

Guidelines in case you need a childcare provider

Whether you work full time outside the home or are simply going out for a few hours you want the best possible care for your children while you are away. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has developed this brochure to help families find quality childcare providers, discuss specific instructions with their children to help prevent sexual exploitation, identify the warning signs of sexual exploitation, and learn what to do if sexual exploitation is suspected or disclosed.

No matter if you choose a childcare provider who comes to your home or one who cares for your children elsewhere, you will want to stop by unexpectedly during the first occasion you use the provider to observe how your children are interacting with him or her. Above all, ask your children whether they like and trust the provider and what activities took place during your time away.

It is critical for families to understand most sexual exploitation is not committed by the stereotypical “dirty old man” who drifts into town and entices children to a secluded location. These acts are often committed by people who are known to the children, have gained the children’s trust and affection, and may threaten or bribe the children into silence.

Finding a Childcare Provider

Excellent sources of information about quality childcare providers are the recommendations of family, friends, and neighbors. Look for mature and responsible people who listen and respond well to your children and appear relaxed and happy with them.

In some states you may be able to obtain a listing of childcare services through your local county office for children or even local law

enforcement. Look in your telephone book under “County Government” or call your local law-enforcement agency. Lists of licensed childcare providers may also be available from the local department of social services, county childcare licensing offices, local schools, and community-resource centers. Some childcare providers are licensed, and you may be able to receive recommendations or check references through the licensing body.

Hiring a Childcare Provider

Once you have made a list of possible childcare providers, carefully check their references. Interview prospective providers personally and observe their interaction with your children.

For In-Home Care

- Contact the provider’s past employers, teachers, relatives, friends, or neighbors, and ask them about the provider’s childcare qualifications.
- Verify and write down the provider’s name, home address, and telephone number. In addition ask for and write down any other key identifying information such as a driver’s license number.
- Check with your state law-enforcement department about how you may access sex-offender registries and criminal-history checks, and visit www.nsopr.gov, the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Sex Offender Public Registry.
- Discuss the hours and fees for service once the hiring decision has been made.
- Outline the provider’s duties and responsibilities and discuss a potential emergency situation and how he or she might react. Make sure the provider knows where you are and how you may be reached. Make a list of additional

telephone numbers for use in emergencies, such as the children’s doctor, the local law-enforcement agency, the fire department, an ambulance service, and the poison-control center.

- Go over any family rules such as eating and sleeping arrangements; computer, telephone, and television use; and guests allowed in the home.
- Discuss safety rules such as locking all doors and windows; never opening the door for anyone unless prior permission has been granted; and carefully monitoring the children to make sure they stay away from dangerous objects like tools and chemicals.

For Out-Of-Home Care

- Contact local law enforcement, county licensing agencies, and the department of social services to determine if any reports of offenses or infractions have been made about the provider.
- Determine whether the provider has made a criminal-history check on or otherwise screened its employees for incidents such as criminal offenses involving children, emotional instability, and substance abuse. Check with your state law-enforcement department about how you may access sex-offender registries, and visit www.nsopr.gov, the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Sex Offender Public Registry.
- Make sure the childcare facility is designed so parents and guardians are fully free to come and go with no requirements to call first and no off-limit areas.
- Find out who will be interacting with your children in addition to the childcare provider and staff members.

- Make sure the restrooms do not contain areas where children may be isolated. Ask who is allowed to take children to the restroom, for what purposes, and at what times.
- Make sure there is proper supervision of the children during naps. Children may be more at risk during naptime because other children are sleeping, the room is darkened, and other staff members may be out of the room.

Safety Tips for Children in the Care of Others

One of the most important keys to child safety is effective communication with your child. The first step you should take is to establish an atmosphere in the home in which your child feels comfortable talking about sensitive matters and potentially embarrassing situations. Below are specific instructions to discuss with your children to help prevent sexual exploitation.

- No one should touch you in the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else—adult or child—in those places. Your body is special and private.
- Never let anyone take your picture in a way that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. If anyone takes your picture for any reason, be sure to tell your family.
- No one should touch you in a way that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- No one should spend a lot of time watching you or fixing your clothes, especially when you are in the restroom.
- You have the right to say no to anyone who tries to take you somewhere; touch you; or make you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused in any way. In these situations you should make every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting.

