Keeping Kids Safe—For Parents

Kids have a natural trust in other people. It is hard for parents to teach children to balance this trust with caution. But kids need to know how to handle threatening situations. Listen to your children—their happy stories, their worries, their problems, and talk with them. Make sure you know where your children are going, who they are with, when they should be back and what they are doing on the computer. Know their friends’ names and phone numbers.

Teach your children to:
- Use the telephone in emergencies. Practice making calls with them. If they have a cell phone, have it programmed to call important numbers.
- Memorize their name, address and phone number, your work number, plus the telephone number of a trusted family member or friend.
- Walk confidently and stay alert to what’s going on around them.
- Walk and play with friends, not alone.
- Refuse rides or gifts from anyone they do not know, no matter what that person says to them.
- Tell a trusted adult immediately if anyone, even a teacher or close relative, touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

If your children are alone at home after school, make sure they know:
- What to do when they get home: call you at work or contact a neighbor.
- How to call 911, your workplace, a neighbor and a relative. Have this posted near all phones and programmed into cell phones.
- Not to let strangers into the home, for any reason. Practice with your children what to say to the stranger.
- Not to tell telephone callers that they’re alone. Again, practice with your child what to say to someone who calls.
- How to work the door and window locks.
- Not to go into the home if the door is open or a window is broken. They should go to a neighbor’s or call the police.

If your children use a home computer:
- Keep the computer in a place where you can see it, not necessarily in their room.
- Teach them about what is safe on the Internet; not to download anything without your OK and not to click on links that come through emails that they don’t know.
- Check with your Internet provider and search engines to learn about tools that allow you to control what your children access. Learn how to block things you don’t want them to view like:
  - Sexually explicit sites
  - Violent material
  - Sites promoting inappropriate behaviors such as eating disorders and drug use

Talk to them about
- Meeting strangers online
- Sharing too much personal information
- Cyberbullying