

6 Steps for Preventing Adult Sexual Misconduct & Child Sexual Abuse.

[ESCAPE Program Logo: End Sexual abuse of Children with Prevention, Awareness and Education]

Educational Video Series. Developed in conjunction with Diane Cranley, an expert in child sexual abuse prevention. This module is part of a series designed to help school staff identify and report suspicious behaviors that may indicate child sexual abuse. A Discussion Guide accompanies each module of the series. A Collection of educational reading materials and resource lists are also included.

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Module 2: Grooming – Elementary School – Part 1

[Sources cited in this video are included at the end of the transcript]

Narrator, Diane Cranley: Hello, I'm Diane Cranley, Author of 8 Ways to Create Their Fate and a Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Consultant. Welcome back to the Adult Sexual Misconduct and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Schools Series.

In our introductory segment, we talked about the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the impact it has on our children, our schools, and on our communities. We also extended an invitation for you to join us as we increase our awareness and prevention efforts. So let's get started.

When parents send their children to school, they have a reasonable expectation that they will be safe - which means that we need to understand how to PREVENT abuse at school, not just report it after the fact. Preventing abuse may seem like an overwhelming challenge, but if we focus on the behaviors that are apparent long before a child molester breaks the law instead of the abuse itself, it's actually possible to predict when abuse is likely to occur. You see child molesters use a slow, methodical seduction process called grooming to create relationships that allow them to abuse without getting caught. The good news is that this slow process gives us many opportunities to intercede and remove children from harm's way.

Sources: 1

To help you better recognize that process, let's break it down into the key objectives that a child molester must achieve in order to abuse without being caught. First, child molesters must build trust - not only with children but with their parents, colleagues, school administrators, and with the community as a whole. Child molesters engage in a lifetime of image management which: 1) causes bystanders to dismiss behaviors that seem odd or inappropriate, 2) keeps people from believing any accusations that ARE brought forth, and 3) deters children from telling because they doubt they would be believed.

Child molesters who target elementary school children are often profiled as fixated abusers. These are people who would likely be diagnosed as pedophiles because they are sexually attracted to prepubescent children. They are often perceived to be excellent employees by parents, children, peers, and administrators and they tend to have a disproportionate number of recognitions and awards.

This quote from a leading prevention expert gives us further insight into the mindset of fixated abusers; “Those familiar with addictions recognize that the addiction drives the behavior because every act is directed at obtaining greater access to the drug of choice. For that reason, addicts primarily associate with people who can help them facilitate that goal, and do not tolerate those who interfere with that goal.” (Carla van Dam). In our case, the drug of choice is children.

Sources: 1,2,4

Repeated access is necessary for child molesters to cultivate relationships with their victims. This is why schools are a magnet for abusers. Child molesters attempt to isolate kids, first into small groups where they can look for voids and develop more personal relationships. Then they create further opportunities to get children alone which is when 80% of sexual abuse happens. Examples of physical isolation include before or after school activities, lunches in the classroom, tutoring, rides, weekend get-togethers, and even sleepovers. In addition to physical isolation, child molesters seek to emotionally isolate kids from other trusted adults. They will pit kids against their parents, other school adults, and even friends, moving themselves into position as their best friend and mentor.

Sources: 1, 5, 6

Child molesters work to desensitize children to touch but it must be done slowly. A piggy back ride and a tickle game; a poke here and a stroke there, a hand on the shoulder and then on the thigh. These encounters proceed slowly and become more frequent, they linger longer, and portray more intimacy over time. Child molesters make a point of excessive physical touch of young children in front of adults and then find times to "slip" and touch kids inappropriately. The child is bewildered and wondering why the adults didn't respond, why didn't they stop it? As the child molester repeats this process, they gain passive agreement from parents and other adults which allows them to push the limits in one-on-one situations and the child assumes it's okay or that no one would stop it even if they told.

Sources: 1, 7, 8, 9

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Now that you're familiar with the first few steps of the process, when and how could you possibly intercede?

Pause the video now and take a short break. When you are ready to continue, press Play.

Educational Video Series. Module 2: Grooming – Elementary School – Part 2.

In our last segment, we talked about the first several steps in the methodical process that child molesters use to seduce children and keep them from disclosing abuse. Our topics included how child molesters Build Trust, Gain Access, Identify the Vulnerable, Isolate Kids, and Desensitize Kids to Touch. So, let's pick up where we left off.

