

## CornerHouse Tips for Keeping Kids Safe

# listen.



Our mission is to assure that the voices of children and adolescents are heard.



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*When we teach our children “stranger danger,” we protect them from less than 10% of potential sexual abuse. Instead, practice these personal safety measures in your home and relationships.*

**Teach your child that some body parts are private; use correct terminology and look for opportunities to revisit.** Many parents think their kids are too young to understand or are uncomfortable setting these boundaries. However, your message can be very simple and your young child will only be uncomfortable if you are. These messages could come at bath time, when your child first learns or asks for the names of body parts, or when discussing other kinds of safety. If it doesn't go well at first, that's okay. Just try again later.

**Respect your child's personal space.** Ask permission before giving your child a kiss or a hug and respect their response. Never require your child to kiss or hug relatives or others; it's enough to be polite by saying goodbye with words, a handshake, or a high-five. When children see that you respect their personal space, they will be more likely to speak up if another adult does not.

**Talk to your kids about sex, sexuality, and personal boundaries.** When you approach these topics with openness, kids are more likely to come to you with questions or worries when they arise.

**Practice internet and social media safety.** Know what sites your child is visiting and with whom your child is communicating online. Monitor the time spent online and instruct your child about the possible dangers of giving out personal information online. Consider limiting your child's time spent on the internet and put the computer in a central location so usage can be easily monitored.

**Watch for signs that something is wrong.** When you see a behavior change or concern, talk to your child about what is going on. Let your child know that if someone is hurting them or making them feel uncomfortable it's not their fault, you will help and they won't be in trouble with you.

**Thoroughly check out care providers.** This includes daycare, summer camp, faith programs, and private babysitters. They should have procedures in place for reporting abuse, background checks, safe pick-up procedures, and ensuring a safe environment while caring for your child. Make sure to check references and ask your child how it's going. If your child doesn't like the provider/program don't assume your child is just being difficult. Specifically ask what your child doesn't like and follow up if needed.

**Trust your gut.** If you or your child gets an “uh-oh” feeling from a care provider, another parent, family member, or trusted adult, don't be afraid to make changes in your behavior or routine to feel more secure about your child's safety. Teach your child to trust their own feelings, and assure them that they have the right to say NO if they sense something is wrong.

**Get help.** If your child reports something concerning, don't try to handle it on your own. Get help right away by calling your local law enforcement or child protective services agency.

**For more information see [www.cornerhousemn.org](http://www.cornerhousemn.org).**

