

Conference Leader:

The information on the following pages will give more information about a predator and how they groom a child.

Please use pages 2 and 3 as a handout for parents.

Important Information For Every Parent

Did you know that most children *will* be exposed to some type of indecent material while using the Internet? This can happen quite unintentionally on your child's part and should be of great concern to every parent!

As you know, the Internet is a part of our daily lives and as informative as it is, there are dangers. In the safety of our homes, with family present, children are exposed to sexual predators, pornography and identity theft as they surf the Internet. Unfortunately, many teens now have unrestricted access to the Internet not only on their home computer but also in the palm of their hands through wireless devices such as cell phones, personal digital assistants and mobile entertainment systems.

Chat rooms and all forms of Instant Messaging have become a playground for predators, and the best defense is awareness. Closing our eyes to this problem by just saying NO to computer use will not make the problem go away. Children WILL be exposed to computer use somewhere along the way to adulthood.

What are the steps a predator will take to build a relationship with a child?

- The chat conversation begins with a simple question A/S/L (Age, Sex, Location).
- Once this is established, the "Grooming" process begins. The predator is a very cunning, systematic individual. One of the definitions for the word "groom" is to prepare. This is what the predator is doing. He is gathering information about a child preparing them to become his victim.
- They will gather as much information as they can while prompting the child to keep the relationship a secret. They will eventually use this information to alienate the child from the family unit. They encourage the child to reveal problems within the family. They will use this information to drive a wedge between the child and the family. The child may then feel that this person is the only one who cares about them.
- After the trust and dependence is built, a face-to-face meeting is arranged.
- As part of the seduction process, predators may send letters, photographs, and all kinds of gifts to their potential victims. Computer-sex offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

Remember falling into a relationship occurs when a child makes the bad choice of communicating with a stranger. It happens to adults, too. Work very hard at keeping communication open with your child. The victim becomes a pawn (an insignificant person used at another's will) or a puppet in the hands of the predator. A child who seems to be responsible may still not have the maturity to make wise decisions.

Children by nature are curious and especially when it is regarding sex. This makes them very vulnerable when a cunning adult who is very aware of their curiosity is luring them. Children using the Internet face these dangers on a daily basis. It is important—*imperative*--that parents establish a trusting relationship that will open the door to communicating with their child. Fear of having computer privileges taken away is the reason most children will not go to them when confronted by a Predator.

Should you become aware of a situation that is inappropriate for your child: DO NOT DELETE any of the chat logs or photos on their computer. DO NOT confront the online predator in any way. Talk to your child calmly to obtain more information. Call law enforcement and the State Bureau of Investigation immediately. The police or an SBI agent will come to your home and take immediate action.

If you are a parent who has already encountered a situation involving an online predator but has not come forward in fear of the repercussions, think seriously about the following real life situation:

“14 year old Jane sat at her computer every night while her parents were watching TV. A 16-year-old boy approached her in a chat room. They chatted for some time and started sharing personal information. Then he sent her a web cam. Guess what happened next? This guy went from a 16-year-old boy to a 52-year-old man. This man was a child predator and he had TMI—too much information! Soon, Jane became very ill. She couldn’t eat or sleep. She was severely depressed and alienated herself from her friends and family. This predator stole two years of her life before she finally told her mother. The authorities were called and he is now spending time in jail, and oh yes, he won the prize of being a lifelong member on the Registered Sex Offenders List. As for Jane ... she got justice and closure. Mostly she got the love and support of her family. She is now in her 3rd year of college.”

In this situation, Jane never left home to meet this man and yet she was a victim. She was traumatized and terrorized while her parents were sitting close by.

Make sure every child knows the rules of Safety On The Internet.

Protect Every Child
www.protecteverychild.org
 Kids Come First
www.kidscomefirstonline.org