

# Child Sexual Abuse & Sexual Assault of a Minor

## MARYLAND DEFINITIONS

- **Child Sexual Abuse:** sexual molestation or exploitation of a child (age 0-17) by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member.
- **Sexual Assault of a Minor:** sexual assault of a child (age 0-17) that does not fall under the “care or custody” or familial or household requirements of child sexual abuse.

## PREVALENCE

- Approximately **67%** of all sexual assaults reported to police involved persons 0-17.<sup>1</sup>
- About **1 in 5** girls and **1 in 20** boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18.<sup>2</sup>
- It is estimated that **7-12%** of children (about **1 in 10** children) are sexually abused before they turn 18.<sup>3</sup>
- **18%** of girls and **3%** of boys say that by age 17 they have been victims of a sexual assault or abuse at the hands of another adolescent.<sup>4</sup>
- Child sexual abuse is significantly underreported.<sup>5</sup>
  - **73%** of child survivors do not tell anyone about the abuse for at least a year.
  - **45%** of victims do not tell anyone for at least 5 years.
  - Some children never disclose.

## PERPETRATORS

- About **90%** of those that sexually abuse a child are acquaintances of either the child or the family, while roughly **10%** of sexual abuse is perpetrated by a stranger.<sup>6</sup>
- **35%** of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by juveniles. In fact, about **12.5%** of sexual abuse is perpetrated by youth under the age of 12.<sup>7</sup>
- The younger the child victim, the more likely it is that the perpetrator is a juvenile themselves. Juveniles are the offenders in **43%** of assaults on children under age six.<sup>8</sup>

## CONSEQUENCES

- Studies have found associations between childhood sexual abuse and schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance misuse.<sup>9</sup>
- Teenage pregnancy risk is strongly linked to sexual abuse.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Townsend, C., Rheingold, A., & Haviland, M. L. (2016) “Estimating a Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Rate for Practitioners: An Updated Review of Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Studies,” *Darkness to Light*.

<sup>3</sup> Townsend, C. & Rheingold, A. (2013) “Estimating a Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Rate for Practitioners: A Review of Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Studies,” *Darkness to Light*

<sup>4</sup> Finkelhor, D., Shattuck, A., Turner, H. A., Hamby, S. L. (2014). The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 55(3)*, pp. 329-333: DOI:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.12.026

<sup>5</sup> Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, “Sexual Assault Disclosure in Relation to Adolescent Mental Health: Results from the National Survey of Adolescents,” J. Broman-Fulks, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Finkelhor, D. Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center (2012).

<sup>7</sup> Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., & Chaffin, M. (2009). Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors. Juvenile justice bulletin.

<sup>8</sup> Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> Hailes, H. P., Yu, R., Danese, A., & Fazel, S. (2019). “Long-term outcomes of childhood sexual abuse: An umbrella review,” *The Lancet, 6(10)*, pp 830-839: DOI:https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(19)30286-X

<sup>10</sup> See Perspectives On Sexual and Reproductive Health, “Teenage Pregnancy and Associated Risk Behavior Among Sexually Abused Adolescents,” E. Saewyc, et al., 2007 and Journal of Pediatric Psychology, “Childhood Sexual Abuse and Adolescent Pregnancy: A Meta-Analytic Update,” J. Noll, et al., 2009.