



What is Grooming? Information Sheet

Most child abuse is the result of months and sometimes years of a perpetrator preparing a child and the adults around them. Child sex offenders identify target children and spend time and effort developing trusting and caring relationships with them. The act of grooming a child for sexual abuse is rarely obvious, but there are signs that can identify grooming behaviour that will allow us to intervene and prevent abuse.

What is grooming?

Grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Behaviour should only be seen as 'grooming' where there is evidence of a **pattern of conduct** that is consistent with grooming the alleged victim for sexual activity and that there is no other reasonable explanation for it.

Grooming is where an adult communicates, by word or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming behavior can also be targeted towards the parent, carer or other person who has a supervisory role towards the child with the intention of garnering the carer's trust to facilitate access to the child.

What sort of behaviour may constitute grooming?

The types of behaviours that may lead to such a conclusion include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Persuading a child or group of children that they have a 'special' relationship, for example by:
 - Spending inappropriate special time with a child.
 - Inappropriately giving gifts.
 - Inappropriately showing special favours to one child but not to other children.
 - Inappropriately allowing the child to overstep rules.
 - Asking the child to keep this relationship to themselves.
- Testing boundaries, for example by:
 - Undressing in front of a child.
 - Encouraging inappropriate physical contact (even where it is not overtly sexual).
 - Talking about sex.
 - 'Accidental' intimate touching.
- Inappropriately extending a relationship outside of work (except where it may be appropriate - for example, where there was a pre-existing friendship with the child's family or as part of normal social interactions in the community).
- Inappropriate personal communication (including emails, telephone calls, text messaging, social media and web forums) that explores sexual feelings or intimate personal feelings with a child.

- An adult requesting that a child keep any aspect of their relationship secret or using tactics to keep any aspect of the relationship secret, would generally increase the likelihood that grooming is occurring.

What should I do if I believe a child is being groomed?

Most states and territories, and the Commonwealth, have legislation that targets and makes illegal grooming behaviour. Effectively, the act of grooming is illegal and should be reported to police.

If you have a reasonable belief that a child is being groomed or that an adult poses a risk of committing a sexual offence against a child, you should immediately consult with your direct line manager, your Divisional/Regional Commander and/or the Territorial Professional Standards Group. All reasonable beliefs must be reported to the police.

If you are concerned about the behaviour of an individual, don't keep this information to yourself.

Talk to a manager, Corps Officer or Corps leader or contact the Territorial Professional Standards Unit on (03) 8878 4814 or email professionalstandards@aus.salvationarmy.org

Sources:

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<http://www.casac.org.au/site%20docs/Grooming.pdf>

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http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/5620/PU_CP_02_11_Reportable_Conduct_v3.pdf

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