

# **Grooming: Making You See and Believe What I Want You To See and Believe**

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## **Our Mission:**

**The NCAC models, promotes, and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education, and leadership.**

# Learning Objectives

1. Attendees will develop a framework for classifying grooming behaviors by those who abuse children.
2. Attendees will review recently published research on grooming related to child abuse and related content.
3. Attendees will identify new opportunities for identifying corroborative evidence based on this new “grooming” information.

# Definition of Grooming

A close-up photograph of two baboons. The larger baboon in the foreground is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Its fur is thick and greyish-brown. The smaller baboon is positioned behind it, partially obscured, and appears to be grooming the larger one's head. The background is a soft, out-of-focus reddish-brown color.

- To clean and maintain the appearance of (as the coat of a horse or dog)
- To make neat or attractive (an impeccably groomed woman)
- To get into readiness for a specific objective - prepare (was being groomed as a presidential candidate)

# Definition of Manipulate

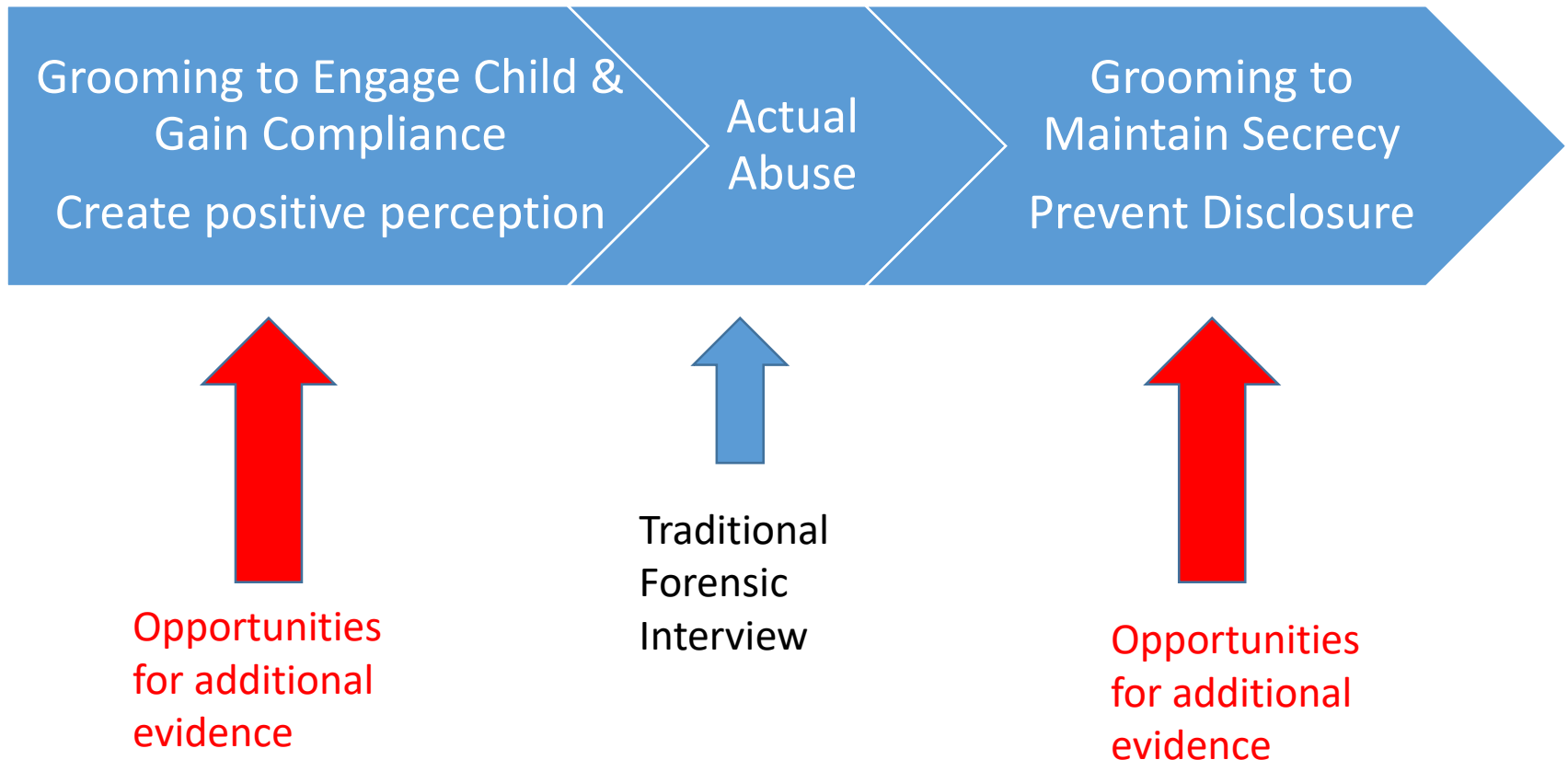
- To treat or operate with or as if with the hands or by mechanical means especially in a skillful manner
- To manage or utilize skillfully or to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means especially to one's own advantage
- To change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose



