

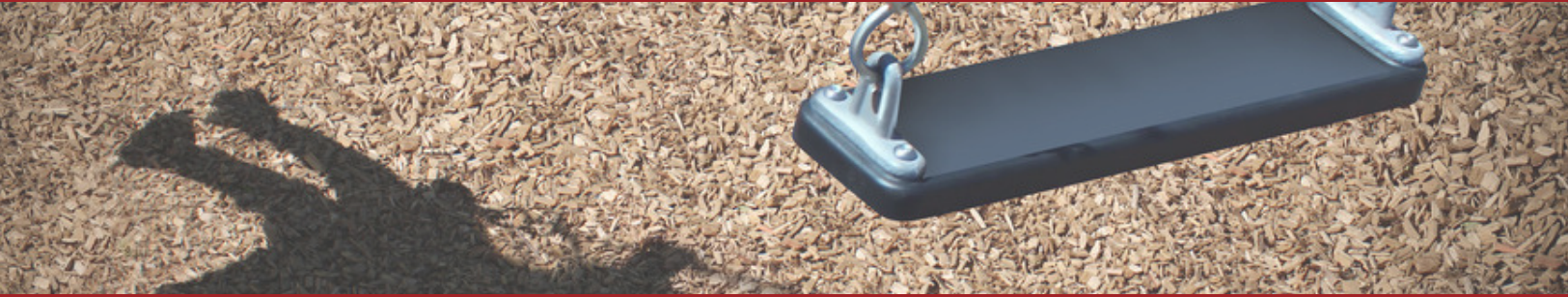


CHILD ABDUCTION T.I.P.S. NEWSLETTER

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Preventing Child Abduction

by Erin Runnion

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April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and when we work together, we can better protect children from all forms of victimization. Local agencies are required to respond to reports of child abduction, but it takes a community to prevent it from happening.

Each year in California, approximately 75,000 children are reported missing.* Of those cases, over 95% are considered “runaway” and 4.5% are abductions perpetrated by family or people they know; less than half of 1% are stereotypical stranger abductions. California’s Missing Alert Program is the best in the nation and yet **5% (over 3,000) of our state’s missing youth are not found within the year.**

The California Child Abduction Task Force encourages law enforcement agencies to participate in its training opportunities and to contact the California Highway Patrol (CHP) - Emergency Notification and Tactical Alert Center (ENTAC) when a missing youth may be in danger. Resources are available that may expedite the investigation and recovery of the missing child regardless of whether the case meets the specific criteria for an Amber Alert. For example, the **Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)**, launched in California in 2018, has been the most successful tool for locating missing people because it quickly activates the community. The WEA allows for **locally targeted** text messages that have pictures, links, etc. and it may be used for cases that do not meet specific criteria for other alerts.

Local agencies can also help raise awareness among families about what they can do to better protect and teach their children about personal safety. Below are some best practices followed by free online resources to share with your community partners and families.

What Every Parent/Guardian Can Do to Prevent Child Abduction

1. Watch and share this PSA to raise awareness about Family Abduction: <https://oag.ca.gov/missing/child-abduction>
2. Talk with your family and close friends about how they can help keep your child safe by paying attention to their body language and respecting their boundaries if they are afraid and/or don't want to be touched. Children learn to trust their instincts when the adults in their lives help them assert their boundaries. Children who are taught not to question and just to ‘do what they are told’ are especially vulnerable to those who are looking to abuse or abduct a child.

3. Tell your child that no one has the right to hurt them, and it is not their fault if anyone ever tries to hurt them. They can get away and tell you right away. Tell your child that it is your job to keep them safe, so they should tell you if anyone, no matter who it is (family or stranger), makes them uncomfortable or afraid.
4. Explain that you will always tell your child if someone else is going to take them somewhere unless there is a sudden and unexpected change in plans (emergency). Schools have emergency cards, and those 2 to 3 people are the only people allowed to pick them up or take them. No one else is allowed to take them anywhere (on foot or in a car) unless you tell your child that it is okay.
5. Agree on a Code Word with your child that they can ask for if anyone they don't expect tells them they are supposed to go with them. This is especially important if there are custody disputes or concerns.
6. Ask your child what they would do to be safe if you were late picking them up. Discuss and agree on a safety plan that includes where they should wait, who they can call, and who they can ask for help if someone offers to drive them home and/or scares them.
7. Talk with your child about having a safety plan should they get separated from you in a public place. Teach them to yell their adult's name and if they don't hear or see you, discuss where they should go and/or who they should ask for help in different real-life situations, e.g., the cashier at a store or a parent with young children if they aren't sure.
8. Give your child permission to yell for help no matter where they are if they are ever afraid and don't see you or another trusted adult. It is not their fault if someone ever tries to hurt or take them, so they can do whatever they have to do to get away.
9. Help your child memorize a family phone number and their address.
10. Download the FBI's free Child ID App: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/apps/child-id-app> The app provides a convenient place to electronically store photos and other vital information about your children so that it's literally right at hand if you need it. You can show the pictures and provide physical identifiers such as height and weight to security or police officers on the spot. Using a special tab on the app, you can also quickly and easily e-mail the information to authorities with a few clicks.

