Dear Parents and Caregivers,

On 26 October 2013 we will celebrate 'Day for Daniel', by promoting a day of child safety awareness. Day for Daniel is an initiative of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation (DMF) and is the largest event of its type in Australia.

I recently visited Northview State School assembly and discussed some key children's safety messages including: the right to be safe with people; recognising early warning signs that tell us when we don't feel safe; how to react to personal emergencies; and how to report using a 'Safety Network'.

It would be of great benefit to your children if you assisted in reinforcing some of the key points of our visit, including:

The right to safety:
We all have the right to be safe with people. This means that no one is allowed to hurt me, put me in danger or make me feel unsafe.

Having this right means I have some responsibilities. Firstly, I need to help to keep myself safe by putting in place some safety measures like wearing a bike helmet if I'm riding my bike and always letting Mum, Dad or a trusted adult know where I am.

My other responsibility is to exercise my right to safety. If I feel unsafe with someone, no matter who it is or where I am, I need to do something to be safe again, like going to a safe place and telling an adult I trust. I also need to make sure that I don't make anyone feel unsafe.

Early warning signs:
Our bodies tell us when we don't feel safe through our early warning signs (EWS). EWS can include butterflies in the tummy, sweaty palms, wobbly knees, goosebumps, a pounding heart and feeling like we need to go to the toilet.

We can feel early warning signs in three different situations:
1. When it is fun and we know we're safe, such as going on a roller coaster or watching a scary movie;
2. When it is not fun but we still know we're safe, such as doing a class presentation or visiting the dentist; and
3. When it is not fun and we think we may be in danger, such as being lost, chased by a dog, or being hurt by another child or adult. These situations are called personal emergencies.

It's a good idea to talk with children about other situations where they might feel early warning signs and together identify if these situations are personal emergencies.

Personal emergencies:
In a personal emergency it is important to take steps to be safe again, such as going to a safe place and seeking the help of a trusted adult. Depending on the situation, we might even need to break a rule to be safe again, for example, running away from someone, revealing a secret or saying "NO" to an adult.

You can assist your child to apply this information by discussing different situations that may cause them to feel unsafe and encouraging them to identify if it is a personal emergency. If it is, children should be encouraged to suggest a safe place they could go to, a trusted person who they could approach and what they might say. They could also identify rules that may be broken in order to be safe again.

Safety networks:
It's a good idea to talk with someone we trust if we're feeling sad, angry, scared or confused. We can gain their support and advice, and it often makes us feel better to know that someone else knows how we're feeling. By having at least five people we can talk with, we are more likely to have at least one person available at any time. These five people are called our Safety Network.

Children are encouraged to develop their own Safety Network of at least five trusted adults who are available, will listen, will believe them and will take action to help them if needed. Children can decide who they would like to have on their Safety Network, including at least one person who lives with them and four people who don't. Safety Network members may be parents, relatives, teachers, friends' parents, neighbours, coaches and even Kids' Helpline (tel: 1800 55 1800), as long as they fit the above criteria.

Children should invite the people they choose to be on their Network. This will ensure Safety Network Members are aware of, and agree to performing, this important role. A worksheet has been provided to classroom teachers to assist with this process. Children should also be aware of how they can contact their Safety Network Members and what they should say to ensure the Network Member knows they are approaching them in this capacity e.g. "I need to speak with you Mrs Jones, because you are on my Safety Network".

Children are encouraged to approach other members of their Safety Network if they find a Network Member to be unavailable or unhelpful. It is vital for children to persist in contacting people on their network until the situation is solved and/or they feel safe again.

Every few months, such as at the commencement or conclusion of each school term, children should review their Safety Network to ensure all of their Network Members are available, willing to listen, believe them and will take action to help. If a Network Member no longer meets these criteria, they should be replaced with someone more suitable. Remember, new Safety Network Members should also be invited.

Thank you

Christine Hinds
A/Senior Sergeant
Adopt-a-Cop : Northview State School