# Grooming?

- Grooming vs. Manipulating?
  - **“to get into readiness for a specific objective”**
  - Grooming is pro-social behavior
  - Get ready for a specific objective like sexually abuse is **NOT**
- Should we change our language?

# Evidence Collection Model



# Craven, S., Brown, S., & Gilchrist, E. (2006).

Sexual grooming of children: Review of literature and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 12(3), 287-299.

# Grooming Overview

- Purpose
  - provide a theoretical review of grooming as it relates to CSA and propose a new definition of grooming
- Proposed definition of “grooming”
  - “A process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child’s compliance, and maintaining the child’s secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender’s abuse pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions” (p. 297)



# Grooming Overview

- Three different types of offender-victim interaction proposed:
  - Aggressive – use of force, violence, or threats
  - Criminal-opportunist – one-off offenses with more stranger or less well-known victims
  - **Intimate – cause less physical harm and a significant focus of their grooming behaviors is to:**
    - **Gain compliance of victim**
    - **Avoid disclosure/criminal justice intervention**

# Grooming Overview

Three types of grooming proposed:

1. Self-Grooming
2. Grooming the environment & significant others
3. Grooming the child

# Grooming Overview

- Self-Grooming
  - Justifying or denying their behavior
  - Relates to overcoming “Internal Inhibitors” from Finkelhor’s Pre-Condition model
  - “Success” is likely to result in:
    - Further justification
    - Denial of their actions
    - Enhanced sexual excitement for the offender

# Grooming Overview

- Grooming the environment & significant others
  - Necessary in order to gain access to the child
  - Involved “grooming” both the environment and the child’s significant others
- Extra-familial Offender
  - Parents may be unsure of the offender’s motives initially
  - Offender must gain the trust of the parent long before any abuse may occur
    - Clearly suggests cunning and planning

# Grooming Overview

- Grooming the environment & significant others
  - Intra-familial Offender
    - Offender is already in a position of trust and will exploit this in a variety of manners
    - Targeting single-parent families – Dennis P.
    - Isolating the victim from non-offending parent, siblings, and outside world
      - “How does the offender get alone time with child?”
    - Isolate non-offending parent from the child
      - Encourage substance use/abuse by non-offending parent
      - Criticize the parenting behavior of the non-offending parent in front of friends and families

# Grooming Overview

- Grooming the child
  - Most commonly recognized form of grooming behavior
  - Physical Grooming
    - Gradual sexualization of the relationship between the offender and victim
    - Desensitize the child to touches which become increasingly sexual over time Desensitize the child to sexual issues and nudity – including seeing each other nude or bathing– Ray M.

