

# WHAT IS GROOMING?



Some caregivers wonder how it is possible for their children to be abused. Offenders use many tactics to gain access to children. These include:

**1. Seeking out an approachable child:** Abusers usually target children who are easy to get to (relatives, friends, and neighbors). They may also seek children who have emotional needs for friendship and attention.

**2. Establishing a relationship with the child:** Abusers often seek ways to build trust and friendship with children. They may spend time playing with them, volunteering for childcare duty, becoming their "buddy," or buying them candy or presents.

**3. Breaking down the child's resistance to touch:** Abusers may find ways to touch children a lot. As a result, the children are often confused when the touch becomes sexual. The abusers may play games with a lot of physical contact or engage in wrestling or tickling children to sneak sexual touches.

**4. Finding ways to isolate a child:** Abusers find excuses to be alone with children so they can abuse them. For example, they may babysit, invite them to sleep over, or take them camping.

**5. Blaming the child and keeping the secret:** Abusers try to make the children feel responsible so they won't tell. They use statements like these:

- "You know you like the way I touch you."
- "If you tell, people will think you are bad."
- "If you tell our 'special secret,' I will go to jail."
- "If you tell your mother, she won't love you anymore."
- "If you tell, you will be taken away from your family."

Abusers may threaten to harm or kill family members or themselves if the child tells.

