

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 – Middle 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 youth, 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 kids 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 kids 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 youth 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 kids from telling because they doubt they would be believed

Child molesters who work in middle schools may be similar to those found in elementary schools, who are often profiled as fixated abusers and are likely to be diagnosed as pedophiles because they are sexually attracted to prepubescent children. They're often the employee that everyone loves and have a disproportionate number of recognitions and awards.

Or they could be an opportunistic abuser who is someone who tends to be emotionally arrested and operate at a teenage level. They often display boundary and judgment issues and spend a lot of time around groups of students - talking with them, going to the same places, trying to blend in and be seen as cool and even as peers.

It just depends on the age of the students these middle school molesters are teaching and targeting.

Sources: 1, 2

Repeated access is necessary for child molesters to cultivate relationships with their victims. This is why schools are a magnet for abusers. Experts have referred to youth-serving organizations as a "well populated hunting ground." In fact, child molesters who secure a position as teacher, likely have access to thirty new students, or thirty new potential victims each year, sometimes for decades.

Sources: 1, 3

Child molesters also need to identify the vulnerable by finding voids in a kid's life that they can fill. And once these needs are met by a child molester, kids and even parents may struggle to give it up. So at risk youth include those whose families have experienced: single parenting, illness, violence, death, poverty, addictions, abuse, crime, depression, suicide, or simply lack of time or affection. Child molesters are not only looking to fill a void, they are also looking for adults who will allow them to do it.

Adults are often too polite, too shy, or too anxious to tell someone to leave a child alone. They can also be too impressed by power, status or money to do the right thing. Child molesters deliberately associate with adults who cannot address these issues and who are easily charmed.

Sources: 1, 4

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 youth 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 kids to touch but it must be done slowly. A poke here and a stroke there, a hand on the shoulder or snap of the bra, an "accidental" brush against the breast or on the thigh. These encounters proceed slowly and become more frequent, they last longer, and portray more intimacy over time. In middle school, child molesters want to exploit the raging hormones of our youth and get their imaginations running wild with lustful thoughts they can't seem to control. That yearning can open doors to future encounters.

Sources: 1, 7, 8, 9

We're going to wrap up for now and start again with Introducing Intimacy in our next segment. Each step of this process plays a vital role in child molesters being able to abuse without getting caught but each step also provides bystanders opportunities to recognize danger and intercede on behalf of a child.

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 – Middle School – Part 2.

In our last segment, we talked about the first several steps in the methodical process that child molesters use to seduce kids 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 middle school, it's powerful to conjure up images in the mind of hormonal pre-teens that they may have a hard time letting go of. A child molester may share something personal such as "I shower sitting down" or ask the student if they've ever touched the private parts of their boyfriend or girlfriend or someone of the same sex.

If the student shows shame or embarrassment, the child molester may apologize for being so forward but let them know it's nothing to be ashamed of and then go on to talk about their own pre-teen sexual encounters and fantasies

Sources: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Child molesters try to create complicity because one of the best ways to keep youth from disclosing sexual abuse is to make them believe it was their fault. Child molesters try to get kids to break the rules, or even break the law, in partnership with them such as staying late at school, taking a ride in their car, or using drugs, alcohol, or pornography together. If abuse happens under any of these circumstances, the student would be disclosing their own wrong doing 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 student "I can't help myself because you're so sexy," or "You were asking for it with that short dress." If a child molester can get a student to believe these lies, it leaves the student 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 youth from disclosing abuse.

Sources: 1, 3, 4, 5

Child molesters need to be sure a student 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 student told such as the teacher sharing a sexual dream they had. 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 student 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 kid 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 to abuse 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 student, they must actively enforce the silence. Sometimes they'll play on the heart strings of a student 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 student doesn't tell.

In middle school, child molesters often use threats of molesting younger siblings or posting nude photos they've secretly taken onto the internet. However, if necessary, child molesters will use threats of or actual physical violence with weapons to make their point.

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 student over time. As we mentioned last time, each of these steps provide bystanders opportunities to recognize danger and intercede on behalf of a student. 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 QUESTION:

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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2. Charol Shakeshaft, "Know the Warning Signs of Educator Sexual Misconduct," *Kappan Magazine* (February 2013), 9-11.
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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), 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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5. Michele Elliott, Kevin Browne, and Jennifer Kilcoyne, "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: What Offenders Tell Us," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19, no. 5 (1995): 579, 582, 584-586, doi:10.1016/0145-2134(95)00017-3.
6. David Finkelhor, Linda Meyer Williams, and Nanci Burns, *Nursery Crimes: Sexual Abuse in Day Care* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988), 92-96.
7. Robin Sax, *It Happens Every Day: Inside the World of a Sex Crimes DA* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2010), 135.
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