

Child Sexual Abuse & Sexual Assault of a Minor

MARYLAND DEFINITIONS

- **Child Sexual Abuse:** Sexual molestation or exploitation¹ of a minor, whether physical injuries were sustained or not, by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for the supervision of a minor, or by any other household or family member.²
- **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 IN THE UNITED STATES

- Approximately **67%** of all sexual assaults reported to police involved persons 0-17.³
- About **1 in 5** girls and **1 in 20** boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18.⁴
- About **1 in 10** children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.⁵
- Data collected in 2008, 2011, and 2014, from a national sample of youth (ages 0-17), showed that **76.7%** of males and **70.4%** of females reported experiencing sexual assault or abuse at the hands of another adolescent.
- Child sexual abuse is significantly underreported.⁶
 - **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.
 - Data collected in 2008, 2011, and 2014, from a national sample of adolescents (ages 10-17) who experienced sexual assault or abuse, showed that only **31%** of adolescents reported their victimization to parents, **33.7%** reported to other adults, and **19.1%** reported to law enforcement.⁷
 - Some children **never** disclose.

PREVALENCE IN MARYLAND

- In Maryland, during 2021, there were **6,303** child victims of child maltreatment, in general, although victims of child sexual abuse were included in this number.⁸
- More specifically, in 2021, there were **2,066** cases of investigated child sexual abuse in Maryland alone⁹ – an increase from the **2,059** Maryland child sexual abuse cases investigated in 2020.¹⁰
- It is important to note that the annual number of cases of investigated child sexual abuse in Maryland may be **higher** because data typically excludes sexual assaults of children by strangers or others who do not have custody or supervision of a child.¹¹

¹ Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 3-602(a)(4)(i)

² Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 3-602(b)

³ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement (2000)

⁴ 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.

⁵ Townsend, C., Rheingold, A. A., & Haviland, M. L. (2016, March). *Estimating a child sexual abuse prevalence rate for practitioners: An updated review of child sexual abuse prevalence studies.* Darkness to Light.

⁶ https://www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Updated-Prevalence-White-Paper-1-25-2016_2020.pdf

⁷ 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

⁸ Gewirtz-Meydan, A. & Finkelhor, D. (2019). Sexual abuse and assault in a large national sample of children and adolescents. *Child Maltreatment*, 25(2), 203-214. DOI: [10.1177/1077559519873975](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559519873975)

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2023, February 09). *Child maltreatment 2021.*

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2021>

¹⁰ U.S. HHS, ACF, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2023, February 09). *Child maltreatment 2021.* <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2021>

¹¹ U.S. HHS, ACF, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2022, January 21). *Child maltreatment 2020.* https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/child-maltreatment-report-2020_0.pdf

¹² London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S. J., & Shuman, D. W. (2005). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Journal of Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11(1), 194-226. DOI: 10.1037/1076-8971.11.1.194

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.¹²
- **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 12.¹³
- 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.¹⁴

CONSEQUENCES

- Studies have found associations between childhood sexual abuse and schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance misuse.¹⁵
- Teenage pregnancy risk is strongly linked to sexual abuse.¹⁶

¹² Finkelhor, D. Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center (2012)

¹³ Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., & Chaffin, M. (2009). Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors. Juvenile justice bulletin.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(19)30286-X)

¹⁶ 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.