

April Bulletin/Website Submissions
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

April 5, 2026: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month: This year we are focusing on the beginning stages of potential abuse where we are not alerted to abuse, necessarily, but rather to inappropriate behavior that often precedes abuse or the attempt of abuse. Grooming is the deliberate manipulation tactic predators use to gain trust. There are three types of grooming: Physical, Psychological, and Community. Learning to recognize grooming signs is the best way to prevent abuse from happening. Over the next few weekends in April we will present some defining elements of grooming. If you know of abuse or have a healthy suspicion of abuse, call DCF at 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

April 12, 2026: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month: Physical **Grooming** is the process of desensitizing a child through increasing levels of closeness. It could progress from a wave, to a hug, or to sharing a chair. The predator seeks out activities to do alone with the child to the exclusion of other adults. This type of behavior transitions seamlessly into **Psychological Grooming**. The predator shows the child favoritism and often extolls of their “special relationship.” The predator will reward the child with privileges and gifts without permission and encourage them to keep it a secret. They push boundaries by exposing the child to “adult stuff” like profanity, telling dirty jokes or alcohol. This can progress to talking about sexual topics and viewing pornography. All these things, because the child knows they are wrong, make the child feel guilty and complicit. Those feelings can paralyze a child from disclosing abuse.

April 19, 2026: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month: Community Grooming is the hardest to recognize because the predator seeks to present themselves as the “ideal” person: employee, volunteer, coach, scout leader, or parent for example. In this guise, the predator builds trust and a good reputation, especially with people of authority around children, which ultimately ensures access to children. In this stage the predator advances the grooming process from seemingly innocent touching, accidental touching, increased sexualized touching, to exposing themselves and/or the child. Even if the child comes to feel something is wrong, they think they cannot say anything as this is the “ideal” person. A well-respected adult and that no one would believe them.

April 26, 2026: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month: When a child is caught in a predator’s physical, psychological, and community grooming stages of manipulation the best weapon is open communication. Talk to children often about this crime. It is never too early—age appropriately, of course-- and it is never too often. The goal is to get them—and yourself-- comfortable with the topic so that if anything happens to make them feel uncomfortable, they will tell you or another safe adult right away. This is the goal of the Virtus children’s Teaching Boundary Safety lessons taught at the ADOM parochial schools and CCD programs. Studies show students who have had prevention programs have a 62% lower reporting rate to those who do not. When parents also take part in preventative programs it yields larger effectiveness. When the community is also provided with an educational awareness and prevention program, the effectiveness grows even more. Can you save the world? No. But saving even one child from the pain and suffering of abuse and possibly years of torment, means the world to them.