



## **EXERCISING PARENTAL AUTHORITY**

SDPD Crime Prevention

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### **CONTENTS**

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

STAR/PAL YOUTH PROGRAMS

DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

Adolescent Relationship Abuse

Alcohol

Bullying

Child Abduction

Curfew Violation

Daytime Loitering and Truancy

Drugs

Gangs

Graffiti Vandalism

Gun Violence

Internet and Cell Phone Dangers

Media and Game Violence

Shoplifting

Suicide

Unsafe Driving

MULTIPLE PROBLEMS

PARENTAL LIABILITY

Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor

Liability for Fines, Penalties, and Restitution

Liability for Civil Damages

Civil Liability for Injury Caused by Firearms

Restitution through Mediation

### **PREFACE**

The SDPD is committed to working in a problem-solving partnership with individuals, community groups, and businesses, as well as with schools, hospitals, religious groups, private organizations, and other government agencies to fight crime and improve the quality of life for the people of San Diego. Problem solving is a key component in the Department's philosophy of Neighborhood Policing, which focuses on community crime and disorder problems and recognizes the need for close relationships between the police and other elements in the City to identify and solve problems. However, Neighborhood Policing cannot succeed on the efforts of the police alone. All elements of the City have responsibilities to fulfill.

Twelve community responsibilities are defined in a paper entitled *Community Responsibilities for Making Neighborhood Policing Work in San Diego: A Resource Guide for Individuals, Community Groups, and Businesses*. They are:

- Voicing concerns about disorder problems
- Employing crime prevention measures

- Knowing about crime in your community
- Addressing and solving certain community problems
- Volunteering services to police and other community groups
- Commenting on SDPD personnel performance in Neighborhood Policing
- Reporting crimes and suspicious activities
- Reporting suspicious person, activities, vehicles, etc. to prevent terrorism
- Reporting other problems and incidents
- Helping to arrest, convict, and punish criminals
- Getting help with personal and family problems
- Exercising parental authority

The first six are discussed in that paper. The last six, including this one, are discussed in separate papers. They are published as part of the SDPD's continuing efforts to promote Neighborhood Policing. They provide information to help individuals, community groups, businesses, property owners, and others fulfill their responsibilities. All can be opened on the Community Resources and Responsibilities page of the SDPD website at [www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/community](http://www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/community).

## INTRODUCTION

Good citizenship begins at home. Parents bear the primary responsibility for the actions of their children. (Everything in this paper also applies to legal guardians.) They must set good examples for their children at home and in their community, teach morals and values, provide a safe home environment, make sure that their children get a good education, direct their children into constructive activities, be involved in their children's activities, make their children responsible and accountable for their actions, etc.

Notwithstanding parent's best efforts, children can be influenced by peer pressures and pick up bad behavior outside the home. Parents must learn to recognize signs that indicate their child may be involved in gangs, drug and alcohol abuse, graffiti vandalism, and other problems, and deal with them as early as possible. They must also make sure that their children abide by the curfew law, attend school, drive safely, stay away from guns, etc. If they cannot deal with these problems on their own, they can get help and referrals from the Juvenile Services Team at their local SDPD Area Station. The addresses and phone numbers of these Stations are listed below.

Central Division	2501 Imperial Ave., San Diego 92102	(619) 744-9500
Eastern Division	9225 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123	(858) 495-7900
Mid-City Division	4310 Landis St., San Diego 92105	(619) 516-3000
Northeastern Division	13396 Salmon River Rd., San Diego 92129	(858) 538-8000
Northern Division	4275 Eastgate Mall, San Diego 92037	(858) 552-1700
Northwestern Division	12592 El Camino Real, San Diego 92130	(858) 523-7000
Southeastern Division	7222 Skyline Dr., San Diego 92114	(619) 527-3500
Southern Division	1120 27th St., San Diego 92154	(619) 424-0400
Western Division	5215 Gaines St., San Diego 92110	(619) 692-4800

Parents who fail in these responsibilities may be legally liable in various ways for the acts of their children. They may be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and held liable for restitution, fines, penalties, and civil damages.

Many good ideas for parenting and activities for children are contained in the *San Diego Family* and *San Diego Parent* magazines, which are published monthly and available free at many libraries, grocery and toy stores, schools, and other family-oriented establishments. They also contain calendars of family and children's events in San Diego County, many of which are free.

Another resource for parents is the San Diego Community College's continuing education program. It offers a variety of free classes at Centers throughout the City on child development, family relations, and many other topics. Call the San Diego Community College at **(619) 388-1800** for information on parenting classes.

Parents can get answers to many legal questions concerning their children from a booklet published by the State Bar of California entitled *Kids and the Law: An A-to-Z Guide for Parents*. It deals with a range of subjects from the “Age of Majority” to “Work Permits and Taxes” with references to the relevant code sections. It also contains a glossary of legal terms. However, it is not intended to substitute for the advice of an attorney. And it may not provide the latest code references. It can be read online or ordered on the State Bar’s website at [www.calbar.ca.gov](http://www.calbar.ca.gov). Print versions are also available in Spanish.

When a child becomes 18, he or she acquires a new set of legal rights and responsibilities. These deal with jury duty, voting, housing, contracts, torts, etc. They are discussed in question and answer form in a pamphlet entitled *When You Become 18: A Survival Guide for Teenagers*. It can also be read online or ordered on the State Bar’s website at [www.calbar.ca.gov](http://www.calbar.ca.gov). And print versions are also available in Spanish. Parents can use this booklet to help their children make the transition to young adults.

Some general parenting tips are listed below:

- Make time every day to discuss the day’s events with your children. Encourage them to tell you about anything that makes them uncomfortable, or scares or confuses them. Listen to what they say and never underestimate their fears or concerns. Show them that you are always concerned about them. Effective communication is the most important factor in child safety.
- Have clear family rules. The consequences of breaking them should be clear.
- Be a good role model. Actions speak louder than words. Be the person you want your children to be.
- Discuss the consequences of tobacco, alcohol, drug use, etc. Tobacco is addictive. It yellows teeth, fouts breath, and kills. Drugs, including alcohol, alter judgment and perspective, and interfere with physical, emotional, and social growth. They are also addictive.
- Know what your children are doing. Know what they do in school and after school. Know their friends. Be involved in their lives.
- Educate yourself on the social and emotional needs of your children.
- Be alert for any changes in your child’s behavior. Look and listen for things that indicate something is troubling him or her. Children are often uncomfortable in disclosing disturbing events or feelings because they are concerned about your reactions to their problems. When they do talk about their problems be calm, compassionate, reassuring, and nonjudgmental as you work with them to resolve the problem.
- The following are indications that a girl might be sexually exploited: frequent truancy from school, bruises and other signs of physical abuse, and unidentifiable sources of money and goods.

The rest of this paper describes some programs in which children can be enrolled, discusses how parents can prevent and deal with various problems involving their children, and defines some of the liabilities that parents may face if they fail to fulfill their responsibilities. More information on child safety and security can be found on the SDPD website. Go to the Prevention Tips page at [www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/tips](http://www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/tips) and click on Child Safety and Security.

## **STAR/PAL YOUTH PROGRAMS**

There are a large number of youth programs in the city of San Diego. Many are offered by the Sports Training, Academics, Recreation/Police Athletic League (STAR/PAL) program. STAR/PAL is a nonprofit organization that provides over 10,000 youth services annually in inner-city neighborhoods throughout the city and county of San Diego. It offers free educational, athletic, and recreational programs which focus on promoting youth safety, positive life choices, and academic success. Its program directors are officers from the San Diego Police and the San Diego County Probation Departments. These dedicated officers coordinate unique programs for underserved youth with the assistance of additional law enforcement and community volunteers. By bringing youth and law enforcement officers together in this manner, STAR/PAL helps build safer communities in the future. Some of its programs are: Mentoring Youth for Tomorrow and Making Changes, GirL-E Leadership and Empowerment, KIDZWATCH Academics, Teen-LEAP (Leadership, Empowerment, Awareness Program), InterACTion, Kids Cops and Cameras, field trips, lake fishing, outdoor excursions, Junior Chargers Training Camps, fundamental sports skills clinics, San Diego Padres Baseball Camps, Pro-Kids Golf Academy, Shop with a Cop, and *The Grinch* Production. Parents can go to the STAR/PAL website at [www.starpal.org](http://www.starpal.org) for information about these programs, opportunities, and events. They can also get information by calling the STAR/PAL Office at **(619) 531-2721**.

