



September 2004

**Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's
Topic of the Month**

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please feel free to use these resources within your own community. Great for newsletters, emails or news release.

SCHOOL SUCCESS

Including Parental Involvement, Truancy and After School Safety

- ✍ 160,000 children skip school every day because they fear being attacked or intimidated by other students.
- ✍ The U.S. Department of Justice states that 37% of all students don't feel safe at school.
- ✍ National Institute of Health reports that a third of students in 6th to 10th grades nationwide experienced some kind of bullying.

Safety in our schools has been the focus of much research and keeping kids in school is the goal for parents, school staff and law enforcement. Checkout the topics of: bullying and harassment prevention, safe and drug free schools programs, and truancy prevention. The Minnesota Student Survey Results for 2004 should be available early 2005.

Truancy is one of the most significant predictors of future criminal activities. Regular attendance in school is the best way to ensure that our children have the best education they can to become successful and productive adults. Studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to be unemployed, rely on public assistance, and engage in criminal or delinquent behavior. Therefore, truancy affects not only the child, but also the overall health and safety of the community. Additional research has shown a strong correlation between the level of education and the average annual income.

There is no single cause for truancy. Research has shown that often times truancy is an indicator for more serious underlying problems such as alcohol or chemical use, family problems, physical or mental health issues, peer pressure, gang involvement, or child neglect. Whatever the cause may be, it is important for the child that the problem be identified and addressed as quickly as possible.

In Minnesota, a child is considered a "habitual truant" if she or he is under the age of 16 years and is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days or for one or more class periods on seven school days. Children ages 16 and 17 will be considered truant if they have not lawfully withdrawn from school with their parent (s') permission.

Resources such as the International, national and state Education Associations, School Principals Associations and the School Psychologists have much information for reprint on the subject of school success. Check out the web sites.

Resources:

☞ NCPC in the 2004 calendar has several brochures for children and parents for reprint.

BACK TO SCHOOL CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

- ? Encourage children to walk and play with friends, not alone
- ? Tell children to avoid places that could be dangerous, vacant buildings, alleys, new construction wooded areas
- ? Make sure that your children take the safest route to and from school, stores, and friend's houses
- ? Teach children to walk confidently and be alert to what is going on around them
- ? Tell children to avoid strangers who may hang around playgrounds, public restrooms, empty buildings, etc...
- ? Children should not walk next to curbs
- ? Children should check in with a parent or trusted neighbor as soon as they arrive home from school (someone should know if they are staying after school)
- ? Parents should take time to listen carefully to children's fears and feelings about people or places that scare them or make them feel uneasy...Tell the children to trust their instincts
- ? Children should be taught to settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons

LATCHKEY KIDS

Here are some basic rules to follow for you and your children who are home alone for ANY amount of time:

- ? Children should check in with their parents on a regular basis.
- ? Children should carry their own house key, DO NOT hide it outside of the home.
- ? Children should be taught to keep all doors and windows locked at all times.
- ? Children should know NEVER to allow anyone into the home without parent's permission.
- ? Children should never let a caller at the door, telephone, or computer know they are home alone.
- ? Children must be taught how to escape the home in case of a fire.
- ? Children must be taught where to go in case of a tornado warning.
- ? Children should have easy access to:
 - ☞ Parent's work telephone numbers
 - ☞ Telephone numbers of relatives or trusted neighbors
 - ☞ Telephone numbers of the Police Department and Fire Department
 - ☞ Telephone number for Poison Control

Parents should take the time to talk to their children about the deadly consequences of guns, medicines, power tools, drugs, alcohol, cleaning products, and inhalants. These items should in a secure place out of sight and locked up.

- ? Call **911** for emergency situations and post non-emergency number for all other situations.