

SOC FNL
Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Guide
For Volunteers

Definitions:

Child/Minor – Any person under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse/Neglect - defined by California Penal Code Section 11165.6

1) Includes physical injury or death inflicted by other than accidental means upon a child by another person, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or the maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare.

2) The willful harming or injuring of a child, endangering the health of a child, and unlawful corporal punishment or injury.

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

Childhood sexual abuse is defined as any form of sexual contact or interaction with a minor for another's gratification. It can include:

- Fondling or direct physical contact of a sexual nature,
- Asking a child to touch the abuser
- Any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors when one exerts power over the other
- Exposing a child to pornography, or involving a child to participate in pornography
- Involving a child in prostitution or trafficking
- Non-contact sexual acts such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet

Child sexual abuse under any circumstance is a crime, punishable by law.

The SOC FNL prevention training is intended to help volunteers:

- Prevent sexual abuse before it happens
- Recognize signs of sexual abuse in children
- Recognize unsafe behaviors by adults who interact with children
- React responsibly if a child discloses or there is reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse

Protecting children from sexual abuse is an ADULT RESPONSIBILITY.

Four Steps to Prevent Childhood Sexual Abuse

STEP 1 – Learn the facts and myths.

Facts:

- 90% of sexual abuse happens to children by someone they know and have an established relationship with and NOT by a stranger. Do not focus solely on the outdated and ineffective concept of stranger-danger.
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will experience sexual abuse by the age of 18.
- Children with disabilities are 4 times more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- Child sexual abuse is one of the most under-reported crimes.
- 89% of sexual offenders gain access to children through “grooming”... a process of using excessive charm, attention, flattery, gift giving, and other types of manipulation to create opportunities for private, alone-time with the child.
- Sex offenders go out of their way to appear trustworthy and reliable.
- Child sexual abuse occurs among all socioeconomic, cultural, racial and educational groups throughout the United States and the world.
- Sexual abuse escalates over time, in a long-term relationship, lasting an average of 4 years.
- The most vulnerable age for sexual abuse is between the ages of 9 and 12 years old.
- Boys are less likely to disclose their abuse.

Myths: Sexual predators count on the public to believe certain myths so they can continue to gain access to children. Predators want you to believe that those who sexually abuse children are:

- Only strangers or registered sex offenders
- Never the older brother/nephew/teen relative/neighbor
- Never the coach, religious leader, or pillar of the community
- Only of a certain ethnicity or race
- Only a “weird” looking person, a “loser”, or someone with a weapon
- Someone without children of their own
- Mentally incapacitated or have obvious emotional challenges

Don't fall for these myths!

STEP 2 – Minimize Opportunity

Two elements must be present for an abuser to victimize a child: **ACCESS & PRIVACY.**

More than 80% of sexual abuse incidents occur in a secluded or isolated environment, usually with one adult/one child.

While it may not be possible to completely eliminate occasional one-on-one situations, parents and caretakers should be mindful and alert to anyone who continually seeks “alone-time” with one child, often removing the child from a larger group or presenting special favors that isolate the child from others.

Reduce the risk of sexual abuse:

- Group situations should have multiple adults supervising children.
- Assess the physical environment, where minors are involved... doors should remain open, curtains and/or shades should not be drawn or covering windows.

- Make sure that all interactions can be observed.
- Older youth should not be in isolated areas with younger children.
- Recognize “grooming tricks” of a potential predator.
- Report reasonable suspicion immediately, particularly if you are a mandated reporter.

STEP 3 – Don’t Expect Obvious Signs in a Child Molester

Child molesters are experts at hiding their true selves. For this reason, it is important that adults working with children are trained to recognize the blurry boundaries, grooming techniques and tricks that a predator will often use.

Grooming is a calculated means with the aim of establishing a special bond with a vulnerable child, eventually leading to more access and privacy. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Special attention, outings, or gifts for no apparent reason
- Isolating a child from others while in a group setting
- Offers of assistance to “help” a parent or relieve a parent of their parental duties
- Treating a child as if they are older, more mature than is developmentally appropriate
- Creating a more special or secretive type of relationship that excludes others
- Sharing inappropriate sexual language or behavior that should only be shared with adults
- Excessive physical attention, especially when the child has asked them stop
- Appearing too good to be true

In addition, a child molester will often blur appropriate boundaries as they interact with their intended target. These include physical boundaries, personal boundaries, and/or relationship boundaries. This overstepping of boundaries is used as a way to test, not only the child, but also other caretakers and parents, etc. to determine if their actions will go unnoticed.

STEP 4 – Intervention: Awareness and Report Suspicions

- Physical signs of abuse may or may not be obvious in a child. There are emotional and/or behavioral signs to be aware of, which may also indicate abuse.
- Child molesters are rarely “caught in the act,” but they are often seen pushing boundaries, breaking rules, and using various grooming tricks.
- You can prevent child sexual abuse by understanding appropriate boundaries and by reporting any good faith suspicions you may have.
- Anyone can report suspected child abuse, Friday Night Lights requires all of its volunteers to report known or suspected child abuse in any form.
- However, some employees are considered legally mandated reporters and have specific obligations by law. (See Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect, pp. 8-9 below.)

Lastly, if you discover child pornography, you have discovered sexual abuse.