A new program that is not described on the STAR/PAL website is “Man Up.” It has a six-week curriculum designed to empower teenage males through development of their leadership and decision-making skills. Its goal is to encourage positive emotional, social, mental, and physical development in adolescent males. It focuses on life skills for making positive life choices and avoiding risky adolescent behavior. It highlights the dangers of substance abuse, gang violence, and becoming a part of the juvenile justice system.

## **DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS**

Notwithstanding parent’s best efforts, children can be influenced adversely by peer pressures and pick up bad behavior outside the home. Parents must learn to recognize signs that indicate their child may be involved in gangs, drug and alcohol abuse, graffiti vandalism, and other problems, and deal with them as early as possible. They must also make sure their children abide by the curfew law, attend school, drive safely, stay away from guns, etc. And they should be alert for warning signs of suicide. Information about various actions parents can take to prevent juvenile delinquency, violence, and victimization, and other related subjects can be obtained by calling the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice at **(800) 638-8736**. Parents who cannot deal with their children's behavior on their own can get help from many agencies, several of which are mentioned in this section, and from the Juvenile Services Team at their local SDPD Area Station.

Parents can also enroll their children in educational classes that deal with shoplifting, graffiti, tobacco, daytime loitering and truancy, curfew violation, and other problems. They can get referrals by contacting Vista Hill’s Juvenile Justice Community Services at **(619) 668-4250**.

### **Adolescent Relationship Abuse**

Adolescent Relationship Abuse (ARA), which includes Teen Dating Violence (TDV), is widespread among teens according to a 2013 survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. As such, ARA has become a significant health concern for adolescents and is the subject of a great deal of activity by the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Violence Prevention in the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and many other organizations.

Adolescent Relationship Abuse (ARA) refers to an escalating pattern of repeated acts that physically, sexually, psychologically, or financially abuses a relationship partner. Physical abuse includes hitting, shoving, slapping, kicking, hair pulling, etc. Sexual abuse includes unwanted touching, forcing a partner to engage in a sex act, drugging or getting a partner drunk to force a sex act, refusing to use birth control measures, etc. Emotional abuse includes name calling, insults, isolating a partner from family and friends, bullying, shaming, stalking, harassment, threatening to spread rumors if a partner refuses to have sex, etc. Financial abuse includes preventing a partner from going to work, destroying a partner’s property, stealing or demanding money, etc. ARA can also occur electronically, such as repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner online. Teens often think some behaviors like teasing and name calling are a “normal” part of a relationship. However, these behaviors can lead to more serious form of abuse, which can have a significant negative effect on a partner’s health throughout life. Teens who are victims of ARA are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety, have eating disorders, exhibit antisocial behavior, do poorly in school, think about suicide, become pregnant (females), engage in binge drinking, or use tobacco or drugs.

The preliminary results of the NORC survey are listed below.

- 68 percent of the respondents said they had been victims of ARA. 62 percent said they had perpetrated ARA.
- 18 percent said they had been victims of physical abuse. 12 percent said they had perpetrated physical abuse.
- 18 percent said they had been victims of sexual abuse. 12 percent said they had perpetrated sexual abuse.
- 64 percent said they had been victims of psychological abuse. 61 percent said they had perpetrated psychological abuse.

Risks of having unhealthy relationships increase for teens who:

- Believe it's OK to use threats, anger, or violence to get their way
- Use alcohol or drugs
- Can't manage anger or frustration
- Hang out with peers in abusive relationships
- Have multiple sexual partners
- Have a friend involved in an abusive relationship
- Are depressed or anxious.
- Have learning difficulties and other problems at school
- Don't have parental supervision and support
- See violence at home
- Have a history of aggressive behavior or bullying.

The family environment is critical in preventing ARA. Parents should be good role models and show their children how to treat people with respect in their relationships with others. They should also monitor their children's activities -- know where they are, who they're with, what they're doing, and when they'll be home. By setting boundaries and expectations for their activities parents can guide their children in making good decisions on their own. For all of this parents must communicate openly with their children. Experts say it's never too early to start talking about tough topics. Parents should not wait for their children to come to them. Many tips for communicating with your children are suggested in a page entitled *Talking with Teens: Conversation Tools* on the website of the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at [www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/info/parents/conversation-tools](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/info/parents/conversation-tools). And in a CDC video entitled *Break the Silence: Stop the Violence* at [www.cdc.gov/cdctv/injuryviolenceandsafety/break-silence-stop-violence.html](http://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/injuryviolenceandsafety/break-silence-stop-violence.html), parents talk with teens about developing healthy, respectful relationships before they start dating.

But even if parents talk to their children about preventing ARA and encourage good relationships with others, their children may become a victim or a perpetrator of ARA. Parents need to watch for warning signs of this. One is refusing to talk about a relationship. Another is denying any abuse or offering excuses for their behavior. Other signs of a child being a victim are suspicious bruises or other injuries, failing grades, no interest in activities or hobbies that he or she once enjoyed, or a partner who is three or four years older. A victim might also be afraid to introduce their partner to his or her parents, excuse their partner's behavior, respond immediately to calls or texts from their partner, withdraw from family and former friends, change their routines, or spend too much time with their partner. And a perpetrator may call or text his or her partner constantly, make insulting remarks about or threatens his or her partner, easily lose his or her temper, be unable to control his or her anger, etc.

Parents need to act quickly if they suspect or know their child is involved in ARA. If they can't terminate the relationship, they can get help from two hotlines and a CDC video. They can also get help for their child from a behavioral health professional, or if the violence occurs at school, from the school counselor.

The hotlines are:

- National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. This is a 24/7 toll-free line created to help teens (ages 13-18) experiencing dating abuse. Teens and parents can call **(866) 331-9474** or log on to the interactive website [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) to receive confidential assistance from trained advocates. They can also write and get assistance in a one-on-one private chat room.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline. This 24/7 line is a partner of loveisrespect. Its advocates provide support, resources, and hope to domestic violence victims and their friends and family. Learn more by calling **(800) 799-7233**.

The CDC video is entitled *Dating Matters: Understanding Teen Dating Violence Prevention*. This 60-minute interactive training is designed to help educators and others working with teens to understand the risk factors and warning signs associated with TDV. In it parents will learn to understand TDV and its effects, identify factors that place teens at risk, and communicate with teens about the importance of healthy relationships. They will also learn about resources to prevent TDV. The video is online at <http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/datingmatters/>.

If the relationship is intimate, which includes dating, and involves abuse or threats of abuse, it is defined as domestic violence and a parent or the victim can get a restraining or “protective order” to protect the victim from future contact, physical or sexual abuse, threats, stalking, or harassment. More information about restraining orders can be found on the website of the California Courts Judicial Branch at [www.courts.ca.gov/1260.htm#domestic](http://www.courts.ca.gov/1260.htm#domestic).

## **Alcohol**

Drinking is an adult privilege. It is illegal in California for anyone under 21 to drink or buy alcoholic beverages. While the majority of teens do not drink, most are faced with the opportunity and many fail to resist peer pressure to drink. Parents need to teach their children about the effects, dangers, and possible consequences of drinking, and should try to discourage it altogether. Drinking loosens inhibitions and leads to bad judgments that can result in traffic accidents with serious injuries, costly civil litigation, social embarrassment, hefty legal fines, college probation or loss of scholarships, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and various criminal acts.

Parents are the single most important influence on children’s decision whether or not to drink. If you drink you should:

- Drink in moderation.
- Keep track of all alcoholic beverages kept at home.
- Have non-alcoholic beverages available at home.
- Never drive after drinking.
- Teach your children that it is not necessary to drink to have a good time.

You should also be aware that under the Teen Alcohol Safety Act of 2010 you will be guilty of a misdemeanor and be subject to civil liability if the alcohol served to a minor in your home is found to be the proximate cause of injuries or death to a third person. Social hosts will no longer be immune from liability when they serve alcohol to minors.

