Keeping Children Safer While In Care

A Presentation for
Foster Parents and
Child-Welfare Professionals

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs • U.S. Department of Justice

- Welcome/Introductions

- Risk Factors for Victimization

- Definitions

- Parents Who Abduct

- Children Who Run From Care

- Internet Safety

- Your Role in Abduction Prevention

- What to Do if a Child is Missing

- Recovery of a Missing Child

- Resources

- Evaluations

Introduce yourself telling us

- How long you have been a foster parent or child-welfare professional

- How old the children are in your home or those you work with

- A word or statement that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "Child Safety"

Recognize and minimize the risks of abduction and exploitation for children in foster care

At the end of this session, participants should be able to

- Identify risk factors for victimization

- Define abduction, exploitation, runaway, and thrownaway

- Identify characteristics of parents who abduct their children

- Identify risk factors for children who run away

- List proactive steps to help keep children safer online

- Identify available resources for foster parents and child-welfare professionals

Risk Factors
for Victimization

- Experiences of loss and rejection early in life

- Scattered family ties and connections

- Lack of safety and security prior to coming into care

- Unhealthy attachments to others

- Children in care are often unaware of who is a potential threat

  – Why is that?

  – What are the risks involved?

- Older children may be at risk for running away or online enticement due to

  – Desire for acceptance and approval

  – Need for independence

  – Computer savvy

Definitions

"A child is considered **abducted** if someone without legal authority or permission of the custodian takes the child or fails to return the child at an agreed-upon time. A child may be abducted by a family member or nonfamily member."

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page xi.

"A child is considered a **runaway** if he or she has voluntarily left a legal residence."

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page xi.

Thrownaway

- Parent or other household adult

    – Asks the child to leave home

    – Prevents child from returning home

- No adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult

- Child is out of the household overnight

Heather Hammer, David Finkelhor, and Andrea J. Sedlak. "Runaway/Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics." *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002, page 2.

"A child is considered missing from care if he or she is not in the physical custody of the child-welfare agency or person or institution with whom the child has been placed."

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page xi.

- Under federal law, child sexual exploitation includes

  – Possession, Manufacture, and Distribution of
    Child Pornography

  – Child Prostitution

  – Child Sex Tourism

  – Child Sexual Molestation

  – Online Enticement of Children for Sexual Acts

- Sexual contact between

  - An adult and **child**

  - **Children** with adults filming

  - **Children**

- A child can never consent

- It is ALWAYS a crime for a child to be sexually exploited!

Parents Who Abduct

- Deny and dismiss the other parent's value

- Not likely to consider actions illegal or morally wrong

- Have a very young child, age 2 to 3

- Have the support of a social network

Janet R. Johnston and Linda K. Girdner. *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions.* Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001, page 2.

Parent

- Suspects/believes abuse has occurred

- Is paranoid delusional

- Has history of

  - Hiding the child

  - Withholding visitation

  - Snatching the child from the other parent

Janet R. Johnston and Linda K. Girdner. *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions.* Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001, pages 2-4.

- Prior threat of or actual abduction

- Mothers and fathers equally likely to abduct

Janet R. Johnston and Linda K. Girdner. *Family Abductors: Descriptive Profiles and Preventive Interventions.* Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001, page 2.

Children Who Run From Care

- To spend time with friends or family

- Strategy developed to respond to feelings, difficulties, trauma, or victimization

- Reaction to imposed restrictions

- Unhappy about placement

- Drawn to apparent attractions of street life

Caren Kaplan. *Children Missing from Care: An Issue Brief.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2004, pages 27-28.

- Inadequate monitoring of placements and cultures

- Senior management fails to offer clear leadership

- Inadequate staffing

- Lack 0f sufficient placement resources

- Inadequate training of staff members or foster parents

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 11.

- Staff members feel demoralized and powerless to intervene when children run away

- Workload pressures can result in little opportunity for direct work with children in care

Caren Kaplan. *Children Missing from Care: An Issue Brief.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2004, page 28.

