

Handouts

- 1.1 **Child Sexual Abuse**
- 1.2 **Myths and Facts About Child Sexual Abuse**
- 1.3 **The Facts About Child Sexual Abuse**
- 1.4 **Statistics on Sexual Abuse**
- 1.5 **Physical and Behavioural Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children**
- 1.6 **Why Sport Organizations Are Vulnerable to Sex Offenders**
- 1.7 **Journey to A SafeR Organization**
- 1.8 **Four Layers of an Organization: Atmosphere, Operations, Structure, Communication**



1.1

Child Sexual Abuse

Generally speaking, the term “child” refers to girls and boys from infancy to the age of 18. Certain exceptions apply, as in Part III of the *Child and Family Services Act*, which deals with child protection. Part III only applies to children under the age of 16, unless they are already under the care of a children’s aid society.

Child Sexual Abuse has been defined as

“... the misuse of power by someone who is in authority over a child, for the purposes of exploiting a child for sexual gratification. It includes incest, sexual molestation, sexual assault and the exploitation of the child for pornography or prostitution.”

(Source: Rix G. Rogers, *Reaching for Solutions* (Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada, 1990), p. 19.)

“Sexual abuse ranges from being forced or encouraged to watch someone else remove clothing or perform sexual acts, to being fondled and touched in private places, to being forced or encouraged to actively take part in sexual activities.”

(Source: Council on Children and Youth. *Put the Child First. A Child Abuse Prevention Manual for Use with Adolescents in Youth-Serving Organizations*. P. 4)

In *Speak Out!... Act Now!*, a compendium of information on policies and guidelines for sport and recreation organizations, sexual abuse is defined as having occurred when “a young or less powerful person is used by an older or more powerful child, adolescent or adult for sexual gratification.”

According to *Speak Out!... Act Now!*:

There are two categories of sexual abuse, contact and non-contact. Examples follow:

Non-Contact:

- flashing or exposing sexual body parts to a young athlete;
- watching intrusively as a young athlete changes or showers;
- speaking or communicating sexually/seductively with a young athlete;
- showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a young athlete;
- having to participate in the creation of pornographic materials;
- forcing¹ a young athlete to watch a sexual act performed by others;
- objectifying or ridiculing a young athlete’s sexual body parts.

Contact:

- kissing or holding a young athlete in a sexual manner;
- touching a young athlete’s sexual body parts or forcing someone to touch another person’s sexual body parts;
- penetrating a young athlete anally or vaginally, with objects or fingers;
- having vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse with a young athlete.

(Source: *Speak Out!... Act Now!* Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women, Sport and Physical Activity and Canadian Hockey Association. Section 1, Chapter 3, pp. 5-6)

¹ this can also include “encouraging.”



1.2

Myths and Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

Read the following statements and indicate if you think they are true or false.

1. We've never heard about an abuse case in our sport; so it doesn't happen here.
2. Strangers are the problem, not us. It's strangers who need to be screened.
3. If we check everyone's criminal record, we'll be able to weed out the offenders.
4. Offenders are "dirty old men."
5. If there were a sex offender in our community, we'd know about it.
6. If my child were being harassed or abused, I'd know about it.
7. If we keep out all homosexuals, we won't have any problems with offenders.
8. Child abuse takes place in big cities, not in small communities where everyone knows everyone else.
9. Children lie about being sexually abused.
10. Teenagers are the group most often sexually abused.



