

CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Statistics

- An estimated 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys will be sexually victimized before age 18¹, yet only 1 in 3 will tell anyone². ¹ Finkelhor, "Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse," 1994. ² Cross, Walsh & Jones, 2001.
- In 2006, there were 78,120 reported cases of child sexual abuse in the United States; 7,406 were Texas cases. Dept. of Health & Human Services. "Child Maltreatment 2006." http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm
- In 2006, 8.8% of child victims were sexually assaulted. Ibid.
- Of the 800,000 children reported missing each year, 58,000 are abducted by non-family members, the primary motive for which is sexual. Finkelhor, "What the Numbers Tell Us" in *The Front Line* Winter 2002/03.
- 1 in 7 children who are regular internet users receive sexual solicitations online; 1 in 3 is exposed to unwanted sexual material and 1 in 25 receives a request to meet someone in real life that they met online. Wolak, Mitchel, and Finkelhor, "Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later," 2006.
- For child victims under 12 years old, the perpetrator was most commonly a non-intimate family member for females (67.8%) and an acquaintance for males (50%). Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000.
- Women with a childhood history of sexual abuse are 4.7 times more likely to be subsequently raped. The Pinnacle, publication of Pennsylvania Coalition against Rape, winter 2006.

Overview of the Issue

- Child victims frequently know and trust their abusers, who may coerce them using various tactics like gifts, manipulation, threats, and force.
- Sexual abuse robs children of their childhood, creating a loss of trust, guilt and self-abusive behaviors. Children who are victims of sexual abuse exhibit physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms. The behavioral symptoms often precede the physical signs, such as nervousness or aggression toward adults, sexually provocative inappropriate to age and use of alcohol or drugs. Boys tend to be more antisocial.
- Offenders seek out children who are vulnerable, crave attention and are emotionally abused or neglected.

What You Can Do

- Educate children about appropriate sexual behavior, their right to say no to adults, and the importance of telling a trusted adult if something feels strange to them.
- Children may resist reporting because of self-blame, shame, guilt or they fear angering the offender. Parents, teachers and other adults who interact with children should be educated to recognize behavioral and physical symptoms. Children are more likely to disclose when talking to someone who appears knowledgeable, non-critical and non-threatening or if they receive information on child sexual abuse.
- Once a child discloses, an appropriate response is crucial to the healing process. Encourage child to talk freely, to seek medical or counseling help and reassure them that they are not to blame. You must report child abuse.

Impact on Survivor

- Child abuse survivors frequently experience serious emotional and developmental problems like lost self-esteem, identity confusion, body and sex anxiety and antisocial behavior. They may also develop psychological problems like depression, disassociative responses, PTSD, multiple personalities, nightmares, flashbacks and sexual dysfunction. They may repress memories and take years to recognize or remember their abuse.
- Sexual assault of boys tends to go under-reported, under-recognized and thus under-treated.
- Adult survivors of child sexual abuse are more likely to engage in criminal behavior, substance abuse and high-risk sexual behaviors.

Quotable

Adults have a responsibility to protect children and ensure them a safe, healthy development. Denying child abuse will not make it disappear. Seek information and awareness so you can better protect a child. If you suspect child abuse is occurring, call the police and Child Protective Services abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

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1010 Waugh Drive, Houston, TX, 77019-3902

Tel: 713-528-6798 Fax: 713-535-6363 Quick Media Contact: 281-615-6737

Domestic Violence Hotline – 713-528-2121 Sexual Assault Hotline – 713-528-7273 (RAPE)

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