

# Campus Safety CONFERENCE CSC

AT EDspaces  
Designing the Future of Education  
Pittsburgh, PA | November 3-5, 2021

## Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Schools

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[CampusSafetyConference.com](https://CampusSafetyConference.com)

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# About Me

- Former National VP Child Safety Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Past president – National Coalition to Prevent CSA
- Contributor: CDC standards for preventing CSA
- Contributor: MD school guideline to prevent CSA
- Co-Author: “Extreme Violence”



**R.L. NICHOLS**  
& ASSOCIATES

*Youth Protection Consultants*



# About the Session

## Attendees Will:

- Learn how to protect students from the immediate and lifelong harm that results from sexual abuse.
- Learn how to protect staff and students from false accusations or acting impulsively and ruining their lives.
- Learn how you, as school leaders, can protect the public trust and community goodwill you need to carry out your mission.

# Exercise

***Pair up and each person will ask the other person:***

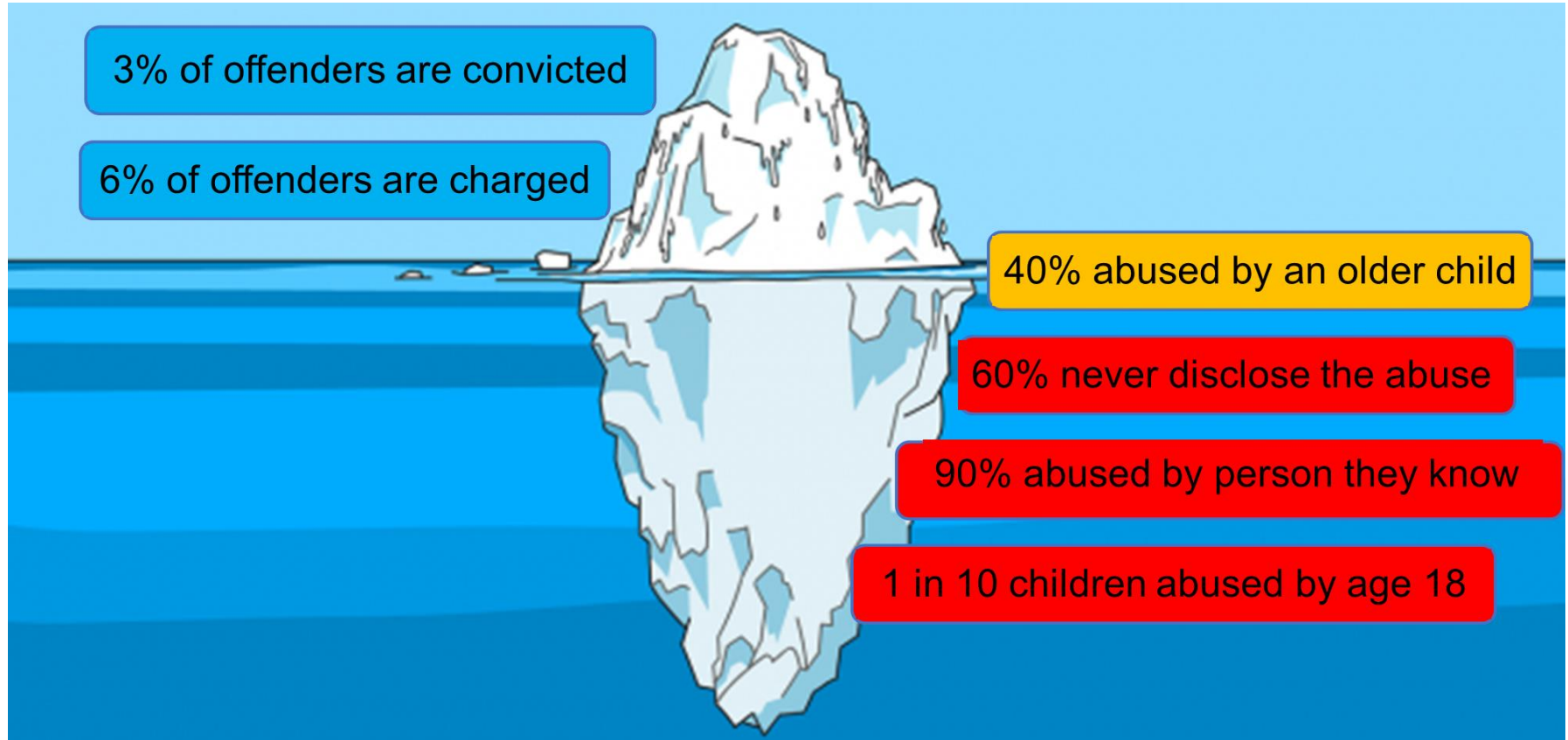
1. If someone close to you was a victim of child sexual abuse?  
And if so, did it change your thinking about the problem?
2. Did your school have a child sex abuse incident?  
And if so, what did your school change afterward?

