

2023 Florida Missing Children's Day Statewide 5th Grade Essay Contest

Theme:

This is how I stay safe
all day.



All essays are due by Friday,
March 10, 2023. Submit
essays via email to
fmcd@fdle.state.fl.us

Essays without school
information and parental
release and consent will
not be considered.

7 regional winners will each
receive \$100.
Winners will be announced
before the school year ends.

PURPOSE:

To promote safety awareness among Florida's children and encourage them to proactively think of ways to keep themselves safe from abduction and online exploitation.

CONTEST GUIDELINES:

The contest is open to all Florida 5th grade students including public, charter, and private schools as well as afterschool programs and home-schooled students.

Each school or program can submit **only one "School Winner"**. Students that are home-schooled or whose school does not hold an essay contest may submit entries directly to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

The school/program information **and** the parent/guardian release and consent **must** be submitted with the essay by **March 10, 2023**.

Essays should be no longer than 1-typed or 2-handwritten pages. If typed, essay needs to be in Times New Roman, size 12 or 14 font. If handwritten, writing must be legible.

Essays must focus on things children can do to help keep them safe from abduction or online exploitation while at home, school, the library, a friend's house, or anywhere they are away from their parents.

Essays may be based upon, but are not limited to: personal experiences of the child, friends, or relatives; discussions with their parents and teachers about abduction safety tips and what/where they can go to get away from uncomfortable situations; steps to avoid online exploitation in which a child may be asked to provide pictures or travel to meet another person; or interviews with people who can assist them should they encounter situations beyond their control.

Essays must be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Essays should demonstrate clear thought processes and be based on realistic scenarios.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Education, and the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation

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PRIZES:

School Winner – Each participating school or program must select 1 winner (except for home-schooled students who may send their entries directly to the Essay Contest Coordinator). The winning essay must be submitted to the contest coordinator by Friday, March 10, 2023. The school contact person can submit the school winner's essay via email to fmcd@fdle.state.fl.us. Please make sure to include the school information and parental release/consent and the school's winning essay.

A certificate of participation will be given to all of the school winners received by the deadline.

Regional Winner – All essays received by March 10, 2023, will be considered for the contest. One winner from the 7 FDLE regions will be selected as Regional Winners. The 7 FDLE regions are the Tallahassee Region, Jacksonville Region, Tampa Region, Orlando Region, Miami Region, Ft. Myers Region and Pensacola Region. See the map below of the counties by region. Essays are judged by the Department of Education and the Florida Executive Office of the Governor.

Regional winners will receive a check for \$100 and the opportunity to be selected as the statewide winner.

Statewide Winner – The statewide winner will be selected from the 7 regional winners. The statewide winner will be invited to Tallahassee to read the winning essay during the formal Florida Missing Children's Day Ceremony on September 11, 2023. The statewide winner will also receive an additional \$100 dollars and a prize package.

At the ceremony, the statewide winner will be presented a prize package including an additional check for \$100, an award, and a trip to Universal Studios.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement map of regions with counties

Counties in the Pensacola Region

Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, Washington

Counties in the Jacksonville Region

Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. John's, Union

Counties in the Tallahassee Region

Columbia, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, Wakulla

Counties in the Orlando Region

Brevard, Indian River, Lake, Martin, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, St. Lucie

Counties in the Tampa Bay Region

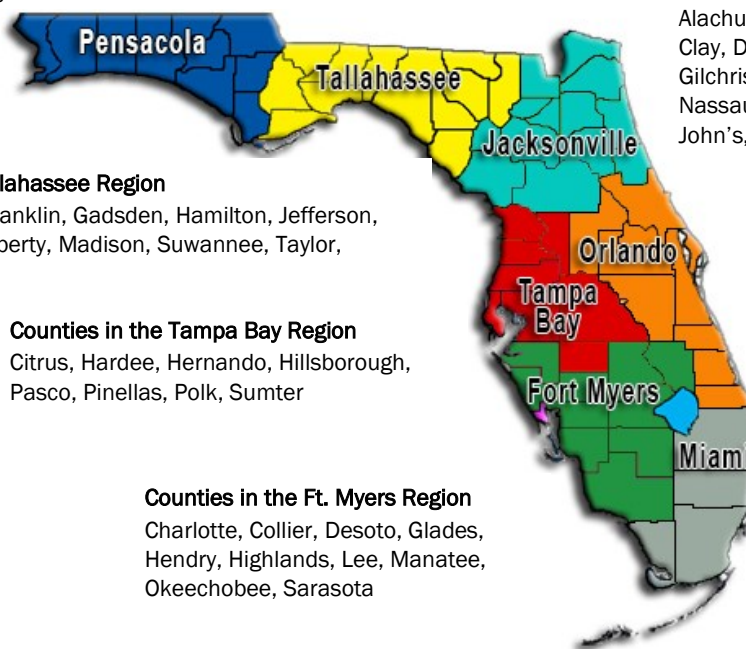
Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Sumter

Counties in the Ft. Myers Region

Charlotte, Collier, Desoto, Glades, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Manatee, Okeechobee, Sarasota

Counties in the Miami Region

Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach



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EDUCATORS:

You can use the theme "How I stay safe all day" as a writing prompt to generate essay topics surrounding safety. Some suggested topics are:

What would you do if you were approached by someone that made you feel uncomfortable?