- May resort to illegal and risky activities

- Substance abuse

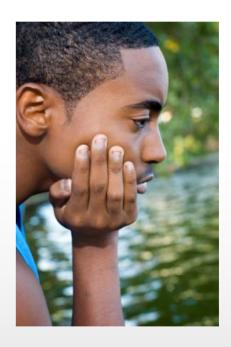- May become a victim of

  – Violent acts

  – Sexual exploitation

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, pages 3-4.

- Become disconnected from

  – Educational system

  – Healthcare

  – Housing

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, pages 3-4.

- Foster parents

  – Encourage children to have a strong connection with at least one adult outside the foster home

  – Assist children in developing problem-solving skills

  – Encourage checking in on a regular basis

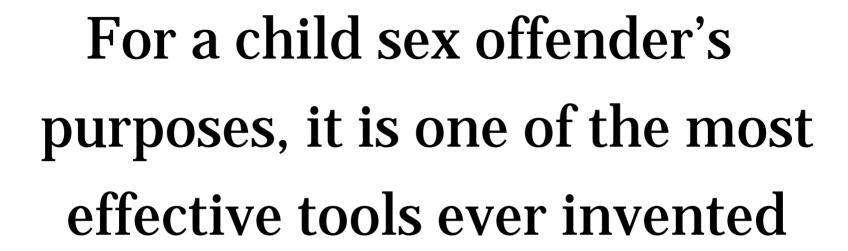 – Inform children of risks of and alternatives to running away

Caren Kaplan. *Children Missing from Care: An Issue Brief.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2004, pages 33-34.
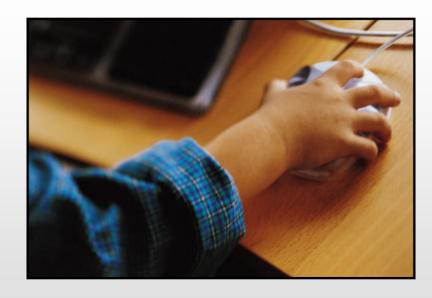
- Child-welfare professionals

  – Provide adequate preparation for placement

  – Address problems as they arise to promote placement stability

  – Provide regular visitation opportunities with family

  – Inform children of risks of and alternatives to running away

Caren Kaplan. *Children Missing from Care: An Issue Brief.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2004, pages 31-35.

Internet Safety

For a child sex offender's purposes, it is one of the most effective tools ever invented

- Younger children should

  – Use developmentally appropriate websites/programs

  – Use the computer with parents/guardians, teachers, and classmates

  – Use computer-safety rules just as they use bike-safety rules

- Let the children in your home show you what they like to do online

- Remind them to be careful not to reveal personal information about themselves through photos, videos, or text

- Teach your children never to arrange a face-to-face meeting with anyone they first meet online

- Teach children the people they interact with online may not really be who they say they are

- These people may lie to
  - Make themselves older
  - Make themselves younger
  - Get money
  - Be mean

- Be aware of other computers your child may be using on/at
  - Cell phones, wireless devices, friends' houses, libraries

- Learn online acronyms such as
  - POS = Parent Over Shoulder
  - A/S/L = Age, Sex, Location

- Make sure screennames are not too revealing

- Keep online computers in a supervised area of the home

- Set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use

- Research the sites your child uses or wants to use for privacy settings they allow

- Consider installing filtering and/or monitoring software

- For additional information check out www.NetSmartz411.org

- Excessive amount of time on the Internet or texting

- Over-reaction to not being able to go online

- Spending less time with friends

- Withdrawn

- Has cellular telephone or web camera you did not purchase

- Having expensive items (that you did not buy!)

