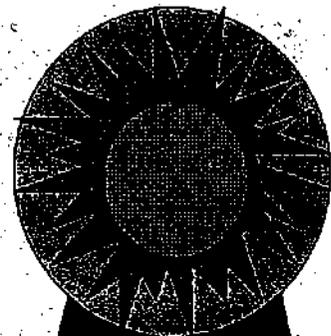
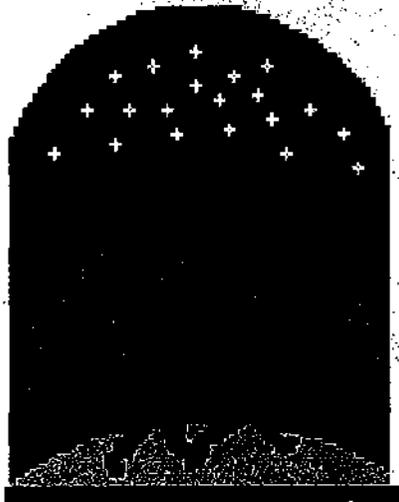
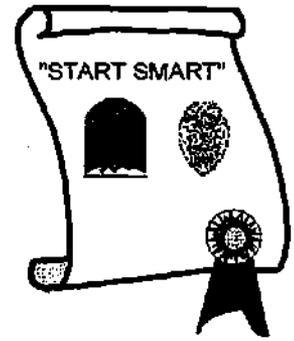


"START SMART"



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INTRODUCTION

When a child does not come home when expected, parents panic and police mobilize. Frequently, many of these children who are reported missing, are 11 years of age or under. For our department, this means that the search for the missing child does not cease until the child is located. In the vast majority of cases where children are reported missing, the search ends successfully with the safe return of the child. However, the efforts put forth by police, and community volunteers could have in many incidents, been expedited or prevented. After I recognized this fact, the task of reducing the number of missing juvenile calls became the goal of the Problem Oriented Project: "Start Smart."

SCANNING

As a police officer, some of the most time consuming calls for service are those which involve missing children. Typically, these calls originate when a parent dials 9-1-1 and reports their son or daughter did not return home. After searches which can range from just a few minutes to several hours, the child is usually located at a friend's house just doors away.

After handling this type of call repeatedly, I recognized specific similarities in many of these situations. One common problem was that children simply did not know what to do when mom or dad was late or did not show up to pick them up from school.

Often the child's solution was to go home with a friend and let mom come to the friends house. The flaw to this plan is that mom or dad do not always know who their children play with or where those playmates live. The police are then called in to find the child. The search for a missing child is the number one priority until they are found and returned safely to their family. Because of this many resources are used for the search. These can consist of numerous patrol officers in our city as well mutual aid from neighboring cities, air support, community volunteers and the media. Although all of these efforts are usually successful, the entire process is very time consuming and exhausting.

ANALYSIS

I went to our Crime Analysis Unit to determine how much out of service time we spent on missing juvenile calls. I found that in 1995, our police department spent an equivalent of three (3) months, (24 hours a day) just responding and handling missing juvenile calls. I also found that in 88% of these calls the missing children were located close to home. It was apparent that officers spent an enormous amount of "out-of-service" time on these types of calls. The obvious question: Why?

There are two explanations in particular which contribute to the amount of time spent on these types of calls. To begin with, a lost child is the number one priority for all involved. Because of this, the search for a missing child continues until the child is located. This may range from a few minutes, to several hours. The longer a child is missing, the greater the chances are that he/she is in need of police assistance. Knowing this, there is no limit on the number of personnel or amount of time needed, to safely locate the child.

However, in conducting a search for a child, a second contributing factor accounting for the amount of time spent, immediately emerges. This is a lack of reliable

information provided to us by the reporting party. With the limited information provided by parents, officers are typically left with no alternative but to seek information from the child's school. This usually requires officers to wait for a school custodian or administrator to arrive with keys to the areas where the information is stored. Then officers are left with the tedious task of contacting each of the child's classmates for any bit of information that might aid us in our search. The search is hindered and prolonged by the sketchy information provided by the reporting party, delays in getting to class records after school hours, and the exhausting task of contacting people who may or may not produce useful information.

