

# Teens and Sexual Abuse

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- **What is Sexual Abuse?**

**SEXUAL ABUSE:** (As reportable under The Child Abuse/ Neglect Law): The use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child, under the age of 18, to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct by those responsible for the child's care, custody, and control.

- **How do I know if it's really sexual abuse?**

Sexual abuse can involve any of the following:

- Coercion
- Force
- Threat
- Temptation
- Persuasion

- **Who can be sexually abused?**

- Minor children (under age 18).
- Persons under 18 also can be charged with sexual abuse if they are significantly older or in a position of power or control over the child (i.e., brothers, babysitters, neighbors).
- It is called "incest" if the abuser and victim are legal or blood relatives.
- Sexual abuse can also occur between married couples if there is force, violence or exploitation involved.

- **The statistics are shocking!**

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before the age of 18.
- 1 in 5 children are solicited sexually while on the internet.
- Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults occur to children ages 17 and under.
- 30-40% of survivors are abused by a family member, another 50% are abused by someone they know, but only 10% are abused by strangers.
- An estimated 39 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse exist in America today.

- **What should I do if I have been sexually abused?**

- Children/teens should tell someone they can trust -- a parent, teacher, police officer, or call Protective Services in their county (Macomb County 586-254-1515).

- **What are some dangers?**

- Sexual abuse may lead to loss of trust, lowered self esteem, and development of shame, guilt, anxiety and depression.
- In severe cases it can lead to eating disorders, self abuse, substance abuse, suicide, promiscuity/prostitution, and other psycho-behavioral issues.

- **What does treatment involve?**

- Since most sexual abuse survivors are traumatized and often suffering from PTSD, best treatments include coping/skills-focused treatments, cognitive therapy, and EMDR which may combine eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing. As with most frightening events, a survivor may never forget the incident(s), but can learn new ways of coping effectively.