***Report what the other person told you.***





# The Problem is Bigger than We Think



# Understanding the Problem



# Schools Face Many Safety Concerns

## **Sexual Behaviors**

- Pedophiles
- Adult-teen romances
- Child-on-child sex abuse
- Staff using pornography
- Known sex offenders

## **Security & Emergencies**

- Fires, severe weather, etc.
- Neighborhood violence
- Armed intruder
- Abductions & missing children
- Vandalism & break-ins

## **Aggressive Behaviors**

- Fighting
- Verbal/social bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- Carrying weapons
- Refuse to follow rules

## **Accidental Injuries & Fatalities**

- Transportation accidents
- Swimming accidents
- Sports concussions
- Common slips & falls
- Freak accidents

# Safety Competes with Security

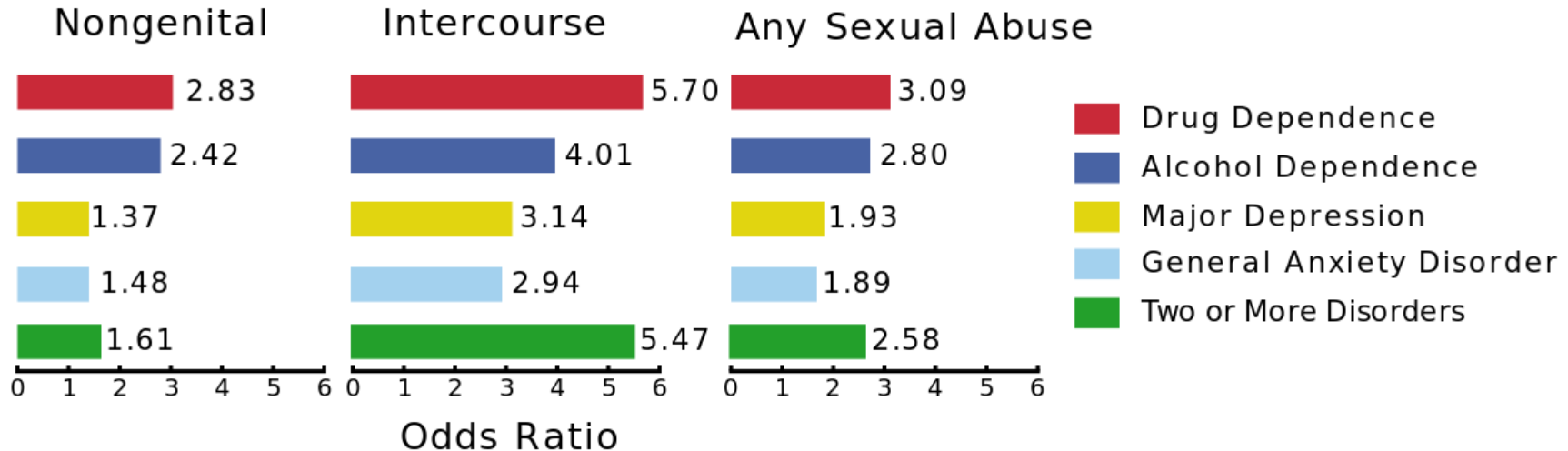


During school years 2011 to 2015 about **17,000 official reports of sexual assault of students at school were reported to police** while during that same period **89 people were killed at school shootings.**

