

What Every Parent Should Know



Your Child and the Law

Parental Responsibility Guide

St. Joseph County Michigan

PURPOSE AND INTENT

THIS PAMPHLET WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999 TO INFORM PARENTS AND CHILDREN OF THE LAWS, GUIDELINES AND PENALTIES INVOLVING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE DELINQUENT ACTS OF MINORS AND TO CLARIFY SOME OF THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING JUVENILE LAW. ONE WAY TO PREVENT JUVENILE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IS BY PROVIDING SUCH INFORMATION, AND TO ASSIST PARENTS IN IDENTIFYING COMMON SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES. BY UPDATING THIS PAMPHLET IN 2009 I HOPE THIS KNOWLEDGE WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE RESPONSIBILITY AND DECISION MAKING BY EVERYONE.

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Juvenile/Family Court Judge

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PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY LAWS

St. Joseph County passed April 24, 1996 ordinance 13 entitled “Parental Responsibility”. Local police and the county prosecutor enforce it. It requires the parent of any minor to have a continuous responsibility to exercise *reasonable* control and supervision of the minor to prevent the minor from committing or participation in the commission of any delinquent act, including the following duties:

- To keep all controlled substances out of the home and out of the possession of a minor.
- To keep firearms out of the possession of the minor (except in connection with hunting or other lawful recreational purposes).
- Require the minor to observe the curfew laws within individual jurisdiction.
- To require the minor to regularly attend all school sessions and to prevent the minor from being absent from school without medical or school permission.
- To prevent the minor from maliciously or willfully destroying or damaging the property of others.
- To prevent the minor from engaging in the theft of property, or keeping in his or her possession property known to be stolen.

The penalty of failing to properly supervise minors in St. Joseph County is a civil infraction with a fine not to exceed \$500.00. Three Rivers has its own ordinance with similar intent. The penalties for failing to properly supervise minors may vary within other jurisdictions. A person who furnishes alcohol (such as at a home party) may be liable for monetary damages in a civil lawsuit. S/He can be sued by anyone suffering personal injury or property damage because of the action of an intoxicated individual whose intoxication is the result of consuming alcohol provided by the party host. The host of the party would be committing an illegal act if s/he served liquor to a minor and **may not** be covered by his/her homeowner’s liability insurance in the event of a lawsuit. A parent or homeowner who allows possession and/or consumption of alcohol or other controlled substances by anyone under the age of 21 may be subject to criminal prosecution and fines under the *Controlled Substances Act* or the *Liquor Control Act*. Anyone aware of an event involving consumption of alcohol or use of controlled substances by minors may report it to the local police. A law enforcement officer will be sent to investigate, and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with applicable ordinances and state laws. The Excessive Noise or Disturbing the Peace ordinances also might be involved.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS & THE LAW

Parents and their teenagers should be aware of the following state and local ordinances pertaining to the use of alcohol and other drugs by minors.

ZERO-TOLERANCE

Underage drinking and driving and the resultant traffic fatalities is one of the major consequences of youth substance abuse. Prevention of this deadly behavior is the key objective of the initiative known as Zero-Tolerance. Michigan is one of the states that have enacted the zero-tolerance law under which makes it illegal for drivers under the age of 21 to have any alcohol in their systems. The success of the zero-tolerance laws may lie in the clear message that they convey. Youth under 21 must not drive after consuming *any* amount of alcohol.

- It is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to have alcohol in his/her possession, unless it is in the course of his/her employment. It is also unlawful for a minor to misrepresent his/her age or to use altered or borrowed identification in an attempt to purchase alcohol.
- It is unlawful for a person to drive under the influence of alcohol or any other drug or combinations of drugs. Driving under the influence is punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 or more than \$500 and/or imprisonment of not more than 90 days, together with the costs of prosecution. The Secretary of State may restrict or revoke the driving privileges of any person convicted of driving under the influence. A second conviction within 7 years brings a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 1 year and license revocation. A third conviction is a felony.
- Any person who drives a motor vehicle on any road used by the general public in Michigan consents to a test to determine the alcohol content of his/her blood. If a person refuses to take the test, his/her driver's privileges may be suspended for 6 months. In addition, 6 points will be assessed against his/hers driving record.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS & THE LAW

