

Tips For Safeguarding Your Children

The nationally acclaimed *Think First & Stay Safe™* School Program recommends the following safety tips to help preserve your child's personal safety. Consider familiarizing yourself with these tips and reviewing them regularly with your child.

- ☑ Make time to discuss personal safety with your kids, even if you're uncomfortable with the topic. Let your kids know they can talk openly with you about anything.
- ☑ Reassure your child that most people are committed to the safety and happiness of children and can be called upon for help if the need arises.
- ☑ Help your child identify trusted adults, both inside and outside the home.
- ☑ Make sure even very young children know their complete name, address and phone number.
- ☑ Teach your children how to dial 911; let them know law enforcement is there to help.
- ☑ Teach children basic sex education; the areas of the body covered by a bathing suit are private.
- ☑ Discuss the importance of respecting one another's personal boundaries at all times.
- ☑ Establish that inappropriate touches (inside the bathing suit zone) are against the law. This gives children confidence to assert themselves with those who may try to sexually abuse them.
- ☑ Explain to your child that youngsters who experience abuse are usually abused by someone they know, not by a stranger.
- ☑ Sexual abuse is never a child's fault. Nothing about the way a child looks, what he/she says, wears or does gives anyone the right to abuse or hurt them.
- ☑ Let children express affection on their own terms. It's best not to instruct them to "Give Uncle Jimmy a hug" or "Give Aunt Susan a kiss."
- ☑ Be vigilant supervising children, especially during multi-family gatherings with multi-age kids.
- ☑ Many children are sexually abused during sleepovers, both by peers and adults. If you choose to allow sleepovers, make certain personal safety is discussed and all activities are closely monitored.
- ☑ Stress that there should be no secrets from you *ever*, even seemingly innocent ones. Secrets often play a significant role in grooming children for abuse.
- ☑ Children may be threatened to keep quiet about sexual abuse. Teach your child that verbal threats are against the law.
- ☑ Explain the importance of reporting abuse or attempted abuse to you or another trusted adult.
- ☑ Teach youngsters to respect, admire and celebrate the differences in people. Live by the family motto, "Zero Tolerance for Intolerance!"
- ☑ Participate or volunteer in your child's school and extracurricular activities whenever possible.
- ☑ Instill youngsters with a sense of self-worth at every opportunity.
- ☑ Make it a priority to get to know your children's friends and their families.
- ☑ Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities. Children with many interests are less likely to experiment with drugs or other negative influences.
- ☑ Online luring does occur. Monitor electronic devices, and if your child is taking risks, find out why.
- ☑ Watch for signs of Cyberbullying to, or by, your child. Report bullying to school officials and police.
- ☑ Encourage youngsters to recognize, trust and follow their instincts about behaviors and situations, including with people they know. Parents should do the same.
- ☑ Praise kids for acts of kindness, treating others with respect and standing up for themselves & others.