# Grooming Overview

- Grooming the child (cont.)
  - Psychological Grooming
    - Used to achieve the increased sexualization
    - Used to increase the victim's compliance
      - Isolating the child from others
      - Building increased "trust" between child and offender
      - Threats or bribes, including potential of harm to those the child loves
    - Used to prevent child disclosure
      - Threats or bribes to maintain secrecy
      - Child made to feel responsible
      - Child confused about physiological response which feels good

# **PROPOSAL: Four Forms of Grooming/Manipulation**

1. Self-grooming
2. Grooming /Manipulating the environment
3. Grooming/Manipulating significant others
4. Grooming/Manipulating the child



## **Katz, C., & Barnett, Z. (2015).**

Children's narratives of alleged child sexual abuse  
offender behaviors and the manipulation process.  
*Psychology of Violence, 6(2), 223.*

# Manipulation Process

- Purpose – increase our understanding of offenders' manipulation tactics identified during FI's
  - First article to specifically reframe the seduction and solicitation of children from **grooming to manipulation**
- 95 investigative interviews with children (5-13 years old) conducted in 2011 which met criteria:
  - Alleged sexual abuse of a child
  - The was the first forensic interview of the child
  - Determined to be a high probability that the abuse occurred based on external evidence
  - Child made allegations & disclosed in the FI
  - No developmental disabilities identified

# Manipulation Process

- Case characteristics:
  - All alleged offenders were male
  - More than half of the children involved were abused by offenders known to the child, but not family members
  - More than half involved multiple incidents of abuse
  - Forensic interviews were conducted using NICHD protocol.
- Manipulation Process – any action performed by the alleged abuser before or immediately after the incident of abuse (establishment of emotional rapport with child, manipulation of the child's family, use of temptation or coercion immediately before and/or after the abuse).

# Manipulation Process

- Most commonly used Manipulation Tactics:
  - “Manipulation of the Family” – 68%
  - “Establishment of Emotional Rapport” – 59%
  - “Coercion” – 39%
  - “Providing treats” – 17%
- Although coercion was only identified by 39% of children, it was the second most reported offender behavior in children’s narratives – after the actual abuse

# **The Internet and Electronic Media**

## **Grooming/Manipulation and Solicitation**

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# Williams, R., Elliott, I. A., & Beech, A. R. (2013).

Identifying sexual grooming themes used by internet sex offenders. *Deviant Behavior*, 34, 135-152.

# Who are you talking to?

- The purpose of this study is to use qualitative analysis of the transcripts of sex offenders and undercover researchers to determine a set of themes that occur within the first two hours of the grooming process online.
- Subjects:
  - Average age of the chat-room users was 31.8 years
  - All of the users were male

# Who are you talking to?

- Design:
  - 8 transcripts of dialogue between child decoys and adults eventually convicted of soliciting children
  - Obtained from **Perverted Justice**
  - 1-2 hour transcripts where grooming was clearly demonstrated
  - Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data
  - The decoys represented themselves as females between the ages of 12-14



# Who are you talking to?

- Three superordinate themes and several sub-themes were found:
  - Rapport-building
  - Sexual content
  - Assessment
- It is common for offenders to jump between various themes and sub-themes
- Not a linear experience

# Who are you talking to?

- Rapport-building

- Coordination

- Synchronize their behaviors with the child's behavior
      - Coming down to the child's level or
      - Elevating the child to a more adult level

- Mutuality

- Discover the interests, attitudes, and personal situation of child and then present himself with similar interests, etc.
      - Aiming to become the confidant of the child

- Positivity

- Portray himself to the child in a extremely positive light to create the impression he is friendly, trustworthy, and harmless.
      - Liberal use of flattery toward the child

# Who are you talking to?

- Sexual content
  - Introduction
    - As a game
    - Advice
    - “Mutual Fantasy”
    - Forcing the topic
  - Maintenance/Escalation
    - Repetition
    - Forcing the dialogue

# Who are you talking to?

- Assessment – this is an ongoing process
  - Of Child
    - Trust/Vulnerability
    - Receptiveness
  - Of Environment
    - Obstacles
    - Opportunity
    - Information
- Similarities with contact grooming/manipulation??

# EDUCATORS

## Grooming/Manipulation and Solicitation

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# Oops!

