

Sexual Abuse

- One in three girls and one in five boys is sexually abused by the age of sixteen.
- In more than 85% of sexual abuse cases, children are abused by someone they know.
- Less than 10% of sexual abuse cases are reported to the authorities.
- On average, an offender will sexually abuse another person more than 100 times in his or her lifetime.
- In up to 50% of reported cases, offenders are adolescents.

Child sexual abuse is very serious. The American Medical Association defines child sexual abuse as "the engagement of a child in sexual activities for which the child is developmentally unprepared and cannot give informed consent." Child sexual abuse is characterized by deception, force or coercion. Sexual abuse can include fondling, genital exposure, intimate kissing, and forced masturbation as well as other sexual activities.

Some survivors of sexual abuse may experience long term psychological effects. A few of the most common side effects include depression, low self esteem, anxiety, fear, hostility, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, suicidal behavior or thoughts, and post traumatic stress disorder. Survivors may also be at higher risk for mental health and social functioning problems resulting from feelings of powerlessness, guilt, and shame. This is why it is important to seek help if you or a child you know is being or has been sexually abused. Though not everyone who is sexually abused experiences these effects from the abuse, it is a good idea to talk to someone about what has occurred. Talking things out with a professional or someone you trust can aid in relieving feelings that can possibly interfere with future relationships.

In addition, making sure that you report incidents of sexual abuse is as important as seeking help. Keeping quiet does not break the chain of abuse. If you have questions about what to do, the Counseling Center can help you best decide how to respond to your situation.