



COLUMBUS HUMANITIES ARTS & TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

Re: Missing Children Protocol and Policy

Date: January 2019

Dear Parents and Families,

There are more than 700 missing children in the state of Ohio, and schools are required to participate in a state-wide program to help identify and recover these children. There are several factors to the program, most of which involve the enrollment and transfer process. Details on this policy can be found on the school's website under section 252: <https://columbushumanitiesata.org/resources/> (it is also attached at the end of this document).

Please review the attached informational pamphlet ("Child Safety Is More Than A Slogan") to learn more about the potential dangers and warning signs about keeping safe from those who wish to harm or abduct our children. Should you have any questions about this program, please contact the front desk at the number at the footer of this letter. Thanks for your cooperation and stay safe!

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Adams', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Alexander Adams, M.Ed

Head of School, Columbus Humanities K-8
Regional Vice President, Accel Schools

WHO DARES WINS

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Alexander Adams, M.Ed – Head of School

CHILD SAFETY IS MORE THAN A SLOGAN

“Stranger-Danger” Warnings Not Effective at Keeping Kids Safer

By Nancy A. McBride, National Safety Director
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®
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“Stranger danger” — the phrase is so pervasive in our culture it has become part of the lexicon. The media and other professionals often use this phrase as a slogan to try to educate children about how to avoid dangerous situations and individuals. When well-intentioned professionals and parents/guardians use the phrase “stranger danger” it may mistakenly convey only strangers harm children. The message of “never talk to strangers” does not fully educate children about how to stay safer.

What does “stranger danger” really mean, and do children benefit from an outdated and misleading message? Here’s what we have learned about the “stranger-danger” concept.

- Children don’t get it
- Adults don’t practice it
- Children need to know how to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations
- Adults need to know risks to children are greater from someone they know

This is why the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) does not support the “stranger-danger” message. The majority of cases have shown most children are not taken by a stranger, but rather are abducted by someone they know.

When questioned, children will often describe a “stranger” as someone who is “ugly or mean.” They do not perceive attractive or friendly people as “strangers.” If someone talks to a child or is even around a child more than once, that person may lose his or her “stranger” status to the child. The child may then think he or she “knows” that person. Children also want to be helpful, thrive on adult approval, and respond to adult authority. So if someone with ill intent asks a child to perform a task or tells a child something has happened to a loved one, there is a good chance the child may be tricked into going with that person.

The “stranger-danger” message becomes even more confusing for children because they may not be able to tell by looking at someone whether that individual is “good” or “bad.” Wouldn’t it be great if we could simply recognize and point out the “bad” people to our children? Adults often break the rule of “don’t talk to strangers” in a number of different situations. Adults, however, have the benefit of experience, judgment, and decision-making skills. Children do not. And even adults, at times, may misperceive potential dangers. So if we are not always able to identify “bad” people, we certainly cannot expect our children to be able to do so.

Children need to be empowered with positive messages and safety skills that will not only build their self-esteem and self-confidence but also help keep them safer. Children need to learn how to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations. If they become involved in a dangerous situation, children need to learn effective steps they can take to remove themselves from the situation. Children do not need to be told the world is a scary place. They see it through a variety of media, hear it from adults, or may even personally experience violence. Children need to know their parents, guardians, or other trusted adults — people whom the parents/guardians have come to rely on and with whom they and their children feel comfortable — are there for them if they are in trouble. Children also need to know the majority of adults in their lives are good people.

When we tell children to “never talk to strangers,” we have effectively eliminated a key source of help for them. If they are lost they may be surrounded by many rescuers who could help them. If children perceive these people as “strangers,” they may not speak or reach out to them. There have been cases in which a child’s rescue was delayed because the lost child was afraid to call out to the “strangers” when rescuers were nearby. Parents and

guardians cannot be with their children every second of the day. We need to give our children “safety nets,” the plans and people you’ve put in place to contact so your children know there is always someone available to help them. These individuals may include uniformed law-enforcement or security officers and store/business personnel wearing nametags.

The safety messages need to be tailored to specific circumstances, such as being lost outside. Parents and guardians should teach children to

- Stay put and not wander away from where they first became lost. Staying where they are increases children’s chances of being found unless that place becomes too dangerous because of severe weather or another potentially threatening situation. In that case children need to go to the nearest safe spot and wait for rescuers.
- Make noise either by yelling, blowing a whistle, or attracting attention in some other way. This may help bring someone to their rescue.

