

What You Can Do To Protect Your Child and Prevent Abduction or Exploitation.

Never leave your child unattended - Not even for “a minute”.

Know where your children are at all times. Be familiar with their friends, friends’ parents or guardians, and daily activities.

Be sensitive to changes in your children’s behavior and talk to them about what caused the changes.

Be alert to anyone who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your children or giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts. However, it is important to handle suspicions reasonably, since the interest and kindness may be genuine.

Teach your children to trust their own feelings and assure them that they have the right to say “no” to what they sense is wrong. Teach them to get away quickly if the situation seems to be wrong.

Listen carefully to your children’s fears and be supportive in all your discussions with them.

Teach your children that no one should approach them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone does, they should tell a parent or other trusted adult immediately.

Carefully select babysitters and any other individuals who have custody of your children. If you do not know them well, obtain references and check them thoroughly.

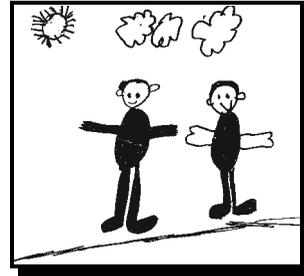
Prior to allowing your child to visit an unfamiliar friend’s home without you, make it a point to get to know the friend and his or her parents. Depending on the age of your child, it may be appropriate to coincide a parent “get acquainted” visit with your child’s first visit.

Ensure that school administrators, as a matter of policy, contact you immediately if your child does not appear at school (unless you notify them of his/her absence on a given day.)

Watch your children while they are waiting at the bus stop. If you are not waiting with them, occasionally look out at them. A child should never wait alone at a bus stop, especially if the stop cannot be seen from your home.

Avoid dressing your child in clothing that displays his or her name. A child may not realize that someone who knows his or her name may not necessarily be a friend.

Do not allow you child to solicit (door-to-door) alone, even for school or church related fund-raisers.



Teaching Basic Rules of Safety.

As soon as your children can articulate a sentence, they can begin the process of learning about personal safety. Children should be taught:

✓ His or her name and address and how to write them.

✓ His or her telephone number (including the area code) and the telephone number of the local law enforcement agency (or 911 if available) and how to dial them.

Here are some ways to talk to your children about their safety. Reinforce them often.

If you are in a public place become separated from your parents, do not wander around looking for them. Immediately go to a “trustworthy” person (e.g., cashier, security officer) and tell the person that you have lost your parent(s) and need help.

You should not get into a car or go anywhere with any person unless you have obtained permission from your parents or the adult responsible for you at that time.

If someone follows you on foot or in a car run away to a safe place. A safe place is not normally a wooded area, a pile of leaves, an unoccupied automobile or abandoned building. A safe place is the home of a neighbor, friend or relative; a store; or any place where there are other people.

If a person is talking to you from a car, you do not need to go near the car.

Adults who need help should not be asking children for help (e.g., asking you for directions or for help in looking for a lost pet). They should be asking adults.

You should not go with a person who tells you that a parent is in trouble and that he or she will take you to them.

If someone tries to take you somewhere, quickly get away from them and yell “This man is trying to take me away.” “Say No, Then Go and Tell”.

You should try to use the “buddy system” and avoid going places alone.

Always ask for permission from a parent or other person in charge (e.g., babysitter, teacher) to leave the yard or play area or to go into someone’s home.

Never hitchhike or try to get a ride home with anyone unless your parents have told you it is okay to ride with him or her.

No one should ask you to keep a special secret or to privately take your picture. If he or she does, tell your parents, teacher or other trusted adult.

No one should touch you, nor should you touch anyone else on parts of the body normally covered by a bathing suit. Your body is special and private.

You can be assertive, and you have the right to say “no” to anyone who tries to take you somewhere, touch you, or makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.

You should not answer the door when parents are not home and should not say that you are alone when someone calls on the telephone.

You should immediately leave and tell an adult if someone, including a friend, is in possession of a gun or other weapon (even if not displayed).

