

Community

what you need
to know to help keep
you and your children safe

Information Packet

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About the Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections was established in 1981 for the purpose of supervising adults who were convicted of felony and gross misdemeanor offenses and were ordered to complete supervision by the Court. During that supervision, the Community Corrections Officer will monitor compliance of the offender's conditions or rules of supervision. Throughout the history of the Department, there have been many changes in the sentences and supervision of offenders. In many cases, these changes were implemented by the Legislature as a result of feedback from the community. These progressive changes have given the Department more authority to target high-risk areas on the offenders we supervise. However, the Department of Corrections must supervise the offenders under the rules of supervision that were set forth at the time of their sentence.

The Department of Corrections supervises only a small percent of the registered sex offenders in the state. Most of these offenders are supervised in collaboration with Department of Corrections staff, local law enforcement officials, treatment providers, and other members of the community. The Department refers to this group of individuals as the Risk Management Team. One of the most important aspects of this team approach to supervision is obtaining information from the community. With your assistance, we can enhance community safety.

For your convenience, we have included some general information that may answer many questions about the supervision of sex offenders under the Department of Corrections.

What is minor contact?

Many sex offenders have conditions prohibiting contact with minors. What these conditions generally mean is that the offenders cannot initiate or prolong contact with anyone under the age of 18. If the offender initiates physical or verbal contact with a minor or prolongs those contacts with minors, he or she may be in violation and the contact will be investigated. There is also incidental contact with minors. This is when a minor initiates either physical or verbal contact with an offender. The offender's responsibility is to disengage that contact immediately and leave the situation. Finally, some offenders have conditions prohibiting contact with just victim age and gender specific minors, and some have special conditions allowing contact with specific minors such as their own children. The court usually sets these types of conditions at the time of sentencing.

Offenders who are prohibited from having contact with minors are generally required (unless specified in their J&S) to have a chaperone/guardian with them when attending church or recreational activities where the concentration of minors is generally increased. This person has met with and been approved by the therapist, CCO or both. This person is knowledgeable of the offender's crime, potential high-risk situations, and conditions. An approved chaperone/guardian has also signed paperwork and has been notified there is a potential for

civil liability if they were supposed to be acting as a chaperone and a violation or new crime were to occur. If an offender is in the presence of an approved chaperone, he or she may be in the presence of minors. This does not mean any of the offender's conditions change. It allows the offender to participate in activities which are considered safer in the presence of an approved person.

How are offender residences screened by the Department of Corrections?

There is no "perfect" place for any sex offender to live. Sex offenders are in this and every community. They have a much better chance for success when they have a stable living environment. The Community Corrections Officer (CCO) investigates proposed addresses on a case by case basis. Each investigation is uniquely based upon the individual offender's risk factors, conditions of the Judgment and Sentence, conditions of supervision, and the offender's specialized needs. As part of the investigation process, the CCO may contact some or all of the following stakeholders: local law enforcement, landlords, community groups relevant to the offender's placement, neighbors, treatment providers, and the CCO's supervisor.

Why is the sex offender living near kids/schools/and parks?

Kids are everywhere! Again, there is no "perfect" place for a sex offender to live. It is almost impossible to find a location free of children. Each offender is unique and has their own individual risk factors and may or may not have a condition, which prohibits them from having contact with minors. The CCO makes every effort to minimize the offender's opportunity to contact minors or other groups at risk. Finding housing for sex offenders is a difficult task and the Department of Corrections welcomes your assistance in helping to locate housing for them.

What does sexual deviancy treatment do and can offenders be cured/rehabilitated?

Sexual deviancy treatment is designed to allow the offenders to evaluate their own offense cycle and specific high-risk behaviors that are associated with it. In many ways, sexual deviancy behaves much like alcoholism or drug additions. Sex offenders will usually follow a fairly specific chain of events or emotional issues that eventually lead to a new offense. The goal of treatment is for the offenders to identify their cycle and to develop some tools to stop the cycle and avoid high-risk situations. For example, while someone who is a recovering alcoholic should not enter a bar, a pedophile should not go into a place where children congregate. In the end, the offender will have the tools to prevent future offenses but it is ultimately up to the individual. What can be said is that sexual deviancy treatment has been shown to reduce the re-offense rate. Some studies have shown that offenders, who have completed sexual deviancy treatment, have less than a 4% chance of committing a new sexual offense, compared to a 15% chance of untreated offenders.

SEX OFFENDER RISK LEVEL CLASSIFICATION

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) through the "Model Policy" established guidelines for risk level classification and the dissemination of information about sex offenders.

For *level I offenders*, law enforcement agencies shall share information with other appropriate law enforcement agencies. If the level I offenders is a juvenile, the information shall be shared with the principal of the public or private school he or she will be attending. Upon request, the agency may disclose relevant, necessary and accurate information to any victim or witness and to any community member who lives near the residence where the offender resides, expects to reside, or is regularly found. RCW 4.24.550(3)

For *level II offenders*, in addition to what is stated for level I offenders, law enforcement agencies may distribute information to those schools, child care and adult care facilities, libraries, businesses and organizations serving children, women and vulnerable adults in the area where the registered offender resides, is expected to reside or is regularly found. (RCW04.24.550(3)). The most common methods for notification of level II offenders is through notification flyers, access to the Offender Watch website at www.sheriffalerts.com/wa/ferry, or the Washington State Association of Sheriff's and Police Chiefs (WASPC) website at www.waspc.org. They can both be accessed through the Ferry County Sheriff's Office website at www.ferry-county.com/sheriff.

For *level III offenders*, in addition to what is stated for level II offenders, law enforcement agencies may disclose information to the public at large. RCW 4.24.550(3). The county sheriff shall also cause to be published twice yearly a current list of level III registered sex offenders. This list shall be maintained by the county sheriff on a publicly accessible web site and updated at least once a month, unless the information is posted on the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs website. RCW 4.24.550(4). The most common methods for notification of level III offenders is through notification flyers, access to the Offender Watch website at www.sheriffalerts.com/wa/ferry, or the Washington State Association of Sheriff's and Police Chiefs (WASPC) website at www.waspc.org. They can both be accessed through the Ferry County Sheriff's Office website at www.ferry-county.com/sheriff.

The End of Sentence Review Committee is made up of a variety of state and local agencies that together complete the risk level assessment of most sex offenders either convicted in Washington State or convicted in another state and move to Washington. The purpose of risk level assessment is to provide the community with information about convicted sex offenders who pose a moderate or high risk to reoffend. If a risk level classification has not been completed on an offender residing in Ferry County, the Sex Offender Registration and Tracking Officer will complete one to determine risk level.

Sexually Violent Predator (SVP): Civil Commitment

There are currently approximately 270 sexually violent predators civilly committed in Washington State. These offenders are housed at the Special Commitment Center (SCC) located at the McNeil Island Correctional Center. These offenders are not serving prison sentences. They fall under the jurisdiction of DSHS. To be civilly committed, and offender

must meet three (3) specific criteria; 1) that they have been convicted of a sexually violent act, 2) they have been diagnosed with a personality disorder or mental abnormality, and 3) that this diagnosis makes it more likely than not, that they will commit a future sexually violent act.

