

# THE ÆGIS

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Bel Air, Maryland 21014

## Think of the victims

Sexual abusers groom their prey, gain their trust, before abuse begins

Editor:

Regarding Wednesday's article about the alleged sexual abuse perpetrator, I would like to offer a different perspective that speaks to the effects of sexual abuse on victims.

As humans, we do not want to believe others are capable of heinous acts such as sexual abuse. Our level of denial is often so high, the tendency is to not believe victims. Perpetrators are often well-respected members of the community who create the illusion of being a mentor or an "all around nice person." Many hold jobs where they have easy access to children.

As an advocate and counseling provider for trauma victims, I see the devastating results of sexual abuse

on children and families. Children are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse because the offender is often a family member or trusted adult. Fear of not being believed or of being blamed leads to silent suffering.

Sexual abuse is a process that begins long before an actual sexual act occurs. Perpetrators groom their victims to build trust; thereby reducing the likelihood of the victim disclosing abuse. Grooming is a deliberate, subtle action to form a relationship with a child to lower the child's inhibitions. Examples of grooming include: Befriending a child, treating him/her as if they are older or hugging/other physical contact even when the child does not want this attention.

Parents must become educated about the signs of sexual abuse, become more involved in the lives of their children and who they are associating with, and be open to talking about sexual abuse. Please do not judge the next time you hear about a victim disclosing sexual abuse; it takes a lot of courage to report abuse. For more information about sexual abuse and how to prevent it, contact: [jredding@fcsmd.org](mailto:jredding@fcsmd.org) or [www.darkness2light.org](http://www.darkness2light.org).

**Jennifer Redding**

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**Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland** offers trauma treatment services to help people who have experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Counseling is offered to victims and their families. Not all services are available at each location. Please call for details.

**Anne Arundel  
Abuse Counseling  
Center**

Annapolis &  
Glen Burnie Offices  
410-571-8341

**Child Abuse  
Treatment Services**

Baltimore City Office  
410-366-8145

Baltimore County Office  
410-281-1334

**Sexual Abuse  
Treatment Centers**

Carroll County Office  
410-876-1233

Harford County Office  
410-838-9000