## Ex-teacher admits molesting boys he tutored after school

**STEVE BRUCE**  
COURT REPORTER

✉ sbruce@herald.ca  
🐦 @CH\_courts

A former teacher with the Halifax regional school board has pleaded guilty to sex crimes involving two teenage boys he was tutoring after-hours.

Ryan Patrick Nolan, 33, entered the pleas Wednesday in Halifax provincial court.

Nolan pleaded guilty to a charge of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old boy by grabbing his penis while he slept.

The Halifax man also admitted exposing his genitals to another boy under the age of 16. In that incident, he put on a pornographic movie and masturbated in front of the teen.

Both offences were committed at his apartment between Septem-

ber 2008 and June 2010. The identities of the victims are protected by a publication ban.

Nolan will be sentenced Nov. 28. Defence lawyer Elizabeth Buckle told the court that she and Crown attorney Peter Dostal will make a joint sentencing recommendation.

Outside court, Dostal wouldn't disclose the proposed sentence but said the options include probation, a conditional sentence and jail time.

Nolan also faces charges of Internet luring and invitation to sexual touching, both involving the boy he sexually assaulted. Dostal said he expects to withdraw those two charges next month.

Nolan was employed with the school board from 2008 to 2011, primarily as a substitute teacher.

He coached the boys' hockey team at Bedford Junior High

School in 2009 and also did some coaching in the Bedford and District Minor Hockey Association.

He was arrested last December after an 18-year-old man told his parents that he had been abused by Nolan at the age of 14.

The other complainant came forward last January after hearing about the charges against Nolan in the news.

Both boys were former students of Nolan's at the time of the offences, Dostal said.

Nolan remains free on bail, with conditions that he remain in Nova Scotia, have no contact with several people and surrender his passport.

He also can't be alone with anyone under 16, must stay away from parks, playgrounds, schools and other places frequented by children and can't use the Internet unless supervised.

# Teachers Make a Difference



Visit [nstu.ca](http://nstu.ca) by Nov. 2 to nominate a teacher who has made a difference.



## **Knoll, J. (2010).**

Teacher sexual misconduct: Grooming patterns and female offenders. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 19*, 371-386.

# You are teaching what?

- Two distinct patterns for educators who sexually abuse:
  - Abusers of victims younger than 7<sup>th</sup> grade
    - These are educators who are often high achievers with past recognition for their work
    - Works at being recognized as a good teacher to secure trust of others (grooming of the environment and others)
  - Abusers with victims in late middle and high school
    - Less pre-meditated actions
    - More likely the result of bad judgement



# You are teaching what?

- Potential Warning Signs of Educator Grooming
  - Obvious/inappropriate preferential treatment of a student(s)
  - Excessive time spent alone with a student
  - Excessive time spent with a student outside of class
  - Repeated time spent in private spaces with a student
  - Driving a student to or from school

# You are teaching what?

- Potential Warning Signs of Educator Grooming (cont.)
  - Befriending parents and making visits to their home
  - Acting as a particular student's "confidante"
  - Giving small gifts, cards, letters to a student
  - Inappropriate calls, emails, or texts to a student
  - Overlay affectionate behavior with a student
  - Flirtatious behavior or off-color remarks around a student
  - Other students suspect, make jokes or references

## Ratliff, L., & Watson, J. (2014).

A descriptive analysis of public school educators arrested for sex offenses. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 23(2), 217-228, DOI: 10.1080/10538712.2014.870275

# What are you teaching?

- The purpose of this study is to provide a description of teachers who have sexually offended against students by examining reviewing public records
- Subjects - 431 certified public school teachers in the Southeastern U.S. arrested and charged with sexual misconduct between 2007-2011

# What are you teaching?

- Teacher Profiles:
  - Gender
    - Male – 319
    - Female – 112
  - Average Age of Arrested Teacher – 37 years old
  - Grade Placement
    - Elementary – 9%
    - Middle School – 27%
    - High School – 64%

# What are you teaching?

- Male teachers were more likely to:
  - Sexually offend against younger students (12 and under)
  - Be caught through a direct disclosure by victim, discovery by school administration, or a police undercover operation
- Female teachers were more likely to:
  - Sexually offend against older students (13 and older)
  - Be caught through reports by other students or the victims' parent/guardian

# **Lippert, T., Cross, T. P., Jones, L., & Walsh, W. (2010).**

Suspect confession of child sexual abuse to  
investigators. *Child Maltreatment*, 15(2), 161-170.

