

Send Your Kids Back to School in Safety

Written by Written by Kimberly Cabral

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Backpacks, pencils, notebooks... AWARENESS! As we prepare for our children to head back to school...have we prepared ourselves as parents to empower our children with the tools to keep them from becoming statistic?



Kimberly Cabral, president and founder of MASK (Mothers Awareness on School-Age Kids), gives us some helpful tips on how to handle issue we might not even be thinking about, but that are very real for our children growing up today. Here are some simple prevention tips to be sure you're off to a good start.

Cell Phones: "Sexting." Do you know that if your child takes an inappropriate picture of themselves or another person and sends it electronically, it is considered a class 2 felony. There are 3-5 cases a week reported to the Police Departments. What can you do? It's as simple as using a black Sharpie on your child's camera lens on phone, or have the camera disabled...talk to your child about the risks of taking inappropriate images.



Lock up your O.T.C (Over- the- Counter -Drugs) this is the biggest and most dangerous trend that children are experiencing. The drug dealer isn't on the corner anymore, they are in our homes. Anything from Sudafed to Oxycotin, children are taking these drugs from their own home to sell or use on their own. The new trend is called the "perfect cocktail" where children will mix in a bowl anything from heart medicine to pain relievers grab a handful of them and drink down with alcohol. Children are losing their lives to this trend...**LOCK YOUR MEDICINES UP!**

Lock up your ALCOHOL! Children should not have easy access to your alcohol cabinet.

Computer Location: Have your child's computer in a common area of the home. The Internet is a wonderful tool, but it also comes with great risks. Predators are looking for children on-line, and within 45 minutes they can find out your child's name where they live, and where they go to school.

Due Diligence: Make sure you have your child's email address and passwords. Parents have to remember to be the parents, not a friend.

Computer Filters: There are many different ways to filter your computer. Many computers you can set up user profiles to set limits on what you will allow your child to access. You can also get computer programs that will record everything your child does while online. Visit www.spectropro.com. Or go to www.internet-filter-review.com for a list of different programs to protect your children.



Drug Test Your Child. Peer pressure is a hard thing for children. They need an OUT for a situation. When you drug test your child, it gives them that OUT that they need and a great excuse to fight even harder against peer pressure.

ASK & Verify: As your child gets older it is even more important to know their friends, and friend's parents. Verify what they are doing...it only takes a minute to call.

EXIT PLAN: Set up an exit plan for your child... Children aren't always going to make the right choice...If they don't, and find themselves in a bad situation...make sure you both have made up an exit plan. Example: They end up at a party where they were drinking, and they know that they shouldn't get in a car. Have a plan where they can call you or someone else to go get help.

TALK...TALK...TALK....to your child about all the trend that are occurring.....this goes for children 7 years old and up. Early education and prevention only strengthens them as they get older. Educate yourselves and your child on all the current trends....Just TALK!

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For additional information on Awareness and Prevention tips go to www.azmask.org. To learn more about how you can attend MASK meetings, visit www.azmask.org. And be sure to attend the first ever [MASKer Aide Night Gala](#) event on October 2.