

Know the Rules...Abduction and Kidnapping Prevention Tips for Parents and Guardians

High-profile abductions, although rare occurrences, may leave some families frightened and unsure about how to best protect their children. According to a study conducted by the Washington State Attorney General's Office for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 40.3 percent of those who experienced one of the most serious forms of child abduction were victims of opportunity¹.

To help minimize the opportunity, children should be supervised by you or another trusted adult and taught how to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations. This is better than expecting your children to rely on their judgment only about people.

The tips noted below will help families lessen the opportunity for abduction and kidnapping and better safeguard their children.

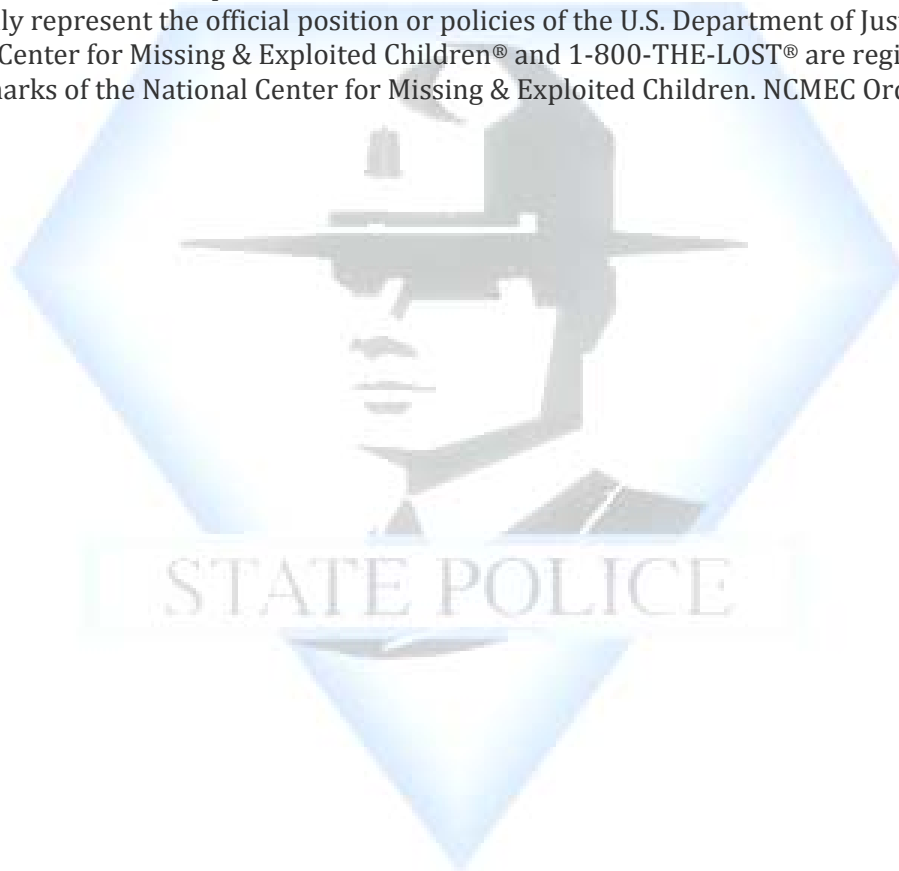
1. **Teach your children to run away from danger**, never toward it. Danger is anyone or anything invading their personal space. If anyone should try to grab them, tell them to make a scene; loudly yell this person is not my father/mother/guardian; and make every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting. Their safety is more important than being polite. Teach your children if they are ever followed in a vehicle to turn around and run in the other direction to you or another trusted adult.
2. **Never let your children go places alone**, and always supervise your young children or make sure there is another trusted adult present to supervise them if you cannot. Make sure your older children always take a friend when they go anywhere.
3. **Know where your children are and whom they are with at all times**. Remind children to never take anything or respond in any way if approached by anyone they don't know, and also remind them to never approach a vehicle without your permission. Teach them to run away as quickly as possible to you or another trusted adult.
4. **Talk openly to your children about safety** and encourage them to tell you or a trusted adult if anyone or anything makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. Discuss safety issues with your children so they will understand the need for precautions. Advise your older children about steps they may take to help safeguard themselves. Know your children's friends and their families. Pay attention to your children and listen to them. If you don't, someone else may. And others may have ulterior motives for befriending your children.
5. **Practice what you teach** by creating "what if" scenarios with your children to make sure they understand the safety message and are able to use it in a real situation.

6. **Consider installing an alarm system in your home** with a monitoring feature. If you do not have an alarm system, consider purchasing less expensive wireless door and window alarms. Make sure your home is secured with deadbolt locks, and ensure landscaping around it doesn't provide places for people to hide. Check other access points such as gates, and make sure they have been secured. Consider installing exterior lighting around your home. Make sure your home is fully secured before you go to sleep and items such as ladders have been stored inside. Prepare a plan to vacate your home in case of **any** emergency. This should include but is not limited to a fire. Have a plan if an intruder tries or gets into your home.
7. **Make your children part of securing your home.** If you have installed an alarm system, demonstrate it to your children and show them how to make sure doors and windows are locked. This will not only help calm their fears but will also help make them part of your "safety plan" at home.
8. **Have a list of family members who could be contacted in case of an emergency.** Designate a family member or close associate who would be able to fill the role of advisor in case of an emergency.
9. **Be alert to and aware of your surroundings.** Know the "escape routes" and plan what you would do in different emergencies. Practice "what if" scenarios, so you will be well prepared. Know the location of local hospitals and best routes to take to reach them. Know how to reach the nearest local law enforcement agency or sub-station.
10. **Know your employees and coworkers.** Do background screening and reference checks on everyone who works at your home, particularly those individuals who care for your children. Their knowledge of your family is extensive so make sure you have an equivalent understanding of them. National access to sex-offender registries is available at www.nsopw.gov.
11. **Consider varying your daily routines and habits.** Do not take the same routes or go at the same time on your regular errands. If you take your children to school, change that route as well.
12. **Take steps to secure personal information about yourself.** Consider getting a post office box and registering everything you may there including your vehicles and drivers' licenses. Have personal bills sent to your place of work or the post office box. Be discreet about your possessions and family's personal habits and information. Take steps to protect your identity by not revealing too much information and notifying authorities of any irregularities.
13. **Report any suspicious persons or activities to law enforcement.** If you feel anyone in your family has been targeted or is being stalked, immediately report this information to law-enforcement authorities. Do not wait.

14. **Remember you are your best resource** for better safeguarding your family. Stay alert, informed, and vigilant about personal-security issues.

¹ Katherine M. Brown, Robert D. Keppel, Joseph G. Weis, and Marvin E. Skeen. *Case Management for Missing Children Homicide Investigation: Executive Summary*. Olympia, Washington: Office of the Attorney General State of Washington and U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, May 2006, page 33, accessed April 15, 2009, at [http://www.atg.wa.gov/uploadedFiles/Another/Supporting_Law_Enforcement/Homicide_Investigation_Tracking_System_\(HITS\)/Child_Abduction_Murder_Research/CMIPDF.pdf](http://www.atg.wa.gov/uploadedFiles/Another/Supporting_Law_Enforcement/Homicide_Investigation_Tracking_System_(HITS)/Child_Abduction_Murder_Research/CMIPDF.pdf). This study is based on the analysis of 735 child-abduction murder cases occurring in the United States.

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