

Myths about Child Sexual Abuse

- Myth 1. **Children who are abused are primarily teenagers.**
Average age of initiation into incest is 8 years old. Infants can be abused.
One third of all abuse happens with children under 6 years old.
- Myth 2. **Child victims come from lower socio-economic groups.**
Income, education, race and ethnicity are not related to involvement in incest and sexual assault.
- Myth 3. **Children are molested on playgrounds and other outdoor sites.**
Children are at a greater risk of molestation in their own homes. Most child offenses occur during daylight hours. When attacked outdoors, a child is usually close to the child's or offender's home.
- Myth 4. **Children are at a greater risk with strangers.**
Studies consistently find that about 80 percent of the offenders are known to the child as an acquaintance. S/he is usually a relative, family friend, family member, babysitter or older friend of the child.
- Myth 5. **When boys are molested by men, the offenders are homosexual.**
Most men who molest boys also molest girls. Seventy-five percent (75%) of male offenders are married or have consensual sexual relationships;; 96% of the perpetrators are heterosexual. A man who has sexual contact with a male child or adolescent is rarely homosexual.
- Myth 6. **Children must be forced into sex acts.**
Force is rarely used. Threat of force, fear, bribes, or pressure from someone in an authority role are the common means used.
- Myth 7. **Women are not capable of becoming sex offenders.**
Although men are the most common offender, women do sexually offend children.
- Myth 8. **Reporting is enough to stop abuse.**
While abuse may stop temporarily during an investigation, without treatment repeat abuse is extremely high.
- Myth 9. **Adolescents who touch children sexually are just expressing curiosity.**
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- Myth 10. **Children often lie or fantasize about sexual activity with adults.**
Children cannot make up sexual information unless they have been exposed to it. They speak from their own experience.
- Myth 11. **Family sexual abuse is an isolated, one-time incident.**
For most victims, the abuse continues for years. In most cases, the offender will not stop until there is intervention.
- Myth 12. **Children provoke sexual abuse by their seductive behavior.**
Seductive behavior is not the causing of the abuse. Responsibility lies with the offender.
- Myth 13. **If the children do not want it, they could say “stop”.**
Children do not generally question the behavior of adults. They are often coerced by bribes, threats and use of a position of authority.
- Myth 14. **All abuse victims are girls.**
While the majority of reported victims are female, evidence shows increasing reports of male victims. One of four females and one of six males under the age of eighteen (18) are child sexual abuse victims.
- Myth 15. **In family sexual abuse, the “non-offending” parent always knows.**
While some “non-offending” parents know and even collude with the offender, many, because of their lack of awareness, may suspect something is wrong but are unclear as to what it is.
- Myth 16. **The majority of child sexual victims tell someone about the abuse.**
According to a study by Dr. David Finkelhor, close to two-thirds of child sexual abuse victims may not tell their parents or anyone else because they fear being blamed, punished or not believed.
- Myth 17. **A discussion of sexual abuse will frighten or be damaging to children.**
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Studies consistently find that about 80 percent of the offenders are known to the child as an acquaintance. S/he is usually a relative, family friend, family member, babysitter or older friend of the child.
- Myth 5. **When boys are molested by men, the offenders are homosexual.**
Most men who molest boys also molest girls. Seventy-five percent (75%) of male offenders are married or have consensual sexual relationships;; 96% of the perpetrators are heterosexual. A man who has sexual contact with a male child or adolescent is rarely homosexual.
- Myth 6. **Children must be forced into sex acts.**
Force is rarely used. Threat of force, fear, bribes, or pressure from someone in an authority role are the common means used.
- Myth 7. **Women are not capable of becoming sex offenders.**
Although men are the most common offender, women do sexually offend children.
- Myth 8. **Reporting is enough to stop abuse.**
While abuse may stop temporarily during an investigation, without treatment repeat abuse is extremely high.
- Myth 9. **Adolescents who touch children sexually are just expressing curiosity.**
Because of the differences in age between an adolescent and a child, coercion and misuse of authority are likely involved. Adolescents who engage in sexual touching of children need intervention to stop what may already be a pattern of sexual offending.

- Myth 10. **Children often lie or fantasize about sexual activity with adults.**
Children cannot make up sexual information unless they have been exposed to it. They speak from their own experience.
- Myth 11. **Family sexual abuse is an isolated, one-time incident.**
For most victims, the abuse continues for years. In most cases, the offender will not stop until there is intervention.
- Myth 12. **Children provoke sexual abuse by their seductive behavior.**
Seductive behavior is not the causing of the abuse. Responsibility lies with the offender.
- Myth 13. **If the children do not want it, they could say “stop”.**
Children do not generally question the behavior of adults. They are often coerced by bribes, threats and use of a position of authority.
- Myth 14. **All abuse victims are girls.**
While the majority of reported victims are female, evidence shows increasing reports of male victims. One of four females and one of six males under the age of eighteen (18) are child sexual abuse victims.
- Myth 15. **In family sexual abuse, the “non-offending” parent always knows.**
While some “non-offending” parents know and even collude with the offender, many, because of their lack of awareness, may suspect something is wrong but are unclear as to what it is.
- Myth 16. **The majority of child sexual victims tell someone about the abuse.**
According to a study by Dr. David Finkelhor, close to two-thirds of child sexual abuse victims may not tell their parents or anyone else because they fear being blamed, punished or not believed.
- Myth 17. **A discussion of sexual abuse will frighten or be damaging to children.**
It is important to receive information about sexual assault for their own protection. Inaccurate or lack of information is more damaging to children.