



National Crime Prevention Council

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Your Inside Look At Crime Prevention

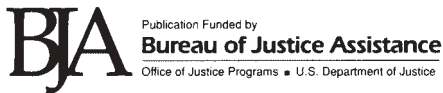




MISSION STATEMENT

To enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur.

The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC provides training and technical assistance on the local, state, and national levels; offers policy guidance; serves as a national focus for crime prevention; and acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, made up of more than 4,000 federal, national, state, and local organizations committed to preventing crime. It also operates demonstration programs and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign, which is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Proceeds from the sale of materials funded by public sources are used to help support NCPC's work on the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign.



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WHAT'S INSIDE



You've probably met McGruff, the trench-coated canine who has become a nationally recognized symbol of prevention. When McGruff says, "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®," kids and adults smile, but also listen and change the habits that make them vulnerable to crime.

In this booklet, you'll learn some basics—how to protect yourself, your family, neighborhood, and workplace. McGruff has learned a lot about crime prevention in his lifetime. You'll get the high points of his experience and some smart ideas on how you can help.

You'll also find out how partnerships propel crime prevention beyond self-protection into neighborhood and community-wide actions that target the causes of crime. Head Start programs for preschoolers, neighborhood festivals, afterschool programs, counseling and other efforts to help high school students graduate, community clean-ups—all of these attack the causes of crime, and they all have a vital role in crime prevention.

No one person or organization can fight crime alone. Police officers and sheriffs, schools, parents, kids, businesses, churches, local government, and citizen activists are all in this together, and together we can make a difference.

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TALES FROM THE McGRUFF FILES

Crime rates continue to fall nationwide. That drop can be attributed to a number of factors including the widespread adoption of prevention and community policing. Law enforcement officers have become problem solvers in the community. Rural, urban, and suburban neighborhoods continue to develop strategies to prevent crime before it happens. Increased concern and involvement by citizens like you in taking back the streets and neighborhoods (one “bite” at a time) is perhaps the most significant contributor to the drop in crime.

In the late 1970s it was pretty lonely out there—just the police and me. Since you’ve joined the fight against crime, everything’s changed. I’ve gathered lots of cases where folks like you have taken a bite out of crime. I myself have been teaching folks how to prevent crime since 1980, and I think that makes me an expert. Now I would like to share what I’ve learned with you.

First, let me tell you a little about my pedigree. The idea of the National Citizens’ Crime Prevention Campaign dates back to 1978. Thanks to funds from the U.S. Department of Justice and the creative talent of Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising, The Advertising Council, Inc. launched my first ad in February 1980.

We’ve been making history ever since! I’ve been seen and heard so often that almost all kids and most adults know my handsome mug and my “Take A Bite Out Of Crime®” slogan. I’ve appeared in almost every major newspaper from *Weekly Reader* to *The Wall Street Journal*. I’ve appeared on a U.S. postage stamp, starred in a television special, had my picture taken with former Presidents Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan, rocked with music and TV stars in videos, and won awards from The Advertising Council, Inc.

I haven’t let all this fame go to my head—I know I’m still just a dog in a trench coat with a job to do. I’m lucky to have lots of help. My old friends have stuck by me. My back-up group has grown into a national crime prevention coalition of more than 4,000 federal agencies, national associations, and state and local groups. My campaign is managed through a partnership among The Advertising Council, Inc., the U.S. Department of Justice, and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC). NCPC writes my supporting materials and coordinates my day-to-day activities. National, state, and local organizations work hard to get my message out to people through all kinds of media.

Whether you’re savvy about crime prevention or just starting out, you can learn some new tips from this booklet. And you should. It’s up to you to help make your community a safer, better place to live, so you can help me “Take A Bite Out Of Crime®.”



GOT A MINUTE?

Let's talk about crime.

Whether it's a wallet stolen, a mailbox vandalized, a convenience store robbed, or a pedestrian mugged, crime touches and hurts everyone.

Crime has two victims. One is the person who suffers loss or injury. The other is the community. When faced with rising crime, neighbors retreat behind locked doors, merchants abandon businesses, and streets become empty at night. Fear creates isolation, and that increases the neighborhood's vulnerability to crime.



The McGruff Files

A Picayune, Mississippi, police officer went into a housing project with a bag of cookies, a ball, and a piece of chalk. With that small gesture, children gathered around him and began to play a game of foursquare. From that grew a sports program, fishing trips, and mentors for at-risk kids. The result was a dramatic reduction in calls for police services to that public housing community.

Crime doesn't have to be a fact of life. Millions of citizens in thousands of neighborhoods across the country have proved that building a sense of community and taking common-sense precautions can cut crime and counter fear. It takes time, energy, and commitment, but the results are worth it!



LET'S TALK ABOUT CRIME PREVENTION

You know what prevention means? It means making it harder for something harmful to happen.

