

A Profile of the Child Molester



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For over three decades, Child Lures Prevention/Teen Lures Prevention has analyzed data on the methods child molesters/sex offenders use to lure children, teens and young adults into abuse and worse. This original research, based on hundreds of interviews with convicted sex offenders and in-depth case studies, reveals 16 specific Lures -- including Affection, Authority, Bribery and Games -- which constitute the foundation of the evidence-based *Think First & Stay Safe™* and *Teen Lures TV Newscast™* school curricula.

Child molesters come from all economic backgrounds, geographic areas and include every ethnicity, race and creed. The sole characteristic all child molesters share is having thoughts about being sexual with children, and acting on those thoughts. These individuals actively seek access to children and the opportunity to be alone with them. Also, contrary to "Stranger Danger" warnings, child molesters are rarely strangers; at least 90% of sexually abused children are abused by someone the child and/or family knows, someone in the child's immediate or extended family, or someone close to the family.

Who can be a child molester?

- Any gender (88% are male; 9% are female; 3% are unknown)*
- All ages (including kids, teens and seniors)
- All socioeconomic groups (wealthy, middle class & disadvantaged)
- All races & ethnicity
- Diverse occupations
- What percentage of child sexual abuse is committed by family members?



Family members abuse:

- 49% of victims under age 6.
- 42% of victims ages 7-11.
- 24% of victims ages 12 - 17.
- The younger the child, the more likely their abuser is a family member. Keep in mind that family members include parents, guardians, step-parents, siblings, step-siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents.

Do kids and teens use Atypical or Problem Sexual Behavior with other children?

Yes. Based on substantiated state-by-state reports, about one in three cases of childhood sexual maltreatment is peer-on-peer. Juveniles using Atypical or Problem Sexual Behavior are usually youngsters who are older and stronger than their victim. The average onset of Problem Sexual Behavior is 12-14 years old. ("Children under age 12 are identified as having atypical sexual behavior, not sexually abusive behavior, due to their young age, developmental level, and the continual changes that occur throughout childhood," states the Association of the Treatment of Sexual Abusers.)

A U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics report* found that 23% of all sexual offenses against children were by other kids under the age of 18. There are two very important distinctions to make about juveniles with Problem Sexual Behaviors:

1. Of children who are sexually abused, the majority DO NOT go on to use Atypical or Problem Sexual Behavior.
2. The subset of juveniles who do use Atypical or Problem Sexual Behavior with other children often have histories of being victimized themselves.

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Do females ever molest children?

Yes. Female offenders make up approximately 9% of all reported child sexual abuse. The most recent statistical report by the US Department of Justice found that female offenders sexually abused:

12% of victims under the age of 6

6% of victims ages 6 - 12

3% of victims ages 12 - 17

What is the most common lure used by child molesters?

The Affection Lure is used both offline and online to exploit unsuspecting youngsters in need of love and attention. (See Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide.) Most victims of abuse are befriended and “groomed” over a period of hours, days, weeks, months, or years. Child molesters have repeatedly admitted: When there’s a physically or emotionally absent parent in the picture, it makes the child more vulnerable to grooming and abuse.

How many sex offenders, including child molesters, live in the U.S.?

Currently, there are 904,011 registered sex offenders living in the United States, according to registry data from 50 states and 6 U.S. territories (May, 2018), which has increased from 847,725 in Nov, 2017*. These are offenders who have been caught, convicted, served their time and are now living among us. This number does not include child molesters who are currently serving time in prison. Also, the FBI estimates that only 10-40% of sex crimes are ever reported, which means there are millions of sex offenders living in the United States, many of whom have never been reported - or caught, or convicted.

**Source: Sex Offender Registration Map, (2018), National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.*

Also not listed on the Sex Offender Registry are juveniles under the age of 14 using atypical or problem sexual behavior (caught and adjudicated), as well as any minors using atypical or problem sexual behavior who have not been reported, caught or adjudicated.

How do child molesters gain access to their victims?

While some sexual abuse is purely opportunistic, most children are groomed and lured into situations where they are vulnerable to abuse. Common grooming strategies include:

- Befriending parents, particularly single parents, to gain access to their children.
- Offering babysitting services to busy parents or guardians.
- Taking jobs and participating in community events that involve children.
- Becoming a guardian or foster parent.
- Attending sporting events for children.
- Offering to coach children’s sports.
- Volunteering in youth organizations.
- Offering to chaperone overnight trips.
- Loitering in places children frequent - playgrounds, parks, malls, game arcades, sports fields, etc.
- Befriending youngsters on social media (TikTok, Ask.fm, YouTube, Kik, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) and online gaming platforms.
- How do sex offenders lure kids online?

