



COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION

SAFETY INFORMATION PACKET

## ACQUAINTANCE RAPE: CAN I REDUCE MY RISK?

Sexual assault is any sexual activity that is forced. Sexual assault is an act of control, aggression and anger. The force used against you can be physical such as hitting, being held against your will, or being threatened by a weapon. It also can be emotional or psychological, such as being pressured into sex through guilt, being given money or gifts in exchange for sex, or being taken advantage of while you are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

More than 90 percent of sexual assault victims are assaulted by someone they know, such as a family member, friend, date, acquaintance, or neighbor. Both men and women, boys and girls can be victims of sexual assault.

Most sexual assaults are planned in advance with the offender seeking an opportunity to find someone who may be vulnerable to his/her tactics. Offenders seek victims who they believe are easy targets. There is no guaranteed way to prevent sexual assault, but we can identify tips for decreasing our vulnerability to offenders. The following are some suggestions to deter a sex offender:

- Be careful of your use of alcohol and drugs. Vulnerability increases when one is intoxicated or high.
- Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say "no" to any unwanted sexual contact.
- Communicate your limits firmly and directly. You have the right to expect your limits to be respected.
- Listen to your feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.
- Don't be afraid to "make waves" if you feel threatened. If you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will don't hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation. Better a few minutes of social awkwardness or embarrassment than the trauma of a sexual assault.
- Attend large parties with friends you can trust. Agree to "look out" for one another. Try to leave with a group rather than alone or with someone you don't know well.
- When starting to date a new acquaintance have the first few dates in a public place. Avoid becoming isolated with someone you don't know well.
- For the first several dates, insist on paying your own way or taking turns with "treating". Sometimes offenders use the "you owe me" line to try to guilt someone into sex.
- As a relationship may progress, avoid becoming physically, emotionally or socially isolated from friends and family. Assaults within on-going relationships do happen.

Even if we take precautions or steps to make ourselves less vulnerable, there is no guarantee that we can prevent a sexual assault, remember:

- Sexual assault is never the victim's fault.
- Victims do not cause their assaults.
- Offenders are responsible for their actions.

If you or someone you know is a victim of a sexual assault, there are people and programs who can help.

## SEX OFFENDER FACTS

- ◆ SEX OFFENDERS COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE AND FROM ALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS. THEY CAN BE MALE OR FEMALE, RICH OR POOR, EMPLOYED OR UNEMPLOYED, RELIGIOUS OR NON-RELIGIOUS, HIGHLY EDUCATED OR UNEDUCATED OR FROM ANY RACE.
- ◆ THE SUSPECT IS KNOWN TO THE VICTIM IN **OVER 90 %** OF SEX CRIMES. IN OTHER WORDS, THE SUSPECT IS A PARENT, RELATIVE, CARETAKER, NEIGHBOR, CO-WORKER, OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER.
- ◆ STRANGERS CAN BE "GOOD GUYS" OR "BAD GUYS". (THIS INCLUDES FEMALES.) PERSONS KNOWN TO YOU OR YOUR CHILDREN CAN BE "GOOD GUYS" OR "BAD GUYS". (AGAIN, THIS INCLUDES FEMALES.)
- ◆ SIXTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF ADULTS CONVICTED OF FELONY SEX CRIMES IN FISCAL YEAR 1995 HAD NO PRIOR CRIMINAL HISTORY.
- ◆ MANY PEDOPHILES SEEK OUT MOTHERS OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF VICTIMIZING THEIR CHILDREN. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING WAS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM A SEX OFFENDER'S TREATMENT SUMMARY:

***"During treatment..(Name).. disclosed that he has been sexually assaulting children, males and females since he was 8 or 9 years old. His victims range in age from 2 to 10 years old. He groomed his victims by keeping candy, popsicles, and children's toys in his apartment. He raised birds to attract children; took children to the park, beach and Mc Donald's; and used children he was baby-sitting to gain access to other victims. He groomed the parents by offering free baby-sitting; helping out by providing transportation and money "when they needed it". He disclosed he gains access by targeting single parents with a large number of children who are not good housekeepers. In his words, "a mother who doesn't give a damn."***

