

Crime Prevention Recommendations for Adolescents

For the purpose of this chapter, adolescents will be defined as junior and senior high school students (grades 7 -12).

- **Teen Dating Violence**

Dating violence or abuse affects one in 10 teen couples. Abuse includes not only hitting but also yelling, threatening, name calling, obsessive phone calling and extreme possessiveness.

- ✓ **What the Victim Can Do**

- Tell your parents, a friend, a counselor, a clergyman, or someone else whom you trust and who can help. The more isolated you are from friends and family, the more control the abuser has over you.
- Alert the school counselor or security officer.
- Keep a daily log of abuse.
- Do not meet your partner alone. Do not let him or her in your home or car when you are alone.
- Avoid being alone at school, your job, on the way to and from places.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Plan and rehearse what you would do if your partner became abusive.



- ✓ **Teens Helping Teens**

Teens or adolescents who are the victims of abuse or dating violence often talk to other teens about their problems. When this occurs, the following are suggestions for the friend:

- If you notice a friend is in an abusive relationship, don't ignore signs of abuse.

Talk to your friend.

- Express your concerns. Tell your friend you're worried. Support, don't judge.
- Point out your friend's strengths - many people in abusive relationships are no longer capable of seeing their own abilities and gifts.
- Encourage them to confide in a trusted adult. Talk to a trusted adult if you believe the situation is getting worse. Offer to go with them for help.
- Never put yourself in a dangerous situation with the victim's partner. Don't be a mediator.
- Call the police if you witness an assault. Tell an adult - a school principal, parent, guidance counselor.

- **Baby Sitter Guide**

Teens or adolescents often work as sitters for younger children. When they do, they should adhere to the following guide:

- ✓ **Before You Accept**

- Know your employer. Don't accept the job if you don't know the person calling. Find out who recommended you for the job.
- Check with your parents and see if they know the family. Ask for the person's phone number and call back after you've checked.

- ✓ **Be professional:**

Baby sitting is a job. Be businesslike and explain the days and hours you are available. How much experience you've had (older children, infants, etc.). What you charge per hour. Try to arrange a visit to the home to meet the parents and children. Make arrangements for transportation to and from the job. Even if it's only a short walk from your home, an adult escort might be a good idea. Determine at the outset exactly what you will be doing to earn your fee. Will your duties go beyond baby sitting and into household chores?

- ✓ **Write it down:**

- Parent's name, phone number and address
- Number of children, their names and ages.
- Time of arrival at job and estimated length of stay.
- Leave your parents a note with the name, phone number and address of the family

for whom you'll be baby sitting and the time you expect to be home.

✓ **When you arrive:**

Get as much information as you can and write it down.

- Where will the parents be? Get the phone numbers of theaters, restaurants or friends the parents will be visiting. What time do they expect to return?
- Ask for the name and phone number of both the family doctor and a neighbor or friend. You should also have emergency phone numbers for the police, fire department and poison control center.
- Ask instructions on handling incoming phone calls. For maximum security, you should never tell a caller that you're home alone with the children. Explain to the caller that there is an adult at home but they are unable to come to the phone. Then, ask if you can take a message and phone number.
- Be sure doors and windows are locked and ask which lights should be left on if you're to stay late at night.
- Is there a fire escape, fire extinguisher or second exit?

✓ **Ask to be sure:**

- What time is bedtime?
- Children's use of the TV, radio or record player.
- Find out about diapers, baby bottles, meals, snacks, checking homework, whether or not friends of the children can visit.

✓ **While you're there:**

- NEVER open the door to strangers.
- Check and lock doors and windows.
- Be aware of strange noises, prowlers at the windows, unusual phone calls.
- If the child is taking some type of medication, determine the time of the last dosage as well as the time for the next.
- If you take the children outside, NEVER talk to strangers. Be extra careful near swimming pools, roads and strange animals.
- If you hear any suspicious noises, check them out by turning on the outside lights. Do not go outside. If you suspect someone is there, call the police immediately.
- If you receive unusual or obscene telephone calls, do not let the caller know you are alone. Hang up and call the police.
- If someone comes to the door requesting to use the telephone, do not let them in the house. Make the call for them. If they attempt to enter, call the police.

✓ **In case of fire:**

- Get the children out of the house immediately. Stay close to the floor to avoid deadly smoke and fumes. Feel doors to see if they're hot. There may be fire on the other side. When everyone is out, go to a neighbor's house and call the Fire Department.

✓ **Avoid Accidents:**

- Pick up toys or other objects on stairs or in passageways.
- Know the location of medicines, cleaning and electrical outlets, and keep children from them.
- If the house is suddenly quiet, check immediately - they could be up to something!

✓ **You're a "guest":**

- Don't tie up the telephone with calls to friends. The parents may be trying to reach you.
- Don't allow friends to visit.
- Stay out of closets, desk drawers and personal papers.
- Enjoy only those snacks that you've been offered.