Parents should always talk openly with their children about alcohol use and abuse. When they go out you should always ask the following six “W” questions: Where are you going? Why are you going there? Who are you going to be with? What are you going to do? Will there be alcoholic beverages? When will you be home? And when they return you should discuss how they handled the situation if any underage drinking was involved and how they should handle it in the future. If you think your child has or may be developing an alcohol problem you can call San Diego Youth Services at **(619) 325-4696** for information and help.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is a form of violence. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful. Bullying may be physical (hitting, kicking, spitting, or stabbing), verbal (taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, or threatening), or emotional (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, extorting, or intimidating). Bullying can occur face-to-face or by an electronic communication device. When by the latter it is called cyberbullying, as discussed below under Internet and Cell Phone Dangers.

Most children have been teased by a sibling or a friend at some time. Teasing is usually not harmful when done in a playful, friendly way, and the children involved find it funny. But when teasing becomes hurtful, unkind, and constant, it crosses the line into bullying. If your child is being bullied, you want to get it stopped. But first you have to know about it. Unless your child tells you about it or has visible bruises or injuries, it can be difficult to figure out if it's happening. But there are some warning signs. You might notice your child acting differently or seeming anxious, not eating or sleeping well, not doing the things he or she usually enjoys, or being afraid to go to school. If you suspect bullying, try to get your child to talk about it. Tell him or her that it's nothing to be embarrassed and ashamed about, it's not your fault, and it's important to talk about it so it can be dealt with and stopped. Praise your child for doing the right thing by talking to you about it. Tell your child that he or she isn't alone and that a lot of people get bullied at some time. Emphasize that it's the bully who is behaving badly and that together we will figure out what to do about it.

Until the bullying can be stopped you should tell your child to avoid the bully and if that's not possible, to be with someone else when the bully is around. If confronted by the bully, tell your child to act calm and confident, ignore hurtful remarks, tell the bully to stop, walk away, and go somewhere safe where the bully won't follow. Advise your child not to respond to bullying by fighting or bullying back because the situation can quickly escalate into violence, serious trouble, and someone getting injured. By ignoring the bully and showing you don't care the bully will probably get bored and stop trying to bother you.

If the bullying occurs at school, the incident should be reported immediately to a teacher or counselor. This can be done by you or your child. All public schools in California are required to have policies and procedures for preventing bullying. They will be in their comprehensive safety plans that all schools are mandated to have. When the bullying occurs because of the victim's actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, it becomes a hate crime as defined in California Penal Code Sec. 422.55 and the complaint process for dealing with it is defined in California Education Code Sec. 234.1 in the Safe Places to Learn Act. Depending on the nature of the incident, school personnel may talk to the alleged bully and his or her parents, recommend anti-bullying programs or disciplinary measures, report the incident to local law enforcement, advise professional counseling for the victim, etc. Reporting bullying is critical because bullies rarely stop on their own and their aggressive behavior will likely escalate and over time as they devise bolder ways to hurt people.

Bullying outside of schools should be reported by calling **911** if it is in progress or about to happen, or if it resulted in serious personal injury, property damage, or property loss. Otherwise it should be reported to the SDPD by calling **(619) 531-200** or **(858) 4843154**, its non-emergency numbers. In either case, be prepared to give the dispatcher the following: name of the bully, if known; nature of the bullying, i.e., hitting, taking money, threats, etc.; location, exact street address and nearest cross street; time of occurrence; and weapons used, if any. If the bully is not known, provide race, gender, age, height, weight, weapon type, hair (color, length, style, facial), clothing color and type (hat, tie, coat, shirt, trousers), other characteristics (e.g., tattoos, scars/marks, complexion, missing teeth, scars, glasses), etc.

Parents also have a duty to prevent their children from becoming bullies. They are their children's first teachers. Their words and actions at home will be imitated by their children in other settings. They should speak and act respectfully to all people. With regard to bullying they should tell their children the following:

- Bullying is disrespectful and can be dangerous even if perpetuated in the spirit of team building or as the price to pay for joining a group. Hazing is humiliating at the least and life threatening at the worst. It is also illegal.
- Bullying of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment and is also illegal.
- Bullying that occurs because of the victim's actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics is a hate crime and cannot be dismissed as teasing.
- Bullying behavior that continues into adulthood can escalate to violent behavior toward strangers, friends, and even family. A lifetime of consequences may follow.

Parents should also tell their children that standing-by while someone is being bullied makes them a part of the problem. If the bullying occurs at school, they should walk away and report the incident to a teacher or counselor.

Students and parents can call Crime Stoppers at **(888) 580-8477** to provide anonymous tips about safety concerns and potential problems at their schools. And students in the San Diego Unified School District can receive cash rewards of up to \$1000 for tips or information that solve or prevent campus violence or vandalism to school property.

## **Child Abduction**

The number of children reported missing each year is staggering. The following precautions will help protect your child from abduction:

- Never leave your child alone in a vehicle, restroom, store, playground, or other public place. Accompany younger children to restrooms.
- Walk your child to and from school, and point out dangerous spots and safe places to go for help.

- Have your child walk or bike to and from school with a friend. There is safety in numbers.
- Don't put your children's names on the outside of their clothes. Children may respond more readily to a stranger who calls them by name.
- If your child takes a bus to and from school, have your child stay with a group while waiting for the bus.
- Make sure that the school will not release your child to anyone but yourself or a person previously designated by you, and that the school will call you back to verify any call saying that some person will come to pick up him or her.

And make sure you teach your child the following:

- Never to leave school with anyone they don't know.
- Turn around and run to the nearest safe place if a person appears to be following them on foot, or a vehicle slows or stops by them.
- Not to hitchhike or accept a ride from anyone unless you have told them it is OK in each instance. Tell them to say NO and run away to a safe place if offered a ride by a stranger. If avoidance is not possible tell them to make a big scene by screaming, yelling, kicking, and resisting.
- The difference between a stranger who may be a danger and one who may be helpful. The simple "stranger-danger" message is inappropriate because the danger to children is much greater from someone who is not a stranger.
- Stay away from any adult who asks for help, e.g., "Can you help me find my dog?" or asks for directions (an adult should ask another adult, not a child for help), or tries to get you to go somewhere with them, e.g., "Your mom's hurt and she told me to come get you."
- Keep all doors and windows locked when at home alone. And not to open the door to a stranger or let an uninvited neighbor or acquaintance into your home.
- Not to tell a caller that you are not at home. Have your child say you cannot come to the phone, ask the caller to leave a message, and say you will call back.

For additional information on how to prevent child abduction and what to do if it happens go to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) website at [www.ncmec.org](http://www.ncmec.org) and look at the resources for parents.

If your child goes missing you should provide identification information to law enforcement officers immediately. A convenient place for this information is on the FBI Child ID App. At this time the App is only available for use on iPhones and can only be downloaded for free from the App Store on iTunes. With it you can show pictures of your kids and provide physical identifiers to law enforcement officers on the spot. The latter include height, weight, hair and eye color, and distinguishing marks. You can also quickly and easily e-mail the information to authorities with a few clicks. The App also include tips on keeping children safe as well as specific guidance on what to do in those first few crucial hours after a child goes missing. Go to the FBI website at [www.fbi.gov/news/stories/child\\_080511/child-id-app](http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/child_080511/child-id-app) for more information. Other organizations that can help you obtain a Child ID Kit are NCMEC at [www.missingkids.org/ChildID](http://www.missingkids.org/ChildID) and the Polly Klass Foundation at <https://secure.pollyklaasaction.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=291>.

Biometric information can also be used for identification. It includes fingerprints, palm prints, footprints, medical and dental records, and DNA samples. It is not necessary to provide biometric information in the initial report to law enforcement. But it should be kept in a secure place so when later fed into a national database it can be used to identify a missing child after its fingerprints, for example, are entered into the database. This can happen if the child is arrested, taken into protective custody, or otherwise involved with law enforcement.

If you do not create an ID Kit for your child yourself, you can pay to have one made. There are many for-profit companies that do this. The danger in this is that the personal identification information you provide can be used to cause problems for your child if it gets into the wrong hands. Here are some things to watch out for in dealing with a for-profit company.

- Offers to collect and retain your child's biometric information. Biometric information is very sensitive and should be kept by parents. If you are having your child's fingerprints, palm prints, etc. taken, make sure that you are given the cards and then secure them in a safe location in your home. Do not allow the company to retain a copy of this information.



