

Are Teens Safe at Work

Teenagers are in more danger from sexual predators at their part time jobs than through the Internet

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Transcript

PBS came to IUPUI because it had learned that the sexual harassment of teenagers is a really huge problem. Basically, they learned that a teenager is more likely to be sexually harassed on the job than to be approached by an Internet predator. For example, sexual harassment also happens with teenage males. Something called bagging where someone will grab a guy's crotch.

Many of the people who would engage in this kind of behavior, I would say predators, who are sexually assaulting people, groping people who know better than what they are doing. They have learned they can't get away doing this with adults, so what they're doing is they're targeting teenagers.

This is not just located only in the workplace. Sexual harassment also happens in educational institutions and high school and in colleges. I know here on campus we have a zero tolerance policy for that. Part of what we're also doing here is looking at the law and neuroscience and psychosocial development of adolescents to say what does the neuroscience, and what does the psychosocial evidence about adolescent development tell us about how we should think about their capacity under the law?

In other words, if their brains are just developing and are under construction if you will, do they literally have the ability to put all the synapses together to formulate what we would consider a fully informed consent? I think watching this PBS special will be terrific. You'll be able to do that online through the show now on PBS.

I think it's important for parents to understand that children might not feel comfortable talking about this phenomenon, and that teenagers don't like talking about sex. They may be embarrassed about it. They may feel like people won't believe them.

My research shows that if parents ask their teens about the workplace, if they let their teens know that they're available to talk about these issues, teens are more likely to come forward, and that's what has to happen. Teens need to report this behavior. Safety has to come first.