# To tell the truth....

- The purpose of this study was to examine suspect confession rates within the context of an investigation of child sexual abuse.
  - Four communities – two with CACs and two without CACs
  - This is secondary data analysis from the Multisite Evaluation of CACs – funded by OJJDP.
- There were a total of 282 cases included:
  - 170 from the CAC communities
  - 112 from the non-CAC communities
- Children were on average 9.6 years old at the time of abuse onset, and 10.3 years old at the time of the initial forensic interview.



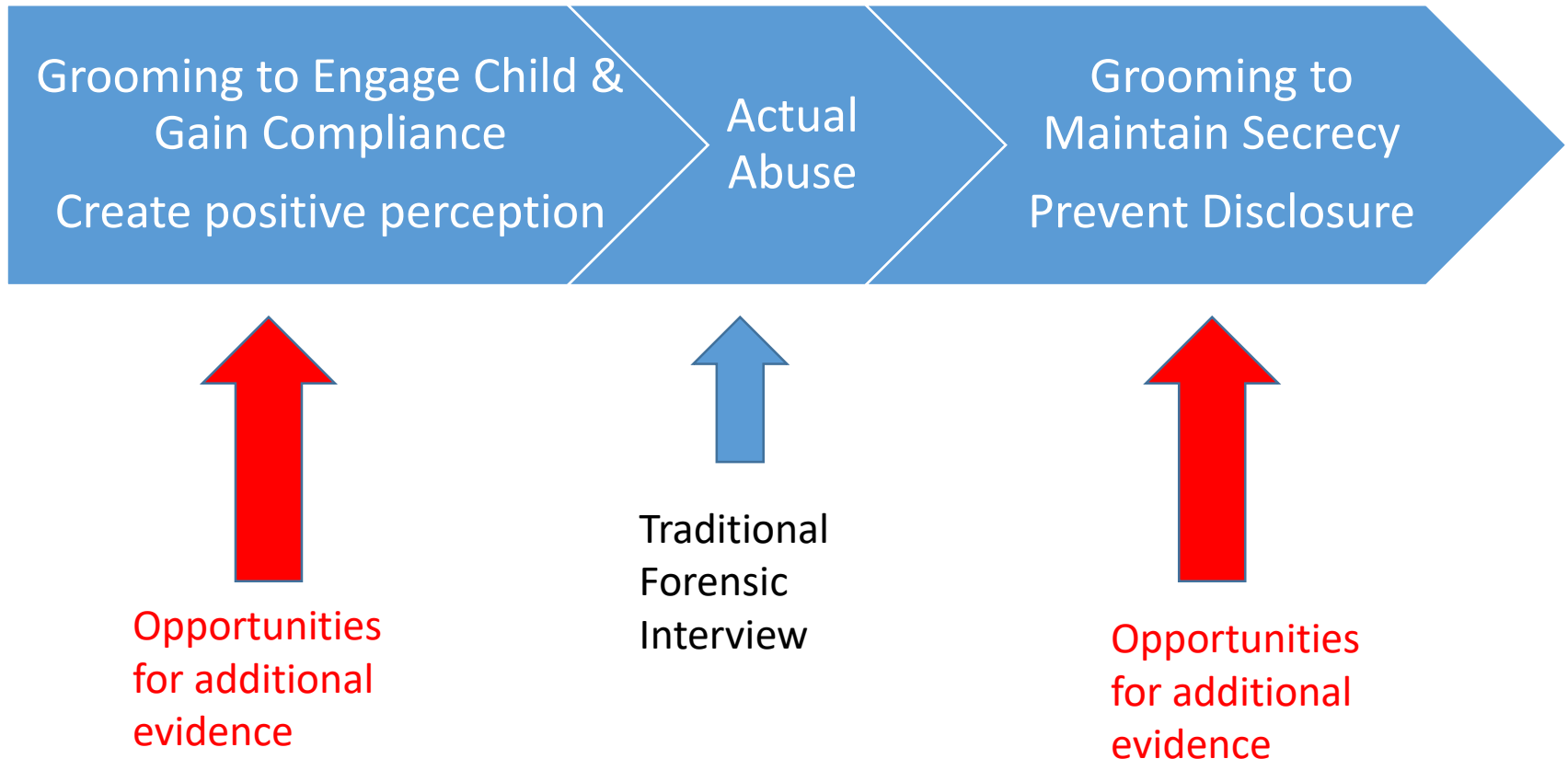
## To tell the truth....