Sources: McDowell (2017) &  
School Shooting Database

# The Effects Often Appear Later

## Association of Childhood Sex Abuse With Drug Dependence And Psychiatric Disorders in Adult Women

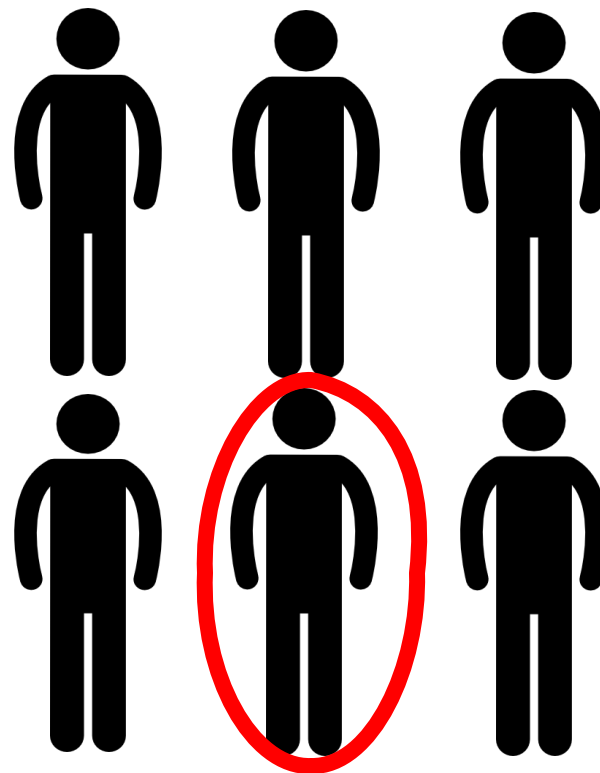


# Many Problematic Adults

## Studies indicate:

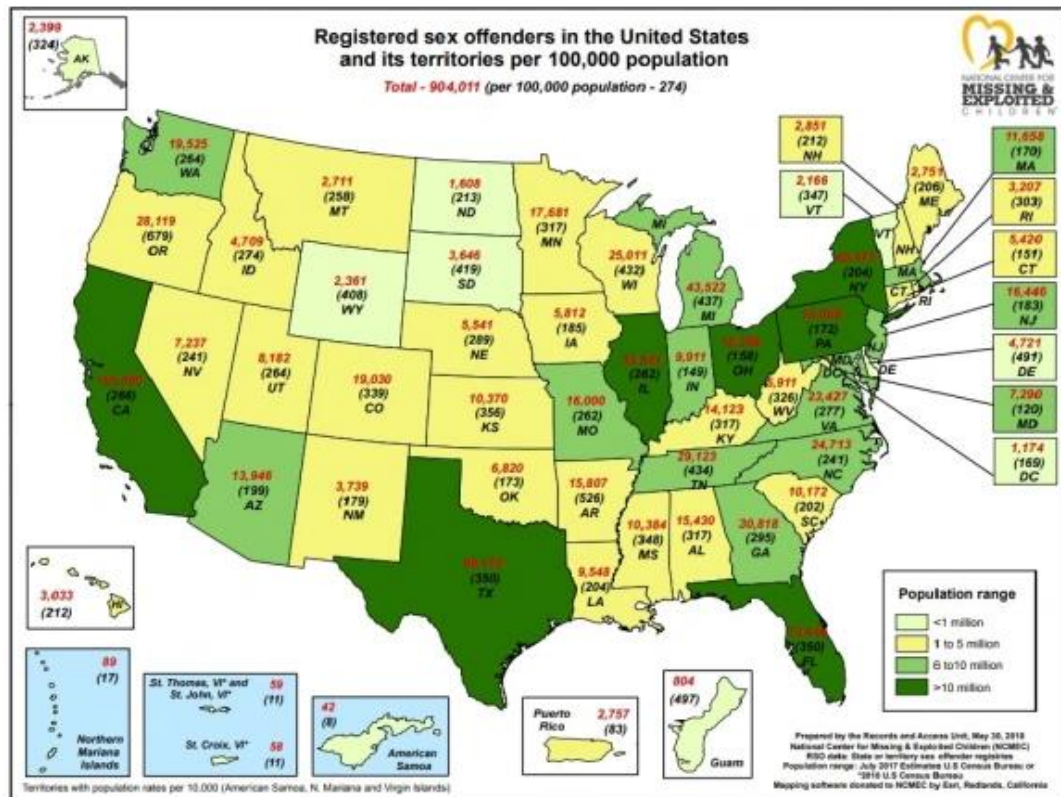
- Approx. **5%** of adult males have a sex drive toward minors.
- Approx. **10%** of adult males *would* have sex with a minor *if they knew they would not be caught.*

**1 in 6 males are problematic for possible sexual interest children.**

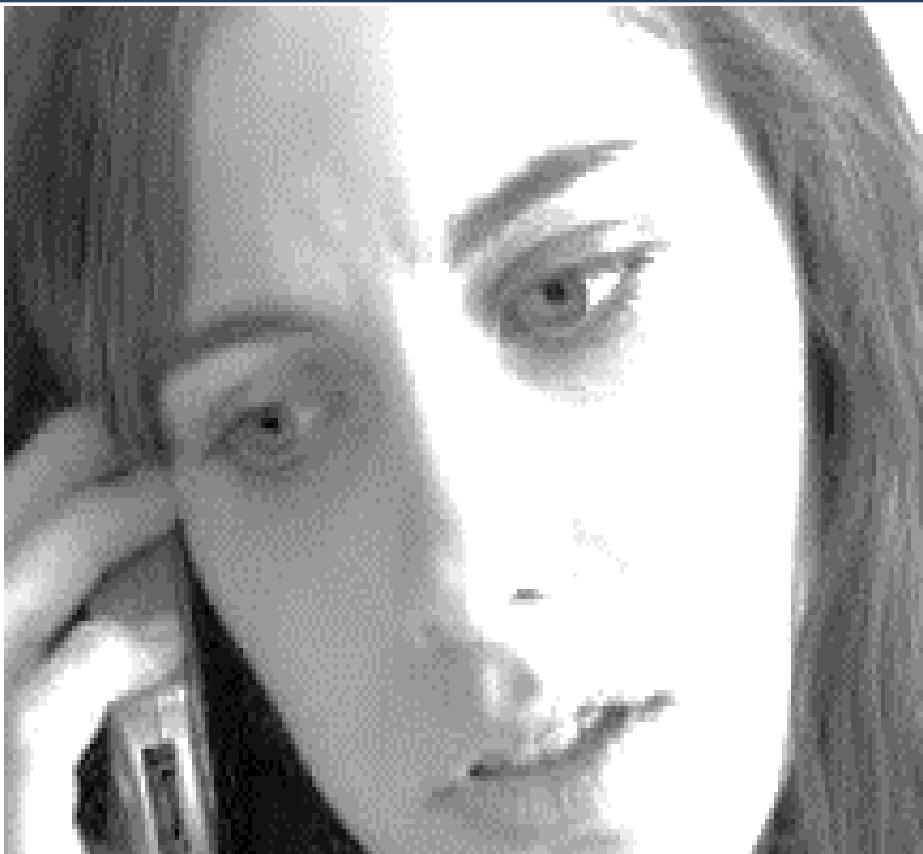


# Few Offenders Have a Criminal Record

- Only 1 in 20 potential adult sex offenders have a criminal record that would exclude them from working at school.
- At least 40% of offenders are minors.



