

STEPS TO SAFETY

Red Flags of Grooming

Your teen should always be aware of strangers, but sometimes people they know well and trust can hurt them. Help your teen understand that when someone makes them feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or threatened, or is just too close to them, that person has violated their body boundary. It is important that your teen is able to recognize if a relationship is just not right, could become harmful, or could be the process of grooming. Grooming is a process of an adult giving a teen 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 teen. Your teen 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 teen should immediately report it to a trusted adult.

It is important for your teen to understand that there are instances that can make them vulnerable to an abuser who could use these situations as part of the grooming process. Abusers are skillful and manipulative, often behaving in friendly and fun ways to gain a teen's trust. They may be acquaintances of the family, community leaders, trusted family friends, family members, or strangers. Grooming tactics are methodical and intended to gain access to a teen, to isolate, and create secrecy around the relationship. Giving gifts and special privileges are common tactics. It is important for teens to establish their boundaries and to be confident in maintaining those boundaries. Teens should always be alert to the red flags of grooming and should tell a trusted adult right away if they feel that a situation is not quite right or if that situation makes them feel uncomfortable.

Red Flags of Grooming

Grooming behaviors are the steps an abuser takes to win the trust of kids and their families over time to set the stage for sexual abuse.

- ✦ Expensive gifts
- ✦ Special treatment
- ✦ Testing boundaries
- ✦ Checking reactions
- ✦ Isolation
- ✦ Unsafe secrets
- ✦ Unsafe touches

Protecting Your Teen from Grooming

Step 1

Your teen 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 teen being harmed by someone they know. It is very important that you and your teen know that there are behaviors that predators use to groom them and gain their family's trust.

Step 2

Know the red flags of grooming. Grooming behaviors are the steps an abuser takes to win the trust of teens and their families over time to set the stage for sexual abuse.

- Expensive gifts
- Special treatment
- Testing boundaries
- Checking reactions
- Isolation
- Unsafe secrets
- Unsafe touches

Step 3

Keep the lines of communication open with your teen. Talk to them about the interactions they have with other adults. Remember that teens 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 teen. Make sure that any other adult who is spending time with your teen knows that you are aware, involved, and in communication with your teen. Anytime you feel as though some of the grooming behaviors are becoming apparent, remove your teen from the situation immediately. Inform other parents of your concerns if their teen is involved with this adult.

Step 5

Report suspicious behavior on the part of any adult interacting with children and/or teens 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.

