

Using Everything Possible

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We know that the best people to be responsible for protecting our children are the caring adults who are part of their lives. We, who love them and are with them throughout their days, are best suited to the job of creating safe environments and protecting our children from those who would do them harm.

We also know that risks to our children often come from the people we know and trust. The likely predator is someone we would least suspect. The result is that we are often shocked and even stunned when someone down the street is suspected of wrongdoing or when a parent we know from a child's school is arrested and charged with sexually molesting children.

The warning signs are there and all too often they are missed or overlooked. Sometimes we talk ourselves out of our concerns because we are convinced that the people we know and trust are, in fact, trustworthy.



Through our commitment to implement The Protecting God's Children® program, we are learning to recognize the warning signs and take action to intervene to protect children. The more effective we become, the safer our children will be.

It is also important that we learn about and support other services that make it more difficult for predators to accomplish their goals. There are a number of other tools available to us and one of the newest ones is the Protect Our Children Act passed on September 27th of this year by the United States Congress¹. The bill mandates a number of actions by state and federal law enforcement to move the discovery, investigation, arrest, and conviction of predators and the efforts to rescue children in dangerous situations to the top of the priority list. This legislation also provides additional funding for law enforcement investigations of allegations of child exploitation.

A major media push was made to encourage adults across the country to contact members of Congress and encourage passage of the bill. The grass roots effort to ensure that this bill was passed was successful. Its tools are now available to law enforcement and the community.

However, like every other tool we have, the key to effective usage is action. In this case, adults must learn to recognize the warning signs. We must take care to scrutinize those who want to work with our children. We must create and follow policies and procedures that monitor programs. We must pay attention to what's going on with our children and, ultimately, must be willing to speak up and speak out about their suspicions and concerns. That is the only way that the Protect our Children Act can do what it is designed to do.

Step 5 of the *Plan to Protect God's Children* calls on us to communicate our concerns and report suspected abuse. Reporting a possible molester that is known to us is difficult to do. When

considering this issue in the abstract, we are sure we would err on the side of protecting children no matter what. However, reporting suspected abuse is not abstract. We know that lives could be altered forever when that call is made. As a result, we often begin to second guess our suspicions and reevaluate our observations. The problem is that this rethinking on our part puts children at risk.

Remember that suspicions do come out of thin air. They are based on the observed actions of an adult that has access to children or a report from a child that trusted you. We must act on those suspicions if we want to protect children.

Tools like those in the Protect Our Children Act can only make a difference if adults and children report suspicions and disclosure abuse. The principles and values laid out in the *Protecting God's Children* program demand that we act as God has instructed and protect children.

As adults, it is important that we use all the tools at our disposal to protect our children and create safe environments. Many throughout America helped support the passage of this new legislation. Now it is time for us to do our part to make sure that it is not just one more good idea that withers and dies on the vine. Speak up when you suspect that a child is being or has been abused and communicate your concerns about the adults interacting with children in our midst. Only with the courageous actions of caring adults in response to concerns and suspicions children will be protected and safe.