# Bystanders Are Naturally Hesitant



## **Approximate Reporting Rates for Crime:**

**99%** - Car theft

**80%** - Burglary, mugging or robbery

**60%** - Physical violence

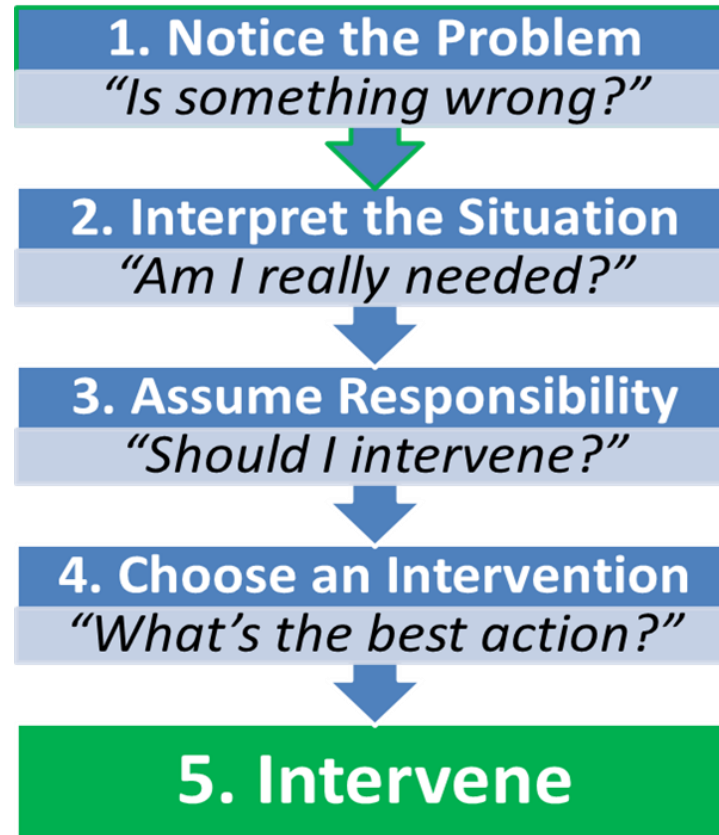
**40%** - Threats, stalking

**06%** - Sexual assaults or harassment

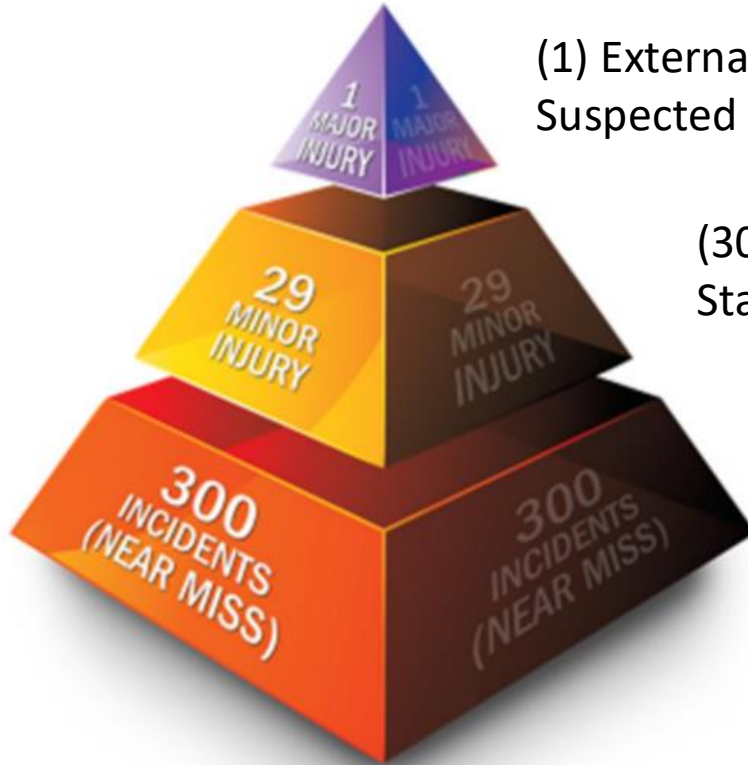
**Mandatory reporting is necessary but not a primary prevention strategy.**



# Bystander Decision-Making Process



# Missing the Forest for the Trees

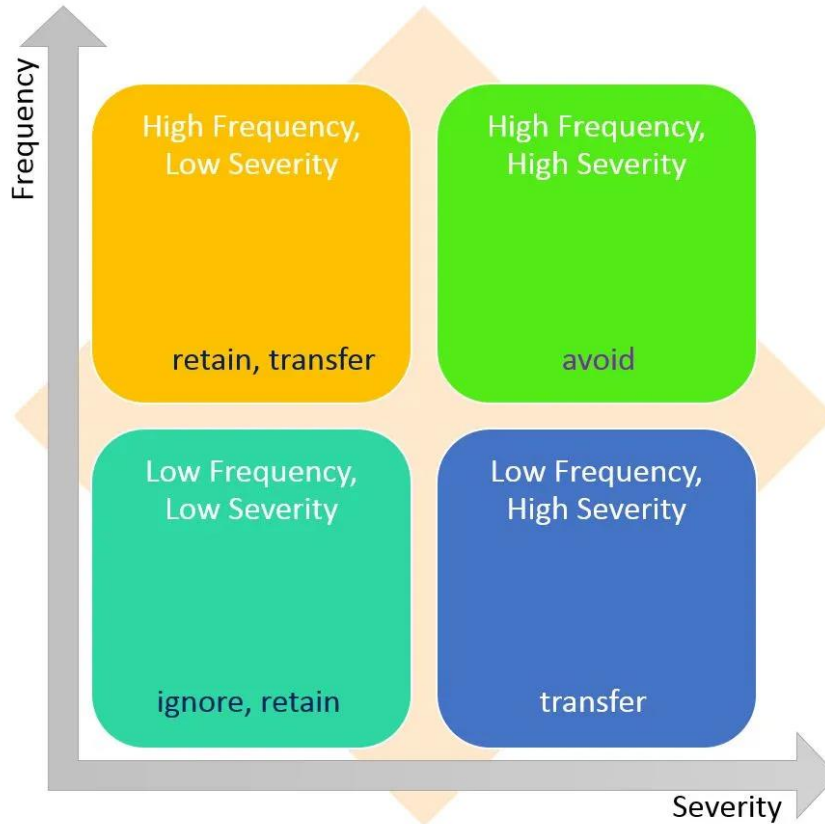


(1) External Reports:  
Suspected or alleged abuse

(30) Internal Reports:  
Staff/student policy violations

(300) Unreported policy violations  
or problematic behaviors.

