

FACT SHEET: CHILD ABUSE

Myths	Facts
Child abuse is more common in cities and occurs rarely in rural areas where people know each other.	Child abuse takes place equally in rural and urban areas. <i>Childline Gauteng. n.d.</i>
Only adults commit child sexual abuse.	As much as half of all child sexual abuse is committed by children under the age of 18. <i>Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth & Becker, 2003</i>
Children “ask” for these actions by being “seductive” or by “consenting” to the sexual acts.	Children are never responsible for being abused. When an adult instigates sexual contact, informed consent is impossible for a child. Many offenders try to shift the blame for their actions by accusing the child of being seductive or promiscuous. <i>Horizon. n.d.</i>
Child sexual abuse is rare and only involves girls.	Research suggests that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys are subjected to some form of sexual abuse by the age of 18. ¹ As child abuse is a secret crime, notification statistics profoundly under-estimate the size of the problem. ² ¹ <i>Childline Gauteng. n.d.</i> ² <i>Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse. n.d.</i>
Child sexual abusers are all homosexuals.	Abusers can be homosexual or heterosexual. Sexual abuse of young boys is perpetrated more often by heterosexual males than homosexual males. <i>Childline Gauteng. n.d.</i>
Child abusers are mostly lower income.	Abusers come from all income, education, and intelligence levels. <i>Childline Gauteng. n.d.</i>
Child sexual abuse is often an isolated incident, it only happens once.	Abuse is seldom a one time incident. Once a child is abused, incidents are often repeated over periods of months and years, especially if the offender is known to the child or other family members. The abuser may move on to abuse other children. <i>Australian Childhood Foundation. n.d.</i>
Child sexual abuse occurs through a violent attack.	In 90% of child sexual abuse cases, the child knows and trusts the person who commits the abuse. <i>Hammer, Finkelhor, Sedlak & US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002</i>
Children will fabricate stories about their sexual experience.	Children rarely fabricate stories of sexual abuse. Children do not have the explicit sexual knowledge to enable them to talk about sex unless they have experienced it. ¹ Children's disclosures of abuse may vary in their content because of their reluctance and fear to tell what has happened. ²

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

- ❖ The LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Abuse Hotline received 12,599 referrals during January 2009. Of these calls, 32% were reports on child neglect, 22% on physical abuse, 10% on sexual abuse, and 9% on emotional abuse. *County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, 2009*
- ❖ In 2007, on average, 14-15 child abuse cases were reported each day in Los Angeles County. *Rand California, n.d.*
- ❖ Despite the overall decrease in the total DCFS child caseload, the number of cases involving Hispanic children increased by 2%, from 19,111 in 2005 to 19,500 in 2006; and the number of cases involving children 2 years and younger has increased by 5%, from 6,165 to 6,443 cases. *Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2007*

UNITED STATES

- ❖ The rate of victimization decreased from 12.3 per 1,000 during 2002, to 12.1 per 1,000 children during 2006. In 2006, 905,000 children were estimated to be victims in the US. *US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008*
- ❖ During 2006, 64% of child abuse victims experienced neglect, 16% were physically abused, 9% were sexually abused, 7% were psychologically maltreated, and 25 were medically neglected. In addition, 15% of victims experienced such "other" types of maltreatment as "abandonment," "threats of harm to the child," or "congenital drug addiction". *US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008*
- ❖ In 2006, an estimated 1,530 children in the national population died of abuse or neglect. *US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008*
- ❖ In 2006, a total of 91,278 infants less than 1 year of age (23 per 1,000 population) experienced nonfatal maltreatment, including 29,881 (33%) who were less than 1 week old. *CDC, 2008*
- ❖ 37% of all women in prison and 14% of all men in prison in the US were abused as children. *Childhelp Foundation. n.d.*
- ❖ Most kidnappings of juveniles are perpetrated by a family member (49%) or acquaintance (27%) rather than a stranger (24%). *Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2000*

To report child abuse and to obtain referrals to local agencies in Los Angeles, CA, contact the Child Protection Hotline, 24 hours/day: 1-800-540-4000. Outside of Los Angeles, contact the ChildHelp® National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

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