The End of Sentence Review Committee does initial screening of cases meeting the criteria. The offender is then sent to psychologists for a forensic evaluation to professionally answer the same three questions. If the offender is found to meet the criteria, then the case is forwarded to a prosecutor who will make a final determination whether the case will go forward for civil commitment. If the case does go forward then a jury trial will make the final determination if the offender is to be civilly committed.

Once the offender is civilly committed, then they receive specific sex offender treatment for sexually violent predators. After completing six phases of sex offender treatment (which may take years, if ever completed), the offender must be considered for placement in a Secure Community Transition Facility (SCTF) in the general community. The placement of these facilities is currently taking place in several counties in Washington State. These facilities are maintained by DSHS. These offenders have the highest degree of supervision, at no time being left in the community without a trained DSHS employee with them. The facility is secure, alarmed and staff is on site 24 hours a day. After it is found that the offender has successfully transitioned into the community, they can be released from the SCTF to maintain their own living arrangements. Any release to an SCTF, less restrictive alternative or unconditional release can only be granted through the court where the conviction as a sexually violent predator occurred.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT OFFENDERS

Because offenders get their power through secrecy, the single most effective means of protecting your child is communication with your child. They have to feel comfortable discussing sensitive matters with you. If they feel they can talk with you about their true feelings and that they will not be “put down” for it, then they will be more likely to tell you when they are put in an uncomfortable situation by a child molester. Also, children need to know that there are many adults who can help if they have a problem.

For a list of free child safety pamphlets, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, toll free (800-843-5678) and the Jacob Wetterling Foundation, toll free (800-325-HOPE), or call your local sexual assault program, victim services agency, or social services agency.

NOW THAT I KNOW THAT A SEX OFFENDER LIVES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, WHAT SHOULD I DO DIFFERENTLY TO PROTECT MY FAMILY AND MYSELF?

Open communication between parents and children are vital components of family safety. Talk to your children. Explain in general terms that this person has hurt someone before and that children should stay away from this individual. Review safety tips. Be aware of common lures. Remember, the purpose behind community notification is to reduce the chances of further victimization of persons by this offender. The information gained through notification should assist you and your family in avoiding situations that allow for easy access to victims. *Don't harass your neighbor...an offender put in a stressful state is more likely to relapse.* We all win with fewer victims!

WHAT DO I TELL MY KIDS ABOUT OFFENDERS?

Avoid scary details. You may know more than your children need to know. Keep information general, as it may protect them from others who would try to harm them as well. Explain the importance of avoiding dangerous situations in general rather than trying to teach them how to be safe from just the one person you know about.

Some basics about offenders:

DON'T accept rides from offenders

DON'T go into the home or yard of offenders

TELL your parents if offenders offer you toys, money, or gifts

TRY to use the buddy system when kids play outdoors

CALL 911 if your parents aren't home and an offender approaches you

ARE YOU GOING TO TELL US IF THE OFFENDER MOVES OUT OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD SO WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ANYMORE?

No. The information shared about sex offenders is basic safety information that we should all be aware of. There are sex offenders in this and every community. It would serve no purpose to have people relax, or not follow safety measures because the one they know about moved from the neighborhood.

WHO ARE THE OFFENDERS?

When most people imagine a child molester, they picture some ugly, old man in a trench coat coaxing children to come to him in exchange for some candy. They don't picture Uncle Joe or Aunt Lorraine, their neighbor next door, the friendly parishioner, another family member, or trusted co-worker. They don't think of mom or dad, or in the case of single parents, their significant other. This misconception has been effectively dispelled through information obtained in thousands of child sexual abuse investigations over the years. Child molesters come from all walks of life and from all social economic groups. They can be male or female, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, religious or non-religious, or from any race. People unknown to them, relatives, friends, or caregivers can molest children.

Both men and women molest children, although the majority of those identified and prosecuted for sex offenses are men. Adults who molest children can generally be divided into two groups, according to their behaviors. A small percentage of sexual offenders have a lifelong exclusive attraction to children and have little or no emotional interest in adult partners. These offenders are classified as pedophiles. Most pedophiles have molested numerous children. However, the majority of sex offenders are not exclusively attracted to children. They generally have adult relationships, and generally have fewer child victims. Also, adults who molest children of their same gender (i.e. an adult male who molests a boy) are not necessarily homosexual.

The incestuous or intra-familial molester is usually an adult male (father, stepfather, grandfather or live-in boyfriend of the mother), however, mothers or other female caregivers also sexually abuse children. The molestation is usually secretive and is sometimes accomplished through misuse of power, mental duress, bribes, tricks or misuse of parental role under the guise of sex education and threats. The molestation usually occurs over an extended period of time, occasionally into the victim's adulthood.

Children are also molested by other children. A significant portion of children are molested by juvenile offenders. Juvenile offenders may offend against other children in their family, such as younger siblings or extended family members. They may also molest extra-familial children that they have regular access to, such as children in the neighborhood or children they babysit. Any sexual contact between juveniles, when one is over the age of sexual consent (16), and the other is under, is considered a criminal act. When both children are under the age of sexual consent, a criminal act is committed when one child is more than two years older than the other child (i.e. a 12 year old boy having sexual contact with a 7 year old boy), or there are forceful or coercive elements. Sexual exploration between peer age children which does not contain forceful or coercive elements is not considered a crime.

UNDERSTANDING SEX OFFENDERS: WHAT THE SEX OFFENDER TELLS US

Barbara Boslaugh Haner, MN, ARNP

There are approximately 20,000 registered sex offenders currently residing within Washington State. Although most media attention is given to known sex offenders moving into the area, the majority of sex offenders are unknown to the general public. The typical sex offender is male, at least a high school graduate, is more likely than other criminals to be employed and typically do not have criminal records. Although many believe offenders are dirty old men in trench coats lurking in the bushes around schools, in fact 85%-90% of child sexual abusers are known to the family. Sex offenders most often are family members, friends, and other adults with significant relationships with children who rely on secrecy and manipulative behavior patterns to identify and target their victims. Additionally, while most other criminals decrease their criminal activity as they age, sex offenders typically do not. Instead, most sex offenders continue to offend against their targeted populations until they are physically incapable.

Child sexual abuse usually begins with a sex offender gaining both the parent's and the child's trust and friendship, becoming a valuable and indispensable part of the family. Once a relationship has been established, the offender will begin to test the child's knowledge and ability to protect themselves. Sexual jokes, back rubs, "accidental" sexual touching, and hugging, often done in the presence of the parent, are utilized to "test the waters". If these behaviors are not received with alarm, the offender will increase the amount and type of sexual exposure. To adjust the child to sexual activity, offenders commonly utilize casual or accidental exposure to pornography.

Offenders also take great precautions to avoid causing physical pain or injury to their victims because injury sharply increases the likelihood the child will disclose the behavior. Most sex offenders of children are content with self-exposure, fondling, masturbation, and oral sex. Penile penetration is rare. This preparation, or grooming process, is often so sly that children are not even aware that these behaviors violate the "good touch, bad touch" philosophy that is the current gold standard for education. The emphasis on "stranger danger" is not applicable within this criminal act. By creating an environment that isolates the child from their peers and other family members, the offenders often instill a sense of responsibility for the sexual behavior on the child.

What do the offenders tell us about prevention? Turning to convicted offenders has generated concrete suggestions to decrease the risk of child sexual assault.