- Unwillingness to communicate or show what he or she does online

- Being fearful of going out

- Getting calls from people you do not know

- **If your children are being stalked, harassed, or threatened in any way**

  - Report the incident to your Internet Service Provider and your local law-enforcement agency

  - If materials received are lewd, obscene, or illegal also report it to NCMEC's CyberTipline® at www.cybertipline.com or 1-800-843-5678

- www.NetSmartz.org

- Interactive, educational safety resource from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

- Designed for children ages 5 to 17, parents, guardians, educators, and law-enforcement personnel

- Uses age-appropriate, 3-D activities to teach children how to stay safer while on the Internet and in the real world

NetSmartz® Workshop

EDUCATE. ENGAGE. EMPOWER.

Your Role in Abduction Prevention

- Based on their age and developmental level, teach children their

  – Full name

  – Full names of their mother, father, guardian(s), or foster parent(s)

  – Current address

  – Current telephone number

  – Emergency contacts including other TRUSTED ADULTS

Tips to Help Keep Children Safer While in Care. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2008.

- Do not confuse your children with the concept of stranger danger

  – Statistically incorrect

  – Kids don't "get it"

  – Adults don't model it

  – Inability to access help

Remember most children are victimized by someone they know, love, or trust

- Know their friends

- Check in with them

- Have them check in with you

- Be clear about places and homes they may visit

- Make sure they are supervised at all times

Tips to Help Keep Children Safer While in Care. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2008.

- Where don't they want to go?

- Who don't they want to see?

- Is someone showing them too much attention?
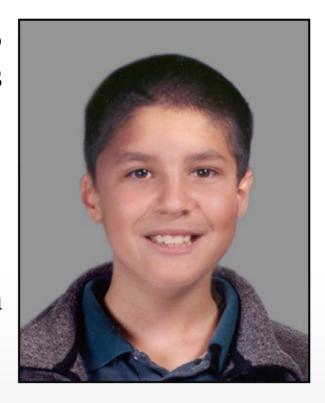
- Has their behavior or attitude changed?

- Take color photographs every 6 months or sooner if the child's appearance changes

- Keep a description of your child

- Keep copies of your child's fingerprints

- Consider having a DNA sample taken from your child

- Know where your child's medical records are located

Just in Case…Guidelines in Case Your Child Might Someday Be Missing. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 1985 and 2004.

- Check first with parents, guardians, or other trusted adults before going anywhere, doing anything, helping anyone, accepting anything, getting into a vehicle, or leaving with anyone

- Take a friend when going places or playing outside

- Tell someone "NO" if they try to touch you or do things in ways that make you feel sad, scared, or confused, because it's OK for you to stand up for yourself

- Tell your parents, guardians, or other trusted adults if anything happens to you

Knowing My Rules for Safety. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005.

- Take the child on a walking tour of the neighborhood. Teach your child

  – Surrounding streets

  – To stay on main roads and never take shortcuts

  – Safe places to go if needing help

  – Other trusted adults who could help

Tips to Help Keep Children Safer While in Care. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2008.

- Maintain regular contact with the caseworker

- Request photo identification prior to releasing the children or divulging information to anyone

- Record the caseworker's name and contact information

- Insist on and understand the visitation plan

- Become sensitive to changes in your child's behavior

- Know the adults who have access to your child, such as therapists, tutors, medical doctors, coaches, and others

- Check the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website at www.nsopw.gov

- Develop ground rules with the child regarding outside activities and friends

- Build a relationship based on trust and respect

- Teach and reinforce basic life skills

- Encourage participation in school activities or other structured programs

- Keep the lines of communication open and become an active listener

- Encourage children to express their fears and concerns

- Teach them to never hitchhike or accept a ride from someone they don't know

- ## What affects safety in your home?

  – Visitors

  – Telephone contact

  – Internet activity

  – Other children

  – Other family members

- Partner with foster parents to help keep children safer while in care

- Identify effects of placement on children

- Respond to issues regarding placement

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 118.

- Know agency policies and practices

- Provide lists containing names and telephone numbers of key contacts including law-enforcement agencies, child-welfare professionals, and others

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, pages 18-19.

What to Do if a Child is Missing

- In the case of a runaway, notify the first of these individuals he or she can reach, in this order

    – The child's social worker

    – The worker's supervisor

    – Designated point-of-contact in the child-welfare agency

    – Local law enforcement

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 56.