Crime prevention means reducing the chances for criminals to victimize you, your family, and neighbors. It means protecting property and teaching kids and adults to be alert and aware. It means doing things that build communities up, and stopping things that tear communities down.

You need to go beyond watching out. You need to help out, too. When all is said and done, your safety, health, and satisfaction depend on the well-being of others. That's why partnerships are such a key part of successful crime prevention. It takes everyone working together.

Crime prevention isn't a flashy gimmick or a trendy fad. The idea of citizens working together to do something about crime has steadily gained momentum. Neighborhood Watch signs are now a part of the landscape. Law enforcement agencies and community groups view crime prevention as a priority. Corporations see child protection and neighborhood security as important to the interests of their customers. Many schools from elementary grades through high school include crime prevention units in their classes. Join the millions of citizens already helping McGruff. Protect yourself and your loved ones, watch out for neighbors, and work to make your community a better place in which to live. And don't forget to report all crimes to your law enforcement agency.

The McGruff Files



The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is working to make public housing communities safer by making improvements to CMHA properties. Management, resident councils, and residents address the unique problems and needs of each community. Some program activities include making interior and exterior repairs and upgrades to property, removing graffiti, towing abandoned cars, and sweeping the streets. Residents who are delinquent in paying rent more than twice in 12 months are evicted. There has been a 12 to 13 percent decrease in crime on CMHA properties in each of the past three years.

USING STREET SMARTS

Whether you're 18 or 80, the best weapons against street crime are alertness and common sense.

THE BIG THREE

- Stay alert and tuned into your surroundings, wherever you are.
- Stand tall and walk confidently.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave quickly.

TIPS FOR WALKERS

- Choose busy streets and avoid passing vacant lots, alleys, or deserted construction sites. At night, stick to well-lighted areas.
- Don't walk or jog alone. Take a friend or neighbor along if possible.
- Get to know the neighborhoods where you live and work. Find out what stores and restaurants are open late and where the police and fire stations are located.
- Carry your purse close to your body, and keep a firm grip on it. Carry a wallet in an inside coat pocket or front pants pocket.
- Don't overload yourself with packages, and avoid wearing shoes or clothing that restrict your movements.
- Carry a whistle or other sound device in case of an emergency.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

- Always lock your car and take the keys, even if you'll only be gone a short time.
- When you drive, be on the lookout for any problems that affect the neighborhood's well-being—abandoned cars, missing signs, malfunctioning traffic lights, reckless drivers, or poor street lighting. Follow up and report any problems to the appropriate authorities.
- Keep your car in good running condition to avoid breakdowns.
- If your car does break down, raise the hood or tie a white cloth to the street-side door handle. Stay in the locked car. If someone stops to help, ask him or her to phone for assistance.
- Park in a well-lighted area that will still be well lighted when you return.
- Be alert when using enclosed parking garages. Leave only your ignition key with a lot attendant, if you must leave a key.
- Always carry an emergency kit in your car. It should contain a flashlight, flares, first aid products, and a 72-hour supply of food and water.
- Never pick up hitchhikers. *Never.*
- Consider purchasing a cell phone to use in an emergency.
- Before getting into your car, look underneath and inside it.



PROTECTING YOUR HOME— LOCKS, LIGHTS, AND GOOD NEIGHBORS

One of the crimes most frequently reported to the police is residential burglary. It's also the most preventable. It doesn't take much or cost much to out-smart most burglars. They're usually not professionals, but rather people taking advantage of an easy target. Burglars may do more than steal things. If they're surprised by someone coming home or if they choose a home that's occupied, someone may get hurt.

SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME

- Make sure all your exterior doors have good locks—at least dead-bolt locks with a minimum one-inch throw.
- Use the locks you have. Always lock up when you go out, even if only for a few minutes.
- Make sure outside doors and door frames are solid, 1 3/4" metal or hardwood.
- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available bars or locks, or put a wooden dowel or broom handle in the door track.
- Make sure your windows have good locks, particularly those at ground level. Lock double-hung windows by sliding a small-headed bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a slight downward angle in a top corner of the inside sash and partway into the outside sash.
- Make sure all porches, entrances, and outside areas are well lighted.
- Trim any bushes or trees that hide doors or windows. Maintain your yard and keep ladders and tools inside when you're not using them.
- Don't hide your keys under the doormat or in a flowerpot. That's the first place burglars look! It's much better to give an extra key to a trusted neighbor.
- Mark your valuable property like televisions, VCRs, computers, cameras, and stereos with your driver's license number. Borrow an engraver from the police. Keep a record of your property in a safe place.
- Consider installing an alarm system for summoning emergency help. Law enforcement agencies can often help you assess your needs.
- Ask local police to do a security survey.
- If you park your car outside of your garage, never leave the garage door opener in the car.



