

## Grooming Behaviors and Child Safety

### What is grooming?

Many children know the person who is abusing them. Abusers are often people in the community that we know, respect, and trust. They build relationships with those they abuse and their families prior to the sexual abuse. This process is called **grooming**.

Recognizing grooming can be tricky, so it takes practice. Pay attention to adults who:

- Insist on hugging, tickling, or wrestling with the child, especially if the child has said “stop.”
- Regularly offer to babysit many children for free/ without exchange of favors or bartering
- Encourage unhealthy behaviors (allowing them to drink alcohol, smoke, or look at pornography)
- Introduce special attention to your child like gifts, money, etc.
- Destroy the child’s trust in others by saying things such as “No one will believe you if you tell”
- Spend too much time alone with the child
- Spend most of their time with children
- Undermine the way others view the child
- Isolate the family from the community

### What can you do to help?

- Talk with other adults about behaviors that are not safe. These conversations send a message to abusers that their behaviors will not be tolerated.
- Talk with your children about safety and boundaries.
- Check in often when a group of children are playing together or are around older children and adults, so everyone knows you are watching.
- Understand grooming behaviors. If a child does not want to be around someone try to understand and honor their feelings.
- Believe children if they say they have been abused.

This message is brought to you by the Plain Communities Task Force. If you have questions on grooming or your role in keeping children safe, please contact Brittany or Mandy at 717- 869-5009 or Mary at 717-627-1611.