Training parents to protect their children from abduction, kidnapping, or sexual molestation
By Alan J. Robinson

The author discusses the role hospital security directors should play in assuring parents to be ever vigilant in protecting their children from child predators.

For decades, children have been sent out the door with a well-intended parental admonishment, designed to galvanize their children against potential harm. “…And don’t talk to strangers!” Parents are now being taught that this advice, in addition to other tactics commonly associated with “good parenting practices,” are, in fact, the worst approach they can take to protect their children.

WHAT DOES A “STRANGER” LOOK LIKE?

Most children, when asked to describe a stranger, will draw an individual possessing a “Darth Vader,” satanic look—i.e., evil faces, dark clothing, and an angry expression. When you tell our children “never talk to strangers,” this is the type of individual they believe you are referring to, when in fact, the person that is going to hurt or molest your child looks more like Mr. Rogers, and almost always, already knows your child. Pedophiles make it a practice to know your child’s name, so that they are not considered a “stranger.” To a child, how can someone be a “stranger,” if they know your child’s name? Or where you work?

To teach a child not to talk to strangers ignores what we know about pedophiles and leads the child into a false sense of security with people they do know.

EMPOWER YOUR CHILD WITH KNOWLEDGE—ALL KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school, teach children the fundamentals to their own safety. A child’s name, address, and phone number can easily be taught to a five-year-old child. As they continue to grow, your phone numbers, address at work, etc. can all be added to their internal database and utilized when they get lost or separated from you. If they are taken out of state by a child predator, oftentimes they will be questioned by a police officer who stops the diver (“parent”) and believes something is amiss. Children who have been traumatized about being killed if they tell what they know may oftentimes be too afraid to speak; sometimes law enforcement officials will ask a child behaving in such a manner to point to a map of the United States and show them where they are from. If your child is from New Jersey and is questioned in Las Vegas, Nevada, the investigation into who they really are, may get started. Remember, child abductors and pedophiles will often change your child’s appearance—i.e., your blonde, blue eyed, long haired daughter becomes a short-haired brunette, wearing glasses.

HOW TO USE “STRANGERS” TO HELP

Every parent I know has turned around in a store and felt that immediate sense of panic when they discover that their son/daughter is not where they were a minute ago. Most of the time the child has just
wandered into the next aisle or may be hiding behind a rack of clothes. But for those anxious few moments, the “lost” parent feels extremely helpless. What if your child is separated from you for a protracted period of time?
If they’ve been taught “never talk to strangers,” you have put them in a situation where they cannot seek help! Teach your child to approach a store clerk or cashier, a security officer, etc. and tell them their situation. If they know their personal information (as described above), the chance that you will be reunited with them grows considerably.

TEACH YOUR CHILD HOW TO HANDLE “SITUATIONS”

If you teach your child that no one is allowed to touch their private parts (for example), the no one is all inclusive. You are not saying (and they are not hearing) that they should never let a stranger touch their private parts, or ask them to touch someone else’s private parts. This same lesson can be applied to numerous situations; to include no one should take their picture without their parents’ permission or ask them to take someone else’s picture without their parents’ permission. Children have an amazing internal alarm system that tells them when they feel something isn’t right; teach them to listen to this internal alarm system and respond the same way they would if they were in school and a fire alarm went off- leave the area!

TALK TO YOUR SCHOOL OFFICIALS

When I have conducted training seminars for anxious parents worried about what they read and hear is happening in other neighborhoods, I typically get told that the school their child is going to is still teaching them not to talk to strangers. Since your child spends more time at school than they do at home, it is critical that you speak to your school officials about teaching their children current themes. National speakers such as Ken Wooden, one of the most dedicated child molester pursuers in the world today, will come to your school and conduct training classes designed to teach communities how to reduce their risk. As we become more a global community, this is necessary to defeat this type of activity.

“GIVE YOUR GRANDPA A KISS AND A HUG RIGHT NOW!”

Every parent has been humiliate at some point in their life when Grandpa or Uncle Fred gives little Johnny a new $100.00 bill, and the child takes the money, throws it on the table, and runs out of the room to play video games with his cousins without so much as a “Thanks.”

Although you should teach your children to e polite, a handshake is as far as your demands should go; ordering children to sit on Grandpa’s lap, or giving him a hug and a kiss, make you feel good an tells the child that he/she does not control who they are familiar with. Rather, adults do. Sure, little Johnny can be brought back and told, “Thank your Grandfather!” and be encouraged to state his appreciation in words and close with a handshake. But leave hugs and kisses, lap sitting, or other touching, familiar responses to your child. When the pedophile instructs your child to sit on his lap or hold his hand, you don’t want little Johnny remembering the last time he was told to do that by an adult and he got in trouble when he refused.

HOSPITAL SECURITY DIRECTORS LOOKED TO FOR GUIDANCE

Hospital Security Directors should become subject experts in these areas and donate their speaking time to their community health programs, PTAs, Junior Leagues, etc. Hospital pediatric, child care, and other
community-based programs and treatment centers need security’s involvement to assure parents that they are being ever vigilant. Should a child be molested in your facility by an employee, a visitor, or someone pretending to be a physician (one of the few recognized exceptions children are taught with regards to letting an adult touch them in their private parts area), you will be much better positioned to handle the media and litigation frenzy sure to occur if your reputation as an advocate for child safety has been well established.