1.3

The Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

1. Some experts estimate that only 10 percent of sexual abuse is reported.
2. According to a 1997 survey of 179 police departments in six Canadian provinces, fully 77 percent of victims of sex offences knew the person who abused them; in 50 percent of all cases, the accused was a friend or acquaintance while in 28 percent of cases, the accused was a family member.
3. Many sex offenders don't have a criminal record or any police record at all.
4. Actually, most offenders commit their first assault as teens and continue until they get caught. Some offenders have assaulted hundreds of children.
5. Actually, you probably wouldn't know, given the low rate of disclosure, and the fact that many abusers are never identified, let alone charged, tried, convicted, or sentenced.
6. You might not. The pressure to keep silent comes from many quarters.
7. Studies and crime statistics are clear that most sex offenders are heterosexual, not homosexual, men. Experts believe that the actual number of women who sexually abuse children is far higher than is reported.
8. Actually, child abuse takes place everywhere. Sadly, some offenders seek out small towns because they are well aware that people believe small communities are safer and therefore may be less guarded.
9. Children rarely lie about the existence of abuse, although to protect the offender, they may minimize the nature and extent of abuse. By disclosing abuse, they risk being punished by the offender and they most certainly experience disruption in their lives.
10. Children as young as infants are abused. The 1997 survey of police departments showed that 62 percent of victims of sex offences were under 18 years of age; of these, 30 percent were children under 12, while 32 percent were youths between 12 and 17 years of age.



1.4

Statistics on Sexual Abuse

- The Badgley Report of the mid-'80s concluded that **“53 percent of females and 31 percent of males have been victims of one or more unwanted sexual acts.”**
- These acts included witnessing an indecent exposure, being touched on a sexual part of the body, being sexually threatened, and being subject to an attempted or actual sexual assault.” Approximately four in five of those incidents happened to the victims when they were children or youth.”
- Sexual abuse cuts across all economic, social, cultural, religious, and racial lines. Children of both sexes, all ages, races, religions, cultures, economic and social backgrounds are victims.
- Unfortunately, complete, reliable statistics on child sexual abuse are not available. The definition of abuse varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, so what is considered abuse in one province is not necessarily considered abuse in another.
- Experts agree that **the vast majority of victims of child sexual abuse never come forward to disclose that they have been abused.** Boys and men are significantly less likely to disclose abuse than are girls and women. Even when a child does tell, the situation is sometimes hushed up and no action is taken.
- The number of abusers is still relatively small in relation to the total population. Unfortunately, many sexual predators abuse many, many victims before they are stopped.

1.5

Physical and Behavioural Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children

Behavioural Signs in A Young Child

- sexual knowledge or language that is inappropriate for the child's age or development
- an unusual interest in, or preoccupation with sexual matters
- hints about sexual activity through actions or comments that are inappropriate to the child's age or developmental level
- inappropriate sexual play or behaviour with dolls/toys, other children or themselves
- art that shows abuse
- excessive masturbation
- persistent urinating or defecating in clothes
- regressive behaviour: baby talk, thumb sucking
- fear or avoidance of any aspect of sexuality
- sexually suggestive behaviour with adults or older children
- consistent psychosomatic complaints or frequent depression
- poor social boundaries
- starting fires or fascination with fire

Behavioural Signs in an Older child

- sexual knowledge or language that is inappropriate for the child's age or development
- hints about abusive sexual activity through actions or comments
- sexually suggestive behaviour with adults or older children
- consistent psychosomatic complaints or frequent depression
- difficulty concentrating, withdrawn, overly obedient
- seeming accident-prone
- starting fires or fascination with fire
- running away
- promiscuity or prostitution
- refusing to undress for gym, often wearing layers of clothing
- [creating] stories, poems, or artwork about abuse
- suicidal feelings or attempts
- destroying property, hurting or mutilating animals

Physical Signs of Sexual Abuse

- bruising, bleeding, swelling, tears or cuts of genitals or anus
- unusual vaginal odour or discharge
- torn, stained, or bloody clothing, especially underwear, or itching in genital area, difficulty going to the bathroom, walking or sitting
- Sexually transmitted disease, especially in a pre-adolescent child
- pregnancy

NOTE: These indicators may of course relate to matters other than sexual abuse, and the presence of any one of them does not necessarily mean that a child is being abused.

