

# Preventing School Employee Sexual Misconduct

Presentation  
Colorado School Safety Resource Center  
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# Prevalence

- Nearly 10 percent of all students in grades 8 to 11 report contact and/or non-contact educator sexual misconduct that was *unwanted*.
- Unwanted qualifier means probably much larger numbers of students experienced school employee sexual misconduct.



# Number of students subject to school employee sexual misconduct at least once between kindergarten and 12th grade

- In the United States, all students: 5.5 million students
- In Colorado: 88,000 public school students



# Offenders



# School Staff Who Abuse

- No national data available
- Increase in licenses being revoked
- Teachers, coaches, custodians, bus drivers, principals, school resource officers, counselors, aids, substitutes...
- About 70% of allegations identify male abusers; 30% identify female abusers



# Offenders by Job Title

	Percent
Teacher Role: Full time, substitutes, aides	42
Coach (might also be a teacher, but in coach role)	15
Bus Driver	12
Other School Employee	10
Security Guard, School Resource Officer	10
Principal/Assistant Principal	6
Counselor	5



# Targets



# Summary of Targets

- More likely to be female
- Disproportionately African descent or Latina/o
- Students with disabilities are over – represented based upon proportion in school population
- Vulnerable children

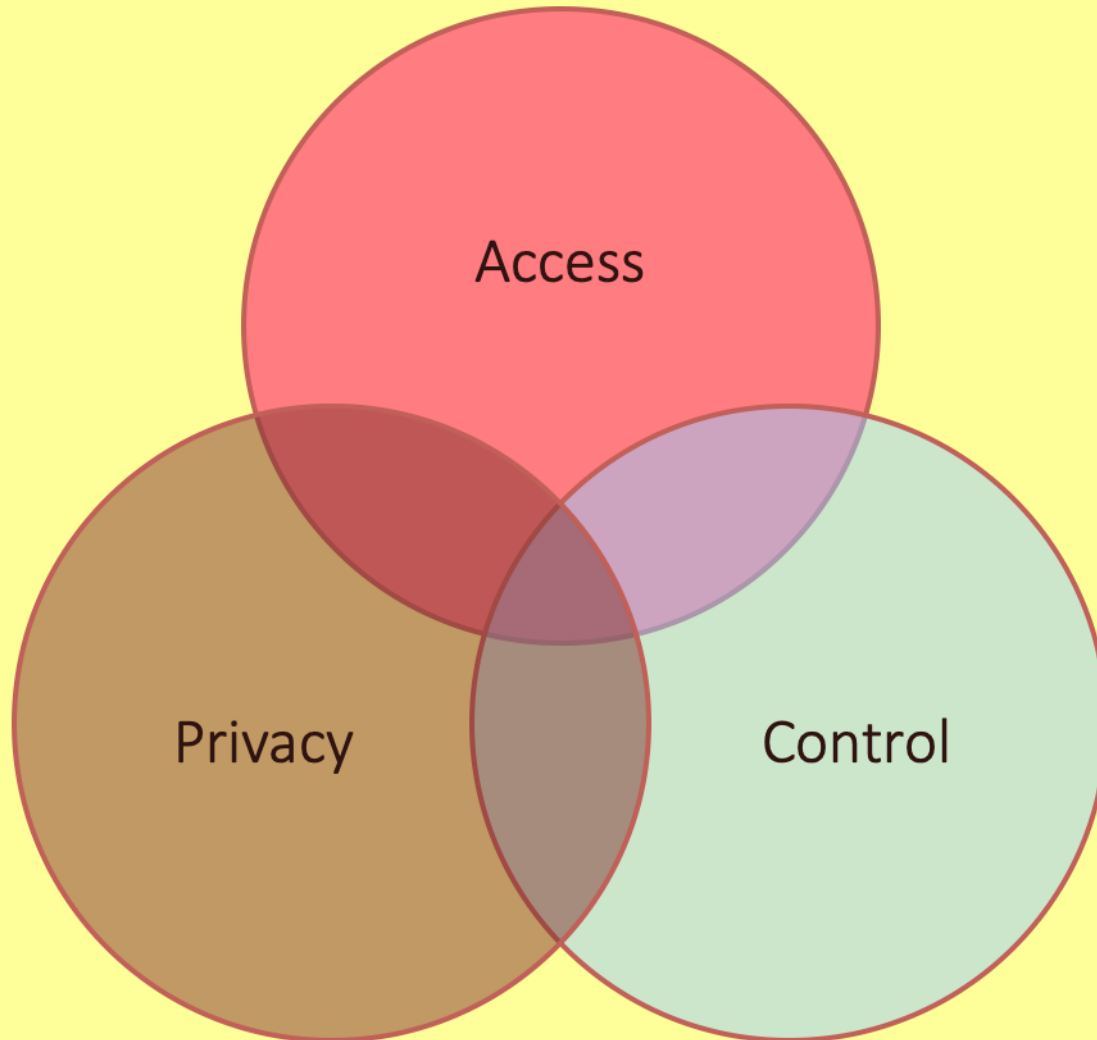




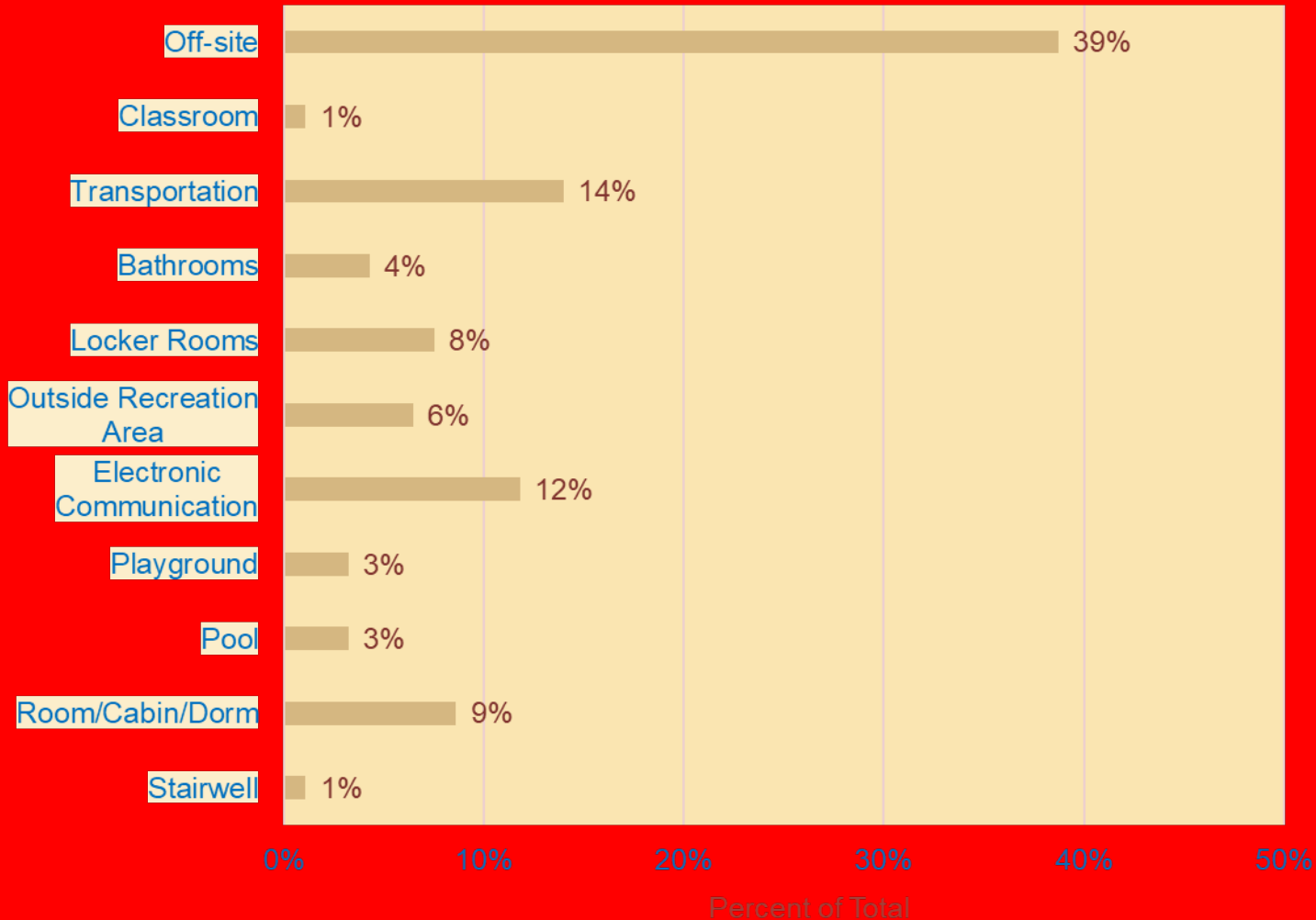
# Patterns



# How it Happens



# Where Sexual Misconduct Occurs



# Patterns and Myths

- Outstanding teacher
- Romantic/situational
- Grooming relationship
- Myths: most are serial abusers
- Most were sexually abused



# What is Grooming?

- Behaviors to gain trust
- Special favors
- Help with school
- Positive connection to parents/guardians
- Trips, presents



