



## Member Article

### 2015

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## Sexual Abusers Who Target Minors Manipulate the Trust of Adults and Children

by [Mark A. Brown](mailto:markbrown@lane-lane.com) [markbrown@lane-lane.com](mailto:markbrown@lane-lane.com)

The damage done by an abuser can last a lifetime. Sexual abuse of a child by a trusted authority figure can ruin a child's trust in his/her religion, sports, school, family and life itself. Which is why the adults in children's lives have a responsibility to do what they can to prevent situations that can open up the opportunity for an abusive situation.

Although a lot of people believe they can spot a sexual abuser or "just know" that someone is a potential threat to children, the truth is that many sexual abusers are seemingly normal people who are much-loved or well-respected members of the community. In fact, many predators and abusers rely on building a sense of trust and authority with a family before abusing a child, and families can be shocked to find out the truth—even to the point of disbelieving a child's allegations.

Sexual abusers may try to manipulate a community's trust and gain unsupervised access to a child by:

- Relying on a position of authority in an organization or community
- Offering to help out at childcare facilities or volunteer time at children's programs
- Building a sense of rapport or trust with parents
- Showering a child with special gifts and attention

Although you may have met and liked the teachers, priests, doctors, volunteers, and other care providers who interact with your child, you can't always rely on how a person appears or your "gut feeling" about him or her. Instead, you should ***insist on knowing how organizations screen and supervise the people who interact with vulnerable children and make sure that appropriate steps have been taken to keep your child safe.***

If you or someone you know believe a child may have been sexually abused by a trusted authority figure, please contact me for a free consultation at 312-332-1400 or by email at [markbrown@lane-lane.com](mailto:markbrown@lane-lane.com). Please be sure to have the referral let our office know that they were referred by an EGL member and have them give us your name.

Mark A. Brown, *Partner*

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