



# School Is Back in Session

## What You Must Know to Protect Your Children

By Sherri Bevan Walsh  
Summit County Prosecutor

School is back in session and along with warning our children about frequent hand washing and covering their coughs, it's a good time to also review safety rules. Every day, millions of children are on the roads to and from school. From walking, to bicycles, to waiting at the bus stop, we all have to be vigilant about talking to our kids about being safe. In addition, it is up to all of us to keep an eye on the neighborhood children to help them in case there is a problem.

According to the Center for National and Exploited Children, approximately 39 percent of attempted abductions occur when a child is going to and from school, or school-related activities. They offer these safety tips:

- Always take a friend when walking or riding a bike to and from school. Walk and ride in well-lit areas. Never take short cuts.
- Stay with a group while waiting

at the bus stop.

- Never accept a ride from anyone unless the parent/guardian has told them it is okay to do so in each instance.
- If anyone follows your child they should get away as quickly as possible by running the opposite direction of a person or car. Always be sure to tell a parent or another trusted adult what happened.
- Quickly get away and yell, "This person is trying to take me away!" or "This person is not my father/mother!" if someone tries to take them.
- Never leave school with anyone they don't know, even if they are told it is an emergency. They should always check first with a parent or guardian or another trusted adult.
- Tell a trusted adult if they notice someone hanging around the school.

There are many other areas of concern that as parents or guardians, we need to be considering. Is your child coming home to an empty

house? Again, be sure you have adequately prepared your child. Make sure they know:

- Their full name, address and telephone number.
- Your full name and where you work, along with the phone number and cell or pager number.
- How to call 9-1-1- in an emergency.
- When they get home, to check if there are open doors, broken windows, or something else about the house that looks odd. If so, have a designated safe place for help.
- To always lock the door once they have entered the house and not to open it again until an adult is home unless it has been pre-approved by an adult.

For older students, take the time to discuss illegal activities that could change the direction of their lives forever.

- **SEXTING**, the act of sending nude pictures over a cell phone, is illegal. Tell your kids not to do it and if they receive such mate-

rial, to notify an adult.

- Drug dealers will ask minors to carry their drugs because the penalties are not as severe. Tell your kids not to fall into a trap like this because the consequences are still hard on a young person's life.
- Most gangs are made up of males under the age of 25, and it usually starts in middle school. Gangs are another road to nowhere for our young people. There are other options...teach them those positive options.
- Sexual assaults are also on the rise among our youth. Teach respect for one another and the boundaries that are expected of them.
- Bullying and hazing can be the result of a "mob mentality," when everyone is caught in the moment and not thinking about the outcome. Again, teach your children to respect others and that if they see something like this occurring, to notify an adult immediately. In the long run, they are the heroes in those situations.

Finally, just like adults, children should be taught to trust their feelings...or trust their gut. If they are feeling scared or uncomfortable, there is likely a reason to feel that way. They should get out of the situation immediately and tell a parent, guardian, or trusted adult.

**SHERRI BEVAN WALSH**  
Prosecuting Attorney County  
of Summit



53 University Avenue,  
Akron, OH 44308  
(330) 643-2800

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