



Child sexual abuse can be prevented and treated with a conscious and sustained effort. Stop the Silence® (www.stopthesilence.org) & NAASCA (www.naasca.org) provide that effort.

Child Sexual Abuse in the U.S.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) includes voyeurism, exhibitionism, inappropriate touching, pornography, fondling, insertion, and rape, occurs at enormous numbers around the world, and often the types of behaviors involved becomes worse over years. It is difficult to address due to the sensitivity of the topic, as well as the near-invisibility of its victims.

There is massive underreporting of the problem due to fear, a sense of guilt, shame, and a resistance to believe minors. There were a total of 62,939 cases of CSA reported in the U.S. according to a 2012 U.S. maltreatment report (9.3 percent of cases of maltreatment of children in 2012 were classified as sexual abuse). Of the victims who were sexually abused, more than one quarter of them were in the age group of 12-14 years and more than one third of them were younger than 9 years (DHHS/ACF, 2012).

Information about CSA is difficult to gather due to the sensitivity of the issue itself. Moreover, the information that is available has been gathered using varying research methods, resulting in a lack of complete information. However, we do know that, in the U.S., CSA affects at least one in four girls and one in six boys before they turn 18 (APA, A2014).

Here is some of what we know about CSA:

- It is most often committed by people the victim knows.
- Nearly half of offenders of victims under age six were family members, over 40 percent of offenders of victims ages 7-11 were family members, and nearly one quarter of offenders of victims ages 12-17 were family members. And, they often times target their victims by getting into the child's life through their family, school, religious venues and hobbies (Snyder reported by DOJ, 2000).
- CSA offenders are also often times described as friendly, kind, engaging, likeable, and able to make others believe they are trustworthy.
- An article published in the *American Psychologist* presented survey information showing that 1 in 25 youths received an online sexual solicitation in which the solicitor tried to make offline contact and pictures were often requested of the child (Wolak, 2008).
- CSA is committed by male and female offenders. More than 10 percent of the children under the age of six years were offended against by females, and six percent of victims ages 6-12 and three percent of the victims aged 12-17 Male offenders who abused girls had an average of more than 50 victims each. Men who molested boys had an astonishing average of 150 victims each. The Department of Justice estimates there are approximately 400,000 convicted pedophiles currently residing in the United States alone (Snyder in DOJ, July 2000).
- Not all sexually abused children exhibit symptoms-some estimate that up to 40 percent of sexually abused children are asymptomatic but some have serious symptoms and consequences that can include unexplained injuries, poor growth, weight gain, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, depression, poor school attendance and performance, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, re-victimization as adults, as well as suicide, homicide, and chronic disease (CDC, 2014)
- CSA costs the nation billions of dollars each year for medical and psychiatric treatment, special education, and legal/judicial and incarceration costs (Leadership Council, 2005).

The vast majority of our public and policymakers, however, know little about this crime or its victims. Action is needed. We need, together, to bring the issue out of the shadows! Advocacy, education and training programming must be designed to prevent and treat CSA.