



GATEWAY  
REGION YMCA

# SEE THE WARNINGS OF CHILD ABUSE

If something is wrong, you may SEE a sudden change in your child's behavior, or you may hear unusual comments. If you SEE or hear these things, follow up. Find a relaxed time to talk with your child, asking them about your concerns.

## Child Abuse Warning Signs

- Frequent or unexplained bruises or injury
- Unkempt or malnourished appearance
- Bathing frequently; obsessive cleanliness
- Disturbed sleeping or eating patterns
- Inability to stay awake or concentrate for extended periods
- Abrupt changes in behavior, anxiety, clinging, aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Sudden, dramatic changes in activities or personality
- Sexually transmitted diseases and infections
- Fear of a certain person (this can include other minors) or place
- Discomfort with physical contact
- Fearfulness or depression
- Aggression toward adults or other children
- Abuse of other children
- Nervousness around adults
- Low self esteem
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his/her age
- Watch for these things in adults that may signify potential abuse. Remember, offenders seek access, privacy & control.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE IF AN ADULT IS A DANGER TO A CHILD:

Offenders often operate through a process called "grooming," the deliberate process of gradually initiating and maintaining a sexual relationship with victims in secrecy. Grooming allows offenders to slowly overcome boundaries long before sexual abuse occurs. On the surface, grooming a child can look like a close relationship between the offending adult, the targeted child and (potentially) the child's caregivers. The grooming process is often misleading because the offender may be well-known or highly regarded in the community. As a result, it's easy to trust them.

## Red Flag Behaviors

### Physical Boundary Violations

- Tickling
- Horseplay
- Hugging
- Massaging
- Wrestling
- Going overboard with affection

### Behavioral Boundary Violations

Offenders manipulate kids into doing things they wouldn't otherwise do, such as:

- Sneaking around by saying they will be in one place when actually they are in another
- Keep secrets with the offender
- Look at pornography
- Use drugs or alcohol

### Emotional Boundary Violations

- Making them feel important, cared about and understood
- Spending too much time with them
- Choosing favorites
- Giving gifts
- Acting possessive
- Sending excessive or inappropriate text messages
- Pretending to be the child's friend on social networking sites
- Sharing personal information to make the child feel like they have a special relationship
- Promising extra coaching time, a college scholarship, a place on a national team or even an Olympic Team spot!

Any gut feeling regarding the way an adult is interacting with minors.

For additional  
Child Abuse  
Prevention  
Resources:

Gateway Region YMCA main office: 314-436-1177  
[Illinois Department of Child and Family Services](#)  
[Missouri Department of Social Services](#)

[Darkness to Light: End Child Sexual Abuse](#)  
[The CDC: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](#)