

THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS

KEEPING KIDS SAFE

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 tales, and their worries and problems, and talk with them. Make sure you know where your children are going, whom they are with, when they should be back and what they are doing on the computer. Know their friends' names and phone numbers. Discuss the curfew laws with your children so they know what will happen if they break the curfew law.

Teach your children to:

- Use the telephone properly in case of 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 (including area code), and 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 someone they do not know, no matter what that person says to them. They are not being impolite but smart to do so.
- 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:

- The check-in procedure to follow, to call you at work or contact a neighbor.
- Emergency telephone numbers: fire, police, poison control, paramedics, your workplace, a neighbor, and a relative. Have this posted near all phones.
- Not to let strangers into the home, *for any reason*. Practice with your children what to say to the stranger. Again, they are not being impolite, just smart.
- 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 ajar 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 that can be monitored, 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 anonymously through email.
- Check with your Internet provider and search engines to learn about tools they provide to control content you may not want your children to access:
 - Sexually explicit and violent material
 - Meeting strangers online
 - Sharing too much personal information
 - Cyberbullying
 - Exposure to vulgar language
 - Sites promoting inappropriate behaviors such as eating disorders and drug use