# Who is groomed?

- Target
- Colleagues
- Parents/guardians
- Purpose is to gain trust



# Allegations

- Most sexual misconduct is unreported
- When reported, often ignored
- Seldom reported directly
- Informal channels are common
- Reports, however they come, require Title IX action
- False allegations are rare



# Prevention





# Comprehensive Prevention



# Comprehensive Policies

- Communicate zero tolerance for abuse
- Include acceptable and unacceptable behavior
- Include School Employee Policy in addition to mandated reporting, child abuse, and sexual harassment policies
- Provide legal and other consequences
- Include reporting responsibilities, procedures, and consequences for not reporting
- In policies (and training) include boundaries
- Include support for victim/target
- Statement about retaliation



# Policies: Boundaries to Define

- Physical affection
- Verbal interactions
- Outside contact
- Electronic communication
- One-on-one interactions
- Gift giving
- Traveling with students – transportation issues
- Afterschool programs and guidelines



# Hiring and Screening

- Application
- Criminal background checks: county, state, places lived work attended school, multi state criminal database
- Reference checks: previous supervisors, references beyond list if supervisors not included, contact by phone and interview, match employee history on application with references
- Other: sex abuser registries, Facebook, social media, social security number
- Behavior interviewing



# Hiring and Screening

- Criminal background check isn't sufficient
- Call references. Ask specific questions.
- In interviews, pose scenarios
- Ask why moving from one school/district to another
- Make it clear in hiring that you take boundary crossing and misconduct seriously



# Education/Training

- Specific to School Employee Sexual Misconduct
