



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* CHILD PROTECTION®
Helping families. Protecting children.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE FROM ABDUCTION

A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Canadian Centre) reveals ways parents can reduce the risk of a child being abducted. While child abduction is rare, the impact is devastating when it occurs, and it is every parent's worst nightmare. This sheet offers information for parents and caregivers to help reduce the risk of a child being abducted by a non-family member.

KEY INFORMATION FROM THE CANADIAN CENTRE'S NEW STUDY ON CHILD ABDUCTION

77%

of children were taken
for sexual purposes

92%

of offenders were male

69%

of offenders were
under 30 years old

41%

of abductions occurred during
late spring/summer months

45%

of abductions occurred
on the weekend

67%

of the instances involved
children who were
on their way somewhere
(walking or biking) – to
school, to the park, to a
friend's house or to the mall

43%

of victims were between
14 and **16** years old

The average age
of the children was
11.6 years old

70%

were murdered within
three **(3)** hours
of abduction

Time between
abduction and murder
could be determined for 60%
of the victims

All numbers are based on the report released May 25, 2016 by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. titled *Abducted then Murdered Children: A Canadian Study (Preliminary Results)* and are subject to the limitations set out in the report. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and are subject to change in the final report.



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CONSIDERATIONS FOR REDUCING RISKS

SUPERVISION

The supervision of children is very important and isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Children require different levels of supervision based on factors such as age, development, environments and individual characteristics. A more challenging stage to supervise is adolescence, when youth are seeking autonomy and independence. People often worry about being overprotective, but it is also important to check in now and then on what our children are doing. The following provides information for healthy supervision of children from 4 to 16 years old.

4 to 6 years old:

- This age group needs direct supervision
- The child needs to be visible to the parent/caregiver at all times, such as when playing in the front yard, on the street, at the playground or park, etc.

Note: If another child is supervising, they are required to be at least 12 years old

7 to 10 years old:

- This age group needs close supervision
- At this age, some indirect supervision and monitoring occurs, such as when children are walking to school and having playdates outside the home
- If possible, ensure your child travels to and from school with other children and/or an adult you trust
- Know the routes children are taking to school and remind them to avoid shortcuts
- Ask your child's school to implement a call-back program if one does not already exist so that you will be alerted as soon as possible if your child does not arrive at school
- Make arrangements to get children to and from play dates and activities
- Ensure your child understands that they should not approach a car, even if the person driving calls them over



11 and 12 years old:

- This age group starts to seek more independence
- At this age, children still require adult monitoring and supervision
- Establish the expectation that children need to check in to get permission before going anywhere so parents/caregivers always know where they are, what they are doing, who they are with and when they will return
- Build in regular check-in points, such as texting or calling when they are out
- If children are not being picked up or dropped off when they go out:
 - ▶ Ask them to check in once they arrive at their destination
 - ▶ Ask them to check in before they leave to come home to know what time to expect them, and check in on their whereabouts if they are late
- Discuss considerations when accepting rides, such as accepting a ride from an aunt or friend's mom versus the guy that you see and talk to on occasion at the grocery store

**Use technology to your advantage to stay connected to your children.
Adolescents prefer and will often respond quickly to texts.**

**If children have special needs that may increase their vulnerability,
they will require a more protective environment. This means more direct
adult supervision is necessary to increase their safety.**



13 to 16 years old:

- Peers often have increased influence at this stage
- At this age, parental monitoring continues to be very important
- Continue with expectations that youth need to check in to let parents/caregivers know where they are, what they are doing, who they are with and when they will return
- Continue with check-in points; connect via text or by phone while they are out; remind them to have their phone fully charged whenever they go out
- Establish the expectation that youth check in with parents/caregivers when they arrive at or change locations, or if they are going to be late
- Stay up until youth get home to make sure they arrive safely
- Remind youth that under any circumstances, they can call you if they need help, such as if they need a ride home late at night or if they get separated from friends
- Continue discussion about the parameters when accepting rides from people, such as:
 - ▶ Making careful decisions about who they accept rides from
 - ▶ Making sure they are with another person (even if they know the person well who offers the ride)
 - ▶ Informing a parent/caregiver when they have received a ride – even from people that they know
 - ▶ Making sure the person who is giving them a ride knows that their parent/caregiver is aware that they have given them a ride
- If your adolescent is seeking babysitting jobs, provide guidance such as:
 - ▶ Avoiding posting ads online, or responding to ads online
 - ▶ Avoiding giving out personal cell phone numbers and avoiding responding to new opportunities from a personal cell phone
 - ▶ Inquiring about babysitting jobs for people known by people connected within the neighbourhood
 - ▶ Providing parents/caregivers with information about where they are babysitting, and having a way to be contacted while they are there

Check in with one another to avoid miscommunication between parents/caregivers as to the whereabouts of the child.





SAFETY STRATEGIES

There is no crash course in personal safety. Have regular conversations with children at all ages about how to increase their personal safety. Practicing safety strategies and problem solving helps build children's confidence and competence around their own personal safety.

What to teach children:

BUDDY System — There is safety in numbers at all ages. Start introducing the Buddy System to children at age 4. Regularly reinforce the importance of using the Buddy System when going places to increase personal safety. When children are age 4 to 7, a buddy is someone who is old enough to supervise them. The Buddy System is an important strategy that is applicable for all age groups. During adolescence, it continues to be important to reinforce that there is safety in numbers. For example, don't abandon a friend at a party, make sure you travel in groups to and from the mall and other outings, and don't accept rides from others.

If asked to go and your parents don't know, SHOUT NO! — This strategy reminds children and youth to check in with parents/caregivers before going anywhere with anyone. As youth become more independent and are away from home with friends, establish the expectation that they check in with parents/caregiver before going anywhere with anyone or changing locations. Use "what if" scenarios to help children anticipate situations and to practice employing a safe response to increase the likelihood that they will use it if they encounter a dangerous situation.

SHOUT NO! RUN – TELL Someone — Teach children assertiveness skills. Teach them that it is okay for them to say no, set limits and not comply if someone wants them to do something or go somewhere and they have not checked with their parents/caregiver or they feel uncomfortable in any way. At age 7 and up, teach children to resist, make noise and make a scene if someone tries to get them to go somewhere.

Trust Your INSTINCTS — Explain to children that our bodies warn us of danger. We need to pay attention to our body, and if we are in a situation where we feel uncomfortable or something seems dangerous, trust that feeling and leave the situation and tell a safe grown-up.

Have ongoing conversations about the importance of being careful when accepting rides from people and making sure others are aware when a ride has been accepted.



IMMEDIATE ACTION

If a child is missing, taking immediate action is key. Recent research demonstrates that a quick response by adults to locate a child is critical to their recovery.

Consider the following information to guide your actions if a child is missing:

- Time is very important if a child is missing
- Report quickly – have one person make a report to police and wait at the house
- Immediately mobilize others to canvas the specific area where the child was last seen or the area where the child was expected to be
- If the child has a smartphone and you are unsure of the child's last location, use the smartphone to help determine the child's last location to assist with tracking

For additional information, visit protectchildren.ca