- A confession was defined as “a suspect’s communication to an investigator (LE or CPS) of any sexual acts with the alleged victim”
  - Full and partial confessions were combined vs. those denying or neither admitting nor denying sexual abuse
- 30% of the suspects confessed to having sexually abused a child

## To tell the truth....

- Suspect confession was more likely when:
  - child victims were older
  - multiple victims
  - it was an extra-familial case
- **Corroborative witness evidence was available for about one-third of the cases and more than doubled the confession rate!**
  - **More corroboration related to grooming = more likely confession!**

# Evidence Collection Model



# Questions Targeting Child's Experience of Victim Selection

- Tell me about meeting [...].”
- “What else was happening in your life when you first met [...]?”
- “What did you think about [...], the first time you met him/her?”



# Questions Targeting Child's Experience of Victim Selection

- “How did you feel about [...] the first time you met him/her?”
- “What did [...] say about you when he/she first met you?”



# Questions Targeting Access Acquisition

- “Where would you be alone with [...]?”
- “Where would others (parents, caregivers, siblings, peers) be?”
- “Did [...] help you, or your mom/dad?”
  - If yes, “Tell me about....”



# Questions Targeting Rapport/Trust Development

- “How did you feel about [...] before [...] started happening?”
- “What kinds of things did [...] first do with you?”
- “Did [...] give you or your friends things?”
  - (If yes, “Tell me about”)



# Questions Targeting Rapport/Trust Development

- “Tell me about any rules [...] had.” “What would happen if you or the other kids broke the rules?”
- “What kinds of things did [...] tell you about him/herself?”
- “What did [...] say about [...]”  
(people significant to the child)





# Questions Targeting Desensitization

- “Was there ever a time [...] showed you something on a computer, phone, iPad, etc.?”
  - If yes, “Tell me about...”
- “Did the things [...] ever change?”
  - If yes, “Tell me about...”



# Questions Targeting Secrecy

- “Did you ever think about telling?”
  - If yes, “Tell me about...”
- “What kinds of things made you think about telling?”
- Tell me if something was ever said about telling?”
- “What stopped you from telling someone?”



# Resource

- Professional Bibliography
  - “Manipulation/Grooming of Victims of Child Sexual Abuse”
  - <https://calio.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/grooming-bib2.pdf>

