

## Preface

FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS I lived by the motto “To Protect and To Serve” as a Los Angeles Police Officer. I carried that precept to the private sector into the world of executive protection. As a police officer, I responded to numerous child abuse calls, and reports involving predators of many types, strangers, friends, and even relatives. As a personal protection specialist, I was responsible, nationally and internationally, for the protection of business persons, celebrities, and foreign dignitaries. I’ve had the responsibility of providing protection for adults and children of all ages.

In writing *Child Safety 101*, I have drawn on my public and private sector experiences and compiled safety tips intended specifically for the protection of children. Unlike the reactive actions of a police officer responding to the scene of a crime already committed, this book addresses protecting the child in a proactive manner as a bodyguard would approach protecting his client. Safety tips and discussions are presented in an “inner-to-outer” perimeter approach, beginning in the home, moving to the neighborhood, discussing day care and school, and continuing to areas away from the children’s center of comfort, their home. This is the coverage due to the unmistakable fact that a child is a potential victim in practically every area.

In the field of executive protection, not everyone can afford the services of a bodyguard. Many executives hire a personal protection agent to teach their personnel to protect themselves. The agent will instruct the employees on how to recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to develop the ability to play “what if” scenarios. This training will enable the

individual to be mentally prepared and able to possibly avoid being targeted as a victim of crime.

As the corporate executive protects employees by teaching them safety awareness, a parent's responsibility is to the child. A child needs to be mentally prepared to distinguish and handle sensitive or dangerous predicaments. This parental obligation is met by a continuous child safety awareness education that has its origin in the home at an early age.

Child safety awareness programs have emerged in almost every community due to the growing concern of parents and teachers. Almost daily, the media features stories about child victims of abduction or sexual crimes. Only recently have parents refrained from saying "I never thought it could happen in this community," as it is widely accepted that sexual deviants and child predators target intended victims in every locale, neighborhood streets, schools, playgrounds, and even houses of worship.

*Child Safety 101* is based on the premise that every parent is a concerned parent. A concerned parent is aware that there is a worldwide problem of missing, sexually abused, and murdered children. A concerned parent knows that this problem is not caused only by strangers. A concerned parent knows not to believe "It can't happen to my child." A concerned parent knows that child safety awareness is a major deterrent to criminal behavior. *Child Safety 101* addresses these issues in stressing child safety awareness.

May your child always be safe.

# Introduction

THIS BOOK primarily addresses the issues that our children are confronted with in our society caused by pedophiles, sex offenders, and child molesters (redundancy at its lowest level). Individual chapters deal with our children's daily activities where these creatures may roam. As parents, we must grasp the safety concepts to educate our children so they may defend themselves against these predators.

The breath of fresh air into this cloud of gloom is that due to the vast amount of publicity of the fate of such beautiful souls as 6-year-old Adam Walsh, 12-year-old Amber Hagerman, 7-year-old Megan Kanka, and so many others, our society continues to force these criminals deeper into the shadows and simultaneously protects our children by stressing child safety education. All forms of media contribute to our children learning faster and being more attuned to our world, for better or worse. Child safety education contributes to protecting our children from the “worse.”

The ultimate goal of child safety organizations is to provide sufficient information to educate all children to a level of being able to discourage any predator from considering them as their next victim.

Children from many generations grew up hearing cautionary advice being given to little girls, such as “be careful—don't talk to strangers,” while little boys were sent along their way with such guidance as “be a good boy—come straight home.” The general perception in our communities was predators targeted little girls, not little boys. The general notion was “strangers” were males and the idea of homosexual preying was unthinkable, or at least unspoken of. The singling out of only little girls is a misconception; boys and girls are targeted victims

of child molesters worldwide. With our modern technology, a predator's tentacles have the ability to reach into almost every home, school, and library.

All children must be taught child safety in order to be mentally prepared to discourage child molesters from focusing on them as their intended victims.

Educating a child on child safety practices should not be perceived as difficult or threatening. Safety education begins at home, just as safety rules are taught to children as they grow and their ability to understand increases. When the question of when a parent should begin teaching child safety to their child is asked, the answer is: as "child safety" encompasses many areas, *all* areas can blend into one's educational procedures. Just as a child is taught at a toddler age, "no, no—that is hot," or "no—that's sharp—don't touch," very early in a child's life he or she can learn "no, no—don't open the door without Mommy." As situations arise, child safety rules may be taught.

Child safety can be taught in a variety of ways. A very effective and highly recommended method is role-playing using "what if" scenarios. Upon observing a child safety-related situation in the media, television, newspaper, magazines, etc., ask your child "what would you do if a person came up to you and . . . ?" This would present an opportunity to discuss other child safety rules. Look for every opportunity to discuss child safety with your child.

*Child safety education  
must have been the inspiration  
of a loving parent.*



# 1

## Home

### **Crime prevention begins with safety education at home.**

Safety education can be taught with an informal, systematic approach to the subject. Children will not become frightened when child safety issues are raised if they are normally discussed. Hypotheticals are a practical approach to protective information. Play the “what if” game whenever a child safety-related story is featured in the media. Safety habits and cautious behavior are the results of regular child safety discussions.

