

Crime Prevention Recommendations for Children

For the purpose of this chapter, children will be defined as elementary age (grades K through 6) and lower.

- **Begin With the Basics**

- ✓ Make sure children know their full name, address (city and state), and telephone number including area code.
- ✓ Be sure children know how to call 9-1-1 and how to use a pay telephone.



- ✓ Teach children never to accept rides or gifts from someone they don't know.
- ✓ Teach children to go to a store clerk, security guard or police officer for help if lost in a mall or store or on the street.
- ✓ Children should be accompanied to public rest rooms.
- ✓ Teach children that no one, not even someone they know, has the right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Tell them they have the right to say "No" in this situation.

- ✓ Show children safe places they can go in your neighborhood in an emergency, like a trusted neighbor's house.
- ✓ Inspect your neighborhood for areas that threaten children's safety, like brush in wooded areas, overgrown shrubbery, poor lighting, etc.

- **At School and Play**

- ✓ Encourage children to walk and play with friends, not alone. Tell them to avoid places that could be dangerous — vacant buildings, alleys, new construction, wooded areas, etc.
- ✓ Make sure children take the safest routes to and from school, stores, and friend's houses.

- ✓ Teach children to walk confidently and to be alert to what's going on around them.
- ✓ Tell children to avoid strangers who may hang around playgrounds, public restrooms, empty buildings, etc.
- ✓ Teach children to always take the same way home from school.
- ✓ Children should not walk next to curbs.
- ✓ Children should not play alone on playgrounds.
- ✓ Children should not wear expensive jewelry or clothing to school.
- ✓ A child should check in with a parent or trusted neighbor as soon as they arrive home from school someone should know if they are staying late at school.
- ✓ Parents should take time to listen carefully to children's fears and feelings about people or places that scare them or make them feel uneasy. Tell them to trust their instincts. Take complaints about bullies seriously.
- ✓ Children should be taught to settle argument with words, not fists or weapons.
- ✓ Children should be taught never to take guns, knives or other weapons to school. They should be taught to tell a school official immediately if they see another student with a gun, knife or other weapon.

- **At Home Alone**

- ✓ Children should check in with a parent or trusted neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- ✓ Children should carry their house key on them in a concealed place. It should not be left hidden outside the house.
- ✓ Children must be taught to use the door and window locks and alarm system, if there is one.
- ✓ Children should know to never allow anyone into the home without the parent's permission.
- ✓ Children should never let a caller at the door or on the telephone know that they are alone.
- ✓ Children must be taught how to escape a house in case of fire.

- ✓ Children should be taught not to go into an empty house or apartment if things don't look right — a broken window, ripped screen or open door, for example.
- ✓ Parents should take the time to talk to children about the deadly consequences of guns, medicines, power tools, drugs, alcohol, cleaning products and inhalants. These items should be in a secure place out of sight and locked up.
- ✓ When home alone, children should be able to easily locate key telephone numbers:
 - Parent's work number(s).
 - Numbers of relatives or trusted neighbors.
 - Police and fire department.
 - Poison Control Center.
- **Halloween Safety Tips**
 - ✓ **Children Should:**
 - Cross streets only at corners.
 - Never cross between parked cars.
 - Carry a flashlight or glow stick.
 - Walk facing oncoming traffic if there is no sidewalk.
 - Be aware of motor vehicles that may be turning into or backing out of driveways.
 - Never go into a stranger's house.
 - ✓ **Parent's Should:**
 - Know the route their children will be taking.
 - Make sure children are accompanied by an adult.
 - Set limits on when children should return home.
 - Consider purchasing Halloween treats other than candy. Stickers, erasers, crayons, pencils and sealed packages of raisins and dried fruits are good choices.
 - Make sure trick-or-treaters will be safe when visiting your home. Remove lawn

decorations and sprinklers, toys and bicycles or anything that might obstruct your walkway. Provide a well lit outside entrance to your home. Keep family pets away from trick-or-treaters.

- Explain to children the difference between tricks and vandalism.
- Instruct children NOT to eat treats until they return home and parents have had a chance to inspect those treats.

✓ **Costume Safety Tips**

- Costumes, masks, beards and wigs should be flame resistant.
- Costumes should be light, bright and clearly visible to motorists.
- Make-up is safer than a mask, which can obscure vision.
- Avoid oversize and high-heeled shoes that can cause a child to trip.
- The child's name, address and phone number should be placed on trick-or-treat bags in case of an accident or lost child.
- Children should carry a flashlight to easily see and be seen.
- Trick-or-treat bags should not be too large; they can obscure vision or cause a child to trip.
- Costumes should have reflective strips.

✓ **Halloween Hazards**

- Dangerous roadways
- Dangerous dress, i.e., loose costumes, unsafe shoes, bulky trick-or-treat bags, masks which reduce vision, sharp or pointed toy weapons, dark costumes.
- Open flames.
- Treacherous "treats" — razor blades in apples (all fruit should be washed and cut into small pieces before eaten), tacks or poison in popcorn (discard unpackaged popcorn).
- Do not allow children to carve pumpkins.