IF YOU LIVE IN AN APARTMENT

- Do your part to see that entrances, parking areas, hallways, stairways, laundry rooms, and other common areas are well lighted. Mailboxes should be in a publicly traveled, well-lighted area.
- Make sure fire stairs are locked from the stairwell side with an appropriate emergency release mechanism. Laundry rooms and storage areas should be kept locked.
- Use common area locks and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

WHEN YOU GO AWAY

- Ask a neighbor to collect your mail and newspapers, and offer to return the favor.
- Put an automatic timer on at least two lights and a radio. Consider photoelectric sensors to turn outside lights on and off automatically.
- Tell a trusted neighbor when you're leaving and when you'll return. Include an itinerary and phone numbers where you can be reached in an emergency.



The McGruff Files

St. Louis, Missouri, launched Operation Safe Street with the slogan "Neighbors Standing Together Against Crime." The city urged all residents to install basic home security systems and keep porch lights on from dusk to dawn. New traffic flow patterns created a stronger sense of community and helped residents identify suspicious persons. Basic home security items, such as deadbolt locks, basement window bars, peepholes, and smoke detectors are available free to senior citizens, low-income residents, the disabled, and burglary victims.

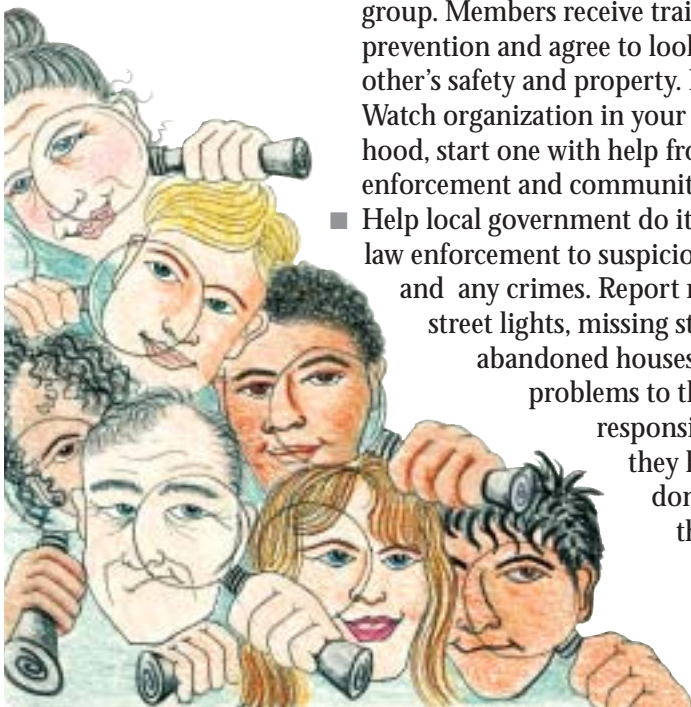
PROTECTING AND IMPROVING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

There's more to crime prevention than locks and lighting. The fact is, concerned neighbors who watch out for and care about each other are the front-line defenses against crime.

What's your neighborhood? Maybe it's a suburban subdivision or a city block bounded by a park or expressway. It could be a small rural area or a high-rise apartment building.

Today's busy lifestyles don't always make it easy to be a good neighbor. But it really only takes a little time and attention.

- Get to know your neighbors and discuss your concerns about the neighborhood and community. Share information.
- Be alert to things that say "we don't care" and invite crime like poor street lighting, boarded-up buildings, a lack of recreational activities or jobs for teens, vacant lots littered with debris, and inadequate day care and after-school programs. Work with law enforcement, civic groups, schools, local businesses, community agencies, churches, and service clubs to solve the problems.
- Join a Neighborhood or Apartment Watch group. Members receive training in crime prevention and agree to look out for each other's safety and property. If there's no Watch organization in your neighborhood, start one with help from local law enforcement and community groups.
- Help local government do its job. Alert law enforcement to suspicious activities and any crimes. Report nonworking street lights, missing street signs, abandoned houses, and other problems to the agencies responsible. How can they help if they don't know there's a problem?



The McGruff Files



Between 1988 and 1998, El Paso, Texas, experienced a 79 percent decrease in overall crime at a time when the city's population increased by nearly 25 percent. During the 1980's enforcement was the primary method used to address crime. But drug-trafficking and many other quality-of-life issues continued to go unaddressed. The El Paso Police Department began to focus on problem-solving and police-community partnerships. The department decentralized and five regional command centers were established. Each facility provides community services such as crime prevention training for neighborhood associations and school resource officers. The Youth Initiative Program in El Paso brings together 127 community organizations, including law enforcement, community agencies, schools, churches, and businesses to mobilize the community to provide prevention and intervention to the city's at-risk youth. Community Advisory Boards (CAB) serve as liaisons between the community and the police department. Volunteers come from the faith community, neighborhood block groups, businesses, and schools. CAB members serve as mentors in local high schools.