### **Teach your child his or her name, address, and telephone number at an early age.**

When small children become lost or separated from their parents, the ability to inform adults of their full names, addresses, and telephone numbers accelerates the process of reuniting them with their parents. In addition to the knowledge of their own information, knowledge of their parents’ full names would be extremely helpful to anyone assisting them.

### **Teach your child to use a peephole or window to identify anyone at the door before opening the door.**

Even if you are home, this is a recommended practice; however, it is critical for children to follow this rule if they are home alone. If your child does not recognize the person at the door, your child should not open it, even if the person appears to be a respectable figure of society such as a postal worker or

police officer. There should be no harm in children advising people that they cannot open the door and that a parent cannot come to the door. A genuine person of authority will respect the fact that a child follows such safety rules. In the event the person at the door persists in trying to convince your child to open the door, let your child know it would be proper to call 911 for help. A police officer would not hesitate to assist a frightened child. Note: it would not be wise for the child to ignore the person at the door by remaining quiet. Many burglars “case” neighborhoods to determine an easy target because no one is home. Such a person would leave rather than chance having the police summoned.

**A child should never tell an unknown telephone caller  
“no one is home.”**

There are many methods to obtain someone’s telephone number. Several professions regularly use a “reverse directory” which allows the person to see a telephone number as it is listed with an address, or an address and then the telephone number. These directories provide telephone numbers either by residential blocks or in numerical order. A child telling a caller that no one is home informs the caller that the child is home alone. Have your child respond to any telephone inquiries for you by saying that you are “busy right now,” or give them other specific instructions on what to say if you are not home.

**Educate children about telephone surveys and tell them  
not to answer any questions.**

A telephone survey is a method many callers use to obtain important personal information about individuals and families. Although the caller, male or female, may sound very nice and friendly, advise your child to never give personal information to anyone on the telephone.

**Keep a list of emergency numbers near the telephone.**

Situations of an emergency nature may arise at any time, or may merely be in a child's imagination. A list conveniently placed near the telephone could avert a potential crisis. At the very least, a child's ability to contact a loved one for comforting advice at a stressful time silently implies that you are there for your child at all times.

Small children should be taught to call 911 in an emergency, and told what an emergency would be. The media continually features stories of young heroes who called 911 when faced with an emergency. Prepare your child on how to react if confronted with an emergency.

**Avoid giving children clothing or items with their names on them.**

Knowledge of a person's name is generally an advantage. A person addressed by his or her first name is very likely to respond in a friendly manner when approached. This is especially true of a young child. Any name tag identifies the child and gives an advantage to a stranger. Items to avoid identifying include clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes, and jewelry, to name a few. Gift shops are saturated with personalized jewelry for small children. Such items allow someone to compliment the item of jewelry, "That is a real nice bracelet (necklace, ring, etc.);" while observing the child's name. Avoid items that give personal information about a child to everyone within eyesight of the child.

**Make sure your child's room is not easily accessible from the outside of the home.**

Ground level rooms are accessible from the outside of the home; however, efforts must be made to prevent or deter someone from entering your child's bedroom from the out-

side. Precautions can be taken to discourage an intruder, such as ensuring that a window is limited in the available space needed for ventilation, or ensuring that there is a dead-bolt lock on any outside door. Each evening, routinely check that all windows and doors are locked.

### **Teach your child a "code" word.**

A code word is a special word or phrase created for identification purposes between you and your child. Airlines use this technique for identification of someone designated to pick up a child traveling alone. Airline personnel meet the person picking up the child and ask for the "code" word, knowing the parent gave the "word" to this designated person. This practice can be used anywhere your child needs to be picked up by anyone other than a parent.

Your children should know that only in an emergency situation would someone other than you or a regular guardian pick them up from school, call them with any requests, or show up asking them to do something on your directions. In such a situation, inform your child that the person would know the "code" word. Stress with your child that this word or phrase is for emergency situations only and not to be told to anyone. Practice "what-if" scenarios that would involve using this practice.

If a person approaching your child has no knowledge of a "code" word or attempts to mislead the child when your child asks about a "code" word, your child should get away from that person immediately.

**Teach your children not to approach your home if the doors are open, a window is broken, or they see signs of a break-in.**

This is a family rule. Avoid entering your residence if there are visible signs of criminal activity outside the home. Telephone the police and have them respond to investigate. Advise your child to seek help from a neighbor who can call the police. It would never be advisable to confront an intruder.

**References and background checks on all household employees are essential.**

Do a thorough background check on any domestic help who will have access to your home or property on a regular basis. This includes housekeepers, gardeners, handymen, and everyone who would be familiar with your schedules and especially your child. Ask for references and make it a point to check with all previous employers.

Many crimes, including those against children, have been committed by trusted household employees.

**Encourage your child to approach you with any of their concerns.**

Every child should be advised that he or she can feel comfortable discussing anything with parents. Children avoid discussing sensitive issues with their parents because they feel embarrassed or they feel they will not be believed by their parents. A child who feels loved and trusted will not hesitate to approach a parent with concerns. Many child safety tips throughout this book will be encompassed by this rule, such as your child being told to keep a secret, an adult wrongfully approaching your child, and a child's personal concerns.