

The Exploiter or Abductor: Not Necessarily a "Stranger".

"Stay away from strangers" is a popular phrase used when discussing safety with children. Unfortunately, this strategy can mislead children into believing that they should be concerned only about people who they do not know or who have an unusual appearance. However, abductors and exploiters are usually "acquaintances". Also, describing a "stranger" can be difficult for adults to explain - and is even more difficult for a child to understand. The best approach involves telling children to avoid people who are not known to parents and to get away from uncomfortable situations involving anyone.

What You Can Do To Prevent Abduction.

- Occasionally take time to discuss safety with your children. Strike a balance between avoiding the issue and instilling a sense of fear in your child. The goal is to instill a sense of caution. Also, demonstrate how your thoughts fit into their daily lives.
- Know where and with whom your children are at all times. Be familiar with daily activities. Know your children's friends and their families.
- Carefully select babysitters and any other people who care for your children. If you do not know them well, obtain and check references thoroughly.
- Be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior and talk to them about what caused the changes.
- Older children are also at risk. As you are giving them more freedom - make sure they understand safety precautions as well.

A Few Rules To Discuss With Your Child...

- Trust your feelings - you have the right to say "no" when something feels wrong. Get away quickly if a situation is uncomfortable. It is more important to get out of a threatening situation, than it is to be polite. "Say No, Then Go and Tell".
- Never take anything or respond in any way if approached by someone who you don't know.

- Run away from danger, never toward it. If someone in a car follows you, turn around and run in the other direction. Run to a safe place (i.e., any place where there are other people) - not a wooded area or unoccupied building.

- Before going anywhere, always tell a parent where you are going. If plans change, check first. Never accept a ride before getting approval from a parent.

- If you become "lost" in a public place, do not wander around. Immediately go to a "trustworthy" person (i.e., cashier, security guard, bus driver) and ask for help.

Being Prepared In Advance - Generally.

If a child "goes missing", immediate availability of detailed information is extremely important.

- Keep an up-to-date written description of your child, including:

Gender Race Eye color Hair color
Height Weight Date of birth
Physical attributes (i.e., scars, tattoos, birthmarks.)

- Keep an *Operation SAFE CHILD* ID card or photos of your child in your pocketbook or wallet. Color photographs (head and shoulders only), taken with the previous six months, are preferred.



- Make it a habit to know what your child is wearing.
- Give some thought as to how you would react if your child disappeared (i.e., where you would look first.)
- Keep a list of names and contact information for your child's: friends and their parents; babysitters and daycare providers; relatives (including non-custodial parent, if applicable); school administrator and teachers; employer and co-workers, if applicable.

Action to take when a child is missing - No immediate indication of an abduction or attempt.

- Conduct a brief, but thorough search of all possible places, including:

Closets Attics Basements
Crawl spaces Garages Sheds
Streams/Ponds Trees/Bushes Swimming pools
Automobiles (even if locked; include trunks)
Appliances (include unused refrigerators)

- Call the people on your list.

- Promptly call the police if you are unable to locate your child within a short period of time.

- Gather information and photos while waiting; provide them to the police when they arrive.

If abduction is suspected or attempted.

- Gather and note all available details and call the police immediately. Provide these details during the initial call. Details include:

- Name and description of the child involved; and the exact location and time when last seen.

- Description/identity of the abductor, if known.

- Description of the vehicle involved, if applicable.

Make Model License plate (number and state)
Damage or markings Color Age

- Direction of travel and time when last seen.

- Try to keep all witnesses and others with information available, so that they can be interviewed by the police. If a person is unable to wait, be sure that you get his or her name, telephone number and all information that they have to offer.

- Even if an abduction attempt is unsuccessful, call the police immediately. Apprehension may preclude the individual from making additional attempts.

The NYS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse (MECC)

Services generally fall into three categories: support for law enforcement, assistance provided to left-behind family members and community outreach.

■ **The 1-800-FIND-KID hotline** operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In addition to case intakes, missing child lead information received on this line is immediately disseminated to investigating police agencies.

■ **The statewide missing and unidentified person repository** is continually updated by MECC with information submitted by law enforcement agencies.

■ **Investigative assistance** provided to law enforcement agencies includes:

Flagging missing child birth and educational records.

Electronically distributing missing child posters via high speed broadcast fax/email systems. When a child is deemed to be "endangered", the *NYS AMBER Alert* and *DCJS Missing Child/College Student Alert* Programs are used to provide the most rapid and widespread public dissemination of information possible. Distribution includes police agencies, television and radio stations, NYS Thruway toll booths and service areas, border crossings, airports and bus terminals.

Placing missing child photographs and biographical information on the DCJS and NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) web sites.

■ **MECC collaboration** with the NCMEC, other state clearinghouses, other State agencies, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts can provide nationwide assistance to police agencies and family members.

■ **MECC community outreach** includes: developing and distributing educational literature; making presentations at professional conferences; and offering the *Operation SAFE CHILD* ID Card Program at community events.

**NEW YORK STATE
MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN
CLEARINGHOUSE**



CHILD SAFETY



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT US AT:**

**NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
4 Tower Place
Albany, NY 12203**

1-800-FIND-KID

Photographs of missing children and biographical information, as well as additional child safety information can be viewed on our website.

www.operationsafechild.org

Contributions made to the NYS MECC Fund made reproduction of this brochure possible. Contributions can be forwarded directly to the fund at the address listed above. Also, the NYS Tax Law allows individuals to donate to the MECC Fund when filing state income tax returns. Every penny of your contribution goes directly to support the work of the Clearinghouse and local efforts statewide.

© 2007 by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
January 2007



**State of New York
Eliot Spitzer, Governor
Denise E. O'Donnell, Commissioner**