# CSA Risk Is Often Miscalculated



# Some Regions Are Riskier than Others

## Child abuse victim rate per 1,000 children

NOTE: 2013 state-by-state and national data has yet to be released

STATE	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2000
National	9.2	9.2	9.3	9.3	9.5	12.2
California	8.2	8.6	8.3	7.8	8.3	14.0
Delaware	11.4	12.0	10.3	9.7	10.8	9.3
Hawaii	4.6	4.4	5.7	6.9	6.3	11.9
Illinois	9.0	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.6	9.7
Minnesota	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.7	4.4	9.2
Missouri	3.3	4.1	3.7	3.7	3.7	5.4
New Jersey	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.2
New York	16.0	16.9	17.8	17.5	16.4	15.8
North Carolina	10.1	10.0	9.6	9.8	10.0	18.4
Ohio	11.0	11.4	11.5	11.5	12.2	18.7
Pennsylvania	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.7

The Center for Children's Justice ([www.C4CJ.org](http://www.C4CJ.org))

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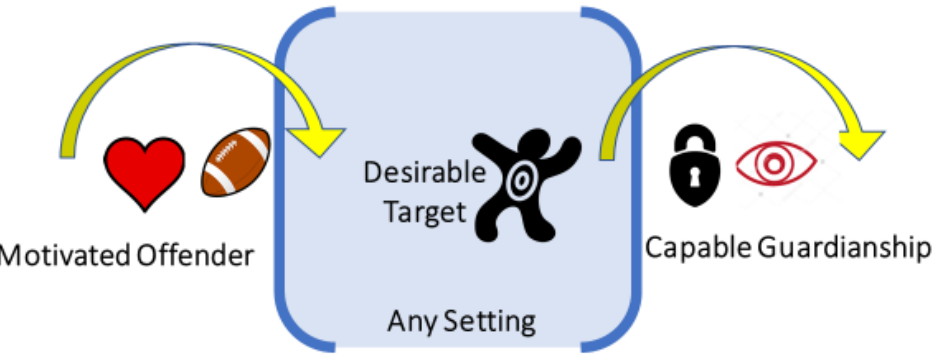
# Typical Adult Attitudes

1. Doesn't want to believe that anyone – especially a person they **like, respect & rely on** could be a child molester.
2. Doesn't understand the **predictable methods** employed by child molesters.
3. Doesn't know how to **intervene** when they sense an inappropriate relationship involving a minor.

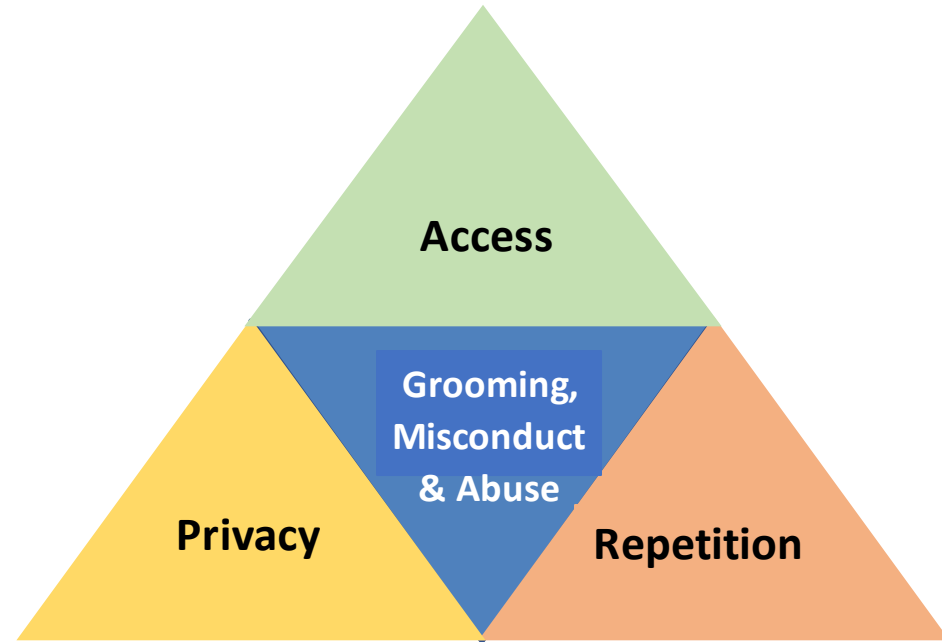
# Modus Operandi



*Crime is most affected by  
choices and behavior patterns*



"Routine Activity Theory"



Child Sex Abuse Theory

# Typical Adult Predator Pattern

## Trolling and Testing

Identify Potential Communities/Targets  
Seek schools with lax policies  
Look for parents who need help  
Look for students with unmet emotional needs

## Grooming

Polishes image with organization & family  
Desensitizes victim to touch  
May provide substances for the victim

## Exploiting and Lulling

Maintains relationship & treats as “our” secret  
Becomes aggressive when questioned by school, parents, others  
Defends conduct as caring more about child than school or parents