After analyzing the amount of out of service time spent on these calls, I concluded that the common threads shared by many of these scenarios was poor communication between parent and child, and a lack of current centralized information.. My solution, "START SMART."

RESPONSE

"START SMART" is a parent-child worksheet designed to have parents and their children sit down together and answer such questions as routes to and from school, the names and phone numbers of friends, and what a child should do if an unusual circumstance should arise. More importantly, "START SMART" is aimed at teaching children to always let their parents know where they are.

The worksheet has three (3) pages. Page one (1) is the "START SMART" logo and "START SMART" poem/pledge. Pages two (2) and three (3) are identical carbonless copies. The poem and page two (2) remain with the parent(s) as a starting point to locate their child. Page three (3) is kept at the school to provide faculty and police officers responding there with a resource list to begin a search. In addition, an index card is also

given to children to be kept in their folders or backpacks. With "START SMART" many of these missing children incidents will never require police assistance, while those that do will give officers a clear place to start.

When a child is missing, parents, teachers, police and members of the community are all effected. With this in mind, it seemed only natural that all would take a vested interest in helping to create a solution to protect our children. To address the problem of missing children, I opened a Problem Oriented Policing project. In doing so, my primary goal was to reduce the amount of time that police spent searching for missing children. My belief was that if parents and children had a plan that they could adhere to, as laid out in the "Start Smart" worksheet, officers would be able to use the information that was on the sheet to find children quicker. In addition, the information that was already pre-listed would best serve a distraught parent that may not be thinking clearly when faced with the situation of their missing child and having to recall vital information to assist us in our search.

However, as I continued to develop the program, I realized that "Start Smart" could be used as a valuable resource, as well as a tool for educating children to always let their parents know where they are. In effect, if children are taught ahead of time what to do if a parent is late picking them up, who they can go to for help, and to always let their parents know where they will be, the incidents of children becoming lost could seriously be reduced. For parents and school officials with this information already on hand, the need to locate a child may end in a phone call to a listed friend. Thus, preventing the search from ever elevating to a police level. What started out as a project to help us find children faster, quickly blossomed into a program which was geared toward prevention.

The program was initially piloted in the Spring of 1996 at Oak Park, Valencia Park and Knox Elementary Schools. Ideally "START SMART" is meant to start off the new school year with a reliable plan for children and their parents. However, the program was

introduced in the spring to tests its effect, response and elicit support. The response was positive and well received by students, parents, teachers and the media. Oak Park, Valencia Park, and Knox all developed plans to "START SMART" in the fall.

I worked throughout the summer to promote the "START SMART" program. Through the participation in the 9th District PTA's mini-convention, I was able to provide information and samples to several PTA members and administrators around the county. From the mini-convention came a number of schools interested in "STARTING SMART" in the Fall of 1996.

The week of October 14th-18th was proclaimed "START SMART" Week by Mayor Susan Golding. During this week schools implemented the program by sending the worksheet home with the children. At night students were able to go home and watch stories about themselves on television. The purpose of "START SMART" Week was to make parents, children and police aware of the benefits of the program, while at the same time promoting countywide unity through the shared experience of "START SMART."

To put "Start Smart" into effect, several resources within the community and the police department were available to me. The Crime Analysis Unit provided the numbers that showed how much time police used in finding missing juveniles. The Indochinese Storefront assisted by translating the "Start Smart" form into Laotian and Vietnamese. And the City of San Diego print shop was able to print the forms for the first three schools to pilot the project. In addition, the Media Relations Department played a pivotal role in informing the public. But the greatest contributors to the project have been PTAs, teachers, school staff, parents and most important, the children.

The age groups that "START SMART" targets is Kindergarten-6th grade. Thus far, several schools have adopted "START SMART." In the city of San Diego the following schools have implemented the program: Oak Park, Valencia Park, Knox, Whitman, Field, Martin Luther King Jr., Nye, and Sandburg Elementary Schools. From the Lemon Grove School District, San Miguel, Monterey Heights, San Alto, Golden Ave., Vista La Mesa,

and Mt. Vernon Elementary Schools participated in "START SMART." In the Chula Vista School District, Eastlake, Hilltop and Valley Vista Elementary Schools instituted the program. And from the city of Lakeside, Lemon Crest Elementary adopted the program. In addition to local interest, I was recently informed by the Yuma Police Department that they were piloting the program in one of their elementary schools. Their plan is to implement "START SMART" at all 22 of their elementary schools in the fall.

