

# Operation Vigilance

General guidelines for parents of  
children aged **12 to 17 years**





Founded in 1985, Enfant-Retour Québec provides front-line services to families who are searching for their missing child. Our staff accompanies, supports and counsels these families in the search for their child by working collaboratively with law enforcement agencies, other child search organizations, as well as the media.

In addition, Enfant-Retour Québec offers comprehensive educational and prevention programs designed especially for children, parents and professionals.

**LEND YOUR EYES ... be the vision for missing children and join Operation Vigilance today!**

Please visit our website at:

**[www.enfant-retourquebec.ca](http://www.enfant-retourquebec.ca)**

or contact us at:

**514.843.4333**

## Adolescence ... a period of transition during which your youngster develops from a child into an adult

Make your home a place of trust and support that fulfils your teen's needs. Encourage your teen to share any secrets that may leave him feeling uncomfortable or scared. Find daily opportunities to talk with your child and listen attentively to what he has to say.

It is crucial that children feel that the significant adults in their lives accept them, care about them and would go out of their way to ensure that they are safe and well. Children with a healthy sense of self-esteem are less vulnerable to becoming victims of abduction, aggression or exploitation.

## Help teens gain a sense of self-confidence

- Spend quality time every day with your teen by engaging in activities that suit his age and interests – remember to use this time for conversation and not for confrontation. Shared experiences (meal times, going shopping together, etc.) help to build feelings of trust and respect that form the basis for open communication. Your teen will learn that you are available to listen either when he is having a problem or when things are going well!
- Model the type of behaviour you expect from your teen. If you want honest expressions of feelings, you must be prepared to do the same;
- Use active listening with your teenager. Pay careful attention to the emotion behind the message and try to determine what your teen is saying by rephrasing it in your own words;
- Encourage your teen to succeed and help him to work through his differences and struggles;
- Create opportunities for your teen to learn how to make positive decisions about his life;
- Protect your teen from feelings of loneliness and isolation;



- Defend your teen against harassment or feelings of loneliness or verbal abuse;
- Offer praise for tasks well done and if your teen falls short, suggest positive ways in which to improve – make sure you don't criticize his behaviour;
- Set realistic boundaries and be consistent in applying them.

## Fundamental rules to help ensure your teen's personal safety

### Trust your instincts

Encourage your teen to always trust his internal alarm system, which lets him know when he has a bad feeling or feels uncomfortable, embarrassed or scared. Remind him that when his alarm system is triggered, he **always** has the right to say **NO!** even to a family member or close friend.

### The safety equation

Teach your teen to ask himself the following 3 questions that will help him to make safe decisions in any situation:

#### 1. Do I have a good feeling?

(trusting one's instincts)

#### 2. Will my parents know where I am?

(asking for permission)

#### 3. Will I be able to find help if I need it?

(buddy system)

If he answers **NO!** to any one of these 3 questions, he must say **NO!** and discuss the situation with you: **Remember 1 no = don't go!**

### Respect your body

All children have the right to reject any unwanted and inappropriate attention such as teasing, touching and bullying. Instruct your teen to be assertive, say **NO!** and then to talk to a trusted adult about the incident. Remind your teen that he is not at fault for what just happened.

### Buddy system

Teach your teen to always be in the company of at least one friend whenever he goes anywhere. There is safety in numbers.

### Always tell an adult where you are going

- Your teen must always advise you before going somewhere, following someone, getting into a car or accepting a gift, even from a family member or a close friend. Explain to him that it is important that you always know where he is, who he is with and what he is doing in order to provide him with help in case of an emergency. If your teen ever finds himself in risky situations or in trouble, his family and friends will know where to begin looking for him;
- Establish an information/message centre in your house where you and your teen can leave notes detailing where everyone is and when they will return;
- Make sure your teen knows how to reach you at all times;
- If there is any change of plans, your teen must immediately notify you.

### Appearances can be deceiving

If it seems too good to be true ... then it probably is! Before accepting any kind of offer, whether a new job, an exciting opportunity, etc., make sure your teen understands that he must first discuss the details with a parent or a trusted adult.

## Internet safety

To ensure that your teen's on-line experience is a rewarding and satisfying one, establish specific safety rules (i.e. time of the day, duration of use and appropriate sites to visit).

- Place the computer in a common area, rather than in the child's bedroom. In order to ensure your teen's safety, monitor his on-line activities;
- Teach your teen to **never** give out his password to anyone other than his parents or guardian;
- Learn to identify the people with whom your teen is communicating on the Internet. Monitor his activities in discussion groups and while exchanging e-mails. Make sure he uses a screen name that does not reveal his true identity;
- Install parental control software in order to limit your teen's access to inappropriate material. Keep in mind that using filtering software and/or hardware can help to block a great deal of inappropriate materials or sites, but it is not 100% fool-proof and is no substitute for good parental involvement.

Social networking sites are popular places these days for teens to network and communicate with friends. But, to ensure their safety, as well as protect your family's privacy, you must teach your teen to exercise caution. Even though it may appear that teens can handle certain situations as they get older, they actually still require and unconsciously seek adult guidance, supervision and ultimately, approval.

- Work with your teen to create a profile that can be safely posted on-line. Check his profile page on a **DAILY** basis. You can get an alert on your home page when he adds new friends or applications;
- Emphasize to your teen the public nature of the Internet, the permanence of sent images, the legal implications of distributing naked images and the disruption it may cause in his life;

- Be aware that information your teen gives out in blogs could possibly put him at a higher risk of victimization. People looking to harm him can use the information posted to gain his trust. They can deceive the teen by pretending to know him;
- Discuss the concept of anonymity on the Internet as people can pretend to be anyone. Before agreeing to meet a cyber-friend, be sure your teen understands the importance of **always** telling a trusted adult or guardian where he is going and who he is going to meet;
- Instruct your teen to immediately report any sexually explicit material that he encounters to **www.Cybertip.ca**;
- Keep the lines of communication open with your teen and make sure he always feels comfortable coming to you when something doesn't feel right.

## Always have proper identification of your teen

Always carry proper identification of your teen that includes a current colour photograph, as well as complete physical description (hair and eye colour, height, weight, date of birth, and any specific physical attributes). Keep a list of all of your teen's friends, including their phone numbers.





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