- *Secrets:* Offenders tell us that teaching the dangers of secret friendships, secret gifts, secret behavior, and secret places is more valuable than any other educational format.
- *Believe:* Listen and trust your child. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse.
- *Education:* Teach accurate and healthy values about sexuality. If we don't teach our children about sex, the offenders will.

- *Remind:* Frequently remind your child about when and where people can touch their bodies.
- *Monitor:* Get to know your child's friends and peers, as well as adults that have contact with your child. Be wary of older children and adults who want to spend a lot of time alone with your child. Are the gifts or privileges your child receives appropriate?

Increased awareness and understanding of how offenders target and maintain their victims is vital to effective prevention. From information supplied by convicted offenders, programs can be developed that effectively counteract the methods utilized by offenders. Without good safety programs and informed professionals and parents, children will continue to be vulnerable and sexually victimized.

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF MEN OR WOMEN WHO HAVE MOLESTED CHILDREN

CAUTION: Some people who have molested or plan to molest a child exhibit no observable behavior pattern that would be a clue to their future actions.

PERSONS WHO MOLEST CHILDREN OFTEN:

1. Are aware, in many cases, of their preference for children before they reach age 18. Most offenders are adult males, but some women also molest children
2. Are usually married. A small number never marry and maintain a lifelong sexual and emotional interest in children
3. Relate better to children than adults and may feel more comfortable with children and their interests
4. Have few close adult friends
5. Prefer children in a specific age group
6. Prefer one gender to the other, however, some are bisexual in their preference
7. Seek employment or volunteer opportunities with programs involving children in the preferred victim age group for this type of offender
8. Pursue children for sexual purposes and may feel emotionally attached to the extent that emotional needs are met by engaging in relationships with children. Example: an adult male spends time with neighbor children or relatives and talks at length about his feelings for them or his own feelings of loneliness or loss, in order to get the child's sympathy
9. Photograph or collect photographs of their victims dressed, nude, or involved in sexual acts
10. Collect child erotica and child-adult pornography which may be used in the following ways:
 - a) To lower the inhibitions of victims
 - b) To fantasize when no potential victim is available
 - c) To relive past sexual activities
 - d) To justify their inappropriate sexual activities
 - e) To blackmail victims to keep them from telling
11. Possess alcohol or narcotics and furnish them to their victims to lower inhibitions or gain favor
12. Talk with children in ways that equalize their relationship
13. Talk about children in the same manner as one would talk about an adult love or partner
14. Seek out organizations (such as the North American Man-Boy Love Association/NAMBLA) and publications that support his sexual beliefs and practices
15. Offer to babysit or take children on trips in order to manipulate situations to sleep with or be near children or bathe or dress them
16. Are seen at parks, playgrounds or places frequented by children or teenagers.

FACTS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or any significantly older person. It is called incest if it occurs between family members. Child sexual abuse can include a variety of behaviors including fondling, verbal stimulation and pornography, but also more violent behaviors such as rape.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- One in four girls is sexually exploited by age 18
- One in six boys is sexually exploited by age 18
- Over 1/3 of child sexual abuse cases involved children five years old or younger
- 85-90% of child sex offenders are known to victims and their family

CHARACTERISTICS

- Sexual abuse may begin when a child is in early childhood and may last several years
- Most children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse
- The typical offender is a male using his position of power to take advantage of a child's trust, need for affections, and innocence
- Child sexual abuse occurs in all socio-economic and racial groups
- Children very rarely lie about sexual abuse incidents

PREVENTION

Education can help prevent sexual exploitation of children. Children and adolescents can learn to recognize potentially exploitative situations and can learn to say "no" to inappropriate touching. Parents can teach these skills to their children. Schools can implement a child sexual abuse prevention curriculum into their health program. Your role is NOT to investigate the situation. It is your responsibility to report the abuse, set in motion the process of getting help for the child, and be supportive of the child. Professionals working with children and youth can learn to recognize the symptoms of sexual abuse and how to help a child who has been victimized. Educators are mandatory reporters. *It is your responsibility to report the abuse not investigate it!*

DISCLOSURE

Children may disclose sexual abuse in a variety of ways. They may come to you in private, and tell you directly and specifically what is going on. Unfortunately, this is one of the less common ways for children to disclose. More common ways include:

INDIRECT HINTS

For example, "My brother wouldn't let me sleep last night." "Mr. Jones wears funny underwear." "Daddy's trying to poison me." "My babysitter keeps bothering me." A child may talk in these terms because he/she hasn't learned more specific vocabulary, feels too ashamed or embarrassed to talk more directly, has promised not to tell, or for a limited

vocabulary. Keep in mind that in order to make a report you do not need to know exactly what form the abuse has taken.

DISGUISED DISCLOSURE

“I know someone who is being touched in a bad way. What would happen if a girl told her mother she was being molested but her mother didn’t believe her?” Here the child might be talking about a friend or sibling, but it just as likely to be talking about him/herself. Encourage the child to tell what he/she knows about the “other child.” It is probable the child will eventually tell you whom they are talking about.

DISCLOSURE WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

“I have a problem, but if I tell you about it you have to promise not to tell anyone else.” Most children are all too aware that some negative consequences will result if they break the secret of abuse. Often the offender uses the threat of these consequences to force the child to remain silent. Let the child know you want to help him/her and that the law requires you to make a report if the child discloses abuse; just as the molestation itself is against the law, so too it would be against the law for you not to report. Assure the child you will respect his/her need for confidentiality by not discussing the abuse with anyone other than those directly involved with the legal process, who might include the school nurse or counselor, school principal, and/or the CPS investigator.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE

- Find a private place to talk with the child
- Do not panic or express shock
- Express your belief that the child is telling you the truth
- Use the child’s vocabulary
- Reassure the child that it is good to tell
- Reassure the child that it is not his/her fault, that he/she is not bad
- Determine the child’s immediate need for safety
- Let the child know that you will do your best to protect and support him/her
- Let the child know what you will do
- Report to the proper authorities
- If a child discloses during a lesson, acknowledge the child’s disclosure and continue the lesson. Afterwards, find a place where you can talk with the child alone. It is best to present the curriculum before a playtime or recess so that you have a natural opportunity to talk with children privately, if they come forward.

General Recommendations for Child-Adult Boundary And Personal Safety Standards

- All persons over the age of 16 residing or regularly visiting in a residence providing overnight care will have a Washington State Patrol criminal history background check
- Child care will not be provided by persons impaired by drugs (prescribed or illicit) or alcohol
- Family members and/or caregivers will not conduct inspections or touching of genitalia, anus, buttocks or breast areas without a clear and specific medical complaint and reasonable cause to suspect that an injury or illness exists. This may include continuous or reoccurring complaints of pain, burning with urination, observable blood, and/or scratching or rubbing
- All adults will actively practice courteous and consistent behavior with children. This includes not forcing or verbally coercing or demeaning a child to participate in a social interaction when they demonstrate behavioral or verbal resistance or reluctance. This includes hugging, kissing, or other physical contact
- Family members will not bathe or shower together
- Family members will not share beds (excluding adult partners sleeping together)
- All family members or household residents and guests will be dressed appropriately at all times. Undergarments and see through fabric are not considered appropriate
- No tickling or wrestling is to take place between children and persons over the age of 16
- Privacy will be provided for bathing and toileting as is appropriate for the child's age and liability
- Permission will be sought to enter any bathing, sleeping, or toileting locations regardless of whether the door is locked
- Locks with appropriate safety override systems are provided for sleeping, bathing, and toileting locations
- Weapons will be secured with trigger locks and/or secured in a locked location. Ornamental weapons will be secured as is appropriate
- Sexually explicit (pornography) discussions or portrayals (videos, video games, print, and television) will not be conducted or displayed in the home while children under the age of 16 are present
- Portrayals (video games, videos, movies, television and print) of inter-personal violence will not be conducted or displayed in the home while children under the age of 16 are present
- Family members and other caregivers will not direct the child to engage in secretive behavior or the purposeful withholding of information from other family members
- Conflicts will be resolved without striking, punching, pushing, throwing items, yelling, or engaging in degrading or demeaning behavior or verbalizations

