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Family Safety Program

Rule # 1 - Telephone

Children should learn how to use the telephone in an emergency. Here are some tips:

*Tell your children they don't need money to dial 911 or 0 for the operator. They should

dial 0 if they are lost or don't know who to call when they need assistance.

* Have them memorize their telephone number, including area code, as young as possible.

Let them practice calling local and long distance numbers for you.

* Practice making a collect call with them. Teach them they don't need money to make a collect call, even if it is a local number.

* Children should learn how and when to use 911. Discuss different situations with them.

Rule # 2 - Family password

How can your child know if it's okay to go with another person without asking for your

permission first? A FAMILY PASSWORD!

Almost every child is taught by their parents not to go anywhere with a stranger.

This is a

weak message to leave with a child. How can a child tell who a stranger is? An abductor

could be someone the child knows. They may trick the child by saying "Mom or Dad

asked me to pick you up". Your child can keep some distance from this person by asking

for the FAMILY PASSWORD. Teach your child not to go with anyone who doesn't know

the password. Promise them you won't send anyone without it.

Rule # 3 - I'm lost! Now what?

You come out of a store and turn around to find your child is not there, now what? It's

time to put "Action Plan A" to the test. Teach your child, in advance, what they should do.

A potential abductor may be able to take advantage of this situation if there is no plan.

First, your child should stay put and let you find them. They should stay in a visible area

and not wander around looking for you. If they stay still, it will be easier than if both of you are moving, maybe in opposite directions. Alert security and provide them with your photo I.D. card. Teach your child if someone wants to help them, have them ask the person to look for you or call security or the police. Teach them to never go with anyone, ever.

Tricks used by abductors

* Help me find my lost puppy * I need help with directions * Offer gifts/candy
* There is an emergency... * I want to take your picture * I have a new video...

Rule # 4 - Secrets

The word SECRET is one that is used freely by both adults and children. Some secrets are good, some are bad, and some are ugly. Unfortunately, it is the most common weapon used by abductors to lure a child from safety. Children love secrets and most often see them as a way to feel independent from their parents. Your child should learn that if an adult asks them to keep a secret from you, this is a danger sign. The secret could be minor, a chocolate bar before dinner. What this person is doing is building up trust with the child to find out if they will tell everything. The secrets will build until they have control and power over the child. SECRETS = BLACKMAIL

Rule # 5 - Good lies?

You expect your child to treat adults with respect and grow up to be polite and honest, however, there are exceptions to these rules. In fact, there are times when they should scream as loudly as possible if someone tries to pull him or her into a car or building. Attention is the last thing an abductor is looking for. Now comes a mixed message. Lie to protect yourself. Children should never tell anyone they are home alone. Tell your children that it's okay to lie to someone who insists on talking to their parents. This is a good lie. Baby-sitters should be given the same instructions.

Rule # 6 - An emergency plan

Where would your child go in an emergency if you were not home? This is a question you want to address before it happens. Finding a trusted neighbor or friend's house for your child is very important for his or her safety. Identify this as a safe house. Choose someone who will likely be home most of the time, such as a retired person or a stay at home mother. Be sure to discuss this idea with them.

Rule # 7 - Strangers?

Most abductors are known by the child. This means all the advice to never talk to strangers is useless if an adult known to the child is the abductor. Children should learn the difference between a good stranger and a bad stranger. If someone tries to pull your child into a car or lure him or her away, they may need to rely on help from another adult. Children should learn that it's okay to get help from a stranger if they are in danger. Your children should NEVER go anywhere with a stranger without asking for your permission.

Rule # 8 - Play safe & have fun

Childhood is supposed to be fun, no pressure, no worries. As parents, this is what we want for our children. As we all know, there is no such thing as a perfect world, and children understand this better than we think. The news is filled with horror stories each night, which gives everyone, including children, a bleak picture of the way the world is. Every city and town has its own set of problems, but in reality, the world is not filled with bad people. The violent crimes in this country are being committed by a small percentage of the population. These people are extremely dangerous to adults and children. Children need to understand that these predators have patterns and habits that can be avoided. Child predators look for opportunities, but once children realize this they can avoid potentially dangerous situations and protect themselves. Children should understand that most people would not harm them and the bad guys don't wear black. Remind your children to play safe, have fun, and enjoy being a kid.

Other rules to remember

- * Never allow your children to go alone to video arcades, public restrooms, parks, public pools, movie theaters, door to door selling, or school yards after hours.
- * Instruct your children to always use the buddy system.
- * Don't display your child's name on the outside of their clothing. This makes it easier for a stranger to approach and pretend to be your child's friend.
- * Tell your children to avoid shortcuts and isolated areas.

Working together to help keep our children safe

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