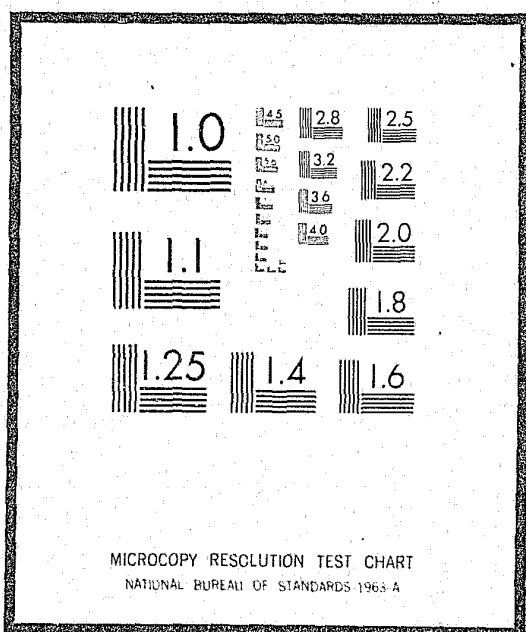


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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531

6/1/77

Date filmed

FACT SHEET¹ ON THE SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILD

NCJRS

Rape Awareness Public Education Program
1515 N. W. 7 Street, Suite 215
Miami, Fla. 33125 Telephone: 547-7810

FEB 17 1977

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS.....Any sexual activity that is detrimental to the child, emotionally as well as physically.

It Takes Many Forms?.....LOVING PARENTAL GESTURES become sexual abuse if they are too lingering and seductive, continued into adolescence, or become centered on the sex organs, anus or breasts.

MOLESTATION--lewd and lascivious behavior; attempted or completed crimes against nature, sodomy, sexual assaults, incest; and attempted rape.

SEXUAL BATTERY--oral, anal or vaginal penetration by or in union with the sexual organ or another; or the anal or vaginal penetration of another by any other object, excluding bona fide medical acts.

SERIOUS PERSONAL INJURY--great bodily harm or pain, permanent disability or permanent disfigurement.

But Usually Involves.....Indecent exposure; petting, fondling or kissing genitals; and attempted penetration without force. Insertion is mainly digital.

Force Is Infrequent.....Probably because the victim knows the offender in most cases. Studies show that forced penetration, forceful attack or violence occur less than 5 per cent of the time; murder is almost non-existent.

Child's Emotional Reactions.....Influenced mostly by child's age, level of development and understanding of sex; brutality of attack; depth of relationship between victim and offender; and stability and reactions of the family. Child may display fear, embarrassment, guilt or confusion. Or emotional shock (vomiting, shaking, crying, hysteria). Or withdrawal, refusing to talk. Or repression (emotions won't allow child to remember). Some children react without fear or guilt; some report being sexually aroused. Often when guilt is absent originally, it is engendered by parents, courts or the community. Long-range effects could range from abstinence to promiscuity; from frigidity to nymphomania.

Psychological Problems...Most children will not suffer long-range emotional problems unless they are adversely affected by adult reactions. Parental overreaction--such as hysteria, overprotectiveness, refusal to allow the child to talk about it, forcing the child to repeat the details, demanding the child testify that the attack was unprovoked--as well as inappropriate medical, case-work and legal methods can cause more trauma than the actual sexual abuse and lead to protracted treatment or permanent emotional scars.

The child-victim may be physically, financially and emotionally dependent on the abuser. Out of fear, guilt or love, the child may tolerate the abuse. Sexual abuses within the family are almost always destructive to the child, parents and family. Power struggles, blackmail, jealousy, guilt and fear prevent normal personal or sexual development for the child who finds severe problems trying to relate to appropriate sexual partners later on.

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THE VICTIM

Who.....Any child is a potential victim.

Age/Sex.....Florida law defines a "child" as any person under 18 years. The Rape Treatment Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital reported the youngest victim was 2 months old; and that 34 per cent of all victims treated were under 16 years. Boys as often as girls are sexually abused. The majority of girl victims of sexual abuse are between 5-10 years; with boys, 6-11 years.

Race.....In 87 per cent of the cases, the victims and offenders are of the same race.

Socio-economic Level.....All levels are involved. Education and income status of the family have no correlation with the incidence rate.

THE OFFENDER

Who.....The offender is known to the victim 80 per cent of the time; in half these cases, the offender is a member of the child's own household or other close relative; the balance, a friend or acquaintance.

Incest cases.....The principal offender is the father. While adult females seldom commit physical sexual abuse, the mother often knows what's happening and, for a variety of reasons, doesn't do anything about it. Parents who abuse their children were usually abused themselves as children, either physically or emotionally. The most common forms of their sexual abuse are gentle variations of adult love-making misplaced on the children of very needy, sadly love-starved parents.

Sociological Considerations.....Offenses are not restricted to the poor or to minority groups. Affluence of middle or upper class parents can help hide the effects. Sexual standards, as well as expressions and demonstrations of affection, differ greatly among various social and cultural groups and among families in the same group. While incest is a universal taboo in Western civilization, other forms of sexual activity practiced within some families may not be considered "wrong" but could, nevertheless, cause psychological damage to the child.

