

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN COMMUNITIES! SAFETY TIPS – WHAT YOU CAN DO

AS A PARENT

- Listen to your children. Know your children's daily activities and habits. Listen to what they like and what they don't like.
- Encourage open communication. Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation. Reassure your children that their safety is your #1 concern.
- Children should know their full name, home phone number and how to use the telephone. Provide your children with a card that includes important contact information – your office phone number, cell phone, pager, etc; a trusted relative and/or neighbour's phone number.
- 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.
- Instruct your children to always take a friend when going out, including when they are walking or riding their bike to and from school. Teach your children to walk and ride in well-lit areas, and never take shortcuts.
- Walk the route to and from school with your children, 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. If your children take a bus, visit the bus stop with them and make sure they know which bus to take.
- Teach your children that adults should not approach children for help or directions. Tell your children that if they are approached by an adult, they should stay alert because this may be a "trick."
- Teach your children to run away from danger, never toward it. Danger is anyone or anything invading their personal space. If anyone should try to grab them, tell them to make a scene; loudly yell this person is not my father / mother; and make every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting. Their safety is more important than being polite.
- Teach your children if they are ever followed in a vehicle to turn around and run in the other direction to you or another trusted adult.
- Monitor your children's television and video viewing. Watching violent films and TV programs can harm young minds.
- Keep a complete description of your children including their fingerprints and a colour photograph (taken every six months). Know where your children's medical records are located.
- Report any suspicious persons or activities to law enforcement. Do not wait.

- **If your child goes missing**, contact your law enforcement immediately. Base your relationship with law enforcement on mutual respect. Trust your feelings, instincts, and gut reactions and share these with law enforcement so they can be checked out.
- Contact the media as they can be a very effective ally in asking for help. Remember however that you have the right to refrain from answering questions if doing so makes you feel uncomfortable. Additionally, you have the right to be treated with dignity and respect – let people know you love your child and need their help in finding and bringing your child home.
- Distribute pictures and information of your child as this is an essential part of search and recovery. Get as many people and organisations as possible to distribute your child's picture. Don't forget to use the internet.
- Take care of yourself. It is okay, even necessary, to take a break from the stress for dinner and a walk. Don't blame yourself. Keep your focus and exercise caution. Never stop looking.

AS A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

- Make sure you know your home address and telephone number, including contact details of your parents and other trusted adults such as a neighbour and relative.
- Always check first with your parents or the person in charge before you go anywhere or get into a car, even with someone you know.
- Always tell an adult where you're going. Letting someone know where you will be at all times is smart. If you're faced with a risky situation or get into trouble, your family and friends will know where to find you.
- Don't go out alone. There is safety in numbers. Always take a friend with you when you go places or play outside. This includes if you are walking or riding your bike to and from school. Stay with a group while waiting at the bus stop. It is safer and more fun to be with your friends.
- If an adult approaches you for help or directions, remember grownups needing help should not ask children for help; they should ask other adults.
- Say No loudly if you feel threatened because someone – anyone – tries to touch you or treat you in a way that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- It is also OK to SAY NO if you are being pressured about sex, drugs, or doing something that you know is wrong. Be strong and stand your ground.
- If anyone bothers you while going to or from school, get away from that person, and tell a trusted adult like your parents or teacher.
- If someone tries to take you somewhere, quickly get away and yell, "This person is trying to take me away!" or "This person is not my father (mother)!"
- If someone follows you, get away from him or her as quickly as you can. Always be sure to tell your parents or a trusted adult about what happened.

AS A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

- Child violence is a problem on the national and local levels that requires action in the form of caring individuals in each community.
- Educate yourself and others about how you can help your community prevent violence against children and young people.
- Talk to your neighbors about looking out for one another's children. Encourage a supportive spirit among parents in your neighbourhood or apartment building. Show that you are involved.
- Share child safety tips with your community to prevent violence from happening in the first place. You can post information in your apartment building, clinic, grocery shop, supermarket, laundromat, beauty salon, and workplace.
- Encourage your community and faith groups to conduct programs on parenting and community involvement to end violence against children and young people.
- Write to your elected officials and ask them to ensure that there are adequate amenities and facilities in your neighbourhood that is child-friendly. Request that they also support funding for parent support and child abuse prevention programs.
- Keep the issue of violence against children on the media agenda by writing to your newspaper regularly. Share tips to prevent violence against children in the communities. Point out that preventing child abuse and neglect is an important investment in the future of your community.
- Give your used clothing, furniture and toys for use by another family. This can help relieve the stress of financial burdens that parents sometimes take out on their children.
- Do not be afraid of getting personally involved if you have reason to believe a child has been or may be harmed. **It is not only your duty to report violence against children ... it is the law.** Call your local department of children and family services or your local police department.
 - ▶ Teledera: 1-800-88-3040
 - ▶ Police: 999
 - ▶ Welfare Department: (03) 2697 1090
- Report any suspicious persons or activities to law enforcement.

Sources:

1. "Personal safety for children: A Parent's Guide" – US Department of Education
2. "When your child is missing: A Family Survival Guide" – US Department of Justice