Internet predators use the same Lures online that are used offline. They typically target uninformed and unsuspecting youngsters to engage in virtual relationships by luring them with flattery, attention and feelings of being close to an online friend. In essence, the Affection Lure, Friendship Lure and Ego Lure are being used online. Lonely, neglected, confused and risk-taking adolescents are most vulnerable. The risk increases if they share intimate images of themselves or have inappropriate conversations.

The internet predator becomes a more serious threat when they obtain a youngster’s personal information (i.e. full name, phone number, address, school, sports team), convinces them to send inappropriate images, or manages to arrange a private, in-person meeting. Youth who have shared too much personal information or agreed to in-person meetings without adult supervision have been robbed, physically assaulted and sexually abused. Cyber predators who convince youngsters to share intimate pictures or video often use blackmail to get more images. This is known as sextortion, which law enforcement has identified as a real and significant threat to the safety of all youth.

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Children and teens are still more likely to be sexually exploited (in person or virtually) by someone they know, including a peer, than by an Internet Predator. This is why it's important to remind kids to limit how much personal information they share with everyone, to keep passwords PRIVATE (even from friends) and to never send inappropriate images to anyone. (For additional safety tips, order a Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide.)

How else do child molesters use the Internet?

Since the dawn of the Internet, child molesters around the globe have used it to share beliefs and experiences, even descriptions, names and images of children they have abused. Now, the Dark Web is where they "socialize," as well as share and sell child pornography, easily produced with cell phone cameras and sometimes even shown in real time.

It is essential for parents to teach children and teens that they must not ask for, nor provide, nude or semi-nude photos. Ever. Many sexted images children and teens have been pressured into sending (or send "to be funny") end up in the child porn collections of American and International child porn collectors. Despite law enforcement's best efforts, it is next to impossible to keep child pornography images out of circulation on the web.

How do child molesters target their victims?

Early grooming efforts by sexual predators seek to determine if the child has a stable home life, or if the family is facing challenges like divorce, foster care, poverty, illness, drugs, homelessness, etc. Children lacking stability at home are at higher risk for sexual abuse, as there is usually more access to the child and opportunities to abuse the child.

Child molesters will also target kids who are loners, or who look troubled or neglected. Youngsters who smoke, vape or use drugs and alcohol are seen as risk-seekers lacking adequate supervision, and therefore easy targets. Single parents are often targeted, as they are more likely to need help with parenting duties and vulnerable to offers to babysit and/or drive kids to school, practices, lessons and other activities. (See Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide.)

Which age group is most often targeted by child molesters?

While all children are vulnerable, approximately 20% of child sexual abuse occurs with children under 5 years of age; 50% with kids between 5-12 years old; and 30% occurs with teens between 13-17 years of age. Parents and guardians can help keep children safe by talking frankly and often to their children about "the birds and the bees." At the very least, teach your child, preferably beginning at birth, anatomically-correct names for their private body parts (buttocks, anus, chest, breasts, vulva, vagina, penis and scrotum). Child molesters have admitted they are less likely to abuse children who know the proper names for private body parts and have learned basic body safety skills.

Some child molesters cite a preference for children on the brink of puberty. This is the age of sexual awakening, making it easy for molesters to prey on the sexual ignorance and curiosity of youngsters. To quote one sex offender, "Give me a kid who knows nothing about sex, and you've given me my next victim."

When and where do most sexual assaults usually happen?

With incidents involving juvenile using atypical or problem sexual behavior, 1 in 7 incidents occur on schooldays between 3pm-7pm, with a peak from 3-4pm, right after school. (Child Maltreatment Report, 2013) This speaks to the importance of safe after-school care and close supervision of multi-age groups of youngsters.

Most child sexual abuse occurs in the home of the victim, the home of the offender, or another residence. 81% of all child sexual abuse occurs in one-on-one situations: one-offender/one-child. (Child Maltreatment Report, 2013) Wherever youth are physically or virtually alone with someone is a potential place where they can be subjected to sexual misconduct or abuse.

Wouldn't a vigilant parent be able to detect a child molester, just by their actions?

Not necessarily. Most child molesters are expert at getting children and families to trust them. Many target their victims and attempt to involve themselves in the child's life, including their family, school, house of worship, sports, and hobbies. They are often the first to offer to babysit or drive children to activities. Child molesters will smile at

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you, look you right in the eye and make you believe they are trustworthy. (To learn the 16 Lures used by sexual offenders, order the Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide at <https://childluresprevention.com/shop/>)

Why is it that most victims do NOT tell someone about their abuse, or attempted abuse?

There are many reasons why 9 in 10 children do not tell about being sexually abused. Because the abuser is often a family member, the child may be dependent on their abuser for basics like food and shelter. They may still love the abuser and not want to get them in trouble, or they may fear breaking up the family. They may have been threatened not to tell, so they are afraid.

