



the women's centre

Ph 07 4775 7555

Fax 07 4779 2959

email: nqcws@thewomenscentre.org.au

www.thewomenscentre.org.au

Funded by Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Facts About Child Sexual Assault

Fact:

The perpetrator is always responsible for his behaviour. Child sexual assault is not the child's fault. No child ever invites sexual assault. 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 neighbour.

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.

FREE Services

Counselling Service

Women's Health Service

Sexual Assault Support Service

Specialist Homelessness Service

Information and Referral

Shelter Referral

Ongoing Counselling

Therapeutic Groups

Workshops

Community Education

Internet and Telephone facilities

Donations - bread/clothes

No appointment needed to see the drop-in counsellor

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

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 authority to involve 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



The Women's Centre acknowledges
the traditional custodians of the land

50 - 52 Patrick Street Aitkenvale
ph 4775 7555

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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.

Immediate Impact Includes:

- 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 children's innocence and exploit children's vulnerability and need for protection

Impacts Continuing Into Adulthood Can 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 – Survivors often 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 try to speak 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.

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***

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 used by perpetrators to groom and involve 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 can be 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". Through the significant power wielded by the perpetrator, and at great personal cost, the child is forced to feel responsible for:

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

In reality, the child is never responsible for any of these.

Talking to someone

Talking with someone you trust, a friend, family member, or counsellor, can assist with healing. The safety and wellbeing of your child is the most important thing. Mothers of children who have been assaulted need support too.