Continued-

- The Michigan insurance statutes do not permit denial of coverage for individuals involved in accidents when the cause is related to the person's use of alcohol or other drugs. However, insurance companies can refuse to renew a policy, can increase premium rates, or can exclude from further coverage a person convicted of driving under the influence.
- It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess or use marijuana. The use of marijuana is a misdemeanor, which may result in a fine of up to \$100, a jail sentence of 90 days, and/or an order to participate in a substance abuse prevention program. Possession of marijuana is a misdemeanor that carries a penalty of 1 year in jail and/or a fine of \$1,000. Should a person possess with the intent to deliver marijuana, the penalties may be 4 years in prison and/or a fine of \$2,000.
- Unlawful possession of controlled substances (cocaine, narcotics, and hallucinogens) is a felony offense. Unlawful use of controlled substances is a misdemeanor.
- In addition, possession of alcohol or marijuana even if you are ***not*** in an Automobile or driving, gets abstracted to the Secretary of State, no matter what the age of the offender and it will interfere with a license you have or may try to get in the future
- A person must be age 18 or older to purchase, possess or use tobacco products in the State of Michigan. If a minor is found to purchase, use or be in the possession of any tobacco product, a citation will be issued. If the person is a juvenile, he/she will also be petitioned into Juvenile Court to receive consequences such as progressive fines and/or community service.

NEGLECT/ABUSE OF YOUTH

Parents must provide minimal care and supervision, and basic necessities including medical care and school attendance for their children till they are adults. Substandard parental responsibility may lead to child protective services investigations for neglect or abuse and possible court action.

WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS

“WEAPONS-FREE SCHOOL ZONE ACT”

In 1994, Governor Engler signed into law the “Weapons Free School Zone Act” which amends section 1311 of the Michigan School code. This Act require mandatory expulsion for a minimum of 180 schooldays of any student who possesses a firearm or any other dangerous weapon or who commits rape or arson while on school property (including vehicles) or at a school related activity. This law was amended several times to be tougher on non-acceptable school conduct.

All local school districts have tough guidelines in these areas. There are no exceptions and few second chances. Youth and parents should talk about unacceptable conduct and never take a chance.

Schools also have policies to expel for unacceptable conduct beyond the mandatory weapons/CSC expulsions that include fights, threats of violence, insubordination to authority, etc. Such behavior does not have to be tolerated in schools.

If parents or students have any questions, ask for the school policy and procedures.

YOUR CHILD AND GANG ACTIVITY

If you think that gangs couldn't be present in our neighborhoods, think again. Though gangs are more prevalent in larger cities, they are rapidly expanding into smaller cities and towns. Simply put, a gang is an organization whose purpose is criminal activity and violence. Each gang has their own laws and customs within the gang. Their clothing can identify gangs, the way they wear it, as well as the colors, tattoos, graffiti and hand signs

What are some signs that signify gang involvement?

- Friends are known or believed to be gang members
- TATTOOS, possibly self-inflicted
- Using a nickname or attaching a prefix or "pet" name to their own name
- Gang graffiti on school books or book backs
- Using hand signals when talking to their friends
- Spending a lot of time away from home
- Having money or material possessions that they shouldn't have.
- Showing signs of physical injuries with a poor excuse for how they got them (could be the result of being "jumped in")
- Getting in trouble with the law
- Losing interest or dropping out of school

If someone displays one or even several of these signs, it does not necessarily mean that they are in a gang. The Rap Music culture has made the wearing of baggy, over-sized clothing popular among teenagers. Clothing alone should not be a sole basis for determining gang activity.

INTERNET GUIDELINES

Online Safety begins at home with you, the parent. You should learn how to check the computer to find out where your child is going while online. Here are some tips to keep your child safe on the Internet.

Another way to know what your child is doing online is to ask your child about how they use the Internet and by asking the right questions it will help you understand what your child is doing online so you can make sure they are making safe online choices.

Questions to ask your child:

- **What sites do you visit?**
- **What do you do on those sites?**
- **Why do you go to that site?**
- **How much time do you spend on the site?**
- **Did you have to register?**
- **What information did they ask for?**
- **What information did you give?**

Talk with your Teens about What They Can and Can't Do Online.

