

## Cell Phones and Teen Safety

- I. **Attention:** How many people in this room have a cellular phone? How many of you had a cell phone at the age of 10? Statistics from CTIA, The Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, show that by the end of 2005, 67.5% of households will have at least 1 wireless phone, most will have multiple. However, while 67% of teens ages 15 to 17 own a cellular phone, only 14% of children ages 10-11 and only 35% of teens age 12-14 own a phone. These last two figures are the ones that we should be concerned about. **Need:** Today I'm going to talk to you about why every school-age child in your life should have a cell phone and why it is your responsibility to make sure that they do. I will tell you about the technology advancements that make it imperative to get your child a phone, the cost implications to your household and how to minimize that cost and finally the safety reasons why your child should have a phone,
  
- II. **Satisfaction Step:** In 1985 there were approximately 200,000 wireless subscribers nationwide. Today there are over 190 million. While the majority of wireless users used to be business men, today every age group is becoming more and more dependent on cellular phones. The average child knows how to use a land line to call 911 by the age of 4 and knows how to use a cellular phone by the age of 5. What does this mean to us? It means that we as parents should be using cell phones as a means of making sure our children are safe at all times and always able to call 911 in an emergency. There are several key things you should know about wireless phones.
  - A. In 1985 there were over 193,000 calls placed to 911 from wireless phones. That number has gradually increased over the last 10 years and in 2003 there were over 72 million calls placed to 911 from a wireless phone. According to the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division, until recently, calls to 911 from a wireless phone were routed to an emergency number that was not part of the standard 911 system, the 911 technicians answering these calls were not given any information regarding the location of the caller, only the mobile number they were calling from.
  
  - B. In October of 2001, following the tragedies of September 11, the FCC began conducting research on implementing a policy to ensure that all wireless phone companies begin installing GPS, otherwise known as Global Positioning System, chips in new cellular phones to aid in

tracking the location of calls made from wireless phones to 911. Based on their research, the E911 regulations were implemented.

- C. There are several key dates that were a part of the new regulations. The key date being that by December 31, 2005, 95% of the entire wireless customer base must be using a GPS equipped handset. These new regulations ensure that any cellular phone, even a phone without active service with a wireless carrier, must be able to call 911 at any time. The GPS chip allows the 911 operator to view precise location information including latitude and longitude of the caller within 50-100 meters. This is one of the reasons that I believe that every school-age child should have a cellular phone.

**Transition:** I believe that safety should always outweigh the cost but many people will say that tweens should not have cellular phones because of the added expense to the family. So let's talk about cost.

**III. Satisfaction Step:** With the increase in affordability of cellular phones as well as the recent popularity of family plans and pooled minute plans, cell phones are becoming more and more affordable.

- A. In 1988 the average monthly bill for a cellular phone was \$95.00. That has dramatically decreased over the last 10 years and is now under \$50.00. While \$50.00 may not seem like a lot to many people, for parents of a young child, \$50 could be a large portion of their family budget. However, a quick search of several wireless provider websites shows that there are cheaper options.
- B. The cheapest option, of course, is free. Because of the recent FCC E911 regulations, every wireless phone must be able to connect with 911 regardless of whether or not it has an active account with a wireless provider. This means you can dig through your closet, your desk drawers, wherever you keep them and find that old cell phone that you replaced because it wasn't cool anymore, charge the battery and give it to your 7 year-old to carry with her in her backpack.
- C. Another option is an emergency only plan. Many wireless companies offer these plans even though they don't advertise them. They range from \$9.95 to \$15.95 per month and usually include 15-60 minutes and are clearly meant for emergency use only. If you choose one of these plans, be sure you have them add another optional feature called usage blocker. This feature blocks all incoming and outgoing calls, other than to 911, once the user has reached their monthly

limit. This will eliminate any overage charges while still allowing your child to reach 911 in case of an emergency.

**Transition:** Now that you know how the technology works and how much it's going to cost you, let's talk about the children in your life that you care about and why you should make sure they have a cellular phone.

**IV. Visualization Step:** Almost 800,000 individuals are reported missing in the United States every year and of those, 85-90 percent are juveniles. That totals almost 2000 missing children a day. The majority of these abductions are children taken while walking home from school, shopping at a mall or walking or riding their bikes around their neighborhood. Of those abductions, 27 percent were abducted by acquaintances, 24 percent by strangers and 49 percent by a family member.

- A.** Abduction by a stranger, probably the most terrifying of these types, can be the most difficult to solve because there are usually very few clues as to where the child has been taken and many times the child is taken out of state.
- B.** There are approximately 115,000 stranger abductions attempted every year. This figure does not include attempted rapes, molestations or other violent crimes against children that do not include an actual abduction.
- C.** Other than abduction, there are many other emergencies that your child could get themselves into that aren't as serious; riding a bicycle home and falling, getting lost at the zoo, getting out of a tough situation at a party or friends house, I could go on and on. Giving your child a cell phone can not only help you locate them if they are ever abducted, but more importantly, can help your child stay safe at all times.

**Action:** As a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or even just a friend, keeping our children safe is one of our most important responsibilities. You wouldn't think twice about putting a helmet on your child before they get on a bicycle, buckling them in properly in the car or keeping them right by your side in the grocery store. Giving your child a tool that will only increase their safety shouldn't be a difficult decision. Hindsight is always 20/20, so don't wait until it's too late and something terrible has happened to someone you love.

Tia Cain  
Speech 100 – Persuasive Speech  
Mrs. Ellen Bremen

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