

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNER



It's natural to want a loving relationship with another adult. It makes you human.

But it's in your child's best interest that you move slowly before introducing your son or daughter to a love interest. Proceed even slower before letting your partner spend nights or babysit.

The people who can hurt your son or daughter the most are often the adults who have easy access. Often it's someone your child knows and trusts.

You may not see signs right away that your partner could harm your child. That's one good reason to give the relationship time to develop before he or she starts staying overnight or living with your family.

Did you know that a child in a home with a live-in boyfriend is 11 times more likely to be abused than a child living with married parents?

For younger children the news is even worse. A child under age 5 faces a greater risk of being fatally abused when living with his or her mother and a boyfriend.

Signs to look for while dating include:

- ✓ Not wanting your friends and family around.
- ✓ Controlling or jealous behavior.
- ✓ Drug or alcohol abuse.
- ✓ Anger when your child cries or misbehaves.
- ✓ Violent behavior toward you or your child.
- ✓ Mood swings.
- ✓ Frequent criticism of you.

If you see at least one sign, your child has an increased risk for possible harm.

Steps to take to protect your child when choosing a partner:

- ✓ Google him or her. Pay for a background check. Look at his social media profiles and activity.
- ✓ Observe how he or she interacts with your child. Pay attention to your instincts.
- ✓ Tell your child he or she can express any concerns they have about your partner.
- ✓ Name a neighbor or another trusted adult your child can go to if frightened by your partner when you are not home.

It takes time to know if a person is the right partner. Don't rush. You and your child are worth the wait.