What to teach children about 911

Children can learn to recognize an emergency and how to call 911. Teaching and practicing these skills can help your child know what to do when help is needed.

Teach Your Child:

When to call 911.

- Explain that 911 is for emergencies when someone is seriously hurt or in danger, there is a fire, a crime is occurring, or immediate help is needed.
- Teach children that an emergency is when there is danger or an injury that can not be fixed by the people that are available.
- Compare "Emergencies" vs. "Difficult Problems"
    - Emergency (Needs help right now): A house is on fire, someone is hurt and bleeding, or someone is lying on the ground and won't wake up.
    - Everyday problem (Can wait or be solved by a grown-up): Losing a favorite toy, getting a small scrape that stops bleeding with a band-aid, or being sad about a friend.

• When in doubt: Teach them if they aren't sure and there isn't an adult to ask they should make the call. Let them know that they will not be in trouble for calling.

Tell your children that if they do call 911, they should not hang up even if it was a mistake. 911 Call Takers are trained to handle unintended calls, and nobody will be in trouble.

How to call 911.

- Show your child how to dial 911 from your home phone AND mobile phone.
    - See the Smartphone tab under FAQs
- Teach them to follow the telecommunicator's instructions and stay on the line until told to hang up.
- Teach children their important information.
    - Make sure your child knows their full name, home address, and a parent's or caregiver's name and phone number.
- Teach children how to describe their location.
    - If they are away from home, teach them to look for an address, street sign, business name, or other landmark that can help identify where they are.
- To stay calm and tell the truth. Your child should answer questions as best they can and clearly explain what happened.

Practice Makes a Difference

Practice with your child so they know what to do before an emergency happens. Role-play simple situations, such as finding a family member who is seriously injured or discovering a fire.

Never encourage your child to pretend-call 911. If your child accidentally calls 911, teach them not to hang up. They should stay on the line and tell the telecommunicator that the call was accidental and that there is no emergency.

Most importantly, remind your child that 911 is for emergencies—not for games, jokes, or help with non-emergency problems.