Characteristics of Child Molesters

Historical View
- Known and trusted individuals are more likely to victimize than strangers
- May be male or female, but about 90 percent of abused children are abused by a male

How Do Predators Choose Their Victims?
- Preferential molester chooses children that match his preference and will not target others
- Preference may be to a sex, age group, body type – it may be the predator’s only sexual outlet
- Many child molesters are very sensitive to the needs and desires of children
- Looks for “outcasts” or needy ones

What are Grooming Behaviors?
- Grooming: Showing special favor, friendship, even love to the intended victim, escalating the sexual intent to desensitize the victim
- May include winning friendship of “gatekeepers,” parents, caregivers, staff, volunteers, even friends of the victim
- May choose activities to put him in proximity to children
- Participates in kid activities
- Tries to gain one-on-one access to victims
- Tries to be “cool” or “hip” and acts younger than his age
- May engage in electronic communications to win the child over – emails, IMs, “sexting”
- Continuing to push boundaries

What Should I be on the Lookout for?
- Being observant, you can prevent a life of mental anguish for one or more children
- Watch for a grooming pattern among staff and volunteers
- Any one behavior may not be grooming, but everyone in the organization should be on the lookout for patterns and more than one sign, which could mean there is a problem

Common Characteristics of Male Offenders
- Moves residence often
- Willing to accept jobs that pay less than his education and experience would warrant
- Not a “team player”
- May have trouble in work interactions, experiencing outbursts, losing control.
- Describes himself as a “big kid”
- May look to date single mothers
- Identifies with children rather than adults

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• Chooses kid hobbies and may go to video arcades, playgrounds, parks, the mall, schools, and youth sporting events
• Has cool games and equipment which will appeal to kids
• May have the latest smartphone which he will attempt to use to start illicit text or phone conversations with victims
• May be overly interested in photography or videography and will use them to appeal to kids’ vanity

Common Characteristics of Female Molesters
• May be unemployed or underemployed
• Casual about drug and alcohol use, unstable work and school history
• Comes from a strict home background with little attention from her father
• Or it could have been very religious with an abusive father
• May have been sexually abused herself
• Problems in social interactions with adults and authority figures
• Is more likely to seduce than to coerce victims
• May use electronic communications to stay in touch with the victim, especially sending sexually explicit text or photos