



## A Sex Offender Lives on Our Block

**a**fter three years of house hunting, my husband and I finally found the perfect home in Cincinnati. We were stunned when our broker told us that a registered sex offender lived a few doors down. As far as I was concerned, this was a deal-breaker. There was no way I'd intentionally place my boys, 4 and 2, at risk. However, my husband felt the enemy we knew was better than the enemy we didn't know—and at least this threat had a name and face we could watch out for.

We gathered as much information as possible. I read the man's court records online, spoke to other parents on the block, and visited the police chief. One mother told me that the terms of the man's probation forbade him from having any contact with children and that he actually seemed more frightened of them than anyone else was of him. Armed with the facts, we decided to buy the house.

Before moving last October, we repeatedly talked to our kids about strangers and inappropriate behavior and touching. I pointed out the offender's house and car and told the boys they should never go inside or talk to the man who lives there. I explained he was a "bad guy" and they should shout "This is not my daddy!" if he ever approached them.

The situation has actually fostered a strong sense of community on our street. Every parent watches out for everyone else's kids. Otherwise, everyday life here is not that different from other places we've lived. But I've realized that I should have been more vigilant even before our move. Registered or not, sex offenders are out there, using public rest rooms and strolling through stores. We have to teach our kids to be aware and wary no matter who our neighbors are. —Paula Andruss

■ Not all states require that brokers inform clients about sex offenders. To find out whether there's a registered sex offender living near you, visit the NCMEC's Website, [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com), which has fact sheets about Megan's Law in every state.

surprise like a birthday present." Research has found that children who are sexually abused often don't reveal secrets because they're afraid no one will believe them, and they're uncomfortable "telling" on an adult.

- "No one should kiss or hug you if you don't want him to." If you try to hug your child and he rebuffs you—because he's busy playing or just in a bad mood—take advantage of that moment and say, "You're right. Other people should always listen if you say you don't want them to touch or kiss you." Parents can unknowingly set their kids up for abuse by insisting that they always be affectionate with others, says Claire R. Reeves, president and *Continued on page 196*