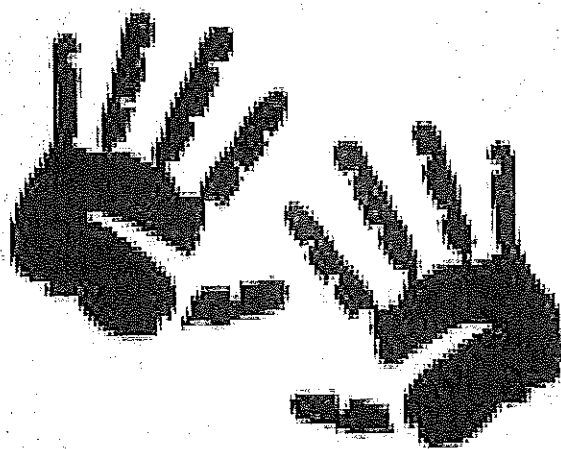


Ensuring Safer Camps

Assessing the Risk Levels of Questionable Counselors

David K. Popham

Revised 2007



A predator deflection guide for camp directors

Preface

The need to nurture and prize children and youth is one of the underlying motivations for the outdoor ministry events of the Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ (RMC-UCC). Bringing children and youth together at camp is a way of actively assisting them to come into the presence of Christ. Yet, bringing children and youth together at camp also provides an opportunity for more sinister forces to be at work.

What image comes to mind with mention of the word "predator"?

I enjoy the television stalwart *Law and Order*, therefore, I think of perverts, creeps and monsters: people lurking in dark allies or loitering across the street from my home. They are unkempt, unclean, and unsuitable for the neighborhood I live in. Yet, *Stranger Danger* makes up a small portion of all child abuse cases.

The truth is most predators are already in our homes. A solid 85% of victims and their families know the predator before the act of abuse. Predators are loyal friends, good workers, and often responsible members of the community. The only difference between you and a child molester is that the molester chooses to sexually abuse children. Remove this one aspect and the predator is the nice neighbor, minister, father, uncle, friend, school teacher, coach, camp counselor, etc.

By thinking primarily in terms of *Stranger Danger* (the situation where the predator and the victim do not know each other before the abuse) we create a false sense of security. One in every three to four girls and one in every six to seven boys will be sexually molested. If sexual abuse was an ailment the word "epidemic" would be used in conjunction with such numbers. On average a predator targeting girls will molest 50 victims before being caught. Those targeting boys will molest an astounding 150 victims before apprehension.

This is a *deflection* resource guide, designed to empower you to intervene and head off any predators that may scheme and wheedle their way into our camps. The RMC-UCC is committed to creating camps that are as safe as possible for children, youth, and adults. In order to achieve this goal you are asked to read this guide and then sign the last page indicating you have a working knowledge of the contents. **Our directors are the front-line defense against sexual exploitation at camp.**

The premise of this manual is: predator detection fails; predator deflection works. I am indebted to three researchers in the field for this understanding. Carla van Dam, *Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offenders* probes the failure of society to provide adequate protection of children by focusing on training children to tell after abuse has taken place. Anna C. Slater, *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders, Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children* in which the last three chapters insightfully explore the failure of detection as the primary defense against predators. And Leigh Baker, *Protecting Your Children from Sexual Predators* which not only provides a concise and practical guide to the issues, but also provides the model of empowerment used throughout this resource guide. I suspect that some of her writing has been unconsciously plagiarized below, although I have tried to give her credit when quoting her directly.

You are about to encounter three camp counselors involved in questionable behavior. While they are placed into specific camps for imaginative purposes, this is not meant to imply these camps are any more vulnerable than the others. All of our camps, by the nature of camping dynamics, possess some level of risk for predator presence.

Thank you for taking the time to become familiar with this information. The RMC-UCC has a good track record and this resource guide is intended to strengthen your knowledge of predators in order to ensure safer camps for all those involved.

Predators in Our Midst

Thomas is a well liked young adult. He comes with recommendations that "he'll be an asset to your camping program." You are glad he is on your Explorer Music staff. He has an easy ability to be on the same wave length as the kids in camp and connects easily with them. One morning you run over to his cabin to discuss a change in the day's schedule. When you arrive Thomas is in one of the boys' rooms where laughter and hooting is coming from. You call out to Thomas and see him emerge from the room wrapped only in a towel which exposes the upper half of his buttocks. When questioned about his attire he explains that he was heading out of the shower when the boys called him into their room. He apologizes for the inappropriate drape of the towel, commenting that he forgets he is with younger boys and not in a college dorm.

