

## Code Adam

Losing track of your child is one of the scariest things a parent can endure. You're looking at a pair of jeans at JC Penneys or looking at a book that someone recommended to you at the bookstore, then all of a sudden you turn around and your child is no longer next to you. Children have a tendency to wander off, usually without realizing the severity of their actions. They could be just around the next rack of clothes, but by being anywhere other than by your side, they scare you half to death. Why is this so frightening? The unfortunate answer is that some people have decided to take advantage of lone children that they encounter. While rare, these kidnappings do happen.

Six-year-old Adam Walsh was one of these abducted children. He went shopping for lamps with his mother in Florida in 1981. His mother left him to play with some video games in the store while she went to check on an item less than 75 feet away. When she returned 10 minutes later, Adam was nowhere to be seen. She searched on her own for quite a while before notifying the police. After posting pictures of Adam in the community, his body was found 16 days later. Adam's father was John Walsh, the host of America's Most Wanted. In attempts to save other children from his son's disastrous fate, John Walsh helped develop Code Adam.

Code Adam is a method used in most retail stores and other public establishments for locating missing children. Employees are trained in the process and practice it regularly in order to be as efficient as possible. When approached by a parent notifying them of a missing child, the employee will ask the following questions:

What is the age and sex of the child?

What is the child wearing?

What color shoes are the child wearing?

This last question seems strange, but is very important. If someone plans on abducting a child, they usually bring a change of clothes to change the child into to avoid recognition. However, changing a child's shoes is more complicated, so often they skip that step.

The information obtained from the parent will be broadcast over the loudspeaker of the store informing employees and customers of the situation. Depending on the location, employees block the exits of the store and search for a child matching the description. If the child is successfully located and reunited with the parent, an announcement of "Code Adam Cancelled" will be broadcast. If the child is not found within 10 minutes, a manager will call the police to help in the search effort.

Knowing the details of Code Adam will help you and your fellow parents. If you can't find your child, approach an employee and ask for help. If you hear a Code Adam page, look for the missing child and report any suspicious behavior that you see. By working together, we can help prevent dangerous abductions.