- No attempt will be made to influence the child's behavior through verbalization about another family member
- Custody or other emotionally laden subjects will not be discussed with or within the hearing of the child

BOOK LIST FOR PARENTS

Title: *From Diapers to Dating: A Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children*

Author: Debra Haffner

Year Published: 2000

Summary: Whether she is discussing how to help kids deal with the onslaught of sexual message they see in the media or providing sensible guidance on teaching the facts of life, Debra Haffner's value-oriented approach to raising sexually healthy children is informative and comforting. Organized from birth through age twelve, her acclaimed book presents a practical, step-by-step program, offering a wealth of practical techniques to help parents identify and communicate their own values about sexuality to their children, while also suggesting to parents the appropriate information to give to children of different ages.

Title: *Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane)*

Author: Gavin deBecker

Year Published: 1999

Summary: All parents face the same challenges when it comes to their children's safety: whom to trust, whom to distrust, what to believe, what to doubt, what to fear, and what not to fear. In this empowering book, Gavin deBecker, the nation's leading expert on predicting violent behavior, offers practical new steps to enhance children's safety at every age level, giving you the tools you need to allow your kids freedom without losing sleep yourself. With daring and comparing, he shatters the widely held myths about danger and safety and helps parents find some certainty about life's highest-stakes questions.

Title: *Helping Your Child Recover From Sexual Abuse*

Author: Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay

Year Published: 1992

Summary: This book offers practical guidance for parents who courageously face the days and months after a child's abuse. Written in a positive, reassuring, jargon-free style, it discusses each stage of a child's recovery. Information for parents appears on the left-hand pages; sample conversation and activities for parents and child together are on the right-hand pages. The book presents the collective wisdom of numerous parents who have been through this experience and have learned how to help their children feel stronger, safer, braver, more loveable, worthwhile and competent.

Title: *The Right Touch*

Author: Sandy Kleven

Year Published: 1997

Summary: This book reaches far beyond the usual scope of a children's picture book. It is a parenting book that introduces a very difficult topic – the sexual abuse of young children. This gentle, thoughtful story is meant to be read aloud by a trusted caregiver. (3-8 year olds)

Title: *My Body is Private*

Author: Linda Walvoord Girard

Year Published: 1984

Summary: A mother child conversation introduces the topic of sexual abuse and ways to keep one's body private. (6-10 year olds)

Title: *Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offenders*

Author: Carla Van Dam

Year Published: 2001

Summary: Understanding the behavior that molesters exhibit when trying to obtain access to children is essential to protecting children from their advances. This book teaches you to recognize and understand the seemingly invisible events that typically precede child sexual abuse.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

LISTEN TO CHILDREN

Believe what they are telling you.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Know where your children are at all times. Be familiar with their friends and daily activities.

BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

A child who has low self-esteem cannot protect him/herself. Listen carefully to your children's fears, and be supportive in all your discussions with them, replacing fear with knowledge.

TEACH DECISION MAKING

Children at all ages can make decisions. Practice early with little decisions so big decisions later are easier. Teach them to trust their own feeling, and assure them they have the right to say NO to what they sense is wrong.

BUILD SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Children need positive adult role models and need to know where to go for help.

CHOOSE SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVERS CAREFULLY

Interview and monitor babysitters, group leaders, youth pastors, etc. Be alert to a teenager or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your children or giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts. Contact the Sheriff's Office (509-775-3132) and request any available information about the person. This will include if the person is a registered sex offender. You may also visit www.watch.wsp.wa.gov, which is the Washington Access to Criminal History.

PROTECT KIDS WHO ARE HOME ALONE

Set ground rules, designate emergency contacts, and develop safety plans for latchkey kids.

TALK WITH CHILDREN

Teach your children that no one should approach them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone does, they should tell their parents immediately.

BE SENSITIVE

Watch for changes in a child's behavior. They are signals that you should sit down and talk to your children about what caused the change(s).

USE ROLE-PLAYING

Rehearse safety situations with your child. Give them power through knowledge. Play the "what if" game.

LET KIDS BE KIDS

Teach them what they will need to know to be safe and let them know you will do your best to protect them. Don't scare the fun out of children.

ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES

Teach and allow your child to have appropriate boundaries. They should never be forced to spend time with someone they are uncomfortable with, hug or kiss unfamiliar relatives, or provide any type of physical contact against their will. Allow children to say no to adults when appropriate, and respect their boundaries.

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW

As soon as a child is old enough to articulate a sentence, he or she can begin the process of learning to protect him or herself against abduction and exploitation. Children should be taught all of the following safety measures and tips:

WHO I AM AND WHERE I LIVE

Teach children about whom they are, including their full name, birth date, complete address, phone number (including area code), and their caregiver's full name.

WHAT I DO IF I AM LOST

If you are in a public place and get lost, don't wander around. Go to a checkout counter, the security office, or the lost and found. Tell the person in charge that you are lost.

GOING PLACES

Never get into a car or leave with someone without checking with your parents, teacher, babysitter or caregiver before getting into a car or going anywhere. Always make sure your caregiver knows where you are.

STAY AWAY

If someone follows you on foot or in a car, stay away from him or her. You shouldn't go near the car or talk to the people inside.

DON'T ASSIST ADULTS

No one should be asking you for directions, to look for a lost puppy, or to ask for assistance. Adult should ask adults, not children.

RUN, SCREAM, AND TELL

If someone tries to take you away, your best defense are your legs and your voice. Yell, "I don't know this person and they're bothering me." Try to run and scream before they get too close. **CALL 911** at any phone. It's a free call; you don't need money.

NEVER HITCHHIKE

Hitchhiking may put you at a risk for a dangerous situation.

DON'T KEEP SECRETS

No one should ask you to keep a secret. Tell an adult you trust.

TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST

If you have a problem – any kind of problem – you can talk to your parents, a teacher, a counselor, a principal, a police officer, a fireman or a friend of the family.

YOU CAN CALL 911

If you have an emergency, or are in a situation where you feel you are in danger, **CALL 911**.

HOW TO TEACH PERSONAL SAFETY TO YOUR CHILD

Why should I teach personal safety to my child?

- When sexual abuse occurs within a family, it is likely to continue for a period of time, even years until it is discovered and stopped
- Children who are well informed and empowered to act and who have someone who will listen to them can, in many cases, prevent or stop sexual abuse. Offenders do not usually choose victims who are likely to resist or tell

What should I teach my child?

