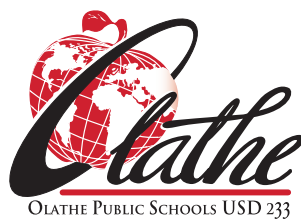




**Olathe Public Schools
Elementary Safety Manual**

PARENT EDITION



**District Tip Line: 780-7777 (SSSS)
Anonymous Hotline: 1-877-626-8203
SECOND EDITION**



Dear Parent of an Elementary Student:

The Olathe Public Schools is dedicated to providing a safe and secure learning environment for your student every day. In order to teach students about safety, the Elementary Safety Manuals for grades K-2 and grades 3-5 were created. This parent manual was also created to provide basic safety information and to reinforce the manuals that your students are using in their school setting.

These safety manuals were put together through the joint efforts of the Olathe Public Schools Department of Safety and Security led by Rick Castillo and the Olathe Public Schools Counseling Department led by Angie Salava and Alicia Jackson. Counselors who contributed to this project include Mitchell Cloud, Fairview Elementary, Amber Daniels, Forestview Elementary, Gail Snowbarger, Central Elementary, Tisha Halfert, Green Springs Elementary, Collin Eidelson, Cedar Creek Elementary, Jenna Owings, Westview Elementary, Mindy Wells, and Cristi Wightman. The work group also wants to acknowledge the editing efforts of Alisa Kozlowski, guidance and support from Connor Gerdes, and design and layout assistance of Curt Fehr of the Olathe Public Schools Graphics Department.

We hope that these manuals provide tools for both students and parents to use and provide a means to provoke conversations on safety topics at home. Your schools and your school counselors are always willing to assist you with any questions or concerns about safety. The Olathe Public Schools Safe Schools Safe Students app is also available to download and any safety concerns can always be reported to the District Tip Line: 913-780-7777. The Safe Schools tipline within the Olathe Public Schools mobile app can be downloaded in the Google Play or Apple App Store.

Sincerely,

Rick Castillo, Manager of Safety and Security

Angie Salava, Director of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Services



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Asking for Help

Being able to ask for help effectively is a very important skill. When they are young, children often ask for help. As they grow, so can their independence and resistance to asking for help even if they need it.

Some kids feel embarrassed or ashamed about needing or asking for help. Some kids don't know how to ask for help or ask for help in negative ways. This skill is very important to being able to be assertive and to keeping themselves safe. There are some things you can do to help your child be more comfortable with this skill.

It will be important to talk with your child about the difference between a small problem, a medium problem, a big problem, and an emergency.

Some kids who struggle with asking for help may avoid doing a task, withdraw, escalate behaviors into a temper tantrum, or infringe on the rights of others to get their needs met. Being able to recognize the function of this behavior in children is beneficial. It can alert you to the fact that they need help building skills for communicating their needs more effectively.

Grades K-2:

Sometimes these years are when kids begin to feel the pressure that asking for help can bring. Encourage your children to understand that asking for help is normal and the responsible thing to do. It can also help keep them safe.

Tips for this age group include providing stories about your childhood, your experiences, or those of people you know who needed to ask for help. Share examples of situations or problems that can occur when people are reluctant to ask for help. Identify a list of people your child(ren) can ask for help. Continually review family safety rules and the importance of asking a trusted adult for help if they are in an uncomfortable or scary situation.

Grades 3-5:

In these years, children are becoming more socially aware and may begin to feel there is a stigma associated with asking for help. Children may think they will look foolish in front of peers if they ask for help or be worried they will be made fun of.

Help them be aware that being able to ask for help appropriately is a sign of maturity. With this age group, you can use true stories. Children often love to hear about what their parents did when they were growing up and learning about life. This is also a good time to talk about making mistakes and learning from them. Again, have them identify a list of people they could ask for help. Continually review family safety rules and the importance of asking a trusted adult for help if they are in an uncomfortable or scary situation.



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Asking for Help

Steps for teaching your child how to ask for help appropriately and respectfully:

1. Ask yourself if you can solve the problem by yourself.
2. If not, think about who could help you.
3. Ask respectfully to speak to that person.
4. Use a phrase similar to, “I need to ask for your help with _____”.
5. Accept the answer you get. Say thank you.
6. If the person isn’t able or willing to help you, decide if you need to ask another person.
7. Help your child understand that if they need help in an emergency situation, it is ok to ask loudly and to interrupt.

Strategies for teaching children to ask for help:

Teach the difference between a statement, question, or request.

When children make statements like, “I’m hungry” or “I want that,” we may interpret that as meaning that they are asking for something and jump right in to help. However, this is a statement, not a request. If we continually jump in and help them when they aren’t really asking for help, they may start to expect people to meet their needs every time they make a statement. They aren’t actually expressing their needs or what they want, they are just making a statement. This can create an entitlement mindset in children. Here is the process to help shift the communication process to become more effective.

When your child makes a statement instead of a request:

Acknowledge:

Acknowledge what they say, but do not immediately offer to help or fix the situation.

Child: “I’m hungry.”

Parent: “Okay, thanks for letting me know.”

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Asking for Help

Strategies continued:

Coach:

If your child repeats the statement or gets frustrated that you are not helping right away, prompt them. Use something like this, “Statements are to tell me about yourself. Questions are to get answers to something you don’t know, and a request is a way to ask for help. Which one of those will help you the most right now?” For a younger child, you might say something like, “You said you’re hungry, do you need help getting food?”

Examples:

Statements usually just tell us what’s happening. You might hear, “I am,” or “I’d like,” or, “I have.” “I” is the key word. Questions are to get more information. They usually include who, what, where, when, how, and why. Requests are asking for something or for someone to do something for you. These can include “Can you,” or, “Will you.”

Practice:

You can give your child examples and have them figure out if you used a statement, question, or request.

Statement: I am hungry.

Question: May I have a snack?

Request: Can you please help me get a snack?

Repeat:

It can take a while for children to understand the difference between these ways of communicating. It will be helpful for you to review them often and to use prompts to help them understand how to convey their needs or intent.

Resources:

Boy’s Town

<https://www.boystown.org/Pages/default.aspx>

Teach Kids How website

www.teachkidshow.com



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Bullying Prevention & Response

Material in this section is taken from the Second Step Bully Prevention Curriculum. Second Step is approved by the USD #233 board of education for use in all Elementary Schools.

Preventing and Addressing Bullying

The Olathe School District uses the Second Step program in all elementary school classrooms to teach students important skills for getting along with others and doing well in school. The district also uses the Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit to teach students how to:

- Recognize when bullying is happening, Report bullying to a caring adult, and Refuse to let bullying happen
- Be a Bystander who helps stop bullying
- Support someone being bullied by standing up for that person and being kind and inclusive
- Recognize, report, and refuse cyber bullying when they see or know about it happening

For bullying prevention to work, everyone at school needs to be involved. All school staff receive yearly trainings in how to:

- Recognize and respond to bullying
- Support children who have been bullied
- Correct behaviors of children who are bullying
- Use strategies that support a positive school and classroom climate

Clarifying what bullying is and how it is both harmful and against the rules empowers students to avoid bullying others and know how to respond appropriately if they witness or experience bullying. This stops bullying from being accepted as normal. It also helps bullied students understand that bullying is wrong and that they don't deserve to be bullied. This can reduce the emotional harm they may suffer.

Preventing and addressing bullying is the responsibility of the adults in the school. At times adults may be unaware that bullying is occurring. A student may not report the bullying to an adult because they are worried about what others might think, that they will get in trouble, or that the other student might become more mean or hurtful to them. The Bully Prevention curriculum reinforces the message that students must first be able to Recognize bullying when they see it by knowing the difference between bullying and a conflict or problem. Once a student is able to Recognize bullying, they are taught how to Report bullying to a trusted adult or Refuse bullying by being assertive and telling the other person to stop.