ASSESSMENT

The results and responses to "START SMART" have been very favorable. The percentage of worksheets completed and returned by parents has ranged from 50-85%. Every school that I have followed up with has expressed the desire to continue the program in the fall. Also through feedback I was told that schools would get a better response if the worksheet was offered in other languages. To this date "START SMART" is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Laotian.

A reliable way of measuring the participation in the program has been by tallying up the numbers of completed sheets that have been turned in. But the effectiveness of "Start Smart" has been demonstrated best by the accounts from school officials that have actually used the worksheet to locate a missing child without police assistance. Pat Wafer is a Community Service Officer at Knox Elementary. Officer Wafer was responsible for implementing "Start Smart" in his school. On 2 occasions he has had the opportunity to use the worksheet to find a missing child. In one case, a 6 year old student did not make it home from school. When parents contacted Officer Wafer, he immediately checked for a completed "Start Smart" worksheet. He reviewed it and re-traced the path that the child took to and from school.. The child was found playing in a ditch that was on his way home.

In a second incident, Officer Wafer was contacted by a worried mother when her daughter did not return home from school. Again the "Start Smart" worksheet was

utilized. When the path the child used to walk home checked negative for her, Officer Wafer made phone calls to the parents of the friends that were listed on the sheet. The parent confirmed that the missing 9 year old girl was safe and playing with her daughter in their apartment complex. In both instances, the children were found with the assistance of the "Start Smart" worksheet and without having to contact police.

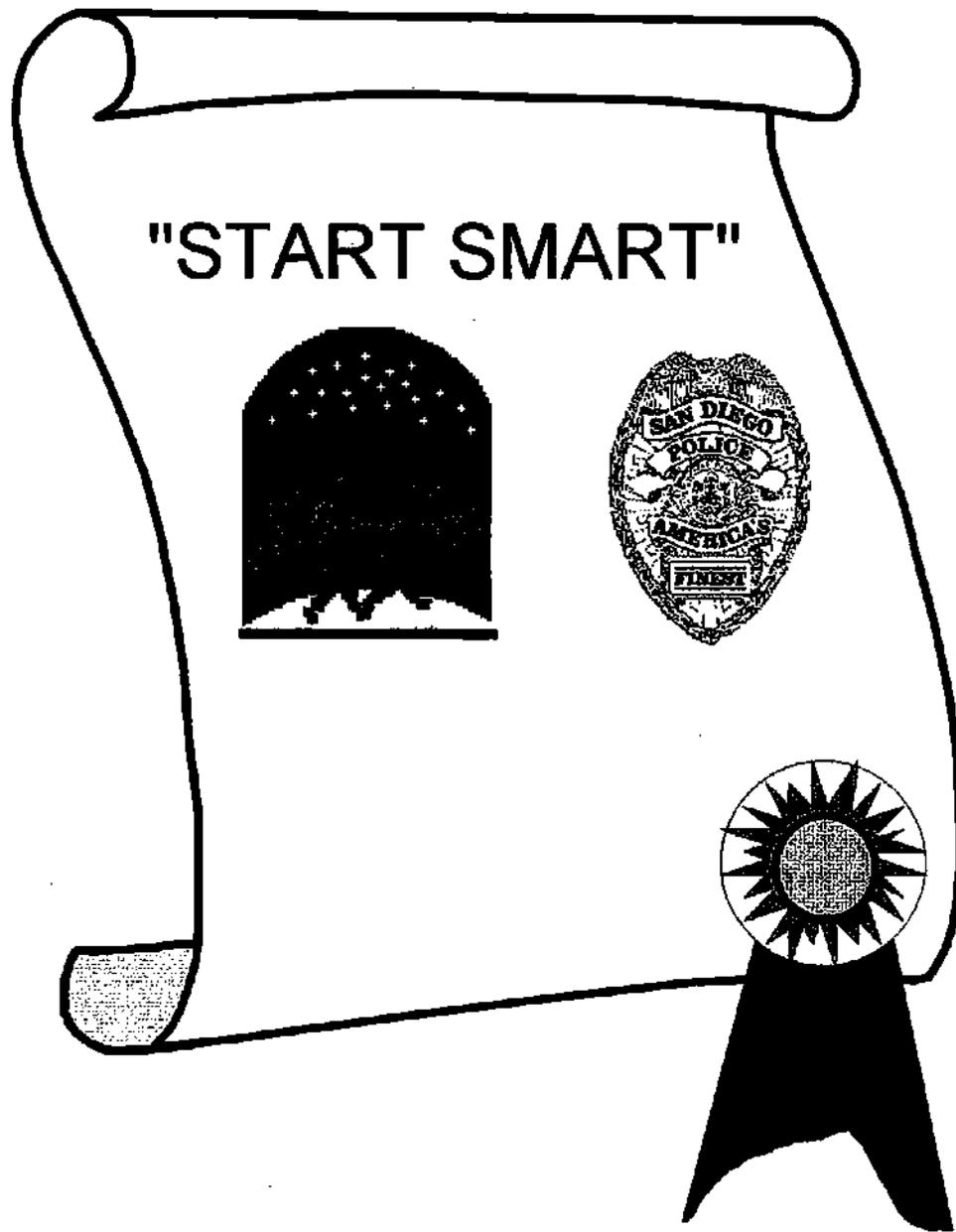
Jill Brogan, Principal of Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, has also experienced the benefits of the "Start Smart" program first hand. In a letter to the Board of Education, she cited examples when she used the program. In one instance, a special education child who could not speak was dropped off at the wrong school. Mrs. Brogan immediately checked his backpack for identification and found the "Start Smart" index card that had been completed with emergency contact numbers. Without this type of identification to speak for him, the child may have been separated from his parents for a number of hours.

