

Strangers and dangerous situations

Kids see strangers every day in stores, in the park, and in their neighborhoods. Most of these strangers are nice, normal people, but a few may not be. Parents can protect their children from dangerous strangers by teaching them about suspicious behavior, and by taking a few precautions of their own.

Who is a stranger?

A stranger is anyone that your family doesn't know well. It's common for children to think that "bad strangers" look scary, like the villains in cartoons. This is not only not true, but it's dangerous for children to think this way. Pretty strangers can be just as dangerous as the not-so-pretty ones. When you talk to your children about strangers, explain that no one can tell if strangers are nice or not nice just by looking at them and that they should be careful around all strangers.

But don't make it seem like all strangers are bad. If children need help--whether they're lost, being threatened by a bully, or being followed by a stranger--the safest thing for them to do in many cases is to ask a stranger for help. You can make this easier for them by showing them which strangers are okay to trust.

Who are safe strangers?

Safe strangers are people children can ask for help when they need it. Police officers and fire fighters are two examples of very recognizable safe strangers.

Teachers, principals, and librarians are adults children can trust too, and they are easy to recognize when they're at work. But make sure that you emphasize that whenever possible, children should go to a public place to ask for help.

You can help your children recognize safe strangers by pointing them out when you're out in your town. Also show your children places they can go if they need help, such as local stores and restaurants and the homes of family friends in your neighborhood.

Pretty strangers can be just as dangerous as the not-so-pretty ones.

Recognizing and handling dangerous situations

Perhaps the most important way parents can protect their children is to teach them to be wary of potentially dangerous situations – this will help them when dealing with strangers as well as with known adults who may not have good intentions. Help children recognize the warning signs of suspicious behavior, such as when an adult asks them to disobey their parents or do something without permission, asks them to keep a secret, asks children for help, or makes them feel uncomfortable in any way. Also

tell your children that an adult should never ask a child for help, and if one does ask for their help, teach them to find a trusted adult right away to tell what happened.

You should also talk to your children about how they should handle dangerous situations. One way is to teach them "No, Go, Yell, Tell." If in a dangerous situations, kids should say no, run away, yell as loud as they can, and tell a trusted adult what happened right away. Make sure that your children know that it is okay to say no to an adult in a dangerous situation and to yell to keep themselves safe, even if they are indoors. It's good to practice this in different situations so that your children will feel confident in knowing know what to do. Here are a few possible scenarios:

A nice-looking stranger approaches your child in the park and asks for help finding the stranger's lost dog.

- A woman who lives in your neighborhood but that the child has never spoken to invites your child into her house for a snack.
- A stranger asks if your child wants a ride home from school.
- Your child thinks he or she is being followed.
- An adult your child knows says or does something that makes him or her feel bad or uncomfortable.
- While your child is walking home from a friend's house, a car pulls over and a stranger asks for directions.

(Strangers, cont. on p. 2)

(Strangers, cont. from p. 1)

What else parents can do

In addition to teaching children how to recognize and handle dangerous situations and strangers, there are a few more things parents can do to help their children stay safe and avoid dangerous situations.

- Know where your children are at all times. Make it a rule that your children must ask permission or check in with you before going anywhere. Give your children your work and cell phone numbers so they can reach you at all times.

- Point out safe places. Show your children safe places to play, safe roads and paths to take, and safe places to go if there's trouble.

- Teach children to trust their instincts. Explain that if they ever feel scared or uncomfortable, they should get away as fast as they can and tell an adult. Tell them that sometimes adults they know may make them feel uncomfortable, and they should still get away as fast as possible and tell another adult what happened. Reassure children that you will help them when they need it.

- Teach your children to be assertive. Make sure they know that it's okay to say no to an adult and to run away from adults in dangerous situations.

- Encourage your children to play with others. There's safety in numbers!

Neighborhood safety

Unfortunately no neighborhood is completely immune to crime. However, there are steps you can take to help keep your family and your neighborhood safe.

- Know where your children are. Have your children tell you or ask permission before leaving the house and give them a time to check in or be home.

