



awareness to action

Wisconsin
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

UNDERSTANDING GROOMING

IMPACTS OF LGBTQ+ MISINFORMATION



IN RECENT YEARS, there has been a surge in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and policy measures in the United States. LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning. These terms describe individuals' sexuality and gender. Anti-LGBTQ+ refers to attitudes, beliefs, actions, policies or laws that discriminate against one person or groups of people based on their sexuality, gender identity or expression. This opposition often shows up in various ways, such as dehumanizing language, excluding LGBTQ+ people and families, discrimination, bias, harassment, denial of rights and violence against LGBTQ+ people.

There have been hundreds of bills introduced centered on intolerance of LGBTQ+ individuals and topics. Some schools and communities have removed books discussing LGBTQ+ themes or prohibited mentioning LGBTQ+ topics. Others have limited transgender individuals' restroom or locker room use. Further, some places have put limits on gender-affirming care for minors.

Some of these proposed bills have become law and some have not. Passing and even proposing bills that convey intolerance of LGBTQ+ people negatively impacts LGBTQ+ individuals. Such policies and legislature pass on harmful beliefs and attitudes. This adds to the marginalization, isolation and denial of rights for LGBTQ+ people.

Recent instances of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and discrimination may seem unprecedented. When looking back, there are examples of using similar means to influence society. For example, Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign in 1977 voiced opposition of LGBTQ+ people's rights to housing and employment under the guise of traditional family values and safety. Understanding this history shows the persistence of harmful policies and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ communities. The pursuit of equality and acceptance is ongoing.



In the midst of policy proposals and conversations, terms and ideas related to child sexual abuse have been misused or vaguely defined. Not only has the use of the term “grooming” in these instances inaccurately connected LGBTQ+ people with the issues of sexual abuse, it has created a setback in the pursuit for prevention. Terms and concepts used in the field of child sexual abuse prevention must be clarified and remain centered on the reality of child sexual abuse.

This resource was created in collaboration between Awareness to Action and Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault to educate, combat misinformation and invite participation in efforts to prevent sexual violence. Please join in the pursuit of preventing child sexual abuse in a way that does no harm and protects our LGBTQ+ community.

For a more comprehensive look at the legislation and policies referenced, please visit Movement Advancement Project at lgbtmap.org.



WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when someone tries to build a relationship with another person with the intent to hurt them in some way. It's important to know that grooming can happen online or in person and can affect people of different ages and backgrounds.

STAGES OF GROOMING

1

Finding a target

People who groom look for someone they think they can easily control or manipulate. Sometimes, adults around the child may also be groomed by the perpetrator.

2

Earning trust

They act friendly or supportive to make the child trust them, pretending to share interests or offering emotional help. This trust-building may extend to the adults in the child's life, such as parents or caregivers.

3

Building a relationship

They deepen the relationship and start doing things that cross boundaries or make the child feel dependent on them. This could involve gaining the trust of not only the child but also those responsible for the child's well-being.

4

Keeping them alone

They try to keep the child away from friends and family, so they rely more on the perpetrator. This isolation may extend to the child's caregivers, making it harder for them to recognize the signs of grooming.

5

Making it sexual

The grooming becomes about sex, with the groomer introducing physical behaviors or talking about it to make the child more accepting. Adults around the child may also be groomed to overlook or dismiss concerning behaviors.

6

Taking control

The groomer controls the child using fear, guilt or manipulation to keep them in the abusive relationship. This control may also extend to influencing the perceptions and actions of the adults involved in the child's life.

COMMON GROOMING TACTICS



SAYING NICE THINGS AND GIVING GIFTS

Groomers often use compliments or presents to make the victim like them.



FINDING WEAK SPOTS

They look for things that bother the victim and use them to make the victim feel like they need the groomer.



TRICKING

Groomers use lies or tricks to control how the victim feels or acts.



KEEPING THEM AWAY

They gradually keep the victim away from people who could help them.



THREATENING

They might use threats to make the victim do what they want.

Grooming isn't just an online problem; it happens in schools, communities and even families.



9 THINGS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN DO TO STOP GROOMING

1. **Talk to your child** about what grooming is and explain that it's not okay for anyone to try to manipulate or control them.
2. **Teach your child about boundaries** and encourage them to speak up if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.
3. **Monitor your child's online activities** and set boundaries for internet usage to minimize their risk of encountering groomers.
4. **Encourage open communication** with your child and let them know they can come to you with any concerns or questions.
5. **Teach your child about consent** and that they have the right to say no to anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
6. **Be aware of adults that your child interacts with regularly** and keep open communication with teachers, coaches and other caregivers.
7. **Encourage your child to trust their instincts** and to seek help if they feel unsafe or threatened by someone's behavior.
8. **Stay informed about grooming tactics** and warning signs so you can recognize them if they arise.
9. **Report any suspicious behavior** to the authorities or child protective services to ensure the safety of your child and others in the community.

CHALLENGING MISINFORMATION

Curriculum refers to educational materials designed to facilitate learning. Challenging curriculum doesn't necessarily mean adopting an opposing view. It means thinking critically about the information.

Misinformation is incorrect information that may mislead from the full or accurate reality of a situation. It stems from sensationalism, biases or deliberate attempts to misrepresent. Moral panic or societal fears, anxiety and outrage amplify, often leading to misinformation, particularly regarding LGBTQ+ issues.

In the context of LGBTQ+ issues, misinformation often comes from misunderstanding and fear of LGBTQ+ individuals. Certain messages utilize parental fears to frame LGBTQ+ topics as threats to children. These types of misinformation spread harmful stereotypes and prejudices.

