

## **Child Abduction**

*As you might recall a few weeks ago I prepared an article on “Child Safety, In and Around Your Vehicle”. As a parent and grandparent and an active member of the Council for a Strong America, where I have served continuously since 2015 on the committee “Fight Crime: Invest in Kids”, I like you place a high priority on the safety of our children, therefore, I am providing a second article on the subject of “Child Abduction”.*

*At the risk of being too technical, the following will give you a better understanding of Texas penal code regarding Child Abduction*

### **Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Article 63.001, Definition**

*“Child” means a person under 18 years of age.*

*“Missing Person” means a person 18 years of age or older who’s disappearance is possibly not voluntary.*

*“Missing Child” means a child, whose whereabouts are unknown to the child’s legal custodian, the circumstance of their absence indicates that:*

- *The child did not voluntarily leave the care and control of the custodian, and the taking of the child, was not authorized by law;*
- *The child voluntarily left the care and control of the custodian without the custodian consent, and without intent to return;*
- *The child was taken or retained in violation of the terms of a court order for possession, or of access to the child; or*
- *The child was taken or retained without the permission of the custodian, and with the effect of depriving the custodian of possession or of access to the child unless the taking or retention of the child was prompted by the commission or attempted commission of family violence, as defined by section 71.004, Family Code, against the child or the actor.*

*Now that you have a threshold understanding of the Texas Penal Code, re: Child Abduction, I will share with you some bullet points that I suggest you share with your children in a family setting by having them “read them to you” aloud, so that you can be convinced of their understanding of these important and potentially life-saving issues.*

*Remember, child abduction is rare. However, it’s important to use your good sense as a child or a parent of a child when confronting these issues.*

- **Share a Secret Code Word**

*You and your parents should agree on a “codeword” that is easy for you to remember. This way, if anyone tells you that you need to come with them because your parents were hurt or are in the hospital, you can ask them for the “codeword”. If they really are a*

*friend of your parents, your parents would have given them the codeword. If they do not know the codeword, you should move away from them as fast as possible and report the incident by calling 911. If you are not able to call 911 enter any public business, for example convenience stores, shopping center store, gas station, etc. Then ask someone to call 911 and your parents as well. Stay where you are until my deputy's arrives and follow the instructions that will be provided to you.*

- **Stay Away from Strangers**

*Who is a stranger? If you've seen someone hanging around your playground at school or in your neighborhood, this does not mean that you know him or her. Although they might have a familiar face, they still are a stranger to you.!*

- **Strange Grown-ups Should Never Ask Kids to Help Them**

*This means that you should not go with or get in a car with a strange adult. They should not ask you for directions. Nor should you help them find their lost puppy, or kitten either. If someone does ask for your help, "say wait here" and I'll check with my parents and with the Sheriff, then go for help as quickly as possible by calling 911.*

- **If You Lose Your Parents in a Public Place, like a Store or a Park, Do Not Go Looking for Them**

*Immediately ask someone who works there for help to find them. Tell them you have been separated from your parents and you need help finding them. You should also know your parents telephone number either cell, home or both.*

- **Always Ask your Parents Before....**

*Going anywhere with anybody.*

*Leaving the yard, play area, or going into someone's home.*

*Getting a ride home with someone other than your bus driver or your usual ride.*

- **Once You Have Permission from Your Parents...**

*Tell them where you are going.*

*Tell them how you will get there.*

*Tell them when you will be back.*

*Call them and tell them if you are going to be late.*

*Give them the phone number and the person's name of where you will be going.*

- **If Someone Follows You on Foot or in a Car, STAY AWAY**

*You do not need to go near the car or talk to anyone inside a stranger's car.*

*Please look forward in the coming weeks of The San Jacinto News Times of my Introduction to the "Amber Alert" system as it relates to "Recovering Abducted Children".*

*It's comforting to know that as of January 2, 2023, 1,127 children were successfully recovered through the "Amber Alert" system.*

*To learn more about the "Council for a Strong America", and specifically the committee I'm invested in, "Fight, Crime, Invest in Kids", please go to: ([www.strongnation.org](http://www.strongnation.org)) and click on the (Texas link). I'm convinced, if you're reading this article, you will find this website interesting.*

*In conclusion, once again, it's my hope that you will find the information I am providing helpful, and I look forward to sharing more of my knowledge and experiences, and the knowledge and experiences of my senior, law-enforcement professionals with the community of San Jacinto County and beyond.*

*Sincerely,  
Greg Capers  
Sheriff of San Jacinto County*