Predatory Behavior

As a parent or guardian, you've probably talked to your child about "stranger danger." But predators can also sexually, emotionally, and psychologically abuse children without ever being in the same room with them — although it may eventually lead to in-person abuse.

Online grooming occurs when a predator initiates and cultivates a relationship with a child through the internet, and it can include:

- Sending explicit messages

- Sharing or requesting sexual photos or videos

- Targeted manipulation

- Isolation from family and friends

- Sextortion

Recommended Actions

- **Educate your child**. Tell your child not to talk to people online who they don't know in real life. Teach them to recognize red flags like when someone online asks them to share their full name, address, or where they go to school. Remind them to never send pictures to strangers, even if the photos seem innocent.

- **Show your child you support them** if they tell you they've been contacted by a predator. A calm, empathetic conversation will help your child feel comfortable discussing what's going on. Let them know that it's not their fault.

- **Document everything**. Work with your child to keep a log of all predatory activities. This will be very important should you need to report these events to law enforcement. **Be sure to include**:

  › What happened and when
  › The names ∕usernames of anyone who was involved or witnessed it
  › What websites ∕platforms (e.g. Snapchat, text messages, etc.) were used
  › The content of the messages, including screenshots if possible

- **Take action**. If your child is in contact with someone you believe is dangerous, have your child block, unfriend, and unfollow them immediately. If someone has tried to convince your child to meet them in real life, report them to the police.

Helpful Resources

→ **Protecting Your Child From Online Predators**

→ **Learn the Stages of Online Grooming**

→ **Recognize the Signs of Sexual Predators**

→ **How to Combat Online Predators**

Conversation Starters

→ **Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable when you were playing online? How did you respond?**

→ **What do you say to a stranger online if they ask what school you go to?**

→ **If someone online said they'd hurt your family if you didn't do something, what would you say?**