Red Flag Warning Signs and Grooming Tricks

Red flags can be early signs of a sex offender's grooming process. One red flag does not immediately indicate that someone is an offender but may suggest that this person's behavior should be monitored more closely. More than one red flag should be taken seriously, as reasonable suspicion, and steps should be taken to protect the child. The following are examples of red flags:

- Someone who continually tries to arrange alone time with one child, often using many different reasons or excuses for this behavior
- Someone who repeatedly befriends one "extra special" child, singling them out and lavishing them with an extraordinary amount of praise and attention
- Someone who appears excessively generous, buys expensive/extravagant gifts or gives money to a child for no apparent reason
- Someone who insists on being physical with a child (excessive hugging, touching, kissing, wrestling, horseplay or other accidental touching games)
- Someone who refuses to let a child set any of his/her own limits or who uses teasing or belittling language to make a child feel guilty, embarrassed or otherwise uncomfortable
- Someone who continually invites children to spend time alone at their home, enticing them with the latest video/computer games, toys, gadgets, etc. – especially an adult who does not have children of their own
- Someone who turns to a child for emotional or physical comfort by sharing personal or private information/activities, normally shared only with adults
- Someone who exposes a child to adult sexual interactions without apparent concern
- Someone who repeatedly makes others uncomfortable by ignoring social, emotional, or physical boundaries or limits (not only with children but with adults as well)
- Someone who frequently enters a bathroom, locker room or changing area while children are changing or showering and doesn't respect a child's need for privacy
- Someone who frequently offers to "help out" or relieve a parent of his or her parental duties, i.e. babysitting for free, transporting a child to or from activities, taking kids on overnight trips and outings
- Someone who prefers to spend most of his or her free time with children and seems to have no interest in relationships with individuals their own age
- Someone who seems especially preoccupied with one child
- Someone who has secret interactions with children, or spends an excessive amount of time emailing, texting, messaging, or calling children
- Someone who frequently points out sexual images or tells sexually suggestive jokes or stories with children present
- Someone who allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors
- Someone who seems "just too good to be true"

Red flag warning signs may be displayed by an adult or even by an older youth who interacts frequently with children.

Boundaries

When it comes to child safety, there are three different types of boundaries that a predator will attempt to “blur” during the grooming process.

Physical Boundaries

Personal Boundaries

Relationship Boundaries

Blurry boundaries indicate an overstepping of appropriate behavior with a child.

Signs of Overstepping Boundaries

Physical: Defined as “ownership” of our own body.

- Anyone who invades a child’s physical space with excessive touching games, hugs, tickles, lap sitting, etc.
- An occasional pat on the back or quick hug under certain circumstances may be fine, but does the physical attention seem to go “overboard,” especially when the child appears uncomfortable or has asked the person to stop?
- A child molester looks for reasons to frequently be physical... massaging shoulders, horseplay, accidental touching or sharing affection.

You may notice a physical boundary being blurred *or* a child may mention it to you for a number of different reasons. Excessive physical attention is often a molester’s first attempt to groom their target, by trying to get the child to feel comfortable with a lot of touching. Do not ignore this warning sign.

Most people who are safe do not want to lavish excessive physical attention on children. In fact, most adults who work with kids are careful *not* to blur this physical boundary.

Personal: Defined as inappropriate comments, suggestions, or sexual language shared with a child OR about a certain child.

- Asking a child to pose in a certain way
- Creating a secretive relationship to “bond”
- Using guilt tactics or teasing to get a child to let down their guard
- Sharing inappropriate photographs or sexual jokes with a child

An offender will blur a personal boundary in order to desensitize a child to certain words or actions.

Relationship:

1. Every person who interacts with a child has specific duties or roles that outline that relationship
2. Determine what role that is with a child
3. The relationship between an adult and child should be limited to the scope of that person’s duties or job description.

EXAMPLES:

Sports Coach – Instructs on the basics of the game, including skills such as running, scoring, etc.

- Encourages sportsmanship and team spirit
- Does not provide transportation for one child
- Does not take one child out to celebrate a victory
- Does not suggest special outings with one child to see other games, tournaments, etc.
- Does not take one child on an overnight trip
- Does not shower with the team

<h3>GUIDELINES FOR THOSE WORKING WITH OR AROUND MINORS</h3>
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- Never engage in any aggressive horseplay or sexually provocative games with children, even as a joke.
- Do not ask kids to sit in your lap.
- Do not engage in any physical activity if the child has asked you to stop.
- Allow children to express affection on their own terms; do not request a hug or kiss from a child.
- Never use any form of physical or emotional punishment to discipline a child or to tease a child.
- Respect the child's need for privacy, especially in restrooms or changing rooms.
- Don't swear around children or make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun.
- Don't ask children, particularly teens or preteens, about their sexuality
- Do not appear to favor one child over the others in your care.
- Don't give special gifts or trinkets to just one child.
- Do not offer to take the child home or on any special outings.
- Never tell a child to keep any type of secret from their parents.
- Don't say things like "This is just between us..."
- Avoid being alone with one child away from the others, particularly in a restroom, shower, or changing area.
- Follow the rule of 3: It is preferable to take another person with you if you must accompany a child to the restroom.
- Should you ever need to be alone with a minor in a changing or shower area, by no means should you ever be unclothed with a minor. Showering or bathing with minors, even when you are not alone, is never acceptable or allowed.
- Activities with children should be conducted in as public an environment as possible in order that all behavior can be readily observed.
- Keep classroom doors open and windows should remain uncovered by drapes or shades.
- Be aware of situations which could be misinterpreted, including being alone with the last child to leave an activity.
- Don't tease children or use guilt tactics if they are setting their own personal or physical boundary with you.
- Do not give any child a ride in a car or van unless you have express permission from the parents.
- Children should always use the "buddy system" or otherwise be encouraged to stay together when going to the bathroom, on field trips, or when leaving a classroom or activity area.
- Be professional and maintain the highest standard of personal behavior at all times; do not

smoke or drink alcohol when working with minors.

- Remain alert to any inappropriate actions of others.
- Trust your instincts.
- Report any suspicions or criminal action as required by the law