

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



Definition: Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the *sexual gratification of an adult* or any significantly older person (someone with more *power* than the child). It is called *incest* if it occurs between family members, including mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, adoptive and step relations, legitimate and illegitimate children, or relatives of whole or half blood.

Behaviors: Child sexual abuse can include a wide range of activities, including *non-forced offenses* (such as verbal stimulation, obscene phone calls, exposure, voyeurism and showing a child pornographic pictures or films) and *forcible, touching offenses* (such as fondling, oral intercourse or attempted intercourse, vaginal or anal intercourse or attempted intercourse, and exploitation of children through prostitution and/or child pornography). Though the behavior is sexual, the drive is using position of power to take advantage of a child's trust, need for affection and innocence.

Statistics: **1 in 3 girls will have been sexually abused by age 18.**

1 in 6 boys will have been sexually abused by age 18.

Reports of male victims are increasing; some experts believe as many boys are abused as girls.

90% of offenders are known to the child.

Child sexual abuse is more frequent within families than outside families; disabled children are three times more at risk of sexual abuse than other children. Eighty-six percent of offenders are *heterosexual* males.

Child sexual abuse happens in all racial, religious, and ethnic groups, and at all socio-economic levels.

No group is "immune" from sexual abuse; the offender can be a person of any occupation. All cultures have a taboo against incest. About 80% of the offenders are members of religious congregations.

The average age for the onset of a sexually abusive relationship is seven years old.

More than one-third of all child victims may be 5 years old or younger; children as young as one week old have been molested. [Three-quarters (78%) of the child fatalities resulting from abuse or neglect were under five years of age.]

Child sexual abuse is seldom a one-time occurrence and rarely involves physical force.

Abusive relationships last an average of four years and many last much longer.

Children very rarely lie about being sexually abused.

Sex with children cannot be consensual, by law and because of the offender's power and position. The offender bears the entire responsibility for the molestation, whatever form it takes.

Offenders almost never seek treatment voluntarily.

Abuse will most likely continue unless a report is made.