



Protecting Children From Predators

Checking Sex-Offender Registries - It is important for parents and guardians to understand that people who would harm children are not sinister masked men. It is hard to comprehend that some of these predators may live next door to us and be someone we trust. These people may even be a member of our own family. As parents or guardians, we must stay alert and rely on that little voice that tells us when something is wrong or bothering our child. Trust your instincts. "Sixty percent of all sexual assault offenders were classified by law enforcement as acquaintances of the victim." (From 2000 US Dept. of Justice Report)

If you feel that your child may have been sexually exploited, contact your local law enforcement immediately. Find additional information and resources at the National Center For Missing & Exploited Children's website, www.missingkids.com.

Who are these people? To find sex offenders in your area or neighborhood, go to the NC Attorney General's Website, www.ncdoj.com, click on *Protecting Children* and from that page click on *Sex Offender Information*. You can search by name, county, city or zip code.

At the National Sex-Offender Registry, <http://www.nsopr.gov/>, clicking "yes" to agree to the conditions of use will direct you to a page where you can search by name or location. You can also search your zip code for the sex offenders living in your neighborhood, or you can choose to search regionally or nationally by using the last name and first initial of a specific person.

You can also search state sites by visiting:

- <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/states.htm>
- <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/predator/sexoffenders.htm>

Important Tips To Remember:

- Listen to your children. Pay attention if they tell you they don't want to be with someone or go somewhere. This may be an indication of more than a personality conflict or lack of interest in the activity or event.
- Notice when someone shows one or all of your children a lot of attention or begins giving them gifts. Take the time to talk to your children about the person and find out why the person is acting in this way. Did you know that most of the teens who leave home to meet someone they met online do this willingly?
- Screen babysitters. Check references with other families who have used the babysitter. Once you have chosen the sitter, drop in unexpectedly to see how your

- children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the sitter was, and listen carefully to the responses.
- Teach your children that they have the right to say NO to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touches or actions by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible. If they cannot get away, teach them to kick, scream, and resist. Reassure them you're there to help and not to blame, and it is okay to tell you anything.
 - Be sensitive to any changes in your children's behavior or attitude. Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Listen without blaming if they tell you about problems. Look and listen to small clues that something may be troubling them. Remember how hard it can be to talk about problems with your parents.
 - Practice basic safety skills with your children. Be sure they understand to never go to a public restroom alone. Teach them how to locate adults who can help if they need help.
 - Encourage your children to communicate with each other by using the telephone. That is instant communication! The money spent on a few long distance calls to far away friends is worth the price—as extreme as it may sound, it may save your child's life.
 - Remember there is no substitute for your attention and supervision. Taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security. They are your responsibility. They should always be your top priority.

Information adapted from: "Know the Rules - General Tips for Parents and Guardians to Help Keep Their Children Safer." Copyright ©; 2000 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.