Be reasonable and set reasonable expectations. Try to understand their needs, interests, and curiosity. Remember what it was like when you were their age.

Be Open with Your Teens and Encourage Them to Come to You if They Encounter a Problem Online. Your first response should not be to blame them or take away their Internet privileges. Work with them to help avoid problems in the future, and remember – your response will determine whether they confide in you the next time they encounter a problem.

INTERNET GUIDELINES

Continued:

Learn Everything You Can About the Internet.

Ask your teens to show you what's cool. Have them show you great places for teens and fill you in on areas that you might benefit from as well. Make "surfing the net" a family experience. Use it to plan a vacation, pick out a movie, or check out other family activities. Make this one area where you get to be the student and your child gets to be the teacher.

Check Out Blocking, Filtering and Ratings Applications.

There are services that rate web sites for content as well as filtering programs and browsers that empower parents to block the types of sites they consider to be inappropriate. It is important to realize that filtering programs cannot protect your child from all dangers in cyberspace. To begin with, no program can possibly block out every inappropriate site. What's more, it's possible, in some cases, for the programs to block sites that are appropriate. If you use a filtering program, you should re-evaluate it periodically to make sure it's working for your family.

Talk your Child about sites like My Space and Face book.

They need to understand what they put on such sites may be viewed in the future not only by their friends but also parents, schools and even prospective employers. Just remember that while your kids may know more than you do about technology, you know more about life. Check out MySpace.com's *Safety Tips and Tips for Parents* page.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Signs at Home

- Loss of interest in family activities, disrespect for family rules
- Withdrawal from responsibilities
- Verbally or physically abusive
- Sudden increase or decrease in appetite
- Disappearance of valuable items or money
- Not coming home on time
- Not telling you where they are going
- Constant excuses for behavior
- Spending a lot of time in their rooms
- Lies about activities
- Finding rolling papers, pipes, roach clips, small glass vials, small plastic bags

Signs at School

- Sudden drop in grades
- Truancy
- Loss of interest in learning
- Sleeping in class
- Not doing homework
- Defiant of authority
- Poor attitude towards sports or other extracurricular activities
- Reduced memory and attention span
- Not informing you of teacher meetings, open houses, etc.

Physical and Emotional Signs

- Changes friends
- Smell of alcohol or marijuana on breath or body
- Unexplainable mood swings and behavior
- Negative, argumentative, paranoid or confused, destructive, anxious
- Over-reacts to criticism, acts rebellious
- Sharing few if any of their personal problems
- Doesn't seem as happy as they used to be
- Overly tired or hyperactive
- Drastic weight loss or gain
- Unhappy and depressed
- Cheats, steals
- Always needs money, or has excessive amounts of money
- Sloppiness in appearance

MOPEDS

A MOPED is defined as any two- or three-wheeled vehicle with a motor which has no more than 50cc piston displacement producing two brake horsepower or less. The moped must have a power drive system that does not require shifting gears and cannot have a top speed exceeding 30 mph on level surfaces.

To operate a moped on public roadways and highways, you must have a valid operator or chauffeur license. If you do not have either of these licenses and are above the age of 15, you may apply for a moped license at a Secretary of State office.

You must pass a vision, knowledge and traffic sign test to obtain a moped license. You do not have to pass a driver education course or a road skills test. If you are under age 18, a parent or legal guardian must sign your license application. You must give up your moped license if you obtain a regular operator or chauffeur license.

Mopeds must be registered at a Secretary of State branch office unless operated solely on private property.

Moped Traffic Laws

- Parents or guardians who knowingly allow their children to ride motor vehicles or mopeds illegally on public roadways are subject to fines and prosecution.
- All moped operators under the age of 19 must wear a properly fitted helmet.
- Never operate a moped on freeways.
- Never drive side by side with another moped.
- Do not drive between lanes of traffic.
- Never operate a moped on sidewalks or bicycle paths.
- A moped shall not be used to carry more than 1 person at a time.
- A person operating a moped, or motorcycle shall not carry any package, bundle, or article that prevents the driver from keeping both hands upon the handlebars of the vehicle.
- A person operating a moped upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction.
- A person operating a motorcycle, moped, or bicycle shall not pass between lines of traffic, but may pass on the left of traffic moving in his or her direction in the case of a 2-way street, or on the left or right of traffic in the case of a 1-way street, in an unoccupied lane.
- A person who rides on any bicycle, motorcycle, or moped, coaster, roller skates, sled, or toy vehicle shall not attach the same or himself or herself to any vehicle on a roadway.