Mike is a Pioneer Camp counselor for the second year running. He is sensitive and connects easily with those kids who hold back from the rest of the crowd; that is why you recruited him for a second year. His presence and help with the marginal kids aids your camp in being a fun and formative week for all those who have come. You were impressed that Mike stayed in touch with one of the more troubled girls from last year's camp. However, you are a bit put out as Mike seems to be unable to hear directions about proper boundaries. More than once you remind him that it is inappropriate for girls to sit on his lap. Yet Mike continues with these activities, saying, "I just can't say no to a kid who wants to play, besides, it's just harmless fun anyway."

Peg is a bubbly personality that radiates sunshine with every smile. She is bright, quick on her feet, and is able to get the over-ambitious boys of MADD Camp to pay attention. As the week proceeds you notice that Peg tends to hang around one male camper in particular. Peg and the adolescent boy are typically the last to exit their cabin and tend to bring up the rear of the camp when moving from one location to another. You even notice the couple holding hands. When asked, Peg explains that nothing is going on. It is just a simple crush the boy has on her, and, while she admits to some puppy-love feelings, she knows that nothing can come of it at camp.

You just encountered three scenarios that as a director of a children/youth summer camp makes you feel icky. A questionable counselor is on your staff. How do you assess the risk levels presented by such counselors? By the time you finish this resource guide you will be able to weigh the threats posed by questionable counselors, and know how to intervene and deflect their advances should they indeed be a predator.

Experts in the field categorize environments for predators as high or low risk. Summer camps are high risk environments for a series of reasons including:

- a concentration of children and youth
- the constant need for volunteers or low-paid staff

- anonymity of a person's background
- naiveté of camp directors to understand the subtle signs of grooming behaviors

The same experts also deem churches to be high risk environments due to attitudes actively fostered in religious communities including:

- thinking the best of every person in the church
- the practice of easy forgiveness
- over confidence in deterrent through detection
- ministers and lay leaders participation in the invulnerable myth: "that happens elsewhere, but not here"

You are the director of a church camp which combines the demands of camping events with the attitudes of the church. It cannot be stated strongly enough that predators know these weaknesses and seek to exploit them in order to gain access to children and youth. The policies and protocols of the RMC-UCC seek to limit situations where exploitation can occur.

Screening and Detection

The La Foret Conference and Retreat Center is a licensed daycare facility with the state of Colorado. The forms and screening process used by the RMC-UCC must meet or exceed the regulations and laws of Colorado regarding the recruitment of camp volunteers.

In camps that do not run more than 14 days Colorado requires three written references, a health statement signed by a health official, a statement signed by the volunteer acknowledging whether he or she has ever been convicted of or charged with any felony, child abuse, or unlawful sexual conduct, and a statement of perjury by the volunteer claiming he or she has not presented false information. Whether or not by design it appears that Colorado regulations assume:

- predators are truthful and never lie
- predators will admit to when they are lying
- in a camp less than two weeks long there is not enough time for exploitation to occur

The RMC-UCC splits the written references between a pastor/officer of the church the volunteer is active in, a person who has known the volunteer at least five years, and a general friend. Beginning in 2006 the RMC-UCC also requires all camp staff personnel to submit information for a criminal and child abuse background check. The RMC-UCC system assumes:

- the ministers/officers of our churches know their parishioners in depth
- that references will speak up when there is a potential problem with the volunteer
- that volunteers have the best interest of camp in mind
- that all volunteers will accurately and truthfully reveal information about their background

Again, it cannot be stated strongly enough that predators seek out these weaknesses and exploit them in order to gain access to children and youth. While the vast majority of those staffing our summer camps are genuinely interested in contributing to the success of our camps, you as the director cannot assume that, having passed the screening process, your staff is absent of a predator.

The screening process is built around the attempt to detect and identify predators. Obviously if we can detect the predator we can keep her or him out of camp. Yet statistics show that detection is the least effective way to deter predators. Stranger Danger makes up less than 15% of all child exploitation. (This figure is somewhat debated given the rise in internet predation. However, I agree with those who understand internet predation as grooming since contact in the virtual world proceeds contact in the real world.) A solid 85% of victims and their families know and trust the predator before the sexual abuse occurs. Obviously if these parents and guardians could detect the predator's presence they would never allow him or her past the front door.

