

Outreach - Contribution - Mobilization Commitment to Community Voices

Crime Prevention Week - November 1st to 7th, 2016

Crime Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility



Keeping Children & Youth Safe

Knowledge is the key to keeping children safe. Teaching children critical safety basics should not be an activity that strikes fear into their minds, but rather a process of teaching them skills that can keep them safe from harm. Consider the child's age, developmental level and the safety skills they need at that point in their life.

Safety Tips for Children

- Teach children their full name, age, telephone number and address. For younger children, use nearby landmarks that can assist them in locating where home is. Help children memorize contact information for parents, or another close relative or friend for emergency situations. Teach children to recognize when and how to call for police, fire or ambulance services.
- Get to know parents of other children in the neighbourhood. Teach children to ask for permission before they go outside to play or visit. Teach children that a stranger is anyone they do not know and that even someone who is friendly is a stranger. Teach children that adults should not approach children for help or directions and to never accept anything from strangers. Do not write a child's name on the outside of clothing or bags as this allows a stranger to know the child's name.
- Provide the school or daycare centre with the names of persons to whom a child may be released to. Inform the school or daycare centre of whom to notify if a child does not arrive at school, including an alternate emergency number if parents cannot be reached. Teach children to always ask permission of a parent, guardian or teacher before accepting rides with other adults – use a pre-selected code word with the child and those who may be asked to give the child a ride.
- Statistics show that most of the people who harm children are known to the child and not strangers. Teach children about boundaries and personal space. Children have the right to be treated with respect even by adults. Empower children and youth to say 'no' – let them know it is okay to stand up to anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable. If a child or youth indicates someone has hurt or harmed them: remain calm; do not make promises that cannot be kept; listen, do not discuss details of the incident; assure the child/youth their story is believed and it was not their fault; report the incident.

Home Alone

- Never leave young children home alone. Whether a child is capable of being home alone depends on a number of factors including: maturity level, responsibility towards homework or following directions, comfort and confidence level of both child and parent, length of time child will be alone; whether there is responsible adult assistance nearby.
- Post an emergency phone list where the child can see it. Include 9-1-1, work and cell numbers, numbers for neighbors, and the numbers for anyone else who is close and trusted. Develop and practice an emergency plan with the child so they know what to do in case of fire, injury, or other emergencies. Ensure the child knows where emergency supplies are located.
- If a child is going to be home alone after school, establish a routine. Take the same route home from school everyday. Establish a check-in system where they call a designated parent when they arrive at home. Establish rules about whether other kids can come over, whether cooking is an option, amount of time they can spend in front of the television or computer, whether they can leave the home.
- Ensure the child is aware of the following: to have doors locked when home alone and not to open the door for strangers, always look before opening the door; never open the door to delivery people or service representatives, such appointments should be made when an adult is at home; not to go outside to check out an unusual noise, if the noise worries the child, they should call a parent, adult or the police. It may be helpful to create a list of things for the child to do upon arriving home, including chores and acceptable activities, along with rules to follow when home alone – post the list in a spot where the child can see it. Ensure the child does not advertise they are home alone.
- Before older children are left alone to care for younger children enroll them in a babysitter's course to learn first aid skills and how to care for younger children.

**Authored by BCCPA



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Teachable Moments

Use milestones in children's lives as opportunities to engage in conversations about safety and responsibilities that come with that milestone. Teachable moments include: first day of school, getting their first phone; turning 13, getting their drivers license.

Safe Online Habits

- Be a mentor. Young children need adults to assist them in finding appropriate online material and should not be using Internet connected devices unsupervised. Review all aspects of new sites or apps to ensure all content is appropriate for the child. Use kid-friendly search engines (i.e. www.factmonster.com or www.kidsclick.org), Use bookmarks for sites appropriate for your child to allow younger children the ability to access sites with a single click and not accidentally search inappropriate sites. As children gain independence and begin to explore the internet on their own, set the content filters on the search engine to block inappropriate content – some popular websites have safety settings to block inappropriate content.
- It is important to teach children that they may come across inappropriate or upsetting content while online and it is OK to come to you or a trusted adult should this happen. Do not blame or become upset at the child, but keep the conversation non-judgemental.
- Establish rules for appropriate online behaviour. Have open conversations about issues or situations children may be exposed to online; be open about monitoring online activity. Teach children about: the consequences of comments or photos/videos they are posting or sharing; to be respectful of others feelings and property online.

Healthy Relationships

- Make time to connect positively with children at every opportunity. Create a safe environment for children to share. Children often need help to talk about important things in their lives such as school, friends or peer pressure. Relate to children in an age appropriate way, be supportive and empathetic. Accept mistakes as learning opportunities. Include children in family responsibilities.
- Be a role model for respect and inclusion to help children understand the diverse cultures, orientations and abilities within our communities. Provide opportunities for children and youth to be leaders and agents of change through community groups, school clubs or community activities.
- Promote positive mental health and well-being. Mental well-being is closely related to physical health. Encourage participation in regular physical activity and healthy eating. Include children and youth in opportunities to develop problem solving, decision making and goal setting skills. Help children identify their emotions and ways to manage them. Recognize there is help available in the community if you need additional support.
- Model positive conflict resolution skills. Understand what the conflict is about and allow opportunity to listen to what others have to say and try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Help children identify feelings associated to the conflict they may be experiencing. Avoid making the conflict worse by using put-downs, negative comments or aggressive behaviours and attitudes. Work together to discover ways to resolve the conflict.

Resources

Canadian Centre for Child Protection - www.protectchildren.ca: A resource centre for parents, teachers and children and youth dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Operates cybertip.ca / missingkids.ca / kindsintheknow.ca / commit2kids.ca

Media Smarts - www.mediasmarts.ca: Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy – provides resources for parents and teachers to engage youth with media as active and informed digital citizens.

Parachute Canada - www.parachutecanada.org: A national organization dedicated to raising awareness of preventable injuries and death in children and youth.

PREVNet - www.prevnet.ca: Canada's authority on bullying. PREVNet is a national network of leading researchers and organizations, working together to stop bullying in Canada.

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