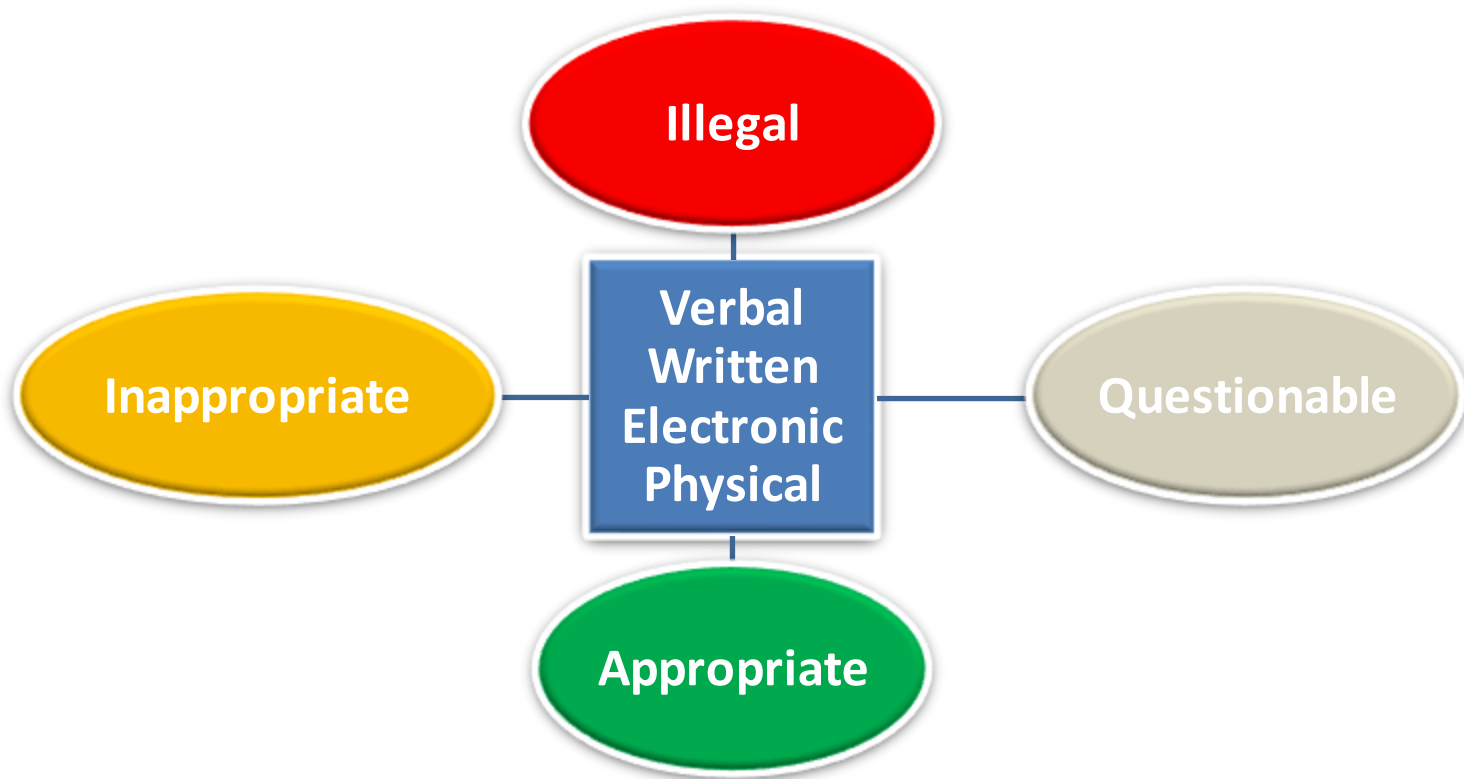
***Note: With juvenile abusers, the actions are more impulsive & opportunity driven.***

# Organizational Strategies

## 6 Components for Organizational Prevention



# Policies – The Good, The Bad, The Gray



# Policy Opportunities

## Mapping Out the “Gray Areas”

**After-school  
interactions  
with  
students &  
their  
families**  
(parental  
cooperation)

**Boundaries  
to use when  
traveling out  
of town for  
sports or  
other  
occasions**  
(room rules)

**When  
teachers  
must have  
close  
physical  
contact with  
students**  
(sports,  
music, voice)

**Attention  
that may  
cross  
boundaries**  
(favoritism)

**Digital  
media  
interactions**  
(district vs  
private)

**Involvement  
with  
students 18  
or older**

Source: REMS-TA training (Preventing Adult Sexual Misconduct in Schools)



# Screening Red Flags

## Applications:

- Gaps in dates
- Conflicting, incorrect, omitted or incomplete information
- Unstable work history
- Vague reasons for leaving previous jobs
- Over-qualified for the position
- Moving to a lesser-paid job
- Patterns of problems with authority
- Unwilling to use supervisors as references.

# Screening Red Flags

## Interviews:

- “Have you ever been accused of harming or abusing a child?”
- “Would it be OK for a caring adult to be sexual with a minor if the adult deeply cared about the minor?”
- “Should children be trusted when they disclose that they have been sexually abused?”

## Reference Checks:

- Reluctant references
- Did not know applicant well
- Deceptive responses
- Differs from applicant’s account
- Not informed they would be used as a reference.

