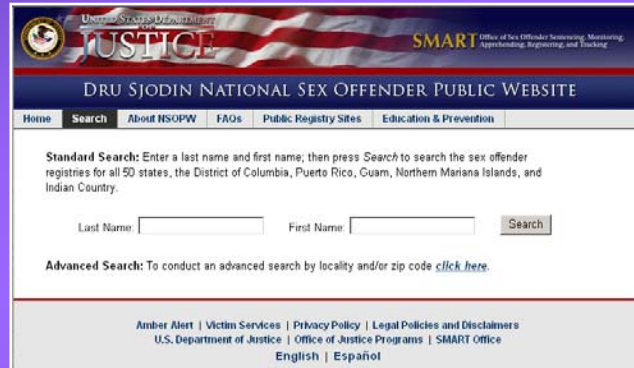


- **Community Notification.**

- Internet - DCJS website:
www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us
(levels 2 and 3 only).
- Telephone - Call DCJS at
1-800-262-3257 (All levels).
- Printed - Subdirectory is
available for review at local
police agencies (levels 2 and
3 only).

A screenshot of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) website. The page is titled "Search Public Registry of Sex Offenders" and includes a search form with fields for "Last Name", "County", and "Zip Code". Below the form are "Search" and "Clear" buttons. A disclaimer states: "By clicking 'Search' you acknowledge that you have read the Disclaimer below." There are also "Search tips" listed: "By last name: To search by name, enter the offender's last name.", "By zip code: You can get a list of all sex offenders who live in a certain area by entering the zip code.", and "By County: You can also get a list of all sex offenders who live in a certain County by entering the County name."

- Internet – National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) website: www.nsopr.gov
 - Provides access to registry information in all states.



missingchildren@dcjs.state.ny.us

1-800-FIND-KID