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Bullying Prevention & Response

Recognizing Bullying

Helping students be able to recognize bullying when it happens is the first step in getting it to stop. The Second Step curriculum teaches students that “Bullying is when someone keeps being mean or hurtful to someone else on purpose and that person hasn’t been able to get it to stop. Bullying is unfair and one-sided.”

Bullying can be:

- Hurting someone else’s body or belongings
- Using words to hurt someone’s feelings
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Getting others to be mean to or exclude someone

Bullying usually happens over and over again, and the person it’s happening to has not been able to make it stop. No one wants or deserves to be bullied.

When something happens that is not one-sided or doesn’t happen over and over again, we call it a conflict or a problem. Conflicts and problems are serious because they can hurt someone’s body, belongings, feelings, or relationships. Students can use the same Reporting or Refusal skills describe below to help the conflict or problem get better or to get help from an adult.

Reporting Bullying

Students are taught that when they Recognize bullying, they can Report it to a trusted adult. Trusted adults can be parents, family members, teachers, the school counselor, the school nurse, the principal, or other adults at school like the bus driver or lunch supervisor. The curriculum makes it clear to students that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling and that it is their job to help keep themselves and others safe by reporting bullying. If a student reports bullying or a conflict to someone who doesn’t help make it stop, they are encouraged to keep telling until they find someone who will listen and help make it stop.

At times it can be difficult for children to remember details of events that happened during the day. An important skill when it comes to reporting bullying is being able to tell:

- What happened
- Who else was there
- When it happened
- Where it happened
- If it has happened before

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Bullying Prevention & Response

You can help support your student by having them practice reporting to you things that happened each day at school. This will give them practice remembering details of what happened during their day. Have your child face you, keep his or her head up and shoulder back, and say in a strong, respectful voice “I need to report my day.” You can guide your child by asking them the questions above if they are not able to do it on their own. Repeat this practice throughout the week. Tell your child you want to hear both the good and bad things that happened.

Refusing Bullying

Students are taught how to use their assertiveness skills to refuse bullying. Students learn that reporting bullying is important because adults should both intervene directly and help them figure out and practice how to respond effectively. Research shows that students can reduce their chances of being bullied in the future by responding assertively. This helps students see that they can get help and help themselves, and that doing both is often the best way to handle bullying.

Students are taught to be assertive by standing up straight and using a strong, respectful voice to tell the other person to stop. Being aggressive or mean back might make things worse while being quiet or passive might not change anything. Being assertive is an important skill for students to develop as it helps students be able to ask for things that they need and helps others to take them seriously.

Help your child practice how to say “No” and use a strong, respectful voice to refuse bullying. Pretend you are a child who is bullying. Have your child face you, keep his or her head up and shoulders back, and say in strong, respectful voice, “Stop it. That’s bullying.” Repeating this practice will help your student know better what to do if they encounter a conflict or bullying in the future.

Bystanders

A Bystander is someone who sees or knows bullying is happening to someone else. Bystanders have the power to stop bullying by standing up for others, reporting or helping report bullying, and including others. But bystanders can also make bullying worse if they join in or don’t help.

One reason students bully is for the effect it has on bystanders. Students can gain social status through bullying by looking tough or cool, making others laugh, or showing that they have power. Because of the power differential in bullying, students who are bullied have limited ability to make it stop. Because bullying often pays off in social or other ways, it can be hard to change the behavior of students who bully. But research shows that changing how bystanders react is a powerful way to reduce bullying.

Your student may be able to help a bullying situation by:

- Standing up for the person being bullied and saying, “Stop. That’s bullying.”
- Reporting or helping report the bullying to a caring adult.
- Including others by inviting them to join in.

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Bullying Prevention&Response

Resources

- <http://www.secondstep.org>

- o You can access resources and get information about what your child is learning in the Second Step program.

Create a free account and use the activation key BPU4 FAMI LY04.

- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

- o This website has great resources for parents and kids. There are several “Webisodes” with quizzes that can help students recognize and practice how to respond to bullying.

- <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

- o National Bullying Prevention Center’s website includes a lot of resources, activities, and videos about recognizing and responding to bullying.

- <http://www.thenedshow.com/topics.html>

- o This website has resources for a variety of topics, but has a section with a video and activities on how to be a Bystander that helps, aka an Upstander.

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Healthy Friendships

Supporting children to build healthy friendships

Parents play an important role in teaching and supporting children while they build healthy friendships. These healthy experiences in friendship can create a positive self-awareness and a sense of belonging for many children. Keeping an open line of communication with your child can help parents and children to identify key components of healthy and meaningful friendships. Developing this communication at a young age can also build trust between parent and child as friendships grow more complex.

Starting the conversation early with children can help to build a good foundation for healthy friendships in the future. Talking to your children about traits like trustworthiness, honesty, dependability, and loyalty can be good building blocks for the growth and development of new friendships.

Parents can help students navigate the ups and downs of friendship by focusing on the development of social skills and empathy. These skills can help students better understand their peer relationships and themselves.

Tips for developing social skills and empathy in children:

Younger Children

1. Teach children the names of different feelings and have them name them. This can help students recognize their own feelings as well as the feelings of other children.
2. Provide opportunities for children to practice their social skills. Scheduling play dates can be a great way for students to connect outside of the school day.
3. Play games that involve cooperation and taking turns. Board games are a great way for parents and children to practice and work through these skills.
4. Model positive social skills when you are out in public. Children absorb many things by watching adults.

Older children

1. Continue to teach and practice social skills needed to maintain and develop friendships. These skills include active listening, cooperation, and empathy.
2. Talk to your children about respect, responsibility, and caring for others.
3. Acknowledge caring and helpful actions of your child. This can help build confidence in your child which will carry over into their peer relationships.
4. Remind students that conflict is a part of friendship and practice creative problem solving skills.

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Healthy Friendships

Quick recommendations:

- Maintain an open and trusting communication with your child.
- Practice and model empathic listening with your child by listening to their feelings. This will validate your student's feelings and allow them to feel more comfortable sharing information with trusted adults
- Listen and ask questions before giving advice or sharing personal experiences.
- Use characters in books, movies and everyday situations to start conversations about healthy friendships.
- Be a good model for your child in your everyday interactions and relationships.

Resources:

- <http://bit.ly/kidstalkaboutfriendsvideo>
 - This website provides a video designed by children to highlight the important aspects of healthy and unhealthy friendship traits.
- <http://bit.ly/beingagoodfriend>
 - Great resources designed for kids to help them explore the many layers of friendship.
- <http://bit.ly/traitsofgoodfriends>
 - This website has many articles and information about building relationships and good friendship traits.
- <http://bit.ly/girlsmakingfriends>
 - This website provides great resources to students and parents for building and maintaining healthy friendships.
- <https://bit.ly/kidsconflictresolution>
 - A website developed to help elementary aged students resolve conflict.



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How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse

As a parent or guardian, you are your child's first teacher. It is very important to teach your child(ren) about safety.

We have all heard of teaching our children about "Stranger Danger," but it has become more widely known that children are more likely to be sexually abused by someone they know. Teaching students about "Tricky People" is more effective because most strangers are not dangerous. Kids sometimes think that a stranger is going to be someone who is scary looking or scary sounding. However, if someone wants to harm a child they are not going to appear scary, they're going to be charming, have an enticing offer, and seem friendly and helpful. Instead of looking for a scary person, a child should look out for a person who is asking them to do something that doesn't sound or feel "right." They should be able to ask themselves if the adult is trying to get them to break their family's safety rules or trick them. Using the idea of tricky people helps the child focus on WHAT is happening in the situation rather than just on if the person is scary or not.

Did You Know?

