

Child Abduction and Stranger Danger

We often hear news reports of missing endangered children as media sources help authorities disseminate information to the masses in an attempt to quickly locate and recover missing children. For example, the AMBER Alert program, created in 1996, has led to the successful recovery of 679 missing children as of January 3, 2014. [1]

As a result of this increased coverage, it's easy to believe that children are now at a greater risk of abduction than any other time in our history. However, statistics prove this is not the case. As a society, we have become more efficient at sharing information. We receive instant alerts on our cell phones and electronic highway message boards. We no longer have to wait for the evening news to learn about the day's events.

Child abductions committed by strangers are on the decline. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), In 1999, only 115 of 258,000 abducted children were kidnapped by strangers. The majority of child abductors were family members, family friends, or the child's acquaintances. [1]

Though "stranger danger" is an important component of the child safety message, its teaching should be considered a small portion of a much larger conversation parents initiate with their children. Studies have shown that children are often confused by "stranger danger" presentations and are consistently unable to vocalize who a stranger is and what a stranger looks like. [2]

To make a meaningful impact, parents should talk to their children one-on-one about child safety, including age-appropriate information on topics such as "stranger danger," "good touch/bad touch," and keeping private parts private.

The below links are provided as a starting point to educate parents about child safety, and to provide a resource guide for how to start a safety conversation with your children.

Resource Guide

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Key Facts on Missing Children, Child Sexual Exploitation and Internet Safety provides statistics from the most comprehensive national study on missing children.

www.missingkids.com/KeyFacts

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Trends Identified in Attempted Abductions provides statistics on stranger abductions compiled by the Case Analysis Unit. Includes high risk times for stranger abduction and the most successful routes a victim can use to escape.

www.missingkids.com/AttemptedAbductions

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Netsmartz Internet Safety provides detailed yet age-appropriate options for educating kids and teens on safe blogging, emailing, texting, file sharing, gaming, etc.

www.netsmartz.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Safe to Compete program provides information on how to keep your child safe playing club sports.

www.safetocompete.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Child Safety is More than a Slogan: "Stranger Danger" Warnings Not Effective at Keeping Kids Safer explains the shortcomings of the traditional "stranger danger" message and offers resources for more effective safety messages.

www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/PDF10A.pdf#page=1

1 *Key Facts*. Alexandria, Va.: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, accessed February 27, 2014, at www.missingkids.com/keyfacts.

2 *Child Safety is More than a Slogan "Stranger Danger" Warnings Not Effective at Keeping Kids Safer*. Alexandria, Va.: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, accessed February 27, 2014, at www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/PDF10A.pdf#page=1.