THE SIX STEPS OF GROOMING



Preventing Abuse Starts with Awareness

Understanding sexualized grooming helps adults recognize the subtle tactics an abuser may use to gain a child's trust and lower their defenses. Prevention starts with knowledge, and informed adults are key to stopping abuse before it begins.

While the grooming process may look different in each case and may not always be a linear process, it's still important to have knowledge of the most common stages of the process to be able to detect concerning behaviors. Below is a graphic that outlines the six primary steps of the grooming process.

abuse.

Maintaining Control:

To ensure the child's continued participation and silence, abusers use secrecy and blame as well as other tactics. Victims sometimes continue the relationship out of fear or shame at the thought of having to tell someone about the

Sexualizing the Relationship:

A perpetrator may work to desensitize a child by talking to them about sexualized topics, or by creating sexualized situations through physical actions or imagery. Due to the trust built, this may feel like a normal progression of the relationship for the child.

Isolating the Child:

By this point, the perpetrator likely put in the work to gain the trust of the child and the child's community to where their relationship with the child is normalized and may not raise questions. The perpetrator may now work to create one-on-one situations either electronically or in person.

Targeting the victim:

A perpetrator may be strategic in their selection and may focus on vulnerabilities or specific needs of a child. For perpetrators of sexual grooming, a strategy used may be observing a child for a period of time.

1

2

(3)

Gaining Trust:

A perpetrator may try to become close with a child to lower their guard - causing them to be less alert to red flag behaviors. A perpetrator may create situations where they're able to offer special attention, gifts, or favors. Note that the perpetrator also works to gain the trust of the community.

Filling a need:

A perpetrator may begin to exploit a child's specific vulnerabilities by stepping in to fill actual or perceived unmet needs. This could be offering rides, gifts, or special attention/affection. The perpetrator may fill a child's needs to continue gaining and maintaining trust.