Age.....In 54 per cent of cases, the offender was 10 years or more older than the victim; in 46 per cent, less than 10 years older. The FBI Crime Index shows that between 1960-1973, persons under 18 years arrested for rape increased by 132 per cent.

Number of Assailants.....In 77 per cent of the cases, there is a single assailant.

THE ASSAULT

When.....Mostly during daylight or dusk; about 1/3 between 8PM and midnight; 12 noon and 8PM are the most frequently reported times.

Where.....Usually in the home of the child or the offender. With girl victims, 2/3 took place in homes; with boys, 1/2. The minority of cases occur in streets, parks, empty lots, schools, clubs, churches, theaters and restaurants.

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THE INCIDENCE

Nationally.....These crimes are frequently unreported. There are no really accurate statistics. The FBI Uniform Crime Reports are adult and offender-oriented with no figures on child sexual abuse other than forcible rape. Estimates vary between 50,000 to 500,000 cases a year in the United States.

Locally.....Protective Services reports that there is no breakdown of statistics for sexual abuse of children. Their figures reflect the total number of cases for all types of child abuse in Dade County.

WHY UNDERREPORTED

Child May Not Tell.....Children sometimes forget to mention the incident to their parents until something triggers the memory. Or, the parent might discover something is wrong (e.g., while bathing the child see a vaginal tear or reddening) and only upon questioning does the child tell about the experience. Sometimes the child has difficulty relating to such an unusual occurrence. A naively obedient child may not be aware that an offense was committed.

Parents May Not Tell.....Some families choose to keep the whole incident hushed up because

- . the victim and offender are related
- . loyalty to the offender
- . victim's strong affection for offender
- . family shame or embarrassment if publicly exposed
- . reluctance to repeat details to others
- . fear social stigma, reputation damage if regarded as failures as parents
- . fear of retaliation or revenge
- . mistrust of police

Others Not Aware of

Required Reporting..Florida law (827.07) requires "any person including but not limited to any physician, nurse, teacher, social worker, or employee of a public or private facility servicing children who has reason to believe that a child has been subject to abuse (including sexual abuse) to report or cause reports to be made" (to Protective Services). An immediate investigation is made. All information, including names of persons reporting the abuse, is kept in strict confidence. This agency acts in the best interest of the child to assure the child's receiving the kind of support and treatment needed.

TRAUMA CAN BE REDUCED BY.....Dealing with the incident as soon as possible.

Support of Family.....Generally, the best recovery is made by the child who was sexually assaulted without violence by a stranger because everyone usually expresses rage at the offense. But if the abuse is by a respected authority figure, those close to the victim may find it hard to accept and withhold support the child so desperately needs

In some cases, lack of family support and continuous abuse by a family member has led to the child's becoming a truant, delinquent, run away or prostitute--even a suicide.

Limited Questioning.....Questioning must be kept to an absolute minimum. It may be harmful to plague the child, trying to get all the details. Instead, listen, support and comfort. Ideally, there should be only one in-depth interview by trained personnel.

Speedy Proceedings.....Oppose unreasonable delays or adjournments in court proceedings.
Respect right of minor to have a closed hearing.

Trial Preparation.....Helping prepare the victim and the family for court appearances
will ease their anxieties.

TREATMENT ADVISED FOR BOTH

VICTIM AND FAMILY.....The child needs a medical exam by a physician if there has been physical abuse. Internal injury may not be evident. Protective Services, when it is in the best interest of the child, will arrange for emergency treatment without waiting for the victim's parents to be located.

Refer the child to the Rape Treatment Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital (TELEPHONE 325-7273 OR REMEMBER 325-RAPE) IF THE OFFENSE IS VIOLENT AND IMMEDIATE. Here the child will receive

- . a physical examination and appropriate treatment
 - . treatment to prevent pregnancy and venereal disease when applicable
 - . counseling to help him/her cope with the emotional trauma
- In addition,
- . specimens are taken for legal evidence
 - . counseling is also offered to the family so that the child can receive the emotional support needed

FOR MORE INFORMATION.....OR TO RECEIVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PAMPHLETS:

- . Precautions And Tactics To Avoid Rape
- . Guidelines For Teenagers
- . Guidelines For Parents
- . Guidelines For Professionals

Please Contact.....Muriel Solomon, Director
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1515 N. W. 7 Street, Suite 215, Miami, Fla. 33125
Telephone (305) 547-7810

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¹Information compiled from studies reported by Vincent DeFrances, Ph.D.; Vincent J. Fontana, MD; International Association of Chiefs of Police; J.W. Mohr, Ph.D.; Gene E. Mundie, RN, Ed.M.; Joseph J. Peters, MD; Edwin I. Roth, MD; LeRoy G. Schultz, MSW, ACSW; David R. Walters, Ph.D.

²Applicable Florida Statutes are:
Involuntary Sexual Battery, 794
Child Molester Act, 801
Abuse of Children, 827

END

7/1/55