

Warning Signs of Suspicious Adult Behaviors: A Closer Look at Potential Offender Characteristics

In order to protect children in our various ministries, it is important that caring adults have a healthy suspicion of any individuals that may interact with youth. This document is designed to provide you with information that may indicate behaviors of adults which are not well-suited to working or volunteering with youth. While there is no single, all-encompassing profile of a child sexual offender, numerous studies have revealed certain common characteristics shared by sexual offenders¹(these common characteristics are listed below this paragraph). It is important to know that **possessing one or more of these behaviors does not indicate that an adult is a sexual offender**; rather, a concerned adult should make note of these signs. Some concerning behaviors may include individuals that:

- Seek positions of trust.
- Behave as if the rules do not apply to them.
- Lack empathy, but feign interest to gain power or control.
- Are characterized by low self-esteem, but exhibit high levels of confidence.
- Refuse to take responsibility for actions and blame others or circumstances for failures.
- Fear adult world; surround themselves with children.
- Act like children or engage often in childish behaviors.
- Display inappropriate dependence on a spouse, parents or institutions.
- Have an absence of any meaningful peer relationships.
- Have a shallow or dependent relationship (a marriage of "convenience").
- Have unstable employment and/or residence history.
- Have been sexually abused as children (although most victims of child abuse do not become abusers).
- Have experienced poor social adjustment in childhood/adolescence and/or poor adjustment to home life in childhood/adolescence.
- Exhibit a lack of respect towards the personal boundaries of others.
- Engage in frequent touching of children (i.e., wrestling, tickling, etc.)
- Use sexuality and aggression in behavior and language in front of children (i.e., "dirty" jokes, bad words, etc.).
- Display deviant sexual behavior and attitudes.
- Allow children to engage in questionable/illegal behaviors (i.e., smoking, drugs, etc.), which parents would prohibit.

¹ Sources are located on the back of this document.

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- Possess a criminal record which includes crimes against children or other crimes (including misdemeanors).
- Encourage children to keep secrets, particularly from parents.
- Prefer to interact with vulnerable or emotionally/physically dependent children.
- Offer items/gifts to specific children (typically without parental permission).

If any member of diocesan personnel believes that any form of child abuse is occurring, that person is obligated to report any and all concerns to Child Protective Services (CPS). Local contact information for Child Protective Services is located on the diocesan website

(<http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection/reporting.php>).

Sources:

Baker, Leigh M. "10 Most Common Characteristics of a Predator." *Protecting Your Children from Sexual Predators*. New York, New York: Macmillan, 2002.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. "Red Flags for Children and Youth Workers." *Staff Screening Tool Kit*. Third Ed. <<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/r3300-staff-screening-tool-kit.pdf>> (accessed on 7 Jun. 2012).

Lanning, Kenneth V. *Child Molesters: A Behavioral Analysis* (electronic version). Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1992.

The Polly Klaas Foundation. "Dangerous Adult Behaviors." <www.pollyklaas.org> (accessed on 7 Jun. 2012).