

Predator Proofing Your Organization



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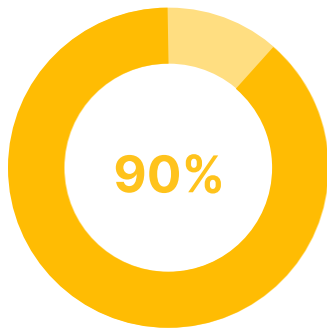
CHAPTER ONE

THE SAFETY LANDSCAPE

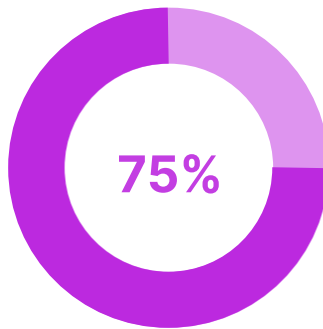
Statistics and False Assumptions

These statistics illustrate that predators are everywhere and show no signs of stopping.

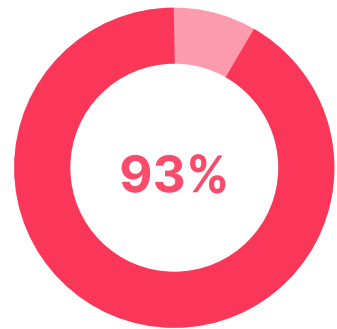
- ✓ Less than **10%** of child sexual abusers are criminally prosecuted
- ✓ Meaning **90%+** will have NO red flags



of child predators
identify as
religious or highly
religious



of child sexual
predators attend
church regularly



of child victims
know their
perpetrator in
some way

Couple the above with the following false assumptions, and organizations may let their guard down and become easy targets.

- ✓ Abuse will never happen here—it only happens in places like, you insert the descriptor.
- ✓ I know everyone who volunteers—they're friends, coworkers, family, and people I see almost every day.

- ✓ Our facility is safe for kids. Why would someone target us?
- ✓ Predators are monsters! I'd know one if I saw one.

Acknowledging these assumptions are inaccurate will enable you to understand how predators infiltrate and the behaviors they use to gain access to child victims.

Targets

What do predators see in houses of worship and other organizations serving kids and youth that make them think it's an easy place to offend children?

✓ **Naivete**

Offenders perceive those who participate in religious activities as naïve. As mentioned above, 90+% identify as religious or highly religious. Individuals closely associated with churches are often regarded as overly trusting and optimistic about others. Offenders recognize this and exploit the situation to their advantage.

✓ **Unawareness**

Many people aren't aware of the growing number of predators in their community or how pervasive the problem of abuse is. This may make it seem like a nonissue and something they don't feel compelled to protect against. Assuming someone is trustworthy simply because they are nice, polite, and compliant can downplay the voices of those brave enough to report abuse.

✓ **Accessibility**

Many churches and organizations that depend on volunteers constantly seek help, particularly with children's programs. Volunteers are frequently late, cancel at the last minute, or do not show up. Therefore, no one wants to turn away a kind and dependable person offering to help. Offenders are aware of this.

CHAPTER TWO

PREDATORS - WHO ARE THEY?

Characteristics

It's disappointing but true. There is no one stereotype of a predator.

They include friends, family, acquaintances, community leaders, business owners, volunteers, teachers, and more.



They are young and old, from different walks of life, and have diverse levels of education, socioeconomic or marital status, family structures, history, and experience.



80-90% are male offenders.
10-20% are female offenders.



They often identify as religious or highly religious and attend church regularly.



They participate at all levels of the organization but actively seek leadership roles that promote respect and authority, which minimizes the chances of them being questioned about their behavior.



Classification

Predators can be classified based on their relationship to the victim, such as stranger, acquaintance, or intra-familial; the focus here is on Power and Persuasive Predators.

The Power Predator

- ✓ Takes victim by force.
- ✓ Strikes only when they know they can prevail.
- ✓ Cannot quickly retreat or claim a misunderstanding.
- ✓ Not focused on organizations with policies and guidelines.

Example: A person who grabs a child in a park.

The Persuasive Predator

- ✓ Uses personality and charm to influence others.
- ✓ Works tirelessly to gain trust & access to victims.
- ✓ Waits for the perfect moment to strike.
- ✓ Presents as the picture-perfect volunteer.
- ✓ Most often found in organizations serving kids & youth.

Example: A wolf in sheep's clothing.

The traits of the Persuasive Predator are diverse, including strong intuition, intelligence, comfort with high-risk situations, and opportunism. These enable them to excel at identifying victims and organizations where they are likely to succeed.