Deciding if information is true or not requires critical thinking and fact-checking with reliable sources. Seeking out varied voices and perspectives gives a fuller and more accurate picture of the situation.



DIALOGUE ADDRESSING LGBTQ+ MISINFORMATION

Encouraging respectful and open discussions with friends, family, and peers bring awareness and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues.

Expressing concerns

"I've noticed some negative views about LGBTQ+ issues. I'm curious about your perspective. Can we have an open conversation about these concerns?"

Addressing stereotypes

"I've observed some stereotypes about LGBTQ+ individuals that seem to be influencing opinions. Can we talk about these stereotypes and explore more accurate information?"

Seeking clarification

"I've heard that there are worries about the LGBTQ+ content in the curriculum. Can you help me understand what specific parts concern you? I'd like to talk about them together."

Highlighting common ground

"We seem to have different views. I think we all want a safe and supportive environment for kids. How do you think the current model supports or doesn't support this goal?"

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES

Over the years, attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights have evolved and expanded. However, as referenced, the continued legislative and policy impacts have negative and far-reaching consequences. The intolerant attitudes, beliefs and discrimination become a normalized part of our culture. Many aspects of LGBTQ+ people's lives are impacted. They are more likely to experience violence and have poorer health outcomes.

41%
OF LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE
seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

Trevor Project's 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People

81.8% OF 22,298 LGBTQ+ STUDENTS REPORT FEELING UNSAFE IN SCHOOL
based on at least one of their perceived identities.

GLSEN's National School Climate Survey

NEARLY 1 IN 5 HATE CRIMES
IS MOTIVATED BY **ANTI-LGBTQ+ BIAS.**

The Human Rights Campaign

4 IN 5 (ALMOST 80%) BISEXUAL WOMEN AND OVER 56% OF BISEXUAL MEN
reported experiencing contact sexual violence in their lifetimes.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)

Black, indigenous and people of color who are LGBTQ+ experienced **ADDITIONAL DISCRIMINATIONS AND BARRIERS TO HEALTH EQUITY** due to racism and other forms of oppression.

The Williams Institute of Law

OVER HALF of Black transgender people **HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED** at some point during their lives.

The U.S. Trans Survey (2015)

SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS

Social connectedness plays a crucial role in individuals' mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Supportive relationships significantly reduce the risk of suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. The way that LGBTQ+ people are supported by friends, family, and the general community can make all the difference. Support and affirmation are essential to positive identity development, and mental, emotional, and physical health.

Understanding the issues affecting LGBTQ+ people is a good start. We all have a responsibility to use our position personally or professionally to support communities who are historically marginalized. Organizations and corporations can also contribute to positive change by making inclusive policies and cultural shifts. It takes intentional action to interrupt oppression and discrimination when we see it.

For more information on being an ally to LGBTQ people, please visit The Human Rights Campaign at [hrc.org](https://www.hrc.org).



IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION

The anti-LGBTQ+ social norms of our society create environments in which LGBTQ+ people are at increased risk of multiple forms of violence simply for existing. LGBTQ+ people experience sexual violence at an early age; before the age of 18, more than 50% of all victims who were women and 1/3 of victims who were male report being impacted by sexual violence. To prevent sexual violence and other types of violence at the root, we need to challenge the social conditions that allow harmful social norms and oppressive policies to continue.

Rather than putting limits on discussion of LGBTQ+ topics, there is a need to center LGBTQ+ people in violence prevention efforts. Education on topics that prevent sexual violence should be made available to people of all ages, genders, abilities and backgrounds, including LGBTQ+ individuals. Inclusive prevention efforts should address harmful social norms, such as rape culture. Rape culture refers to the societal environment or sets of beliefs or practices that normalize, trivialize or even condone sexual violence, particularly rape or sexual assault. Prevention also includes teaching consent, bystander intervention and inclusive comprehensive sexual education. Finally, this education should promote the chance for all people to be healthy. This means talking about and addressing the factors that have influenced the higher rates of sexual violence in historically marginalized groups.

People who provide education with the goal of eliminating sexual abuse go to many locations to do this work. Some places have set rules that the educators must use when providing education. They may not allow conversation or education on LGBTQ+ topics. If the person giving this education is LGBTQ+, they may not feel safe while doing their work.

The task of eliminating child sexual abuse is a serious need in society. Numerous individuals and programs work to bring awareness and prevent sexual abuse. When terms about child sexual abuse, such as grooming, are misused, it is a setback for prevention. Defining and correctly using terms is essential for addressing child sexual abuse and preventing harm to the LGBTQ+ community.



INCLUSION OF LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

We can all do things as a community to be sure that LGBTQ+ people are included and supported.

Learn about LGBTQ+ people and experiences and invite heterosexual and cisgender youth and adults to learn as well.

Use research and data that includes information on LGBTQ+ people.

Use curriculum that reflects LGBTQ+ relationships and identities.

Actively push back against any anti-LGBTQ+ statements or sentiments in your community.

Engage with those in all levels of power to ensure that LGBTQ+ people are protected by nondiscriminatory practices.

Discuss how racism and oppression are connected to sexual violence and how the existing culture can change for the better.

Work with your local LGBTQ+ community center for joint programming and outreach.

Use your decision-making power to integrate LGBTQ+ inclusive policies into your organization/agency.

We all have a role in sexual violence prevention. We should all be concerned that the phrase grooming is being misused against LGBTQ+ people. Language and understanding the meaning behind terms is important. Inaccurately using the phrase grooming to describe actions that aren't related to child sexual abuse, makes it harder to define, identify, and respond to when it is occurring.

We all have a part in ensuring those most impacted by sexual violence are seen, heard, respected and included.

Awareness to Action is a program of Children's Wisconsin with funding provided by the Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Board.