

# KIDS AND COMPANY®

## Parent Notes

Dear Sixth Grade Parent/Guardian,

Our class will soon begin a personal safety program, **KIDS AND COMPANY: Together for Safety®** that builds upon previous years' lessons. The program uses specially designed activities and role-plays to provide an interactive learning experience and to encourage children to be familiar with the use of safety strategies to avoid victimization by abduction or sexual exploitation. Children of this age are targets for specific types of exploitation. For instance, the average victim of abduction and murder is an approximately 11 year old girl who is described as a "low risk," "normal" kid from a middle class neighborhood with a stable family relationship who has initial contact with an abductor within a quarter mile of her home. (Kenneth A. Hanfland, Robert D. Keppel, and Joseph G. Weis. *Case Management for Missing Child 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 2.) As parents/guardians, it is important to continue to impress upon children the need for safety without causing undue fear and to respond to your child's developing need for independence.

Safety measures such as **CHECKING FIRST**, **BUDDYING UP** and saying **NO**, **GOing**, and **TELLing** still work. Below is a summary of key safety measures for Grade 6.

**CHECK FIRST** - children are taught to always let someone know where they are, who they are with, and when they change plans. The rule is to check first before leaving or changing plans.

**BUDDY SYSTEM** - children traveling in groups of two or more in and around the neighborhood or out and about in malls or stores are less likely targets for victimization. A child traveling alone is more easily accessed.

**NO-GO-TELL** - the rule is to say "NO" using an assertive voice, facial expression, and stance, GO from the situation/place to a safe place, and then TELL a trusted adult. This rule is used whenever children are in a situation where they are uncomfortable, unsure, or afraid.

**HOME ALONE** - reinforce with your child to keep doors and windows closed and locked, to keep emergency numbers by the phone, to answer the phone as though an adult is home, to phone a trusted neighbor for help or advice if concerned or unsure about anything, to keep TV or music turned low enough so that they can hear and be alert to unusual noises, to avoid watching or reading scary stories that might trigger their imagination and make them feel frightened, and to not "advertise" that they will be home alone by talking about it with friends or by displaying or talking about their house (apartment) key in public.

**TRUSTED ADULTS** - knowing and being able to access several adults who can help your child if they have a problem and can't reach you is a safe procedure for your child to follow. Select these adults with your child and put their names and numbers on an emergency ID card, and place it in your child's backpack.

**ONLINE** - children can be tricked to give personal information on the Internet which can lead to their victimization. Remind children to not give out their name, address, telephone number, photograph, your work address/telephone number, or the school's name or location without your permission. Children need to tell you right away if any information seen or received on the Internet makes them feel uncomfortable.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION** - wearing clothing and jewelry with a child's name on it provides access to the child by acquaintances and people they do not know, therefore do not have your child wear such items. Have your child keep emergency information with them on an ID card.

**ASSERTIVENESS** - children who can assert themselves may be less likely to be targeted for victimization. Encourage your child to walk tall and interact with people using eye contact and a strong clear voice.

**BABYSITTING** - gather information about the family for whom your child will babysit including their address and phone number, before your child goes babysitting. Have your child take a list of helpers with them in case they need to call someone while they are babysitting.

**RUNAWAY** - there are alternatives to running away. Children with resources for themselves and their friends who understand the risks associated with running away, may find another way to work out their concerns without running away.

*Many of the lessons include Activity Sheets which you can review and sign. Take the time to discuss these with your child.*

*The KIDS AND COMPANY® booklet for parents, "Partners in Protection", is available at school as a resource for you. Additional safety resources are also available from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. To order free pamphlets call 1-800-843-5678 or visit the National Center's website at [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com). (Use this same number or the website to report a missing child, concerns about child pornography on the Internet, or to report a tip or lead regarding a missing child.)*

*Parents across the country have participated in KIDS AND COMPANY: Together for Safety® with their children and have enjoyed the opportunity to learn how to talk to their child about these crucial topics. Please accept this opportunity to work with your child. There is no one more effective in teaching and reinforcing your child's safety than you!*