✓ **When parents return:**

- Tell them about any problems encountered during your stay, either with the children or otherwise.
- Give the parents all messages taken during your stay.
- If, for any reason, you should feel uncomfortable with the parent who is to escort you home, insist on calling your own parents to make other arrangements.

• **Cyber-safety For Adolescents**

Adolescents have numerous opportunities to access the Internet, at home, at school, a friend's house, libraries, museums, etc. By knowing the dangers and how to avoid them, they can take advantage of all the positive aspects of the Internet while bypassing most of its pitfalls.

Teenagers are more likely to get into trouble on the Internet than are younger children. Teens are more likely to explore obscure locations in cyberspace and possibly be preyed upon by pedophiles and other exploiters.

✓ **What Are the Risks?**

- **Exposure to Inappropriate Material.** There are web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms online that provide exposure to material that is sexual and/or violent in nature, that espouse hateful attitudes or discuss activities that are repulsive or unpleasant.
- **Physical Danger.** The possibility exists that the teenager or adolescent may experience physical danger because of information they post about themselves on the Internet. While the number of teens who are molested, abducted or leave home as a result of contacts made on the Internet are relatively low, when it happens the results can be tragic.
- **Exposure To Financial Risk.** Teens may become the victims of “get rich quick” schemes on the Internet.
- **Harassment.** Adolescents using the Internet may encounter material, especially in chat rooms or bulletin boards, that can be harassing, demeaning, abusive, obscene, lewd or indecent.

✓ **Recommendations For Teens**

- **Keep Your Identity Private.** Particularly in chat rooms and bulletin boards, avoid giving out your full name, mailing address, telephone number, name of your school or any other information that could help someone determine your actual identity.
- **Do Not Get Together With People You Meet Online.** There is never a guarantee that someone you meet online is who they say they are. If you feel it is appropriate to have an actual meeting with someone you have corresponded with online, discuss the matter with your parents and do not go to the meeting by yourself. Meet the person in a public place, preferably with a parent or other adult present.

Never send a photograph of yourself or any personal information to someone you don't know.

- **Never Respond To Inappropriate E-Mail, Chat Comments Or Newsgroup Messages.** If a message is hostile, belligerent, aggressive or in any way makes you feel uncomfortable, don't respond to it. Tell your parents or a trusted adult.
- **Talk To Your Parents about Ground Rules.** Teens and their parents need to agree upon the ground rules for Internet use. Communicating before a problem possibly occurs is usually beneficial to all involved.

✓ **Recommendations For Parents**

- **Communicate With Your Teens.** Talk with your teens and try to establish reasonable expectations. Attempt to understand their needs, interests and curiosity.
 - **Encourage Your Teens To Come To You If They Encounter A Problem On The Internet.** Be open with your teenagers and do not automatically blame them or take away their Internet privileges if they encounter a problem. Work with them to avoid similar problems in the future.
 - **Learn About The Internet.** Even if you don't use the Internet, you need to be knowledgeable about it if your children do. Make "surfing the net" a family experience. Allow your children to teach you what they know about the Internet.
 - **Check Out Blocking, Filtering And Ratings.** There are services that rate web sites for content as well as filter programs. Parents can also block types of sites they consider to be inappropriate. If you choose to block or filter a site(s), explain to your children why you feel it is necessary to do.
- **Motor Vehicle Safety For Teens**

The number one killer of teenagers is motor vehicle accidents, accounting for more than 5,000 deaths each year. Younger drivers are at the greatest risk — 16-year old driver is 42% more likely to be involved in a motor vehicle accident than a teen one year older.

✓ **Recommendations For Teen Drivers**

- Drive sober and always ride with a sober driver.
- Always wear your safety belt, even when your car is equipped with air bags or when you're traveling close to home. Insist that all passengers in your vehicle also wear their safety belts.
- Be familiar with the vehicle you're driving, and use safety devices such as sun visors, door locks, and the parking brake, when appropriate.
- Be a defensive driver, be alert, and have a good attitude. Never tailgate.
- Focus on your driving: avoid distractions such as loud music, talking on cellular phones, eating, or applying make-up while you're on the road.
- Limit the number of passengers riding in your car.
- Reduce stress by being courteous rather than competitive while driving.
- Follow the traffic safety rules and drive at safe, legal speeds.

✓ **Recommendations for Parents of Teen Drivers.**

- Supervise your teen's driving time. Take time to let your teen practice behind the wheel while he or she has a permit and throughout the first year of licensed driving.
- Put a limit on the number of passengers allowed in the car. Teens are likely to have more trouble focusing on the road with additional passengers in the car.
- Limit your teen's driving during periods of increased risk. Friday and Saturday nights and early Saturday and Sunday mornings have the highest number of driving accidents.
- Establish a house curfew: a time by which your teen must be home.
- Insist that your teen and any passengers wear safety belts.
- Set limits on the areas a teen can drive.
- Prohibit your teen from driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Encourage your teen to use good judgement both as a driver and as a passenger.
- Be a good role model.
- Support graduated licensing.