

When an abduction/attempted child abduction occurs in your community

While the abduction of a child is rare, when one is attempted, it affects the entire community, causing fear among parents and potential distress in children. As a parent, you may start asking questions such as “How can I keep my child safe?” and “My child is terrified, what should I do?” There are steps you can take to empower your child with age-appropriate safety information without inciting panic or fear and re-establish her/his sense of security.

It is important to assess areas of risk that may exist in your child’s life and in her/his daily routine. Remember that there is a difference between information adults need to know and age-appropriate information children need to learn. The following outlines steps you can take to increase your child’s safety:

What You Can Do

- Reassure your child that s/he is safe.
- Limit your child’s access to media. Avoid sharing details from media stories as this can create more fear for your child.
- Be emotionally available. A child who is feeling distressed can become more clingy, anxious and emotional. It is a positive sign if your child reaches out to you for support when upset. If this occurs, be calm and supportive.
- Keep routines. Consistency and predictability will help your child re-establish a sense of security and control.
- Know where your child is at all times. It is important to know your child’s friends and to be familiar with her/his daily activities.
- Introduce personal safety skills on a daily basis so these strategies become second nature (easily recalled by memory if required).

What You Should Talk to Your Child About

- Your child always needs your permission before going anywhere with anyone.
- Your child should use the buddy system when going to and from places.
- When walking to a friend’s house, your child should call or text to let you know s/he has arrived safely. S/he should also call or text you when heading home from her/his friend’s house.
- Every day, your child should use the same route to and from school.
- Your child should be aware of safe places s/he can go to for help within the community.
- Remind your child to trust her/his instincts. Paying attention to instincts can be critical to warning your child of potential danger and the need to immediately leave a situation.

Make Safety a Habit!

When an abduction/attempted child abduction occurs within the community, as parents, we are reminded of how important it is to teach our children personal safety strategies that can help them respond to a threatening situation. Yet, as adults, we often shy away from or feel uncomfortable talking to our children about concerns tied to their personal safety — afraid we might frighten them and make them scared of the world. It is important to remember that safety education helps to not only build a child's confidence and critical thinking skills, but also enables them to respond if faced with a dangerous situation.

For more information visit the Canadian Centre for Child Protection's Kids in the Know website (www.kidsintheknow.ca)