

POTENTIAL SIGNS OF GROOMING FOR ABUSE

7 STAGES OF GROOMING

- 1) IDENTIFYING & TARGETING THE VICTIM
- 2) GAINING TRUST AND ACCESS
- 3) FILLS A NEED IN A PERSON'S LIFE
- 4) THEY BEGIN TO ISOLATE YOU
- 5) CREATE SECRECY AROUND THE RELATIONSHIP
- 6) INITIATING SEXUAL CONTACT
- 7) CONTROLLING THE RELATIONSHIP

GROOMING CAN ALSO INCLUDE:

- Giving gifts or money to flatter the victim
- Buying gifts without the parents' consent
- Showering the victim with lots of attention
- Sharing secrets with a child
- Becomes the sole provider of the victim's needs - giving rides, special outings, friendship, a place to stay, and a sympathetic listener
- Showing interest in one particular child while ignoring others
- Discuss their personal life and adult matters'
- Provides alcohol, drugs, and/or pornography
- Sends texts, emails, DM's to a youth without the parents' knowledge
- Communicates privately with a child online
- Find excuses to isolate themselves with their victim
- Initiate touching, such as hugs, tickling, and massages, to desensitize the child to touch
- Express unusual interest in the victim's dating status or romantic life
- Prefers the company of children more than adults.
- Offer to help the caregivers to gain alone time with their victim
- Undermining the authority of parents
- Frequently allows the child to bend the rules of the parent or caregiver

RED FLAGS OF A CHILD PREDATOR

- **Close contact with minors:** A Sexual predator may associate with elementary, middle, or high school-aged children and form close bonds with their targets. They seldom have friends their age.
- **Build Emotional Dependency:** Chosen victims are showered with gifts, praise, and affection, and are manipulated into a false sense of dependency on their groomer. Predators then take advantage of this vulnerability.
- **Manipulative Language & Behavior:** Predators may employ gaslighting tactics and ridicule many aspects of their victim's personal life, mocking their friends, appearance, or choice of clothing.
- **Controlling Behavior & Jealousy:** Predators often become extremely possessive of their victims and are jealous of their family members and chosen friends. As a result, they may try to limit the victim's social interactions with others, especially if they suspect the victim has a romantic interest. In addition, predators may monitor their child's social media accounts to control their personal lives.
- **Overstepping Physical & Sexual Boundaries:** Initially, this starts as seemingly innocent pats on the leg, back, or arm as the predator attempts to normalize physical touch. This may progress to cuddling, hugging, or even fondling the child without consent. Finally, they may tell victims that a sexual act is a game or show them pornographic material to push sexual boundaries and encourage compliance.

BE A SAFE ADULT

LOOK, LISTEN, ACT

LOOK

- Never assume a child is safe because they are with another adult.
- Be observant. Observe how other adults interact with a child.
- Be observant. Watch to see if an adult is isolating a child. Ex. Being alone in a room with them or singling the child out from other children.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions if something seems "off".
- Be observant. Watch to see if a child shows reluctance to be around a specific adult.
- Never drop off a child in a new environment without familiarizing yourself with the location and the people there. Ex. The House of a friend at school. New sport or extracurricular activity.

LISTEN

- Take a child seriously if they express discomfort around a particular adult or group, or if they express that someone is abusing them.
- Establish open lines of communication early with your youth. Help them to feel comfortable enough to talk to you about anything they saw or heard that is confusing or uncomfortable to them.
- Adjust your reactions. Even if you are shocked or uncomfortable about what a youth is expressing to you, adjust your reactions to show support for the youth and that the youth has a safe place to process what is going on.
- Adjust your reactions. Do not blame or interrogate a youth, as this will cause them to withdraw and make them uncomfortable about sharing.
- Adjust your reactions. Never tell a child that they must be mistaken or have misread the situation. Investigate the situation separately from the child.
- Remember, it may be hard for a child to articulate their thoughts and what they are going through. Be patient. And listen, as it may take several times for a child to explain their concerns or any abuse they witnessed or received.

ACT

- Reassure and reaffirm your commitment to the youth that you are committed to their safety.
- Never leave an adult and a child alone for an extended period behind closed doors.
- When planning school, parish, or extracurricular events, ensure there are enough adults to keep both the adults and the youth accountable.
- When participating in school, parish, or extracurricular events, always be transparent and maintain open communication with other adults and children.
- **Write everything down. Report the abuse. Do not go it alone.**

Key Points to Remember:

- Kids always mimic what they see.
- **Indiana is a Mandatory Reporting State** on child abuse and neglect. Confidential reports can be made to local law enforcement or the Indiana Department of Child Services.
- Educate youth that sexually explicit pictures or videos of youth under the age of 18 years are considered child pornography.