Environments They Seek

Predators will always prey on organizations that have safety breakdowns, such as:

- ✓ Ease of isolating victims due to poor facility design or low-visibility areas.
- ✓ Lack of accountability.
- ✓ Inadequate screening, education, and training.
- ✓ Closed-door environments where transparency and communication are limited.
- ✓ Unrestricted access to children and youth.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GROOMING MODEL

Grooming is a tactic predators use to build relationships, earn trust, and lower barriers to gain access to victims. Predators understand that when they are well-established, liked, respected, and keep their behaviors in check, they are less likely to be identified or have their actions questioned, which also makes it more difficult for others to speak out against them if an accusation arises.

Offenders rarely rush through the grooming process. Instead, they take their time to develop relationships with potential victims, their families and friends, board members, and individuals in leadership roles. Living a double life is a powerful strategy. Studies on conformity show very few people will openly disagree with the majority opinion, which is why predators invest time in building relationships or what they perceive will be an insulating inner circle of support.

How Predators Work

Predators strive to establish a consistent and reliable process, so it's crucial to remember their actions are highly repetitive and predictable. Recognizing this will help you identify early warning signs and act when needed.

Once predators gain trust, barriers to access are removed, and they notice people have let their guard down, the grooming process begins.

Offenders understand that earning a child's or their family's trust makes them vulnerable. It begins with innocent behaviors, and as the victim becomes more comfortable, there is a shift to more risky activities. This is when a level of sexuality is introduced, and once that occurs, an incident is often imminent.

Evolution of the Grooming Model

With the internet and mobile connectivity, the grooming model has evolved.

THEN

- ✓ Transitions from place to place for easy access
- ✓ Grooms single victim over short time
- ✓ Hides in the shadows at low levels of organization
- ✓ Isolated and alone
- ✓ Works alone
- ✓ No online education
- ✓ Limited access to virtual networks and communities



NOW

- ✓ Integrates into community and establishes a presence with authority
- ✓ Targets families, board members, those in authority
- ✓ Leverages leadership position to increase access
- ✓ Befriends other predators, develops communities of like-minded individuals
- ✓ Works in groups, shares information about targets, victims, methods
- ✓ Uses online education to increase knowledge of victims & targets
- ✓ Uses social media to develop online communities, share ideas, identify victims, evaluate targets

Red Flags or Warning Signs

- ✓ Spends an unusual amount of time with children instead of other adults or peers.
- ✓ Consistently seeks access to children, even if they do not have a child in the program.
- ✓ Requests to take pictures with children, not their own.

- ✓ Gives gifts or pays special attention to a specific child.
- ✓ Lingers outside the children's area.
- ✓ Frequently offers to "help out" with the children but is neither a screened employee nor a volunteer.
- ✓ Repeatedly enters a bathroom or locker room where children are changing or showering, disregarding their need for privacy.
- ✓ Disregards personal or societal boundaries.
- ✓ Asks or encourages a child to keep secrets.
- ✓ Uses digital platforms to connect without parental consent.
- ✓ Becomes aggressive and defensive when their actions are questioned.
- ✓ Supersedes the authority of established policies and guidelines.
- ✓ References topics that are not age-appropriate.
- ✓ Establishes a swift, intense connection with a child or youth by bypassing typical social or relational boundaries.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABUSE PREVENTION

Organizations must adopt a proactive stance to protect their most vulnerable members. The most effective way to prevent predators from entering your organization is to establish a first line of defense. This involves creating high-level policies that prioritize prevention and guide daily protective measures.

To effectively stop predators, develop abuse prevention policies, guidelines, and procedures with two goals:



Predators seek separation, seclusion, and an environment that allows them to isolate children. To combat these behaviors and help prevent an incident, you must make it challenging for anyone to be alone with a child and always ensure multiple pairs of eyes are watching over and protecting the children.

Top Prevention Methods

- ✓ Utilize a well-written Child Protection Plan.
- ✓ Develop policies for responding to and reporting abuse.
- ✓ Emphasize safety training and education. Reflect, educate, and reeducate.

- ✓ Implement a screening process for both adults and youth.
- ✓ Establish a Speak Up Culture that fosters transparency and prioritizes communication.
- ✓ Get familiar with your state's mandatory reporting laws.
- ✓ Establish transportation procedures.
- ✓ Communicate your organization's commitment to child protection.

Top Protective Measures

Most of the success in abuse prevention comes from consistently sticking to daily safety guidelines, called protective measures or tactics.

