Dear Parents:

It is impossible to put into words the lengths to which parents will go to protect their children. We want them to be safe when they are at school, at home and at play. There are so many ways in which children can be hurt — among them injuries at the playground and at home; accidents while riding bicycles, skateboards and scooters; and injuries while playing sports or riding in cars.

While it is important that parents let their kids have fun, they should also be aware of the many dangers facing their children.

This brochure was created with the safety of your children in mind. It contains numerous tips on how to make sure your kids are safe wherever they happen to be.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely.

Senator John J. Flanagan
2nd Senate District

Bicycle Helmets:

Not Just a Good Idea, but the Law

According to the New York State Health Department, about 50 New Yorkers are killed each year in bicycle accidents, and another 2,200 are hospitalized. Almost 40 percent of these accidents involve brain injuries. It's no wonder that the State requires children under age 14 to wear a helmet when riding bicycles. Helmet use by older children and adults is strongly encouraged as well.

When buying a helmet for yourself or your child, remember the following:

- ❑ Buy a helmet that exceeds U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission standards, and is approved by SNELL, ANSI or ASTM. You will see a sticker inside the helmet showing that it has passed crash tests.
- ❑ It is New York State law that all children operating a bicycle, in-line skating or skate boarding are required to wear a helmet.
- ❑ The helmets should be tried on by your children. Helmets should fit snugly, but not too tightly, centered on the top of the head, with the strap buckled.
- ❑ You may want to let your children be involved in picking their own helmets. Helmets come in many shapes and styles. By allowing children to pick a design they prefer, they are less likely to remove the helmet when you are not around.
- ❑ There should be no compromise when it comes to helmets. If your children say they don't want to wear one, then they can't ride their bikes.

There are many things that you can do as a parent to reduce the risk of crashes:

- ❑ Make sure your child can stand over the top tube of their bicycle, and check to make sure that the handlebars turn easily and that hand brakes, when applied, do not touch the handlebars.
- ❑ Bike riders should wear bright clothing during the day.
- ❑ Under no circumstances should a child ride a bike at night. If it is absolutely necessary, one should wear reflective clothing and have reflectors and safety lights on the bike.
- ❑ A child should not wear loose clothing or long coats that can get caught in pedals, wheels, or the chain.
- ❑ Leg clips or bands keep pant legs from becoming entangled in chains.
- ❑ It is important that children obey all traffic signals; give automobiles, motorcycles and pedestrians the right of way; walk their bike through busy intersections and when they are making left-hand turns; and learn to use hand signals.

Keeping Your Kids Safe

A Special Report From

Senator John J. Flanagan • 2nd Senate District

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Informational Websites

Here are a few child safety websites that provide useful information:

The website of Safe Kids Worldwide
www.usa.safekids.org

The website of the Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission
www.cpsc.gov

The website of The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.gov

Information to make your home safe for your baby and toddler
www.safebaby.com

Safe Kids New York State

SAFE KIDS New York State is a coalition of public and private organizations working together to prevent injuries and deaths to children. Unintentional injuries are the number one killer of children from birth to age 14. More children die annually from unintentional injury than from all childhood diseases combined.

New York currently has eight active SAFE KIDS Coalitions statewide.
For information on your local coalition visit :
www.safekidsnystate.org

Car Safety

Purchasing the right car seat for your child is very important. Use the following information to determine the right seat:

❑ It is New York State law that back seat passengers between the ages of four and seven are to be restrained in an appropriate child restraint system which meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.

❑ Children who are less than a year old and weigh less than 20 pounds should sit in a rear-facing car seat. NEVER put a rear-facing seat in the front of a vehicle with an air bag — ALWAYS put it in the back.

❑ Children more than a year old who weigh between 20 and 40 pounds can sit in forward-facing seats, or in a rear-facing convertible seat.

❑ Children ages four to eight who weigh between 40 and 80 pounds should sit in a booster seat and should be restrained with lap and shoulder belts.

❑ Children who are more than eight years of age and who weigh more than 80 pounds can sit in the back without a booster seat. The lap belt should fit across their hips, and not their stomach. The shoulder belt should cross the center of the shoulder. DO NOT let your children place the shoulder belt behind their backs or arms.

❑ Make sure to send in the seat's registration card. You will be informed of any recalls.

Remember, New York State law mandates that children under four must sit in an approved child safety seat, and that children under 16 riding in the back seat must wear a seat belt.

During the summer, parents should also be concerned about the temperature inside the car. Small children and infants are particularly prone to severe heat stroke and death if they are in a parked car on a hot day. Tragic incidents have happened even at home, when toddlers and young children crawl into unlocked, overheated cars. Young children are often unable to figure out how to escape, and die from the sweltering heat.