What would you do if someone you do not know asked you to go somewhere with them, or if they asked you for your personal information?

What would you do if you are approached by someone who made you feel uncomfortable, or if someone tried to take you?

What are some ways you can stay safe online?

What should you do if someone you do not know talks to you online?

What should you do if someone online asks to meet you in-person?

Conduct a class discussion to explore different dangers that children face. Have students break into groups to brainstorm and discuss safety tips that they can use.

Provide examples of online safety and the "do's and don'ts" of online messaging.

Have students make a safety "quilt" that shows ways to be safe. Each square can represent a danger and the solution to overcome it.

Practice safety scenarios.

Suggest that students discuss the essay topic during family time or whenever a "teachable" moment arises. Suggest they include all siblings as much as possible.

If a child opts to conduct interviews for an essay, help devise a plan so that the information gathered can be helpful. Suggested people to interview: school resource officers, family members, school officials, security officers, law enforcement officers, etc. Sample questions include:

What is your name and what is your occupation?

What tips can you provide to help me stay safe from abduction?

What tips can you provide to help me stay safe online?

How can I get in touch with you if I need help?

If you are not available, who else can I contact for help?

The school information and parental release/consent and the school's winning essay should be sent to fmcd@fdle.state.fl.us by March 10, 2023.



Use the education kit(s) available from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at <https://www.missingkids.org/education> to help facilitate safety discussions.



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FAMILIES:

To stay safe from abduction and predators, children should arm themselves with a good plan. There will be moments when children find themselves away from the safety of their parents. As they grow older, children encounter different situations. Whether at play, on the internet, on social networking websites, walking to and from school, at the school bus stop or other places, all children should have a safety plan. They should ask themselves "How can I stay safe from abduction especially when my parents are not with me?" Parents should talk to their children and provide clear direction in this regard.

Fifth-grade Florida students are asked to write an essay about ways to stay safe from abduction and online exploitation. They will need to conduct research and construct their thoughts into an essay. The essay must focus on things children can do to keep themselves safe from abduction or online exploitation.

Essay materials include a few websites children can use to conduct their research. Teachers and parents are encouraged to review and discuss these sites with the children. Doing so will help to arm them with the ability to protect themselves at all times. Listed below are helpful hints to use in the discussion:

- What would you do if you were approached by someone who made you feel uncomfortable?
- If someone tried to take you somewhere or get you to go somewhere with them, what would you do?
- If you are chatting online and the person asked you to meet them somewhere, asked you for personal information, or asked for a picture of you, what would you do? Discuss the subject with friends and classmates. Have they been in a situation where they were asked to provide personal information? Have they received messages or phone calls from someone they do not know? If so, how did they handle it?

Children should ask permission from your parents before you conduct interviews or go on the Internet.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Missing Children Information Clearinghouse

<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/mcicsearch/SafetyTips.asp>

<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/mcicsearch/Publications.asp>

<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICSearch/Documents/SafeSteps.pdf>

[Best Practices for Kids \(secureflorida.org\)](#)

[Cyberbullying \(secureflorida.org\)](#)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz>

<https://www.missingkids.org/education/kidsmartz>

Office of the Attorney General of Florida

www.safeflorida.net/safesurf

Jimmy Ryce Center

<https://jimmyryce.wpengine.com/educate/kids/>

Other resources

<https://www.getnetwise.org/>

[netcetera_2018.pdf \(ftc.gov\)](#)

["Chatting with Kids about Being Online" Booklet | CISA](#)

Internet Safety Sites

<https://isafeventures.com/>

www.ikeepssafe.org

www.safekids.com

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School Information



PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Student's name as it should appear on the certificate: _____

School/Program type:

Public

Charter

Private

Home-school

Afterschool Program

Other

School/Program name: _____

School/Program address: _____

School/Program city and zip code: _____

School/Program county: _____

Teacher/Program contact name: _____

Teacher/Program contact email: _____

Teacher/Program contact phone number: _____

Parent/Guardian Release and Consent

I hereby grant permission to use and reproduce the essay of my child, _____
_____, and use my child's name in federal and state related publications, news features, blogs, or other advertisements relating to the Annual Florida Missing Children's Day Essay Contest. I also grant permission for my child to participate in any interviews with media relating to this event. I understand that any written statements may be edited or used, in whole or in part, or adapted with other materials, and I hereby waive all rights of privacy, compensation, control, or royalties that I may have.

I have read this document before signing below and warrant that I fully understand its contents.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print): _____

Address: _____

City and zip code: _____

Contact email: _____

Contact phone number: _____

