



For Immediate Release
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SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS AS KIDS HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) reminds parents to look after their children's safety as they head back to school and get into a regular routine.

More than 4,000 children are struck by motor vehicles each year in Canada. According to Safe Kids Canada, these accidents occur while playing outdoors or walking to school, to visit friends, to sports activities or to a neighbourhood shop.

"We have heard too many disturbing stories of children being harmed while in places parents think are safe, such as at the mall, at school, at the playground," says Jeanette Lewis, executive director, OACAS. "Parents need to remind their children about basic safety tips to keep them safe at home, at school and in public."

Young children should be supervised at all times, but when children are out of sight, either on their way to school or home, parents can teach them how to stay safe while remaining confident and cautious, but not fearful.

"It's important for motorists to be aware of children at this time," Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Julian Fantino said, "because they're excited about seeing their friends again after the summer holidays and aren't necessarily paying attention to the traffic around them. Motorists should remember, as well, that they must stop in both directions for a school bus when it has its lights flashing and is stopped to pick up or drop off children."

Here are some safety tips for parents:

- **Road safety:** Teach younger children proper road safety rules such as: cross at designated crosswalks or traffic lights, make sure drivers see you before you cross and watch for turning traffic. Also ensure children wear bright or light-coloured clothing or reflective strips, when walking in dusk or darkness so drivers can see them. Accompany any children under nine years old on the street as younger children's judgment and perceptual skills are still developing.
- **School bus safety:** Remind your child to always look at the driver for a signal before crossing, look all ways before crossing the road and walk, never run, to the side of the road when the bus stops.
- **Playground safety:** On the playground, parents can check their children for loose clothing, scarves or strings that can get stuck; check the playground equipment before your child plays and supervise your child closely.
- **Internet safety:** Learn about what your child is doing on the Internet, web sites, chat rooms, e-mail and messages. Set reasonable guidelines for children to use the internet and keep the computer in a family room. Ensure children do not give out

personal information online such as address, phone number, or school name or location and to use a screen name. Caution children never to agree to meet anyone from a chat room in person.

- **Home Alone:** After school, make sure your child is safe and well cared for. Consider the child's age and development level, the safety of the home environment and neighbourhood and accessibility of parents/adults/ friends and neighbours if assistance is required when planning to leave a child under the age of 16 unattended or with a babysitter.
- **Protect your child:** Teach young children some basic information by age five such as their name, address and phone number and parents' or guardians' full name as well as their contact information, a work number. Give your daycare provider or school a list of safe people who can pick up your child.

"We need to work together with parents and the community to protect and care for children, they are our future and the most vulnerable citizens in our society," adds Lewis.

Ontario's Children's Aid Societies protect children from abuse including neglect, promote their well-being within their families and communities, and provide a safe, nurturing place for children and youth to grow up.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

OACAS is a membership organization representing Children's Aid Societies (CASs) in Ontario. The Association has served its members, the community, the public and the government in a variety of ways since 1912. Today, OACAS provides service in the areas of advocacy, government relations, communications, youth in care, information management, education and training, accreditation and member outreach. OACAS is the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

- 30 -

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