

WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?



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“Sexual abuse” is also called “sexual assault” or “sexual violence.”

Sexual abuse refers to *any action that forces, pressures, or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't or wouldn't otherwise want to do.* It can also refer to any action that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs.¹

Furthermore, *any sexual activity* involving a minor (18 years of age in most states) is sexual abuse.

Examples of Sexual Abuse

- Unwanted kissing or touching.
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity.
- Rape or attempted rape.
- Refusing to use condoms or restricting someone's access to birth control.
- Keeping someone from protecting themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Sexual contact with someone who is very drunk, drugged, unconscious, or otherwise unable to give a clear and informed “yes” or “no.”
- Threatening or pressuring someone into unwanted sexual activity.¹

Not all sexual assaults are violent “attacks.”

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a minor. These acts can include **sexual touching** (e.g., touching a person's penis, vagina, buttocks, or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse) and **sexual behaviors that do not include touching** (e.g., peeping, flashing, or showing pornography to a child.)

Sometimes an older child may sexually abuse a younger one. ²

When a perpetrator engages with a child this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim.

Examples of Child Sexual Abuse

- Intercourse; sex of any kind with a minor, including vaginal, oral, or anal (including use of foreign objects)
- Fondling; touching a child's sexual organs except for medical or hygiene purposes
- Inappropriate kissing or making out
- Obscene phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction
- Exhibitionism, or exposing oneself to a minor
- Sex trafficking

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A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity, period.

- Masturbation in the presence of a minor or forcing the minor to masturbate
- Producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children
- Any other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare³

*Juvenile Statistics*⁴

93% of juvenile sexual assault victims know their attacker.

34% of attackers were family members.

59% were acquaintances.

7% of the perpetrators were strangers to the victim.

If you feel unsure about what child sexual abuse really is, you're not alone. About half of the people in a recent survey couldn't explain sexual abuse.²

Everyone has the right to decide what they do and don't want to do sexually.

1 People of all different ages, genders, and walks of life have been victims of sexual abuse. None of them “caused” their perpetrator to abuse them.

2 Sexual abuse can occur between two people who have been sexual with each other before, including people who are married or dating.¹

3 Consent is a clear “yes” to sexual activity. Not saying “no” does not mean you have given consent.

4 A body's natural response to sexual activity does not mean that forced or coerced sexual activity was consensual.

*If you have been sexually abused,
it is NOT YOUR FAULT.*

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1. [Loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)
 2. http://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/lets_talk.pdf
 3. <https://rainn.org/get-information/types-of-sexual-assault/child-sexual-abuse>
 4. U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2000 Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement. 2000.

Additional Information Available

For more information about sexual abuse, contact the following organizations:

Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS
800-232-4636 • <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center
877-739-3895 • www.nsvrc.org

Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice
202-514-2000 • www.ovw.usdoj.gov

Love is Respect
1.866.331.9474 • <http://www.loveisrespect.org/resources/download-materials/>

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