# Reporting Violations & Concerns

Organizations with  
**FRAUD AWARENESS TRAINING**  
for employees were  
**more likely** to gather tips through



**FORMAL  
REPORTING  
MECHANISMS**

**56%** of tips with training

**37%** of tips without training



**43%**

OF SCHEMES WERE DETECTED BY TIP,  
and half of those tips  
came from employees

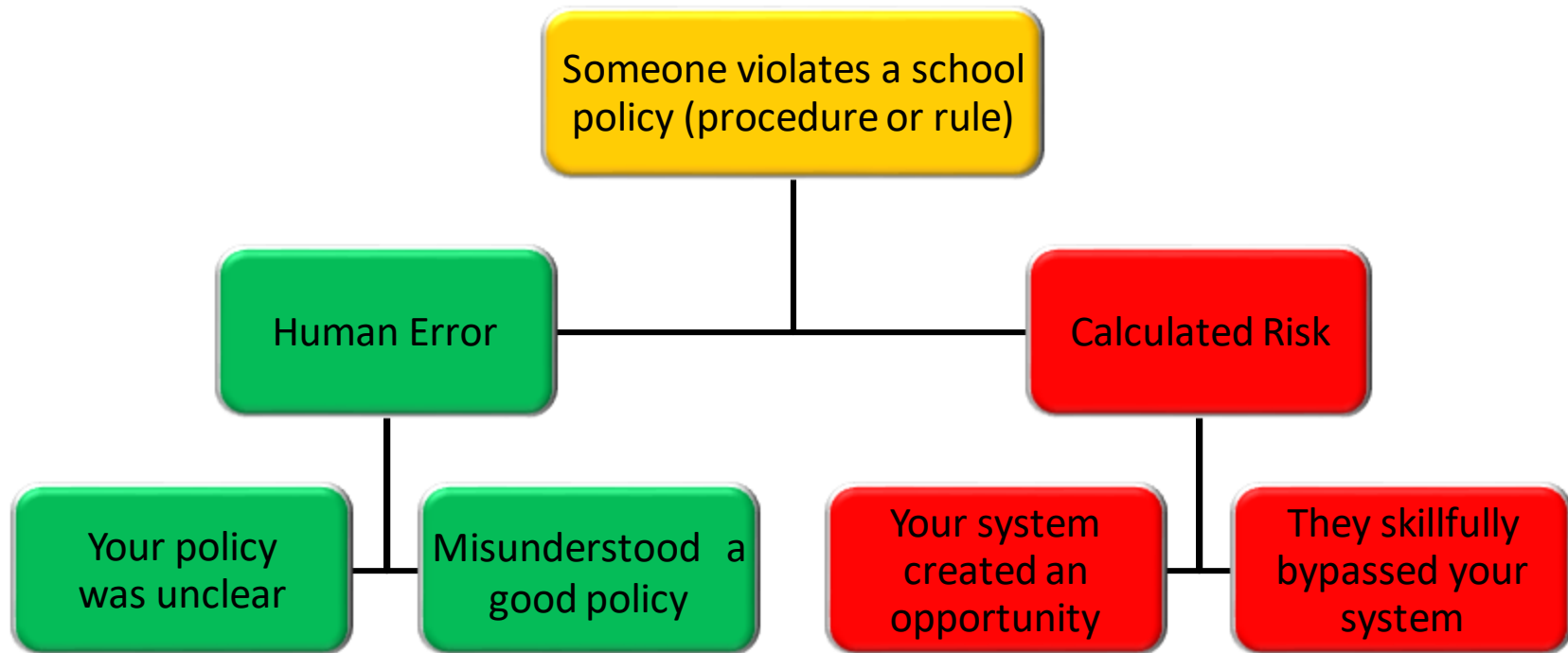


**TELEPHONE HOTLINE** and **EMAIL**  
were each used by  
whistleblowers in

**33%**  
**OF CASES**



# Analyzing Violations/Concerns



# Tracking Violations/Concerns

## Suggested data to collect for any possible CSA incident:

- Type of policy violations, misconduct or abuse
- Date of incident & location
- Who reported it & when
- Disciplinary action taken & when
- Nature of victim, aggressor & witnesses
- Enablers
  - Blind spots
  - Unlocked rooms
  - Poor supervision
- Drugs, alcohol or pornography involved
- Transportation or travel related



# Behavioral vs Situational Factors

## **Behavioral Factors are Weak Predictors**

- **Adult aggressors**
  - 95% have no criminal history
  - No clear profile
  - Grooming is deceptive by nature
- **Juvenile aggressors**
  - Mostly opportunity driven
- **Victims**
  - Often cooperate with aggressors
  - Seldom disclose abuse to adults
  - Often disclose to a friend

## **Situational Factors are Strong Predictors**

- **Criminal theory:** offenders pick settings where observation, reporting and intervention (guardianship) are weakest.
- **Factors** that weaken guardianship:
  - Building & grounds design
  - Distracted staff
  - Routine activities (e.g., gathering areas)
  - Policy & procedures do not address gray areas



