



Seven Facts You Should Know About Sexual Abuse

1. Child sexual abuse includes a range of behaviours, from obvious contact offences such as touching or fondling genitalia to less obvious non-contact offences, such as exposure to sexually explicit material.¹ Child sexual abuse and exploitation occur when an older child, youth, or adult takes advantage of a younger child or youth for sexual purposes, including prostitution, pornographic performances, and the production of pornography.²
2. In Canada, sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 years is a criminal offence regardless of the child's perceived consent.³
3. According to Statistics Canada, 59% of all victims of sexual abuse in 2008 were children under the age of 18 years. Forty percent were children 11 years old or under.⁴
4. Child sexual abuse is one of the most misunderstood and underreported crimes. Despite the years of public education, media campaigns, and prevention programs, over half of all child sexual abuse victims remain silent and never disclose their abuse.⁵ This reluctance or failure to disclose is much more common when the abuse involves a familiar person, especially a family member.⁶
5. Research reveals that individuals who sexually abuse children usually know their victim.⁷
6. Offenders are less likely to victimize a child if they think the child will tell. Some offenders will test a child's personal safety awareness and whether there is a risk that the child will tell an adult.⁸
7. Sexual abuse is a process. It often begins before sexual touching starts. "Grooming" is a method of building trust with a child and adults who care for the child in an effort to gain access to and time alone with her/him.⁹

¹ Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2011.

² Department of Justice Canada, 2005.

³ <http://www.justice.gc.ca/>

⁴ Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2011.

⁵ OACAS Facilitator Guide – Module Two: Understanding Child Sexual Abuse.

⁶ Schachter et al., 2009, SexAssault.ca, 2011.

⁷ Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2011.

⁸ Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2011.

⁹ Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2011.