

# SAFE ROUTES PROGRAM

## Preventing Violent Crime

In the 300+ Native American reservations in the United States, the number of violent crimes that take place are double that of the national average. According to data produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there are more than 7,700 Native American children listed as missing in the United States. Many American Indian and Alaskan Native children are plagued with living in communities with high rates of poverty, drug abuse, suicide, victimization, domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. Knowing how dangerous it can be, what is a kid to do when their home isn't the safest place?



## What is the Safe Routes Program?

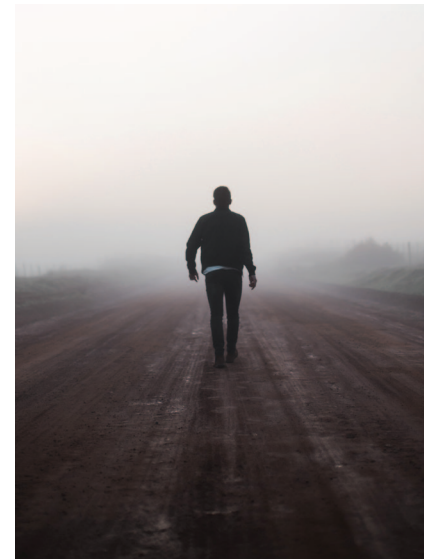
The goal of the program is for kids to identify a place that they could go to when they feel unsafe in their own home. Ideally, this place should be within walking distance to remove themselves from a toxic situation or environment. After the safe place is identified, kids map out their safe route, which includes their path and how to get to that location. There are a few ways to map out these routes, depending on the age group.

## Implementing the Safe Routes Program

For younger youth, have them draw a picture that begins with their home, and then where they would walk to, being sure to label any identifiable markers along the way. It may be helpful to create a template that they can use for this activity. It's important for youth to be as detailed as possible when identifying the route to their safe place. To assist them, ask them questions such as:

**What do you see along your route? What buildings do you see on the way to your safe place? Who lives at your safe place?**

Older youth may write out their route, including the turns and/or street names they would have to pass to get to their safe location. Instead of using the same template for the younger children, a map of the reservation or area in which they live in could be an essential tool. For instance, if the maps show buildings, street signs, nearby schools, etc. they could include those in their safe route. Have the kids start with the street they live on and place X's directly on the route they would walk. This is an activity where staff can be creative in how they present the information, and youth can be creative in how they choose to map their route.



Another addition would be to have the kids select a trusted adult or adults that they could call during an emergency (ideally the adult at the safe location) to notify them that they feel unsafe and are leaving. In some instances, the person listed as the "primary contact" may be the person inflicting harm to these children.



**AMBER  
ALERT**

*Note: In certain cultures, tribes, and on certain reservations, families may be very close knit. This may make it difficult for youth to contact an adult that they identify as safe contact if they feel like they will get in trouble for speaking out on this. If this is relevant to your community, the tribal police and Law Enforcement can be a safe contact for these individuals.*

## Why is the Safe Routes Program Important?

The Safe Routes Program serves as an activity that youth can use to identify their safe place, as well as people they feel safe around during an emergency. It can also be used as an emergency response resource in the event a child goes missing. With the high rates of crime that happen on many reservations and within Native communities, it provides law enforcement with a place to search based on what the child has identified as a safe place. In addition, those people that the youth have identified can be used to assist an investigation.

*Note: The route is more important than the destination. If the child is in trouble and needs to hide they may not reach their safe place, but police may know where to look based on the safe route and the process it takes to get there.*

## The Safe Route Model

**Safe Routes**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_



My House

**How Do I Get There?**


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



My Safe Place

**My Safe Place**

**What Do I See?**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





**AMBER  
ALERT**

The Safe Routes Map starts off at the participant's home. From there they are introduced to the first part of this activity. There is a space provided for youth to explain the steps they take to get to their "safe place," and what they see along their route. In this section participants should write steps such as the turns they make, stores that they pass along the way, if they walk on a main road, if they have to walk through the woods, etc. Youth should try to be as detailed as possible so that their safe place could be found by law enforcement or tribal police if this child were to go missing.



There also a space labeled "**My Safe Place.**" In this section, youth should mention what or where their safe place is. If it's a relative's or a friend's house, or even a youth-serving organization, they should note that here. **The safe place should be somewhere that someone is present in the event child is being followed.** It is important to mention that while youth may think their safe place is a quiet area by the river where they can escape harm or a stressful situation, it may not be the safest place to be if they are in immediate danger or are being pursued.

*Note: If youth mention that your youth organization is their "safe place" for when they don't feel safe at home, you should make it a point to check on these individuals regularly and ask "how's everything at home going?" These kids may be there because they enjoy the club but if they mention that it is their safe place it may be something else going on as well.*

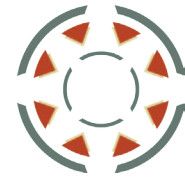
On the Tribal database there is a template they can use to identify their **Safe Contact(s)**. As mentioned earlier, it is important for them to list a few safe contacts in case the primary contact person is the individual youth is identified as a threat. It is important that they are able to reach their safe contact during an emergency so that they know to expect them.

My Safe Contact(s):	
Name:	_____
Phone Number:	_____
Name:	_____
Phone Number:	_____

Additional Details:

**Staff members at your organization could also be considered safe contacts.**

Lastly there is a place for any **Additional Details** they may want to add about their safe place or safe contacts. This area can be used as an overflow for the youth, or it can be used for the youth professional if more information presents itself later on.



## Modifications

The model can be modified in any way you prefer. Some modifications may include:

### Model template vs. a map of the reservation

- A map of the reservation may make it easier for youth professionals can get a better visual on where their safe place is in case of an emergency.

### Multiple models

- They don't have to be limited to one safe place. If the participants have more than one, feel free to have them fill out additional templates/models.

### Types of models

#### • Daytime and Nighttime models

If their safe place is a friend's house, they may not be able to go there at night so having a day time and night time model may be helpful.

#### • Daytime and Nighttime contacts

As mentioned above, some contacts may not be reachable depending on the time of day so having multiple people to call will be beneficial. Tribal police or other forms of law enforcement will be ideal to have as a safe contact because they will be able to be reached at all times.

**Disclaimer-** *Although you shouldn't encourage youth to leave their home at night, if they are in a situation where they feel unsafe and could potentially be harmed at home, having a nighttime model would be beneficial.*

## Sources

McCain, John. "Ending The Tragedy Of Child Abductions In Indian Country." Medium, Medium, 10 May 2017, [www.medium.com/@SenatorJohnMcCain/ending-the-tragedy-of-child-abductions-in-indian-country-cc4aec7d689a](http://www.medium.com/@SenatorJohnMcCain/ending-the-tragedy-of-child-abductions-in-indian-country-cc4aec7d689a).

Culp-Ressler, Tara. "The Shocking Rates Of Violence And Abuse Facing Native American Kids." ThinkProgress, 18 Nov. 2014, 2:12 PM, [www.thinkprogress.org/the-shocking-rates-of-violence-and-abuse-facing-native-american-kids-883449df0f63](http://www.thinkprogress.org/the-shocking-rates-of-violence-and-abuse-facing-native-american-kids-883449df0f63).

Williams, Timothy. "Higher Crime, Fewer Charges on Indian Land." The New York Times, The New York Times, 20 Feb. 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/02/21/us/on-indian-reservations-higher-crime-and-fewer-prosecutions.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/21/us/on-indian-reservations-higher-crime-and-fewer-prosecutions.html).

---

Special thanks to Nikiea Johnson, a former Clubhouse Director at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale, for her insight and contribution to this resource.