



## Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026  
Denver Marriott Tech Center



PRESENTED BY



# Safeguarding Our Children: Awareness, Prevention, and Protection

Donald Moseley, Executive Director  
Ralston House

Primrose  
February 27, 2026 | 1:30 – 2:30 PM  
Hot Topics



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We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



**Be a part of the action.**



The logo for Ralston House. It features a stylized house with a blue roof and a blue window with a cross. A yellow sun is positioned above the house. Below the house is a green, wavy line representing grass. The text "Ralston House" is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a black outline. Below the logo, the text "Stop the Abuse" and "Start the Healing" is written in a black, sans-serif font.

**Ralston  
House**

Stop the Abuse  
Start the Healing



# A Warning!

Child sexual abuse is a disturbing and complicated problem. The purpose of this presentation is to increase adult awareness and understanding around the sexual abuse of youth. Examples will be provided to support adults in understanding how abuse happens, how perpetrators gain access and trust and how to support adults and youth in preventing abuse and to heal when abuse happens.

**The content of this presentation can be triggering due to the examples used and the nature of this topic.**



# Mission

**Ralston House Child Advocacy Center works with law enforcement, human services and the community to provide a safe place to investigate child abuse and ensure victim services for children who have been physically or sexually abused or who have witnessed violence. Ralston House also provides education and outreach to prevent child abuse. Our mission is to stop the abuse and start the healing.**



# What is Sexual Abuse?

**There are many types of sexual abuse which can include:**

- **Penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth**
- **Sexual touching or fondling**
- **Exposing children to sexual activity or pornography**
- **Having children pose, undress, or act out sexual activities**
- **Forcing children to perform sexual acts**

**Child sexual abuse includes all acts that are performed for the perpetrator's sexual gratification.**



**Child Sexual Abuse is  
never accidental,  
unplanned or  
harmless.**

**Sexual abuse happens,  
and it happens often.**



# Statistics on Child Sexual Abuse

1 – 6

1- 12

- Over 30% of victims never disclose the experience to ANYONE.
- Significant under reporting – especially by males.
- Average age of disclosure is 52 years old
- Children only fabricate 1% of the time
- Almost 80% of victims initially deny abuse or are tentative in disclosing
- 20% of victims who disclose later recant, even if the abuse occurred



**“Child sexual abuse  
deprives children of  
the normal  
developmental tasks  
of childhood.”**

van Dam, 2001



# The Hope in Child Sexual Abuse

Fortunately, with early detection, support and therapy, most victims of child sexual abuse can go on to lead healthy, happy lives.

# Identifying Perpetrators





**“We should fear these offenders not because they are monsters, we should fear them because they’re ordinary.”**

**Kenneth Lanning, Retired FBI**

**“In their outward characteristics, child molesters are the mirror image of all Americans.”**

**Abel & Harlow, 2001**



# Stats about Perpetrators

- **90 – 95% of perpetrators are male**
- **5-10% of perpetrators are female**
- **30-40% of victims are abused by a family member**
- **Another 50% of victims are abused by someone outside of the family who they know and trust**
- **Approximately 25% - 30% of victims are abused by older or larger children whom they know**
- **Only 10% of victims are abused by strangers**

# Who are the Perpetrators?



- **Male**
- **Female**
- **Young**
- **Old**
- **Married**
- **Single**
- **Wealth**
- **Poor**
- **Heterosexual**
- **Homosexual**
- **Educated**
- **Accomplished**
- **Religious**
- **Parents**



# Why do they molest?

Child sex assault  
perpetrators are  
individuals who are  
***sexually aroused by  
children.***



# The Focus of a Perpetrator

...to perpetrate!

**We should not ask the question:**  
Why would a \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher, coach,  
friend, priest, mentor) do this to children?

**But instead realize that:**  
The perpetrator became a \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher,  
coach, friend, priest, mentor) to gain  
access to children.



# Perpetrators count on us to believe that:



- Public behavior predicts private behavior
- *People are good*
- You should be polite to others
- *People change*
- Religious persons are honest and “good”  
*i.e. “Christians are good people”*
- We can tell when someone is lying





**Child sexual assault can happen to ANYONE, even the most well-functioning families.**



**The traits and situations targeted by perpetrators are not faults or flaws, simply vulnerabilities that are targeted.**



**Child sexual assault is the fault of ONE person, the perpetrator.**





# Grooming



# Community Grooming

**“This “grooming” of adults is a well-organized, long-term activity, with considerable thought and planning going into the event.”** *Stanford, 1980*

**The accuser, labeled Victim No. 1 by a grand jury, said he eventually confided in a school district guidance counselor that Sandusky was molesting him, only to be told: “He has a heart of a gold, and he wouldn’t do something like that.”**

**“So they didn’t believe me,” the teenager said.** *Washington Times, 2012*



# Family Grooming

**“Adults often unwittingly become enthusiastic supporters of molesters, which communicates to children that any disclosures are unlikely to be believed, thereby inadvertently colluding with the molesters in undermining the children’s willingness to talk.”** van Dam, 2001

**“Charm is a predator’s best tool because it makes parents less likely to suspect him and victims less likely to be believed.”** O’Hagan and Willmsen, 2003



# Child Grooming

- Engages child in peer-like involvement
- Breaks down the child's resistance to touch
- Finds ways to isolate child
  - Refusing child access to significant others
  - May abuse child with others present
- Threatens violence



# Child Grooming

- Double-Bind: choosing between equally unsatisfactory alternatives, a punishing and inescapable dilemma
- Makes the child feel responsible, blames the child and encourages keeping the secret
- Invoking guilt “now look what you have done”
- Tests boundaries – i.e. touching/secrets/sexual jokes/etc.



