

Protecting Our Children

Help For Missing And Exploited African-American Children

(NAPSA)—They are nightmares familiar to any parent, but for too many families, child abduction and sexual exploitation are haunting realities.

Statistics show that this is particularly the case in the African-American community. The U.S. Department of Justice's second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children reported that of the 58,200 non-family abductions in the United States, 65 percent involved minorities, with 42 percent of them African-American children.

Many believe that as a society, our efforts to prevent crimes against children have not kept pace with the increasing vulnerability of our children. However, many crimes that are committed against children can be prevented. The most effective key to child safety is effective communication with your child.

"Communities are often unaware of how serious this problem is and are not informed on steps they can take to keep children safer," said Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). "Because they are disproportionately affected, NCMEC is especially concerned about child safety in minority communities," he added.

More than 797,000 children were reported missing in 1999.

"Statistics show that one in five girls and one in 10 boys will be sexually victimized before reaching adulthood," said Allen.

NCMEC's Minority Outreach Program was created to increase awareness of problems associated with missing and exploited African-American and Hispanic children. Goals are to educate



A new outreach program is helping parents keep their children safer from abduction and abuse.

families on ways to keep children safer from potential predators and offer help on what to do should a child become a victim. The program helps families and individuals recognize suspected cases of sexual exploitation; encourages them to listen to their children; and provides information on what to do, who to call, and other ways to address the needs of their children.

"The sexual exploitation of children is largely unrecognized and underreported. We need to shed light on this crime so victims can be identified and child predators can be stopped," said Allen.

NCMEC offers services for families and professionals in the prevention of abducted, endangered and sexually exploited children. To request information on the Minority Outreach Program and tips on how to talk to your kids, visit www.missingkids.com or call 1-800-THE-LOST.