

Prevention and Safety Tips for Families

- Talk with your children regularly about how to be safe, and about dangerous situations that may potentially occur for children and young adults.
- Make a plan for, and/or ‘role-play’, unsafe scenarios and teach children/youth how to handle these situations. Make them aware of resources available to them to stay safe (like neighbours, safe places in the community, friends and family etc.).
- Know the friends and contacts your child/friend has. Try to listen and remember when they’re talking about where they’re hanging out, and with whom.
- Teach them about how to stay safe from internet predators (including on Facebook and other social media) by never meeting strangers in person, never releasing personal details like age or address during online chat, and by using secure privacy settings for photographs online.
- Take lots of regular photographs of your family and friends. Having current photos is a great way to remember special moments, but it is also important so that you have updated photographs of your loved ones.
- Make sure your child memorizes phone numbers and/or addresses in case of an emergency. If they have a cell phone, make sure these emergency numbers are programmed into the phone.
- Enrolling your child in fun and engaging activities with other friends and loved ones not only boost self esteem but also supports a sense of belonging and supports making connections to their community. There are many low-cost and free activities available through local organizations.
- Encourage your loved one to always travel in a group, rather than walking alone. Whether it’s 2 or 20 people, travelling with others usually makes it less likely something will happen.
- Make sure that your loved one never accepts rides from anyone except trusted family or friends. Even if they do know the person they should call and check with you before getting into any vehicle. Have a “code word” that they have to say before they get in a car so you know they’re safe and not coerced.
- Let your loved one know that you will ALWAYS help them/pick them up if they are in a tough situation even if it’s late or they think you’ll be upset.
- Let your loved one know that if they were ever to go missing that you would not stop looking for them (just in case someone were to try telling them differently).

- Teach your loved ones that if something or someone does not seem quite right, that they should trust their gut feelings and instincts and get out of that situation.
- Pay closer attention than you normally do if your child's behaviour seems to be changing significantly, and/or you notice a sudden change in their friends.
- Parents who have reason to be concerned with their child's safety may choose to save a toothbrush or hairbrush in a sealed 'Ziploc' bag.

NOTES: