

BeneFACTS

...an employee benefits
newsletter

FOR MEARIE MEMBERS

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W E L L N E S S F E A T U R E

STAY ALERT & STAY SAFE

Street Proofing YOUR KIDS

WHAT'S STREET PROOFING ALL ABOUT?

It's about helping your child identify and react to situations that are uncomfortable, unwelcome or even dangerous. It's also about encouraging discussions with your child every day, practicing family guidelines and developing an understanding of what's acceptable and what's not.

As a parent or guardian you can help make personal safety second nature to your child's daily activities. You may not be able to follow your child around everywhere, but you can teach your child to trust his or her own instincts and "keep their radar up".

Here are some basic guidelines you can put in place to help street proof your child:

Important information. Have your child memorize important addresses and telephone numbers and go over these on a regular basis. Whether it's your own or that of a trusted neighbour or relative, children need to know where they can go, and whom they should call, if they find themselves lost or in need of help.

Dialing 9-1-1. Instil in your child that 9-1-1 is the number to call if they feel in danger. Point out local payphones in your area, or along your child's regular route to and from school, and ensure that he or she can confidently use the number to dial for help.

Stranger alert. Reinforce that strangers come in all shapes and sizes - including people who act friendly. For younger children who may not easily grasp the



concept of a stranger, teach them who is not a stranger first, and then explain that everyone else is.

What to do if a car approaches.

Explain to your child that adults rarely ask a child for help or directions. Teach them never to approach a stranger's car and to move away from a car that pulls

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up beside them. If they think they are being followed, they should run to the nearest public place and yell for help. Role-playing different situations such as stepping back from a stranger, saying “no” boldly or running away from a stranger, will help your child feel more confident handling real-life scenarios.

What to do if someone tries to grab them. Teach your child that what’s not normally your idea of “acceptable” behaviour is very okay if anyone tries to grab them against their will. Tell them to drop to the ground and throw a tantrum; kick, bite and scratch; scatter their books or belongings; scream; yell: “this is not my mother/father” or break things to get noticed. Tell them that “anything goes” if it attracts attention.

Personalized attire. Avoid your child’s name on T-shirts, lunch boxes, jackets or jewellery in public. A child is likely to respond to anyone who addresses him or her by name.

Know your child’s world. Take time with your child to check out the neighbourhood. Learn about their world including favourite play areas,

preferred routes to and from friends’ houses, and with whom they interact as part of their daily routine.

Turn up the radar. Remind your child to “keep their radar up.” Teach your child to watch, listen, and trust their instincts. Discuss why it is never silly to be ‘scared’ and that instinct is one of the best ways to spot and avoid danger.

The ‘no secrets’ rule. Stress the importance of “telling” and making sure your child understands that adults do not keep secrets with children.

Ground rules. Set rules with your child outlining “approved” and “off-limit” areas for playing. Review these rules each time your child goes out and take time to discuss why it is best for them to avoid isolated parking lots, woods or unpopulated areas.

Check in time. Develop a family check-in procedure. Set a firm time for your child to check in either by phone or in person on a daily basis so you will always know where your child is, whom they are with, and when to expect them home.

Make a point of knowing your child’s friends. Keep a list of their telephone numbers, where they live and get to know their parents. Teach your child never to enter anyone’s home without your permission.

The “buddy-system” - tried but true. Make it a rule for your child to stay in pairs or groups when they’re at the park, the mall, the movies or going to a bathroom in a public place.

When you’re late arrange to meet your kids in the community centre, nearby doughnut shop or other public areas. Make sure they never wait in isolated areas such as empty parking lots.

Develop a password with your children and tell them if anyone attempts to pick them up on your behalf, that they must know the password.

Set the house rules. Safety rules for the child home alone and those for the street may be slightly different, but apply the same “stranger alert” principal. Sit down and discuss these with your child; write them out together and post them by the door or phone.

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Privacy in Canada

On January 1, 2004, the third and final stage of the federal government's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (or PIPEDA for short) comes into effect. At that time, the law expands to fully cover all personal information collected, used or disclosed by private sector companies. The federal laws will apply in all provinces and territories where provincial legislation of a "substantially similar nature" (meaning equal or superior to the federal law) does not exist. As it is anticipated that Ontario will not have legislation in effect on January 1, 2004 that deals fully with this issue, the federal PIPEDA legislation will apply to all private sector companies in Ontario.