Thank you for fostering collaboration among your community's law enforcement, local agencies, schools, and families to better protect and empower children to be brave and be safe. Because it shouldn't take a tragedy to unite a community to better protect its children, [The Joyful Child Foundation – In Memory of Samantha Runnion](#) offers the free video-based lessons and activities below to be shared with parents, educators, and youth-serving agencies.

For ages 5 - 12 (Elementary): Use this short [Be Brave – Be Safe video](#) introduction to start the conversation and/or try these [BRAVE Skill-Building Activities](#).

For ages 3.5 – 5 (Early Learners): [Pre-K video lessons and activities](#)

Together, we can better protect and empower our children to be brave and be safe.

*Average rate of missing reported between 2015 and 2022 per State of California Department of Justice; <https://oag.ca.gov/missing/stats>. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 76,000 – 82,000 children were reported missing each year in California; the rate of unsolved cases remained around 5%.

Law Enforcement Stress Management Strategies

by Cari Teran

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As a law enforcement officer, your job requires you to be alert, focused, and ready to respond to any situation at a moment's notice. However, the demands of the job can take a toll on your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Many aspects of your job can have the same impact on your body as exposure to a traumatic

event. Trauma responses and law enforcement share similarities in the way they affect individuals and how they manifest in behavior and emotions.

1. **Hypervigilance:** Hypervigilance is a state of heightened alertness and awareness, commonly experienced by individuals who have been exposed to traumatic events. This can also be a common response among law enforcement officers due to the nature of the work. You need to be alert and aware of your surroundings to ensure your safety and the safety of others. However, excessive hypervigilance can lead to exhaustion and burnout, affecting job performance and personal relationships.
2. **Emotional dysregulation:** Trauma responses can lead to emotional dysregulation, where individuals experience intense emotions, such as anger, fear, or sadness, with little control over their emotional reactions. Similarly, law enforcement officers may experience emotional dysregulation due to the nature of your work, dealing with traumatic events and stressful situations daily.
3. **Avoidance:** Avoidance is a common trauma response where individuals avoid situations, people, or places that trigger traumatic memories or emotions. Law enforcement officers may also exhibit avoidance behaviors, such as avoiding certain assignments or situations that may trigger your trauma responses.
4. **Substance use:** Substance use is a common coping mechanism used by individuals who have experienced trauma to numb their emotions and avoid dealing with their emotional pain. Law enforcement officers are also at higher risk of substance use due to the stressful and traumatic nature of your work.
5. **Self-care:** Self-care is an essential aspect of maintaining physical and mental well-being. It is crucial for law enforcement officers to prioritize self-care to avoid burnout, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. When symptoms continue for too long and begin to impair your functioning either at home or at work, an acute traumatic stress response will become post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
6. **Prioritize sleep:** Law enforcement officers often work long shifts, sometimes overnight, which can disrupt your sleep schedule. However, getting enough sleep is crucial for maintaining optimal physical and mental health. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night, and try to establish a consistent sleep schedule, even on your days off. Create a sleep-friendly environment by reducing noise, limiting caffeine, and avoiding screen time before bedtime.
7. **Exercise regularly:** Exercise has been shown to improve mood, reduce stress, and promote better sleep. Incorporate exercise into your daily routine, even if it's just a 10-15 minute walk during your break. Consider joining a gym, participating in group fitness classes, or engaging in activities such as hiking or cycling on your days off.
8. **Practice Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of being present and fully engaged in the current moment. It can be a powerful tool for reducing stress and improving mental health. Try incorporating mindfulness practices such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga into your daily routine.
9. **Connect with others:** Law enforcement officers often experience high levels of stress and trauma, and it's essential to have a support system to turn to. Connect with other law enforcement officers, family members, or friends who understand the unique challenges of your job. Consider joining a support group or seeking professional help if needed.
10. **Eat a healthy diet:** A healthy diet can help you maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and improve energy levels. Try to eat a balanced diet consisting of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and healthy fats. Avoid processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive amounts of caffeine or alcohol.
11. **Take time off:** It's essential to take time off from work to recharge and take care of yourself. If possible take multiple days off together. Use your vacation time to spend time with family and friends, engage in hobbies, or simply relax. Avoid checking work-related emails or taking phone calls during your time off.

It is essential for law enforcement agencies to ensure the well-being of their officers and provide appropriate support and resources to help you cope with the challenges of your work. Providing education and training on trauma-informed care and implementing self-care strategies can help reduce the impact of trauma responses and improve your overall well-being. Incorporating regular exercise, getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness, seeking support, and taking breaks can help you manage stress and improve your overall well-being. By prioritizing self-care, you can be better equipped to handle the demands of the job and serve your communities with excellence.

www.cirinc.org/abduction

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