

SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS

EMERGENCY NUMBER: **072 647 7464**
www.missingchildren.org.za

MISSING CHILDREN

SOUTH AFRICA®

FOLLOW THESE VERY IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS TO ENSURE THAT WE ALL MAKE SOUTH AFRICA A SAFER PLACE FOR OUR CHILDREN.

- 1.** DO NOT WAIT 24 HOURS BEFORE REPORTING YOUR CHILD AS MISSING!
The first 24 hours are crucial, and there is no waiting period to report a person as missing.
- 2.** Teach your children that even people they know can try to harm them, so they should tell you if another family member or family friend is doing something that makes them feel bad or uncomfortable. No one is allowed to ever touch your child's body.
- 3.** Know where your child is at all times, whom they're with and what they're wearing.
- 4.** Always keep a recent photograph of your child on you, so that the photo will be readily available in case of an emergency.
- 5.** Make an effort to know your child's friends - know their names, addresses and numbers.
- 6.** Be involved in your child's life, but don't force it. Build a trusting relationship and create a home environment where they want to be and bring their friends to.
- 7.** Teach your children their own names and addresses, as well as your name and telephone number.
- 8.** Keep your children close to home and teach them the importance of the BUDDY SYSTEM: never go anywhere alone.
- 9.** Take your children to the nearest police station, hospital and clinic to show them how to find it easily; point out landmarks to prevent them from getting lost.
- 10.** Teach your children never to take the same route to and from places. Plan different routes, walk them with your children, and then decide each day which route they must take. If your child goes missing, you can start looking on the discussed route.
- 11.** Teach your children the 'BUDDY SYSTEM'; which is always to take a friend with them - don't go anywhere alone. This way, they can help each other when they are in trouble.
- 12.** Create a family exclusive password - teach your children that when you send a person to pick them up, the person should know the password; otherwise your children should not go with the person as they then know that you have not sent the person to pick them up.
- 13.** Teach your children the rules; what is OK and what is not OK, and teach them to have the confidence to take action if they for any reason feel like someone is trying to take advantage of them.
- 14.** Teach your children not to walk away with anyone other than their parent/s, or the designated person who was arranged to take care of your child.
- 15.** Parents with special needs children – get them bracelets with emergency contact numbers on the bracelet. This also is very helpful with the elderly that suffers from dementia or Alzheimer's.
- 16.** Stranger danger still exists even though children and parents need to be cautious about people they know such as family members and family friends. Teach your children never to get into a car with a stranger, for any reason.
- 17.** Parents, teach your children that an adult does not need anything from a child – not to find a puppy, not to buy them an ice-cream - not for anything. If an adult is asking a child for help, or wanting to buy children anything, that's a warning sign.
- 18.** Keep the lines of communication open. It's crucial to talk to your child regularly and openly about what is going on in their lives and at school, so that if there is any change in their behaviour, you will notice it immediately. Allow them to tell you about the things that make them feel scared, uncomfortable or sad. Teach them to know the difference between a good secret (these are fun to keep; like a surprise birthday party) and a bad secret (these feel bad to keep, and makes them scared). Having an open relationship with them will allow them to trust you, and share any problems that they may be experiencing.
- 19.** Do not write your child's name on his or her personal belongings. And do not attach a name to their backpack, lunch box or water bottle. Your child's things shouldn't give strangers access to private information. When addressing a child by their name, an unfamiliar person immediately wins his or her trust, which can lead to all kinds of dangerous manipulation. A much better idea is to write your phone number instead as this will prove helpful if anything gets lost or stolen.
- 20.** We teach our children not to get into cars with strangers, and that's important. But your child should learn one more rule; if a car pulls up near you or starts to follow you with people inside the car attempting to draw your attention, they should run quickly in the direction opposite to the movement of the vehicle. This will help you buy time to call for help.
- 21.** Tell your child that, when grabbed by a stranger, it is more than ok to behave "badly"; to bite, kick, claw, and try to attract attention at any cost, even if the situation is very scary. Also, your child should keep shouting loudly, "I don't know him/her! He/she wants to take me away!" This will often scare off the perpetrator, and also alert passer-by's, who can then rescue them.
- 22.** Your child should know that he/she is not obliged to talk to strangers. So, if the conversation lasts longer than 5-7 seconds, it's best to leave and head for a safe location. While the conversation lasts, a child should always stand at a distance from a stranger. If a stranger tries to come closer, it is important for them to take a step back. Practice this situation with your child, show him/her what a safe distance looks like, and stress that it should be maintained no matter what.
- 23.** Explain to your child that if there's a call at the door, but no one can be seen through the peephole and no answer comes to the question "Who's there?" he or she mustn't open the door even the tiniest little bit to see what's going on. Also, a child mustn't let a stranger know that his/her parents are away – not even if the stranger claims to be their friend or says that he/she is a municipal worker. If a stranger is very persistent and starts trying to break in, the child must phone their parents or neighbours at once.
- 24.** Take an interest in your child's on-line world. Talk to your children about what they're doing on-line. Take an interest in their interests, and consider co-viewing or co-creating with them. Make sure they are using the internet sites that they are only allowed to use. Your child must remember never to tell strangers, not even children, his/her phone number, address, or name. Nor should your child send personal photos to on-line friends, or tell them when and where he or she likes to hang out. Your child should always decline invitations to meet in person. Always be one step ahead. If your child is on any social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram or Twitter), familiarise yourself with the technology and find a way to monitor it.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN THESE IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

SAPSIPOLICE: **10111** • MISSING CHILDREN SOUTH AFRICA: **072 647 7464** • CELL PHONE HELP: **112** • SAPS CRIMESTOP: **086 001 0111**
CHILDLINE SOUTH AFRICA: **080 005 5555** • GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: **080 042 8428** • HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE: **080 022 2777**