- 95% of all childhood sexual abuse occurs with someone whom the child knows, and has a trusted, established relationship with, not by a stranger. This includes family members.
- According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, statistics show that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood, yet less than 35% of those assaults are reported to the authorities.
- Childhood sexual abuse occurs among ALL socioeconomic, educational, racial, and cultural groups in the United States and the World.
- The most vulnerable age for sexual abuse is between 9 and 12 years old. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports that 84% of sexually abused children are victimized before the age of 12.
- Sex offenders do not usually look "weird." There is no outward physical appearance to indicate an abuser, and they are experts at hiding their true selves. Sex offenders look "normal;" it's part of the con.
- In the majority of cases of childhood sexual abuse, most predators gain access to their victims through "grooming" of the children and/or parents. They may look for ways to create trust and relationships with you and your child. They may give your child extra attention or gifts, or offer extra lessons. They may work very hard to win you and your child over. They try to gain access to your child using enticement, secrecy, and deception.

Be Aware of People Seeking Access and Privacy with Your Child:

- A sex offender continually seeks ACCESS and PRIVACY with their intended targets as part of the grooming process. Monitor your child's relationships, especially if there seems to be an excessiveness involved, as in excessive time, treats, trips, lessons, etc. If you have any uneasy feelings about someone or something doesn't seem right, PAY ATTENTION to those feelings and investigate.

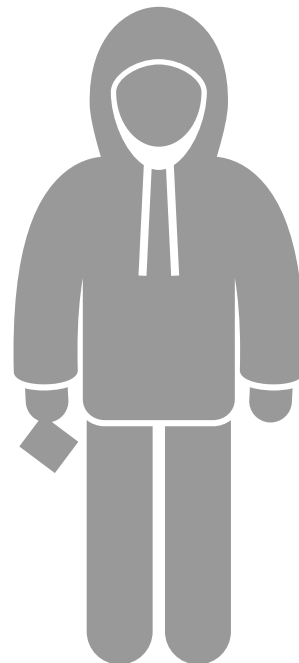
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How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse

Red Flags/Possible Warning Signs:

- Someone who continually tries to arrange time alone with your child, often with lots of reasons/excuses to exclude an adult.
- Someone who repeatedly lavishes your child with gifts, treats, attention, praise, affection, etc.
- Someone who often “offers” to help you with babysitting, taking your child somewhere, etc.
- Someone who insists on being physical with your child in the form of hugging, kissing, holding, wrestling, tickling, etc.
- Someone who uses guilt tactics if you or your child resists gifts, help, etc.
- Someone who makes inappropriate comments or jokes about your child’s or other childrens’ bodies.
- Someone who seems “too good to be true.”
- Someone who always invites your child or other children to spend time alone with them in their home.
- Someone who repeatedly ignores social, emotional, or physical boundaries or limits or seems to have no boundaries of their own.
- Someone who enters bathrooms or other areas where children are using the restroom or changing clothes or showering, and do not seem to respect the child’s privacy.
- Someone who undermines a parent’s authority by allowing the children (especially pre-teens) to engage in behaviors or activities that the parent would not allow.
- Someone who frequently volunteers to “rescue” a single parent, stepping in and taking care of parental duties, suggesting they can be a “role model” for the child.
- Someone who offers to teach your child something for free as a favor when they would normally be paid for the lessons.
- Someone who seems to prefer the company of children rather than adults on a consistent basis.
- Someone who asks your child to keep a secret.



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How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse

Prevention Tips:

- Have safety conversations with your kids on a regular basis. The intent is not to scare them, but empower them with “safety smarts”. Establish your family’s safety rules and review them often.
- Make sure your child memorizes his/her full name, address, and phone numbers of trusted adults.
- Children need to learn that not everyone can be trusted. Explain to your child who can be trusted among your family and friends, and throughout your community (police officers, store employees, etc.)
- Ask “what if” questions to help your child think through possible situations that could happen.
- Do not write your child’s name on belongings visible to others.
- Let your children decide their comfort level for affection. Do not force them to hug or kiss anyone to be polite, and this includes with family members.
- Talk about the differences between secrets and surprises. Tell your child that it’s ok to have surprises or secrets with you, but not keep secrets from you-especially with an older child or adult. A surprise is a secret that everyone will know eventually.
- Talk to your child about safe and unsafe touches. Safe touches could include high fives, a bath from a parent/guardian, and a medical checkup. Unsafe touches could include touches that hurt your child or make them uncomfortable in any way, even tight hugs. Unsafe touches also include someone touching or asking to see your child’s private parts that would be covered by a swimming suit.
- Teach your children the anatomically correct names for private body parts for two reasons. The first one is that if your child suddenly starts calling them something else, you will know to investigate. Second, if your child needs to report abuse, the person will understand that sexual abuse is occurring.
- Teach your child to listen to their gut feelings. If they know what it is and why they are having that feeling, they will know to get themselves out of the situation or tell an adult. It might be feeling yucky, scared, worried, nervous, etc. It might be an uh-oh feeling. Tell them they need to listen to it because it can signal danger.
- Teach your child to immediately get away from someone who is trying to trick them into doing something that makes them feel bad, or breaks a family safety rule and go straight to a trusted adult. Children need to learn that in safety situations, it is ok to tell an adult no and not comply with the adult. It may also help to address that sometimes tricky people will try to use threats like saying that parents will be mad at the child or something bad might happen to the parents if the child tells. This process is all about manipulation.
- Learn the potential signs of sexual abuse, including redness, swelling, or complaints of pain in the genital area. Abrupt changes in behavior, such as withdrawal, depression, anger, or rebellion can signal trouble. Report suspected abuse immediately to the police or your state or local child protective services agency.

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How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse

A 10-point General Safety Checklist for Dealing with People You Don't Know:

1. Be very careful with using headphones or texting while out in public. Teach your child that someone can gain the upper hand by catching them by surprise.
2. Make sure that you teach your children to stay alert at all times and visually scan their environment. Are there risky spots in your environment? Do not take chances. Children should also know that public places can be risky spots. Sometimes people are abducted or hurt in parking lots. Teach your children to look around and walk with their head up and looking around. Teach them that if they have a funny feeling while they are in a public place, they should listen to that and take action. They should go back into the store and ask for help or find help as soon as they can.
3. Don't be too polite, especially to someone you don't know. Teach your child that they don't have to help anyone just because they approach them and ask for something. Teach them to move away from the person and seek help from a trusted adult.
4. Disengaging is OK. Teach your child that if they are in an uncomfortable position with someone who is trying to trick them, they need to stop talking and go get help. The longer they talk to the person, the higher chance the person will be able to persuade them or get close to them.
5. Plan and know an exit strategy. Teach your children to get out of the danger zone immediately. Have a plan for what they will need to do once they move away from the tricky person in order to protect themselves.
6. Establish "Safe Places," places your child can go to if they experience an "uh oh" feeling.
7. Stay out in the open. Teach your child not to take secluded shortcuts where they cannot be openly seen.
8. Go "Bananas"!! If your child is grabbed or accosted, teach them to start screaming and yelling, "This is not my mom", or "I need help". Teach them to run, kick, fight, hit, bite, whatever it takes to get away from the tricky person.
9. Teach your child not to obey the tricky person. If they are trying to tell the child to be quiet or not run or yell, then your child should do all of that and more. Tricky people are looking for targets who will go along with whatever they say and may leave a child alone if they make a big scene.
10. Teach your child to never get into a vehicle with someone they don't know or even with someone they do know, unless the driver knows a code word established in your family or a parent told your child ahead of time. Your child should say no and go find a trusted adult.

