

Martha

"The law enforcement people were taking over our house. They answered our phone. They drank out of our coffee cups. They were always there."

"There was this neighbor, a man who lived by himself. A lot of people in the neighborhood were speculating and gossiping about him. At first I thought it was ridiculous, but as the police kept questioning him, I started to wonder. I felt like I couldn't trust anyone."



Trevor

"I liked having the police at our house. I was very scared, and having them there made me feel safe."

After your brother or sister is abducted, the first thing your parents will probably do is call the police. In most cases, law enforcement (police, sheriffs, detectives, the FBI) will be the first people your family talks to.

SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Law enforcement has a job to do. They are there to find your brother or sister, to eliminate possible **suspects**, and to track down the actual **perpetrator** of the crime. Many people don't realize this, but the police and the FBI start by questioning the people closest to the missing sibling: you, your parents, your other siblings, close relatives, friends, and neighbors. The police will talk to many people, including those who know your brother or sister and who may have witnessed something important. They want to gather as much information as possible to bring your brother or sister home safely. Many times abductions are carried out by someone who knows the child involved.

The more suspects law enforcement can **eliminate**, the more they can focus on who really committed the crime and track them down. You, your parents, and others close to the family may be asked to take a **polygraph** test to see if you are telling the truth. Though this may be a frightening process, it is a necessary one.

The local police and the FBI are trained to gather as much information as possible on the case, largely through interviews. One thing you can definitely expect is that they will ask you lots and lots of questions. They may ask you the same questions over and over again. You'll probably be interviewed many times. Sometimes, the interview will be in an uncomfortable or unfamiliar place. You may have different people asking questions or the same people asking questions repeatedly. After a while, you may be so tired and confused that you start to question your own answers. You may even feel like you are being accused yourself, even though you know it's crazy.

Their questions may make you feel uncomfortable and intimidated. They will ask you questions about relatives, teachers, coaches, and family friends, and you may be afraid your answers will get them in trouble. You may think that they are being insensitive and are asking strange questions. Sometimes, it may seem like they do not know how to talk to you or don't believe you.

"They said they were just going to ask a few questions, but we were in there for hours. They asked the same questions over and over." - Amy

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Just remember one thing. Law enforcement's job is to ask questions to help them find your brother or sister. Your job is to answer the questions as best you can. Your only job is to tell the truth.

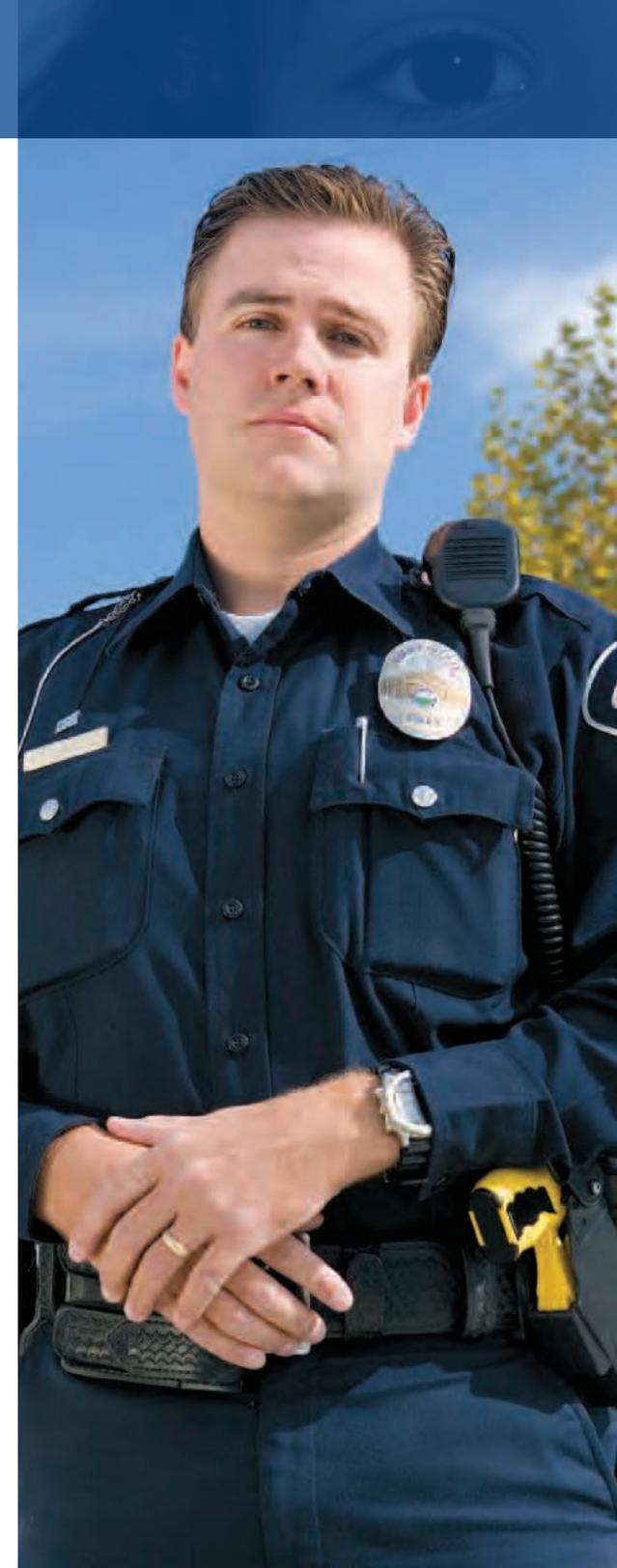
Here are some things you can do to help yourself handle the interview process:

- Bring something with you to the interview that makes you feel comfortable. Very young children may want to bring a favorite stuffed animal or toy.
- Try not to overanalyze every question the officer asks you or to give what you think is the "right" answer. Just answer each question as truthfully as possible.
- Let the officer know if you are tired, thirsty, or need to go to the bathroom. Ask if you can take a break.

- Remind yourself that even though you don't know why they are asking certain questions, they are the experts in solving cases.
- If you cannot remember something, don't make up an answer. It's okay to just say, 'I don't remember.'
- If any part of the interview makes you uncomfortable, be sure to let your parents know about it.

Law enforcement may also do other things, some of which can feel **invasive**. They may take the family computer or other personal possessions. They may tape telephone calls, **tap** your family's phone line, or put in a second line for the investigation. They may screen your calls and your mail. They may ask questions of your friends and neighbors.

"I would sit at the police station all day and nobody would tell me anything. It was frustrating." - Marcus



LAW ENFORCEMENT

Space for your thoughts.

"They won't tell you anything because they don't want you to get your hopes up." – Marcus

Sometimes, it may seem like there is a lot of law enforcement activity, and sometimes, there is none. You may not know everything the law enforcement officers are doing or the reasons why they are doing them. They have very good reasons for keeping activities **confidential** and not informing your family about every new development in the case. Just because you haven't heard about any progress doesn't mean that nothing is happening on the case. Try not to let it dampen your spirits.

Sometimes, there are so many law enforcement officers working on the case that you are not sure what they are all doing and why. One thing we found helpful was to have a law enforcement officer serve as our family's **designated liaison** to give us information and to coordinate law enforcement activities. Your parents may already know and trust someone in law enforcement and can ask that person, or someone they know, to take on that role. The designated liaison can give the family an update every day. That way everyone can feel like they know what's happening.

"Just because you don't hear about progress, doesn't mean they're not making any." – Marcus