# Typical Higher-Risk Locations in Schools

## Possible Abusers:

- Staff
- Older Students
- Same Age Students
- Contractors
- Volunteers

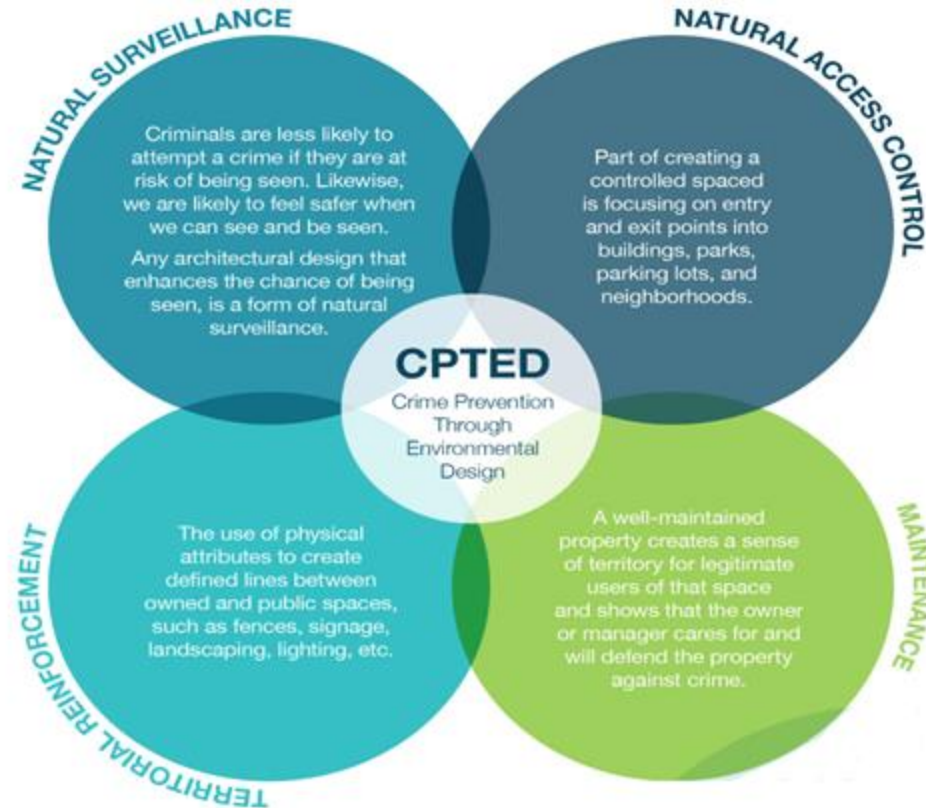
## Likely Locations:

- Wooded areas around building
- Unlit exterior areas
- Remote parking areas
- Under the bleachers
- Baseball dugouts
- Swimming pools
- Gymnasiums
- Wrestling rooms
- Weight rooms
- Gym equipment rooms
- Locker rooms

- Group Restrooms
- Dressing rooms
- Drama & behind Stage areas
- Vo-Tech Shops
- Art studios
- Storage rooms
- Stairwells
- Large corridors
- Little or Unused, unlocked rooms
- Non-supervised Rest Areas in Health Suites

# Modify Buildings & Grounds (Natural)

- **Natural Surveillance** facilitates supervision, helps victims anticipate threats, increases bystander involvement.
- **Natural Access Control** adds protective layers to high-risk areas
- **Territorial Reinforcement** changes ambiguous areas and supports bystander actions by posting rules and expectations.
- **Maintenance and Management** raises behavioral expectations



# Modify Buildings & Grounds (Electronic)

***Make it hard for a sexual predator (adult or student) to have complete privacy with a student on your premises:***

- **Cameras** at gathering areas, locker room/restroom entries & stairwells
- **Motion detection lights** in locker rooms, restrooms & storage rooms
- **Card readers** for any room where a staff and child could be alone
- **Automated notifications** to send a “pop-up” alert when certain combination of events occur (who + when + where are out of place)
- **Public display monitors** to show bystanders who is in a stairwell
- **Audio recognition system** in group restrooms to detect a struggle or cry for help.

# Setting the Tone

# Have to Do vs Want to Do

## Safety Operations

- Compliance/oversight
- Policies/procedures
- Standards
- Insurance coverage
- Background checks
- Checklists/inspections
- Trainings/drills
- Measurement

## Safety Culture

- Awareness
- Values
- Skills/practice/capacity
- Passionate torch-bearer
- Self-motivation
- Confident actions
- Peer pressure
- Modeling behaviors

# Seven Actions that Make a Difference

# **#1 Accept: The Problem Is Not an Outlier**

Always been here, but people wouldn't talk about it

# **#2 Approach the Problem Strategically**

Prevention means people changing their behavior



## **#3 Enlist an Internal Advocate**

Someone everyone respects must carry the torch

## **#4 Re-Think Staff & Volunteer Screening**

Identify candidates who do not respect boundaries

## **#5 Use Policies to Supplement Vague Laws**

Policies can uniquely address issues not covered in  
your state's reporting laws

## **#6 Create Multiple Ways to Report**

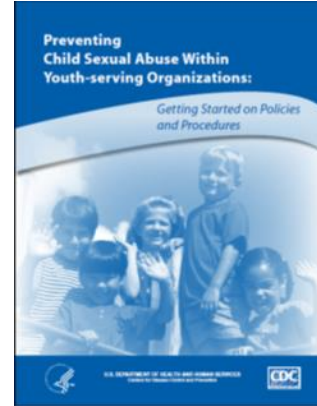
Make it easy for people to report concerns, complaints  
policy violations and allegations about anyone.

## **#7 Track Leading, not Lagging Indicators**

Focus on successful resolution of the minor incidents  
that are known to lead to major incidents

# References & Useful Resources

- Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started with Policies & Procedures (2007)  
[www.CDC.org](http://www.CDC.org)
- Addressing & Preventing Adult Sexual Misconduct in School Settings (online training) Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools,  
[www.rems.ed.gov](http://www.rems.ed.gov)
- Stewards of Children Training (online training) Darkness to Light Foundation,  
[www.D2L.org](http://www.D2L.org)



# The Frog & The Scorpion



# The North Wind & The Sun





## Reminders

- Access to the presentation
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