Four elements are important to a child's ability to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

- Knowledge and ability to identify sexual abuse
- A sense of being able to control their own bodies in exchanges of physical attention
- Assertive techniques for telling someone not to touch them
- Confidence in an adult who will believe them when told about an incident

Tell your child...

- Your body is your own. You have a right to privacy in dressing, bathing, and sleeping.
- People touch each other in many ways. Most touches are pleasant and okay. Some touches, like tickling, might be confusing because they start out okay, but become not okay when the person won't stop. Some touches are hurtful and not okay. If you wonder whether a touch is okay or not, ask someone you trust
- If anyone touches you in a way you do not like or understand or asks you to touch them in a "not okay" way, take action
- You have our permission to say "NO" or "Don't touch me that way"
- You have the right to move away
- You have our permission to tell a trusted adult – tell Mom or Dad, Grandma or Grandpa, your friend's mother, your teacher, your counselor, nurse, principal, police, or any other adult you think of. If you tell someone and they don't believe you, tell someone else. Tell me! I will believe you and help make you safe
- No adults should touch your private body parts – your penis, vagina, breasts, and buttocks – except for health reasons. If an adult touches you and says, "This is our secret" we want you to tell anyway. That kind of secret is not okay
- You are NOT to blame if an adult touches you on the private parts of your body. The adult should know better. IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT
- We will believe what you tell us. We will protect you

What else should I do to protect my child?

- Define family rules or boundaries, such as all family members must wear some clothing, must respect individual rights to privacy in dressing, bathing, or sleeping
- Teach proper names for body parts from earliest years on. This gives your child language for understanding and telling

- Periodically review personal safety as a total family. Remind the children they have your permission to tell if abuse happens to them. If the first person they tell does not seem to believe them, they should tell another, until someone takes action
- Check to see if your children understand your teaching by asking “what if” questions. Listen closely to their answers
- If abuse should happen to your child, respond in a calm, matter-of-fact way, and reassure the child he/she has done nothing wrong and was right to tell
- Always believe your child and follow up on any disclosures of abuse

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

One of the most difficult times in a parent’s life has to do with telling his or her child about sex. We often skip the vital part of parenting because we are too uncomfortable to give our children the information they are requesting or need. An incarcerated sex offender was asked how he picks his victims and he said “Show me a child who knows nothing about sex and I’ll show you my next victim.” You do not need to tell a three year old about sexual intercourse but when a child expresses interest in understanding where they come from and what sex is, it is important to give your child age appropriate information, and to update that information as your child gets older and gains new cognitive abilities and skills. Children are naturally curious and need to have their questions answered. Providing your child with information will not cause him or her to go out and have sex but rather will help your child better understand his or her body and also help your child not to be a target for sex offenders.

NAME THOSE BODY PARTS

When you play that age old game with your child of asking him or her to tell you where his or her nose is, it is important to remember the body parts no one names. When we fail to name a child’s genitalia or give pet names to their genitalia, we create a secrecy and mystery about parts of their bodies. This secrecy can create shame and embarrassment and make it difficult to discuss their bodies with their parents. From the time children are small and learning about fingers, toes and noses, they should also be learning about penises and vaginas. If you treat all their body parts as matter-of-fact, then your child will too and will have no problem telling you when something hurts or someone is touching them where they should not be touched.

Identifying Child Abuse

While it is impossible to determine the presence of abuse or neglect by behavior, the following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parent's attention
- Has learning problems or difficulty concentrating that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home

The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Denies the existence of, or blames the child for the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs

The Parent and the Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship entirely negative
- State that they do not like each other

Signs of Abuse and Neglect

While it is impossible to determine the presence of abuse or neglect by behavior, the following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of their parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for a child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil", or in some other negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child

Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals money or food
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for winter
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bed wetting
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Become pregnant or contracts a venereal disease
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a partner or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous of the child's contact with other people, particularly those of the opposite sex

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior
- Is either inappropriately adult, such as parenting other children, or inappropriately immature
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Does not appear to be attached to their parent

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caretaker:

- Constantly blames, belittles or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's issues
- Overtly rejects the child

Impact of Physical Abuse on Children

Child physical abuse damages children physically, emotionally and socially. The most obvious and immediate result is physical.

Physical

An abused child may experience one or more of the following: hitting, shaking, choking, biting, kicking, punching, burning, poisoning, suffocating, or being held underwater. Physical abuse may lead to bruises, cuts, welts, burns, fractures, internal injuries, or in the most extreme cases death.

Initial impact on children will be the immediate pain and suffering and medical problems caused by the physical injury. However, the pain will last long after the bruises and wounds have healed. The longer physical abuse of a child occurs, the more serious the impact. Chronic physical abuse can result in long term physical disabilities, including brain damage, hearing loss, or eye damage.

The age at which the abuse takes place influences the impact of the damage. For example, infants who are physically abused are more likely to experience long-term physical effects and neurological alterations such as irritability, lethargy, tremors, and vomiting. In more serious cases where the abuse was more forceful or longer in duration, the infant may experience seizures, permanent blindness or deafness, mental and developmental delays or retardation, coma, paralysis, and in many cases death. This has recently been called the "Shaken Baby Syndrome" since it most often occurs as a result of violent shaking or shaking of the head.

Emotional

Beyond the physical problems experienced by children, there are other consequences of physical abuse. Studies of physically abused children and their families indicate that a significant number of psychological problems are associated with child physical abuse. Abused children compared with non-abused children may have more difficulty with academic performance, self-control, self-image and social relationships. A recent US study comparing physically abused and non-abused children provided considerable evidence of the negative and lasting consequences of physical abuse. The physically abused children in the study experienced far greater problems at home, at school, amongst peers and in the community.

Children who are physically abused have a predisposition to many emotional disturbances. They may experience feelings of low self-esteem and depression or may be hyperactive and overly anxious. Many of these children may exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression towards other children or siblings. Other emotional problems include anger, hostility, fear, humiliation, and an inability to express feelings. The long-term emotional consequences can be devastating. For example, children who are abused are at risk of experiencing low self-esteem, depression, drug or alcohol dependence, and increased potential for child abuse as a parent.

Social

The social impact on children who have been physically abused is perhaps less obvious, yet still substantial. Immediate social consequences can include an inability to form friendships with peers, poor social skills, poor cognitive and language skills, distrust of others, over-compliance with authority figures, and a tendency to solve interpersonal problems with aggression. In their adult life, the long-term consequences can impact both their family and their community. There are financial costs to the community and society in general, e.g., funding social welfare programs and services and the foster care system. Studies have shown that physically abused children are at a greater risk for mental illness, homelessness, crime, and unemployment. All of these affect the community and society in general and are the social costs of physical abuse.

Physical Punishment

Most parents want their children to behave in an appropriate and socially accepted manner. Appropriate behaviors help to ensure the child's safety, promote harmony in relationships, and enable children to feel good about themselves and their place in society.

