Things Every Child Should Know

- Their complete name, address and phone number.
- How to make a collect phone call. Young children should know they can always dial "O" to get help.
- How to answer the phone and respond to a stranger who calls when they are home alone.
- How to get home from neighborhood landmarks—a church, school, major intersection.
- Their parents' full names and where they work.
- Full name of a reliable relative and how to contact them.

This brochure was prepared as a public service by

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Preventing Child Abductions: a Guide for Parents

Provided as a community service by

SIEGFRIED & JENSEN
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Preventing Child Abductions: a Guide for Parents

Recent highly-publicized child abductions have made it clear that our children need to know how to protect themselves. At the same time, we don't want our children to anxiously view every adult they meet as a potential kidnapper or killer.

That's why we have developed this brochure. While the chances of your child being kidnapped are not great, several hundred children are abducted by non-family members every day in the United States, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. So it's important that you explain to your children that while most people care about kids and want to help and protect them, there are some adults who try to kidnap or hurt children.

If you and your child learn together how and when abductions occur, you can reduce the chances, however slim they may be, of it happening to your family.

Ned Siegfried and Mitch Jensen

SIEGFRIED & JENSEN
THE LAW FIRM FOR ACCIDENT VICTIMS

Who Kidnaps Children?

The United States Department of Justice divides child kidnapping into three categories:

Kidnapping by a Relative of the Victim or "Family Kidnapping"

- *49% of all child kidnappings are committed by a relative of the victim*

Committed primarily by parents. In parental kidnappings, mothers flee with children in 54 percent of the cases, while fathers flee in 46 percent of the cases. These cases occur more frequently to children under six years of age and equally to children of both sexes.

Kidnapping by an Acquaintance of the Victim or "Acquaintance Kidnapping"

- *27% of all child kidnappings are committed by acquaintances*

Acquaintance kidnapping involves a comparatively high percentage of juvenile (often babysitter) perpetrators, has the largest percentage of female and teenage victims, is more often associated with other crimes (especially sexual and physical assault), occurs at homes and residences, and has the highest percentage of injured victims.

Kidnapping by a Stranger to the Victim or "Stranger Kidnapping"

- *24% of all child kidnappings are committed by strangers.*

Stranger kidnapping victimizes more females than males, occurs primarily at outdoor locations, victimizes both teenagers and school-age children, is associated with sexual assaults in the case of girl victims and robberies in the case of boy victims (although not exclusively so.) This is the type of kidnapping most likely to involve the use of a firearm.

Where Strangers Kidnap Children

More than 60% of children kidnapped by strangers are taken from the street, a parked vehicle, a park or a wooded area.

In contrast, family abductions usually occur inside a child's house or yard, or in the house or yard of a child's friend.

How Children are Approached by Strangers

Parents know it's impossible to expect children to play only in the house or in their own yard. Eventually your child will play or walk through areas where the possibility of abduction becomes greater. Knowing how your child might be lured away by a kidnapper, and teaching your children to be careful when approached by adults other than family members, is one of the most important lessons you can teach your children.

Children who have been kidnapped often tell police they were tricked by their abductors. The stranger offered a bribe, lied about an emergency, asked for help or posed as a person of authority. Below are the ways children report being approached before being abducted. Review these situations with your children to prevent them from being tricked.

Bribes

- *"I'll take you to the ice cream store."*
- *"I have a Barbie (or Power Puff Girls) at my house you can play with."*

Asking for Help

- *"I'm lost. Can you show me how to get to…"*
- *"I lost my puppy, can you help me find him?"*

False Emergency

- *"I'm a friend of your Mom. She's sick and I need to take you to see her at the hospital."*
- *"Your Dad told me to come and get you. Your dog cut his foot."*

Not Who They Seem to Be

- *"I'm a police officer, come with me."*
- *"I'm a firefighter and your house is burning. Come with me."*

Explain to your child that firefighters do not come and get children when there is a fire. That's a police officer's job. Explain that your town or city's police officers have distinctive uniforms and drive marked cars. If the police officer that talks to your child isn't wearing the right uniform, or is driving an unmarked car, tell them to find another adult immediately.

Tell your children to stay out of reaching distance of anyone who asks them for help.

If asked directions by a person in a car, tell your children not to walk up to the vehicle. Run away from the car in the opposite direction it is pointed in.

Adopt a Family Code Word

Single-parent households and dual income families are common everywhere in America. It is not uncommon for these parents to be forced by circumstances to ask someone their child will view as a stranger to pick them up from an activity, camp or after school.

Many families prepare for this situation by choosing a family code word that can be easily remembered. Tell your son or daughter to keep the word a secret from everyone. Explain that if you ever need to send a stranger to pick them up that you will give the stranger the secret code word.

Tell your children that if a stranger ever tells them they were sent to pick them up, they should ask for the code word. If the stranger doesn't know the word, or if your child has any doubts, tell your child to find a nearby adult they trust immediately.

Just in Case— What You Can Do to Help Police Find Your Child Quickly

- Take color photographs of your child every six months— and keep copies in your wallet and at home. Getting them in the hands of police immediately increases the chances of a quick recovery if your child turns up missing.
- Keep a complete written description of your child—height, weight, scars, hair and eye color, other distinguishing features. Under pressure when your child is missing you may be unable to recall this information quickly or accurately for police.
- Keep copies of your child's fingerprints.
- Have your family dentist create and maintain current dental records of your child.