You, however, are already prepared. You also are knowledgeable about the inadequacy of relying on detection as the gate that will stop predators. You understand that predators scheme to get access to children and will lie and falsify documents in order to get what they want. Armed with this information you understand that the actions of Thomas, Mike, and Peg are serious and need to be addressed instead of ignored. You will go a long way in deflecting predators by letting your camp staff know that you are a conscientious and watchful director.

Distorted Thinking

Since predators operate outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior they have had to develop a way of thinking which justifies their behaviors to themselves and to the rest of us. Leigh Baker writes, "Thought distortions are the building blocks that the predator uses to construct a reality in which he or she can deny, justify, minimize, and perpetuate abusive acts."

Denial is distorted thinking that allows predators to avoid accepting full responsibility for their actions. Denial ranges from the stark, "The child is lying, I didn't do anything;" to confusion over the situation, "I didn't know she was underage;" to obscuring the impact of the abuse, "It was only experimentation." Whatever form it may take denial is the distorted thinking that allows the predator to remain innocent even though she or he is involved in acts of exploitation and abuse.

Excuse making and blaming is distorted thinking through which predators rationalize their actions. "I was abused as a child," or "My wife refuses to have sex with me," or "The child seduced me, and I'm the true victim here," or "I'm teaching the child appropriate sexual loving." In blaming someone else for their actions, predators avoid taking personal responsibility for their exploitation of others. Predators will blame the victims, their parents, and "the System." Be prepared, for if a blaming predator should be on staff, once uncovered, he or she will lash out as being victimized and you the victimizer - an audacious charge for any person in the United Church of Christ!

Objectification is distorted thinking that strips the victim of human qualities and reduces the victim to a "thing" to be used for sexual gratification. Pedophiles are people who seek out children for the purpose of sexual relationships. However, not all predators are pedophiles; rather they are situational molesters who use children to "discharge

frustration and anger and to quell their sense of isolation, loneliness, and sexual tension," (Leigh Baker). In short, predators view others as a means to meet their needs. Through distorted thinking they lower others to a subordinate status and transfer negative characteristics to them by way of name-calling, physical dominance and other controlling behaviors. The stereotypical fraternity jock remark of "tapping that bitch's booty" is a good example of pairing down a person to an object of gratification.

Projection is a powerful form of distorted thinking that allows significant discrepancies to be created between predators' perceptions of their own actions and the stance of other people. By projecting thoughts, feelings, ideas and impulses onto others, predators believe the other person is feeling what the predator is experiencing. "She wanted it too," is the way a predator projects her or his own unacceptable behavior onto an innocent child.

Above the law is distorted thinking that allows predators to side-step the rules of acceptable behavior. "I know children shouldn't sit in my lap, but I didn't think that applied all the time," or "I know what we covered in orientation, but I don't see where that counts here." By excluding themselves from the norms of society predators understand themselves to be special and beyond parameters the rest of us live by.

One or more of the above thought distortions are used by all sexual predators, but now you will not be fooled. You know that excuses and that avoiding taking personal responsibility for actions is just distorted thinking on the predator's part. Awareness of these thought patterns allows you to see beyond the smokescreen and intervene and deflect before abuse occurs.

Take the knowledge you are now armed with and reflect upon the actions of Thomas, Mike, and Peg.

Thomas seems to be sincere about the towel incident and his explanations certainly make sense. He isn't denying the incident and does not appear to be projecting attitudes on the boys or setting himself above the rules. Yet, he did excuse his being in the boys' room by blaming the boys for calling him in there. As a conscientious director you note this attitude. Further, you inform Thomas that you consider his behavior to be a breach of the boundaries established in orientation and that you take such breaches seriously.

Mike also seems sincere in his relationship to the children. However, he continues to ignore your directions about appropriate behavior. It is obvious that Mike sees himself above the rules. Even though he has repeatedly been asked not to sit kids on his lap he still does. Mike places the blame for his continued thwarting of boundaries on the children, "I just can't say no to a kid who wants to play." Mike also seeks to minimize the effects of his behavior "it's just harmless fun anyway." With three of the distorted thinking patterns present, what Mike portrays as harmless fun you begin to see as grooming for exploitation. You alert Mike that no more rules bending will be tolerated and the next time a child sits in his lap he will be asked to leave.