- Recommends you carry biometric information on your person at all times. Some companies will offer to digitize the information and include it on a thumb drive for you to carry on your key chain. Carrying a copy of your child's fingerprints on you at all times is not a best practice and is not endorsed by child-safety professionals. Wallets, purses, and key chains can be lost or stolen. The only exception is when you are traveling away from home.
- Requests or wants to obtain other sensitive personal information. Information such as a Social Security Number (SSN), a passport number, or a copy of a birth certificate will not assist in the search for missing child. There is no need for this information to be included in a Child ID Kit.
- Advertises that it is endorsed by law enforcement. While some things may be endorsed by the law enforcement, a particular for-profit company will not be. Sometimes for-profit companies will establish a partnership with law enforcement but don't take its word for it. Check with law enforcement yourself.
- States that all proceeds go to charity. If the company does not list the charity, consider this a red flag. And if it does list one, check that it's a legitimate at [www.GuideStar.org](http://www.GuideStar.org) or [www.CharityNavigator.org](http://www.CharityNavigator.org), and ask the charity if the company is a fundraiser it endorses.
- Uses scare or high-pressure tactics to entice you to buy its kit instead of one of the free kits that are available.

The bottom line is that having a properly made Child ID Kit can help law enforcement find your child if it goes missing. However, a kit with personal information can lead to problems for your child if the information gets into the wrong hands. Do some research before you decide what to do and consult the sources mentioned. If you have any questions you can receive free assistance by calling the Identity Theft Resource Center at **(888) 400-5530** and talking to an identity theft information specialist.

## Curfew Violation

Parents should know the activities and whereabouts of their minor children (under 18 years old) and make sure that they are home during curfew hours, which is the period from 10:00 p.m. any evening of the week until 6:00 a.m. the following day in the City of San Diego. Minors can be cited for curfew violations under SDMC Sec. 58.0102, which also defines ten defenses to prosecution. These are summarized as follows:

- Accompanied by the minor's parent or guardian, or a responsible adult
- On an errand at the direction of the minor's parent or guardian, or a responsible adult, without any detour or stop
- In a motor vehicle involved in interstate travel
- In an employment activity, or going to or returning from an employment activity, without any detour or stop
- Involved in an emergency
- On the sidewalk abutting the minor's residence
- Attending or returning home from, without any detour or stop, an official school, religious, or other recreational activity supervised by adults and sponsored by the City of San Diego, a civic organization, or another similar entity that takes responsibility for the minor
- Exercising or returning home from exercising, without any detour or stop, First Amendment rights protected by the U.S. Constitution
- Travelling between activities listed above
- Emancipated pursuant to law

In addition, parents can be cited if they knowingly permit or by insufficient control to allow the minor to be present in any public place or on the premises of any establishment within the City of San Diego during curfew hours.

Parents should be aware that the curfew hours vary by jurisdiction in the County of San Diego. For example, in the cities of Del Mar, Solana Beach, and Escondido they are from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., and in the cities of Poway, Chula Vista, and Coronado they are from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Parents should check the curfew hours for any jurisdiction in which their children might drive at night. And the evening curfew time is an hour earlier than the time a child under the age of 18 with a provisional California driver license cannot drive without a licensed parent, guardian, other adult 25 years of age or older, or licensed or certified driving instructor in the vehicle.

## Daytime Loitering and Truancy

Parents must also make sure that their children are attending school during school hours. It is unlawful under SDMC Secs. 58.05(b)(1) and 58.05(b)(2) for any juvenile who is subject to compulsory education to loiter in any public or unsupervised place, or on the premises of any establishment between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on any day when school is in session for the juvenile. And under SDMC Sec. 58.05(b)(3) it is unlawful for the parent of any juvenile to knowingly permit or by insufficient control allow the juvenile to violate this daytime loitering ordinance. If a juvenile is cited for a violation of SDMC Sec. 58.05(b), the juvenile and a parent will appear in court and the parent advised of the citation and warned of its responsibility and liability. Upon subsequent violations, parents may be cited for an infraction and punished by a fine not exceeding \$250 or by a requirement to perform community service, or both. And after subsequent violations they may be cited for a misdemeanor and punished by a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or six months in jail, or both.

If the child is a chronic truant, i.e., one who is defined in the California Education Code Sec. 48263.6 as being absent without a valid excuse for ten percent or more of the schooldays in one school year, California Penal Code Sec. 270.1(a) makes its parent or guardian guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not exceeding \$2,000 or by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year or by both if its parent or guardian has failed to reasonably supervise and encourage the pupil's school attendance after being offered language accessible support services to address the pupil's truancy.

## Drugs

Parents can provide the best protection children have against drug abuse. However, peer pressures and other outside influences can often undermine your best parenting efforts. Indications that your child may be involved with drugs include the following:

- Loss of interest in activities, don't-care attitude
- Use of incense, room deodorant, perfume, mouthwash, or breath mints
- Different friends and clothing choices, new associations
- Drug paraphernalia
- Bottles of eye drops
- Missing prescription drugs, especially narcotics and mood stabilizers
- Personality or sudden mood changes, erratic behavior, rages, bouts of anger, temper flare-ups, more combative
- Anxiety or paranoia
- Increased forgetfulness
- Withdrawal from the family, frequent absences from home
- Lack of sleep, insomnia
- Hyperactivity, excessive energy
- Resistance to discipline
- Poor school work, truancy
- Lack of stamina, listless, hung over, fatigued
- Isolation, increased secretiveness
- Poor personal appearance and hygiene, e.g., watery and sunken eyes, poor complexion, weight loss, bad breath, etc.
- Need of money or unexplained affluence
- Missing items in home

Parents can get a great deal of information on drug prevention, abuse, intervention, treatment, and recovery from the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids at [\*\*www.drugfree.org/get-information\*\*](http://www.drugfree.org/get-information). The parenting toolkit provides advice by age and tips on understanding teens, connecting with and protecting your kids, spotting drug and alcohol use, and helping if they are using. It is estimated that children who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who do not.

Many children are now using inhalants and prescription drugs instead of illegal ones. Parents need to keep their prescription pain killers, cough syrup, and other over-the-counter drugs locked away out of their children's reach. They should also do the following:

- Monitor their children's use of the Internet for visits to illegal online pharmacies and use of social media outlets to make connections and set up drug deals.
- Examine their credit card and bank statements for drug purchases, and text messages for indications of drug use.
- Search their rooms for drug paraphernalia, including tinfoil, hollowed-out pens, lighters, hose clamps, syringes, and spoons.
- Read the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) guide entitled *Prescription for Disaster: How Teens Abuse Medicines* from its website at [www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com](http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com). Click on Prevent and then select the tool entitled *Prevent Prescription Drug Abuse*. This website has a great deal of other information of use to parents.
- Be a parent, not a friend or enabler.
- Dispose of prescription drugs properly. There are bins for them at all Sheriff's stations and a few SDPD Area Stations. Do not flush them down the toilet. That poses a threat to the environment.

## Gangs

Gang activities constitute not only a serious problem in the community but a great danger to your child. Children who are gang members will become criminals or likely victims of gang violence. If you see signs that your child is becoming involved with gangs, you need to act immediately to deal with the problem and get help if necessary.

The warning signs of gang involvement include the following: lack of interest in school, fights, changes in hairstyle and dress, changes in friends, tattoos, nicknames, graffiti on clothing and personal items, changes in personality, staying out late at night, hanging out with known gang members and in known gang areas, possession of more money, etc. Additional information on gang awareness is available at your local SDPD Area Station. Presentations to groups of parents can be arranged by calling the SDPD Gang Unit at **(619) 531-2847**.

Parents whose children show signs of gang involvement or other problems need to take firm control of the situation. They need to reassert their involvement and control over their children's activities, dress, friends, and finances. If help is needed, it is available from many community organizations. Some of those that offer counseling and diversion programs are listed below.