Here are other tips:

❑ Never leave your child unattended in a car for any period of time, even if the windows are rolled down.

❑ Never allow your child to play in and around cars.

❑ Lock your car's doors and trunk, even at home.

❑ Check the temperature of the car's seats and seat belts before restraining your children in the car.

❑ Use a light covering to shade the seat of your parked car. Use shades for both the front and back windshields.

Skateboards, In-line Skates and Scooters

With their return to popularity in the 90s, skateboards helped to usher in the popularity of "extreme" sports," with athletes riding in simulated city structures that include ramps, concrete steps and stair railings. If your children are interested in skateboarding, it goes without saying that they should not try to imitate any of the stunts they see on television. The athletes in these events have had years of training. Children should always wear a helmet, wrist pads, elbow pads, and knee pads.

Almost everybody remembers the old four-wheel roller skates we grew up with. But it seems the more popular brand of skates these days are in-line skates. The law requires children under 14 to wear a helmet while skating. Other protective gear, such as wrist pads, knee pads, elbow pads, and gloves should be worn as well.

Children should also skate on smooth, paved surfaces with no traffic nearby, and avoid streets, driveways, and surfaces with water, sand, gravel or dirt.

It is also important that skaters learn to stop properly, using the brake pads at the heel of most skates. Finally, children should not skate at night because they are not likely to see obstacles, and passing vehicles are not likely to see them.

In recent years, non-powered scooters have been big sellers, because of their light weight (10 pounds or less) and the ability to fold them for easy transport. The proof of the rapid growth in sales is evident in the fact that, in September 2000, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported that the number of scooter injuries (8,600) surpassed those associated with in-line skates.

Effective July 2002, New York State law requires children under 14 years of age to wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet when riding scooters. The penalty for not wearing a helmet is a $50 fine. Children should also wear knee and elbow pads, but not wrist pads; they make it difficult to grip the scooter's handles.

Preventing Sports Injuries

Organized sports leagues are a wonderful way for your children to increase their fitness and learn to socialize with their peers. However, injuries can occur during athletic events. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, most organized sports-related injuries occur during practice, because the same precautions taken in games are not always taken during practice.

❑ Children should have a general health exam and an orthopedic exam before beginning a sport. Coaches should have a certificate from a state or national organization saying they are licensed to coach this sport, be certified in CPR, and have a first aid kit available. Provide the coach with your name, address, phone number, and any information about medical conditions your child may have.

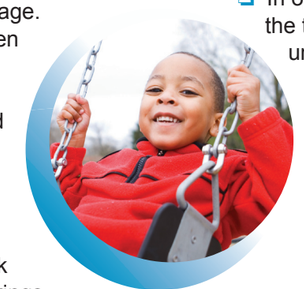
❑ Before practices or games, children should wear the appropriate protective gear, stretch and warm up. During games, they should compete with other kids of similar skill level and size. Athletic grounds should be checked for hazards, such as rocks, holes and broken glass.

❑ During practices and games, adults should supervise children at all times. Children should drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration, receive adequate rest breaks, and never play through an injury.

Staying Safe at the Playground

For generations, playgrounds have provided enjoyment to children and a chance for parents to watch children have fun. Practicing safe behavior on these playgrounds will ensure years of happy memories:

❑ Playgrounds should have equipment appropriate for your child's age. Rusted or broken equipment or dangerous surfaces should immediately be reported to the school or municipality;



❑ Remove neck or hood drawstrings from your child's clothing to prevent the possibility of strangulation;

❑ Tell your children not to shove or push their peers, and make sure they use only the equipment available to them; and

❑ Always make sure you know where your child is.

❑ Wear the appropriate safety devices.

Safe Swimming

Swimming and playing in a pool are certainly popular summertime activities. To make sure your children remain safe, follow these steps:

❑ Wading pools should be emptied after each use; stored upside down and out of reach of children.

❑ Children should take swimming lessons only from qualified instructors.

❑ Adults and children over 13 years old should learn child and infant CPR.

❑ Make sure you know which of your child's friends have pools, and make sure an adult is supervising. If you have a pool, make sure you supervise when your children and their friends are swimming.

❑ Install a four-sided fence at least five feet high around your pool, with self-closing and self-locking gates, to keep children from wandering into the pool unsupervised.

❑ In open water, pay attention to the tide, changing waves, and undercurrents.

❑ Wear the appropriate safety devices.

❑ Always have your children swim with a buddy.

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