Peg raises several red flags. She minimizes the depth of the relationship, "it's just a simple crush," and also projects her feelings onto the adolescent boy when acknowledging she has some puppy-love feelings for him. By lingering in cabins alone with the boy Peg is sending messages to him that the camp rules don't really apply to them. You inform Peg that she is not to hang around the camper anymore. Peg responds

that you're a prude, that it's just having a little fun. You're taken aback by the ferocity of her remarks and begin to think maybe it is all in your mind; suspicions put there by this resource guide. In the end you choose not to make Peg leave, but, being a great director you give David Popham a call just to debrief about the situation.

All three counselors have engaged in questionable behaviors. Exposing the bottom, holding children in close physical contact, and holding hands are activities which desensitizes everyone to the sexual aspect of the behaviors. For the child involved it is a possible first step in a grooming process that will allow the predator control over the child's body. For the adults it is a possible first step in being groomed to believe that the distorted thinking patterns are not really distorted at all.

Grooming

As noted, the vast majority of sexual exploitation occurs between the victim and a person the victim *and* the victim's family knows and trusts. The process that predators go through to win our trust and thus gain unsupervised access to our children is called "grooming." Becoming aware of the steps of grooming will allow you to recognize potentially dangerous behavior, and will also aid in deflecting the predator's attempt to groom you. Remember, for child molesters to abuse they must succeed at grooming children to keep secrets and at grooming adults to allow unsupervised access to children.

Step one is detection. While it seems odd, most predators (except for Stranger Danger) do not approach just any child. Predators take time to target the most vulnerable child whom they define as the child easiest to befriend and to gain access too. Keep in mind these factors sighted by convicted predators:

- the younger the child the more vulnerable
- availability (your camp is full of children or youth)
- girls are much more likely to become victims with some studies suggesting 90% of child molestation involving female victims (but boys are less likely to tell)
- children who have behavioral, or intellectual challenges (partly because of the child's lower ability to process the relationship, partly because if the child does tell, it is easier to convince authorities the child is lying, and partly because adults are relieved when "troubled" children have friends)
- low self-esteem
- children who are depressed or recently suffered loss (including divorce of the parents, or the gaining of a step-parent)
- children who have already been sexually abused
- a child's knowledge of sexual exploitation danger and the level of preventative education the child receives at home is also a factor: the lower the understanding the higher the vulnerability

Thomas at this point is not showing signs of interest in a particular boy. Still, his draped-towel escapade could be for the purpose of determining who has a high sense of sexual danger and who does not.

Mike too, is not showing any interest in a particular female camper, however, the lap sitting business may also be a ruse to determine who is comfortable in his lap and who is

not. Also we know that Mike kept in touch with one female camper from the previous year who exhibits two and possibly more of the traits listed above.

Peg shows interest in one camper who works hard to overcome issues and self-esteem feelings that have emerged from his living with ADHD.

Step two is the approach. Having targeted a victim the predator now must get closer to the intended child/youth. At this point the predator will begin to actively groom the parent or adult authority figures such as camp directors.

- the predator will tailor behavior to appear as the perfect friend: Mike connects with campers that the other staff shies away from thereby befriendng both the children he may target and the staff members who are now relieved of the pressures of interacting with the trouble campers.
- child molesters will try to ingratiate themselves through providing favors to both the target and the adult authority: Peg can control the unruly adolescent boys which put you in debt to her and is why she is still at camp. At the same time she is paying attention to a youth who does not get much attention from girls his own age, and is why the young man does not resist her attention.
- predators present themselves as the best friend and the best camp staffer because they are scheming to exploit the vulnerabilities of their targets and of their target's parents/adult authorities.

Step three is gaining control over the child/youth. Predators must render their targets powerless, cut off, and defenseless for the abuse to occur. At the beginning the control over the target needed to accomplish this is subtle and may appear as friendly advice, suggestions, and even occasional criticisms. However, all this has one scheming purpose: to isolate the child/youth from friends and other adults.