- **Preventing Child Sexual Abuse — Tips For Parents**

- ✓ Talk to your child every day and take time to really listen and observe. Learn as many details as you can about your child's activities and feelings. Encourage him or her to share concerns and problems with you.
- ✓ Let your child know that he or she can tell you anything, and that you'll be supportive.
- ✓ Teach your child that no one — not even a teacher or close relative — has the right to touch him or her in a way that feels uncomfortable, and that it's okay to say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult.
- ✓ Don't force kids to kiss or hug or sit on a grown-ups lap if they don't want to. This gives them control and teaches them that they have the right to refuse.
- ✓ Always know where your child is and who he or she is with.
- ✓ Tell your child to stay away from strangers who hang around playgrounds, public restrooms and schools.
- ✓ Be alert for changes in your child's behavior that could signal sexual abuse such as sudden secretiveness, withdrawal from activities, refusal to go to school, unexpected hostility toward a favorite baby-sitter or relative, or increased anxiety. Some physical signs of abuse include bed-wetting, loss of appetite, venereal disease, nightmares, and complaints of pain or irritation around the genitals.
- ✓ If your child is a victim of any crime, from stolen lunch money to sexual abuse, don't blame him or her. Listen and offer sympathy.

- **Fingerprinting Programs**

Many national, state and local organizations have sponsored fingerprinting programs for children. The purpose of the fingerprinting program is to provide a means of identifying a child. Law enforcement agencies also sponsor such efforts as a community service program.

- **Have You Seen This Child?**

Businesses often help law enforcement agencies in locating and identifying missing and abducted children. Dairy companies publish the picture and description of missing children on the side of milk containers. Some trucking companies place the pictures of missing children on the back of tractor trailers. Some businesses sponsor billboards with missing children's pictures and cable television companies sometimes publicize lost or missing children.

- **Cybersafety for Children**

The Internet has opened up a world of information for children. It also exposes them to risks. Children can be the targets of crime and exploitation as they use online Internet services.

- ✓ **What Are the Risks?**

- **Exposure to Inappropriate Material.** Children may be exposed to inappropriate material of a sexual or violent nature.
- **Physical Molestation.** While online, a child might provide information or arrange a meeting that could risk his/her safety.
- **Harassment.** Children on the Internet may encounter electronic mail or bulletin board messages that are harassing or threatening.

- ✓ **Recommendations For Parents**

- Teach children not to give out identifying information such as name, password, parent's name, home address, school name or telephone number in a chat room or bulletin board. Also, be careful about revealing such information via e-mail. Make sure you know with whom you are communicating.
- Know the Internet services your child uses. Learn how to block out objectionable material.
- Never permit a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with another compute user without parental permission. If such a meeting is arranged, make it in a public location and a parent should accompany the child.
- Teach children not to respond to messages or bulletin board items that are suggestive, obscene or threatening. They should be encouraged to tell the parent if they encounter such messages.
- If the parent becomes aware of the transmission, use or viewing of child pornography on the Internet, they should immediately report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (1-800-843-5678) and the online service provider.
- It is suggested that the computer with Internet access should be kept in a family room rather than a child's bedroom.
- Children should not be allowed to send a picture of themselves to anyone without the parent's permission.

- Children should have rules and guidelines for their computer use. Compliance with these rules should be monitored by the parent. Children should not be allowed to have excessive use of online services or bulletin boards, especially at night.
 - Children should never be allowed to enter an area on the Internet that charges for services without permission of the parent.
 - Parents should make sure that access to the Internet at their children’s school is monitored by adults.
 - If a child’s friend has Internet access at home, talk to the parents about the rules they have established.
- **D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)**

Project DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a substance use prevention education program designed to equip elementary school children with skills for resisting peer pressure to experiment with tobacco, drugs, and alcohol. This unique program, which was developed in 1983 as a cooperative effort by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District, uses uniformed law enforcement officers to teach a formal curriculum to students in a classroom setting.

Project DARE gives special attention to sixth grades to prepare students for entry into junior high and high school, where they are most likely to encounter pressures to use drugs.

✓ **DARE Lessons Focus On Four Major Areas:**

- Providing accurate information about tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Teaching students decision making skills.
- Showing students how to resist peer pressure.
- Giving students ideas for alternatives to drug use.

✓ **DARE Targets Elementary School Children.**

Junior high and high school drug education programs have come too late to prevent drug use among youth in the past. Therefore, substantial numbers of young people have reported initiating use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana by junior high school.

✓ **DARE Offers A Highly Structured, Intensive Curriculum Developed By Health Education Specialists.**

A basic precept of the DARE program is that elementary school children lack sufficient social skills to resist peer pressure and say no to drugs. DARE instructors do not use the scare tactics of traditional approaches that focus on the dangers of drug use. Instead, the instructors work with children to raise their self-esteem, to teach them how to make decisions on their own, and to help them identify positive alternatives to tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. The curriculum addresses learning objectives in keeping with those of state departments of education and conforms with health education standards.

✓ **DARE Uses Uniformed Law Enforcement Officers To Conduct The Class.**

Uniformed officers as DARE instructors not only serve as role models for children at an impressionable age, but also have high credibility on the subject of drug use. Moreover, by relating to students in a role other than that of law enforcement, officers develop a rapport that promotes positive attitudes toward the police and greater respect for the law.

✓ **DARE Represents A Long-Term Solution To A Problem That Has Developed Over Many Years.**

Many people believe that, over time, a change in public attitudes will reduce the demand for drugs. DARE seeks to promote that change. Equally important, DARE instructors help children develop mature decision-making capabilities that they can apply to a variety of situations as they grow up.