

Dear Teachers,

Miami-Dade ranks first in the State of Florida for pedestrian injury and mortality. Over the past three years researchers at UM/JMMC have noticed an increase in the incidence of pediatric pedestrian trauma patients being admitted to our center. With support of the Florida Department of Transportation and the Ryder Trauma Center, an active approach has been taken for identifying, observing and creating a plan to prevent pediatric pedestrian trauma.

From current literature and our own research we have learned that the most effective way to prevent these injuries is to create a prevention-based education program in elementary schools. Over the last few years we have implemented the WalkSafe program, an educational-based pedestrian safety intervention program. We found from our studies that students retain pedestrian safety knowledge if they are taught the proper education. It is thought that this education can potentially affect the behavior of these children leading to a decrease in the numbers of children being hit by cars.

We have addressed this problem with a multidimensional approach that includes the three Es: **Education** – Miami-Dade County Public Schools, **Enforcement** – Miami-Dade School Board Police and City of Miami Police and **Engineering** – Metropolitan Dade County Public Works. Appropriate engineering modifications and enforcement has been made already to 16 elementary schools in Liberty City. As of April 2003, the Miami-Dade School Board has mandated the WalkSafe program be added to the curriculum for all elementary schools.

The plan this year is to implement our WalkSafe program along with the International Walk to School Day at all 204 elementary schools in Miami-Dade County. It is very important that you make the WalkSafe program part of your classes' curriculum. We are planning for the WalkSafe program to be implemented by your school every October.

The Assistant Principal at your school will be responsible for training you and will be available to discuss any questions you might have. My staff and I appreciate all of your help in taking this step to help decrease this serious problem within our community. With your assistance, we look forward to creating a sustainable program that can be administered in all elementary schools within the state of Florida.

Sincerely,

Gillian Hotz, PhD
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