On a separate occasion, a parent having withdrawals from medications came on campus incoherent. Mrs. Brogan checked her child's "Start Smart" worksheet and found emergency contact numbers. These numbers were used to find a person that could provide information about the parents medical history so that the police on scene could render medical aid. Again, the information taken from the "Start Smart" worksheet provided its user with the necessary means to reach a successful end.

As proven in the examples above, "Start Smart" has the potential to aid in the search of a child without having to rely on police officials. As "Start Smart" is implemented into more schools and districts, I believe that both the amount of calls for service will be drastically reduced. In turn, the amount of time spent on these calls will also drop because the information contained on the sheet can help officers find children faster. "Start Smart" is an ongoing project that will be used to help combat the problem of children who become missing because they do not know what to do, or simply wander off. As with all projects, the success of "Start Smart" depends on the participation and

commitment of the facilitators, parents, and children. Again, this problem is one that affects the entire community. Therefore, its solution also rests in the hands of the community.

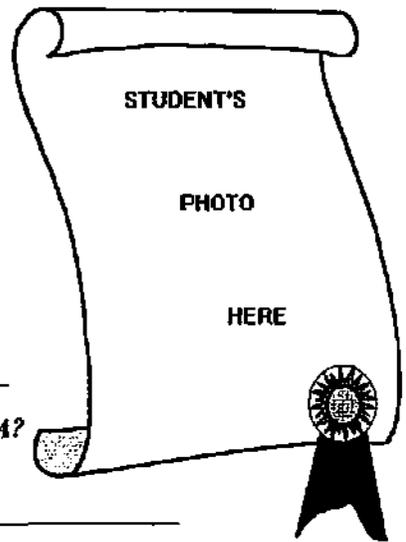
Currently "START SMART" is being implemented on a school to school basis. The cost of the worksheets for the first 3 pilot schools was funded by the San Diego Police Department. The funding for the schools that adopted the program in the Fall of 1996 was provided by school PTA's. For City of San Diego Schools, their print shop was providing the forms for approximately \$68 for 1000 NCR forms. My ultimate goal is to implement "START SMART" on a large scale within the school system by facilitating the program through tffe districts. This way all schools will be able to "START SMART."