MAKING YOUR WORKPLACE SAFE

No mechanical devices—alarms, safes, elaborate access systems—can be effective without the cooperation of the people they protect. Alertness, common sense precautions, and concern for co-workers are keys to preventing crime in the workplace.

The McGruff Files

Modeled after the popular Neighborhood Watch program, Business Watch links small businesses with each other and the police. In Business Watch areas, crime prevention officers and business leaders assist business owners, operators, and employees in reporting crime, robbery prevention, burglary prevention, self-protection, and marking equipment with traceable identification numbers. An effective Business Watch program can be as simple as an information-sharing network. The police department, on its own or in conjunction with a business organization, establishes a network to provide timely information about a variety of crimes against businesses, including robbery, burglary, shoplifting, and fraud. The network also can be used to send time-sensitive information about an armed robbery in the area or the photo of a child missing in the neighborhood.

- If you plan to work late or report early, try to arrange your schedule to coincide with another employee's.
- Be extra cautious when using restrooms or stairwells that are in isolated locations, poorly lighted, or open to the public.
- If you are working late, ask the security guard or a co-worker to escort you to the parking lot.
- Lock your purse or wallet in a drawer or closet at all times.
- Check the identification of any stranger or any delivery or repair person that wants to enter a restricted area or move equipment.
- If you notice any suspicious persons or vehicles, call security or the police. Be especially alert outside normal working hours.
- Keep emergency numbers for security, police, and fire assistance posted near every phone.
- Make note of which co-workers could provide transportation or temporary shelter for others in the event of an emergency.
- Never write down a safe or vault combination or a computer password.
- Make sure your office has an emergency evacuation plan.
- Have safe rooms available where people can go during an in-office emergency.
- Ask employees to wear identification tags at all times.



KEEPING KIDS SAFE

One of the great things about kids is their natural trust in other people, particularly adults. It's hard for parents to teach children to balance this trust with caution, but kids need to know how to protect themselves and how to handle threatening situations.

TEACH CHILDREN TO

- use the telephone properly in case of emergencies and practice making emergency phone calls with them
- memorize their name, address (including city and state), and phone number (including area code), and your work number
- walk confidently and stay alert to what's going on around them
- walk and play with friends, not alone
- refuse rides or gifts from someone they don't know well
- know where to go to in an emergency
- tell a trusted adult immediately if anyone, even a teacher or close relative, touches or speaks to them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Listen to children's worries and problems. Make sure you know where children are going, who they're with, and when they should be back. Know their friends' names, phone numbers, and addresses.

The McGruff Files



Recent studies show that as many as 75 percent of children have been victims of bullying during their school career. The anti-bullying programs of southern Westchester County, New York, counsel bullies individually and in groups. The program provides incentives for bullies to change their behavior, cooperate with peers, and empathize with victims. The program also helps victims become more assertive through counseling, role-playing, and group discussions.



IF CHILDREN ARE ALONE AT HOME AFTER SCHOOL, MAKE SURE THEY KNOW

- the check-in procedure to follow, whether with you at work or with a neighbor
- emergency telephone numbers—fire, police, poison control, paramedics, your workplace, a neighbor, and a relative
- not to let strangers into the home, for any reason
- not to tell telephone callers they are alone
- how to work the door and window locks
- your rules about acceptable activities
- not to go into the home if a door is ajar or a window is broken. They should go to a neighbor's house or public phone and call the police.

HELPING TEENS TACKLE CRIME

Teens are hit by property and personal crime far more frequently than their parents or grandparents. Teens can reduce their risks substantially by reading and following the advice in this booklet.

Adults often stereotype teens, blame them for neighborhood problems, and complain that they are irresponsible. In fact, the majority of teens are sources of strength, not trouble to their communities. School completion rates and youth employment are up; teen pregnancy rates are down. Nearly 60 percent of teens volunteer in meaningful ways such as revamping city parks, mentoring and tutoring young children, and providing companionship to housebound senior citizens. Young people have a vested interest in their community's well-being, and we can certainly use their help to improve the safety and quality of our neighborhoods.

When talking with teens, always keep the lines of communication open, no matter how difficult it may seem. Encourage teens to volunteer to help their neighborhood, school, and community. Set an example through your actions and lifestyle.

The McGruff Files

Teens, Crime, and the Community (TCC), a national program for teens to get involved in crime prevention, has been helping young people to make a difference since 1985. Through a combination of education and action, TCC has motivated more than one million young people to create safer schools and neighborhoods; helped teens understand how crime affects them and their families; and involved them in crime prevention partnerships that make their community more vital. Teens tackle critical issues such as drunk driving, shoplifting, substance abuse, and violence. The program has been successfully implemented in urban, suburban, and rural areas. TCC is a joint project of the National Crime Prevention Council and Street Law, Inc. Funding is provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.



TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

It's a tough subject with no simple answers. But one important thing parents can do is . . . TALK.

- Tell your kids you don't approve of drugs, even on a one-time or experimental basis.
- Tell them how drugs can hurt them emotionally and physically. Don't generalize. Get your facts straight and be specific about which drugs will do what.
- Listen. Don't do all the talking. Let them tell you their feelings and experiences.
- Keep the discussion objective. Be careful not to accuse them or their friends.
- Remind them that buying or possessing marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine, heroin, and many other drugs is against the law. An arrest now could hurt their chances later when applying for a job or college.
- Keep calm and keep an open mind. It's a touchy, emotional subject. Don't lose your cool.



The McGruff Files



Alcohol is the drug of choice on U.S. college campuses. Many students think that drinking is part of the college experience. Syracuse University is home to the Twelve-Point Plan for Substance Abuse Prevention and Health Enhancement. The program fosters communication and involvement among university departments and the local community and targets 11,000 undergraduate university students. The program includes providing substance abuse information to students; a campus-community coalition that works to find solutions to alcohol and other drug-related problems; providing alternatives to drinking, such as student-planned programs in the campus coffeehouse; training for faculty and staff to develop prevention and intervention skills; and training students as educators, advisors, and program activity planners.

PREVENTING DRUG ABUSE THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION

Talking with kids about why and how to refuse drugs is important, but more needs to be done. Communities need to establish or reinforce acceptable behavior standards that don't include drug use or abuse. Positive alternatives and positive pressure need to be built up.

The McGruff Files

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Fort Worth, Texas, provide the SMART Moves program to over 4,200 high-risk youth living in inner city neighborhoods. SMART Moves combines recreational, educational, and cultural activities that promote a sense of belonging and bonding with peers among youth ages six to 15 in the community. Children learn how to make healthy decisions and resist peer pressure; information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; and how to communicate with their parents. SMART Moves participants have decreased alcohol and tobacco use by 82 percent.

Preventing or reducing drug abuse in a community is a tough job, no question. But it can be done. You'll need a solid group of concerned people, a task force, or committee to help. Enlist both those who are faced with the problem (area residents, parents, business people) and those who can help you with it (law enforcement, social service and health agencies, treatment facilities, school officials, land use and zoning officials). Tackle one issue at a time. Pick a clear goal, work together toward it, and then set another goal.

You might form a parents' group that could sponsor drug-free activities for kids, support each other in establishing and maintaining drug-free behavior standards for your children, and help the parents of kids who do become involved with drugs. You could focus on schools, making sure prevention is taught in the earliest grades or that a comprehensive curriculum for secondary schools includes ways to refer students who might be using drugs to counseling or treatment programs. Consider getting out the dealers in your community by using zoning and housing codes to evict them or by getting law enforcement to enforce other ordinances to make dealing an unprofitable experience in your area. You can also provide police with extra eyes and ears to look out for and report suspicious activity.