- forming an exclusive and unique relationship allows predators to separate the target from all other adult authorities
- the predator may escalate to heavy handed control such as telling the target who he or she may associate with, "Don't hang with them," or managing the child's schedule, "Spend your free time with me."
- in order to keep the child in a state of confusion and turmoil the predator may begin moving between "best friend" and "worst nightmare": Children looking to please the adults in their lives are easily controlled by this method as children will look to themselves as the cause of the mood swings and will try to do *whatever necessary* to please their best friend.

Peg is the only staffer who seems to be operating at this stage. She is actively grooming you to think that her relationship with the male camper is unique "he has a crush on me."

Step four is the act of cultivating the target. At this point in the relationship with their targets predators will prepare them for the abuse.

- buying gifts such as a La Foret bracelet or planning special activities such as going together to the craft barn
- the predator will test boundaries of physical intimacies by kissing a cheek, hugging, holding hands, wrestling, tickling
- exploration of keeping secrets: If the target cannot keep a secret the sexual abuse cannot occur. All little secrets are grooming for keeping the big secret of abuse.
- elevating the child to adult status: Cleverly the predator will manipulate the child or youth into thinking he or she has power over an adult, "Only you really understand me." Once the target is given adult status the predator can ask the child or youth to fulfill adult needs.

The scenarios above seem to indicate that step four is yet to be achieved by Thomas, Mike, or Peg. I agree with the state of Colorado that it would be difficult (but not impossible) for this step to be accomplished within the time frame of a one week camp. But remember that Mike keeps in touch with one girl from the previous year's camp and Peg says nothing will come of her crush *at camp*. Certainly continued contact after camp would provide plenty of opportunities to cultivate the relationship to this step and beyond.

Step five is the act of sexual molestation. The child molester will guarantee that all the previous steps of grooming are reinforced and firmly established before any sexual abuse is enacted.

- the victim's compliance and secrecy will be ensured by a combination of pleadings, promises, and threats
- the predator will capitalize on the victim's sense of guilt and shame that results from the abuse: a blame-the-victim set-up
- any combination of the previous steps to keep the child confused and dependent upon the predator

Step five is also difficult to accomplish in a week long camp. Still we must understand that the actions of step one through four, some seemingly harmless, have a terrible aim in mind, the act of sexual abuse. Now that you are aware of this aim you will intervene when you notice the grooming process taking place.

Other Tell-Tell Signs

Predators come from all walks of life. There is no one place or age, no one social status or religion, no one ethnic group or place of birth, no one sexual orientation. They typically begin early in life and continue to sexually exploit children and youth until they are caught or unable to perform sexually. In order to maintain their cover predators build a double life that leaves tell-tell signs:

- predators rarely talk about their past: holes in personal life stories are a warning sign, as are unaccounted for blocks of time during the day

- predators, seeking to groom adults, often present themselves as a victim: “My boss is one hard ass...” or “My professors hound me...” these are ways of pulling sympathy from us and winning us over as a semi-protector
- predators will mix in some truth with the grooming lies further blurring and confusing attempts to detect ulterior motives: Pegs admitting to puppy-love leaves us blind to the more sinister aspect of exploitation
- child molesters often have the uncanny ability to connect with a child on the child’s level making the predator childlike in his or her behavior: the gut feeling that this person should be more mature in her or his actions is a warning sign to be heeded
- predators are often adults who find it hard to connect with peers and to maintain peer aged relationships: some experts understand this as the chief reason for the predator turning to children to meet adult needs.

Let us review our three staffers. Thomas is new to the RMC-UCC, having arrived at CSU in Fort Collins the previous fall. He regularly speaks of his family, friends, and other experiences during his growing up in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mike often complains about his dysfunctional family and how hard he had it growing up. Mike also is extremely childlike in his interactions with the campers, you have even thought, “He’s just a big kid at heart.”

Peg never speaks of a boyfriend or even of any significant group of friends from college or church. She tends to gravitate to the campers at meals and devotion times and shies away from significant interaction with the other staffers.

Assessing Risk Levels

All the behaviors and attitudes spoken about are *by themselves* harmless idiosyncrasies of myriads of personalities across our churches. *By themselves* they do not present a threat. It is when we begin to discern a bundling of these attitudes and traits in one person that we need to be on alert. Bundling is understood as three or more traits appearing in a single personality. Armed with the knowledge you now have let us assess the risk levels of our three staffers.