SHOPLIFTING

Why do Teens Shoplift?

Peer pressure is one reason why teens shoplift. They want to be part of the group and go along with someone's decision to shoplift in order to fit in. Some teens want to see what they can get away with or they may get a rush out of doing something risky that has the potential to get them into serious trouble. Others do it as a way to get attention from parents or friends. Some teens shoplift because they want things their classmates have but can't afford them.

No matter the reason shoplifting rarely affects the store as much as it affects the people who shop there. The cost of shoplifting is passed on to the customer by increased prices. So the people shopping there are the ones paying extra, not the stores

Shoplifting Laws

Shoplifting is called **Retail Fraud** and it's more than just leaving a store with something you did not pay for. Shoplifting is also paying less than the purchase price of the item by changing the labels in some way; moving the item to a different container; or returning stolen merchandise for a refund.

You do not have to leave the store itself or the stores property, passing all points of purchase without attempting to pay for an item may be sufficient to prove the required intent to steal. If you are with someone who is shoplifting and you are aware of the fact, or acting as a "lookout" you could also be charged.

If you are found guilty of shoplifting, you could be fined, have to perform community service, or be placed on probation or even in detention. You might also be required to pay a penalty up to 3 times the value of the property stolen. You may also receive a "No Trespassing" order and not be allowed back into the store.

TEENAGE SEX AND THE LAW

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT RAPE IS AGAINST THE LAW.....

But, does everyone know what exactly constitutes Rape, or Criminal Sexual Conduct?

There are many levels of Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC). Legally, CSC can be defined as:

Sexual intercourse, penetration, or unconsenting touching of genital areas of a person forcibly and/or against that person's will; or not forcibly and/or against the person's will where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of his/her temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

It is NOT always as simple as "**NO means NO**". It is a misconception that if both partners consent, the sexual activity is okay. Not according to the law. Any person, **Male** or **Female** who is under the age of 16 is legally a child and therefore is not old enough to give consent for sex.

What this means is that any person who has sex with a person age 15 or younger can be charged with Criminal Sexual Conduct. Sex is more than intercourse, as it is any touching of genital areas and other sexual activities. Also, if both partners were age 15 or younger, they **both** can be charged with CSC in the State of Michigan, if convicted all persons have to register as a Sex Offender in the jurisdiction he/she lives for 25 years or if repeat offense for the rest of his/her life. No exceptions. No excuses, he/she must keep the police informed of any address change throughout the time period. Failing to register is a crime.

RUNAWAYS

- For most purposes in the eyes of the law, a person is an adult at age 17. until then, a person is a juvenile, and is bound by juvenile law. The parents or custodial guardian has responsibility over that person and, therefore, has the obligation to report the juvenile as a runaway if he/she is gone from the home for a significant period of time without permission. A Juvenile is considered a Runaway when he/she is gone for more than 24 hours without permission.
- When the Juvenile runs away, the parent/guardian should file a complaint with the police department. The police will then enter the child as missing locally and in a nation-wide computer so all agencies can be on the lookout. If the juvenile returns to the home, the parents/guardians must notify the police department so the child's name can be removed from the computer.
- Anyone found to be hiding, or harboring, the juvenile can be cited for Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor.
- If the police department picks up the juvenile, the parent/guardian will be notified and expected to come pick up the child. A juvenile cannot be lodged with adult prisoners for such offense. If a parent fails to pick up a child, the parent can be charged with neglect or under the county Parental Responsibility Law with a civil infraction.

MALICIOUS DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

It is a Criminal Offense to willfully and maliciously destroy or damage the personal property of another. If the damage is \$1,000 or more, the offense is a felony. Parents may also be held monetarily responsible for a child's intentional act of damage.

TRUANCY

- St. Joseph County has a very comprehensive truancy policy. It combines three laws that require regular school attendance:
 1. Compulsory Education Law (6-16 years of age)
 2. Educational Neglect (6-12 years of age)
 3. Truancy in Juvenile Court (12-16 years of age)

In all 3, lack of attendance that is willful and repeated will lead to involvement first by the school, then police, and finally the prosecutor and courts.