- ◆ MOST SEX OFFENDERS "GROOM" THEIR VICTIMS PRIOR TO ANY SEXUAL ABUSE. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING WAS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM A SEX OFFENDER'S TREATMENT SUMMARY:

***"He played the part of (Name) 's best friend by being around her as much as possible and telling her she could always come to him if she needed someone to talk to. He helped (Name) do her homework and her household chores. He played games with (Name) and took her to the park. Other places he took her were the malls, toy stores, clothing stores, and swimming pools. He gave (Name) money and bought her things, such as new toys, board games, a bike and expensive clothing. When he was baby-sitting (Name), he would tell her she could do anything she wanted. He told (Name) if she would let him do what he wanted to her, he would buy her things. To keep her quiet, he told (Name) that if her mother found out about what "we" were doing, she would be mad and it would be all (Name)'s fault."***

## CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF A PEDOPHILE

When most people imagine a child molester, they picture some ugly, old man in a trench coat coaxing children to come to him in exchange for some candy. They don't picture uncle Joe or aunt Lorraine; the neighbor next door or the friendly parishioner; another family member or trusted co-worker. They don't think of mom or dad, or in the case of single parents, their significant other. This *misconception* has been effectively dispelled through information obtained in thousands of child sexual abuse investigations over the years. **Child molesters come from all walks of life and from all socioeconomic groups. They can be male or female, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, religious or non-religious or from any race.**

Through numerous case studies, the Department of Justice has developed characteristics and behavioral indicators of a pedophile. They are as follows:

1. Is most often an adult male.
2. Is usually married.
3. Works in a wide range of occupations, from unskilled laborer to corporate executive.
4. Relates better to children than adults.
5. Socializes with few adults unless they are pedophiles.
6. Usually prefers children in a specific age group.
7. Usually prefers either males or females, but may be bi-sexual.
8. May seek employment or volunteer with programs involving children of the age of his preference.
9. Pursues children for sexual purposes.
10. Frequently photographs or collects photographs of his victims, either dressed, nude, or in sexually explicit acts.
11. Collects child erotica and child-adult pornography:
  - a: To lower the inhibitions of victims.
  - b: To fantasize when no potential victim is available.
  - c: To relive his sexual activities.
  - d: To justify his activities. (The depiction of others engaged in these acts legitimizes them in the pedophile's mind.)
  - e: To blackmail victims to keep them from telling.
12. May possess and furnish narcotics to his victims to lower their inhibitions.
13. Is usually intelligent enough to recognize that he has a personal problem and understand the severity of it.
14. May go to great lengths to conceal his illegal activity.
15. Often rationalizes his illicit activities, emphasizing his positive impact upon the victim and repressing feelings about the harm he has done.
16. Often portrays the child as the aggressor. This usually occurs after the child realizes that by withholding "sexual favors" the child will obtain what he or she desires, such as new toys, clothing or trips.
17. Talks about children in the same manner as one would talk about an adult lover or spouse.
18. Often was a child molestation victim and frequently seeks out children at the age or stage of physical development at which he was molested.
19. Often seeks out publications and organizations that support his sexual beliefs and practices.
20. Usually corresponds with other pedophiles and exchanges child pornography and erotica as proof of involvement.

21. Is usually non-violent and has few problems with the law (pedophiles are frequently respected community members).

The **widespread misconception** that child molestation consists solely of children being seized from the street and forcibly molested couldn't be further from the truth. Although these incidents do occur, the vast majority of child molesters are adults who seduce children through subtle intimidation and persuasion and are known to the child.