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Barrio Station                        | (619) 238-0314 |
| • Casa Familiar                         | (619) 428-1115 |
| • Harmonium                             | (858) 566-5740 |
| • Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry | (619) 805-5526 |
| • Ralph Bunche Youth Center             | (619) 527-0171 |
| • Safe San Diego                        | (858) 565-4148 |
| • San Diego Urban League                | (619) 263-3115 |
| • Social Advocates for Youth (SAY)      | (619) 283-9624 |
| • South Bay Community Services          | (619) 420-3620 |
| • Union of Pan Asian Communities        | (619) 232-6454 |
| • YMCA PRYDE Program                    | (619) 281-8313 |

## Graffiti Vandalism

Parents need to discuss with their children the importance of respect for property and the effects graffiti has on the victim, vandal, and the vandal's family. SDMC Sec. 54.0411 makes parents civilly liable for up to \$25,000 of property damage caused by their minor children. SDMC Sec. 54.0413(e) makes parents reimburse the city for any reward that is paid for information leading to the arrest and conviction of their minor child for graffiti crimes. Furthermore, California Penal Code Sec. 594(d) makes a parent liable for any fine that his or her minor child is unable to pay. The amount of the fines depends on the amount of the damage; the maximum fine is \$50,000. Thus, parents have a strong incentive to make sure their children are not graffiti taggers. The signs of a graffiti tagger include: tags on clothes or other personal possessions; use of tagger jargon; frequent use of baggy jackets and small backpacks that can hide spray cans; paint or dye on hands and under fingernails; and used graffiti devices. If you think that your child might be involved with graffiti, call the Graffiti Control Hotline at **(619) 525-8522** for further information and places to call for assistance.

## Gun Violence

Gun violence has become a major health issue for young people. Parents need to teach their children that: (1) guns don't solve problems; (2) guns can kill or cause lifelong disabilities; and (3) there are enormous differences between real life and the fantasy world of television and all of its violence. Furthermore, parents need to exercise complete control over any guns in their home. Those who have guns should keep them unloaded, uncocked, and stored in a securely locked container. The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence suggests that gun owners adhere to the following additional guidelines:

- Store your gun and its ammunition in separate locations known only to you.
- Store your ammunition in a locked container away from heat and moisture. Never throw it out in the trash.
- Child-proof your revolver by placing a sturdy and tamper-resistant child-safety lock on the trigger or on the firing mechanism.
- Child-proof your semi-automatic handgun by removing the magazine, disassembling the frame from the slide and magazine or securing it with a child-safety lock.
- Never leave the keys to your child-safety locks or gun and ammunition storage containers where they are accessible to others. And make sure the keys cannot be duplicated.

Parents can get help from a Juvenile Service Team officer at their local SDPD Area Station regarding signs that their children might be involved with guns, where to look for guns that children might hide at home, and what discipline measures would be appropriate. Any guns that are found should be turned in at any SDPD facility. Answers to questions about gun safety can be obtained by calling the SDPD Pistol Range at **(619) 527-6070**.

Information on effective strategies for preventing violence against youth can be obtained at **[www.preventviolence.org](http://www.preventviolence.org)**. This site also contains facts and data, and up-to-date information on violence prevention activities in California. At the national level the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center's website at **[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)** contains information on hot topics, prevention and intervention programs, publications, and research and data on violence committed by and against children and teens.

## Internet and Cell Phone Dangers

While the Internet provides a way to stay connected with friends, it also exposes us and our children to increased risks of cyberbullying, cyber predators, identity theft, fraud, and phishing. In June 2012 the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's *Stop.Think.Connect Update* cited a study conducted by the National Cyber Security Alliance that found that children aged 8 to 18 spend an average of about eight hours a day online. If a child sleeps eight hours a night, one-half of the time he or she is awake is spent online. In order to protect yourself and your family from potential online dangers, it is important first to understand the risks. Did you know that?

- 20 percent of kids will have been a victim of cyberbullying by the time they graduate from high school according to the Cyberbullying Research Center.
- 79 percent of online teens agree that teens aren't careful enough when sharing personal information online according to a study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.
- The Crimes against Children Research Center warns that one in five U.S. teenagers who regularly log on to the Internet say they have received an unwanted sexual solicitation via the web.
- 500,000 kid identities are stolen each year according to the Identity Theft Resource Center. In a MSNBC investigation officials found a 9-year-old girl in default on utility bills, a teenager \$750,000 in debt, and a 2-year-old with a pile of credit card bills.

Although the vast majority of online services and Internet material is legitimate and benign, there have been numerous incidents of children receiving pornographic material, providing personal information under the pretext of possibly winning a prize, or sending money for promised benefits or products. Warning signs of these dangers include the following:

- Excessive late-night computer use
- Secretive behavior about computer associates

- Pornography
- Receiving phone calls, mail, gifts, or packages from persons you don't know
- Making phone calls to numbers you don't recognize
- Hidden files or directories, and password-protected bios, files, or logical drives
- Turning the computer monitor off or quickly changing the screen when you enter the room
- Becoming withdrawn from the family

If you are not familiar with computers, the Internet, and social networking you should visit **www.NetSmartz411.org**. It is parents' and guardians' premier online resource for answering questions about Internet safety, computers, and the Web. There you can get answers to frequently asked questions. Or you can call **(888) 638-7411** to ask your questions to an expert. You can also visit the NetSmartz Workshop at **www.netsmartz.org**. It is an interactive, educational program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and off- line. The program is designed for parents, guardians, and children ages 5-17. It entertains while it educates with resources such as videos, games, activity cards, and presentations, and has the following goals:

- Educate children on how to recognize potential Internet risks
- Engage children and adults in a two-way conversation about on- and off-line risks
- Empower children to help prevent themselves from being exploited and to report victimization to a trusted adult

You should do the following to minimize Internet dangers that your children may encounter:

- Start early. Talk to your children about online behavior, safety, and security as soon as they start using a computer, cell phone, or any mobile device. Have them show you the websites they visit, how they navigate through the Internet, and how they use social networking sites. To better understand the latter you should try networking yourself. This is a great way to connect with your children on computer-related matters.
- Help them find information online. Search together to find reliable source of information and learn to distinguish fact from fiction.
- Set reasonable guidelines and time limits for Internet and cell phone use, and social networking. Prohibiting Internet use is not a good idea because it is too easy for children to establish accounts at a friend's house or many other places. But do set time limits on computer use. People, not computers, should be their best friends and companions.
- Keep the computer in the family room or other area where its use can be monitored. Don't allow computers and mobile devices such as laptops and smart phones to be used in your children's bedrooms. And don't allow your children to have separate passwords and log-on names.
- Post clear, simple, easy-to-read rules for Internet use on or near the computer. Discuss these rules with your children and make sure they understand the reasons for them. Visit **www.NetSmartz.org** for examples of rules and safety tips. Your supervision and attention is the best way to protect your children when using the Internet.
- Know what Internet access your children have away from home, i.e., at a friend's home, libraries, schools, and cell phones and other wireless devices. Also have a plan to monitor their online activities there.
- Initiate conversations with your children about their Internet use. Communicate your values, be patient and persistent, and don't rush through conversations. Encourage your children to come to you with any problems they encounter online or anything that makes them uncomfortable.
- Your children are computer users and should have their own passwords and log-on names. Make sure they understand the importance of password and privacy protection, and not to share passwords or log-on names with anyone but you. Passwords should be more than eight characters in length and have at least one capital letter, one lowercase letter, one number, and one symbol. Use of non-dictionary words is also recommended. Easily remembered numbers or available information like mother's maiden name, date of birth, phone number, or pet's names should not be used.
- Have your children give you their passwords and log-on names, and share their blogs and online profiles with you. Be aware that they can have multiple accounts on multiple services. Search for you children's identifying information and monitor their screen name(s) and websites for inappropriate content.
- Have your children request your permission to exchange phone numbers or meet another child they have "talked" to online. Consider talking to the other child's parents about a meeting and accompanying your child to the meeting, which should be in a public place. Tell your children that caution is needed because people

online are not necessarily who they might seem to be. Never allow them to meet someone they have “met” online without your permission.