- ✓ Implement a standard check-in and check-out procedure.
- ✓ Become comfortable with saying NO. Your primary responsibility is the safety of the children.
- ✓ Conduct a background check every 18 to 24 months on all adults who work with or around children.
- ✓ Establish classroom standards for discipline, appropriate contact, and rest.
- ✓ Follow the Rule of Two.
- ✓ Establish appropriate classroom ratios.
- ✓ Create highly visible child areas.
- ✓ Do not assign a minor to supervise other minors.
- ✓ Maintain accurate attendance records.
- ✓ Take children's comments, feedback, and observations seriously.
- ✓ Watch over more vulnerable children.

While it's impossible to eliminate 100% of abuse, taking steps to reduce risk goes a long way in deterring bad behavior and making it more difficult for predators to infiltrate.

CHAPTER FIVE

REPORTING ABUSE

Why Report

Reporting abuse is critical because it saves lives, protects the most vulnerable, holds offenders accountable as they rely on silence, and ensures children receive the support they need.

For survivors, it's the leading cause of adult depression, anxiety, and suicide. Reporting abuse helps create safer, more supportive, and stable communities. Not acting continues to put children's lives at risk.

Conflicts may arise in how disclosures are reported. Nonetheless, any abuse against a child is a crime and must be reported to authorities.

When to Report

It is best to file a report within 24 hours of learning about safety concerns or receiving a disclosure. A report should be filed when a child directly discloses abuse, when someone witnesses abuse firsthand, or when there are consistent signs and indications. Additionally, if an offender discloses abuse, that situation should be reported.

How to Report

Making a report can feel complicated and scary, but everyone must do their part protecting children. Reporting in good faith as a citizen protects you from civil liability. You don't have to prove your concerns before contacting authorities.

Information Needed When Making A Report

- ✓ Your name, address, phone number, and relationship to the child.
- ✓ The child's name, names of family members or guardians, current address, and phone number.
- ✓ An explanation of your concerns about the child's safety or care.
- ✓ A description of the child's injury, including when and where the incident occurred.
- ✓ Current location of the child and whether they are in immediate danger.
- ✓ Names of individuals who might have additional information.
- ✓ Helpful information includes photos, previous statements of concern, and past feedback from others who have interacted with the child.

CHAPTER SIX

WHEN DISCLOSURE HAPPENS

Disclosure is complex, and for it to occur, a child must have someone they trust. The most crucial factor is that the child knows they will be believed and supported. Without someone willing to believe them and act, they will remain vulnerable to abuse.

How to Address Abuse Disclosure

- ✓ Stay and respond calmly.
- ✓ Listen carefully and be attentive.
- ✓ Commend their bravery.
- ✓ Reassure them that they are not at fault.
- ✓ Allow them to speak freely; don't interrupt.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions.
- ✓ Avoid making false promises.
- ✓ Ensure the child understands the next steps.
- ✓ Immediately protect the child from the suspect.
- ✓ Notify the authorities about the abuse.
- ✓ Document the disclosure.
- ✓ Protect the child's right to privacy.

How to Respond

When a child discloses abuse, it can evoke strong emotions, making it difficult to maintain your composure and think clearly about how to respond. However, those initial moments are the most critical and will influence whether a child feels safe and continues to share or becomes silent.

Here are some suggested responses.

- ✓ I believe you! The three most important words to say to a victim.
- ✓ Thank you for telling me.
- ✓ You did the right thing by asking for help.
- ✓ I'm sorry this happened to you. How can I help?
- ✓ Take as much time as you need.
- ✓ I'm here. I'll stand with you.
- ✓ Things may never be the same, but they can get better.

Ongoing Support for Victims and Their Family

Once a disclosure has been made and authorities have been notified, the responsibility is to continue providing support for the victim and their family.

Here are a few suggestions for providing support.

- ✓ Implement protective measures.
- ✓ Offer needed care for the child and family.
- ✓ Show up, listen, validate, and support.
- ✓ Immediately terminate/suspend the alleged perpetrator.
- ✓ Assist in locating qualified treatment providers.
- ✓ Post signs about child abuse prevention.
- ✓ Organize a support group for survivors.
- ✓ Promote your zero-tolerance policy regarding abuse.
- ✓ Communicate your commitment to child protection.
- ✓ Speak frequently about prevention.
- ✓ Always be prepared to answer questions regarding child safety and your Child Protection Policy.

RESOURCES

For additional safety resources, visit www.kidcheck.com, where you will find other eBooks, free safety downloads, webinars, video series, and an Emergency Instructions Flip Book.

Learn more about KidCheck with a free personalized product demonstration and see first-hand the benefits of secure children's and youth check-in, volunteer scheduling, and mobile Express Check-In. Go to www.kidcheck.com or call us at 208-538-2000.