

Learn to Recognize Risky Behaviors

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- ***Pediatrician Mass Molestation Case a Sad Reminder for Parents Everywhere*** – O.Malley, D., Chicago Crime | Examiner.com <http://www.examiner.com/crime-in-chicago/pediatrician-mass-molestation-case-a-sad-reminder-for-parents-everywhere-video#ixzz1EFINz8dS>,
- ***Phoenix Pediatrician Accused of Distributing Child Porn*** – Thomas, J., azfamily.com, September 2, 2010.

Families across the country are reeling from revelations represented by these two headlines. Through The Protecting God's Children® Program, caring adults are learning to recognize the risky behaviors that other adults in the environment exhibit in their interactions with children. Somehow we believe that children should be safe with their pediatrician or their optometrist or dentist. After all, how could a potential molester complete their training in a child related specialty and no one notice that he or she is a risk to the children they care for?

When children are younger, the answer is simple. Parents or caregivers should always be in the room with children when they are being examined—for anything. Young children do not need to be left alone with a health care professional except for certain tests and those should be observable through a window or other portal. The challenge arises when children get older and they no longer want their parents in the room during an examination.

Pediatricians are confronting this situation with a new view toward the challenges this circumstance creates due to recent cases like the one mentioned above in Delaware. As with others who work with children, those with no bad intentions tend to forget about the risks and those *with* bad intentions try to get by on the coattails of good people. Creating a safe environment for all takes something from both the parents and the professionals involved. One simple rule can help everyone avert the risk in the situation.

Parents can let kids know before the appointment that, although they understand the need for the young person to go in without parents, that will not happen unless there is another adult in the room with the doctor. It is important for parents to not be swayed in this decision by the child or the health care professional. It is not “okay” to go forward one-on-one just because the child or the health care professional thinks it is okay. Protecting everyone is the goal—and both the young person and the health care professional are vulnerable.

In the event that there are circumstances that require a private meeting between the child and the professional, remember to apply or demand that the principles of creating an open environment are adhered to. For example, parents should only agree if the meeting is in a room with windows that allow others to observe the interactions—without listening in to confidential conversations.

Health care professionals also need to take responsibility for creating a proactive approach to this issue by including practices such as having “chaperones” in the room when examining older children. If parents are leaving the decision to the health professional and/or the child, the adult must say “yes” or “no” and without a chaperone, it is in the best interest of all that the answer be “no.” One missed exam is not worth the risk of a career.

We all know that older children assert their independence as a part of growing up. They will think it is fine to meet alone with the doctor, dentist, optometrist, or other health care professional and the doctors may agree to leave it up to the child. However, the responsible parties in all this are the parents to establish the boundaries within which their children operate. This is just one example of a situation that requires parents and care givers to stand their ground to protect their children.

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.