

Where Is Ghislaine Maxwell Now?

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Here's the December 2021 update on the Ghislaine Maxwell case, currently underway in Manhattan, NY.

On Thursday, December 1, 2021 in the Federal courthouse in lower Manhattan, the Ghislaine Maxwell sex-trafficking trial was in its fourth day. An expert witness for the prosecution, Dr. Lisa Rocchio, described the five-step process called “grooming” that child sex predators often use to draw in their victims:

1. Select a victim.
2. Gain access to and isolate the victim.
3. Use deception, lies, and manipulation to build trust and a sense of attachment.
4. Desensitize the child by acclimating them to physical touching and sexual talk.
5. Maintain control of the victim to coerce the child into accepting continued abuse.



The witness explained that the grooming process might involve developing a rapport by expressing concern, complementing, giving special attention, and giving gifts. She said predators work to acclimate children by introducing sexual topics of conversation, gaining cooperation by taking down the normal boundaries. The objective is to weaken resistance, normalize sexual behavior by discussing or joking about sex.

This routine helps make the victim feel responsible or complicit when the sexual abuser escalates the activities. This helps make the child victim less likely to recognize or report the crime when the sex offender finally escalates the sexual activity from light touching to sexual abuse or assault.

This grooming process is the core of the government's case against Ms. Maxwell, who is accused of assisting Jeffrey Epstein in sexually abusing girls as young as age 14. Prosecutors say she deliberately victimized the girls, bringing them into Epstein's grasp. They said she took the girls shopping and positioned herself as their mentor, ultimately even advising them on how Epstein wanted to be touched.

The defense argued that the behaviors referred to as grooming can also be non-grooming behaviors. The expert witness agreed. However, she said that the determinant of whether the specified actions are grooming largely depends on the adult's intentions.

Prosecutor Lara Pomerantz asserted that Epstein's sexual abuse of the victims began with him lying facedown, with the pretense of having the girls give him massages. Then, he touched the girls sexually and instructed them to continue massaging him as he masturbated, and he engaged them in other sexual actions.

The prosecution argued that Maxwell's role was to make the girls vulnerable to Epstein by winning their trust, discussing sexual topics with them, helping make them feel safe and at ease, and normalizing sexually abusive actions. They assert that she deliberately prepared them for Epstein to abuse them sexually.

Mr. Juan Alessi, who worked at Epstein's Palm Beach property for around 12 years, testified that hundreds of times there were young women topless at the home, lounging by the pool. He estimated that they were topless around 80 percent of the time.

Alessi said Maxwell controlled all details of managing activities at the estate. He estimated that one of the girls, named Jane, was about 14 to 15 years old. Earlier in the week, a girl named Jane testified that she had been 14 when she met Mr. Epstein and Ms. Maxwell.

Before federal charges were filed against Maxwell for sex trafficking and conspiracy, Jeffrey Epstein was indicted on the same charges. He was accused of sexual abuse and trafficking dozens of girls, some as young as 14. But, about a month after Epstein was arrested, he was found dead in his jail cell. The NYC medical examiner concluded that he had hanged himself. If he had been convicted, he might have received a sentence of 45 years in prison.

Epstein, a financier with social ties to numerous wealthy people, including world leaders, had been investigated years earlier regarding sex crimes involving underage girls in Florida. But, he had received a secret special deal from prosecutors and served only 13 months.

The case against Maxwell, who was arrested in July 2020, includes more charges than Epstein's case. The accusations against her are for alleged activity as early as 1994. Epstein and Maxwell each received one charge of sex trafficking of a minor. But Epstein faced only one charge of conspiracy, whereas Maxwell is facing three such charges with a total of four accusers involved.

She is additionally charged with enticing a minor and transporting a minor to travel numerous times between Florida and New York for illegal sex acts. If she is convicted, Ms. Maxwell, who is 59 years old, may receive a prison sentence that will be at least as long as Epstein's could have been.