Sexual Exploitation

While most childcare providers give quality care,¹ parents and guardians often have a concern about their child’s safety while with others. Once you have established an atmosphere of trust and support in your home in which your children feel free to talk without fear of accusation, blame, or guilt, it is important to recognize signs when they need help.

The reality of sexual exploitation is that children often feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused and may be reluctant to talk about the experience. Carefully listen to your children. Parents and guardians should be alert to the potential indicators of sexual exploitation noted below.

- Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearfulness, and excessive crying
- Bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed, or other sleep disturbances
- Acting out inappropriate sexual activity or showing an unusual interest in sexual matters or sexual knowledge beyond their years
- A sudden acting out of feelings or aggressive or rebellious behavior
- Regression to infantile behavior and clinging
- A fear of certain places, people, or activities; an excessive fear of going to or being with the childcare provider; and an avoidance or unwillingness to discuss their time with the childcare provider
- Pain, itching, bleeding, fluid, or rawness in private areas of a child’s body

If you observe any of these potential indicators in your children, talk to them about the causes. Changes like these may be due to causes other than sexual exploitation such as a medical, family, or school problem. Be sure to work with

your child to get to the root of the problem. Also keep in mind that children do not always demonstrate obvious signs such as these but may do or say something that hints at sexual exploitation.

What To Do

If your child discloses acts of sexual exploitation, you need to provide help. Strive to remain calm, reassuring, and nonjudgmental. Show physical affection, and express love, compassion, and support with words and gestures. Explain to your child that he or she has done nothing wrong.

- Immediately alert law enforcement
- Seek appropriate medical care for your child
- Alert the child-protection, youth-services, child-abuse, or other appropriate social-service organizations **in cooperation with law enforcement**
- Discuss the need for counseling or therapy for your child and the entire family
- Take appropriate steps, **under the advice of child-care and law-enforcement professionals**, to have other families using this childcare provider notified

The support and cooperation of the victim's family is invaluable to the effective resolution of cases involving the sexual exploitation of children. Be open and available to the law-enforcement investigators and prosecutors handling your child's case. If there is media involvement in your case, help ensure your child's name and picture, your name and picture, and other private information remain confidential. Many states have enacted laws that help protect the identity of child victims.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit organization, serves as a clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children; provides technical assistance to the public and law-enforcement agencies; offers training programs to law-enforcement and forensic, social-service professionals; distributes photographs of and descriptions about missing children worldwide; creates and coordinates child-protection education and prevention programs and publications; coordinates child-protection efforts with the private sector; networks with nonprofit service providers and missing-children clearinghouses regarding missing-child cases; and provides information about effective legislation to help ensure the protection of children per 42 U.S.C. §§ 5771 *et seq.*; 42 U.S.C. § 11606; and 22 C.F.R. § 94.6.

A 24-hour, toll-free telephone line, **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**, is available in Canada and the United States for those who have information regarding missing and exploited children. The "phone free" number is 001-800-0843-5678 when dialing from Mexico and 00-800-0843-5678 when dialing from many other countries. For a list of other toll-free numbers available when dialing from specific countries visit www.missingkids.com, and from the home page click on the link to "More Services" and then on the link to "24-Hour Hotline." The CyberTipline® is available worldwide for online reporting of these crimes at www.cybertipline.com. The TTY line is 1-800-826-7653. The NCMEC business number when dialing in the United States is 703-274-3900. The NCMEC business number when dialing from other countries is

001-703-522-9320. The NCMEC facsimile number is 703-274-2200. The NCMEC website address is www.missingkids.com.

For information about the services offered by NCMEC's regional offices, please call them directly in California at 714-508-0150, Florida at 561-848-1900, Florida/Collier County at 239-566-5804, Kansas City at 913-469-5437, New York/Buffalo at 716-842-6333, New York/Rochester at 585-242-0900, New York/Utica at 315-732-7233, and South Carolina at 803-254-2326.

A number of publications, addressing various aspects of the missing- and exploited-child issue, are available free-of-charge in single copies by contacting the



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Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3175
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¹As reported by David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod in "Crimes Against Children by Babysitters," *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, September 2001, page 2, "Babysitters are responsible for a relatively small portion of the reported criminal offenses [committed] against children." They accounted for 4.2 percent of those who committed crimes against children younger than 6 years of age. In contrast family members accounted for 53.5 percent of offenders who committed crimes against children younger than 6 and people unknown to the victim's family accounted for 5.6 percent of offenders who committed crimes against children younger than 6.

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Just in case...

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