



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Gov. Blagojevich encourages Illinoisans to “Take Time to Talk to Children about Safety”  
*Proclaims May 25 Missing Children’s Day in Illinois***

SPRINGFIELD, IL — Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, along with the Illinois State Police, Department of Children and Family Services, and Illinois Department of Transportation, joined families throughout Illinois in observing May 25 as Missing Children’s Day in Illinois. This year, families are encouraged to “Take Time to Talk to Children About Safety Issues” by taking 25 minutes to talk with their children about safety and abduction prevention. The day also provides communities an opportunity to plan events to raise public awareness about the serious issue of missing children.

“As a father, I understand how important it is to know that our children are safe,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “I’m encouraging parents to take 25 minutes out of their busy schedules to talk to their children about how to remain safe by recognizing potential dangers and making smart decisions.”

In 2006, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children created the Take 25 campaign which provides 25 preventive safety tips for parents and others to use to teach children to be safe. The web site, <http://www.take25.org>, was designed to heighten awareness about children’s safety issues. With a focus on prevention, the campaign encourages parents, guardians, and other trusted-adult role models to spend time talking to kids and teaching them ways to be safer.

“The anguish parents experience when their child goes missing is heartbreaking,” said Illinois State Police Director Larry G. Trent. “As we observe Missing Children’s Day in Illinois, the Illinois State Police is reaffirming its commitment to finding these children and reuniting them with their families.”

Nationally, May 25 has been observed as National Missing Children’s Day since it was first proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. In Illinois, an estimated 38,000 children are reported missing annually, with roughly 95 percent quickly located and returned safely home. Today, there continues to be more than 2,000 children missing across the state.

"Missing children and youth are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation," said Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Director Erwin McEwen. "We must work together relentlessly to locate these children and save them from harm."

In addition to the safety tips offered by the Take 25 web site, the Illinois State Police is available to provide NetSmartz training to educate children on how to stay safe when online. To date, more than 20,500 students, teachers and parents have attended the workshops which combine the newest technologies and the most current research in high-impact educational activities to teach kids and teens how to stay safe. A NetSmartz training program can be scheduled by contacting a Safety Education Officer at any ISP headquarters. The training is free for all schools, parent groups and civic organizations.

"IDOT is proud to join Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois State Police in highlighting the important message of Missing Children's Day, which is that parents and caretakers must take the time to discuss safety issues with their children," said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. "And just as IDOT supports law enforcement and employs our statewide system of Dynamic Message Signs to flash AMBER Alerts when needed, on May 25 we will use these signs to remind the public that it is 'Missing Children's Day' and to urge them to: "Light The Way Home - Turn on Your Headlights."

Illinois, in a partnership with Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Ohio, is also active in the Interstate Agreement on Missing and Exploited Children. The agreement was established as a network to improve identifying and recovering missing children. The Council is comprised of representatives of state law enforcement and criminal justice agencies from each of these states and meets annually.

In observance of Missing Children's Day in Illinois, citizens are encouraged to take part in the day's observance by turning on porch lights and vehicle headlights to "Light the Way Home" for our missing children.