TO START SMART I MUST DO MY
PART, TO KNOW WHERE I LIVE AND
MY NUMBER BY HEART!
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT
ALL KIDS MUST DO, IS TO LET YOUR
PARENTS KNOW WHERE THEY CAN
ALWAYS FIND YOU!

PARENT-CHILD WORKSHEET

NAME/NOMBRE: _____
 ADDRESS/DOMICILIO: _____
 HOME PHONE/TELÉFONO: _____
 EMERGENCY PHONE/NÚMERO PARA EMERGENCIA: _____
 MOTHER'S Work Phone: _____ Home Phone(if different): _____
 FATHER'S Work Phone: _____ Home Phone(if different): _____
 Emergency Contact/Persona Para Emergencia: _____
 Grade/Año Escolar: _____ Age/Años: _____ Teacher's Name/Nombre del Maestro(a): _____



HOW DO YOU GET HOME FROM SCHOOL? / ¿CÓMO LLEGAS A CASA DE LA ESCUELA?

WALK OR BUS / CAMINANDO O EN AUTOBÚS:

Who do you walk with? / ¿Con quién caminas? _____ Phone No. / teléfono: _____

Where is your bus stop? / ¿Donde esperarse para de autobús _____

Path to and from school or bus stop: (It is very important to follow a planned route and **DON'T** change it!)

Ruta a la escuela o parada de autobús. (Sigue una ruta planeada y no hagas cambios sin antes platicarlo).

PICKED UP/RECOGER

Who picks you up? / ¿Quién te recoge? Name/ Nombre: _____ Phone /Teléfono _____

Mon/Lunes _____ Tue/Martes _____ Wed/Miércoles _____ Thur/Jueves _____ Fri/Viernes _____

IF RIDE DOES NOT SHOW UP I MUST! / SI MI AVENTON NO LLEGA, YO DEBO

- *Go to Office and Call/ Ir a la oficina y llamarle a: _____
- *Walk home (Do you have a planned route and a key?)/ Caminar a casa. (¿Tengo una ruta planeada y la llave?)
- *Walk to/ Caminar a la casa de _____ (s) house and wait for/ y esperar a _____

FRIENDS/AMIGOS:

Who do I play with? (at school, at home, in my neighborhood)/ ¿Con Quienes juego? (en la escuela, en casa en mi vecindario):

Where do they live? / ¿A donde viven?:

What are their phone numbers? / ¿numeros de teléfono?:

NAME/NOMBRE:	ADDRESS/DIRECCIÓN:	PHONE/TELÉFONO:

INSTRUCTIONS/ INSTRUCCIONES:

Walk home directly after school/practice.
 I should be home by _____ am/pm
 Check in with Parent, if necessary call a Parent at work.
**** Always tell your parents where you are!! ****

Camina directamente a casa después de la escuela/práctica.
 Debo llegar a casa a las _____ am/pm.
 Avízales a tus padres de tu regreso y si es necesario llámales al trabajo.
****;Siempre díle a tus padres en dónde te encuentras! ****

IF I EVER GET LOST I CAN/ SI ALGUNA VEZ ME PIERDO, YO PUEDO:

*Look in my backpack/folder/purse for phone numbers.
 *Dial 911, stay where I am, and let the police know where I am so they can help me.

*Buscar los números de teléfono en mi mochila/carpeta/bolsa.
 *Llamar al 911 y decirle a la policia en dónde me encuentro para que puedan ayudarme.

PARENTS ALWAYS NEED TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE!!! ;TUS PADRES SIEMPRE NECESITAN SABER EN DONDE TE ENCUENTRAS!

I, _____ have read and completed this worksheet with my child,
 Yo, _____ he leído y llenado esta hoja de información con mi hijo(a), _____
(parent's signature) (child's signature)

START SMART

USE A **PENCIL** TO FILL THIS CARD OUT, AND IF YOUR NUMBER OR ADDRESS SHOULD CHANGE, JUST ERASE AND REARRANGE!