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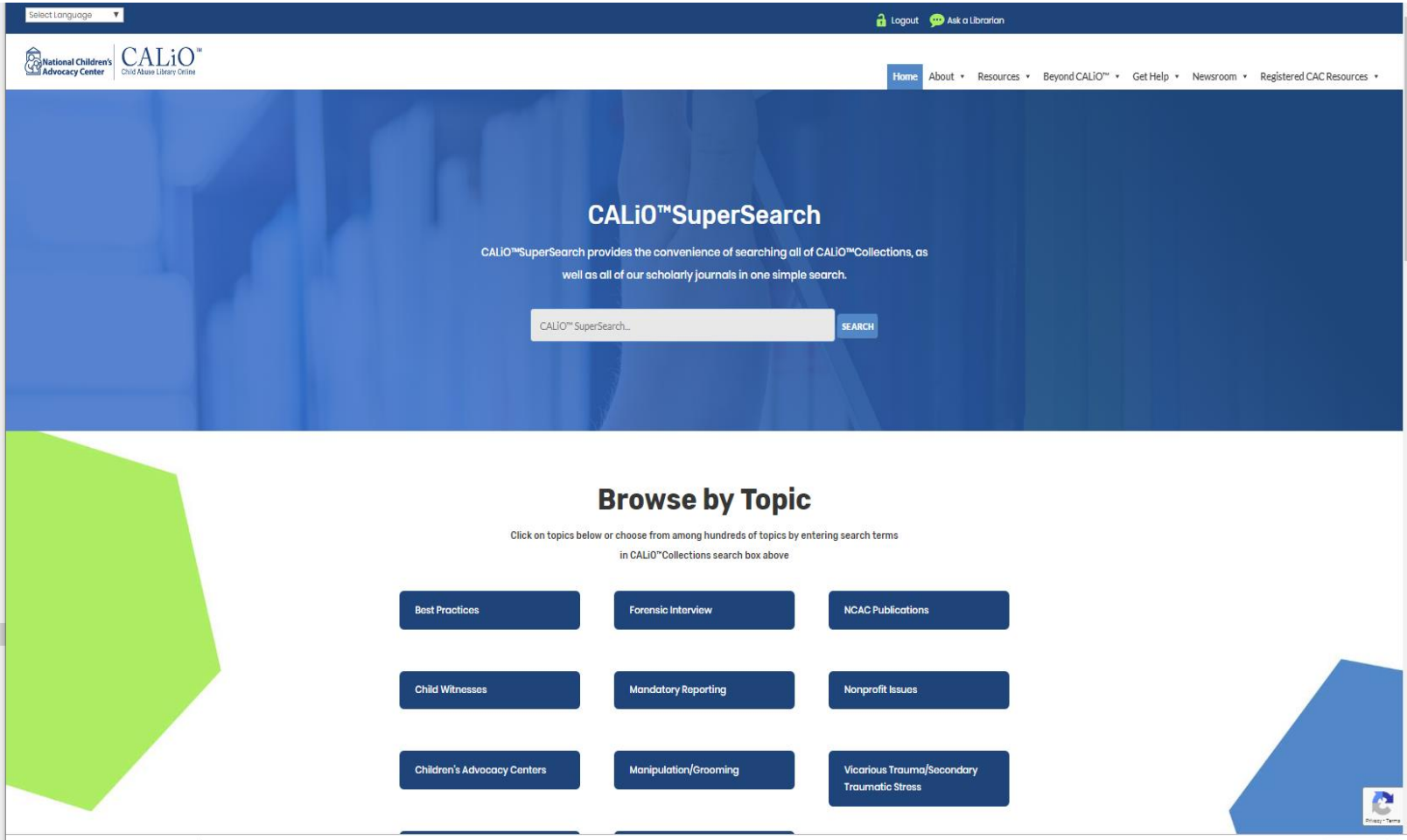


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# Child Abuse Library Online (CALiO)

[www.calio.org](http://www.calio.org)



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Child Abuse Library Online (CALiO). The top navigation bar includes a language selector, a login button, and a link to ask a librarian. The main header features the National Children's Advocacy Center logo and the CALiO logo. A navigation menu contains links for Home, About, Resources, Beyond CALiO, Get Help, Newsroom, and Registered CAC Resources. The central section is titled "CALiO™ SuperSearch" and includes a search box with the placeholder text "CALiO™ SuperSearch..." and a "SEARCH" button. Below this is a "Browse by Topic" section with a grid of topic buttons: Best Practices, Forensic Interview, NCAC Publications, Child Witnesses, Mandatory Reporting, Nonprofit Issues, Children's Advocacy Centers, Manipulation/Grooming, and Vicarious Trauma/Secondary Traumatic Stress. A "Privacy Terms" link is visible in the bottom right corner.

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