The **incestuous or intrafamilial molester** is usually an adult male (father, stepfather, grandfather or live-in boyfriend of the mother) who molests the child or children. Although physical abuse may occur, the molestation is usually secretive and is accomplished through mental duress and threats - that the child would be removed from the family if she did not succumb to his wishes, that she would be blamed for hurting the family if the offender is arrested, or that a sibling would be sexually abused if the victim did not consent. The molestation occurs over an extended period of time, occasionally into the victim's adulthood. Through intimidation, the child is made to feel responsible for the molestation and for keeping the acts secret. This secret is normally kept between the offender and the victim, or within the immediate family.

The **stranger molester** will use force or fear to molest children. As the term implies, the child does not know the molester. This type of molestation is usually reported promptly to the police because the trauma to the child is readily apparent.

The **single-parent family** is particularly vulnerable to the pedophile; the parent usually has a full-time job and is attempting to fulfill the role of both parents, as well as run the household. In many cases the parent is unable to provide the psychological support the child needs. These situations may contribute to the success of the child molester **who can and will** provide the caring attention, however superficial, that may be lacking at home. Of course, domestic problems in intact families also can make children vulnerable to the pedophile. It should be noted as well, many pedophiles seek out mothers of single-parent families for the purpose of victimizing their children.

The single most effective means of protecting your child is **communication** with your child. They have to feel comfortable discussing sensitive matters with you. If they don't feel they can talk with you about their true feelings or that they will be "put down" for it, then you can't expect they will tell you when they are put in an uncomfortable situation by a child molester. Most child molesters are "masters of communication" with children.

Teach your children that they should not be asked to touch anyone in the bathing suit areas of their body or allow anyone to touch them in those areas. Teach them types of **situations** to avoid. It's not good enough to tell a child to avoid strangers. **Most child molestation's are committed by someone known to or related to the child.**

The Seattle Police Department handout "Personal Safety For Children" and the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children pamphlet "Child Protection", give you excellent examples of basic safety rules for children. For a list of **free** child safety pamphlets, call the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children **toll free** at **1-800-843-5678**, or you can access them through their web site at **<http://www.missingkids.com>**.

Some of the material in this handout came from the law enforcement training manual entitled "Child Abuse and Exploitation". This manual is put out by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

# HOW TO AVOID RAPE

## At Home —

- When moving into a new home or apartment, change all locks on outside doors. This practice prevents former tenants from entering with old keys.
- Install a chain lock inside your door. Be sure that the chain is short enough to prevent an intruder from removing it and that the screws are long enough to prevent a sudden violent push from pulling them out.
- Install a peephole. A peephole device is easy to install and inexpensive.
- Install a lock on every window that a burglar or intruder can reach.
- Consider installing an electronic security system in your home. Many types of burglar alarms are listed in the yellow pages.
- Consider asking the telephone company not to list your street address in the phone book. This will enable your friends to find your number and prevent unwanted visitors.
- Do not leave keys in a "secret" hiding place (i.e., under the mat, on a windowsill, in the mailbox). Much safer, leave your keys with a trusted neighbor.
- Keep house keys on a different key ring from car keys. Many successful burglars conspire with parking lot attendants to have keys duplicated while a car is parked.
- Keep your draperies and shades drawn at night, especially if your home is easily accessible from the street. If a potential assailant sees you alone, he's more likely to enter the house.
- Keep lights on in at least two rooms.
- Have doorways and driveways lit at night.
- If you return home to find doors or windows open or you suspect a burglary, *don't* go into the house — call the police from a neighbor's house.

## Telephone Calls —

- Never give personal information to a caller you don't know.
- If a phone call is becoming obscene or frightening, hang up immediately.
- If the caller persists, blow a whistle loudly into the mouthpiece.
- Never give a caller a reason to suspect you are alone in the house.
- Advise the caller that this call is being monitored.
- If threatening or obscene calls persist, report them immediately to the phone company.