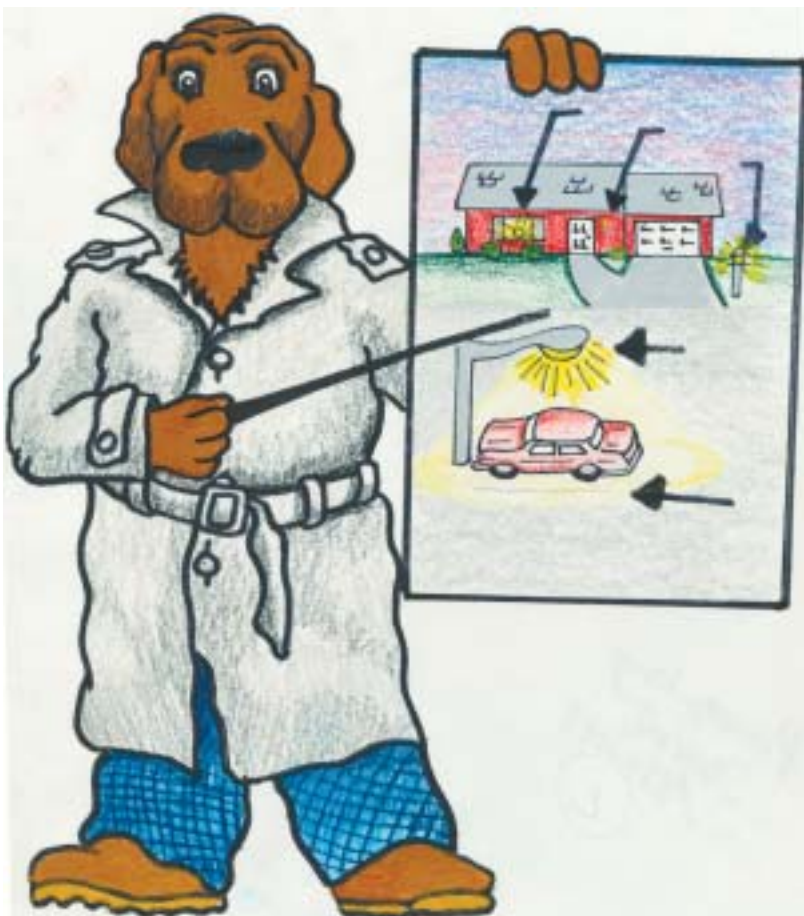


PREVENTING SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Most people don't even want to think about sexual assault. They say, "It isn't going to happen to me." But it can happen at home, at school, or at a party. It's estimated that at least one-third of all rape victims knew their attacker as a date, friend, or casual acquaintance. No one knows for sure how many girls and women are raped each year because many don't tell the police. Men and boys can also be sexual assault victims, but reports are very rare.

Rape is not a crime of passion. It is a violent crime that can have a traumatic effect on the victim for months and even years. There have been dramatic improvements in attitudes toward rape and help for victims. Police and courts are generally more sensitive to victims' feelings, and most communities have rape hotlines and crisis centers.

You can substantially reduce the risk of being raped by practicing good home security and street safety habits. Review the tips in this booklet and get other suggestions from local law enforcement. You also should learn more about the facts and myths surrounding rape, date rape, and your community's service for sexual assault victims.



The McGruff Files



Educating teens about abusive relationships helps them build skills to prevent teen dating violence as well as domestic violence in their adult years.

The Dating Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) of Boston, Massachusetts, started in 1986 and still going strong, grew out of a partnership between a treatment program for batterers and a shelter for victims. The program aims to prevent young people from learning to accept violence in their relationships. The DVIP program includes assemblies and theater performances built around the theme of respect; a 24-hour hotline and counseling services; a course that explores the causes of dating violence and trains youth as prevention advocates; courses in which former victims and abusers train students to identify abusive behaviors, engage in respectful communication, and manage conflict; and mandatory participation in weekly counseling groups.

WATCHING OUT FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Although seniors are the least likely to be victims of crime, fear can cause older citizens to radically alter their lifestyles and retreat into isolation. Even a petty crime can cause major physical, emotional, and financial trauma for an older person.

It doesn't have to be this way. Older people can benefit from precautions that reduce their vulnerability to crime. They can be the backbone of a Neighborhood or Apartment Watch, provide a block home for children, help out at a victim services agency, tutor school children, or volunteer in local law enforcement agencies.

The McGruff Files

In Charleston, South Carolina, the Elder Supportline and Charleston police team up to provide senior citizens with a direct, confidential line to report cases of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The program provides a central place for seniors to obtain information and assistance in contacting agencies for help. Elder Supportline assists seniors with home health services, legal matters, prevention tips, nutrition, transportation, and much more.

Teens can ease seniors' isolation and build communication by escorting them to appointments, running errands, and helping out in other ways. Everyone can help. A phone call, a short visit, or an offer to help will make older neighbors feel safer and help maintain or rebuild their trust in the community.



IT'S A CON

Con artists prey on everyone. Older citizens who worry about costs of home repairs, insurance, and investments are especially vulnerable. The best advice? Be suspicious about any proposal that has to be kept secret or sounds too good to be true.

BE PARTICULARLY WARY OF

- “get rich quick” or other schemes for which you have to put up “good faith” money in advance
- unexplained bargain deals on normally costly repairs or home improvement jobs
- investments that promise unusually large returns
- someone claiming you owe money for an item ordered by a deceased relative
- giving out your credit card number over the phone unless you made the call or know the organization is legitimate
- work-at-home schemes, door-to-door sales, health insurance that duplicates existing coverage, miracle cures, glasses and hearing aids from unknown sources at bargain prices, and similar deals. Ask yourself, “Could I follow up on this purchase in six months if there’s a problem?”

The McGruff Files



In Florida, senior citizens can volunteer with the statewide Seniors vs. Crime Program. Retired citizens educate peers on consumer fraud, conduct seminars on how seniors can protect themselves, and help in consumer investigations. The Senior Sleuths, specially trained volunteers with the Seniors vs. Crime Program, have helped the attorney general’s office and other law enforcement agencies uncover fraudulent practices. Sleuths have checked into the pricing and advertising practices of many industries, including prescription drugs, funeral homes, and the auto and home repair industries. Thanks to the Sleuths’ undercover work, the attorney general has been able to successfully bring litigation against companies charging excessive or fraudulent fees, following fraudulent billing practices, and using deceptive advertising.

