



the women's centre

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www.thewomenscentre.org.au

Funded by Queensland Health and Department of Communities

FREE Services

Counselling Service
Women's Health Service
Sexual Assault Support Service

24 hour support line
Information and Referral
Shelter Referral
Health Promotion
Ongoing Counselling
Therapeutic Groups
Workshops
Community Education
Drop in service
Internet and Telephone facilities
Donations - bread/clothes

No appointment needed to see the daily counsellor

Feel free to come in, relax and have a cuppa
For further information please contact the Women's Centre 4775 7555

Other Important Numbers

NQ Domestic Violence Resource Service (NQDVRS)
07 4721 2888

NQ Women's Legal Service
07 4772 5400

Women's Health Information Line
1800 017 676 Free Call

DVConnect Women's line
1800 811 811 - 24 Hrs Free call

NQCWS-08

Facts About Child Sexual Assault

What is child sexual assault?

Child sexual assault is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person. It occurs when an adult, adolescent or older child uses his power and/ or authority to engage a child in inappropriate sexual acts.

Child sexual assault is a crime

Perpetrators plan and deliberately target children

All children are vulnerable

The perpetrator is fully responsible for his actions



Fact:

The perpetrator is always responsible for his behaviour. Child sexual assault is not the child's fault. No child ever "asks" to be sexually assaulted. Child sexual assault is a crime.

Fact:

In the vast majority of situations the perpetrator is a member of the child's family or someone the child knows and trusts, such as a relative, family friend or neighbor.

Fact:

Children are usually very frightened and intimidated by the perpetrator, making it almost impossible for them to tell. Children may also feel guilty, ashamed and responsible for the sexual assaults. Perpetrators usually threaten children ensuring they remain silent and available.

Fact:

Many children who are sexually assaulted are very young, including babies and toddlers. Children of all ages, girls and boys, are sexually assaulted.

Fact:

A child's appearance or behaviour does not cause child sexual assault or excuse the perpetrator.

Child sexual assault may include sexual touching, exposing genitals, engaging a child in pornography, and sexual intercourse, involving penetration with a penis, finger, tongue or object.

In the majority of cases, the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the child, and includes family members, relatives and friends of the family.

Common effects and feelings as a child include:

- Emotional isolation and feeling different
- Self blame – children may feel responsible, and that they deserve and have caused the sexual assaults
- Guilt – children may believe the sexual assaults are punishments for wrong doings
- Betrayal of trust – perpetrators of child sexual assault manipulate a child's innocence and exploit children's vulnerability and need for protection

Common effects which may continue into adulthood include:

Relationships – Some survivors experience difficulties in developing intimate relationships in which they feel safe. Sexual contact may trigger memories of childhood sexual assaults.

Anger – Some survivors report feelings of anger and rage towards themselves for being unable to stop the sexual assaults, towards the perpetrator, and/or towards parents/caregivers for not protecting them.

It is not uncommon for survivors to believe they told an adult, or an adult knew what was happening. This may or may not be the case. Sometimes children may disclose information about child sexual assault using language which does not alert a trusted adult to the danger they are in.

Fear, anxiety and depression – Many survivors continue to live with these effects and experience high levels of anxiety. These are normal responses to trauma.

Self-harming and suicidal behaviours – In coping with the overwhelming impacts of child sexual assault, some survivors may engage in cutting or burning themselves, or experience repeated thoughts of, and/or attempts to, commit suicide.

Fear of becoming a perpetrator of child sexual assault – This belief has no basis in fact. No link has ever been established between experiences of childhood sexual assault and becoming a perpetrator of sexual assault against children.

Perpetrators of Child Sexual Assault

The vast majority of child sexual assault perpetrators are adult or adolescent males who are known and trusted by the child. He may be the child's father or stepfather, grandfather, older male cousin, brother or brother in law, uncle or someone else within the family. Perpetrators of child sexual assault come from all walks of life, and could also be a trusted family friend, neighbour, sporting coach, teacher or priest. While children may also be at risk of sexual assault by a stranger, this occurrence is less likely.

Perpetrator Tactics

Child sexual assault is planned and occurs when perpetrators deliberately select children to target them for sexual assault. A wide range of intentional behaviours are employed by perpetrators to groom and engage children in sexual acts. Based on their adult power and status, perpetrators of child sexual assault use trickery, manipulation, threats and force to target children, who by their very nature, are powerless and vulnerable.

Grooming

Grooming involves the perpetrator developing a special trusting relationship with a child or children through:

- the giving of gifts and compliments
- providing special favours
- engaging the child as a confidante
- gradually desensitising the child to sexual language and sexual touching
- pretending this is all a game
- pretending sexual touching is accidental
- breaching the personal boundaries of a child under the guise of "normal" bathing, bed time routines etc.

The child is gradually entrapped in a sophisticated web of deceit and manipulation enabling the perpetrator to escalate his control and the severity and frequency of the sexual assaults.

In many cases, the perpetrator also actively grooms others who are close to the child, with the deliberate intention of deflecting any possible suspicion.

On-going Impact for the Child:

Secrecy and Silence

The child is now further subjected to

- emotional abuse
- blackmail
- manipulation
- intimidation
- bullying
- threats about what might happen if she tells

The perpetrator convinces the child that she consented to the sexual acts and that she is in fact in a "relationship" with him. He may imply that the child initiated the "relationship".

Responsibility

Through the significant power wielded by the perpetrator, and at great personal cost, the child is forced to take responsibility for:

- the sexual assaults
- maintaining the secret
- protecting the perpetrator
- keeping the family together

Recovery from child sexual assault can be a long journey.

If you have never talked about how this has affected you, you may decide now is a good time to begin.

***There is hope,
You can heal***