## On The Street —

- Be aware that walking alone at night may be hazardous to your health.
- If you are being followed or you see a man or group further down the street who makes you feel uncomfortable, cross the street, walk in another **direction, or ask other people walking if you may walk a short distance with them.**
- Walk near the curb, in the middle of the street, and away from buildings, trees, and shrubbery, which can hide potential assailants.
- When walking near the car to your home or apartment, carry your house keys in your hand, not in your purse. Don't stand in a doorway and fumble in your purse or pocket for your keys. Have them ready to use.

- Be aware, at all times, of your surroundings. Look over your shoulder and behind you several times while walking. Better to look and/or feel foolish or suspicious than to be raped.
- Don't give friendly answers to men who attempt to strike up conversations on the street. Walk briskly and with purpose — keep walking.
- Use a grocery cart when you have many packages. You make a good mark when your arms are full.
- Always dress so that movement is not restricted and your clothing does not make you more vulnerable.
- Try to vary your routine routes of travel. Most rapists have been found to study their victim's habitual patterns.
- While waiting for public transportation, keep your back against a wall (or pole) so that you cannot be surprised from behind.
- Know your routes. Notice lighting, alleys, abandoned buildings, and street people.
- Pick out places that you consider safer, places where you can either make a stand or reassure yourself that you are not being followed or watched (i.e., lit porches, bus stops, stores, etc.).
- If you are going somewhere in a city with which you aren't familiar, check a map, know where you are going. Looking lost increases vulnerability.

#### **Visitors, Repairmen, Deliverymen —**

- When alone and answering a door ring, call out "I'll take it, Bill," or "I'll go, Tom." Make sure the call is loud and clear. Never reveal either in person or on the phone that you are alone.
- Never let small children answer the door.
- Repairmen who represent utility companies carry identification cards. If a man has none, get his name and telephone the company he claims to represent before you admit him.
- A large number of attacks occur because women allow unidentified strangers into their homes. Never say to a repairman, "Come in," then check his identification card. Make him wait outside the door until you are satisfied it is safe to let him enter.
- Many assailants gain entry into homes or apartments by pretending to be visitors, repairmen, or deliverymen. You can avoid such deceptions by installing a peephole. If you don't have a peephole, make sure your safety chain is hooked before you open your door.
- Ask any deliveryman to leave packages outside the door. Wait until you are sure he's gone away, then go for the packages.

#### **In A Car —**

- Picking up hitchhikers is never safe, but if you feel compelled to do so, pick up a woman alone. You may be saving a woman from a rapist.
- When alone in a car, keep the doors and windows locked and up. If you must keep a window open, make sure it is the one nearest to you so that you can raise it quickly if necessary. Keep windows open only enough to admit breathing space — but not to admit a hand.
- Do not travel on deserted roads, especially at night. Better to drive on a well-lit highway — even though it may take a little longer to reach your destination.

- When driving, don't let your gas indicator fall below the quarter full mark. If you feel you are being followed, head for the nearest police station, gas station, shopping center, or home with lights.
- Do not enter a car without checking to see if someone is hiding on the rear seat or on the rear floor. Do not enter a car in which a man or group is leaning or loafing. Turn around immediately and go back to safety.
- If you carry a small weapon on the front seat next to you, be sure you know how to use it and that it is easily accessible. Weapons carried in glove compartments or under seats may mean nothing if you must hastily search or struggle for them. Road flares are very good weapons to keep in the car.
- If you run out of gas or have an accident, lock all doors and stay inside the car. Accept no rides from men — wait for the police. If a man wants to help, ask him to send the repair truck or police from the next exit or nearest phone.
- If you see an accident or stranded motorist, before stopping, consider that it might be a trap set by a rapist. It is probably more helpful to hurry to report it from the nearest phone.
- Parking lots and garages are particularly dangerous. When parking your car, note your position carefully, so that you can go directly to it. When returning to your car, look around. If you notice anything or anyone suspicious, alert the attendant.