Parents who choose physical punishments often do so because that's what they know. Slapping your child helps to relieve your stress. Furthermore, hitting your child often has instant results—slapping your children is likely to stop their misbehavior now. There are three major problems with physical punishment:

1. Physical punishment loses its effectiveness, and eventually becomes unworkable
2. The parent/caregiver who finds that one slap no longer has the same immediate effect may escalate to spanking, or to hitting with a belt, wooden spoon, closed fist, or other implement. This progression is most often toward a harsher means of control
3. Physically punishing your child puts you at risk of losing control and causing serious physical and emotional damage to the child. You could kill your child while you're enraged

Resorting to physical punishment teaches your child the following *inappropriate* lessons:

- Violence is an acceptable way to control behavior
- If people do something you don't like, it's alright to hit them to make them stop
- Violence is an acceptable way to settle disagreements
- It's alright to hit someone when you're angry or stressed
- It's alright to use physical force when something is really important
- It's morally acceptable to hit
- Love and violence are associated. It's alright for people who love you to cause you pain, hurt, and humiliation
- It's important to learn ways to avoid punishment. In order to survive, you need to be sneaky and conduct your business in an underground fashion

DISCIPLINE vs. ABUSE

Most adults can agree that physical abuse occurs all too often with damaging and sometimes deadly results. However, there is less agreement about the dividing line between positive discipline and abuse. Many parents fear that “sparing the rod will spoil the child” while others feel that any form of physical punishment is cruel and ineffective in controlling a child’s behavior.

In attempting to legislate child abuse laws and clarify the problem, state governments are beginning to define abuse in terms of outcome rather than intent. Washington State, for example, defines physical abuse as actions which have lasting physical effects, such as broken bones, burns, cuts, internal organ damage or substantial bruises.

While it is important not to protective child abuse legislation on something as elusive as “intent”. A closer look at intent can help many parents to evaluate discipline measures and guide them towards safe and effective parenting.

DISCIPLINE is designed to help children control and change their behavior. Its purpose is to encourage moral, physical, intellectual development and a sense of responsibility in children. Ultimately, older standard initially presented by parents and other caretakers. In learning to rely on their own resources rather than parents, children gain self-confidence and a positive self-image.

ABUSE, on the other hand, is characterized by its orientation toward satisfying needs or expressing the negative feelings of parents or other caregivers. While it may result in positively changing the child’s behavior, often the improvement is temporary and followed by a later acting out of the hatred, revenge and hostility they have learned from their parents. To avoid further abuse, children may lie, run away or exhibit other forms of avoiding responsibility. Abuse tends to damage the self-esteem of both the parents and the children.

SAFE, EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE is a correction given in the best interest of the child. In evaluating methods of guiding their children’s behavior, parents or guardians need to ask themselves:

Is the discipline:

- carefully related to the offense?
- administered in the calmness of conviction rather than in the heat of anger?
- fair, weighting heavily in consideration of the child?
- occasional and brief in duration?
- free from physical violence? (Examples are a look of reproach, scolding or the taking away of a valued privilege)

BE ALERT TO COMMON TRICKS

THE BRIBE OR TRICK

The victim is offered something he or she might want. A young child might be offered candy, a toy, or gum; a teen might be offered money, free food, a ride or trip to some place novel or exciting. Sometimes a person will take a valued belonging and then offer to return it only if the victim goes with the person, or allows sexual contact.

THE ANIMAL TRICK

The person is lured away from others by an invitation to play with, or receive a gift of a puppy or kitten, or some other cute or unusual animal.

THE EMERGENCY TRICK

A person pretends that a fire, accident, illness, death, or some other emergency has happened to the victim's family, home, or friend. Or the person says there was a change in plans, and he/she is to pick up the child because the prearranged ride fell through.

THE HELP TRICK

Someone asks the child/teen for help: i.e. for directions, to use the phone, to carry heavy bags, or to search for someone or something lost, like a pet, child, or money.

THE FRIEND TRICK

A person pretends to know the family and says that the child's parents have asked him/her to come and give the child a ride home. A person pretends to have a mutual friend and uses that as a lure to separate the teen from others.

THE BAD CHILD TRICK

A person accuses the child/teen of doing something wrong. The child/teen is ordered to go with the person. Sometimes a real-looking badge or ID is shown as fake proof of the predator's official status. Sometimes a child/teen will be convinced by someone they trust that his/her parents do not want him or her around anymore because the child/teen is a troublemaker, nuisance, or obstacle to the parent's happiness.

THE FLATTERY TRICK

The person might ask the victim to go with him/her by posing as a photographer, so pictures or a video can be taken, such as a team photo, newspaper story, acting, modeling, or surveys.

THE OPEN THE DOOR TRICK

The person tricks the victim into opening the house door or car door. The person might look like a repair person, say he/she needs to use the phone, deliver a package, needs help or directions. Sometimes a minor car accident is staged to get the victim to pull over and open the car door.

THE SECRET TRICK

Sometimes victims are warned to keep physical and sexual harassment or assault a secret because: no one will believe them, it is the victim's fault, their parents and friends will be angry or reject them if they knew, or that something awful will happen to them or loved ones if they tell. Often the victimization continues because the victim is afraid these threats might be true.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS FOR ADOLESCENTS & ADULTS

Incidents of violence can occur anywhere at anytime. Trust your gut feeling that something may be wrong. These are some guidelines that may help reduce potential vulnerability. Remember though, whether you choose to use these options or not, no one has the right to harm you.

AT HOME

- be aware of your surroundings. Be familiar with who is coming and going – who belongs and who doesn't
- know your neighbors and learn who can be called for assistance when needed
- Women may be safer using only first initials and last names on mailboxes and in phone directories
- Change locks when you move into a new residence. Make sure your doors have dead bolt locks, security chains and peepholes. Use them!
- Don't hide spare keys outdoors
- Check Ids when repair people, salespeople, meter readers, etc. come to the door. Don't hesitate to call and check them out or refuse them admittance if something feels wrong
- If you let someone in and have second thoughts, be assertive. Tell them to leave or you leave. Pretend you are not alone by mentioning a friend or family member asleep in the next room
- Make sure entrances, garages, grounds and hallways are well lighted
- Leave porch lights on at night or when you expect to return after dark. Leave an interior light on in a room or two with the shades drawn. Leave a radio on
- Instruct children and baby-sitters not to give out information about who is home, who is out or for how long
- Don't leave notes on your door for others or allow solicitor's material to remain on your doorknob since they advertise your absence
- If you suspect your home has been broken into, don't go in – go someplace else and call the police
- Always lock doors when doing yard work or otherwise spending time in the yard. If you have a portable phone, take it outside with you
- Be careful when using computer internet or online services. Use caution in providing personal information. Being flooded with e-mail can be annoying; having a chat room participant show up at your door uninvited can be terrifying

IN YOUR CAR

- Keep car doors locked at all times, and windows rolled up all the way
- If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay in your vehicle. If someone offers assistance, roll the window down just enough to talk to them. Ask them to stop at the first phone to call the police for you
- Do not stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle – go to a safe place and report the stalled vehicle to the police

- Don't pick up hitchhikers
- If someone tries to break into your car while you are in it, honk the horn in short, repeated blasts and try to drive away
- If you are being followed, don't go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station or an open gas station – any place with people around
- Try to keep your car maintained, and keep your gas tank at least half full
- Park as close to your destination as possible, and in well-lighted areas whenever feasible
- If security staff is available to walk you to your car, don't be embarrassed to use them. Most major malls offer this type of service
- Check inside your car before getting in
- If you leave keys with a parking attendant or at a service station, leave only the car key. Do not leave your house key
- Purchase/lease a cellular phone and keep it charged
- Always have your keys ready to unlock the car door and enter without delay. You appear vulnerable if you are looking for your keys as you approach your car

