

STEPS TO SAFETY

Understanding Grooming

Your child should always be aware of strangers, but sometimes they can be hurt by people they know well and trust. Help your child understand that when someone makes them feel uncomfortable, unsafe, threatened, or is just too close to them, that person has violated their Body Boundary. It is important that your child is able to recognize if a relationship is just not right, could become harmful, or could be the process of grooming. Grooming is when an adult giving a child extra attention that isn't normal, healthy, or appropriate in an effort to gain their trust and the trust of their family. This kind of inappropriate behavior can lead to that adult harming the child. Your child may think that everyone enjoys attention and that the attention makes them feel special. If that attention begins to make them feel uncomfortable, or if their body boundary becomes violated with unwanted and inappropriate touches, your child should immediately report to someone in their Safety NETWORK.

Protecting Your Child from Grooming

Step 1

Your child knows about the danger of strangers and that they are never to talk to, go anywhere with, or meet with a stranger. But there is a much greater chance of your child being harmed by someone they know. It is very important that you and your child know that there are behaviors that predators use to groom a child and gain their family's trust.

Step 2

Know the warning signs of grooming:

- Someone spends too much time with your child
- Someone wants to be alone with your child
- Someone isolates your child from a group
- Your child receives gifts that you don't know about
- Your child is being asked to keep secrets from you by another adult
- Someone seems too eager to gain access to your family by doing favors, offering to babysit, etc.

Step 3

Keep the lines of communication open with your child. Talk to them about the interactions they have with other adults. Remember that children who feel like they can talk to their parents or caregivers about anything are much less susceptible to being victimized by a sexual predator.

Step 4

Monitor the time and frequency that other adults spend with your child. Make sure that any other adult who is spending time with your child knows that you are aware, involved, and in communication with your child. If at any time that you feel as though some of the grooming behaviors are becoming apparent, remove your child from the situation immediately. Inform other parents of your concerns if their child is involved with this adult.

Step 5

Report suspicious behavior on the part of any adult interacting with children to the agency or organization employing the individual, and follow up with law enforcement. Be aware of predators who may be living in your area.