

## **KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE**

### **How to Identify Grooming Tactics & Prevent Sexual Assault**

Adults are the ***number one*** resource to protect children and prevent sexual assault. The majority of sexual assaults are not random incidents. For example; nine out of ten children who came to King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) in 2006 knew his or her abuser; a family member victimized almost half of those children.

**Before assaults occur — especially those committed by someone known to the victim — offenders “groom” victims and families to gain their trust and confidence. This grooming process is a critical time for adult to identify the potential risks to children. The grooming procedure is extremely effective, and consequently, the vast majority of children/adolescents do not disclose the abuse. Offenders are often clever at grooming adults and caregivers of their victims as well. Adults may be set up for victimization in similar ways.**

Offenders spend a great deal of time and energy in the process of “grooming” their victims. They generally gain the victim’s trust and confidence to begin the process. Because the offender is generally someone known to the victim, teen/child may feel that he/she has no alternative but to accept the abuse. The next step is to introduce the victim to sexual types of touch. This is often accomplished slowly, so that the victim is gradually desensitized to the touch.

Sexual offenders then manipulate the victim to keep the secret. The offender may trick or force a victim into keeping the sexual abuse a secret by using subtle tactics, such as:

**Bribery “I’ll let you go shopping if you let me do this.”**

**Threats of Harm to the Teen/Child “You are really going to get it if you tell anyone.”**

**Threats of Harm to the Offender “If you tell, I’ll go to jail.”**

**Withdrawal of Affection “I won’t like you anymore if you tell.”**

**Break-up of the Family “This would really hurt your parents if they knew.”**

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**Taking Advantage of the Child/Teen’s Innocence “It’s okay, everybody does this,” or “If you tell anyone, I’ll just say you were lying.”**

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While stranger assaults and abductions are rare, they still pose a risk to children, teens and vulnerable adults. Strangers will also use grooming tactics to gain access and/or lure victims.

**1) Understand the grooming process used by offenders. The basic steps are:**

- Gaining the trust and confidence of future victims and their families.
- Introducing the child to sexual types of touch, with escalating inappropriate behavior.
- Manipulating children with trickery or threats to keep the behavior, activity or incident secret.

**2) Watch for warning signs that grooming is taking place. It is important to look for patterns of behavior involving several of the characteristics below. A potential offender may be someone who:**

- Is exceptionally charming and/or helpful.
- Attempts to obtain immediate “insider” status.
- Consistently prefers the company of children to adults, rather than age-appropriate companionship.
- Attempts to establish peer relationships with people much younger than self.
- Fails to honor clear boundaries set by parents.
- Roughhouses, wrestles or tickles children after being asked to stop.

**3) If you think a child is being groomed, trust your “gut feeling” and act on it:**

- Listen for statements or questions from your child that would support your suspicions.
- Encourage your child to tell you more about the time he or she spends with the person.
- Assert yourself and end questionable behavior.
- Be willing to stop all contact between the child and the potential abuser, even if it makes you the “bad guy”.

**4) Give a child the prevention tools to help identify inappropriate behavior:**

- Talk regularly with children about safety skills.

- Help them become more aware of their environment.
- Make sure children understand that they can and should say “NO!” to anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable.

## **List of Community Resources on Laws and Information sources regarding sex offenders and sexual assault**

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### **Where can I find more information in Washington State?**

- Official State Government Website <http://access.wa.gov/>
- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs:  
<HTTP://WWW.WCSAP.ORG/HELP.HTM>
- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC): <http://www.kcsarc.org/>
  - KCSARC’s Education And Prevention Department 425.226.5062
  - KCSARC’s 24-Hour Sexual Assault Resource Line 1.888.99.VOICE
  - General Sex Offender Information:  
[http://www.kcsarc.org/sex\\_offenders\\_safety.htm](http://www.kcsarc.org/sex_offenders_safety.htm)
- King County Sheriff’s Office <http://www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/>
- Seattle Police Department’s Sex Offender Website <http://www.seattle.gov/police>
- Washington Department of Corrections: <http://www.doc.wa.gov/>
  - Offender Transition: <http://www.doc.wa.gov/cpu/>
- Washington Juvenile Rehabilitation Association (JRA):  
<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/jra/>
  - Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment:  
<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/jra/SOTreatment.shtml>
- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs:  
<http://www.waspc.org/index.php>
  - WASPC’s Sex Offender Information Center: <http://ml.waspc.org/>
- Health Profession Quality Assurance (can be used to check if licensed practitioner has had license suspended or revoked due to sex offense):  
[https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/hpqa1/Application/Credential\\_Search/profile.asp](https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/hpqa1/Application/Credential_Search/profile.asp)

## Local

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- For a list of Community Sexual Assault Programs, go to <http://www.wcsap.org/help.htm>
- Contact your local police department for additional community resources.
- Contact your county sheriff's department for additional community resources.

## Federal

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- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa>
- Center for Sex Offender Management: <http://www.csom.org/>

## Publications

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- Training for School Staff on Juvenile Sex and Kidnapping Offenders: Legislative Report – House Bill 2101: <http://www.k12.wa.us/InstitutionalEd/pubdocs/FinalTaskForceReportHB2101.pdf>
- Notification to Schools of Registered Juvenile Sex or Kidnapping Offenders: Legislative Report – Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6580: <http://www.k12.wa.us/InstitutionalEd/pubdocs/FinalTaskForceReportHB2101.pdf>

## Legislation

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- Senate Bill 6580: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6580&year=2005>
- House Bill 2101: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2101&year=2005>

**If there are any other resources that you believe should be on this list, please e-mail links to [Kathleen.sande@k12.wa.us](mailto:Kathleen.sande@k12.wa.us)**