- Parents are legally responsible to get their children (between the ages of 6 and 16) to school. Under the **Compulsory Education Law**, a parent could spend up to 90 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine for truancy, if **educational neglect** is proven, a child can be taken from parents for not regularly attending school. If the parents have tried to get a youth over 12 to school, the youth can be brought to the **Juvenile Court** for **truancy**. This could result in strict probation, community service, loss of privileges and freedom, and even parents paying for probation fees and costs.
- Regular school attendance is serious and requires both the parents and children to cooperate with schools and the legal system.
- Unexcused absences will not be tolerated.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND JUVENILE CONDUCT

Statistics point out; youth that are raised in a home that has domestic violence are hundreds of times more likely to be violent in the home and/or community. The current problem of juvenile violence has other sources such as substance abuse, low self-esteem, gangs, etc. **but** being exposed to violence in his/her home is a leading cause. Be very careful to keep peace and order in the home. Safety within the home leads to safety within society. This goes even beyond being a good role model as a parent.

An assault against a family member is **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** and if convicted, State/Federal law makes it is illegal to buy or possess a firearm for a period of time.

CURFEWS

- In the state of Michigan it is unlawful for a minor under the age of 12 years to loiter, idle or congregate in or on any public street, highway, alley or park between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., unless the minor is accompanied by a parent or guardian, or some adult delegated by the parent or guardian. An adult delegated to accompany the minor under 16 must be over 21 years of age. The same restrictions apply to a minor under the age of 16 years between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m., except where the minor is on an errand or other legitimate business directed by his/her parent or guardian.
- It is a misdemeanor for anyone of the age of 16 or over to assist, aid, allow, or encourage any minor to violate the above provisions.

Local law enforcement officials enforce curfew hours as Follows:

BURR OAK

17 and under:
10:00 p.m.– 6:00 a.m.

COLON

17 and under:
11:00 p.m.- 6:00 a.m.

MENDON

17 and under:
10:00p.m.– 6:00 a.m.

THREE RIVERS

12 and under: 10:00 p.m. 6:00 a.m.
13 to 16 Midnight– 6:00 a.m.

CENTREVILLE

17 and under:
10:00 p.m.– 6:00 a.m.

CONSTANTINE

17 and under:
10:00 p.m.– 6:00 a.m.

STURGIS

12 and under: 10:30 p.m.- 6:00 a.m.
16 and under: Midnight– 6:00 a.m.

WHITE PIGEON

17 and under
10:00p.m.– 6:00 a.m.

- It is important for parents to set reasonable time limits for their children, to know where they are at all times and to make sure appropriate transportation is provided when necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTIES

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW WHEN THEIR CHILDREN ATTEND A PARTY:

1. KNOW WHERE YOUR TEEN WILL BE.

- Obtain the address and phone number of the party giver.
- Let your teen know that you expect a phone call if the location of the party is changed.

2. CONTACT THE PARENTS OF THE PARTY-GIVER TO:

- Verify the occasion.
- Be sure that a parent will be present.
- Be certain that alcohol and other drugs will not be permitted.

3. BE SURE YOUR TEEN KNOWS WHEN HE/SHE IS SUPPOSED TO BE HOME.

4. KNOW HOW YOUR TEEN WILL GET TO AND FROM THE PARTY.

- a. Assure your teen that you or a specific friend or neighbor can be call for a ride home (make sure your teen has the phone number).
- Discuss with your teen the possible situations in which the teen might need to make such a call.

5. BE AWAKE OR HAVE YOUR TEEN AWAKEN YOU WHEN HE/SHE ARRIVES HOME.

- This is often a good sharing time.

6. IF YOUR TEEN STAYS OVERNIGHT WITH A FRIEND AFTER A PARTY, CHECK WITH THE PARENTS OF THE FRIEND BEFOREHAND TO VERIFY THAT:

- They want your teen to stay over.
- They will be home.
- You both agree on curfew hours and other basic house rules.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW WHEN HOSTING A PARTY:

1. A PARENT SHOULD BE AT HOME AND VISIBLE DURING THE PARTY.

Many parties take place when parents are away from home. **Do not put your teen in a vulnerable position of being taken advantage of by their friends, because they are in an available, un-chaperoned home.**

- A Parent can bring snacks and non-alcoholic beverages. Not only will your presence help keep the party running smoothly, but it will also give you an opportunity to meet your teen's friends.
- Invite other parents to help if your party is large.

