

THE RISK OBSERVER

FOUNDED 2006 – VOL. CLXI

GLATFELTER PUBLIC PRACTICE

DAILY 5 CENTS, SUNDAY 15 CENTS

STRANGERS AND CHILD SAFETY

The topic of talking to strangers may be covered thoroughly in K-5 classrooms; however, it may not be addressed in the upper grades, which is something for educators to consider.

Abduction of children is a real problem with potentially deadly consequences. Over 2,000 children are reported missing each year. Many of these are runaways, or are taken by non-custodial parents, or are found within several hours. Approximately 100 missing children are murdered each year; a significant reason for sharing information on stranger awareness.

Tip for Teachers and Administrators

- You do have the responsibility to act *in loco parentis*, “in place of the parents”, while children are in your control. You must take reasonable precautions to protect children from foreseeable sources of harm while they are in your control.

Tips for Parents

- Teaching your children not to talk to strangers may not be enough. For example, a boy lost in the woods hid from searchers because they were “strangers.” Teach them about stranger awareness by reviewing scenarios that predators use such as asking for directions, or help in finding a lost puppy, etc. Teach your children that a stranger is not a strange looking person, but someone that they do not know.
- Whenever possible, children should have a buddy with them. They should know what to do approached by a stranger; yell “NO” and run to a safe place person with whom they are familiar.
- Children should know their full name, phone number, and address.
- Children should know not to open the door, especially when they are home alone.
- Children should know to avoid places that are not safe - isolated areas like the woods or small, dark streets.
- Children should know that strangers should ask adults, not children for help.
- Children should know that they should stay away from strangers’ cars at all times.
- Children should be taught to trust their instincts. If their instincts tell them that something is dangerous or not quite right, get out of the area, tell an adult, or call **911**. Also, tell them to make a lot of noise if they are scared.
- Make sure your child has identification such as a tag on clothing with his/her name, your name, and a local phone number.
- Have a current picture of the child and identifying information written down at all times.
- When shopping or attending large events, set up a meeting place if you become separated, or give the child a cell phone so that you can get in touch quickly.

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Helpful Web sites

- <http://www.keepkidshealthy.com>, “A Pediatrician’s Guide to Keeping Kids Healthy and Safe.”
- <http://www.theparentreport.com>
- <http://www.kidshealth.org>
- <http://www.cityofdekalb.com>
- <http://www.safetycops.com>