Thomas is involved with one incident that has a plausible explanation, “I was leaving the shower when the boys called me into their room. I’m used to the ‘dorm life’ and didn’t think in terms of what I was wearing or how it was hanging around my waist.” We know Thomas’ history and there appears to be no holes or lost segments of time. He speaks of friends and peer relationships. He does not appear to be actively involved in grooming, but there is a legitimate concern that his towel episode could be the first step in the process. Thomas does not exhibit any of the patterns of distorted thinking and has readily taken responsibility for not assessing how he was dressed. Most importantly, Thomas is heeding your concerns and has taken the steps necessary to insure that no similar incident happens again. Thomas is low risk. As the camp director you will keep an eye on Thomas but you will not ask him to leave.

Mike has participated in repeated incidents which involve distorted thinking, "I just can't say no to a kid who wants to play, and it's just harmless fun anyway." We know some of Mike's background but he doesn't talk of peer age friends and he presents himself as a victim of a dysfunctional family. Mike exhibits grooming behavior through his insistence on physical contact with female campers and lap sitting. Mike also seeks to place the blame on you by making you out to be a fun-sucker. Tellingly, Mike continues to ignore your instructions about ending his physical contact with the campers. Mike is high risk. You are right to give him the ultimatum of ending his rules bending or leaving camp.

Incidentally what you don't know, because Mike wears baggy shorts, is that every time he sets a girl on his lap he gets an erection. Also you don't know that Mike is actively engaged in the grooming process with the girl from the previous year's camp. He eats regularly with the girl's family and has even taken her to the movies without other family members attending. Mike is a predator, however, you have maintained a safer camp by intervening and deflecting him.

Peg is participating in a situation which is untenable: a romance with a camper. Still, Peg presents a more difficult situation to pull apart: the relationship between an older youth and a younger adult. To fully assess the level of risk that Peg poses we need an understanding of acceptable sexual experimentation and unacceptable sexual exploitation.

Regular and Irregular Sexual Exchanges Among Children and Youth

Keep in mind that normal sex play, experimentation, and exploration is always *consensual*, involving *no* force or intimidation, and is *developmentally appropriate*.

Leigh Baker maps the territory for us:

In preschool children, normal sex play takes place with similar-age children of both sexes and is usually limited to the exploration of genitals and masturbation. Prior to puberty, sexual interaction between children is more often with the same-sex friends of similar age and usually involves exploratory games such as 'playing doctor.' During adolescence, sexual interactions are about exploring the social and interpersonal aspects of 'adult' forms of sexuality. These interactions begin to be more selective and are more likely to involve opposite-sex peers who are in exclusive relationships.

Questions for assessing the appropriate or inappropriate behaviors in Peg's case include:

- Is there a significant age difference? Children usually engage peers in sexual play. The wider the age gap the more likely sexual abuse is taking place.
- Is there an inequality in the power relationships between the two? Normal experimentation usually involves friends and is always *voluntary*. Whenever one person has advantage over another through status, age, size, or position of authority (such as camp counselor) sexual abuse can occur.
- Is there an aggressive and/or submissive manner in which the sexual contact takes place? Normal sexual contact is explorative and mutual.

While there may be embarrassment if caught, typically the children/youth are giddy and playful during the time of sex play. Sexual contact involving aggressive behavior that places one participant in a subordinate position, or where there is a display of anxiety and fearfulness are signs of sexual abuse.

- Is the sexual contact between the participants frequent? Sex play among peers occurs periodically and in the context of a larger life. Sex play which keeps one participant from engaging other areas of life is problematic.
- Is the sex play reflecting a knowledge of sex that is on par with the developmental knowledge of the participant? Sex play is typically limited by the child/youth's knowledge of sex as has been mapped above.
- Is there fear, intimidation or secrecy involved in the sex play? Although privacy is often held by participants, the activity does not take on the dimensions of "keeping a secret." Typically when asked participants may respond with blushed cheeks and ducked heads but, nevertheless, are able to speak about it with an understanding adult.
- Do other children/youth complain about a certain person's sexual behavior? Children and youth will often be the first to sound the warning signal of inappropriate behavior and sexual displays. It is important that we listen to these complaints.