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How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse

Safety Scenarios Practice:

- Ask your child to pretend he/she is at the playground. An adult approaches them and asks for help. What should they do?
- Ask your child to pretend he/she is walking home with friends. One friend wants to leave the group. What should they do? If the friend still leaves, ask your child what he/she would do?
- Using a parked car as a prop, have your child pretend someone is driving beside him/her. Have them practice refusing a ride or other offer and running in the opposite direction.
- Have your child practice what he/she would say if a family member or someone they know asks them for a hug.

Resources:

Safely Ever After website
www.safelyeverafter.com

Who Can You Trust? Safety Booklet
Children's Hospital of Michigan

[https://www.childrensdmc.org/docs/librariesprovider76/brochures/pcb-24-\(2\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](https://www.childrensdmc.org/docs/librariesprovider76/brochures/pcb-24-(2).pdf?sfvrsn=2)
(To view the booklet, please manually enter the web address to bring up the booklet).

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
www.Kidsmartz.org

Your local library may have children's book on this and other safety topics.

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Internet Safety

Helping your student stay safe online:

The internet has a lot of great things that can help students learn, explore, and connect in many different ways. It's a great way to keep students engaged and wondering about their world. There are also many things online that can be hazardous to your student. Depending on the device your student is using, there are likely to be parental controls that allow you to choose what your student is able to access and view. A simple Google search with the name of the device and "parental controls" will lead you to recommendations that can help you secure the devices in your home.

It is very important to note however that these parental controls will not stop everything. They may stop a majority of the bad things out there, but it is highly likely that your student, at some point, will come across things that they should not be exposed to. No matter how good the parental controls you have on your devices, it is still likely that undesirable content will get through. There are two solutions to this however. The first is to supervise what is being viewed, and the second is to have open dialogue with your child about what they are doing online.

The first solution is to supervise your student's online time as much as possible. While it's unrealistic or even undesirable to be looking over their shoulder the entire time they are online, you can make sure that you know the passwords to all of your student's devices. Be nosy about what they are doing online and who they are talking to. Check the web browser's history, chat logs, messages, emails, facetime calls, games they are playing, and apps they have installed. It can be helpful to not make this a secret activity. By making it public knowledge, your children will be more likely to talk to you first if they come across something inappropriate or unsafe. It may also help prevent them from accessing things that they shouldn't be looking at if they know you will find it later. Remember the purpose is not to find things to punish your student for, shame them, or make them feel embarrassed. It is to help keep them safe online.

The second solution is to talk to your student about what they are doing online. Be interested in the games they are playing, who they are talking to, what apps they are using, what videos they are watching, the things that make them laugh, and the things that may make them feel uncomfortable. If you remain accepting of their experience, curious, and empathetic, it's likely that your child will feel more comfortable talking to you about the hard stuff they might encounter online or in real life. If you care about the small things they are doing, it's more likely that they will come to you for the larger things. It's never too early to start talking to your child about online safety. Use the points in the student's brochure as a place to start. If your student is learning how to be safe online from an early age, they will be more likely to have gained the skills necessary to stay safe once they are on their own in the digital world.

District Tip Line: 780-7777 (SSSS)

Anonymous Hotline: 1-877-626-8203

Internet Safety

Healthy Online Habits for Kids

Part of helping keep your students safe online is helping them to balance their digital experiences with real world experiences. Students can learn a lot while they are online, but connected devices can be a black hole of attention and time.

3 tips to help tame screen time usage:

1. Establish Tech-Free Zones and Times.
 - a. No devices at the dinner table
 - b. No devices in the bedroom
 - c. No devices 1 hour before bedtime
2. Place consistent limits on hours per day of media use as well as types of media used.
 - a. The variety and quality of screen time varies depending on device and content on those devices. Help your student choose high quality content (check out www.common sense media.org for help with this) and help create a balance between screen time, physical activity, family interaction, and other activities that help develop your child's attention and creativity.
3. Practice engaging face-to-face and relaxing away from technology.
 - a. Video games, websites, apps, and other digital content are designed to keep your attention and be highly engaging. This can kick a child's mind into high gear and make it hard for them to disengage, slow down, and be engaged with the world around them. Toys at home, conversations with others, homework, playing outside are all inherently slower and less stimulating than digital content. These however help a child stay balanced and in sync with the real world around them. Practice engaging in conversations with your student, playing games with them, and helping your child find the excitement around "offline" activities, toys, and experiences.



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Internet Safety

Quick recommendations:

- Have frequent conversations about what your student is doing online and who they are talking to.
- Frequently check messages, chat logs, history, emails, games, and apps that are installed to monitor use and content.
- Encourage technology use in public areas of your house (e.g. not in the bedroom) to allow for easier supervision and monitoring.
- Set up “Parental Controls” on each device.
- Check reviews from TV shows, apps, movies, and video games on www.common sense media.org.
- Review Internet Safety Rules frequently to remind students not to share personal information with others online.
- Avoid becoming angry or banning screen time if your student finds something inappropriate online – this may make it less likely that they will come to you the next time they find something inappropriate.
- However, don't be afraid to take away screen time. Relationships and personal responsibilities should always come before device time.
- Encourage kindness online and help eliminate cyber bullying.

Resources:

- <https://www.common sense media.org>
 - Great reviews and content guides for a very wide variety of TV shows, apps, movies, and games. Content guides can help you determine if the media is appropriate for your child.
 - Also contains guides with information about educational apps, parent support regarding technology, and how to have a connected, healthy family.
- <https://jr.brainpop.com>
 - This website has great educational resources for students. The internet safety section of the website contains comics, quizzes, and activities about internet safety.
- <http://bit.ly/healthychildrenmedia>
 - Extensive, quality articles for adults about media use and online safety. Also includes a guide on how to create a media plan for your family.

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Personal Safety

Personal Information

All children should know their parents' or guardians' full names, their own home address, and at least one parent/guardian's phone number. This can be learned as early as preschool and should be reviewed regularly throughout a child's life. Come up with a fun memorization game to play with your children to encourage memorization of their personal information. Try singing the information to the tune of your child's favorite song!

In an Emergency

In a worst-case scenario if your child should go missing, the most effective tools for law enforcement are a current, quality photograph and detailed descriptive information. As a parent, you may feel you could easily answer all of their questions about your child, but in a stressful emergency your mind may not be as clear about details. It is wise to keep all of their statistics up-to-date and current and safely filed in a place that is easily accessible.


LifeTouch Photos

Partnering with the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children, LifeTouch offers a Smilesafe card that is created upon the completion of photo day at school. These cards are not ID cards for you to carry, but rather should be stored in a safe place that the parent/guardian can easily retrieve them in case of emergency. All students, whether they buy a photo package or not, will receive Smilesafe cards.



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Personal Safety



PLACE PHOTO HERE

Remember to use a high-resolution, head-and-shoulders photo of your child, and update it every 6 months.



PERSONAL INFORMATION

Address: _____
 City: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____
 State/Province/Region: _____ Country: _____



PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Sex: Female Male
 Race/Ethnicity: _____
 Hair Color: _____
 Eye Color: _____

Height	Weight	Date



DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

My child wears or has:
 Glasses Contacts Braces Birthmarks Piercings Tattoos
 Special Needs: _____
 Other: _____

Last Name: _____
 First/Middle Name: _____
 Nickname: _____
 Date of Birth: _____



MEDICAL INFORMATION

Physician's Name: _____	 Emergency Contact: _____	 Emergency Contact: _____
Office #: _____	Relationship: _____	Relationship: _____
Allergies/Conditions: _____	Cell #: _____	Cell #: _____
Medications: _____	Home #: _____	Home #: _____
_____ Blood Type: _____	Work #: _____	Work #: _____



FINGERPRINTS

Fingerprints are critical to a complete child identification record and should be taken by trained individuals, such as law-enforcement personnel.

