

Is this *your* CHILD?
If not --
It may be the
NEXT TIME



NATIONAL
CENTER FOR 
**MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN**
NCMEC Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

Our children are the forgotten victims in our justice system

Do you know how many children are missing each year?

There are nearly 800,000 children reported missing each year – that is more than 2,000 per day!¹

Do you know how many children will be sexually victimized before adulthood?

Girls: 1 in 5
and
Boys: 1 in 10
will be victimized²

Awareness about crimes committed against children has grown and left many families feeling vulnerable. It is important for parents and guardians to be aware and alert, but you and your child should not be afraid. The possibility that your child will be missing or sexually exploited is remote. Nevertheless, as parents and guardians you should do your best to keep your child safe and be prepared for the unthinkable. The information in this brochure can help you prevent your child from becoming missing or sexually exploited and provides a plan of action if your child does.



¹ As reported by Andrea J. Sedlak, David Finkelhor, Heather Hammer, and Dana J. Schultz, "National Estimates of Missing Children: An Overview," *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*, Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, October 2002, page 5, an estimated 797,500 children were reported missing in 1999. An NCMCEC review of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center missing-person reports shows a range of entries from 818,921 to 929,518 for the past 5 years. Traditionally 80% of these entries are for people younger than 18.

² David Finkelhor. "Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse." *The Future of Children: Sexual Abuse of Children*, 1994, Volume 4, page 37.

**TO KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SAFER TALK TO THEM EARLY
AND REGULARLY ABOUT THEIR SAFETY**

**What Parents and
Guardians Can Do**

- ➔ **Listen** to your children
- ➔ Take the time to **talk** to your children
- ➔ **Know** who your children's friends are
- ➔ **Notice** when anyone shows one or all of your children too much attention or begins giving them gifts
- ➔ **Teach** your children that they should say **NO** to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others
- ➔ **Be sensitive** to any changes in your children's behavior or attitude
- ➔ **Look** and **listen** to small clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings
- ➔ If your children do share problems with you, strive to remain **calm, noncritical, and nonjudgmental**
- ➔ Be sure to **screen** babysitters and caregivers
- ➔ Provide **oversight** and **supervision** of your children's online computer use
- ➔ Be **involved** in your children's activities
- ➔ **Work** with your children's school to institute sound child-safety programs as part of their curriculum
- ➔ **Practice** basic safety skills with your children, and discuss their safety openly and honestly

There is no substitute for your attention and supervision. Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

These guidelines are adapted from the brochure *Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Copyright © 2003 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved.

Be Prepared in Case Your Child Becomes Missing

Take the 6 steps listed below to be prepared.

- ① Keep a complete **description** of your child on hand
- ② Take color **photographs** of your child every six months
- ③ Have your dentist prepare and maintain **dental charts** for your child, and be sure they are updated each time an examination or dental work is performed
- ④ Know where your child's **medical records** are located
- ⑤ Arrange with your local law-enforcement agency to have your child fingerprinted and keep the **fingerprints** in a safe and easily accessible place
- ⑥ Keep a **DNA** sample from your child, like an old toothbrush in a brown envelope licked closed by your child, at room temperature in a dry, easily accessible place that is far away from heat

What To Do If Your Child Is Missing

It is important that you act immediately, because if a murder is to be committed it typically happens within the first 3 hours after abduction.³

- ① **Search** your home and check with relatives, neighbors, and friends to try and locate your child
- ② If you cannot find your child, immediately **report** your child missing to your local law-enforcement officers
- ③ **Limit** access to your home until law-enforcement officers arrive and are able to collect evidence⁴
- ④ **Give** law-enforcement officers all the information they request about your child, and be sure to give them any information that could help in the search
- ⑤ **Request** that your child's name and identifying information be immediately entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File
- ⑥ **Call** the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)** to find out what resources are available to you

These guidelines are adapted from the brochure *Just in Case...Parental guidelines in case your child might someday be missing*. Copyright © 1985 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved.

³ Kenneth A. Hanfland, Robert D. Keppel, and Joseph G. Weis. *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 1997, page 3.

⁴ Jeanne Phillips. "Dear Abby." *The Washington Post*. September, 23, 2003, page C11.