Giving power to the people

In a nutshell, the federal law requires organizations to ask a person's permission anytime they collect, use or share his or her personal information*. Furthermore, if the information is ever needed for a use other than the originally stated purpose, permission must be obtained for each additional use. The Act also requires personal information to be properly stored, managed and safeguarded, and grants individuals certain rights, including:

- The right to access their personal information
- The right to challenge the accuracy of the information
- The right to make a complaint about how an organization handles their personal information.

What is personal information?

Personal information is any information about an identifiable individual. This includes obvious things like age, social insurance or health card number, medical details, financial, employment and insurance claims records. But the definition also includes opinions, comments and evaluations. Even individual intentions to do or purchase something are considered personal information and are protected under the Act. Personal information does not include the type of information that is publicly available in the phone book or on a business card.

Your responsibilities under PIPEDA

PIPEDA establishes ten principles that form the benchmark for all privacy legislation in Canada to meet or exceed. These inter-dependent principles, combined with the "reasonable person test," govern how companies must handle and safeguard individual's personal information. The ten responsibilities of businesses are:

1. **Be accountable.**
2. **Identify the purpose of data collection.**
3. **Obtain consent.**
4. **Limit collection of personal information.**
5. **Limit the use, disclosure and retention of personal information.**
6. **Be accurate.**
7. **Use appropriate safeguards.**
8. **Be open.**
9. **Give individuals access.**
10. **Provide recourse.**

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YOUR KIDS

Include as part of your list those names of "acceptable" or "parent-approved" people who can enter the home.

Start a child identity kit. Your local police can assist you in creating your own child identity kit. Kits usually include: an up-to-date colour photograph of your child, at least one for each year (more for younger children), your child's fingerprints, a medical and dental history including your child's blood type, medical problems, scars, broken bones, pulled teeth, braces, glasses, medication, allergies, etc. and any other pertinent information.

Talking to your child about strangers or potential dangerous situations can be difficult. You want to provide them with as much information as possible without creating fear or anxiety about the world around them. For more information about streetproofing your child, contact your local police department, or log on to the Stay Alert...Stay Safe national streetproofing organization Web site at: www.sass.ca.

Source: HealthQuest - a quarterly newsletter focusing on mental health issues and concerns, published by Warren Shepell Consultants - The MEARIE Group's partner for providing leading-edge solutions in EAPs.



MEARIE ChairDave Sinclair
MEARIE Vice-ChairDon MacMaster
CEO C.C. (Charlie) Macaluso
Editor Andrea Greto

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Additional Products include an Employee Assistance Program; Group Home & Auto Insurance; and Comprehensive Care (health & dental program for retirees).

For further information or material submission, contact the editor at :

20 Eglinton Avenue West,
P.O. Box 2004, Suite 500
Toronto, ON M4R 1K8

Telephone 416-483-7739
Toll Free1-800-668-9979
Fax 416-483-2841
E-mail mearie@mearie.ca

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NEED FORMS? MEARIE Employee Benefit Program Members

Don't forget, many of our forms are available through The MEARIE Group's Web site. Be sure to visit us at www.mearie.ca

Forms include:

- Health and Dental Claims Forms
- Salary Change Report Form
- Enrollment Form
- Change Form
- Out of Province and Out of Canada Claim Form

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Does this sound reasonable to you?

Finally, these ten principles of privacy must be collectively applied in conjunction with the **reasonable person test**. This means that an organization can only collect, use and disclose its clients' personal information if doing so would be considered acceptable by a reasonable person.

Require further information on PIPEDA?

"Your Privacy Responsibilities, A Guide For Businesses and Organizations" and a copy of PIPEDA, can be obtained from The

Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (Web site: www.privcom.gc.ca , under Publications). As well, a Privacy Diagnostic Tool Workbook, which can be utilized to assist businesses in assessing and educating themselves on how to protect personal information, can be obtained from the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (Web site: www.ipc.on.ca, under Resources).

*There are a few exceptions where prior consent is not required. These include law enforcement, scholarly research and emergency situations.