#### **Hitchhiking Is Never Safe —**

- Try to arrange rides with friends or take public transportation whenever possible. No one deserves to be raped. You did nothing wrong. The rapist, not you, is responsible for the attack. You are the victim of a violent crime.
- Follow your intuition — trust your feelings. If you feel that a situation is not right, move out of the situation.
- Be aware of your surroundings. In social situations, including dates, be alert to places and situations that make you vulnerable.
- Develop an attitude of confidence to be a survivor.
- If you are attacked, consider resisting. Resisting may allow you the opportunity to get away. Not resisting is no guarantee that you will not be injured. Keep in mind that every situation is different and only you can decide whether or not it is appropriate to resist.

#### **What You Should Do If You Are Raped —**

- Do nothing that will change your appearance or the appearance of the place of the rape. Do not take a bath or shower or douche. Don't even wash your hands.
- Get medical attention to check for venereal disease, internal injuries, or the possibility of pregnancy. Take a change of clothes with you to the hospital.
- Report the crime to the police. Reporting the crime does not mean that you must press charges. But it does allow the police to keep accurate records for future reference and will provide the necessary evidence and information needed if you later decide to press charges.
- As soon as possible, write as much as you can remember about your attack and the circumstances.



## HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT TOUCHING SAFETY WITHOUT SCARING THEM

Parents, teachers and other caring adults often teach children guidelines for bike, water and street safety. Children do not become fearful of bicycles, swimming pools and crosswalks as a result of this instruction. Touching safety can be approached in the same straightforward matter-of-fact manner. Ideas for talking with children about touching safety follow:

- 1. Include touching safety rules when you talk about other types of safety.**  
"If you are touched by an someone in a way that you don't feel right about, tell me or \_\_\_\_\_ about it. We will believe you and help you."
- 2. Repeat simple safety guidelines often.**  
"We don't keep secrets about touching in our family"  
"Grownups don't usually need to touch children in private areas unless it's for health or hygiene reasons"  
"Never go away with or get in a car with a grown up you don't know, no matter what they tell you"  
"Trust your inner-voice (instincts, judgment) if it's telling you something doesn't seem right"
- 3. Establish your own set of family rules.**  
"Do not let others know if you are home alone"  
"Your opinion is important when we try a new babysitter or have a problem with a babysitter"  
"You can say "no" to anyone who wants you to break one of our family rules. I will back you up"  
"You can ride in a car with \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ but not with anyone else without asking first"
- 4. Play "what ifs" to practice decision-making.**  
"What if you were playing (someplace you aren't suppose to play) and a man or woman tried to make you get in their car?"  
"What if you and I got separated at the shopping mall"  
"What if someone we know really well touched you in a confusing way and asked you to keep it a secret"  
"What if a person offered you money (or something you really wanted) if you would break our family rules"
- 5. Help children develop assertiveness skills. Practice responding verbally:**  
"I don't tell people that"  
"I don't want to be tickled. Could we take a walk instead"  
"Leave me alone, I'll tell"  
"I'm not allowed to do that"  
"No"

### Practice responding non-verbally:

Taking someone's hand off them, running away, moving away, standing tall, shoulders back, looking person in the eye, shaking head.

**6. Teach Children that adults aren't always right**

"Most adults touch children in appropriate ways, but some adults are mixed up and don't make good decisions about touching children"

"If you aren't sure about something a grownup says or does, ask me to help explain it"

**7. Teach children that there are certain things that adults, older children and babysitters shouldn't do**

"No one has the right to put their hand down your pants, force you to touch them, touch your body if you say "no" or touch your private body parts"

**8. Help children develop a dignified vocabulary for parts of the body.**

Children with no words other than slang or family names might be embarrassed to ask for help with a touching problem. The correct terms for body parts "breast, penis, vagina" are dignified and enable children to express themselves clearly. A Possible substitute for medical terminology might be "private body parts" or "the parts of a body that are covered by underwear or a bathing suit".

