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Battle against child molesters

By JOHN CASTINE

Free Press Staff Writer

"There is no stereotype of a child molester. I guarantee that if you met me, you would not believe in a million years that I was a sex offender."

— from a convicted child molester's letter, quoted in "Child Molesting, A Prosecutor's Advisory."

Any author would be happy to produce a best-selling book, but Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson wishes that wouldn't be the case with his latest effort.

With no fanfare, Patterson last week introduced a handbook, produced by several volunteers and him, entitled "Child Molesting — A Prosecutor's Advisory."

"Obviously it (book) is timely, unfortunately," Patterson said about the 87-page manual, which has been more than a year in the works. "We think it's a valuable contribution in the total effort to combat this most serious problem which is very prevalent and increasing every day."



Patterson

Statistics on child molesting are not reliable. Neither the federal government nor Michigan State Police keep any, and those kept by other departments may not reflect true numbers at all. The American Humane Society in Denver figures that in 1979, the last year for which totals are available, there were 11,306 reports of sexual abuse of children in the nation, compared to 5,119 cases reported in 1978.

The doubling of figures is due in part, says a spokesperson, to the increase in reporting crimes against children, especially by teachers.

Edward Sosnick, an assistant Oakland County prosecutor, said the state's Department of Social Services has reported 45 sex abuse cases in Oakland County for the first three months of this year, with 514 in the state. In 1979, the agency substantiated 1,725 sex abuse cases in Michigan, he said.

"And probably only five percent of the cases are ever reported. So that's a very, very big problem, he added.

Patterson said he won't make any money on the book, because it is being printed by Oakland County and is meant for distribution to teacher, parent, police and church groups. He said the book will be free to groups in Oakland County and cost

\$2 to individuals or to groups outside the county, to cover printing costs.

Although the idea for the handbook grew out of the abduction and murders of four children in Oakland County in the late 1970s, and most recently the child killings in Atlanta, the book is aimed at the less publicized but more typical cases of child molesting, Patterson said.

"WHAT WE'VE done is try to identify the child molester. We have tried to explode some myths about who he is and who he is not, and set up a training guide for parents, teachers and children themselves," Patterson said. "We've got to tell the kids that they (child molesters) are not going to come up and grab you. That's the one who makes the press.

"Most often the molestation is one done through seduction, guile, friendship, favors, candy. 'Come in the house. Watch my video equipment, play Ping-Pong' ... and over a period of time the defenses (of a child) are reduced."

The cover of the manual depicts that idea, showing youngsters following a Pied Piper.

Sosnick, a senior trial lawyer who has prosecuted several child molesters, directed the assembling of the handbook. Other volunteers for the project included Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor James Vondale, William Gray of the Rochester Police Department, Oak Park district court probation director Robert Klotz, psychologist Lawrence Lilliston of Oakland University, and M. Diane Vincent, director of Common Ground in Birmingham.

THE BOOK includes quizzes and role-playing games for parents and their children. Also there are sections on reporting, legal and medical procedures, and what Patterson called the most valuable part of the book — "How to detect when a child's been molested ... through mood changes and the reactions (of a child) to certain individuals."

Patterson said he had the men and women in his office with children try the quizzes out at home and found many of the kids thought they knew all the answers about what people they should avoid.

For instance one true-or-false question is "People who molest children look crazy or creepy." The answer is False. The book says molesters "look like everyone else."

Another question is: "A child molester can be anyone you know." The answer is True. "A molester can be a person you know and trust. He is not always a stranger. So if a person you know and trust, even a relative, touches you in a way you know to be wrong, you should report it to mom or dad."

"The kids (of his employees) answered these question wrong," Patterson said. "So did my daughter Patsy ... and

See HANDBOOK, Page 3E

Handbook lists plays

"Child Molesting — A Prosecutor's Advisory" includes the following 10 most successful plays of the child molester, gleaned from thorough reviews of the Oakland County prosecutor's files.

1. The molester asks the child to help him locate a lost puppy. The molester may ask the child to join him in searching a field or to ride in his car around the block while looking for the animal.
2. The molester stops his vehicle and asks the child for directions. He may grab the child as he approaches the car or ask the child to join him in the car to show him the way.
3. The molester offers gifts, candy or money to any child in a group who will come with him in his vehicle.
4. The molester asks the child his name and then says, "You're the one I'm looking for. Your mom has been in an accident and is now in the hospital. I'm supposed to take you to her."
5. The molester attempts to detain a child until all other children have departed after an event. He may do this by asking the child to help clean up the site or briefly to do some other kind of work.
6. The molester uses an "attraction" — perhaps a vehicle such as a motorcycle, sports car or speedboat — in which he offers to give the child a ride.
7. The molester looks for the lone hitchhiker while driving. He may have removed the door handle on the passenger side of his car.
8. The molester pretends to be someone he is not. He carries a policeman's badge or wears a clerical collar. (One molester kept makeup, wigs, and several costumes in his van.)
9. The molester invites neighborhood children into his home, where he has such things as a pinball machine, Ping-Pong table and pool table to entertain them. He will then disarm his guests by serving wine.
10. The molester goes up to a house and asks for a specific person. Upon being informed that no such person lives there, he asks to use the telephone.

Greeks go on television

Waiting kids to climb down