1.6

Why Sport Organizations are Vulnerable to Sex Offenders

Sex offenders target all kinds of organizations where children and youth are present, not just sport organizations of course. Sexual abusers look for circumstances and characteristics that will make it easy, or easier, to find and target victims. Sport organizations feature many of them:

- They involve children of all ages.
- They are sometimes gender specific – i.e., they involve only boys or only girls. Some male offenders have admitted that they targeted boys, not because they are attracted to boys, but because involvement with boys attracted less attention than would involvement with girls.
- Children are generally taught to listen to, respect, and obey adults in authority, including leaders. The younger the child, the more likely he or she is to accept what the leader does, says, or tells him or her to do.
- Parents don't always question, or question often enough, what leaders do (apart from benching their kids), especially in really competitive sports.
- Sport organizations are so grateful for the help that they don't adequately question the behaviours and actions of leaders.
- Many, if not most, of the people involved, particularly in minor sport activities, are parents. They tend to be trusted automatically.
- In many activities, a close relationship between leaders and players is encouraged.
- In some activities, particularly competitive sport, that close relationship is vital to success.
- Many activities require children to dress and undress, to shower in locker rooms or common shower areas.
- Leaders may have to touch children to demonstrate or correct a move or a technique, or to help them if they are hurt.
- Players may spend a great deal of time alone with leaders, travelling, training, and waiting between games at tournaments, etc. The risk of abuse increases with the number and duration of one-on-one situations – in cars, hotels, locker rooms, private homes.
- Overnight trips are common.
- One of the reasons children join sport programs is to enhance self-esteem and self-confidence. Abusers take advantage of those with low self-esteem and low self-confidence.
- Some children's dreams are wrapped up in their sport abilities. Consequently, coaches and leaders wield enormous power over children.
- Sexual abusers prey on children as young as infants and toddlers who obviously can't protect themselves and can't tell. They are perfect targets. Even though most sport programs are offered to children over four, there are infant and toddler swimming programs, and activities such as gym classes.
- Societal taboos about sex and children can make it hard for kids to disclose abuse and for adults to believe them or face the truth.
- Abusers often make children feel that they are responsible for the abuse they have suffered, that they somehow "invited" it to happen. This fact, along with sexual stereotypes and attitudes about sexual orientation can create powerful reasons to remain silent. Boys in particular may fear they will be labelled as homosexuals if they disclose.

1.7

Journey to A Safer Organization

PREVENTION

Destination: Safer Organization

Learn Definitions and concepts Sport as target Abuse consequences Obligations (legal, etc.)	Commit to action Organization Stakeholders	Articulate Values Principles	Conduct risk assessment Org. Atmosphere Org. Operations Org. Structure Org. Communication	Eliminate/Reduce Org. Atmosphere Org. Operations Org. Structure Org. Communication
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RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

Destination: Abuse ends

Attend to complaint comfort listen get basic story don't investigate	Report complaint to authorities	Cooperate with authorities	Take preventive measures	Help organization heal
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1.8

Four Layers of an Organization:

Atmosphere, Operations, Structure, Communication

In order to combat sexual abuse, risk management activities have to be undertaken on all aspects of the organization:

- **Atmosphere:** An organization can have the best, strictest policies in the world. It can rigorously screen staff. It can have all kinds of procedures designed to maximize safety – but if the atmosphere – how the organization feels and acts – makes it impossible for people to talk about it or for children to disclose harm, then the policies and screening and procedures are useless.
- **Operations:** It's important to look at all the things the organization does, to look at the players and understand their characteristics and vulnerabilities; at the sport activities themselves – the practices, the games, the tournaments, the road trips, etc.; and at the people who act as board members, officials, managers, coaches, etc.
- **Structure:** Looking at structure means examining the way the organization is set up, who takes responsibility for what, whether the issue of sexual abuse receives adequate attention from the Board in policy and in Board time, whether it is the focus of education and training efforts, who is actually responsible on an ongoing basis for implementing and enforcing the measures the Board establishes.
- **Communication:** It's important that all communication from the organization reflect the same message, both internally and externally. Statements about the organization's commitment to preventing abuse can be completely undermined if members, especially leaders, scoff at either the issue itself or at the organization's efforts to deal with it.