	Left Thumb	Left Index	Left Middle	Left Ring	Left Pinky
	Right Thumb	Right Index	Right Middle	Right Ring	Right Pinky

Staying at Home Alone

Currently in the state of Kansas there is no clear legal definition as to what age a child is considered capable of spending time unmonitored. According to National SAFEKIDS, a general rule of thumb is to never leave a child under the age of 12 home alone. When determining if your child is ready to stay home alone, it is important to consider variables such as the child's age, maturity level, self-regulation, and their desire to be left alone.

The Kansas Department for Children and Families has these 8 factors to consider before leaving a child home alone:

1. **Chronological age:** Young children from 0-6 years should not be left alone for even short periods of time. Children 6-9 years should be left for only short periods, depending on their level of maturity and other factors such as a desire to be independent, ability to handle emergencies, etc. Children 10 and above probably can be left for somewhat longer periods depending on other factors as previously mentioned.
2. **Length of adult absence:** Consider how long the child will be alone. It is one thing for a parent to leave a child alone for a few minutes to run to the store. It is quite another thing to leave the child overnight while the parent is taking care of other obligations or attending events. Many elementary school-aged children are left alone after school until their parents get home from work and this is generally acceptable. However, consideration should be given to the other factors for each individual child.
3. **Maturity and intellectual ability:** Consider a child's ability to fend for themselves. Consider the maturity, general intellectual capability and problem solving skills of the child involved. Certainly children with developmental disabilities, emotional disturbances or behavior problems are at a greater risk when left alone.
4. **Emergencies:** Children should know their emergency information. Children left alone should know what they would do in case of a fire, tornado or a stranger at the door. These questions can be framed in the context of "What if...?" Children who are unaware of emergency procedures should be educated and able to comprehend the information before being left alone.
5. **Availability:** It is very important for children to know where parents or other responsible adults are and how to reach them in case of an emergency or should the child become fearful and need reassurance. Children who are left without knowledge of where or how their parents can be located are at risk.
6. **Structure:** Adults should examine the tasks and responsibilities given to children when they are alone. Some children are capable of being alone by themselves but when given the task of caring for a younger sibling, meal preparation or housework they can become overwhelmed and at risk.
7. **Anxiety:** Consider each individual child's fear level, insecurity, and emotional stability. Some children can become fearful about being left alone, while others the same age may not. This variable should be considered, as children should feel comfortable being unsupervised for periods of time. The more fearful the child is, the less likely he or she will be able to respond appropriately to emergency situations.
8. **Behavior:** Consider each individual child's behavior in the absence of their parents. Children who misbehave, vandalize, steal, intimidate neighbors, set fires, expose themselves to danger, etc. in the adults' absence are in need of more intensive supervision. Some children cannot manage their own behavior in the absence of adult guidance and need to have imposed limits and structure for their own safety.

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Staying at Home Alone

How can you help your child stay safe while they are home alone?

Here are suggestions for keeping children safe in the home:

- Consider the use of home security systems and automation equipment such as cameras and two-way talking features.
- Consider the use of touch screen door locks or smart locks.
- Set rules, expectations, and proper safety guidelines.
- Have emergency contact information readily available.
- Lock up anything that is dangerous or needs to be kept away from a child, including alcohol, firearms, poisonous or flammable materials, personal items that can be ruined, etc.
- Have a fire escape plan and plans for other emergencies.
- Have a first aid kit and all necessities readily available (food, water, etc.).
- Check in periodically.
- If you change plans or experience a delay, make sure to let kids know because they may worry.
- Consider structuring a child's time while home alone such as providing a list of chores or healthy activities the child could safely engage in while unsupervised.
- Be cautious about hidden keys avoiding common or obvious locations such as under a potted plant or door mat.
- Have children practice relevant scenarios so they will be able to handle unexpected situations or emergencies.
- Make sure your child doesn't tell others that they are home alone.
- Make sure your child understands not to answer unexpected phone calls or anyone who rings the doorbell.
- Restrict and monitor online access as a lot of child safety issues arise from internet usage. Bullying, inappropriate material, or simply a distraction can be caused by access to the internet. Get a device that can monitor WiFi and place safety rules on internet access. Also tell children when, where, and for how long they are allowed access.

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Staying at Home Alone

Resources:

- <http://bit.ly/stayinghomeages>
- <http://bit.ly/kidsathomealone>
- <http://bit.ly/homealonechildren>
- <http://bit.ly/homeafterschool>
- <http://bit.ly/stayinghomealone>

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Substance Abuse

Talking about medication safety and substance abuse with your student

In elementary school, the primary focus is on helping students recognize what healthy choices look like for their brains and bodies. During these years there is a focus on recognizing that drugs are harmful, bad, and that you should always say “No to drugs.” However, there is an effort to help students recognize that their bodies need healthy things to stay strong. Those healthy things obviously don’t include drugs and alcohol, but they do include exercising, reading, trying new things, creativity, talking with others, practicing new skills, and lots of other ideas that can help their brains and bodies get stronger. In your student’s school, detailed information about drug use and the effects drugs have on people isn’t taught. Instead, students are taught:

- * Drugs are bad. Stay far away.
- * Talking with your parents about your thoughts and feelings is really important.
- * Keep your brain and body healthy.

When taught and practiced early in life, these ideas provide a solid foundation for students throughout their development. With this foundation in place it becomes much easier to make healthy decisions regarding drugs and alcohol as students get older.

Role Models

Having good role models is a huge piece of keeping your student drug free. Keeping your students engaged in the community and surrounding them with positive peers lessens the risk that they will be exposed to harmful experiences. Direct supervision or frequent check-ins while your student is away from home can help keep your student out of troubling situations. But most of all, having conversations with your children about their experiences, their friends, the things they enjoy, the things that scare them, and the things that they worry about will open up doors that may otherwise stay closed in your student’s heart. If they can trust you with the small things, it’s much more likely that they will come to you with the big stuff. Practice empathy and acceptance of your child’s experience; not necessarily acceptance of their behavior, but acceptance of the thoughts and feelings that motivated the behavior. When you know WHY your child did something it will be much easier to help prevent it from happening again.

If you smoke or drink, talk to your student about how drinking and smoking are adult choices and that kids aren’t allowed to use those things.

Online Challenges

A recent trend has been for young people to challenge each other online to different “challenges.” Sometimes these “challenges” are for a great cause like the “ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.” However, other times these include consuming something or doing something that can put them in unsafe situations. Some of the challenges have encouraged viewers to eat laundry soap pods, stuff their mouth full of marshmallows, eat an excessive amount of food items in a time period, slip on a banana peel, swallow cinnamon, pour hot water on someone, and probably many more things since this information was written. Many of these online “challenges” are pushing the limits of what is safe in an effort to get more views, likes, or shares. Talk with your student about what they are doing online and about how online “challenges” can be potentially unsafe.

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Substance Abuse

Signs of Drug Use:

- Sudden changes in your child's behaviors: they might be more irritable, angry, sad, depressed, withdrawn, or erratic
- Secretive about activities or who they are spending time with
- Loss of interest in things that they used to enjoy
- Loss of interest in family activities
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Decrease in the amount they communicate with parents or other loved ones

What to do:

All of the above signs of potential drug use can also indicate other mental health challenges that your student may be experiencing. Depression, anxiety, bullying, and a host of other things can lead your student to have some of the difficulties mentioned above. The most important thing is to pay attention to these early warning signs, take them seriously, and get help. It may be beneficial to take your student to your family doctor and even seek out mental health counseling through the school district's HELP Clinic or local mental health center. Ask your school counselor about the concerns you have for your student. They can also help identify local resources that can help your student.