ON THE STREET

- Stay on populated, well lit streets. Avoid shrubbery, dark areas near buildings, and other places an attacker might hide. Avoid shortcuts through alleys, vacant lots and other deserted places. When possible, avoid walking or jogging alone – even during the day
- Look around as you walk and be aware of your surroundings. Make it difficult for anyone to take you by surprise. Walk confidently at a steady pace
- Avoid secluded or deserted areas and businesses (Laundromats, phone booths, etc.)
- Carry something that can make a loud noise that can scare off possible attackers
- If using public transportation, sit near the driver
- If you have gotten a ride in a cab or from a friend, ask the driver to wait and watch until you are safely inside your destination
- Be cautious about revealing cash or credit cards
- Try to limit the number of items you carry
- If you carry a handbag, hold it close to your body with fastener closed and turned toward your body so a thief can't grab it and cause injury and knock you down. "Fanny packs" keep your personal items close to you while keeping your hands free
- Don't wear headphones. They block your ability to hear someone approach you
- Again, trust your instincts. Do not hesitate to remove yourself from the situation. Forget the rules of etiquette and social norms. Be willing to make a scene if necessary. Most rapes are not committed by strangers, but by men who know their victims. Your safety may depend on a quick and decisive reaction

****ABOVE ALL, BE OBSERVANT AND AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AT ALL TIMES.****

ACQUAINTANCE RAPE: CAN I REDUCE MY RISK?

Sexual assault is any sexual activity that is forced. Sexual assault is an act of control, aggression, and anger. The force used against you can be physical such as hitting, being held against your will, or being threatened by a weapon. It also can be emotional or psychological, such as being pressured into sex through guilt, being given money or gifts in exchange for sex, or being taken advantage of while you are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

Someone they know, such as a family member, friend, date acquaintance, or neighbor assaults more than 85% of sexual assault victims. Men and women, boys and girls can be victims of sexual assault.

Most sexual assaults are planned in advance with the offender seeking an opportunity to find someone who may be vulnerable to his/her tactics. Offenders seek victims who they believe are easy targets. There is no guaranteed way to prevent sexual assault, but we can identify tips for decreasing our vulnerability to offenders. The following are some suggestions to deter a sexual assault:

- Be careful of your use of alcohol and drugs. Vulnerability increases when one is intoxicated or high
- Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say “no” to any unwanted sexual contact
- Communicate your limits firmly and directly. You have the right to expect your limits to be respected
- Listen to your feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place
- Don’t be afraid to “make waves” if you feel threatened. If you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will, don’t hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation. Better a few minutes of social awkwardness or embarrassment than the trauma of sexual assault
- Attend large parties with friends you can trust. Agree to “look out” for one another. Try to leave with a group rather than alone or with someone you don’t know well
- When starting to date a new acquaintance, have the first few dates in a public place. Avoid becoming isolated with someone you don’t know well
- For the first several dates, insist on paying your own way or taking turns with “treating”. Sometimes offenders use the “you owe me” line to try to guilt someone into sex
- As a relationship may progress, avoid becoming physically, emotionally or socially isolated from friends and family. Assaults within ongoing relationships do happen
- Even if we take many precautions or steps to make ourselves less vulnerable, there is no guarantee that we can prevent a sexual assault. Remember:
 1. sexual assault is never the victim’s fault
 2. victims do not cause their assaults
 3. offenders are responsible for their actions

INTERNET INFORMATION

While online computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway. There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of online services and the Internet. Some of these individuals gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness, and even gifts. These individuals are often willing to devote considerable amounts of time, money, and energy in this process. They listen to and empathize with the problems of children. They will be aware of the latest music, hobbies, and interests of children. These individuals attempt to gradually lower children's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations.

There are other individuals, however, who immediately engage in sexually explicit conversation with children. Some offenders primarily collect and trade child pornographic images, while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via online contacts. It is important for parents to understand that children can be indirectly victimized through conversation, i.e. "chat", as well as the transfer of sexually explicit information and material. Computer sex offenders may also be evaluating children they come in contact with online for future face-to-face contact and direct victimization. Parents and children should remember that a computer sex offender can be any age or sex. The person does not have to fit the caricature of a dirty, unkempt, older man wearing a raincoat to be someone who could harm a child. Often times offenders pose as a different age and/or sex in an attempt to lure children.

Children, especially adolescents, are sometimes interested in and curious about sexuality and sexually explicit material. They may be moving away from the total control of parents and seeking to establish new relationships outside their family. Because they may be curious, children/adolescents sometimes use their online access to actively seek out such materials and individuals. Sex offenders targeting children will use and exploit these characteristics and needs. Some adolescent children may also be attracted to and lured by online offenders closer to their age who, although not technically child molesters, may be dangerous. Nevertheless, they have been seduced and manipulated by a clever offender and do not fully understand or recognize the potential danger of these contacts.

This guide was prepared from actual investigations involving child victims, as well as investigations where law enforcement officers posed as children. Further information on protecting your child online may be found on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children website at www.webwisekids.com. Other websites for additional information include: Web Wise Kids at www.webwisekids.com, and Child Safety at www.netsmartz.org, which provides an interactive site focused on internet safety for kids, teens, parents, and educators.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE AT RISK ONLINE

Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night – Most children that fall victim to computer sex offenders spend large amounts of time online, particularly in chat rooms. They may go online after dinner and on the weekends. They may be latchkey kids whose parents have told them to stay at home after school. They go online to chat with friends, make new friends, pass time, and sometimes look for sexually explicit information. While much of the knowledge and experience gained may be valuable, parents should consider monitoring the amount of time spent online.

Children online are at the greatest risk during the evening hours. While offenders are online around the clock, most work during the day and spend their evenings online trying to locate and lure children or seeking pornography.

You find pornography on your child's computer - Pornography is often used in the sexual victimization of children. Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. Child pornography may be used to show the child victim that sex between children and adults is "normal". Parents should be conscious of the fact that a child may hide the pornographic files on diskettes from them. This may be especially true if the computer is used by other family members.

Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize – While talking to a child victim online is a thrill for a computer sex offender, it can be very cumbersome. Most want to talk to the children on the telephone. They often engage in "phone sex" with the children and often seek to set up an actual meeting for real sex.

While a child may be hesitant to give out his/her home phone number, the computer sex offender will give out theirs. With Caller ID, they can readily find out the child's phone number. Some computer sex offenders have even obtained toll-free 800 numbers, so that their potential victims can call them without their parents finding out. Others will tell the child to call collect. Both of these methods result in the computer sex offender being able to find out the child's phone number.

Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know – As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and all manner of gifts to their potential victims. Computer sex offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room – A child looking at pornographic imaging or having sexually explicit conversations does not want you to see it on the screen.

Your child becomes withdrawn from the family – Computer sex offenders will work very hard at driving a wedge between a child and their family or at exploiting their relationship. They will accentuate any minor problems at home that the child might have. Children may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else – Even if you don't subscribe to an online service or internet service, your child may meet an offender while online at a friend's house or the library. Most computers come preloaded with online and/or internet software. Computer sex offenders will sometimes provide potential victims with a computer account for communications with them.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS COMMUNICATING WITH A SEXUAL PREDATOR ONLINE?

Consider talking openly with your child about your suspicions. Tell them about the dangers of computer sex offenders. Review what is on your child's computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person. Pornography or any kind of sexual communication can be a warning sign.