The Exploiter or Abductor: Not Necessarily a “Stranger”.

“Stay away from strangers” is a popular warning used to prevent abduction and exploitation. However, many children are abducted or exploited by people who are familiar with and perhaps even close to the children. They may or may not be known to the parents.

The term “stranger” suggests a concept that children often do not understand. It is one that ignores what we do know about the people who commit crimes against children. It misleads children into believing that they should be aware only of individuals who have an unusual or slovenly appearance.

Instead, it is more appropriate to teach our children to be on the lookout for certain kinds of situations or actions, rather than certain kinds of individuals.

Often exploiters or abductors initiate seemingly innocent contact with the victim. They may try to get to know the children and befriend them. They use subtle approaches that both parents and children should be aware of.

For example, children can be raised to be polite and friendly, but it is okay for them to be suspicious of any adult asking for assistance. Children help other children, but there is normally no need for them to be assisting adults. They should know that it is okay to say “No” - even to an adult.

Remember, a clear, calm and reasonable message about situations and actions to be concerned about is easier for a child to understand than a particular profile or image of a “stranger.”

A Message About Child Safety From Governor George E. Pataki



The safety of our children is paramount. As parents and guardians, we must take every step possible to ensure that they are protected at all times. However, unfortunately we cannot be with them every minute of the day.

Therefore, we must teach our children how to be safe. This brochure is intended to provide you with basic safety rules which should be taught to your child – and reinforced often. It also includes tips for you to follow. Please take a few minutes to read them carefully.

Keep in mind that effective communication between you and your child is extremely important in promoting child safety. If you establish an atmosphere of understanding and trust, your child will feel comfortable in discussing sensitive matters, including inappropriate behavior by others. The truth is that children are often too afraid or confused to express their fears or to report their experiences.

Talk to your child in a calm and reasonable manner, being careful not to over-emphasize the frightening details of what might happen to a child who does not follow the safety guidelines.

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.

The NYS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse (MECC).

MECC is a strong partner with parents and law enforcement in preventing and investigating child abduction and exploitation.

P *The 1-800-FIND-KID hotline* is maintained 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Missing child leads and sightings received on the hotline are immediately disseminated to investigating law enforcement agencies.

P *The statewide missing and unidentified person repository* is continually updated by MECC with information submitted by law enforcement agencies.

P *Investigative assistance* is provided to law enforcement agencies and parents. MECC trains law enforcement officers in basic and advanced investigative techniques. To aid in finding missing children, MECC staff members:

- ✓ Offer advice on case management practices.
 - ✓ Flag missing child birth and educational records.
 - ✓ Develop missing child flyers and distribute them statewide.
 - ✓ Place missing child photographs and biographical information and child safety information on the Internet via the DCJS web site.
 - ✓ Search employment, credit, motor vehicle and other records for leads.
 - ✓ Analyze and enter missing person dental and other anatomical information into New York State and NCIC (National Crime Information Center) files.
- P** *MECC collaboration* with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, other state clearinghouses, other State agencies, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts can provide nationwide assistance to law enforcement agencies and family members.

**NEW YORK STATE
MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN
CLEARINGHOUSE**



CHILD SAFETY



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE
INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:**

**NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
4 Tower Place
Albany, NY 12203**

1-800-FIND-KID or (518) 457-6326

**Missing child photographs and biographical
information and additional child safety
information can be viewed on our website.**

<http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us>

Contributions made to the NYS MECC Fund made reproduction of this brochure possible. Contributions can be forwarded directly to the fund at the address listed above. Also, the NYS Tax Law now allows individuals to donate to the MECC Fund when filing state income tax returns. Every penny of your contribution goes directly to support the work of the Clearinghouse and local efforts statewide.

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Courtesy of the Elmira Police Department and the City of Elmira
<http://www.ci.elmira.ny.us>



**State of New York
George E. Pataki, Governor**