2. DO NOT ALLOW THE USE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS IN YOUR HOME.

- Be alert to the signs of alcohol or other drug use by teens
- Guests who try to bring in alcohol or other drugs or who otherwise refuse to cooperate with your expectations should be asked to leave.
- Notify the parents of any teen who arrives at the party drunk or under the influence of any other drug to ensure the teen's safe transportation home.

3. SET THE GROUND RULES WITH YOUR TEEN BEFORE THE PARTY.

- This will give you both a good opportunity to express feelings and concerns.
- Let your teen know what to expect.

4. PLAN TO HAVE PLENTY OF FOOD AND NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS ON HAND.

6. PLAN ACTIVITIES FOR THE PARTY WITH YOUR TEEN PRIOR TO THE PARTY.

7. BE ALERT FOR ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS HIDDEN PRIOR TO THE PARTY FOR USE DURING THE PARTY.

HOSTING A PARTY

Continued:

7. DO NOT ALLOW ANY GUEST WHO LEAVES THE PARTY TO RETURN.

- This will discourage teens from leaving to drink or use other drugs and then return to the party.

8. LIMIT PARTY ATTENDANCE AND TIMES.

- Know who is expected to attend. It is important to discourage “Crashers”.
- Avoid open-house parties; it is difficult for parents and teens to keep control over this kind of party.
- Set time limits that enable teens to be home by the legal curfew.

9. NOTIFY THE POLICE WHEN PLANNING A LARGE PARTY.

- This will help the police protect you, your guests and your neighbors.

10. NOTIFY YOUR NEIGHBORS THAT THERE WILL BE A PARTY.

OTHER IDEAS:

- Get to know your Children’s friends and their parents. Keep in touch with them during children’s teen years.
- Be a healthy role model. As a parent, do not use alcohol when hosting your teen’s party. This sends a mixed message to teens. This is the teen’s party; not the parents’. Parents need to be alert and sober to problems that may arise. Our children learn more from what we do than what we say.
- Many parties occur spontaneously. Parent and teenagers should understand beforehand that the above guidelines are in effect at **ALL** parties.
- If, despite your precautions, things get out of hand, do not hesitate to call your local police department for help.

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S **POSITIVE SOCIAL GROWTH**

Occupy your children's free time. Give them responsibilities at home. Get them involved in after school sports, recreation, or church activities.

Develop good communication with your children. Good communication is open, frequent, and it takes on a positive tone. It allows your children to come to you to discuss any topic or problem. It does **not** condemn or put down. Good communication allows you to tell your children that you love them.

Spend time with your children. Plan activities that the whole family can enjoy. Spend time alone with your children. Expose them to different places outside of your neighborhood; parks, museums, the zoo, the beach, area lakes, camping trips, etc. **Give them attention.**

Set limits for your children. At an early age children need to know what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Set household curfews. Do not allow your children to stay out late and spend a lot of unsupervised time out on the streets.

Participate in the education of your children. Take an interest in your children's education. Visit your children's school, meet the teachers, and attend parent/school meetings. Help your children with their school work. **Set high standards for you children.**

Participate in the Community. Know your neighbors. Organize or join neighborhood watch groups, attend community functions.

Be a Good Example. Become and active, not passive parent.

DEALING WITH BULLIES

Signs of Bullying

Unless your child tells you about bullying, or has visible bruises or injuries, it can be difficult to figure out if it's happening. But there are some warning signs; if your child starts acting differently or seeming anxious, or not eating, sleeping well, or doing the things that he or she usually enjoys or when they start avoiding certain situations, like taking the bus to school, it may be because of a bully.

Let your child know that if he or she is being bullied, or sees it happening to someone else, it's important to talk to someone about it, whether it's you, another adult, or a sibling.

If your child tells you about a bully, focus on offering comfort and support. Kids are often reluctant to tell adults about bullying. They feel embarrassed and ashamed that it's happening.

