

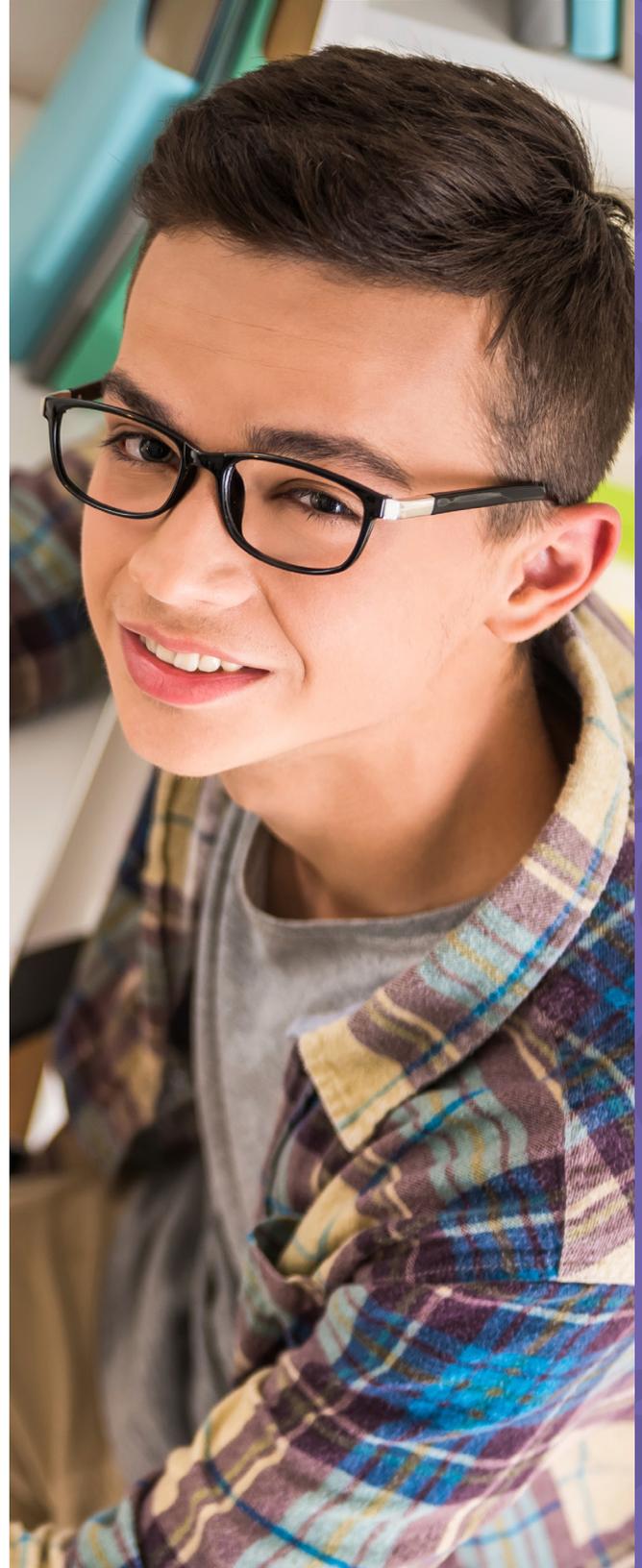


HIGH SCHOOL PARENT LETTER

Adolescence is a challenging time for both children and parents. As children enter high school they strive to “grow up” and become independent. This is an important developmental step as they transition into adulthood, though children may not yet have the emotional maturity or strategies to handle difficult situations they may encounter. It is important to keep lines of communication open with your child so you can be one of the trusted adults to whom he or she can turn. Abusers often target adolescents because children in this age group can be insecure, are exploring their sexuality, and are engaging in more activities that are not directly supervised by adults. They may encounter some adults who can and do take advantage of their authority and use it to exploit and sexually abuse children. In fact, 90% of children who are sexually abused are taken advantage of by someone they – and their parents – know, love, and trust.

The purpose of the **‘Safer, Smarter Families’ Family Safety Toolkit for High School Children** is to empower your child to protect themselves in potentially abusive situations by arming them with a few basic protective principles:

- Building self-esteem increases responsible behavior including assisting others
- Safe relationships share a balance of power
- Children have the right to violence free relationships and the right to use their voice to stop harassment
- Setting personal boundaries gives children the right to say “no” to anything and anyone that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Children need to have a few trusted adults they trust whom they can go to whenever a



situation arises that makes them feel scared or uncomfortable

- That there are identifiable warning signs or “red flags”, such as secrets or threats, to help children recognize unsafe situations

High school-aged children experience the often confusing feelings of adolescence with its accompanying physical, emotional, and intellectual changes. As children are transitioning into adulthood and may look more like adults, their feelings and intellect are still developing. In addition, their peer group has become increasingly important, as has their desire to fit in and be part of a group – which can make them more at risk to the influence of others.

Involving your child in the activities identified in your family’s safety plan is very important. Sharing these strategies will give your child the opportunity to stay safe. Initiate discussions with your child to help them understand that they have the personal power within themselves to make choices and decisions that keep them safe. And, that they can use that power not only to help themselves by recognizing red flags that alert them to unsafe situations, but to see this in others as well.

Practicing the tips and tools presented in your Family Safety Toolkit is the first step in ensuring your child is prepared to safely navigate these formative years.

For more information, visit LaurensKids.org.

