The best means for preventing child sexual abuse is evaluating the day-to-day interaction adults have with children. Safe adults must regularly evaluate all adults and adolescents who have contact with children.

In many high-profile child abuse cases, a common thread is the number of adults who may have suspected abuse or actually witnessed the abuse. It is critical, and often a legal requirement, that adults report any suspicious behavior, even when exhibited by someone who seems an unlikely offender.

Although we cannot assume that individuals with certain characteristics are child predators, indicators coupled with suspicious behavior can put safe adults on alert.
Here are some signs to watch for that may indicate a person who is not safe to be alone with a child:

- A person who spends an inordinate amount of time with the child, especially time alone with the child;
- A person who shows an unusual interest in the child, while possibly ignoring other children;
- A person who makes frequent offers to watch the child for the parent or caregiver;
- A person who seeks to take the child on trips away from the parent or caregiver;
- A person who provides the child with special treatment or gifts without the parent’s or caregiver’s permission;
- A person who makes special efforts to appear trustworthy to the parents or caregivers;
- A person who acts like a child, talks like a child, or does childish things;
- A person who allows a child to ignore or bend the rules of his or her parents or caregivers;
- A person who spends more time with one child in particular than with other children or adults;
- A person who contradicts or demeans the child’s parents or caregivers to the child; and/or
- A person who takes pictures of the child or of other children who are not his or her own.

Brought to you through the National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc. and its VIRTUS® programs with the goal to help prevent, address, and mitigate wrongdoing in the community of faith and to help adults become protectors of children and to help communities become safe havens for children.