

# NORTH KANSAS CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

## COPPS Unit – Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving

2010 Howell Street, North Kansas City, MO 64116 | 816.274.6013

### Child Safety Tips

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#### Child Safety Seat and Seat Belt Laws

Missouri car seat safety laws require children under age four and under 40 pounds to ride in a federally approved child car seat that is appropriate for the child's age and size. If you are purchasing a new car seat, it will state on the box whether it is federally approved. If you are purchasing a used car seat, there should be sticker or tag on the back or bottom of the car seat stating that it federally approved.

Children ages 4 through 7 who weigh more than 40 pounds but less than 80 pounds or are not at least 4'9" tall must ride in an appropriate child car seat or booster seat. Children ages 8 to 18 must wear a seat belt. Missouri law also prohibits children under age 18 from riding in an unenclosed truck bed.

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#### Stranger Danger

Most people genuinely care about children, and not all strangers are bad. However, we must educate parents and children to recognize and avoid dangerous child abduction situations. Knowledge, caution and alertness are our children's best protection.

The tips below can help you reduce the risk of your child becoming a victim of abduction. Please take the time to read this child protection information and share it with your children

#### How Parents Can Protect Children from Abduction

- Know where your children are at all times and who they are with.
- Never leave your child alone in a public place, stroller or car.
- Always accompany younger children to a public restroom.
- Teach your children not to accept rides and gifts from strangers.
- Always accompany your child on door-to-door activities, i.e. Halloween, school fundraising campaigns, etc.
- Establish a routine for picking your children up from school or other events.
- Agree on a simple code word for emergency situations. A trusted adult who knows the code word can pick up your child if necessary.
- Make sure your child knows their full name, address and phone number.
- Teach your child how to reach you (home, office, mobile)
- Teach your child how to call the police.
- Have a plan in case your child gets separated from you in public.
- Teach your child to stay in groups of friends when going anywhere .
- Tell your children about child abductions in simple and easy to understand terms. Awareness can help them protect themselves.
- Avoid clothing and toys with your child's name on it. A child may not fear someone who knows his/her name.
- Promote an environment in which your child feels free to talk to you.
- Let your child know that you will pick them up at any time, any place.
- Listen closely when your child talks about friends or acquaintances they spend time with in your absence.
- Check all potential babysitters and older friends of your child.
- Teach your child to recognize suspicious behavior and collect descriptions.
- Urge your child to think escape / survival if he or she were ever abducted.
- Speak to your local law enforcement agency to find out about neighborhood watch.
- Get to know your neighbors and the children in the area. Make sure your child's friends know your house is safe and they can seek help from you.
- Check with your local law enforcement to find out if there are sexual offenders in your area.
- Use a system such as KidSave to organize your child's photo and child ID card with pertinent descriptive data.
- Keep up-to-date medical/dental history and finger print cards.
- Teach your child that there is always someone to help them, and they have the right to be safe.

Please feel free to contact a COPPS officer with any questions or concerns: [COPPS@nkc.org](mailto:COPPS@nkc.org)

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#### How Children Can Protect Themselves

- Always tell your parents where you are going and who you are going with.
- Never answer the door if alone.
- Do not invite anyone in the house without the permission of a parent or a babysitter.
- NEVER get into anyone's car without permission.
- Don't tell anyone on the phone that your parents are not home. Instead tell them that your parents can't come to the phone and take a message.
- Don't go to restrooms in out-of-the-way places without a trusted adult.
- Don't take shortcuts. Always use well-traveled streets.
- Never go to movies or playgrounds alone.
- Go to the nearest cashier if lost or separated from a parent in a store or mall.
- Never hitch-hike.
- Do not take candy or other gifts from strangers without asking a parent first.
- Stay away from isolated areas or abandoned buildings.
- If you do not know the driver of a car that slows down or stops near you. Run home, to the police department or to a public place where there are people. Do not run and hide.
- If an adult approaches to ask for directions, step back, tell them you don't know and walk away. Adults should ask other adults for directions.
- If forced toward a building or car, scream "help", scatter belongings and fight.
- No one has the right to touch any part of your body that a bathing suit would cover.
- If someone touches you in a way that feels uncomfortable, tell them in a loud voice that it is your body and they don't have the right to touch you, even if it is a relative or friend. Tell an adult you can trust and keep telling until someone believes you.
- If you see someone unusual hanging around a schoolyard or a park, tell your parents.
- Tell a parent about anyone who exposes themselves to you.
- Don't believe any adult who asks you to keep a secret from your parents.

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#### Patterns of Abduction

- In abduction cases, the first few hours are the most critical.
  - 75% of abductions are by a family member or an acquaintance.
  - Only 25% of kids are taken by strangers. The majority of these abductors are men.
  - When kids are taken by strangers, 66% of the victims are female children.
  - 76% percent of victims are Caucasian females with an average age of 11 years.
  - Infant abductions are fairly rare, but the abductors are usually women.
  - Most abductors/predators are usually highly skilled in the art of manipulation.
  - Abductors/predators often single out a lone child or one that is out late at night alone.
  - Abductors/predators usually befriend their victim.
  - Abductors/predators single out children or teenagers that seem to have problems at home.
  - Abductors/predators identify and pursue at-risk children or teens.
  - Many child abductors/predators were victims of domestic violence themselves.
  - The majority of children reported missing are either runaways or there has been a miscommunication with their parents.
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#### Environments that May Promote Child Abduction

- Walking alone to or from school (especially before and after normal school hours).
  - Waiting for a school bus alone.
  - Playing in a public park or playground after hours or late in the evening or playing unsupervised at any time.
  - Exploring remote areas.
  - Using enclosed, poorly lit stairways, corridors and public rooms.
  - Riding a bicycle alone or at night.
  - Using late night or all night facilities, such as laundry facilities.
  - Waiting in public parking lots (e.g., at malls).
  - Walking unattended in a crowded mall or other public places.
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#### Stranger Danger – Tricks Strangers Use to Lure Children

- A stranger may quickly approach the victim. This element of surprise does not allow the child to think about what is happening, nor to get away.
  - A stranger may pose as an authority figure (police, firemen, security) and ask the child to leave with them.
  - A stranger may try to bribe the child with money, candy, toys, cute pets, etc.
  - A stranger may tell the child there is a crisis such as family illness and say a parent told them to pick the child up.
  - A stranger may approach with compliments to appeal to the child's ego.
  - A stranger may approach with false caring, promise or knowing child's name if noted on child's possessions.
  - A stranger may suggest playing games.
  - A stranger may ask for help, such as directions or to help find a lost pet.
  - A stranger may fake injury and request help.
  - Children often idolize adults, allowing false trust. Strangers prey on this false trust.
  - A stranger may try to lure a child by asking the child to do work for the stranger.
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#### Recognize Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

- Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearlessness, excessive crying
  - Bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed and sleep disorders
  - Acting out inappropriate sexual activity or showing unusual interest in sexual matters
  - A sudden acting out of feelings or aggressive, rebellious behavior
  - Regression to infantile behavior
  - A fear of certain places, people or activities
  - Pain, itching, bleeding, fluid or rawness in the private areas.
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