**9. Teach children that touching safety rules apply all the time**

They just don't apply with strangers or with babysitters. We do our children a great disservice when we talk to them only about "stranger danger," since over 90 percent of all sex crimes are committed by someone known to the victim. Teaching children that touching safety rules apply ALL THE TIME, whether it's by a stranger or someone they know, is important in safety instruction. Remember: It's uncommon for a child to be sexually abused by a stranger.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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#### **What is "Community Notification" all about?**

An individual who has been convicted of a sex offense, kidnapping offense, or another related offense, has been released from a prison, work release, or other secure facility, and is living within the city limits of Seattle. The purpose of this information is to provide you and your loved ones with additional strategies for crime prevention and detection. Strategies you may not have thought about if you were unaware of the background of this offender, or had no knowledge of his/her release, or place of residence. Washington statutes provide the opportunity for the Seattle Police Department to give you the information you need, so that you may make good decisions with regard to the safety of yourself and those around you.

An offender who appears on one of the official, state sex offender websites has been convicted of a crime that requires registration with the county sheriff's office where he or she resides; in this case King County. By registering, law enforcement is informed of any changes in an offender's residence. This information is regularly updated and maintained on a computer system by the Washington State Patrol, King County Police and the Seattle Police Department Sex Offender Detail.

#### **Why is this offender moving into my community?**

An offender whose bulletin appears on one of the official, state sex offender websites has committed a crime that has been reported to a police agency. That agency investigated the report and arrested the individual. The local prosecuting attorney for that jurisdiction determined the criminal statutes violated. They charged the suspect with those violations and went to court to convict this individual of those crimes.

The offender was either found guilty by a judge or jury, or as happens in most of these cases, pled guilty to the offenses with which he or she was charged. When an offender is released from prison, he or she usually returns to the same area of residence from which they lived when the crime was committed. Most offenders are released to the jurisdiction that originally gained the conviction. Sometimes offenders are released to another jurisdiction because they may have family support there, additional treatment to complete at a program located in the other jurisdiction, or they may have found a job in the area that will lead to a productive lifestyle.

#### **If this offender is so dangerous, why are you letting him out in the first place?**

Washington is one of the states that has specific sentence lengths for each crime. These sentence lengths are called presumptive sentences and are determined by the Washington State Legislature (this is called determinate sentencing). When the offender was sentenced to prison by the judge, the length of required prison time was previously established for that offense by the Washington State Legislature, and it applies to anyone convicted of the same offense.

Someone with no previous offenses has a shorter sentence, than someone who has been in trouble before. A person who has a previous offense against a person, will be

sentenced to a longer term than someone whose previous offense was a property crime. These possibilities are included in the sentencing guidelines.

On some occasions, judges don't follow the guidelines. This is called an exceptional sentence. When a judge has a compelling reason to depart from the sentencing guidelines, he or she must submit the reasons for that departure into the court record.

At some point in time, the offender will have served the sentence required by law and must be released. Once the sentence is finished, neither the Seattle Police Department, or the court has the power to tell the offender where to live or work. Information provided by one of the official state sex offender websites is supplied to inform you of the location the offender has chosen to reside, and/or those other places the offender is most likely to conduct legitimate activities.

### **Don't most of these offenders get sentenced to long prison terms and just get right back out again?**

This is simply not true. Washington sex offenders are sentenced to more time, and serve more of that time in prison, than in almost any other state. In Washington, sex offenders must serve at least 80% of their sentence in prison, and then they serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, in a situation called "community supervision." They are supervised by a community corrections officer, and are required to report regularly. In addition, they must fulfill other requirements of the conditions of release, in order to stay out of prison. These requirements may include, but are not limited to: no consumption of alcohol, regular attendance at AA or other help groups, holding a steady job, having no contact with the victim(s) or witnesses, no contact with minor children, and they must comply with sex offender registration.

### **Don't these offenders just go to prison and sit around all day?**

When an offender goes to prison, a number of important activities are initiated to ensure that the offender gets the kind of controls and support required. These activities are based on the type of offense for which they have been convicted and help identify the type of criminal behavior an offender committed in the past (if any).

