



Human Trafficking Online Grooming Red Flags

Grooming is the process by which someone befriends and gains the trust of a child (and sometimes the child's friends and family) in order to take advantage of the child. Predators are masters at manipulation, often appearing kind and helpful. Keep these in mind of who or what a predator will do:

- An adult pretending to be someone they're not, which is typical and easy in online chats and games
- An adult offering advice or sympathetic understanding to problems
- Gift giving
- Giving the child considerable attention
- Taking kids on trips or vacations
- Using their professional position or reputation – such as a teacher, parent, coach, etc.
- Send you lots of messages
- Ask you to keep your conversations secret
- Try to find out more
- Start sending you sexual messages
- Get you to share personal information
- Try to blackmail you.

Grooming Signs of an Online Sexual Predator

There are a number of signs to be aware of that may suggest online grooming is taking place. Although some may seem like typical teen behavior, it's still important to pay attention if your youth is:

- Wanting or asking to spend more time on the internet
- Being secretive about the sites they visit or who they are talking to online
- Switching screens when you come near them when they are on their computer or phone
- Wanting to spend time alone in their rooms with electronics
- Going to unusual places to meet friends
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Possessing new items, you haven't given them, especially electronic devices
- Using sexual language, you wouldn't expect them to know or that is not age appropriate
- Emotions that become more volatile
- have access to drugs and alcohol.
- unexplained changes in behavior or personality, such as being withdrawn, anxious, aggressive and missing school.

Children of any gender, family situation, and socioeconomic status can be targeted as victims of grooming – no one is immune. To help protect your child from online predators, there are a number of steps you can take, including:

- Encouraging your child to be “**share aware**” by talking openly and often about what sites they’re visiting, games they’re playing, and people they’re chatting with.
- Creating a family environment where your child feels safe talking about **difficult topics**. The safer a child feels, the more likely they are to open up when something bad happens.
- Monitoring their devices for potentially harmful communications.
- Maintaining an open line of communication with your child and paying extra attention to the amount of time they spend with other adults, as well as **monitoring their online activity**, can help protect your child from predators.
- Above all, make sure your child knows they are not at fault for anything inappropriate an adult says or does to them. You’re there to help and protect them — not punish them for a predator’s actions.
- When parents know the signs to look for, they’re in a better position to help keep their kids safe both online and in real life.

For further help or questions please contact:

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