Resources:

- <https://drugfacts4youngpeople.com/>
 - o Great website with comics for students and information for parents about drugs and drug use prevention.
- <https://www.samhsa.gov>
 - o Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This website is loaded with information about various mental health difficulties and has a lot of information about drug abuse and prevention. Also includes a Treatment Services Locator to help locate supportive services in your area.
- <http://bit.ly/jocomentalhealthinfo>
 - o Website for Johnson County Mental Health. They provide walk-in initial visits and a 24/7 crisis hotline.
- <https://www.drugabuse.gov>
 - o Comprehensive website containing a lot of information about drugs, alcohol, and addiction.

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Substance Abuse

E-Cigarettes and Vaping: What Parents Need to Know

E-cigarettes have become very popular. These devices (also called e-cigs, vape pens, e-hookah, e-cigars, mechanical mods, and pod systems) are not a safe alternative to cigarette smoking. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports actions to prevent children and youth from using or being exposed to the vapor from e-cigarettes. This fact sheet offers facts and tips for parents to help address e-cigarette use and exposure.



Common types of e-cigarettes

Health Harms

- The solution and vapor from e-cigarettes contain harmful chemicals, some of which cause cancer
- The nicotine in e-cigarettes is addictive and can harm brain development
- E-cigarettes are not recommended as a way to quit smoking
- In some cases, e-cigarettes have exploded, causing burns or fires
- Exposure to secondhand vapor from e-cigarettes is harmful to growing lungs
- Long-term health effects on users and bystanders are still unknown
- E-cigarettes can be used to smoke or “vape” marijuana, herbs, waxes, and oils

Dangers to Youth

- E-cigarettes are the most commonly-used tobacco product among teens: in 2018, over 20% of high school students reported having used e-cigarettes in the last 30 days
- Youth are uniquely vulnerable to the nicotine in e-cigarettes because their brains are still developing
- Youth who use e-cigarettes are more likely to smoke traditional cigarettes in the future
- Children are exposed to e-cigarette advertising in the media, online, and in magazines and billboards
- E-cigarettes appeal to children because they come in fun flavors like fruit, bubble-gum and candy
- Although it is illegal for e-cigarettes to be sold to youth under age 18, they can be ordered online

Risk of Poisoning

- E-cigarette solutions can poison children and adults through swallowing or skin contact
- A young child can be killed by very small amounts of nicotine: less than half a teaspoon. Because of this, liquid nicotine is required to be sold in childproof packaging
- Symptoms of nicotine poisoning include sweating, dizziness, vomiting, and increased heart rate.
- Calls to poison control centers related to e-cigarettes have skyrocketed in the last 5 years
- If exposure to liquid nicotine occurs, call the local poison center at 1-800-222-1222

Recommendations for Parents

- The best way to protect your children is to never smoke or vape in the house, in the car, or in places that children spend time. Talk with your doctor about ways to help you quit tobacco products
- Talk to your children about the dangers of e-cigarettes, and make sure you can identify them
- If you are an e-cigarette user, always keep e-cigarettes and liquid nicotine locked and out of the reach of children. Protect your skin if handling e-liquid

For more information about these devices, including statistics and citations, please visit

<http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/ENDS.html>

Visit the AAP Richmond Center online at: www.richmondcenter.org

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Transportation Safety

How to help your child get to school safely:

We all know that what children do in school is very important, but getting to school is also important. Some children live near the school, but others have to walk long distances, ride the school bus, or take public transportation. How can you help your child be safe on the way to school?

Here are some things you can do:

- If your child rides the bus, tell your child to sit quietly in the seat. Children should follow the directions of the driver.
- No matter the form of transportation, he or she should never play by the curb. Children should stand away from the road.
- If your children walk to school, make sure they are with friends. They should walk on the main sidewalks and not take shortcuts through woods or empty lots.
- Teach your children how to cross the street. Make sure they know how to follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.
- Teach your children not to talk to strangers.
- Give your children a whistle to blow if they are in danger. A whistle will attract attention and will alert individuals in the surrounding area.
- Make sure your child uses the seat belt if you drive to school, even if it's nearby. Remember that most accidents occur within 10 miles of home.
- If your child bikes to school, make sure he or she wears a helmet. Bikers should also wear bright, light colored clothing, and when it is getting dark, they should wear markers that reflect light.
- If your child rides a bicycle to school, teach them how to be predictable and avoid sudden movements. Showing off by stunting or weaving into traffic is extremely dangerous.
- Motorized bicycles or scooters should not be used by students as a transportation method to and from school.
- Know your school's arrival and dismissal procedures for car lines, walkers, bus riders and daycare vans.
- Consider moving your child's booster seat so they exit the vehicle on the curb side of the car.
- Always report concerns you have to your school administrator.
- Model respect of school rules, expectations, and procedures. Teach your children how to follow rules and procedures and the importance of meeting expectations.

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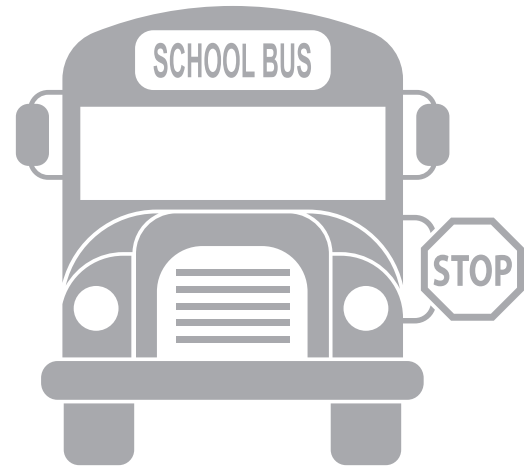
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Transportation Safety

Safety Activities:

For young children, help your child practice crossing the street. Teach your child to:

1. Cross at the corner and in crosswalks.
2. Look all ways before crossing.
3. Watch for turning vehicles.
4. Stay in the crosswalks.
5. If there is a traffic light, cross only when the facing light is green or when the walk sign is on.
6. Always follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.



For older children, talk frankly with your children and teach them to be aware of Tricky People.

Always call the school if your child will be absent. Make sure the school knows how to contact you if your child does not show up. Valuable time in looking for a lost child can be saved if there is quick contact between the school and a parent.

Tell your child how to contact you in a hurry and make sure they have your cell number. Explain that he/she should leave detailed messages if there is an emergency. Teach your child when and how to call 911.

Arrange for others to take your children in an emergency or if you are going to be late. Be sure to list those individuals on your child's enrollment sheet and communicate this with the school.

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Transportation Safety

Child Passenger Safety:

- Kansas Law requires children ages 4-7 be secured in a booster seat.
- Children under age 1 should ride in a rear-facing car seat.
- Children ages 1, 2 & 3 may ride in a front-facing car seat.
- All children ages 4, 5, 6 and 7 are required to ride in a booster seat unless:
 - o They weigh more than 80 pounds
 - o Are taller than 4 feet 9 inches
 - o Only a lap belt is available
- Children ages 8 through 13 must be protected by a seat belt.

Resources:

- <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/LearnPtnrs/safe.html>
- <https://www.ksdot.org/burrrail/bike/biking/bicyclesafety.asp>
- <http://www.kansashighwaypatrol.org/293/Child-Passenger-Safety>
- <http://www.kansasboosterseat.org/images/Booster-Flyer-2017.png>
- <http://departments.olatheschools.com/transportation/safety-regulations/>
- <http://departments.olatheschools.com/transportation/files/2016/04/safetyexpectations.pdf>
- <https://icsw.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/kidsandbikesafetyweb/>



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Vandalism

What is vandalism?

- Vandalism is the act of intentionally destroying or damaging public or private property.
- Vandalism is a misuse of community resources and robs others of the opportunity to enjoy those resources.
- Vandalism is disrespectful to the community and hurtful to individuals.
- Vandalism is an abuse of key positions in our school community such as custodial staff, maintenance engineers, and those who care for the grounds (groundskeepers).
- Vandalism is a violation of the Olathe Schools Code of Conduct.
- Vandalism is against the law.
- The Olathe Public Schools Code of Conduct defines vandalism as: The willful or malicious destruction or defacement of any property. Vandalism includes, but is not limited to, breaking windows, writing on walls, destroying restroom fixtures, or the use of paint or like materials to deface any portion of the interior or exterior of school property and lawns and/or landscaping, including the furnishings and equipment housed within or upon the school property.