Turning our attention to Peg let us review the red flags she raises. Peg is involved in distorted thinking which minimizes the depth of the relationship, "it's just a simple crush," and also projects her feelings onto the boy when acknowledging she has feelings for him. Peg's lingering in cabins alone with the boy sends the message that the camp rules do not apply. She is grooming him by subtly separating him from the rest of the camp through the actions of hanging back and bringing up the rear as well as holding hands, a universal sign that "we are a couple." Peg does not speak of any significant peer relationships or even a boyfriend. While close together in age, the boy and Peg are not close together in developmental levels: she is an accomplished college co-ed; he is a teenager managing ADHD. Peg has even mixed in a bit of truth to show how mature she is and to smokescreen any concerns. However, Peg is a camp counselor and holds considerable power over the adolescent male camper. There are no exceptions: fraternization is prohibited between camp staff and campers, period, end of discussion! While females make up only 11% of predators, there is little doubt that Peg is a female child molester.

Herein lies the problem, male predators readily admit that the child/youth was a sexual target. Befriending the victim was a ruse to gain unsupervised access so that abuse could take place. Female predators are different for they almost always project the relationship as a romance involving love, deep feelings and mutuality. Do not be taken in. In case after case once the target of a female predator reaches a certain age or a certain developmental level the female predator will drop the child/youth and minimize the relationship as just a fling. The relationship was never a mutual bond to begin with; it was only a scheming disguise for the venting of anger, frustration, loneliness and adult sexual needs onto an innocent victim: a victim whose psychological and emotional well being is now damaged and bruised, if not altogether broken.

The Effects of Sexual Abuse on the Victims

The problems left in the wake of sexual exploitation are numerous including:

- body image
- low self-esteem
- ongoing nightmares
- depression
- walled-off existence
- free floating anxiety
- betrayal and mistrust of intimate relationships
- betrayal and mistrust of society, life, the universe, and God
- loss of hope
- feelings of guilt and shame
- self-blaming
- suicide

One of the primary difficulties faced by victims of sexual assault is that the experience can never be outlived. It becomes a part of the psychological, emotional, and spiritual make up as the victim travels on through life.

Most of the complexities arising in a person following abuse are related to the fact that her or his sexuality thermostat was turned up to fast to soon. Typically we journey through life moving from one developmental stage to the next with appropriate timing and through normal patterns. However, when people get stuck at one stage (arrested development) it is difficult to engage in healthy relationships or behavior patterns. The same can be said of those catapulted to a stage beyond their own emotional, psychological and spiritual capabilities to handle. Healthy and holistic ways of relating to others and to the world become confused, mixed up, and blurred.

Having the sexuality thermostat prematurely turned up jeopardizes all future relationships and ones ability to relate in healthy ways to others. Sex is a wonderful, life affirming gift of God, yet for the victim of sexual assault, sexuality and intimacy become the occasion for difficulty and a long road to healing.

But now you are empowered with knowledge, understanding and discernment. You are capable of monitoring your camp staff: capable of looking through the smokescreen and assessing the risk levels. You have the ability to help reach the goal of safer camps for all the participants, ensuring that the week is fun and formative.

When You Suspect a Predator

You are now a well armed director in the effort to keep our camps safe from child molesters. Let's say a predator has schemed and connived his or her way into your camp. What should you do?

- the best deflection is to let your camp staff know that you are a conscientious director knowledgeable about child sexual exploitation, this warning alone will go far in deflecting any activity for fear of the watchful eye

- in orientation with the campers you will let them know that keeping secrets or being alone with a counselor out of sight of others is not a part of camp
- you will work to create open communications and personal accessibility to the campers so they have an understanding adult to turn to if needed
- you will seek to pair the questionable counselor with another staff member so that unsupervised access to campers is difficult to come by
- you will be in conversation with David Popham so that the issues being dealt with and any course of action are accomplished within the policy framework of the RMC-UCC and the regulations of Colorado (and so that I may be of support and resource to you)

This guide was developed with an eye at deflecting predators at camp. What happens when the child/youth speaks to you or another staff member about sexual molestation experienced in other settings of their life? *We are a mandatory reporting entity* and we take such information seriously. More orientation around this issue will be given at camp.

Thank you for taking time to read through this resource guide, to arm yourself with knowledge, and to help make the children and youth camping experience one to talk about because of friendships and self-discovery rather than "that's the summer I was molested." Together we will continue the track record of honoring the Rocky Mountain Conference Outdoor Ministry design: *offering a sanctuary - a place where it is safe to explore new ideas, have visions, dream, and take risks as persons harmonize their lives with the vision of the Gospel.*