

A Guide for Families:

How to respond to a child abduction that has occurred within your community

While child abduction within a community is rare, having a child taken from within a home is unimaginable.

When someone breaches the trust and safety of people within a community, it touches everyone in a personal way. An array of impacts is felt by communities. Questions often arise for parents within the community, such as, "How can I keep my child safe?" and "My child is terrified, what should I do?"

Adults need to regain a sense of control and security for both themselves and for their children. In order to move forward, it is important to consider how you as a parent feel about what has happened. Working through your own feelings will help you support your children.

You may be feeling:

- That your sense of safety has been shaken
- Anger
- Overly protective
- A loss of trust
- A lack of control
- Scared
- Overwhelmed
- Sad
- Isolated and alone
- Vulnerable
- Grief and loss
- Disbelief (turn a blind eye)
- Ambivalent

What parents can do:

- Reassure your children that they are safe.
- Take the necessary safety precautions to ensure that your environment is secure. Look at your child's daily routine and learn ways to increase her/his safety, such as when playing in the community and attending programs and activities. For more information visit commit2kids.ca.
- Be patient and always answer your child's questions with age-appropriate information. Children do not need and cannot handle details about what has occurred. Using fear is ineffective. They need to know that safe adults are taking care of matters and that they are safe.
- Protect children from media exposure. Information conveyed through the media is not meant for children and will only create more fear and insecurity.
- Be emotionally available. Some children who are more sensitive may feel anxious and become more clingy, and emotional. It is a positive sign if your child reaches out to you for support when feeling distress. Be calm and supportive.
- Keep routines. Consistency and predictability will help children reestablish a sense of security and control.
- Make safety a habit. During times of crisis we are often reminded about the importance of teaching children about personal safety. As adults, we often shy away from teaching children about sexual abuse and abduction, feeling we will frighten them. Introducing daily personal safety skills helps build a child's competence and confidence. For more information visit kidsintheknow.ca.