CYBERCRIME

Many of today's criminals, armed with computers, are one step ahead of law enforcement. Officers know what to do when someone steals your car or burglarizes your house, yet remain uncertain as to how to deal with cybercrime. But, things are changing. Training in technology is being offered to officers. Individuals now guard their personal information more carefully. Advances are being made in preventing cybercrime.

Internet fraud often consists of scams that con artists have been using for years. Only now, they have a new medium and new victims to exploit. The following are some tips to help you navigate safely through cyberspace.

- Shop online only with companies you know. If you don't know a company, ask for a print catalog before you decide to order electronically.
- Use a secure browser that will encrypt or scramble purchase information. Consider faxing your order or paying with a check if you don't have encryption software.
- Never give anyone your bank account number, social security number, or other personal information that isn't absolutely needed to complete a transaction.
- Make sure children know to never give out their full name, address, or phone number.
- Consider installing software to block children's access to sites with distasteful or hazardous content and control access to chat rooms, news groups, and messages from other subscribers.



IDENTITY THEFT ON THE RISE

The McGruff Files

The Federal Trade Commission, the Better Business Bureau, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the National Consumers League, and others joined forces to create the Consumer Sentinel Web site at www.consumer.gov. Forty-two percent of the complaints Consumer Sentinel received last year fell into one of three categories: identity theft, Internet auctions, and Internet services and computer complaints. The site shows how law enforcement agencies all over the world work together to fight all kinds of fraud. It offers background information on consumer fraud, including Internet cons and identity theft. The site offers links to related sites, a consumer action handbook, and information on how to file a complaint online and safe Internet surfing for kids.

Armed with a computer, a name, a social security number, and a person's credit history, today's criminals can steal without ever leaving the comfort of their homes. Identity theft is taking a victim's identity to obtain credit, apply for loans, rent an apartment, or obtain a job using the victim's name. Enterprising criminals can gather remarkable amounts of information about a victim through the debris of everyday transactions. They use their information to gain access to all of the victim's financial information. Thieves get information by stealing a victim's wallet, looking over a victim's shoulder at an ATM or phone booth to capture a PIN, stealing from a victim's mailbox, digging through discarded trash, or fraudulently ordering a copy of the victim's credit record.

TO PREVENT BECOMING AN IDENTITY THEFT VICTIM

- keep personal information private
- check financial information regularly
- obtain a copy of your credit report annually
- maintain careful records of banking and financial accounts
- shred all mail containing credit card offers or other personal information.

HELPING THE VICTIM OF A CRIME

When we think about crime, we usually think about catching the criminal. The victim can get lost in the shuffle. Each of us can help victims. Even little things mean a lot.

- Don't blame the victim.
- Don't tell the victim he or she is silly for being upset, angry, or afraid.
- If the victim hasn't told the police, offer to go with him or her, drive him or her, or help in any way to file a report.
- Let the victim know you are sorry about what happened.
- Help the victim repair the damage, install a new lock, or replace important papers.
- Stay with the victim if he or she is feeling upset or fearful.
- Be willing just to listen to the victim talk about the crime. It's therapeutic for some victims.
- Help with transportation, babysitting, cooking, or other everyday needs.
- Accompany the victim to the police station, hospital, or court.
- Ask what you can do to help in the future, and get back in touch.



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Since 1977, the Victim-Witness Assistance Program of Los Angeles County, California, has provided essential services to victims and witnesses of crime, extending a helping hand in a time of great trauma and stress. The main objective of the program is to alleviate the trauma and devastating effects of crime on the lives of victims and their families. It also attempts to lessen the anxiety caused by participation in the criminal justice system by providing counseling, court escorts, victim of crime claims assistance, transportation assistance, and child care.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP PREVENT CRIME

- Work with PTAs, law enforcement, and civic associations to sponsor a community forum or action plan for preventing drug abuse and drug trafficking.
- Look to the future by caring for young people now. Make sure there are good day-care facilities, after-school programs, recreational facilities, alternative education and jobs for dropouts, confidential health services, and community service opportunities for teens.
- Organize or help sponsor an anti-vandalism crew to remove graffiti or clean up playgrounds and parks. Enlist high school students and reward them with publicity, class credit, or cash.
- Urge education authorities to include crime prevention course work in all elementary and secondary schools.
- Ask local lawmakers to require that part of all fines paid by persons convicted of burglary, fraud, auto theft, drug offenses, and other crime be put into a special crime prevention fund.
- Help the criminal justice system work. Volunteer to help in your police or sheriff's department, victim services agency, or court watch program.
- Talk to your local broadcaster or cable television station about airing a crime prevention program that profiles local prevention projects. Perhaps high school or community college film students could produce a short film for a class.
- Work with law enforcement and Neighborhood Watch groups to analyze crime patterns in your community. The better you understand the problem, the more effectively you can act on it.
- Consider mediation as a peaceful way to resolve disputes with family, neighbors, and businesses. Check your telephone book for local nonprofit mediation agencies.
- Give some time to your community. You'll both benefit. Schools, senior centers, adult literacy programs, libraries, food banks, soup kitchens, police departments, service organizations, conservation groups, hospitals and nursing homes, and many others need your help.
- Organize! Organizing itself brings more power to press for change. Your Neighborhood Watch, parent's group, or other community organization can have a stronger voice than any individual alone.