- Help children learn important phone numbers. Have your children practice reciting their home phone number and address, and your work

Grandparents as Parents

- 1st Wednesday of each month, 10 a.m., at 3609 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend.
- 3rd Monday of each month, 6:30 p.m., at Living Stones Church, 718 East Don Moyer Ave, South Bend. Contact number for both locations is (574) 232-6890.

Support Groups

- **Elkhart County** contact Jody Richards at (574) 533-1234, ext. 218.
- **St. Joseph County** group meets the 1st Thursday of each month. Contact Tom & Linda Cleveland at (574) 232-3404.
- **Marshall/Starke County** meets 3rd Monday every other month at the Plymouth Library. Next meeting is March 17, 6:00–7:30 p.m. Contact Melissa Bachtel at (574) 935-3052.

Parenting Classes

Mondays, July 21–September 22, 5:00–8:00 p.m., Bashor Children's Home, Goshen. Wednesdays, July 23–September 17, 9:15–11:45 a.m., Joy Rose Center, Elkhart. Thursdays, July 24–September 18, 5:00–8:00 p.m.

To register, contact Elizabeth Cruz at (574) 522-1998, ext. 71.

and cell phone numbers. Tell your children where you will be and the best way to reach you.

- Set limits on where your children can go in your neighborhood. Are there certain homes in your neighborhood that you don't want your children to go to?

- Get to know your children's friends. Meet their parents before letting your children to go to their home and keep a list of their phone numbers. Ask what your children might do at their house and if they will be supervised.

- Choose a safe house in your neighborhood. Pick a neighbor's house where your children can go if

Area Inservices

Please note, these are nine-week workshops. Fee for the entire series is \$35 for a single parent or \$45 for two parents.

Michiana Behavioral Health Center

- **Psychological behaviors**, Friday, May 16, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Normal and abnormal behaviors in children and adolescents.
- Depression touches all ages, Friday, June 20, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Living with depression at various life stages. Coping skills for family members and caregivers. Seating is limited. To make a reservation, call (574) 936-3784,

Family Involvement Fund (FIF)

Foster parents of children with disabilities are eligible to receive financial support through the Family Involvement Fund for actual expenses to participate in conferences, training events, and other activities. Funding limits may change, but are currently up to \$250 per person, per program year and up to \$500 per family. The application must be received at least 30 days prior to the first day of the event. For more info, contact Cathy Beard at 1-800-825-4733 or via email at fif@indiana.edu.

they need help. Point out other places they can go for help, like stores, libraries, and police stations.

- Teach children to settle arguments with words, not fists. Role-play talking out problems, walking away from fist fights, and what to do when confronted with bullies.

- Work together with your neighbors. Watch out for suspicious and unusual behavior in your neighborhood. Get to know your neighbors and their children so you can look out for one another.

The articles in this newsletter were taken from the National Crime Prevention Council website at www.ncpc.org.

Reservations for the following training sessions can be made by calling (574) 533-1234 or 800-282-0809, ext. 243. Classes may be cancelled if not enough persons register. Alternative training is available through books, audio and video. A web site at www.fosterparents.com lists approved foster parent trainings. For a list of pre-approved materials as well as the training verification form, go to www.oaklawn.org, click on Services and Programs, then Services for Children and Adolescents, then Collaborative Programs. Look for Traditional Foster Care to find the forms. Remember, traditional homes can receive up to four hours and special needs or therapeutic homes can receive up to eight training hours annually through books, audio, video or internet. Certification of the training hours are dependent upon approval from the training coordinator. Please note that child care is NOT provided during trainings.

Preservice

Required training: 20 hours for foster parents or 26 hours for adoptive parents. Day one of each training session must be taken first. All pre-service classes include Universal Precautions and First Aid Training; you do not need to sign up for these classes separately.

Elkhart

June 7, 14, 21, 28
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Elkhart, Oaklawn

July 26, August 2, 9, 16
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Elkhart, Oaklawn

St. Joseph County

June 14, 21, 28, July 12
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
July 12 will end at 2:00 p.m.
Location to be announced

August 2, 9, 16, 23
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
August 23 will end at 2:00 p.m.
South Bend, Kern Road Menno-
nite Church

First Aid & Safety

Meets criteria for certification and State requirements for Foster Parents. CPR—due before certification expires; First Aid—due every three years; Universal Precautions due at each relicensure.

