

## Grooming of children ...

### “What is grooming?”

### “What should I do if I suspect grooming in the Church?”



## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

### **Safe Place Services (Adventist Church)**

Australia 1800 220 468 or New Zealand 0800 442 458 or website  
[www.safeplaceservices.org.au](http://www.safeplaceservices.org.au)

**ACT—Office for Children, Youth & Family Support** 1300 556 729

**NSW—Community Services** 132 111

**NT—Department of Health & Families** 1800 700 250

**NZ—Child, Youth & Families (CYFs New Zealand)** 0508 326 459

**QLD—Department of Child Safety** 1800 811 810 (for details of nearest Local Office) or 1800 177 135 (after hours)

**SA—Families SA Child Abuse Report Line** 131 478

**TAS—Department of Health & Human Services Child Protection Intake** 1300 737 639

**VIC—Department of Human Services** 1300 650 172 or 131 278 after hours

**WA—Department of Child Protection** 08 9222 2555 during office hours; Perth after hours 08 9325 1111; Regional after hours 1800 199 008



**Local Conference Safe-Place Coordinator:**



## Grooming of Children



**Seventh-day Adventist Churches  
of Australia and New Zealand**

## WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is a process of preparing a person—usually a child or other vulnerable person—for sexual assault. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents, other adults, and Church leaders to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive.

## WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH BE AWARE?

There are several reasons why Churches should be aware of grooming. These include the following:

1. Sexual assault of children occurs across all of society including Churches and other faith communities.
2. Within Church (and other community organization) settings, there is an abundance of opportunity for adults to form special relationships with children which can have a *potential* to be exploited.
3. Although children, parents and the Church should be aware of 'stranger danger', most people who sexually abuse children are known to the victim through family; friends; school; sporting; Church and other community-based participation.
4. There is no clear 'profile' of a person who is likely to sexually offend against children. An offender could be a friend; someone who is married in their thirties with children; or a person who is well liked and educated. They could be male or female.
5. Grooming often begins with a legitimate, condoned relationship with a child. Initially, conduct might appear to be innocent—even commendable—but it progresses over time and escalates.

## HOW IS THE LOCAL CHURCH RESPONDING?

The local Church has the following safeguards in place:

1. A CODE OF CONDUCT for all adults and volunteers who interact with children.
2. A REQUIREMENT that disclosures and suspicions of child abuse be reported to Church, Government and Community-based services, which can help.
3. A SCREENING process for all children's workers.
4. A CHILD-SAFE ENVIRONMENTS policy.

The local Church also affirms the value of children as a 'sacred trust' to be 'discipled' in Christ to become His servants. Children, as a 'blessing' from God, are to be afforded care and protection and nurtured in ways that promote their growth and development in all its dimensions.

## WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF GROOMING?

Some signs of grooming include an adult or, sometimes, an older adolescent/youth doing things such as:

1. Giving extra special praise and attention to a child.
2. Making a child feel special through gifts and treats.
3. Sending text, voice, email, or on-line messages to a child on a regular basis (e.g. via social networking).
4. Asking the child for personal information.
5. Spending time alone with a child.

6. Talking about sex and sexuality with a child.
7. Sharing 'fun' secrets with a child.

## WHAT ARE SOME IMPACTS OF GROOMING?

1. People may trust the person who is grooming.
2. The child might like the person who is grooming them, or like certain aspects of the interaction.
3. Over time the child can become isolated from peers and siblings and be dependent upon the groomer.

Once sexual assault has occurred, the child can feel confused, ashamed, partly-to-blame, and afraid to speak out due to a fear of not being believed OR due to the range of possible consequences upon themselves or the abuser. Some children, due to their developmental stage, might not understand the nature of the abuse. It is not uncommon for a range of adverse impacts to take days, months, and even years to emerge as the child grows and develops.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I SUSPECT GROOMING?

Parents, members and Church leaders should be AWARE of grooming but not be overly SUSPICIOUS. The conduct of most people towards children is of pure and noble intent.

If an adult feels a sense of unease or concern about a person's conduct towards a child, they should check this out with a qualified person. This might be done with someone they know such as the Local Church Safe-Place Coordinator, OR by contacting Safe Place Services (see back panel).