Use the Caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Most telephone companies that offer Caller ID also offer a service that allows you to block your number from appearing on someone else's Caller ID. Telephone companies also offer an additional service feature that rejects incoming calls that you block. This rejection feature prevents computer sex offenders or anyone else from calling your home anonymously.

Devices can be purchased that show telephone numbers that have been dialed from your home phone. Additionally, the last number called from your home phone can be retrieved provided that the telephone is equipped with a redial feature. You will also need a telephone pager to complete this retrieval.

This is done using a numeric display pager and another phone that is on the same line as the first phone with the redial feature. Using the two phones and the pager, a call is placed from the second phone to the pager. When the paging terminal beeps for you to enter a telephone number, you press the redial button on the first (or suspect) phone. The last number called from that phone will then be displayed on the pager.

Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications (i.e., chat rooms, instant messages, Internet Relay Chat, etc.), and monitor your child's email. Computer sex offenders almost always meet potential victims via chat rooms. After meeting a child online, they will continue to communicate electronically often via email.

Should any of the following situations arise in your household, via the internet or online service, you should immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency, the **FBI**, and the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**:

- Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography,
- Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age,
- Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone that knows your child is under the age of 18.

If one of these scenarios occurs, keep the computer turned off in order to preserve any evidence for future law enforcement use. Unless directed to do so by the law enforcement agency, you should not attempt to copy any of the images and/or text found on the computer.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MINIMIZE THE CHANCES OF AN ONLINE EXPLOITER VICTIMIZING YOUR CHILD?

Communicate, and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential online danger.

Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online destinations.

Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a computer sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.

Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software. While electronic chat can be a great place for children to make new friends and discuss various topics of interest, it is also prowled by computer sex offenders. Use of chat rooms, in particular, should be heavily monitored. While parents should utilize these mechanisms, they should not totally rely on them.

Always maintain access to your child's online account and randomly check his/her email. Be aware that your child could be contacted through the U.S. Mail. Be up front with your child about your access and reasons why.

Teach your child the responsible use of the resources online. There is much more to the online experience than chat rooms.

Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends. These are all places, outside your normal supervision, where your child could encounter an online predator.

Understand, even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that he/she is not at fault and is the victim. The offender always bears the complete responsibility for his or her actions.

Instruct your children:

- to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online,
- to never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the internet or online service to people they do not personally know,
- to never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number,
- to never download pictures from an unknown source, as there is a good chance there could be sexually explicit images,
- to never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing,
- that whatever they are told online may or may not be true.

Frequently Asked Questions:

My child has received an email advertising for a pornographic website, what should I do?

Generally, advertising for an adult, pornographic website that is sent to an email address does not violate federal law or the current laws of most states. In some states it may be a violation of the law if the sender knows the recipient is under the age of 18. Such advertising can be reported to your service provider and, if know, the service provider of the originator. It can also be reported to your state and federal legislators, so they can be made aware of the extent of the problem.

Is any service safer than the others?

Sex offenders have contacted children via most of the major online services and the internet. The most important factors in keeping your child safe online are the utilization of appropriate blocking software and/or parental controls, along with open, honest discussions with your child, monitoring his/her online activity, and following the tips of this pamphlet.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Internet – an immense, global network that connects computers via telephone lines and/or fiber networks to storehouses of electronic information. With only a computer, a modem, a telephone line and a service provider, people from all over the world can communicate and share information with little more than a few keystrokes.

Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) – electronic networks of computers that are connected by a central computer setup and operated by a system administrator or operator and are distinguishable from the internet by their “dial up” accessibility. BBS users link their individual computers to the central BBS computer by a modem which allows them to post messages, read messages left by others, trade information, or hold direct conversations. Access to a BBS can, and often is, privileged and limited to those users who have access privileges granted by the systems operator.

Commercial Online Service (COS) – examples of COSs are America Online, Prodigy, CompuServe and Microsoft Network, which provide access to their service for a fee. COSs generally offer limited access to the internet as part of their total service package.

Internet Service Provider (ISP) – These services offer direct, full access to the internet at a flat, monthly rate and often provide electronic mail service for their customers. ISPs often provide space on their servers for their customers to maintain World Wide Web (WWW) sites. Not all ISPs are commercial enterprises. Educational, governmental and nonprofit organizations also provide internet access to their members.

Public Chat Rooms – created, maintained, listed and monitored by the COS and other public domain systems such as Internet Relay Chat. A number of customers can be in the public chat rooms at any given time, which are monitored for illegal activity and even appropriate language by systems operators (SYSOP). Some public chat rooms are monitored more frequently than others, depending on the COS and the type of chat room. Violators can be reported to the administrators of the system (at American Online they are referred to as terms of service (TOS)), which can revoke user privileges. The public chat rooms usually cover a broad range of topics such as entertainment, sports, game rooms, children only, etc.

Electronic Mail (Email) – a function of BBSs, COSs and ISPs which provides for the transmission of messages and files between computers over a communications network similar to mailing a letter via the postal service. Email is stored on a server, where it will remain until the addressee retrieves it. Anonymity can be maintained by the sender by predetermining what the receiver will see as the “from” address. Another way to conceal one’s identity is to use an “anonymous remailer”, which is a service that allows the user to send an email message repackaged under the remailer’s own header, stripping off the originator’s name completely.

Chat – real-time text conversation between users in a chat room with no expectation of privacy. All chat conversation is accessible by all individuals in the chat room while the conversation is taking place.

Instant Messages (IM) – private, real-time text conversation between two users in a chat room.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) – real-time text conversation similar to public and/or private chat rooms on COS.

Usenet (Newsgroups) – like a giant, cork bulletin board where users post messages and information. Each posting is like an open letter and is capable of having attachments, such as graphic image files (GIFs). Anyone accessing the newsgroup can read the postings, take copies of posted items, or post responses. Each newsgroup can hold thousands of postings. Currently, there are over 29,000 public newsgroups and that number is growing daily. Newsgroups are both public and/or private. There is no listing of private newsgroups. A user of private newsgroups has to be invited into the newsgroup and be provided with the newsgroup's address.

Grooming – actions deliberately undertaken with the goal of befriending a child in order to lower a child's sexual inhibitions or establish an intimate friendship in preparation for the eventual act of sexual intercourse with the child.

Identifying Grooming Behaviors

- Grooming behaviors begin with seemingly appropriate acts towards children, such as showing interest in their hobbies
- Grooming behaviors may evolve to include actions that lead the child to feel obligated to the adult, such as using his or her influence to help the child do things like skip school or avoid punishments
- Grooming may also include illegal behaviors, such as showing pornography to the child to persuade the child that sexual activity between adults and children is normal
- Grooming can occur on the Internet; offenders may pose as children in online message-sharing forums while learning details about potential victims and attempting to gain their trust. Sex offenders' ultimate goals typically include online sexual activity (in chat room, for instance) or meeting the child in person to engage in sexual activity
- Some offenders seduce children through intimidation and persuasion to gain compliance
- Some offenders seek out the children of single mothers for the purpose of victimization
- Offenders may provide superficial care and attention to children who may be lacking this interest at home
- Some offenders will strive to gain the trust of families and communities in order to gain access to victims
- Offenders can be respected community members in positions of authority