- Discourage your children from visiting chat rooms, especially those with video, even if they claim to be child friendly. Persons who would harm children use these websites to entice children.
- Use filtering software to scan for offensive words and phrases in chat rooms and then end the conversations by signing off.
- Install a browser that limits the websites that your younger children can visit to those vetted by educational professionals. Some will send you periodic e-mails that detail you children’s Internet activity.
- Install a monitoring service like McGruff SafeGuard. It’s free for 30 days and also scans any chat or text conversations for bad language and other inappropriate communications. Go to **[www.gomcgruff.com](http://www.gomcgruff.com)** for details of this service. Also look at the ESET Family Security Pack at **[www.eset.com](http://www.eset.com)**.
- Have your children promise not to turn off any programs you might install to monitor their computer use.
- Understand how online services work.
- Supervise closely the choice of websites by young children. Monitor their online activities as they get older and more independent. Check the computer’s cache and history to see what websites they have accessed. Also check their profiles and buddy lists.
- Learn the meaning of the acronyms your children use in texting. Go to **[www.netlingo.com/acronyms.php](http://www.netlingo.com/acronyms.php)** for a list of acronyms and their definitions, e.g., PAL means parents are listening.
- Make sure your child’s screen name does not reveal any identifying information such as name, age, location, school. A screen name should be benign and innocuous, e.g., the first letter of each word in an easily-remembered phrase.
- Prohibit your children from downloading any games, movies, programs, etc., trying to win “free” things, or buying things online. You are the computer administrator and should be the only one who can install new software and programs.
- Tell your children it’s not safe to put photos or any type of personally identifying information on a personal website without privacy settings, even if they promise to give the website address to people they know. Anyone in the world can access such a website. Also, personally identifying information should not be published on a group website or in an Internet yearbook. Group photos are preferable to individual photos only if no names are published.
- Children should be aware that file sharing programs for music and videos may be stealing copyrighted material and make their computers vulnerable to malware.

Children who use social networking sites like Facebook and Myspace should be warned about online predators. These Internet offenders manipulate young people into illegal or inappropriate behavior by “grooming” them, i.e., building trust, appealing to their desire to be liked and understood, and playing on their natural curiosity about sex. All settings should be on “private.” Visit social-networking websites with your children and show them what’s OK and what’s risky. Establish your own profile so you can monitor your children. Teach them to do the following to prevent and deal with any problems that might arise:

- Never to give out their name, address, phone number, photos, school, schedule, or any other personal information that can identify them. Avoid posting anything that would enable a stranger to find them, e.g., school names. Members’ profiles become public information.
- Never say they are home alone.
- Don’t post anything that they wouldn’t want the world to know, especially anything or language that might embarrass them later, e.g., in applying for college or a job. What’s uploaded can be downloaded and passed around by others and be posted online forever. It can’t be taken back even if it’s deleted from a site.
- Never send out any pictures of themselves, family members, or friends.
- Don’t “friend” strangers. People aren’t always who they say they are. Have your children ask permission before listing any adults as “friends,” even if they are teachers, relatives, or your friends.
- Come to you to discuss any harassment, hate speech, and inappropriate content they receive.
- Check comments regularly. Ignore and don’t respond to any that are mean or embarrassing. Just log off if the harassment bothers them.
- Avoid misleading people into thinking they are older or younger than they are.
- Don’t talk about sex or use any sexually explicit language.
- Block people from sending messages or e-mail, or delete them from their “buddy list” if they harass you.

- Change their password if someone hacks into their profile. Change username and e-mail address if someone repeatedly bothers them.
- Have you contact the company that runs the site to have their profile deleted if it was created or altered without their knowledge.
- Talk to you if they are upset about what is being said about them. If they are scared or threatened you will contact a Juvenile Service Team officer at the nearest SDPD area station and inform their Internet Service Provider. Area station addresses and phone numbers are listed in the back of this paper.

Children also need to be given rules for using cell phones and be warned of dangers in their use. Rules should deal with when and where phones can be used, what they can and cannot be used for, and etiquette and safety in texting.

You need to set good examples in the use of phones, e.g., not while driving. The following are some good rules for texting.

- Be polite and respect others. Avoid using shorthand that might lead to misunderstandings. Think about how a message might be read and understood before sending it.
- Ignore messages from people you don't know.
- Block numbers of people you don't want to hear from.
- Don't post your cell phone number on the Internet.
- Never provide personal or financial information in response to a text message.
- Use Cc: and Reply all: with care.
- Never engage in sexting, i.e., the sending or forwarding of sexually explicit photos, videos, or messages. In addition to risking their reputation, friendships, and employment and educational opportunities, they could be in violation of California Penal Code Secs. 288.2, 288.3, and 311 *et seq* if they create, forward, or even save this kind of message.

Once rules are set you need to remind your children about them and check to see that they are being followed. Here are some things to do:

- Discuss to consequences of breaking the rules.
- Review your child's "friends" list and delete any you don't know about.
- Review their text messages and block or set limits on text messaging and picture sending if you don't like what you see. Make sure they are not receiving any threatening or harassing messages, or are sending, receiving, or saving any sexts.
- Block unwanted callers.
- Check the browser history. If it's empty someone may be hiding something.

Cyberbullying is another problem you should talk to your children about. You should tell them that they can't hide behind the messages they send or pictures they post, and that hurtful messages not only threaten the victim, but they make the sender look bad and can bring scorn from peers. They should not make threats, spread lies, start rumors, distribute embarrassing pictures, or otherwise distribute or publish electronic messages of a harassing nature about another person with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for his or her safety. Such messages are a misdemeanor under California Penal Code Sec. 653.2, and a person who sends them can be punished by up to one year in a county jail, by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or both. Also, you should also make sure your own conduct does not encourage bullying, i.e., that you don't make mean-spirited comments about others or act unkindly to them.

You also need to be prepared to help your children if they become a victim of bullying. You should encourage them to show you any online messages or pictures that make them feel threatened or hurt. If you fear for your child's safety you should call the SDPD on its non-emergency number, **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**.

Otherwise tell your child not to respond, save the messages and pictures for evidence, and keep you informed. Call the SDPD again if the bullying persists. Here are some other things your child should do:

- Report the bullying to the website or network where it appears.
- Delete the bully from your list of "friends" or "buddies," or block the bully's username or e-mail address.

- Share these measures with a friend who is a victim of bullying. Bullying usually stops quickly when peers intervene on behalf of the victim.

Any suspected online sexual exploitation or attempt by an adult to meet your child should be reported immediately to the San Diego Internet Crimes against Children Task Force at **(858) 715-7100** and the Cyber Tipline at **www.cybertipline.com** or **(800) 843-5678**. The former is the local law-enforcement agency that deals with these matters. The latter is managed by the NCMEC and is mandated by Congress to forward your information to the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. If your children or anyone in your home receives pornography depicting children or your children receive sexually explicit images, report the imagery to ICAC and keep it open on your computer until an investigator comes to see it. Do not copy or download it. In the meantime you can use your computer for other things or turn your monitor off.

Children should also be warned about virus creators, identity thieves, and spammers. These cyber-criminals are increasingly targeting users of social networking sites in an effort to steal their personal data and the passwords to their accounts. One of the tactics they use to gain access to this information involves sending social networking users e-mails that appear to come from online “friends.” For example, some Facebook users have been receiving e-mails from “friends” that claim to contain a video of them. When they click on it they download a virus that goes through their hard drives and installs malware (malicious software). The virus, known as Koobface, then sends itself to all the “friends” on the victim's Facebook profile. A new version of the virus also is affecting users of Myspace and other social networking sites. Cyber-criminals are tricking social networking users into downloading malware by creating fake profiles of friends, celebrities, and others. Security experts say that such attacks, which became widespread in 2008, are increasingly successful because more and more people are becoming comfortable with putting all kinds of personal information about themselves on social networking sites. They warn that users need to be very careful about what information they post because it can be used to steal their identities.

To avoid these problems on social networking sites or anywhere in the Internet, you should warn your children to:

- Not to open any e-mail from an unknown sender. Delete it without opening it. “Drive-by spam” can automatically download malware when an HTML e-mail is opened. You don't have to click on a link or open an attachment to get infected.
- Not to click on any links, videos, programs, etc. provided in messages, even if a “friend” encourages you to click on them.
- Not to visit any sites that promise ways of bypassing parental controls or blocks set up by schools to prevent users from visiting sites such as Facebook. These sites are full of scams, malware, and offers for other services.
- Get program updates directly from the company's website, not through a provided link.
- Customize your personal privacy settings so only your “friends” have access to the information you post.
- Read your network's privacy policy regularly to stay informed on how it uses or discloses your information.
- Scan your computer regularly with an anti-virus program. Make sure the program is kept up to date, preferably automatically.
- Be suspicious of anyone, even a “friend,” who asks for money over the Internet.
- Don't open or forward chain letters. Just delete them. They are nuisances at best and scams at worst. And many contain viruses or spyware.
- Watch out for “free” stuff. Don't download anything unless it's from a trusted source and it's been scanned with security software. “Free” stuff can hide malware.
- Do not buy or download free anti-spyware software in response to unexpected pop-ups or e-mails, especially ones that claim to have scanned your computer and detected malicious software.
- Make sure the pop-up blocker in the tools menu of your browser is turned on. This will prevent most pop-up ads. If you do get one, be careful in getting rid of it. Never click on any of its boxes. By clicking on No or Close you may actually be downloading malware onto your computer. And even clicking on the X in the upper right-hand corner can initiate a download instead of closing the ad. To be safe on a PC, hold down the Ctrl and Alt keys and hit Delete. Then in the Windows Security box click on Task Manger, and then click on End Task. This will clear your screen. Then run a full anti-virus scan.
- Avoid all online games and quizzes that request personal information, including your e-mail address. Providing this information can put your identity at risk.



