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Kids As Young As 12 Are Being Put On The Kansas Sex Offender Website

KAKE News

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Just playing doctor could put your child on the Kansas sex offender website.

The sex offender website is filled with information about people who have committed horrible crimes against children. But KAKE News has learned kids not even old enough to drive are being called sex offenders.

On the website are the faces of Kansas sex offenders. Many of them men, in their forties and fifties, who have molested and raped young children. But some are children themselves, also labeled as sex offenders.

"This is the new scarlet letter and I don't think we want to be branding kids with it," said Wichita attorney Roger Falk.

Kids can be put on this list as young as 10 years old for what some may describe as "playing doctor" but the law has ruled as criminal offenses. Just ask a Kansas teen, who we will call Kevin.

"I was just pretty much in shock," said Kevin.

Kevin is on the list. He and his mother agreed to share their story, as long as they were not identified. Several years ago, Kevin's mom walked in on him performing a sex act on another child, who was under the age of ten. His mother was concerned and took Kevin to a therapist. The girl was also counseled.

"Next thing I know, I have my son registered as a sex offender because I took him in for counseling.

Kansas law requires the therapist to report children involved in sexual situations, no matter how innocent they seem. If they don't, they could lose their license.

Kevin's mom knew the incident would have to be reported, but she never expected her son would end up on the website.

Around 20 children in Sedgwick County and 50 other Kansas kids 15 and under, are registered sex offenders. So how does this happen?

Over the past decade, the state has made sexual perpetrators' crimes increasingly public with its website. But in recent years, the law has allowed for pictures of children as young as 10-years-old to be plastered on the website.

"It's the reason he's not going to have a future," said Kevin's mom. "And what future he does have is limited because of my decision to make sure he was okay."

The interesting thing about the law? IF the female victim had been 10-years-old at the time of the incident, her face could have been on the website too.

Typically juvenile criminal files are sealed, that's not necessarily the case for sexual offenders. While their files are not public record, you can learn their names, see their faces, and know their offenses from the website.

"I didn't really understand what was going on at first, until I realized I had to go to the prison and get my picture taken and finger prints," said Kevin.

Kevin realizes he did something wrong, and while experts argue about the appropriate treatment, many are outraged a boy could be treated the same as an adult rapist.

In this case, Kevin was adjudicated, a term reserved for juveniles, but he was essentially found guilty of a sex crime and had to register as a sex offender.

"I do have some concerns about the law because I think that the long-term impact on the child is probably detrimental," said Terri Brown from Adult Child and Family Counseling.

A new hobby for high schoolers is to Google each other. That's what Kevin's classmates did to him, and guess what they found?

"I was at school, at lunchtime, and one of my best friends came up to me and asked me about it," said Kevin. "It sort of hit me off balance."

Kevin has now changed schools two times and everyday he worries who will find out next.

"It just gave me a feeling of I don't want to be there, knowing they know what I did wrong," said Kevin.

Kevin had hopes of going into the military and getting a sports medicine degree. Those hopes have all but vanished.

"You tell your kids to try everything and try their best and they will make it," said Kevin's mom. "I'm lying to him everyday because no matter what he does, he's still going to be limited."

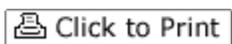
Kevin's last chance is a change in the law. Right now lawmakers are re-evaluating the juvenile justice codes. Kevin's mom has been asked to speak to lawmakers in January.

"And maybe get the laws changed, to where these kids have a second chance," said Kevin's mom.

Kevin will remain on the sex offender registry website until he is 18-years-old. If he so much as hugs a girl who doesn't want to be hugged, he will be on the list for life.

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