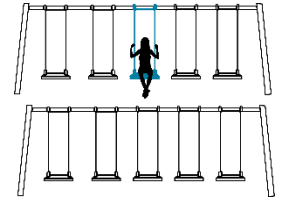


Child Sexual Abuse

1 in 10 children will experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday¹.



Child sexual abuse (CSA) is the exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child

and includes fondling, sodomy, rape, commercial sexual exploitation of children (sex trafficking), indecent exposure and exhibitionism, or utilizing the internet as a vehicle for exploitation. Keep in mind that direct physical contact with a child is not required to sexually abuse a child. Indecent exposure, showing pornography to a child or exploiting a child on the internet are all examples of sexual abuse.

Quick Facts

The perpetrator is usually an individual **known** to the victim and family².

23% of reported CSA is perpetrated by another child. Recent studies indicate significantly higher rates^{2,3}.

Child sexual abuse includes interactions **without** physical touch such as indecent exposure.



of youth report experiencing online sexual abuse³.

It is not only adults or online strangers who are responsible. It also results from peers or young adult friends who pressure youth for sexual images or activities, or who misuse images they received without consent. This abuse includes many romantic partners and offline friends.

Those who sexually abuse often do not use physical force, but may use play, deception, threats, or other forms of coercion to engage children and maintain their silence. They frequently employ persuasive and manipulative tactics to keep the child engaged. These tactics—sometimes referred to as “grooming”—may include buying gifts or arranging special activities, which can further confuse the victim.

The impact of sexual abuse against children can cause short and long-term physical and psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts².

Indicators

Sexually abused children may display a range of emotional and behavioral reactions such as:

- An increase in nightmares, sleeping difficulties
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts
- Anxiety, depression
- Not wanting to be left alone with a particular individual(s)
- Sexual knowledge, language, or behaviors that are inappropriate for the child’s age

Disclosures

Although many children who have experienced sexual abuse show behavioral and emotional changes, many others do not. Adults must also be prepared to respond to a child’s direct or indirect disclosure of abuse. Here are some tips:

- Reassure the child: “I believe you.” “What happened isn’t your fault.”
- Listen openly and calmly
- Ask open-ended and limited questions
- Write down any facts and report to CPS

Protecting and Preventing



Tips to Help Protect Children from Sexual Abuse⁴

- Teach children accurate names of body parts.
- Avoid focusing on “stranger danger.” Most perpetrators are known to the family.
- Teach children body safety and the difference between “okay” and “not okay” touches.
- Let children know that they have the right to make decisions about their bodies. Empower them to say no when they do not want to be touched, even in non-sexual ways (e.g., politely refusing hugs) and to say no to touching others.
- Make sure children know that adults and older children never need help with their private body parts (e.g., bathing or going to the bathroom).
- Teach children how to take care of their own private parts (i.e., bathing, wiping) so they don’t have to rely on adults or older children for help.
- Educate children about the difference between surprises (like surprise parties—which are okay because they are not kept secret for long) and secrets (those that the child is supposed to keep secret forever, which are not okay).
- If you feel uneasy about leaving a child with someone, don’t do it. If you’re concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions.
- Avoid and/or monitor situations and interactions where a child is alone and isolated with one adult or older youth.

How Child and Youth Serving Organizations Can Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

1. Require background checks and additional screening of all employees and volunteers
2. Provide guidelines on interactions between adults and children (e.g., one-on-one interactions with children should be in settings which can be observed by others)
3. Continually monitor employee and volunteer behavior regarding adherence to guidelines
4. Have clear organizational policies and training on responding to inappropriate behavior, breaches in policy, and allegations and suspicions of child sexual abuse
5. Ensure safe environments (e.g., spaces that are open and visible to multiple people, off-site activity and transportation guidelines)
6. Staff training on child sexual abuse prevention during onboarding and ongoing

➔ Find more information: *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures, CDC*

➔ Information on preventing child sexual abuse and training at [GeorgiaCenterForChildAdvocacy.org](https://www.GeorgiaCenterForChildAdvocacy.org)

Citations

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