Additional information on Internet dangers to children and how to keep children safe online is available on numerous websites. These include the following:

- San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force at **[www.sdicac.org](http://www.sdicac.org)**
- StaySafeOnline powered by the National Cyber Security Alliance at has a section for parents at **<https://staysafeonline.org/stay-safe-online/for-parents/raising-digital-citizens>** that that deals with raising digital citizens, cyberbullying and harassment, parental controls, and gaming tips.
- San Diego County District Attorney at **[www.sdcdca.org](http://www.sdcdca.org)**. See the Protecting Children Online page under Protecting the Community.
- GetNetWise at **[www.GetNetWise.org](http://www.GetNetWise.org)**
- FBI *A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety* at **[www2.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguideee.htm](http://www2.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguideee.htm)**
- NCMEC at **[www.ncmec.org](http://www.ncmec.org)**. See resources for parents and guardians.
- FTC tips to help you stay safe and secure online at **[www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0038-onguardonline](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0038-onguardonline)**
- NET CETERA: *Chatting with Kids about Being Online* at **[www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0001-netcetera\\_0.pdf](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0001-netcetera_0.pdf)**.
- FTC consumer information tips on Living Life Online at **[www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0006-living-life-online.pdf](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0006-living-life-online.pdf)** and **[www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0026-living-life-online](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0026-living-life-online)**
- ConnectSafely at **[www.connectsafely.org/](http://www.connectsafely.org/)** offers parents a collection of short, clearly written guidebooks that explain various apps, services, and platforms popular with kids and teens.
- Netsmartz Kids at **[www.netsmartzkids.org/](http://www.netsmartzkids.org/)** provides interactive, educational, and age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer online.
- Family Online Safety Institute at **[www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/](http://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/)** gives advice, tips, and tools that empower parents to confidently navigate the online world with your kids.
- Savvy Cyber Kids at **[www.savvycyberkids.org/default.aspx](http://www.savvycyberkids.org/default.aspx)** offers curriculum that covers the concepts of security, privacy, bully response, and online ethics with engaging characters and in age appropriate language.
- Stop.Think.Connect Social Media Guide at **[www.stcguide.com/explore/tips-trends](http://www.stcguide.com/explore/tips-trends)** provides tips for parents and students on how to protect themselves on social media and includes many resources available to them. The Guide explains the cyber risks kids face when using social media and provides tips for talking to your kids about these risks.

## Media and Game Violence

Media violence is also a health hazard for children. It has been estimated that young people have seen over 200,000 acts of violence by the time they graduate from high school. This exposure may result in aggressive attitudes and behavior, and insensitivity to violence. The following 10 tips from the Minnesota Medical Association are designed to help deal with this problem: (1) set clear limits on TV viewing and video game playing, (2) don't use the TV as a babysitter, (3) don't make TV the focal point of family activities in the home, (4) offer other enjoyable activities at home, (5) select what your children watch, (6) ban unacceptable programs, (7) identify high-quality programs, (8) know what your children are watching, (9) discuss media violence, and (10) have a voice in local TV programming.

Children are spending increasing amounts of time playing video games, which include computer and console games. Games can have good and bad impacts. Children can learn useful information, skills, attitudes, and behaviors from them. They find them highly motivating by virtue of their interactive nature. But games can also have negative effects on children's health and behavior. The former include obesity, seizures, tendonitis, nerve compression, and carpal tunnel syndrome. The latter come primarily from violent games that lead to increased physiological arousal and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

You can protect your children from these negative effects by limiting the time they play games, reading reviews and checking the ratings of games they might buy, and becoming familiar with the games by playing them with your children. You can get information and ratings of games on the websites of the Entertainment Software Rating Board and Common Sense Media at **[www.esrb.com](http://www.esrb.com)** and **[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)**, respectively.

## Shoplifting

Shoplifting is not a game or sport. It is theft! It has serious consequences for both the child and the parent. If the value of the merchandise taken is less than or equal to \$400, the crime is petty theft. The first time it is punishable as a misdemeanor with a fine of at least \$50 but not more than \$1000, or imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding six months, or both. The second time it is punishable as a felony with imprisonment in the county jail or the state prison not exceeding one year. If the value of the merchandise taken is more than \$400, the crime is grand theft, which is punishable as a felony the first time. As noted in below under parental liability, judges can order parents to pay these fines for their minor children.

For petty thefts by an un-emancipated minor, California Penal Code Sec. 490.5(b) makes parents liable to the merchant for civil damages of not less than \$50 nor more than \$500, plus costs. In addition, parents are liable for the full retail value of the things taken if they are not recovered in a merchantable condition. Total damages are limited to \$500 for each action brought under this section.

Signs that your child might be shoplifting include: wearing new clothes or jewelry, possessing items that you know they don't have money to buy, finding tags or package wrapping hidden in the trash, wearing baggy clothes or jackets when it is warm, and leaving the house with an empty backpack or large purse. Some of the things you can do to prevent shoplifting include: teaching that shoplifting is theft and that it is wrong to steal, telling your child that being in the company of a shoplifter is as bad as stealing and that all persons involved can be punished, encouraging your child to choose friends carefully, knowing your child's friends, keeping your child busy to minimize unsupervised free time, and perhaps as a last resort, enrolling your child in a shoplifting prevention class.

## Suicide

There were 427 deaths by suicide in San Diego County in 2015. Twenty-one of these were ages 10-19. This data is from the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Annual Report for 2015. This data for other years is available in the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Annual Reports for those years on its website at [www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me/press/stats.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me/press/stats.html). The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) says that suicide can be prevented because most people who are suicidal give some warning to a friend or family member. Thus, parents can prevent suicides by their children by learning to recognize the signs of a child at risk, taking those signs seriously, and knowing how to respond to them.

More than 90 percent of the people who kill themselves are suffering from one or more psychiatric disorders. These include depression, substance abuse and dependence, eating and personality disorders, etc. These are both recognizable and treatable. Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed. The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency has said that one in five children in the County are affected by depression. Signs of depression include the following:

- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless, unhappy, sad, moody, or empty
- Self-reproach or excessive or inappropriate guilt, fixating on past failures or blaming yourself for things that are not your responsibility
- Angry outbursts, irritability, or frustration
- Excessive crying
- Loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities and things that used to be fun
- Loss of job
- Avoiding friends or feeling alone when with friends
- Isolation from family and friends
- Divorce, separation, or stress in the family
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia, sleeping too much, and changes in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite or weight, including increased craving for food
- Loss of health or unexplained physical problems such as back pain or headaches
- Intense anxiety, agitation, or restlessness, e.g., excessive worrying, pacing, hand-wringing, or inability to sit still
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Decreased concentration, indecisiveness, or poorer memory

- Slowed thinking, speaking, or body movements
- Frequent thoughts of death

Other warning signs of a person considering suicide are:

- Talking, reading, or writing about suicide or death
- Talk of hurting or killing self
- Visiting friends to say good-bye
- Engaging in risky or self-destructive behavior, e.g., drug or alcohol abuse
- Giving things away
- Acquiring means of killing self, e.g., buying a gun, stockpiling pills or drugs, etc.

If your child threatens suicide you should call the San Diego County 24-Hour Crisis Line at **(888) 724-7240** immediately. It is staffed 24/7 by trained professionals. Otherwise if you observe any of these signs you should start by talking to your child. Express your concerns, ask if he or she is thinking about suicide and what the problems are, and listen to what your child says. You should help your child understand that his or her problems are temporary and can be solved with the help of a physician or mental health professional. And then get that help right away. If medication is prescribed, make sure it is taken and be alert for possible adverse side effects. And if it is not effective, ask the physician to prescribe another one. Finally, don't leave your child alone.

