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## Ponying Up: The Truth About Child Sex Offenders

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by *RMHP Staff*

Allegations of sex abuse have rocked Penn State causing shock waves across the country. Now, new allegations are emerging around Syracuse's basketball program - as some wonder how many alleged victims will have the strength to break their silence.

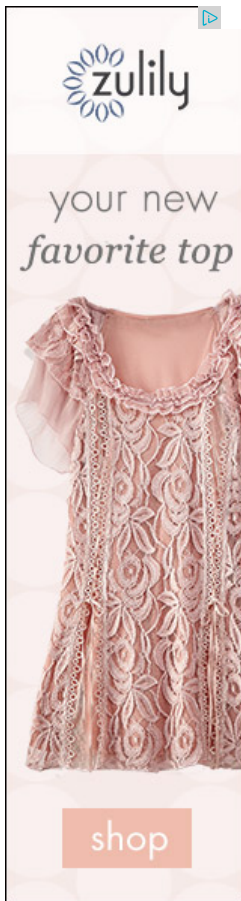
Research shows the average child predator molests about 117 youngsters, most of whom do not report the offense. While a difficult topic, it is imperative parents are informed since one of the largest predictors of re-offense is access to victims.

Ninety percent of the time, the perpetrator is someone the child knows and is often in a position of authority over the young person. Sports are an ideal opportunity for abusers since experts say sexual predators typically seek the trust not only of the child, but also of the child's parent. This makes it more difficult for the child to seek help after the abuse has begun.

Choosing a horseback riding instructor or a new stable for your child's pony may seem like a fairly simple task, whether you are new to the industry or an experienced horseperson. Sarita Hudson from [Stop It Now](#) says parents need to take the extra steps to familiarize themselves with the "warning signs" of an offender's behavior.

### Tools & Limitations

Not every adult is a sex offender; however it is important to educate yourself utilizing the tools available, while understanding their limitations.



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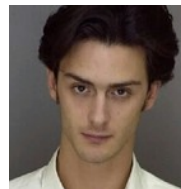
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So how do some sex offenders, even those who have been convicted, go unnoticed when working around children? [Cliff Barrineau](#) was arrested in 1993 and charged with eight sexual felonies, including the molestation of an eleven-year old girl. He served more than 600 days ~~two years~~ behind bars prior to pleading to a lesser charge of lewd assault on a child under 12 and was sentenced to time served by a judge in 1995. This was prior to the Florida Sex Offender Registry, so he and other convicted offenders aren't listed. Since his release, Barrineau hasn't been in trouble with the law; however his various employment positions, including horse show videographer, have all centered on children.



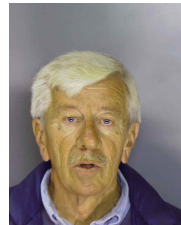
Cliff Barrineau shoots video for a local horse show in Florida in late 2010.



Cliff Barrineau (1993)

The National Sex Offender Registry was created in 1997, although every state follows its own set of guidelines. For example, California has three "categories" of sex offenders. One group allows registry searchers to view the registrant's full address, the second only the offender's zip code, the third is a list only available to law enforcement officials. So, in California, the list of Registered Sex Offenders you are viewing is not a complete one.

According to a survey of law enforcement officials, police also "lose track" of one in four registered sex offenders. Hugh Lewis Higley failed to re-register but was arrested in San Luis Obispo, California last December. He was running his business, McLeod's Dressage, and using the alias Ben McLeod until he was captured by officials. He served the last nine months behind bars in prison and is now in the Sacramento County Jail awaiting his next court date.



Hugh Lewis Higley  
aka Ben McLeod

It is also important to note many child molesters don't have criminal records since they are not apprehended for their crimes. Those that do have a criminal history may have a lesser charge due to a plea agreement, as seen in Barrineau's case. Hudson says, "parents shouldn't count on background checks alone."

### Selecting Riding Instructor / Stable

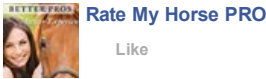
Who owns the farm? Manages farm? Lives on property? Who is approved to come / go from farm (maintenance workers, lawn crew, etc?)

What does hiring process include? Include background checks for all employees? Sub contractors?


Is horse trainer / instructor an employee of farm or do they freelance?

Are work related references checked thoroughly? Gaps in references checked?

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The former President of the American Saddlebred Horse Association of Georgia (ASHAG) must register as a sex offender, according to the solicitor's office. Chan Sutton, of Brunswick, Georgia pleaded guilty on Friday to computer pornography and criminal attempt to commit a felony. [Rate My Horse PRO](#)



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Does farm have policies in place regarding protection and safety of children? What are they?

Are there volunteers (in cases of horse shows) and if so, what process do they go through? Do they need to be affiliated with someone from farm / organization or can anyone volunteer?

Conduct your own interview with anyone that will be teaching your child. Observe riding lessons.



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