Many offenders have problems with chemical dependency. They will have an opportunity to participate in chemical dependency treatment. Other offenders are found to be illiterate, and are offered basic education programs. Those convicted of a sex offense, or another crime that is related to a sex offense, will generally be offered an opportunity to participate in sex offender treatment.

All inmates must either work or participate in treatment. They do not sit around all day and do nothing. If they do not participate in their assigned treatment, they can be forced to do more time in prison. If they refuse to work, they will be disciplined. Discipline usually entails being segregated from the other prisoners in solitary confinement.

All of these activities are designed to provide offenders, who want to avoid future problems with the law, an opportunity to learn the things they need to know in order to stay out of trouble. The most important reason the offenders are encouraged to participate in these programs, is to reduce the likelihood they will fall into the same patterns of past behaviors; hopefully, preventing them from committing another crime and victimizing another person.

**Why are you only telling me about this offender and not all of the other people who get out of prison?**

The Community Protection Act of 1990 only involves those offenders who have violated the criminal sexual statutes, the kidnapping statutes, or other statutes with a finding of sexual motivation.

The End of Sentence Review Board utilizes a sex offender screening tool that was developed by clinical psychologists who are experts in the field of sex offender recidivism in the United States and Canada. Based on past behaviors demonstrated by convicted sex offenders, this screening tool determines whether an individual poses a high risk to the public when they are released. This does not necessarily mean that they will commit a new crime, but that they are part of a group of persons who are most likely to. A majority of the individuals in this group will not commit another crime; however, the experts have determined that some of these persons have a greater likelihood of future offenses than do others.

There is a group of items in this screening tool that receive scores, assigned by the End of Sentence Review Board, before offenders are released from prison. The total of these scores determines which "risk" category the offender will be assigned. This process is called "actuarial risk prediction." This means that there is some statistical basis for public concern about the future behavior of people identified as part of this group.

**Doesn't this mean that it is just a matter of time before the offender commits another crime?**

The actuarial risk prediction process is much like the process insurance companies use when determining the insurance costs of a particular driver. If the driver has speeding tickets, they will pose a greater risk to be in a traffic accident than drivers who have not; thus, they will pay more for their insurance. Those drivers who have had a DUI conviction pay more for their insurance because they are more likely to get in an accident than speeders. When someone gets enough tickets, they have to buy "risk" insurance because they have the greatest risk of being involved in an accident. Not all speeders or persons convicted of driving while intoxicated get into accidents. In fact, most of them will not even have accidents; it's just that they are statistically more likely to have an accident than are other drivers.

Similarly, not all offenders with a high score on the risk assessment tool, or even most of them, will commit another crime. They are just more likely to commit another crime than an offender with a low score. Individuals who score really high on this screening process are referred to the county prosecutor for review for civil commitment after they are released from prison.

There is no known way that anyone can accurately predict the future behavior of another person. The process of screening individuals in prison places them into risk categories. This doesn't mean that the End of Sentence Review Board has devised a way to predict future behavior. Rather, it means that there is a scientific way to evaluate an offender's past behaviors by comparing their past behaviors with other individuals who have been out of prison for awhile. This shows how offenders might act once they are released.

**Now that I know a sex offender lives in my neighborhood, what should I do differently to protect my family and myself?**

Open communication between parents and children are vital components of family safety. In general terms, tell your children that this person has hurt someone before. Explain to them that they should stay away from this individual. Review safety tips, and be aware of common lures. Remember, the purpose behind community notification is to reduce the chances of future victimization of persons by this offender. The information gained through this notification should assist you and your family in avoiding situations that allow for easy access to victims. Don't harass your neighbor. An offender put in a stressful state is more likely to re-offend. We need to help them succeed. We all win with fewer victims.

**What do I tell my children about this offender?**

Avoid scary details. You may know more than your children need to know. Keep information general, as it may protect them from others who would try to harm them as well. Explain the importance of avoiding dangerous situations in general, rather than trying to teach them how to be safe from just the one person you know about. **Over 90% of all sex crimes are committed by someone known to the victim;** many of those incidents are committed by family members or someone who is NOT a stranger to the victim.

