



How well do you know your partner?

One mom's true story:

"I knew this man for 17 years. We grew up together. I had been living with him for five months when he offered to babysit while I was at work. That day I had a gut feeling maybe I should stay home, but I went to work anyway. My boyfriend killed my son that day.

If you feel like something isn't right, investigate! Pay attention to the little things, especially your child's behavior. If he or she begins to cry whenever they see the person or any other changes that cannot be explained, investigate! Even though I am not to blame and I did not hurt him, I will blame myself every day because I didn't know. Every day I replay what I could have done to prevent his death.

You can always find another job or babysitter, but you can never replace your child."

— Linda, age 37

You hold the key to your child's safety. Parents think their child will be safe in their own home. The reality is that many children are abused by their parent's partner every year and some even die.

There are many reasons you might want someone to live with you. You may:

- Be in love;
- Want companionship or someone to talk to;
- Want someone to help you with your child;
- Need a babysitter;
- Need help paying bills; or
- Need help with transportation and a place to live.

Be careful!

Any person you invite into your home will also impact the life of your child. They may be kind and loving to you and still be a danger to your child. If your partner is hurting your child, you may be in danger too; and if your partner is hurting you, he or she may also be hurting your child.

Listen to your child. Watch your child's behavior and reactions. Make sure you know your partner well before you let him or her be alone with your child. If it's safe, ask for help and talk honestly with your:

- Friends;
- Family;
- Spiritual leader;
- Health care provider;
- Family support worker, or
- Anyone you trust.

Does your partner fail the “safe” test?

Does he or she:

- Yell at your child?
- Hit your child?
- Not like your child?
- Talk bad about your child?
- Talk negatively to your child?
- Have secrets with your child?
- Touch your child in a way that makes you or them feel bad?
- Hurt you?
- Abuse alcohol or drugs?
- Have a criminal history?
- Get angry often?
- Lack experience in taking care of children?
- Have unrealistic expectations of your child?
- Criticize your parenting?

Does your child:

- Cry when left alone with your partner?
- Cry when he/she has to go home and your partner is there?
- Act fearful in your home?
- Have unexplained bruises or injuries?
- Act different around your partner than he/she does around you?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your child might be in danger.

Call your local health department to find out about support groups and other resources in your area.

Protect your children from registered sex offenders living in Illinois. For a complete list, visit <http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor>.

For more information, visit www2.illinois.gov/DCFS

Does your partner pass the “safe” test?

Does he or she:

- Enjoy spending time with you and your child?
- Say nice things about your child?
- Talk to your child in a respectful way?
- Know your child’s daily activities?
- Provide attention to your child through positive words and actions?
- Listen to your child and respect his/her feelings?
- Understand what children can do at different ages?
- Use positive discipline like time-outs?
- Make your child feel safe and secure?

Does your child:

- Look forward to spending time with both of you?
- Enjoy being at home?
- Openly share feelings and concerns?
- Treat others with respect?

If you answered yes to these questions, there’s a better chance that your child is safe.