MY NAME IS: _____

MY ADDRESS: _____

MY PHONE #: _____

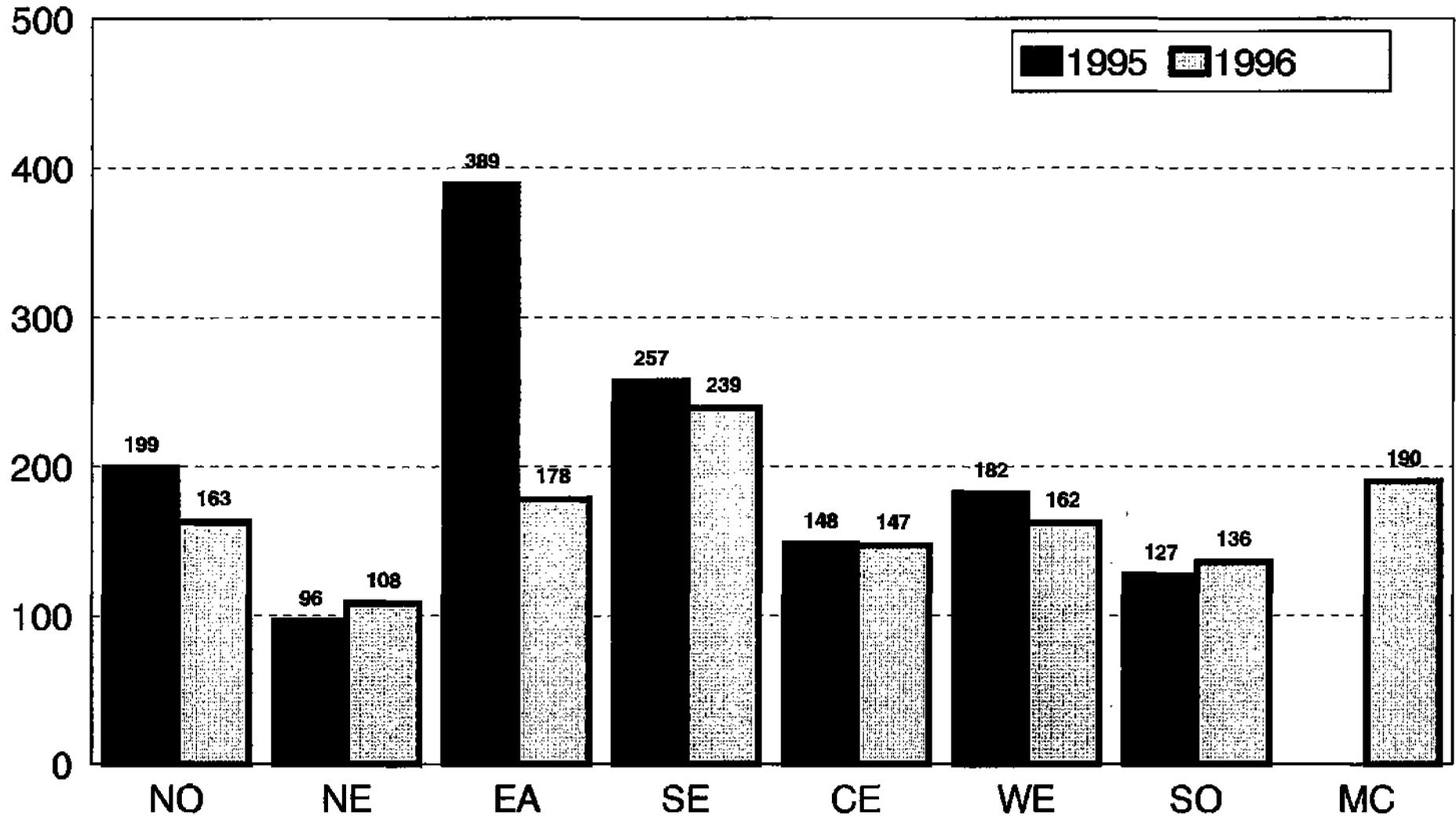
MOM'S # AT WORK: _____ DAD'S # AT WORK: _____

IF I EVER GET LOST I CAN:

DIAL 911 - STAY WHERE I AM, AND LET THE POLICE KNOW WHERE I AM SO THEY CAN HELP ME.