What does vandalism look like?

- Writing on desks, walls, bathroom stalls, playground equipment and even books.
- Misusing playground equipment such as destroying basketball nets, soccer goal nets, wrapping swings around the top pole and any action that prevents others from using playground equipment.
- Misusing flexible seating and classroom fidgets.
- Filling toilets with toilet paper or paper towels.
- Intentionally or unintentionally placing bodily fluids outside of toilets.
- Plugging sinks and water fountains.
- Graffiti and other property defacement.



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Vandalism

What does vandalism look like in the Olathe Public Schools?

- Breaking headphones.
- Drawing on desks and walls.
- Picking on or scraping desk edges.
- Marking on or destroying teacher supplies.
- Using erasers to make marks on walls.
- Writing in books and on teacher's materials.
- Tearing name tags off desks or other teaching areas.
- Destroying bulletin boards.
- Destroying fidgets.
- Ruining student work.
- Placing human waste on floors, walls, and bathroom stalls.
- Littering bathroom floors with toilet paper or trash.
- Writing on bathroom stalls using profanity and hurtful statements.
- Plugging sinks and water fountains.

What to do?

- Talk with your child about the importance of taking pride in our school community and the role we all play in respecting property around us.
- If your child is involved in vandalism work together with the school to resolve the situation and walk through consequences together.
- Consider utilizing outside resources such as individual therapy, group therapy or even volunteering opportunities that teach community involvement.
- Model community respect and talk openly with your child when the topic comes up.

Resources:

- <http://schools.olatheschools.com/buildings/prairietrail/files/2016/09/Code-of-Student-Conduct-16-17.pdf>
- <https://bridgingthegap.org/volunteer/>

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Youth Suicide

Youth Suicide is a topic that is uncomfortable for many to talk about. However, awareness and information are powerful preventative factors that can help keep our children safe.

Youth suicide has been described as the “silent epidemic” of death in children ages 10-24 years-old. Many Kansans are not aware that the rate of deaths by suicide in Kansas youth, ages 10-24 years-old, is 1 death by suicide every 4.62 days. Even young children can express thoughts of suicidal ideation.

On May 13, 2016, the Kansas Legislature adopted the Jason Flatt Act (SB323) in memory of Cady Housh, who was an Olathe student. Kansas was the 19th state in the United States to pass the bill into law.

The Jason Flatt Act (SB323) major components are:

- Suicide prevention training for all school district personnel.
- Training materials provided to staff under the Jason Flatt Act are available to parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the Olathe School District.
- Training materials include a minimum of 1 hour of training each calendar year based on programs approved by the KS State Board of Education.
- A building crisis plan developed for each school building including: Steps for recognizing suicidal ideation, appropriate methods of intervention, and a crisis recovery plan.
(From The Jason Foundation Website www.jasonfoundation.com)



Facts & Stats:

According to the latest CDC's WISQARS National Data Reporting (2016):

- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 10-14 in Kansas.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 12-18 (middle and high school ages) in Kansas.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for college-age youth ages 18-22 in Kansas.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading overall cause of death in Kansas for youth aged 10-24.

In ages 10-14, there has been an alarming increase of more than 150% in suicides since 1981, making it the third leading cause of death for that age group.

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Youth Suicide

More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease, **COMBINED**.

Each day in our nation, there are an average of over 3,470 attempts by young people grades 9-12. If these percentages are additionally applied to grades 7 & 8, the numbers would be higher.

(From The Jason Foundation Website www.jasonfoundation.com)

Warning Signs:

Four out of five teens who attempt suicide give clear warning signs.

Warning Signs of suicidal ideation include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Talking about suicide.
- Making statements about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless.
- A deepening depression.
- Preoccupation with death.
- Taking unnecessary risks or exhibiting self-destructive behavior.
- Out of character behavior.
- A loss of interest in the things one cares about.
- Visiting or calling people one cares about.
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- Giving prized possessions away.



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Youth Suicide

Related Factors:

► Stressors:

Suicide does not typically have a sudden onset. There are a number of stressors that can contribute to a youth's anxiety and unhappiness, increasing the possibility of a suicide attempt. A number of them are described below.

Depression, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse:

- One of the most telling risk factors for youth is mental illness. Mental or addictive disorders are associated with 90% of suicides. One in ten youth suffers from mental illness serious enough to be impaired, yet fewer than 20% receive treatment. In fact, 60% of those who complete suicide suffer from depression. Alcohol and drug use, which clouds judgment, lowers inhibitions, and worsens depression, are associated with 50-67% of suicides.

Aggression and Fighting:

- Recent research has identified a connection between interpersonal violence and suicide. Suicide is associated with fighting for both males and females, across all ethnic groups, and for youth living in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Home Environment:

- Within the home, a lack of cohesion, high levels of violence and conflict, a lack of parental support and alienation from and within the family contribute to suicidal ideation.

Community Environment:

- Youth with high levels of exposure to community violence are at serious risk for self-destructive behavior. This can occur when a youth models his or her own behavior after what is experienced in the community. Additionally, more youth are growing up without making meaningful connections with adults, and therefore are not getting the guidance they need to help them cope with their daily lives.

School Environment:

- Youth who are struggling with school and perceive their teachers as not understanding them or caring about them, or have poor relationships with their peers have increased vulnerability for suicidal ideation.

Previous Attempts:

- Youth who have attempted suicide are at risk to do it again. In fact, they are eight times more likely than youth who have never attempted suicide to make another suicide attempt.

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Anonymous Hotline: 1-877-626-8203

Youth Suicide

Cultural Factors:

- Changes in gender roles and expectations, issues of conformity and assimilation, and feelings of isolation and victimization can all increase the stress levels and vulnerability of individuals. Additionally, in some cultures, suicide may be seen as a rational response to shame.

Family History/Stresses:

- A history of mental illness and suicide among immediate family members place youth at greater risk for suicide. Exacerbating these circumstances are changes in family structure such as death, divorce, remarriage, moving to a new city, and financial instability.

Self-Mutilation:

- Self-mutilation or self-harm behaviors include head banging, cutting, burning, biting, erasing, and digging at wounds. These behaviors are becoming increasingly common among youth, especially female youth. While self-injury typically signals the occurrence of broader problems, the reason for this behavior can vary from peer group pressure to severe emotional disturbance. Although help should be sought for any individual who is causing self-harm, an appropriate response is crucial. Although most self-mutilation behaviors are not suicide attempts, it is important to be cautious when reaching out to the youth and not to make assumptions.

Situational Crises:

- Approximately 40% of youth suicides are associated with an identifiable precipitating event, such as the death of a loved one, loss of a valued relationship, parental divorce, or sexual abuse. Typically, these events coincide with other risk factors.

► Elevated Risk Factors:

Although there is no such thing as a suicidal type of young person, the statistics on youth suicide do suggest that there are certain behaviors or characteristics that can alert to a possible elevated risk of suicidal thought. Some of the most common elevated risk factors are listed below:

Perfectionist Personalities:

- The pressure, often on oneself or from others, to be perfect may cause feelings of inadequacies. These young people are often the high achievers and/or school leaders that overextend themselves to exhaustion. These youth set high expectations for themselves and if those expectations become impossible to achieve, depression and eventual thoughts of suicide may occur.

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Youth Suicide

GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning):

- These young people are considered to be at high risk for suicidal behavior because they are the targets of a great deal of victimization. They report not feeling safe in their schools, feeling confused about their sexuality and suffering some form of verbal or physical abuse.

