



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION

Key Takeaways

- Child sexual abuse (CSA) is preventable— we must empower adults to take responsibility for the safety of children.
- Nearly 90% of CSA occurs within families or involves someone the child or family knows and trusts.⁷
- Extensive research shows that experience of CSA are associated with long lasting physical and mental health and developmental problems.^{1,11-13}
- By strengthening, developing, and disseminating robust and adaptable CSA policies, practices, and public education we can create safe environments for all children and decrease the overall risk of CSA.¹⁴

Child sexual abuse (CSA)— defined as “the involvement of a child (a person less than 18 years old) in a sexual activity that violates laws or societal taboos, and that the child (i) doesn’t fully comprehend, (ii) doesn’t consent to, or is unable to give informed consent to, or (iii) is not developmentally prepared for and cannot give consent to”— **is a widespread public health issue and an adverse childhood experience (ACE).**¹

Research identifies several individual, family, and societal risk factors associated with CSA.²⁻⁵

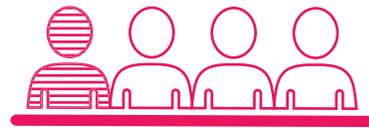
In 2019, approximately 47,000 children had a substantiated CSA welfare case, though this is likely an underestimate of the problem.⁶

Research has found that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience CSA.¹

Nearly 90% of CSA occurs within families or involves someone the child or family knows and trusts.⁷

More than 70% of CSA victims reported perpetration by a juvenile offender, often an acquaintance.⁸

Findings suggest that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 3.8 times more likely to experience CSA than straight youth.^{9,10}



Experiences of CSA are associated with long lasting physical, mental, and behavioral health problems, and poor academic outcomes.^{1, 11-13}

- **Physical health:** STIs, physical injuries, heart disease, and obesity;^{1, 11}
- **Mental health:** depression, anxiety, and PTSD^{1, 11, 12}
- **Behavioral consequences:** substance use/misuse, risky sexual behaviors, suicidal ideation, and risk of future sexual perpetration or victimization;^{1, 11, 12} and
- **Poor academic outcomes:** below average grades, enrollment in remedial classes, and low graduation rates¹³

Prevent Child Abuse America strives to create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments for all children and families to decrease the overall risk of child sexual abuse by:

- **Advocating for and strengthening CSA-related policies and programs** at the state and federal levels. This includes supporting additional investments in federal CSA prevention research funding and primary prevention interventions.
- **Supporting our state chapter network**—34 chapters engage in CSA work through providing education and awareness, advocating for services, providing training and/or technical assistance, funding services, and/or providing direct services.
- **Promoting social norms** that protect against sexual violence and support positive parenting through public awareness and engagement campaigns.

In collaboration with policymakers, business leaders, and community members, we can work together to develop and implement strategies to prevent child sexual abuse. To learn more, visit: <https://preventchildabuse.org/what-we-do/child-sexual-abuse-prevention/>.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, June). Preventing Child Sexual Abuse. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childsexualabuse/fastfact.html>

2. Assink, M., van der Put, C. E., Meeuwse, M. W. C. M., de Jong, N. M., Oort, F. J., Stams, G. J. J. M., & Hoeve, M. (2019). Risk factors for child sexual abuse victimization: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 145, 459-489.

3. Black, D.A., Heyman, R.E., & Smith-Slep, A.M. (2001). Risk factors for child sexual abuse. *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, 6, 203-229.

4. Clayton, E., Jones, C., Brown, J., & Taylor, J. (2018). The aetiology of child sexual abuse: A critical review of the empirical evidence. *Child Abuse Review*, 27, 181-197.

5. Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reductions of inequities in gender relations: a conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls. *The Lancet*, 385(9977), 1580-1589.

6. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2021). *Child Maltreatment 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

7. Finkelhor, D., & Shattuck, A. (2012). Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes Against Children Research Center.

Retrieved from http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV26_Revised%20Characteristics%20of%20Crimes%20against%20Juveniles_5-2-12.pdf

8. Gewirtz-Meydan, A. & Finkelhor, D. (2019). Sexual abuse and assault in large national sample of children and adolescents. *Child Maltreatment*, 25(2), 203-214.

9. Friedman, M. S., Marshal, M. P., Guadamuz, T. E., Wei, C., Wong, C. F., Saewyc, E., & Stall, R. (2011). A meta-analysis of disparities in childhood sexual abuse, parental physical abuse, and peer victimization among sexual minority and sexual nonminority individuals. *American journal of public health*, 101(8), 1481-1494.

10. University of Washington Joshua Center on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention. (2022). How common is child sexual abuse? Retrieved from: <https://uwjoshuacenter.org/how-common-child-sexual-abuse>

11. Hailes, H. P., Yu, R., Danese, A., & Fazel, S. (2019). Long-term outcomes of childhood sexual abuse: an umbrella review. *The Lancet, Psychiatry*, 6(10), 830-839.

12. Maniglio, R. (2009). The impact of child sexual abuse on health: A systematic review of reviews. *Clinical Psychology Reviews*, 29, 647-657.

13. Daignault, I.V. & Hebert, M. (2009). Profiles of school adaptation: Social, behavioral, and academic functioning in sexually abused girls. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 33, 102-115

14. Prevent Together: The National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (2021). *The National Plan to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*. Retrieved from: www.preventtogether.org