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WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT MINNESOTA'S NEW ANTI- GROOMING LAW

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Minnesota's New Anti-Grooming Law



- In May 2026 Minnesota enacted changes to Minn. Stat. §609.352.
- Starting August 1, 2026, Minnesota law creates a felony grooming offense focused on an adult's words, pattern of conduct, and intent – not on whether sexual conduct ultimately occurs.

Minnesota's New Anti-Grooming Law



- The new law also adds specific provisions for people in positions of authority and people who work for or provide services for schools.

What the grooming provision requires

- Under the new law, the person must be at least 18 years old to commit a grooming offence. The law requires both of the following:
 1. The person expresses to a child a desire or intent to engage in sexual conduct with that child, **and**
 2. The person engages in a deliberate pattern of conduct designed to develop a false trusting relationship for the purpose of manipulating the child to engage in sexual conduct in the future.

Definitions



- The definition of “child” means a person age 15 or younger.
- A “pattern” means two or more instances of contact

- This new statute expressly provides that the offense may be complete even if sexual conduct never occurs.

- The new grooming law does not make every inappropriate, troubling, or misunderstood conversation a grooming felony.
- The statutory elements include a particular expression, a deliberate pattern, and a specific future-directed purpose.

How This New Law Differs From Existing Solicitation Law



- Minn. Stat. §609.352 already makes it a felony for an adult to solicit a child, or someone the adult reasonably believes to be a child, to engage in sexual conduct when the adult intends to engage in that conduct.
- A separate existing provision addresses certain electronic solicitation, sexual communications, and distribution of sexual material.

How This Differs From Existing Solicitation Law (Cont.)



- The new grooming law is different because it focuses on the combination of an expressed desire or intent in a deliberate pattern aimed at building a false trusting relationship for future sexual conduct.
- Understanding which sub-division of Minn. Stat. § 609.352 is important because each one uses different language and requires proof of different facts.

Special New Provisions for Authority Figures and Schools



- The 2026 law also adds a new sub-division which applies when a person commits conduct described as grooming in the first part of the Statute and the person is in a current or recent position of authority over the victim, and is more than 36 months older than the victim, and the victim is under 18.

Special Provisions for Authority Figures and Schools (Cont.)



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- A sub-division of the new statute addresses a person employed by or contracted to provide services for an elementary, middle or secondary school. It applies when that person commits grooming conduct described in this new statute and the victim is enrolled at the school, regardless of the victim's age.

- The new anti-grooming statute turns on precise questions:
- What was expressed? Whether there were two or more instances of conduct? What relationship was being developed? And what purpose the person allegedly had?
- For the “authority in school provisions,” age differences, enrollment, employment and the nature of their relationship will also matter.

Exact Communications and Timeline Matter (Cont.)



- Words like “deliberate” “methodically”, “false trusting relationship”, and “intended” are part of the text in the new statute.
- A criminal charge may depend on how messages, conversations, timing and contact relate to those statutory elements.

- The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families is required to update mandated reporter training by August 1, 2027, for education professionals, including training on how to identify and report grooming and threatened sexual abuse, the duty to report grooming as maltreatment, how to spot the warning signs and how to recognize riskier environments.

The Significance of the New Anti-Grooming Statute



- The new Anti-Grooming Statute moves grooming behavior into the criminal and mandated reporter framework. It heightens the importance of recognizing patterns - private messaging, manufactured secrecy, favoritism, boundary testing, or use of a position of authority – **before** physical abuse occurs.

The Significance of the New Anti-Grooming Statute (Cont.)



- Suspected grooming should now be reported to proper civil authorities as suspected child abuse.
- Archdiocesan Policy 110, III (B) 3: “Clergy, Church Personnel and volunteers who report Sexual Abuse of a Minor to civil authorities shall be required to report the same information without undue delay to the Director. The Director shall then promptly notify the Archbishop or his designee.”

Summary



- The new Anti-Grooming Law does not make ordinary communication with a minor illegal. Instead, it targets adults who attempt to sexually manipulate children through a deliberate pattern of conduct.