Some basics:

**DON'T** accept a ride from the offender.

**DON'T** go into the home or yard of the offender.

**TELL** your parents if this person offers you toys, money, or gifts.

**TRY** to use the buddy system when children play outdoors.

**CALL 911** if your parents aren't home and this offender approaches you.

**Are you going to tell us if the offender moves out of this neighborhood, so we don't have to worry anymore?**

No. The information shared about sex offenders is basic safety information that we should all be aware of. There are many sex offenders in Washington, as well as in every other state. It would serve no purpose to have people relax, or not follow safety measures because the sex offender they knew about moved from the neighborhood. Sex offenders, like anyone else, establish friendships and business relationships in the area where they are living. There is no reason to believe they would give up these relationships just because they have moved to another part of town or county.

It is a fact of life that individuals who commit sex offenses against children live among us. They are co-workers, neighbors, parishioners, and respected members of the community. And they all have families. They are our parents, our brothers and sisters, our children. What this means is that we all have an opportunity to protect children from sex offenders.

Yet the greatest difficulty we face as a society that is trying to deal with the problem of sexual offending is that we have trouble reconciling our views about sex offenders in the abstract with our attitudes toward sex offenders whom we know. Virtually all citizens believe that sexual abuse of children is a heinous crime that should be punished severely. Legislatures pass increasingly harsh laws and the community demands that child molesters receive long sentences. Ex-offenders are widely believed to represent a continuing danger to children. When it comes to someone we know being convicted, or even being accused, of a sex offense, all of a sudden it becomes less clear how he or she should be treated.

Sex offenders are often able to garner the support of the community or family members. Sometimes, even when there is no doubt about guilt or in cases where the offender has confessed, supporters will assert that the accused could not possibly have committed the crimes or does not fit the profile. Family and friends will "go to bat" on behalf of certain offenders. It will be claimed that this offender is not like other sex offenders and is not a danger to the community, that the crimes were not so serious or were a case of bad judgment, that he or she does not deserve the punishment the law dictates. The fact that children have been sexually assaulted and potentially harmed is disregarded, overlooked, or minimized.

The reason that people react this way is because sex offenders are more like us than they are not like us in many cases. The majority of child molesters are not antisocial and deviant in all aspects of their lives. They may be quite ordinary in most ways. They may even have positive attributes and qualities. It is very hard to integrate the public persona of sex offenders with the image or idea of them being sexual with children. This dissonance is often resolved in favor of the less disturbing interpretation that people are more or less what they seem, not that they have sordid, secret lives.

The other big problem that we have in protecting children from sex offenders is that we expect the government to do it for us. When there is a re-offense, the police, the prosecutors, the judges, the community corrections officers, and the law are blamed. It is clear that these authorities do have responsibility and that they sometimes fail in carrying out their obligations. But when it comes right down to it, it is those who know and interact with sex offenders who can do the most to prevent sex offenders from re-offending.

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# INTERNET RESOURCES

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

Resources include pamphlets on:

*[A Child Is Missing](#)*

*[A Family Resource Guide](#)*

*[Blog Beware](#)*

*[Family Abduction](#)*

*[Is this your CHILD?](#)*

*[Just in Case...Childcare Provider](#)*

*[Just in Case...Daycare](#)*

*[Just in Case...Runaway](#)*

*[Know the Rules...Abduction and Kidnapping](#)*

*[Know the Rules...For Children Who Are Home Alone](#)*

*[Know the Rules...General Tips Parents and Guardians](#)*

*[Personal Safety for Children](#)*

*[When Your Child is Missing](#)*

Netsmartz to teach your child Internet safety.

One of the best child safety sites on the Internet.

## SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY WEB SITES

National: <http://www.nsopw.gov>

Washington: <http://www.icrimewatch.net/washington.php>

King County: <http://www.metrokc.gov/SexOffender/>