



Cheat Sheet re: Sexual Abuse and Grooming Behaviors

What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse occurs when someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent.

What is Grooming?

Prior to an act of sexual violence, many abusers undertake a series of steps to desensitize and manipulate their victim. This process of “grooming” makes it more difficult for the victim to assert their boundaries and/or to report inappropriate behavior when it occurs.

Examples of Grooming Behaviors (Red Flag Behaviors):

- An emotionally intense relationship
- Isolation / separating the student from others
- Gift giving
- Declarations of admiration (especially regarding the student’s body)
- Asking the student to keep secrets
- Over-sharing by an adult (to a student) about an adult relationship or marriage
- De-sensitization to touch / excessive touching
- “Accidental” intrusions on the student when the student is undressing or in the bathroom
- Conversations about inappropriate topics (underwear, pornography, sex, etc.)
- Showing the student pornographic material

If your student reports (or if you witness) any of these red-flag behaviors, notify YFU. If you cannot reach your SSM or it is outside of business hours, call the emergency number: 1-800-424-3691.

What Will YFU Do?

- YFU will move the student out of the home immediately.
- YFU will report the behavior to CPS.
- YFU will notify the partner country office; the partner country will notify the student’s natural family.
- YFU will facilitate counseling for the student.

Keep In Mind:

In most cases of sexual violence, there are no witnesses beyond the abuser and the victim and there is rarely clear evidence of the abusive behavior.

Sexual violence toward children is often perpetrated by persons who are well-respected and well-established. The predator’s heightened status and public image make it more unlikely that allegations against them will be deemed valid.

Within families, abusive behavior on the part of a family member might be ignored or even facilitated by other family members.

False allegations are very rare and it is not the YFU staff member or Local Coordinator’s job to prove if the allegations are true. It is our job to move the student and keep them safe. Removing a student from a placement when there are allegations of sexual misconduct protects both the student and the host family.