

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IN NEW MEXICO: FACT, FICTION, & MOVING FORWARD

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify facts, myths, and current trends in childhood sexual abuse
- Understand the impact of childhood sexual abuse on children and families in New Mexico
- Explore ways to initiate change and create progress in addressing childhood sexual abuse in our state

MYTH V. FACT



MYTH
**MOST KIDS ARE SEXUALLY
ABUSED BY A STRANGER**



FACT
MOST CHILDREN KNOW AND
TRUST THE PERSON WHO
SEXUALLY ABUSED THEM



**SEXUAL ABUSE
ALLEGATIONS IN DIVORCE
CASES ARE USUALLY FALSE**

MYTH



**SEXUAL ABUSE RATES HAVE
DECLINED SINCE THE
1990'S**

FACT



SEXUAL ABUSE FACTS & STATS



SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- 1 in 10

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- # of children sexually abused before they turn 18
- 42 million

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- # of children sexually abused before they turn 18
- # of survivors of child sexual abuse in the United States
- 90

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- # of children sexually abused before they turn 18
- # of survivors of child sexual abuse in the United States
- % of children who know their abuser
- 47

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- # of children sexually abused before they turn 18
- # of survivors of child sexual abuse in the United States
- % of children who know their abuser
- % of decline in sexual abuse cases from 1993-2006
- 4-8

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- # of children sexually abused before they turn 18
- # of survivors of child sexual abuse in the United States
- % of children who know their abuser
- % of decline in sexual abuse cases from 1993-2006
- % of sexual abuse allegations that are false

SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NUMBERS

- 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before they are 18
- There are 42 million survivors of sexual abuse in the United States
- 90% of abused children know their abuser
- Identified incidents of child sexual abuse decreased 47% from 1993 to 2006
- Only 4%-8% of sexual abuse allegations are false

I'D KNOW A SEXUAL
ABUSER BY LOOKING AT
THEM

MYTH



PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY
ABUSE CHILDREN ARE
MYTH PEDOPHILES



**ADOLESCENTS WHO CAUSE
SEXUAL VIOLENCE ARE DIFFERENT
THAN ADULT SEX OFFENDERS**



ADULT AND ADOLESCENT OFFENDERS



SEX OFFENDERS & ADOLESCENTS WHO CAUSE SEXUAL HARM

- Perpetrators look and act like everyone else
- Situational offender v. preferential offender
- Adolescents who engage in sexually abusive behaviors are categorically different than adults who sexually offend
- Treatment for adults and adolescents is specialized
- Sex offender registration may provide false sense of safety

MYTHS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AREN'T RIGHT AWAY



**MEDICAL EVIDENCE IN
SEXUAL ABUSE CASES IS
RARE**

FACT



**BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE
OUTWEIGH FACILITATORS**

FACT



DISCLOSURES OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Victims often delay disclosure or fail to disclose altogether
- Disclosure of sexual abuse is a process rather than a single event
- Children do not give one detailed, clear account of abuse
- Disclosures generally unfold gradually
- Children typically “test” reactions and present the abuse in a series of “hints”

Why kids don't tell...

I don't want to get them in trouble.

No one will believe me.

I promised to keep this a secret.

People will look at me differently.

I'm too ashamed.

I'm going to be taken away from my home.

I'm scared.

It's my fault.

He said he'd kill me if I told.

She said she'd hurt my little brother.

I should have fought harder or screamed louder.

MYTH

**VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE
GROUP TO BE ABUSERS**



**TRAUMA-FOCUSED TREATMENT
IS THE MOST SUPPORTED
APPROACH FOR VICTIMS OF
SEXUAL ABUSE**

FACT



**CHILDREN WHO EXHIBIT
BED-WETTING, NIGHTMARES,
AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR HAVE
BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED**

MYTH



THE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE



IMPACT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Short- & long-term consequences of sexual abuse are well-documented but the association is not straightforward
- Child sexual abuse is a non-specific risk factor
- Impacts diverse range of domains including mental health, behavioral, interpersonal, educational, physical health & brain development

(Cashmore & Shackle, 2013)

IMPACT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Males experience more externalizing problems whereas females struggle with internalizing problems
- Strongest links include depression, alcohol & substance abuse, eating disorders for women survivors, and anxiety-related disorders for male survivors
- Re-victimization of survivors has also been demonstrated

(Cashmore & Shackle, 2013)

SEXUAL ABUSE IN NEW MEXICO



SEXUAL ABUSE IN NEW MEXICO

- New Mexico ranks 50th in overall child wellbeing
- Reporting costs can be high for New Mexicans
- Patriarchal family structure
- Machismo beliefs
- Religious barriers
- Collectivist cultures may place the value of family reputation over the needs of the victim (*Sawrikar & Katz, 2017*)

MOVING FORWARD



MOVING FORWARD

- Ultimate goal is to prevent childhood sexual abuse
- Requires a socio-ecological approach
- Interplay of individual, relationships, community, & societal
- Factors at one level influence factors at another level
- Act across multiple levels simultaneously



Societal

Community

Relationship

Individual

MOVING FORWARD

- Know the facts
- Shift prevention from children to adults
- Talk about sexual abuse
- Create opportunities for victims to disclose
- Be willing to intervene

MOVING FORWARD

- One of the most important protective factors is support from the family and the wider social environment
- Enhance social supports
- Report, report, report
- Know your community resources

**DID WE COVER OUR
LEARNING OBJECTIVES?**



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



CLOSING REMARKS



THANK-YOU

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