Here are some other strategies to discuss with kids that can help improve the situation and make them feel better:

Avoid the bully and use the buddy system. Make sure you have someone with you so that you're not alone with the bully. Buddy up with a friend on the bus, in the hallways, or at recess — wherever the bully is. Offer to do the same for a friend.

Hold the anger. It's natural to get upset by the bully, but that's what bullies thrive on. It makes them feel more powerful. Sometimes kids find it useful to practice "cool down" strategies such as counting to 10, or walking away. Sometimes the best thing to do is to teach kids to wear a "poker face" until they are clear of any danger (smiling or laughing may provoke the bully).

Act brave, walk away, and ignore the bully. Firmly and clearly tell the bully to stop, and then walk away. Practice ways to ignore the hurtful remarks. By ignoring the bully, you're showing that you don't care. Eventually, the bully will probably get bored with trying to bother you.

Talk about it. Talk to someone you trust, such as a guidance counselor, teacher, sibling, or friend. They may offer some helpful suggestions, and even if they can't fix the situation, it may help you feel a little less alone.

Remove the incentives. If the bully is demanding your lunch money, start bringing your lunch. If he's trying to get your music player, don't bring it to school.

CELL PHONES AND YOUR CHILD

The decision to let your child use a cell phone is yours, before you actually hand the cell phone over to your child, there are a few areas to consider or discuss:

- All major cell providers offer some form of parental controls. Examine their plans for the phone model you've selected before you sign up.
- The account should be in your name not your child's. It makes changing services or canceling easier.
- Give your child the password for the phone and tell her/him you will check the phone regularly to look at images and text history.
- If the phone has a camera feature find out if it can be turned off and on by the account owner.
- Tell your child you are installing and using parental controls and show them the details on what you'll be limiting.
- Discuss cyber bullying and remind your child that electronic communications are permanent. Be kind online and in person.
- Discuss texting and Instant Messaging and your family rules. You should know the people you message with in the real world and never write anything that might be embarrassing if forwarded to the whole school.
- "Sexting" or peer-to-peer porn creation has boomed because of cell phones. Make sure your child knows never to take or send or forward an image of someone without his or her clothes on. It's embarrassing and **illegal and they could be charged with child pornography.**
- Discuss who will pay the bill and what will happen if the charges go too high. (Parental controls can help prevent financial ruin from an overeager texting teen.)
- If the phone is lost or broken (goes into the laundry via a jeans pocket), will a replacement be purchased and who pays?



Thousands of Programs...

One number to call

For Cell Phone Users – (800) 250-5628

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND HELP

The ARK

(Teen shelter & family support)
(269) 343-8765

Community Mental Health

(269) 467-1000
-after hours (800) 622-3967

Celebrate Recovery

(Substance abuse)
(269) 273-8723

Domestic & Sexual Abuse services

(800) 828-2023

Community Healing Center

Three Rivers (269) 279-5187
Sturgis (269) 651-1212

Department of Human Services

(269) 467-1200

Child Protective services

(269) 467-1250

St. Joseph Co. Health Department

Sturgis (269) 659-4013
Three Rivers (269) 273-2161

Youth Programs

4-H

269-467-5511

Big Brothers/Sisters

888-456-1600

Boy Scouts of Southwest Michigan

800-272-7962

Girl Scouts Heart of America

800-788-4919

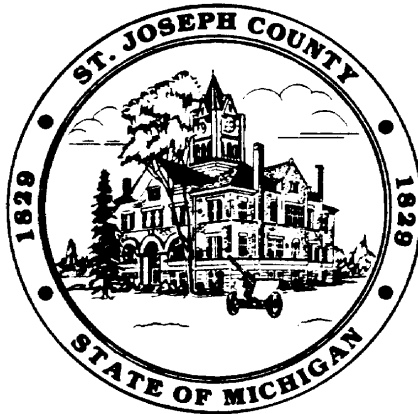
Three Rivers Area Mentoring

269-278-8726

Presented Courtesy of:

**Juvenile Division,
St. Joseph County Circuit Court**
Thomas E. Shumaker, Family Court Judge

Phone: (269) 467-5561



Printed Courtesy of:



St. Joseph County
Human Services Commission

Phone: (269) 467-1200

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