Learning Disabled:

- Youth who constantly struggle to understand concepts that are easily understood by others can become depressed and feel defeated. Their struggle to perform in school is present for them daily. Youth with learning disabilities have twice the risk of emotional distress, and females with learning disabilities were at twice the risk of attempting suicide and for violence involvement than their peers.

Loners:

- These young people appear to have no social or emotional support systems.

Low Self- Esteem:

- Feelings of worthless, shame, overwhelming guilt, self-hatred, “everyone would be better off without me” can lead to an elevated risk of suicidal ideation.

Depressed Youth:

- 90% of those who complete suicide suffer from undiagnosed and treatable mental health issues.

Students in Trouble:

- A recent literature review of youth corrections shows that detention has a profoundly negative impact on young people’s mental and physical well-being, their education, and their employment. One psychologist found that for one-third of incarcerated youth diagnosed with depression, the onset of the depression occurred after they began their incarceration. Another psychologist suggests that poor mental health, and the conditions of confinement together conspire to make it more likely that incarcerated teens will engage in suicide and self-harm.

Abused, Molested, or Neglected:

- Abused youth in a study by the American Medical Association showed significantly greater risk factors for youth suicide, including family disintegration, diagnoses of depression, disruptive behavior disorders, substance abuse, and dependence.

Abusers of Drugs and Alcohol:

- Alcohol and drug use clouds judgment, lowers inhibitions, and worsens depression. In turn, alcohol use can heighten the risk considerably.

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Youth Suicide

Dos and Don'ts:

If you have noticed a pattern of behavior in a young person that is consistent with some of the risk factors and warning signs described in subsequent sections, it is time to take action. Here are some tips on the next steps to take:

Call Your School Counselor for Assistance:

- If you are aware that your child or family has risk factors, alerting your school counselor to support your child at school, and helping your family secure community resources is an important first step. You can also consult with a family physician or community counselor.

Remain Calm:

- Though you may be shocked and overwhelmed, it is important to try to stay relaxed. By remaining calm, you are creating a comfortable atmosphere for the person who is suicidal to open up to you and reach out for your help. Do not give up hope or begin to panic. If an individual is opening up to you, he or she must trust you and feel comfortable with you. Do not doubt yourself in the situation. It is important that the child have someone with them, so be sure to not leave him or her alone.

Be Prepared to Talk About Suicide:

- Four out of five completed suicides gave clear warning signs before the attempt. While death is an uncomfortable subject for many people, it is important to be able to talk about it openly and honestly. There should be no fear in talking to young people about suicide. By discussing it, you are not putting the idea in their head or increasing the likelihood of suicidal behavior. An open discussion can help decrease some of the anxiety experienced by suicidal youth and come as a relief to them that someone else cares about them and wants to help them. Talking about suicide can help youth see the other options they have. Further, asking if they are suicidal can be helpful because some youth view this question as permission to feel the way they do, making it easier for them to open up.

In talking to a young person, it is important not to minimize or dismiss their problems. Instead, try to provide them with reassurance. Be sure to acknowledge their fear, sadness, and other emotions, and tell them you care about them and want to help them. Also, it is important to keep from encouraging feelings of guilt or judgement.

Since people who are contemplating suicide feel so alone and helpless, the most important thing to do, if you think a friend or loved one is suicidal, is to communicate with him or her openly and frequently. Make it clear that you care; stress your willingness to listen.

- Your first question should be whether or not he or she is having suicidal thoughts.
- If the answer is yes, then ask the individual if he or she has a plan of how to do it.
- If the youth answers yes again, ask if he or she has obtained whatever is needed to do it, and if so, if a time has been determined.
- Getting the answers to these questions can help you evaluate the mindset of the youth and get him or her the necessary help.

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Youth Suicide

Be Prepared To Act:

- When a suicidal youth wants to open up, don't be afraid to get involved and take action to get them help. If someone is suicidal, he or she must not be left alone. Try to get the person to seek help immediately from his or her doctor, from the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911. It is also important to limit the person's access to firearms, medications, or other lethal methods for suicide.

Do Not Try to Play The Hero:

- Though it is important to act immediately, it is better not to act alone. Helping a suicidal person is not easy. It can take a lot of time and energy and bring forth an array of emotions. Having the support of others can help you help someone else. Additionally, you should never attempt to physically take away a weapon. You do not want to put yourself in a dangerous situation, nor do you want to aggravate the suicidal person.

Do Not Promise Confidentiality:

- Though an individual may ask for a guarantee of confidentiality, try to avoid making this promise, and be prepared to break it if you do. Keeping a child's promise is not as important as saving a child's life. Though a child may be hurt and angry initially, you must remember that he or she is unable to think clearly right now, and realize it may be time to seek professional help.

Don't Fall into the "Not My Child Syndrome:"

- It is all too easy to think of suicide as a terrible tragedy that happens to other people's families. We want to believe that children who experience suicidal thoughts come from dysfunctional families that may have a history of family violence and drug abuse. While it is true that these factors increase the risk of suicide, it is important to understand that suicide crosses all racial, economic, social, and ethnic lines. No one is automatically exempted. All of us need to be aware of the warning signs of "suicidal thought" and know how to respond if the behavior of the youth causes concern.

Protective Factors:

According to Dr. Robert Brooks (2014), three major protective factors against youth suicide are to:

1. Build Resiliency in your child.
2. Connect students to their Islands of Competence.
3. Help students form positive relationships with trusted adults.

Building Resiliency:

- Resiliency is the ability to "bounce back" from hard, difficult, or overwhelming circumstances. Helping your child understand that all humans fail and all humans have difficult, disappointing, or devastating circumstances happen to them, can help offer the perspective they are not alone. Resiliency is the emotional ability to use coping skills to not stay stuck feeling bad and to "bounce back." This does not mean that we don't feel sad, mad, overwhelmed, defeated, etc. It means that we can identify and use coping skills to help us move forward.

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Connecting to Islands of Competence:

- Help your child understand and discover their own personal strengths and weaknesses. Help them connect to and participate in activities that they are good at and that they enjoy. Islands of Competence are different for every person. Choose activities that your child has a genuine interest and affinity for and not just activities in which friends participate or that was a preferred activity for a parent. Chances are your child will make friends exploring their islands of competence.

Connecting to Trusted Adults:

- Trusted adults are safe and caring adults both inside and outside of the family unit. Trusted adults help children build important coping skills and when a child experiences emotional upset, due to difficult life circumstances, trusted adults support them by helping them through the challenge, not avoid it. This builds competency in problem-solving, resiliency, and coping skills.

Resources:

If you or a loved one is experiencing a crisis, call 911.

If you or a friend need to talk with a counselor for help or for resources available in your area, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call will be routed to the nearest crisis center to you.

Johnson County Mental Health

Open Access: Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-2 p.m. @ 1125 W. Spruce. Olathe, KS 66061

Main Phone: 913-826-4200

After hours Emergency: 913-286-0156

The University of Kansas Health Systems-Marillac Campus

24/7 Availability @ 8000 W. 127th Street, Overland Park, KS 66213

913-951-4300

Shawnee Mission Medical Center Emergency Room

24/7 Availability @ 9100 W. 74th Street, Shawnee Mission, KS 66204

Main phone: 913-676-2000

Emergency Room phone: 913-676-2218

Headquarters Counseling Center

Open Access Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-4 p.m. @ 211 E 8th Street, Suite C, Lawrence, KS 66044 \$10 Fee

24/7 Phone Availability, Chat Support available Tuesday-Saturday, 8 p.m.-11 p.m.

Main Phone: 785-841-2345

The Jason Foundation Website

www.jasonfoundation.com

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Notification Statement of Non-discrimination:

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