Parents and guardians should make child safety part of a child’s everyday life in a reassuring way by practicing these skills. Whether it is checking first with a trusted adult, taking a friend, or avoiding and getting out of potentially dangerous situations, there are easy “what-if” scenarios you may practice with your children to make sure they understand and “get it.” Make outings to a mall or the park a “teachable moment” to make sure your children understand the safety messages and are able to use them in real-life situations. Children will begin to learn what to do if they become lost or are in danger by practicing these “what-if” scenarios with you on a regular basis. You can also use these opportunities to reassure your children you are there for them, and remind them there are other people who also are able to help them.

NCMEC believes it is time for everyone to retire use of the “stranger-danger” message. By realizing child safety is much more than a slogan, we can then arm our children with relevant, age-appropriate messages to help empower and protect them from potentially dangerous situations. Having strong parental, guardian, and caregiver supervision and attention is vital to keeping our children safer.

For more information about child-safety topics, visit our website at www.missingkids.com or contact us at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678).

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252 Missing and Absent Children

The Board believes in the importance of trying to decrease the number of missing children. Therefore, efforts will be made to identify possible missing children and notify the proper adults or agencies.

A student at the time of his/her initial entry to school shall present to the person in charge of admission any records given to him/her by the elementary or secondary school s/he most recently attended and a certification of birth* issued pursuant to Section 3705.05 of the Ohio Revised Code or a comparable certificate or certification issued pursuant to the statutes of another state, territory, possession, or nation. Within twenty-four (24) hours of the student's entry into the school, a school official shall request the student's official records from the elementary or secondary school s/he most recently attended. If the school the student claims to have most recently attended indicates that it has no records of the student's attendance or the records are not received within fourteen (14) days of the date of request, or the student does not present a certification of birth or comparable certificate or certification from another state, territory, possession, or nation, the Principal of the School shall notify the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the area where the student resides of this fact and of the possibility that the student may, be a missing child, as this term is defined in Section 2901.30 of the Ohio Revised Code.

If the School receives notification from a law enforcement agency that it has made a missing child report for a current or a former student, then the School must mark the student's records so that whenever a copy of, or information regarding the records is requested, any School official responding to the request is alerted that the records are those of a reported missing child. In addition, when a request of records or information is received, the person in charge of admission must immediately report the request to the law enforcement agency that notified the School that the student might be a missing child. When forwarding a copy of, or information from the student's records in response to a request, the School must do so in such a way that the receiving school is not able to discern that the student's records are marked. But, the School must retain the mark in the records until notified that the student is no longer a missing child. Upon notification by a law enforcement agency that the student is no longer a missing child, the School must remove the mark from the student's records in such a way that it would be impossible to tell that the records were ever marked. See **Appendix 252-A** for the Missing Child Reporting and Marking Form.

The School will also immediately give notice of the fact of a missing child to the Ohio Attorney General's missing children clearinghouse. The School will also assist parents in the case of a missing student by coordinating with the missing children clearinghouse.

Informational programs for students, parents, and community members relative to missing children issues and matters are available from the School, including information regarding the fingerprinting program. The School's informational programs are based on assistance and materials provided by the Ohio Attorney General's missing child education program.

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance at School rests with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). Parent(s)/guardian(s) must notify the School on the day a student is absent unless previous notification has been given in accordance with school procedure for excused absences. The person in charge of



admissions is also required to notify a student's parents, custodial parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person responsible for him/her when the student is absent from school. The parent or other responsible person shall be notified by telephone or written notice shall be mailed on the same day that the student is absent. Parents or other responsible persons shall provide the School with their current home and/or work telephone numbers and home addresses, as well as emergency telephone numbers.

The procedure for absences is as follows:

1. A parent must call the School to inform the School that his/her child or children will be absent from School. This phone call should take place within the first hour that School is in session.
2. If a parent fails to call the School as prescribed in Part A, School personnel will call the parent to inform him/her of the student's absence.
3. In those cases where telephone communication could not be made, School personnel will initiate a written communication to the home of the legal guardian the day of the student's absence.

*May substitute any of the following documents for a birth certificate: 1) a passport or attested transcript showing the date and place of birth of the child; 2) an attested transcript of a birth certificate; 3) an attested transcript of a baptism certificate or other religious record showing the date and place of birth of the child; 4) an attested transcript of a hospital record showing date and place of birth, or 5) a birth affidavit.

R.C. §109.65; R.C. §.3313.96; R.C. §3313.672