# Reducing Organizational Risk of Child Sexual Abuse

Have policies and procedures that reduce the risk to children and protect staff.

There is no sure way to identify a potential perpetrator. However screening, policies and management to minimize opportunities for abuse, will best protect children.

van Dam, 2001

**You are trying to create an environment in which predators cannot succeed.**

# Hiring

**No one has the right to have access to children!**

1. Application
2. Background Checks
3. References
4. Interview Questions
5. Emphasis on protecting children from abuse





# Boundaries

- Job Description
- One-on-One Time
- Physical Contact
- Personal/Private/Confidential Conversations
- Favoritism
- Relationships Outside of Role
- Sexual Conversations/Jokes
- Gifts/Financial Help
- Photos/Video
- Positive Examples of Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries



# Boundaries

- Importance of clear boundaries
- Do NOT tolerate minor boundary violations
- Document ALL boundary violations, even those that are accidental
- Supervision

**Remember: perpetrators will test boundaries and may try to involve other staff in boundary violations.**

# Communication



- Schedules
- Phone
- Text
- Email
- Web page
- Facebook





# Physical Environment





# Organizational Culture

## Culture Always Trumps Reason!

Richard Sipe – Mother Church and the Rape of her Children

# Organizational Culture

- Child safety is the priority
- Clear expectations
- Appropriate training
- Supervision
- Reporting is encouraged and welcomed



# Organizational Culture



Short-Term Pain  
vs.  
Long-Term Damage



# Reporting

**Reporting is Every Adult's  
Responsibility**



**What to Report?**

Abuse

Boundary Violations

Confusing/Concerning Behaviors



*Report in a Timely Manner!*



# Intuition

Trust your intuition!





# How to Respond to an Outcry of Child Sexual Assault

## DO

Listen

Observe

Believe

Document

Thank

Report

## DON'T

Panic

Question

Leave Alone





Perpetrators are the ONLY  
people responsible for  
child sexual assault. NO  
ONE else is to blame.



# How to Report Abuse

**1-844-CO-4-KIDS**

Noticing Child Abuse or Neglect Isn't Always Easy. Calling Is.

Colorado now has one toll-free number to report child abuse and neglect. Please use it.

# Impact





# Resources for Adults

**Darkness to Light** [www.darkness2light.org](http://www.darkness2light.org)

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children** [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

**NetSmartz** [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)

**Ralston House** [www.ralstonhouse.net](http://www.ralstonhouse.net)

**Stop It Now** [www.stopitnow.com](http://www.stopitnow.com)



# Resources for Adults

- Abel, Gene G. and Harlow, Nora. (2001) *Stop Child Molestation Book*.
- de Becker, Gavin. (1999) *Protecting the Gift*.
- de Becker, Gavin. (2000) *The Gift of Fear*.
- Knoll, James. (2011) *Teacher Sexual Misconduct: Grooming Patterns and Female Offenders*.
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (2013) *Safe to Compete*
- O'Hagan, Willmsen. (2003) *How Parents Can Spot Trouble Before it's too Late*.
- Patterson, John. (2004) *Staff Screening Tool Kit*



# Resources for Adults

- Salter, Anna C. (2003) *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, & Other Sex Offenders.*
- United States Olympic Committee. (2012) *Recognizing, Reducing and Responding to Misconduct in Sport: Creating Your Strategy*
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007) *Preventing child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures.*
- van Dam, Carla. (2001) *Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offender.*
- Witten-Hannah, Miller, McCarthy. (2004) *Ending Offending Together: All About Child Sexual Abuse, the People who Commit it and How to Stop it.*
- Wurtele Ph.D., Sandy. (2010) *Out of Harm's Way.*



# In Closing

Child sexual abuse is a disturbing and complicated problem. The information presented can cover only certain aspects of this complex issue.

Ralston House presents this information as a service. The information is intended to give you simple, proactive steps to help protect children; however, Ralston House makes no representations or guarantees concerning its completeness or effectiveness. In no event shall Ralston House or the City of Arvada be held liable for any failure of such safety information.

# How you can help Ralston House and the children who use it...

**720-898-6741**

or on the web at

**[www.RalstonHouse.net](http://www.RalstonHouse.net)**



Stop the Abuse  
Start the Healing

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feedback  
helps us all  
move forward  
together**



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