Where You Can Go

You've learned some key steps you can take to prevent crime and build the sense of community often threatened by modern life. But there's much more to learn and do.

Your local police or sheriff's department can help you with expertise and information. Find out what programs are already underway in your area. In many states, a statewide crime prevention program or an association of crime prevention practitioners can help. Check the following list of Crime Prevention Coalition of America member organizations. Many local affiliates are involved in crime prevention activities.

The National Crime Prevention Council can provide information, technical assistance, materials, training, and other forms of help. Call 202-466-6272, fax 202-296-1356, or visit www.ncpc.org for more information. Or call 800-627-2911 for a catalog of NCPC publications.

Crime Prevention Coalition of America

National Organizations

AARP
The Ad Council, Inc.
American Crime Prevention Association
American Probation and Parole Association
American School Counselors' Association
American Society for Industrial Security
Boy Scouts of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Corporation for National Service
General Federation of Women's Clubs
Girl Scouts of the USA
Institute of Criminal Justice Studies
International Association of Campus Law Administrators
International Association of Chiefs of Police
International Association of Directors for Law Enforcement Standards & Training
International City-County Management Association
International Society of Crime Prevention Practitioners
International Union of Police Associations
National 4-H Council
National Association of Attorneys General
National Association of Broadcasters
National Association of Counties
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Police Athletic Leagues

National Association of Town Watch
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
National Crime Prevention Council
National Crime Prevention Institute
National Criminal Justice Association
National District Attorneys' Association
National Exchange Club
National Family Partnership
National Governors' Association
National League of Cities
National Network for Youth
National Organization for Victim Assistance
National Organization for Weed & Seed
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
National Peer Helpers Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Sheriffs' Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Urban League, Inc.
The Non-Violence Project
Police Executive Research Forum
U.S. Conference of Mayors

State Organizations

Alabama Crime Prevention Clearinghouse
Arizona Crime Prevention Association
Arkansas Crime Information Center

California Attorney General's Office
California Crime Prevention Officers' Association
California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
California Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning
Colorado Crime Prevention Association
Crime Prevention Association of Connecticut
Florida Bureau of Criminal Justice Programs
Florida Crime Prevention Association
Georgia Crime Prevention Association
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Hawaii Department of the Attorney General
Idaho Crime Prevention Association
Idaho State Police
Illinois Attorney General's Office
Illinois Crime Prevention Association
Indiana Attorney General's Office
Indiana Crime Prevention Coalition
Iowa Crime Prevention Association
Iowa Department of Public Safety
Kansas Bureau of Investigation
Kentucky Crime Prevention Coalition
Kentucky Office of the Attorney General
Louisiana Community Policing Institute
Maryland Community Crime Prevention Institute
Maryland Crime Prevention Association
Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council
Crime Prevention Association of Michigan
Minnesota Crime Prevention Association
Minnesota Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention
Mississippi Crime Prevention Association
Mississippi Division of Public Safety Planning
Missouri Crime Prevention Association
Missouri Department of Public Safety
Nebraska Crime Prevention Association
Nevada Office of the Attorney General
New England Community-Police Partnership
New Jersey Commission to Deter Criminal Activity
New Jersey Crime Prevention Officers Association
New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety
New Mexico Crime Prevention Association
New York State Crime Prevention Coalition
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
North Carolina Crime Prevention Association

North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety
North Dakota Office of the Attorney General
Ohio Crime Prevention Association
Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services
Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center
Crime Prevention Association of Oregon
Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training
Crime Prevention Association of Western Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency
Pennsylvania Crime Prevention Officers Association
Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association
Rhode Island Justice Commission
Texas Crime Prevention Association
Texas Governor's Office, Criminal Justice Division
Utah Council for Crime Prevention
Vermont State Police
Virginia Crime Prevention Association
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Washington Crime Prevention Association
Washington State Attorney General's Office
West Virginia Office of Community Policing
Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association, Inc.
Wisconsin Department of Justice
Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance

Federal Agencies

Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice
General Services Administration
National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Air Force
U.S. Department of Army
U.S. Department of Navy
U.S. Forest Service, Law Enforcement and Investigations Division
U.S. Marine Corps
U.S. Postal Inspection Service