Child molesters introduce intimacy as they begin to move the conversation from professional to personal; from general to sexual. In elementary school, a child molester might start by asking the child about the differences between female and male body parts or if they have ever seen their parents having sex. If the child seems hesitant or embarrassed, the child molester may respond with surprise that their parents haven't taught them these things but reassure the child that it's okay, he or she can explain it.

Sources: 1

Child molesters try to create complicity because one of the best ways to keep a child from disclosing sexual abuse is to make them believe it was their fault. Child molesters try to get kids to break the rules in partnership with them such as staying in the classroom after school, accepting gifts, or taking a ride in their car. If abuse happens under any of these circumstances, the child would be disclosing their own wrongdoing if they were to disclose the abuse. The other way child molesters achieve complicity is by twisting the truth to redirect the blame such as telling a child "I can't resist you when you wear that cute little skirt" or "I know you just want to be loved." If a child molester can get a child to believe these lies, it leaves the child with a deep sense of shame and causes them to hide the truth of what happened. Both of these ways of creating complicity are very effective in keeping children from disclosing abuse.

Sources: 1, 3, 4, 5

Child molesters need to be sure a child can and will keep a secret before they actually cross the line to sexualize them. So they'll start by breaking rules and boundaries that are fairly insignificant at first; something they could easily talk their way out of if the child told – perhaps giving a child an expensive toy. They'll wait to see if they're confronted by a parent or supervisor and if not, they'll move forward to break a more significant boundary. If they're confronted, they'll make their excuses and remove that child from their short list of potential victims. They don't want to run the risk of being caught which is why they're constantly testing the waters along the way. And, every time a child keeps a secret they're less likely to tell the next secret, even if it's worse, because they're ashamed that they didn't tell before.

Sources: 1, 5, 6, 7

Silence is absolutely necessary; without it child molesters can't continue and may go to prison, so they'll do anything to maintain it. The foundation for creating silence is built through many of the steps we've discussed but once a child molester crosses the line and molests a child, they must actively enforce the silence. Sometimes they'll play on the heart strings of a child and say "I'll get in trouble if you tell" but most of the time outright threats are used to maintain silence. These threats are age specific and chosen to create enough fear to ensure the child doesn't tell. Threats used to create fear in young children include "I'll kill your dog," or "If your parents find out what you did, they'll give you up for adoption."

Sources: 1, 5, 6, 7

Though we've depicted this process in a linear fashion, it's really a cyclical process that creates a deeper stronghold on a child over time. As we mentioned last time, each of these steps provide bystanders

opportunities to recognize danger and intercede on behalf of a child. However, a research study found that only 11% of educators say they would report a colleague who they thought was sexually abusing a child.

Sources: 1, 8

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How has understanding this seductive grooming process impacted your confidence in recognizing and reporting potential abuse?

What obstacles still exist?

Thank you for taking the time to watch this video and engage with us in preventing child sexual abuse. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact your Human Resources Department.

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Part 1 Sources

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4. Carla van Dam, *The Socially Skilled Child Molester: Differentiating the Guilty From the Falsely Accused* (Binghamton: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2006), 1,3.
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7. Carla van Dam, *Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offender* (Binghamton: The Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press, 2001), 30-35.
8. Robin Sax, *Predators and Child Molesters: What Every Parent Needs to Know to Keep Kids Safe: A Sex Crimes DA Answers 100 of the Most Asked Questions* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2009), 86.
9. Michele Elliott, Kevin Browne, and Jennifer Kilcoyne, "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: What Offenders Tell Us," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19, no. 5 (1995): 579, 585, 586, doi:10.1016/0145-2134(95)00017-3.

Part 2 Sources:

1. Diane Cranley, *8 Ways to Create their Fate: Protecting the Sexual Innocence of Children in Youth-Serving Organizations* (Mustang: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, LLC), 49, 55, 132, 172, 174, 175, 180, 290-292, 306.
2. Kenneth V. Lanning and Park Dietz, "Acquaintance Molestation and Youth-Serving Organizations," *J Interpers Violence* (May 2014): 12, doi:10.1177/0886260514532360.
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7. Robin Sax, *It Happens Every Day: Inside the World of a Sex Crimes DA* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2010), 135.
8. Charol Shakeshaft, "Know the Warning Signs of Educator Sexual Misconduct," *Kappan Magazine* (February 2013): 11.

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