Universal Precautions/ Bloodborne Pathogens

- Wednesday, June 18, 6:30–7:00 p.m., Elkhart, Oaklawn
- Monday, August 18, 6:00–6:30 p.m., South Bend, JCC

Important information about trainings

- Both Elkhart County and St. Joseph County trainings are held at various locations. Check individual trainings for location.

- You **MUST** register for classes in advance so that we can prepare for the number attending.

First Aid (immediately following Universal Precautions training)

- Wednesday, June 18, Elkhart, Oaklawn
- Monday, August 18, South Bend, JCC

CPR

- Saturday, May 17, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Elkhart, Oaklawn
- Saturday, May 17, 1:00–4:00 p.m., Elkhart, Oaklawn
- Saturday, May 31, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., South Bend, Virginia Tutt Library
- Saturday, May 31, 1:30–4:30 p.m., South Bend, Virginia Tutt Library
- Thursday, June 5, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., Elkhart, Oaklawn

Inservice classes

10–20 hours of training required each year. **Classes are 6:00–9:00 p.m. unless otherwise specified.**

Handbook Training

Cancelled until a new handbook is published.

Effective Communication with DCS

Monday, May 12, St. Joseph County, JCC

Pre-adoption/Permanency, Part I & II

Monday, May 12 & Wednesday, May 14, South Bend, Kern Road Mennonite Church

Information on adoption subsidies and post adoption. Required of adoptive parents.

Gangs

Tuesday, May 27, Goshen, Oaklawn

The Goshen City Police Dept. will talk about the gang situation in our community and how to recognize the warning signs if your children are involved.

Discipline (Part 1 of 2)

Monday, June 9, Elkhart (location to be announced)

Jantha and Melissa will provide information on parenting children of all ages.

Discipline (Part 2 of 2)

Monday, June 16, Elkhart (location to be announced)

Jantha and Melissa will provide information on parenting children of all ages.

Coordinator's Corner

Jerica Tripp, M.S.
Team Leader, Traditional Foster Care



Jerica Tripp

Hello Foster parents! I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy! It has been long, tough winter and I'm sure most of you, like me, are excited about spring! I hope you know how much we appreciate each one of you and your dedication to our children.

We have all been stuck inside for a long time so I think it's time to get outside and enjoy activities in our

community. I did a little research to find what we have available in Indiana that can get us outside for a little sunshine! Following are some websites/resources that might help make this spring a little more exciting:

- www.elkhartindiana.org This is the website for the City of Elkhart. Here you will find inexpensive activities that can provide good ways to spend time together as a family. If you prefer to talk with someone in person, you can call (574) 294-5471 ext. 242.

- www.in.gov/dnr This website for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources has great information on camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, boating, etc., in the state of Indiana. This is a great resource to help plan weekend getaway trips. Once on the website, click on "Recreation" and it will give

you all the information you need. You can also call toll free to 1-877-463-6367.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Take care and have a happy spring!

Foster Parent Network-News is published monthly for foster families and the professionals who relate to them. Please send changes of address to: Gloria Miller Holub, editor
P.O. Box 809, Goshen, IN 46527
E-mail: info@oaklawn.org
Jerica Tripp, Team Leader, Traditional Foster Care
E-mail: jerica.tripp@oaklawn.org
Phone: (574) 533-1234, ext. 754
Toll free: 800-282-0809, ext. 754
Fax: (574) 537-2638

Address Service Requested
Important information for
Foster Parents!

Goshen, Indiana 46527
330 Lakeview Drive
P.O. Box 809

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Foster Parent Training Registration Form

Use this form only for network training classes (those in the box on page 3). Please complete the following information about yourself, your spouse or companion (if applicable) and the training sessions you would like to attend. Fold, seal, stamp and mail to the Traditional Foster Care office.

First Participant

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Agency that maintains your license _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Second Participant

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Agency that maintains your license _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

Training topic _____

Location _____ Date(s) _____

**Traditional Foster Care
2600 Oakland Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517**

Place
stamp
here
