

# Prevalence and Impact of Youth Sexual Victimization

Grand Challenge: Ensuring Healthy Development for all  
Youth

A detailed review of the literature done by:

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# Background

- ❖ Sexual Abuse: unwanted and nonconsensual sexual behaviors
- ❖ Studied the increased prevalence of sexual victimization amongst adolescents, how these individuals are affected:
  - Emotionally
  - Physically
  - Impact on future behaviors
- ❖ Only within the last 10 years has sexual victimization been researched, examined, and understood more clearly.
- ❖ Social Workers have a responsibility to:

# Extent of the Problem

- ❖ A national survey estimates that 3.2 percent of children between two and seventeen experienced sexual abuse in a single year (Finkelhor, 2009, p. 171).
- ❖ In 2012 a national survey estimated that 10 million girls and 791,000 boys have experienced either rape or attempted rape
- ❖ 43.6 percent of perpetrators are acquaintances of the victim
- ❖ Being a victim has been found to be the strongest predictor for perpetration violence in romantic relationships.

# Factors Leading to Sexual Abuse Among Adolescent Youth...

Abusive Family Backgrounds Has a Direct Correlation to Adolescents Living on the Streets.

- ❖ Runaways become less “psychologically Resilient.
- ❖ Increased engagement in criminal means of survival. (Stealing, selling drugs, prostitution).
- ❖ Increased exposure to harmful situations.
- ❖ Affiliation with deviant peers.



# Considering factors such as...

- ❖ Socio Economic Status
- ❖ Access to Education
- ❖ Access to Internet
- ❖ Owning or Renting Residence
- ❖ Living in Urban or Non-urban Regions

...no single demographic factor increases odds of sexual abuse among adolescents

# Early Sexual Abuse is a Key Factor Leading to Increased Sexual Victimization Later in Life... Adolescent Abuse Among Peers Becomes Common.

- ❖ Of 5000 adolescent respondents aged 12-18 two thirds report being victimized by their partner.
- ❖ Adolescent relationship abuse often begins in middle school where many youth begin dating.
- ❖ Studies Indicate childhood abuse leads to adolescents normalizing violence and aggressive behavior.

# Consequences



Youth that have been sexually victimized are more likely to be **sexually re-victimization** & to **commit sexual offenses**

Other symptoms include:

Increased depression

Social withdrawal

Suicide and Suicide ideation

Poor self-esteem

Somatic complaints

Mental illness

Delinquency

This also can impact individuals ability to obtain employment in the future because of these symptoms.

When people experience sexual victimization and abuse there is an internalization experiences creating negative views of self.

This also can contribute to eating and sleeping, disruptions.

Males tended to have more juvenile court charges, and females had more trips to the emergency room for suicide attempts.

There as an increased propensity for substance abuse charges as well as contracting STI's.

# Factors Improving the Problem

- ❖ Addressing relationships problems before youth reach middle school helps change the socialized ways of acting.
- ❖ Focusing discussions on how violence in interpersonal relationships is unacceptable sends a strong message.
- ❖ Teaching about healthy peers and dating which can help prevent patterns of dating violence and can minimize sexual harassment and bullying
- ❖ Sexual assault awareness programs help shape students knowledge and

# What is Working in Prevention?

## Characteristics of Effective Programing:

- ❖ Comprehensive
- ❖ Varied teaching methods
- ❖ Sufficient dosage
- ❖ Theory driven
- ❖ Positive relationship
- ❖ Appropriately timed
- ❖ Socio-cultural relevancy



# Current Effective Programs



“SAFE DATES”



“COACHING BOYS INTO MEN”



STAFF DEVELOPMENT



# CONCLUSIONS

## The Solutions

- ❖ Providing universal prevention programs beginning at earlier ages and appropriately timed programs continuing throughout adolescence can prevent initial victimization of youth.
- ❖ Providing interventions which focus on strengthening the protective capacities of parents will result in less sexual victimization of youth.
- ❖ Providing sexual assault awareness programs in schools can effectively change social norms and attitudes about relationship abuse.