- Everyone gets overall training (teachers, administrators, custodial, clerical, cafeteria, professional staff)
- Specific additional group training: administrators, boards, Title IX coordinator, parents, students



# Education/Training (cont'd)

- Avoid one shot training
- Train every year
- Do not assume mandated reporter training is sufficient
- Reinforce by communicating when something has happened



# Supervision and Monitoring

- Walk into classrooms
- Walk the building before and after school
- Listen to rumors and gossip from kids
- Look for warning signs: doors closed, windows covered up, student alone in room with teacher
- Model, teach, and encourage positive bystander behavior
- Watch to prevent intimidation of victims
- Check telephones/texting
- Increase supervision of a staff member with reported or suspicious behavior





# Responding and Reporting

- Report to police or child services
- Leave investigations to professionals
- You will need to complete a Title IX investigation but can use police/child service investigation report as *part* of your findings



# Aftermath: What went wrong?

- Were policies adequate?
- Did we follow our own policies?
- Was supervision adequate?
- What did people see and hear?
- Were reporting procedures followed?



# Why adults don't report

- Don't understand red flags
- Don't want to hurt colleague's career
- Fear disclosing will hurt school
- Don't understand how reports are investigated
- Don't understand the threshold for reasonable suspicion, reason to believe, or even rumor



# Why Children Don't Report

- Manipulated by abusers
- Don't interpret as abuse
- Embarrassed
- Feel guilty
- Believe they will be blamed
- Don't believe they will be protected
- Fear reprisal
- Don't know how to report
- Don't want to get abuser in trouble



# Healing

- Victim
- School
- Community



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