

House steps up to protect children with anti-grooming measure

A middle school student starts getting extra attention from an adult at school. It begins with compliments and small favors. Soon there are private messages, encouragement to keep secrets, and reassurance that no one else really understands them. Nothing overtly criminal happens at first. By the time the behavior becomes unmistakably wrong, the child is already isolated, confused, and afraid to speak up.

This example is fictional, but it is drawn from patterns law enforcement and families across Kentucky have described again and again.

In another case, a trusted authority figure offers mentorship to a young person struggling at home. The relationship seems supportive on the surface. Over time, boundaries erode. Conversations become inappropriate. The child is conditioned to accept behavior he or she knows feels wrong, but has been taught to normalize. The harm does not begin with physical abuse. It begins with manipulation.

This is grooming. And Kentucky law has struggled to clearly define it.

Lawmakers are working to

fix this problem with HB 4, which passed the House unanimously on the 20th day of the session. The bill would formally define grooming and make it a



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TIPTON

criminal offense, recognizing it as a deliberate and calculated process used to gain access to vulnerable children for exploitation or abuse. It is an important and overdue step toward protecting kids before irreversible harm occurs.

Grooming is not accidental. It is not a misunderstanding. It is not innocent relationship-building that gets misinterpreted after the fact. It is a pattern of behavior that predators use intentionally, often patiently, to break down a child's defenses and silence them long before abuse is visible to the outside world.

The legislation was brought forward in response to concerns raised directly by families who encountered grooming firsthand. Parents, law enforcement, and prosecutors discovered that while existing laws addressed abuse after it happened, they did not adequately

account for the warning signs that come earlier. The absence of a clear legal definition also makes it harder to intervene when red flags were obvious but the conduct had not yet crossed into physical abuse.

HB 4 seeks to fix this, spelling out what grooming looks like and attaching meaningful consequences to it. Penalties are based on the age of the child and whether the adult involved holds a position of trust or authority. After all, when those in a position of trust exploit their access to children, the betrayal compounds the harm and deepens the trauma.

By structuring penalties this way, the legislation recognizes two critical truths. Younger children are more vulnerable and require stronger protections. And authority figures who abuse their position cause greater damage because children are conditioned to trust them and fear the consequences of speaking out.

Some have raised concerns that defining grooming could criminalize innocent behavior. The act of grooming is manipulative, deceptive, and aimed at exploitation – not normal adult interaction. Prosecutors still bear the burden of proving intent. Parents, teachers, and mentors who act appropriately have nothing to fear from clarity in the law.

Protecting children is a basic responsibility of government and community alike. HB 4 draws a clear line and acknowledges what families, advocates, and prosecutors have long known:

SEE HOUSE/PAGE B6



LEGAL NOTICE

Blue Sky Towers IV, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company and Cellico Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless have applied to the Taylorsville-Spencer County Joint Planning & Zoning Commission for approval to construct a new communications facility on a site located at 460 Whitfield Lane, Taylorsville, KY 40071 (38° 05' 27.95" North latitude, 85° 28' 09.67" West longitude). A public hearing on the application is scheduled for February 19th at 7:00 PM and will be held in the Fiscal Court meeting hall located at 28 East Main Street, Taylorsville, KY 40071. If you have questions concerning this proposal, you may contact the Planning Commission at P.O. Box 305, Taylorsville, KY 40071; telephone (502) 477-3218.



Notice is hereby given that the Taylorsville-Spencer County Joint Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on the 19th day of February 2026 at 7:00 p.m. prevailing time in the Fiscal Court Meeting Hall located at 28 East Main Street, Taylorsville, Kentucky. The commission will be reviewing the following applications as well as any additional items that were continued to this date specific:

1. Blue Sky Towers IV, LLC dba Verizon Wireless requesting approval for a new communications facility and tower at 460 Whitfield Lane.

Information on the above applications is available for review in the zoning office Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Julie Sweazy, Administrator
Taylorsville-Spencer
County Joint
Planning & Zoning
Commission

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Monday-Friday 8AM-4PM

*Holidays advance deadline by 24 hours.

LEGAL NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Social Services

Title III-C1 and III-C2 Congregate and Home Delivered Meals
- Meal Preparation

KIPDA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
11520 Commonwealth Drive
Louisville, KY 40299

The Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency (KIPDA), Division of Social Services, 11520 Commonwealth Drive, Louisville, KY 40299, serving the Kentucky counties of Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble, is inviting organizations to submit proposals for the services listed above. Funding is made available through the Older Americans Act and/or the KY General Assembly.

The Request for Proposals will be issued **after 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) February 9, 2026.**

A copy of this RFP can be accessed through KIPDA's website at www.kipda.org/about/fps-rfps after it is released. Please also review Procurement Information for Potential Division of Social Services Providers which includes the link to KIPDA's Procurement Portal.

All applicants **must** be registered users of KIPDA's Procurement portal in Euna Solutions. The registration can be completed at <https://kipda.bonfirehub.com> by clicking the "Log In/Register" button at the top right of the page. There is no cost for registration.

All communication regarding these proposals, including accessing application documents and submitting questions, will go through this portal.

Proposals must be submitted to <https://kipda.bonfirehub.com/> **no later than 12:00 noon (Eastern Time) March 2, 2026.** Proposals received after that time and date will not be considered for review. Awards will be based on the lowest and best evaluated bids and in accordance with evaluation criteria.

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