- Do an immediate search of your home, your vehicle, and the surrounding area.

- If your child was abducted directly from your care immediately contact law enforcement.

- Act quickly. By law there is no waiting period to report a missing child to law enforcement. Contact family members, friends, schools, and former foster parents to inform them of your missing child.

- Know and follow the agency policy for reporting a missing child

- Verify with the caseworker that the child's name and identifying information is entered into the **National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File (MPF)**

- Be prepared to give information to law enforcement including

    – Recent photograph of the child

    – Child's full name and nicknames

    – Age and date of birth

    – Clothing child was wearing

    – Any identifying scars, piercings, tattoos, or birthmarks

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, pages 21-22.

- Be prepared to give information to law enforcement including

  – Locations of activities the child attends

  – Names of child's friends

  – Location of birth family and other relatives[1]

  – Any history of running away[2]

[1]Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, pages 21-22.

[2]Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 69.

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Child-Welfare Agency (CWA) and law-enforcement agencies

  – Joint/respective missions, roles, and responsibilities

  – Definitions and types of missing-child episodes covered

  – Investigative techniques for each type of missing-child episode

  – Procedures for joint-response reports of missing children

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, pages 17-18.

- Develop mutually agreed upon protocols that include

  – Clear reporting arrangements

  – Response procedure

  – Processes and forms needed to interview each child

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, pages 16-17.

- Establish single point-of-contact who has immediate access to

  – The agency administrator, the agency's general counsel, and the director of public relations

  – Contact information for all caseworkers, foster parents, and children in care

  – A single point-of-contact with the local law-enforcement agency

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, pages 55-56.

- Establish points of contact between agency and

    - Birth family

    - Foster parents and other caregivers

    - Media

    - Community-service providers

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page 18.

- Develop mutually agreed upon protocols that include

  – A public-information plan

  – Immediate community-notification systems when warranted

  – Shared and distinct roles of law-enforcement agencies, child-welfare professionals, and others involved

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, pages 16-18.

- Establish procedures for

  – Return of the children

  – Safeguarding or removing other children if victimization is suspected

  – Follow-up investigations on reports of victimization

  – Debriefing children and families

  – Joint or cross training

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page 18.

- In the case of a runaway, notify the first of these individuals he or she can reach, in this order

  – The child's social worker

  – The social worker's supervisor

  – Designated point of contact in the child-welfare agency

  – Local law enforcement

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, pages 56-58.

- Reaching agreement on definitions

- Confidentiality issues

- Sharing information with the public

- Emancipation

  – Notify law enforcement when the case is closed whether or not the child has been located

Thomas B. Smith, Kenneth Buniak, Lee Condon, and Lee Reed. *Children Missing From Care: The Law-Enforcement Response.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page 18.

Recovery of a Missing Child

- Attend to the immediate needs of the child first such as medical attention, food, shower, and clothing

- Be open to listening to the child's description of where he or she was and what happened

- Do not press for details

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 69.

- Reassure the child. Remember, your child may have experienced rejection before.

- Recovery is only the beginning.

  – The child, foster parent, and child-welfare worker should meet as soon as possible to discuss the situation leading to the incident.

  – Re-evaluate safety procedures in the home.

  – Discuss future plans.

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 69.

- If you request the child to be removed from your home, this should be discussed with all parties as soon as possible

Susan Dougherty. *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Children Missing from Care.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2005, page 69.

Resources

- [Tips to Help Keep Children Safer While in Care](#)

- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

  [www.missingkids.com](#)

   1-800-THE LOST® (1-800-843-5678)

  [www.cybertipline.com](#)

www.NetSmartz.org

- An interactive, educational safety resource from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® and Boys & Girls Clubs of America

www.NetSmartz411.org

- NetSmartz411 is parents' and guardians' premier, online resource for answering questions about Internet safety, computers, and the Web

Please complete the presentation evaluation.

http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=4134

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Keeping Children Safer While in Care Program Evaluation

Congratulations