More information is available on the AFSP's website at **[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)** and that of the Health and Human Services Agency of the County of San Diego at **[www.up2sd.org](http://www.up2sd.org)**. You can also get help from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) by calling its San Diego chapter at **(800) 523-5933** between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. NAMI offers an array of support, education, and referral services that help build better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

## Unsafe Driving

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. In 2014, 2,270 teens aged 16-19 were killed and 221,313 were treated in emergency rooms for injuries suffered in motor vehicle crashes. This data for other years is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Teen Drivers Fact Sheet on its website at **[www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teen\\_drivers/teendrivers\\_factsheet.html](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teen_drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html)**. Because driving involves great risks of personal injury and property damage, and driver education only deals with driving skills, parents need to do the following to make their teens safe drivers:

- Know and understand your teen. Not all are responsible enough to drive at 16.
- Set a good example by following all traffic laws and safety rules when you drive. Wear your seat belt, drive the speed limit, limit distractions, never text or use a phone, maintain a safe following distance, etc.
- Set the following guidelines to avoid visual, manual, and cognitive distractions while driving, which kill at least eight people a day, most under the age of 20, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at **[www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted\\_driving](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving)**.
  - Keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.
  - Keep your mind on the act of driving.
  - Eat snacks and meals before you start driving. If you must snack, choose foods that aren't messy or complicated to eat.
  - Never apply makeup, finish dressing, shave, or attempt grooming while driving.
  - Avoid electronic distractions by mapping routes before you begin to drive, and disabling text and e-mail push notification on your phone.
  - Use Bluetooth or other hands-free devices only in an emergency.
  - Pull over and stop if you need to do anything that would be distracting while driving.
- Take advantage of typical and usual situations to teach safe driving, e.g., to follow at a greater distance when the road is wet because your braking distance will be greater.
- Select a high-quality driving school that encourages parental involvement and progress reports.
- Create a written parent-teen driving agreement that specifies rules, conditions, restrictions, and consequences of driving behavior. State that driving and drinking don't mix.
- Have your teen drive the safest vehicle the family owns, and make sure he or she is properly insured.

- Set a schedule for regular practice driving sessions with your teen. They should be no longer than 45 minutes. Be direct with your instructions and keep your comments as simple as possible. Stress defensive driving.
- Set a time each week to discuss safe driving.
- Discourage driving at night and with passengers.
- Make sure your teen gets enough sleep. Driving while drowsy can be as risky as driving while intoxicated.
- Stress the need for total concentration on driving, and avoidance of distractions from using cell phones or text messaging.
- Stay out of cars that others might drive in an unsafe manner.
- Teach basic vehicle mechanics and what to do in case of an accident or emergency.
- Stress the criticality of all persons in the vehicle wearing seat belts.

Another reason for parents to be concerned about their children driving is that parents are legally responsible for any injuries and damage that their minor children might cause while driving. Information about driving and traffic safety can be obtained by calling the SDPD Traffic Division's CRO at **(858) 495-7822**. Another good source of information is the Auto Club of Southern California (ACSC). Visit its website at **[www.calif.aaa.com/content/dam/ace/LOB/automotive/Driver%20Education/Teen%20Programs/TeenDriverSafetyBrochure-CA.pdf](http://www.calif.aaa.com/content/dam/ace/LOB/automotive/Driver%20Education/Teen%20Programs/TeenDriverSafetyBrochure-CA.pdf)** where you can find a *Parent & Teen Driver Resource Guide* with descriptions of programs and resources for teen drivers in their pre-permit, permit, and license pages. These include the *Dare to Prepare* workshop, driving schools, DMV information, graduated driver license overview, parent-teen driving agreement, etc.

Parents should also warn their children about staged crashes. These are on the rise in many areas. According to the ACSC's Automotive Research Center (ARC), there were nearly 4,000 suspected fraudulent insurance claims in Los Angeles County in 2012 and 4,700 in 2014. Criminals pretend to be injured in staged crashes and bring large claims against the victim's insurance company. For more information on staged crashes and videos on how they are set up go to the National Insurance Crime Bureau's website at **[www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org)** and check out the latest videos on insurance fraud and crime under Video/Audio Clips. Parents should then tell their teens to do the following to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of a staged crash:

- Never tailgate. Leave enough space to stop if the vehicle in front of you stops. And look beyond that vehicle for changed traffic conditions that might cause it to slow or stop. Don't wait for the vehicle in front of you to slow down before you apply your brakes.
- Look over your shoulder for better visibility when backing out of a parking space or driveway. Don't rely on your mirrors. And back out slowly.
- Drive defensively and be aware of your surroundings. Be extra cautious on freeway ramps, at stop signs, in parking lots, when merging into traffic, and making turns.

If your teen is ever involved in a crash, he or she should follow these tips from the ACSC's ARC.

- Call 911 if anyone is injured.
- For each vehicle involved, get the name, address, phone number, driver license number, and auto insurance information for their drivers. Also get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of their passengers.
- Get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of anyone who witnessed the crash. Also get a written statement of where they were and what they saw. Or get a video of their statements.
- Take detailed photos of the crash scene, the damage to each vehicle involved, and people injured. Beware of tow trucks that arrive at the scene before anyone called for help. And don't let them take your vehicle, especially if they won't quote a charge. They may be planning to hold your vehicle until you pay an outrageous charge.
- Beware of strangers who appear on the scene and try to persuade you to take your vehicle to a certain body shop, hire a certain lawyer, or see a particular doctor. Or they may be working with the people who staged the crash to tell a story that is favorable to them.
- If you think you've been the victim of a staged crash, contact the local police and ask them to come to the scene. Get the names and badge numbers of the officers who arrive and ask for a copy of their report for your insurance company.

## **MULTIPLE PROBLEMS**

Several organizations offer programs that can help children with multiple problems. One is the YMCA Youth and Family Services offers classes, workshops, and counseling on many subjects. Parents should call **(619) 543-9850** for details.

The California National Guard has several youth programs for different age groups and areas of the state. One is a statewide residential program conducted at the Grizzly Youth Academy at Camp San Luis Obispo. It is called the The California National Guard has several youth programs for different age groups and areas of the state. One is a statewide residential program conducted at the Grizzly Youth Academy at Camp San Luis Obispo. It is called the Youth ChalleNge Program and is for 16 to 18 year-olds who are high school dropouts or at risk of dropping out. For further information call **(800) 926-0643**.

## **PARENTAL LIABILITY**

In addition to the liabilities mentioned above, parents or guardians are legally liable in various ways for the acts of their children. These are additional reasons for parents to deal with their child's behavior before it results in criminal acts.

**Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor.** Parents who fail in their legal duty to exercise reasonable care, supervision, protection, and control over their minor children can be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, a misdemeanor punishable by one year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine per count. This is stated in California Penal Code Sec. 272(a).

**Liability for Fines, Penalties, and Restitution.** Under California Welfare and Institutions Code Sec. 730.7 juvenile court judges might order parents to pay fines and penalties assessed against a minor that they have legal and physical custody and control of, and also to pay restitution to the victims of the crimes committed by their minor children. The upper limits on these payments are specified in California Civil Code Secs. 1714.1 and 1714.3, as noted below.

**Liability for Civil Damages.** Under the California Civil Code Sec. 1714.1 parents are liable for civil damages of up to \$25,000 for each tort or act of willful misconduct of a minor in their custody and control that results in injury or death to another person or in any injury to the property of another. This limit is adjusted every two years for changes in the California Consumer Price Index. If a parent is insured, the maximum liability of the insurer is set at \$10,000.

**Civil Liability for Injury Caused by Firearms.** Under California Civil Code Sec. 1714.3 parents are liable for injuries caused by the discharge of a firearm by a minor in their custody and control, where the minor was permitted to have the firearm or the firearm was left in a place accessible to the minor. Damages are limited to \$30,000 for injury to or death of one person, or \$60,000 for all persons in a single occurrence.

**Restitution through Mediation.** One way for parents or guardians to avoid liability for the acts of their minor children in civil lawsuits is to work out an agreement for repayment of the victim's losses. This can be done by mediators who assist the victim and the youth in talking about the incident and its consequences, get the youth to take responsibility for his/her actions, and draft a realistic restitution agreement.