Many survivors of sexual abuse feel embarrassment, shame and a sense of guilt over what happened. They may mistakenly believe they are somehow responsible, that they did something to make the abuse happen. They did not. Other kids, especially boys, are afraid parents will over-react or restrict their freedom, so they keep quiet. However, being sexually abused is NEVER a child's fault. Think First & Stay Safe and Teen Lures TV Newscast curricula also teach children and teens that All Secrets Can Be Told. Program evaluations document that children are more willing to tell about grooming behaviors, attempted abuse and sexual abuse after learning either or both curricula.

How then, do we protect our children?

Starting at birth, teach children the medical terms for private body parts. (Chest, breasts, buttocks, anus, vulva, vagina, penis and scrotum.) Teach children that private parts are just that - private. Assure children of their own rights, that they are the boss of their own body, and they get to choose whether or not anyone can hug, kiss or touch them. Respect children's privacy and personal space, and teach them to respect the privacy and personal space of others.

Teach your child that it is against the law for anyone to look at, take pictures/video of, or touch a child's private parts with any part of their body. It is also against the law to tell a child to look at, take pictures/video of, or touch another person's private parts with any part of their body. Anyone who tries is breaking the law. Tell your children that all secrets can be told, especially secrets they have been told to keep or have been keeping for a long time. Help your child choose two trusted adults, one at home and one at school, to whom they can tell anything. (See Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide at <https://childluresprevention.com/shop/>)

If a person or situation gives you or your child a funny feeling in the belly, act upon those feelings. Don't allow your child to be alone with such persons or go alone into such situations. Gut feelings are rarely wrong.

The VIP (Very Important Person) Factor

While there are many reasons victims don't tell, the "VIP Factor" is a significant reason why sexual crimes against children have continued for generations. These "Very Important Persons" (VIPs) are well-known local leaders in our schools, athletic and civic organizations, houses of worship, healthcare and business communities. Some are VIPs on the state or national level, in the educational, legal, military, corporate, media, higher education and political worlds. They have power and money, and they have imposed a culture of silence that few dare attempt to confront.

For example, at Penn State University, Assistant Coach Jerry Sandusky (who ran a non-profit organization for disadvantaged youth) used nine of the 16 Child Lures to entrap and sexually exploit his many young victims: 1. Affection, 2. Assistance, 3. Authority, 4. Bribery, 5. Games, 6. Hero, 7. Job, 8. Threats & Weapons and 9. Drugs.

Four of the victims were assaulted during sleepovers with Sandusky, a common tactic of sex offenders. As in many cases of child sexual abuse, the children were threatened not to disclose and were told, "No one will believe you." As is usually the case, the child victims believed their offender.

Other VIPs within Penn State University were aware of inappropriate behaviors by Sandusky, but did nothing to stop, report or prevent his crimes against vulnerable children.

And now, nearly a decade later, another high profile case has emerged with Jeffrey Epstein. Gleaned from the complaint: Jane Doe v. Darren K. Indyke and Richard D. Kahn, in their capacities as the executors of the estate of Jeffrey E. Epstein, Jane Doe specifically outlines how Jeffrey Epstein and his recruiters/handlers allegedly used the VERY SAME Child/Teen Lures of 1. Affection, 2. Assistance, 3. Authority, 4. Bribery, 5. Games, 6. Hero, 7. Job and 8. Threats/Fear to carry out years of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

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And like Sandusky/Penn State University, why did no one in Jeffrey Epstein's orbit speak up or step up to stop, report or prevent these crimes against children, teens and young women?

Final Thoughts:

Child molesters can be anyone - family members, relatives, neighbors, coaches, teachers, preachers, friends, children's peers, etc.. Knowing this - and knowing that adults cannot be with children every moment of every day - it is essential to talk openly with children about personal boundaries and personal safety. Teach children, age-appropriately, how to recognize, resist and report the lures used for generations by sexual offenders of every kind. (Order a Think First & Stay Safe™ Parent Guide at <https://childluresprevention.com/shop/>)

Thankfully, both children and adults are beginning to more readily report bullying, harassment and sexual abuse, saying boldly and loudly that these crimes are no longer acceptable. This long-overdue cultural shift to zero tolerance will hopefully shift attention to the dire need to prevent child sexual abuse through awareness and education.

By teaching positive health-promoting norms, attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors, beginning in Pre-Kindergarten and continuing through high school and beyond, a culture of kindness, mutual respect and personal safety can be cultivated and maintained. Please consider recommending the evidence-based Think First & Stay Safe and Teen Lures TV Newscast curricula to your child's school and/or organizations. [END]

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For Information on the evidence-based
Think First & Stay Safe™ Adult Training and Youth Curriculum for Grades PreK-6
and
Teen Lures TV Newscast™ School Program for Grades 7-12,
visit
<https://childluresprevention.com>



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