



Preventing Child Sexual Assault and Abuse

Information For Parents:

Peer-to-Peer Abuse

Nearly 30% of child sexual abuse cases involve **juvenile perpetrators**. Fifty percent of juvenile sexual abusers were abused themselves as children.

Parents should keep in mind that the average onset of **juvenile sexual assault behavior** is 12-14 years old. Also noteworthy to parents: the average age of alcohol and marijuana experimentation is now 12 years old.

Parents should closely monitor children during play dates and multi-family gatherings, especially those involving multi-aged children. Abuse tends to occur while adults are socializing and youngsters are playing unsupervised in separate areas.

Many children are sexually abused during sleepovers, by both peers and adults. If you choose to allow sleepovers, supervise and monitor all activities closely. Discussing personal safety on a regular basis and reminding youngsters to keep their behavior appropriate will go far in preventing sexual crimes.

Grooming

Most kids are slowly lured into abuse with grooming behaviors. Secrets typically play a significant role in the grooming process. Stress to children that there should be no secrets from you ever, even seemingly innocent ones, as they often lay the groundwork for future abuse.

The following are grooming behaviors, which on the surface, can appear innocent. A potential offender may:

- Befriending the youngster and their family to slowly gain trust.
- Giving gifts, money, trips, and/or performing special favors for youngster.
- Promoting the notion that the relationship with the boy or girl is special.
- Encouraging harmless secrets, laying the foundation for future sexual secrets.
- Taking pictures/video of the child.
- Communicating with the boy or girl excessively; texting, emailing or calling.
- Desensitizing the child through nonsexual touching, "accidental" touching of privates and/or walking in on bathroom or dressing time.
- Testing a child's boundaries by using inappropriate language and/or telling dirty jokes.
- Playing body contact games with children; tickling, backrubs or wrestling.
- Making alcohol/drugs available to the youth.
- Introducing pornography to initiate sexual interest or normalize the behavior.

- Offering to babysit, including overnight trips or sleepovers.

** Keep in mind that most sexual offenders are someone we know and trust. They are notoriously friendly, nice, kind, engaging and likeable. They often target victims, insinuating themselves into that child's life — their family, school, house of worship, sports, and hobbies. Sexual offenders are professional con artists and are expert at getting children and families to trust them. They will smile at you, look you right in the eye and make you believe they are trustworthy.*

Beware Single Moms!

A special word of caution to single Moms: please be careful. Single Moms and their kids are easy targets for sexual offenders. With schedules oftentimes overloaded, it is tempting to accept offers of babysitting - especially if it is someone you like and trust, and they constantly offer to help.

Be extremely cautious of offers to take your children overnight. If it seems too good to be true it probably is. Many children are abused by boyfriends of single Moms. Recognize, listen to and trust to your instincts. Encourage your children to do the same. Again, the best way to prevent child exploitation is to have open, honest discussions on a regular basis.

Parents of Teenagers

Most teens view themselves as independent and invincible. Crime statistics on teen sexual assault, however, reveal a different reality.

Teenagers are the primary target of sexual crimes.

They account for 51% of all reported sexual abuse, and teens aged 16-19 are three and a half times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault. All too often, it's a peer who takes advantage.

Leave your copy of the *Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide* out for your teen to read. They'll either read it on their own or ask you about it. Either way, having ongoing conversations about sexual crimes lets your teens know you are available and willing to talk. Encouraging teens to talk openly about sexual crimes and sexual abuse prevention can help ensure they don't become victims.

Consider visiting TeenLuresPrevention.com for more information about preventing sexual crimes against teenagers. Your teen may be interested in participating in the Teen Lures TV Newscast. Today's teens can help change the world!

The logo for TeenLures™ PREVENTION.com features the word "Teen" in orange, a stylized silhouette of three people in black, "Lures™" in orange, and "PREVENTION.com" in black. The entire logo is set against a light yellow rectangular background.

Source: Child Lures Prevention