Missing Juvenile Incidents by Division

1995 - 1996

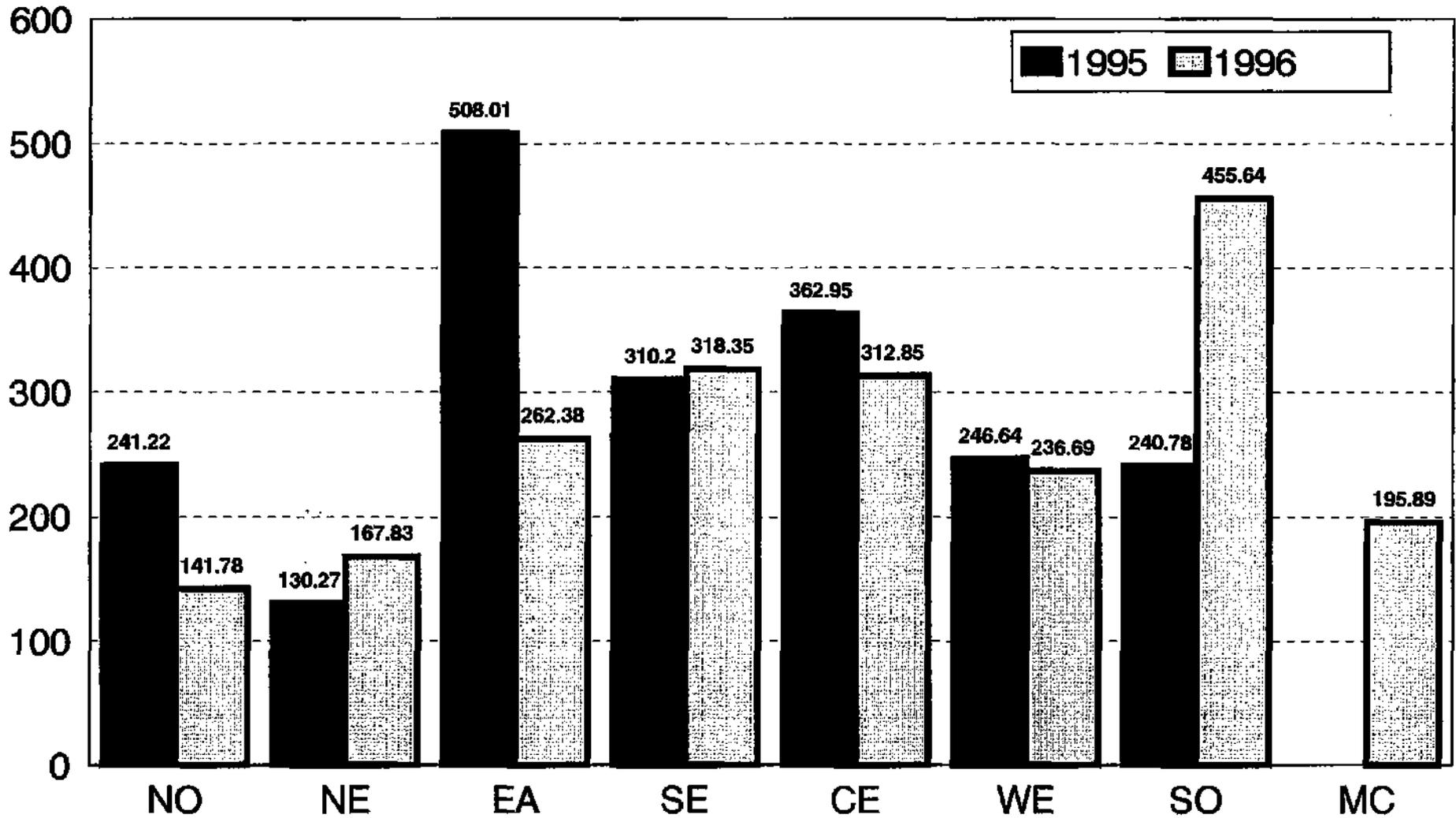


Total 1995 Calls: 1398

Total 1996 Calls: 1323

* Except NE & SO, division boundaries changed 5/96 and Mid-City was added.

Missing Juvenile Out of Service Hours by Division 1995 - 1996



Total OST 1995: 2040

Total OST 1996: 2091.41

* Except NE & SO, division boundaries changed 5/96 and Mid-City was added.