



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 2, 2010

TSA Policies May Desensitize Children to Sexual Abuse

The concerns voiced against the intrusive Transportation Security Administration screening procedures have been confirmed by experts at Child Lures Prevention. According to the organization, in an effort to have children cooperate with the TSA screenings, the TSA is calling the airport pat-downs “a game.” As a result, children who experience the enhanced pat-downs may become desensitized to sexual molestation.



TSA regional security director James Marchand explained about the TSA’s interaction with children, “You try to make it as best you can for that child to come through. If you can come up with some kind of game to play with a child, it makes it a lot easier.”

Ken Wooden of Child Lures Prevention explains that telling children they are participating in a game “is one of the most common ways” for sexual predators to engage children in inappropriate contact. Likewise, because children “don’t have the sophistication” to differentiate between the pat-down at the airports and sexual assault, the TSA procedures are setting a dangerous precedent for children who undergo the procedures.

Reacting to the TSA’s reference to the screening procedures as a game, Wooden replied, “How can experts working at the TSA be so incredibly misinformed and misguided to suggest that full body pat downs for children be portrayed as a game. To do so is completely contrary to what we in the sexual abuse prevention field have been trying to accomplish for the past thirty years.”

He concludes, “TSA policy could desensitize children to inappropriate touch and ultimately make it easier for sexual offenders to prey on our children.”

Critics of the TSA screening methods were particularly angered by the use of enhanced pat-down procedures, which entail touching of the genitals, on children. In response to the outcry against the use of such procedures on children, the TSA announced its intent to modify the screening methods, but the *L.A. Times* revealed that it is “unclear” whether the new rules allow for the touching of children’s genitals.

In addition to the sensitive issue of screening children, TSA administrators have been forced to contend with the potential conflicts of screening victims of sexual abuse, who may be particularly offended by the enhanced pat-downs. John Pistole, TSA administrator, says that the TSA may change its screening rules for those particular fliers.

Overall, the TSA screening procedures have been under fire for their intrusive, invasive, sexual nature, and many assert that the measures would be a crime if conducted by anyone other than the federal



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government.

Photo of a young girl waiting to undergo screening: AP Images

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