Types of Sexual Violence

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an overarching term for any type of sexual activity committed by one person without the consent of the other. It may involve the use of threats, force, or any other form of coercion or intimidation. Sexual contact with a person who is unable to give consent due to things like age, cognitive ability, or incapacitation is also sexual violence. Sexual violence includes sexual assault, intimate partner sexual assault, child sexual abuse, stalking, sexual harassment, and trafficking.

Historically, the term "rape" has been used to describe sexual assault. It is true that rape is a form of sexual assault. However, not all sexual assaults are rapes. The term rape most often has been used to describe forced vaginal penetration, which is not a part of all sexual assaults. When we use the term sexual assault, we make more space for survivors who have experienced forms of sexual violence that may not have fit into how the current culture's definition of rape.

Sexual assault is used in place of the term rape to be more inclusive of the different forms of non-consensual sexual acts, and it is also the term used in the Maine Criminal Statutes (17-A M.R.S.A., Chapter 11). While advocates do not need to use the following terms, it is helpful to understand how Maine law defines these general categories of sexual assault:

"Sexual act" means:

1. Any act between two persons involving direct physical contact between the genitals of one person and the mouth, anus, or genitals of the other person or direct physical contact between the genitals of one and the genitals of the other;

2. Any act involving direct physical contact between the genitals or anus of one and an instrument or device manipulated by another when the act is done for arousing or gratifying sexual desire or for causing bodily injury or offensive physical contact; or

3. Any act between a person and an animal being used by another person which act involves direct physical contact between the genitals of one and the mouth and anus of the other or direct physical contact between the genitals of one and the genitals of the other.

"Sexual contact" means:

any touching of the genitals or anus directly or through clothing, other than as would constitute a sexual act, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire or for the purpose of causing bodily injury or offensive physical contact.

"Sexual touching" means:

any touching of the breasts, buttocks, groin, or inner thigh, directly or through clothing, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire.

Types of Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is a violation of a person's body, trust, and spirituality. However we choose to name it, no experience of sexual violence is the same.

Stranger Sexual Assault

Stranger sexual assault is sexual assault committed against one person by someone unknown to the victim. Popular media has perpetuated the myth that sexual assault by a stranger is more common than it is. We know that more often, they commit violence quickly without any prior warning, and use physical force and/or verbal threats to gain power and control.

Because this is such a common culture narrative of sexual violence, it's important that we consider this as one form of sexual assault and not the only form. Advocates often have to work with other systems partners like law enforcement who may be comparing a survivor's experience against this stranger sexual assault narrative.

Non-Stranger Sexual Assault

Perpetrators of sexual assault can be strangers, but data shows that they are more likely to be acquaintances, co-workers, dating partners, friends, family members, and/or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Sexual Assault

Sexual assault committed by a current or a previous intimate partner (including non-sexual partners or former partners), may be referred to as intimate partner sexual assault and/or as a form of domestic violence. These types of violence can include all types of non-consensual sexual activity by one partner toward the other partner or former partner. This is without regard for living arrangement, legal status of relationship, or gender of the partners.

Acquaintance Sexual Assault

An offender of acquaintance sexual assault can be someone a person just met, a classmate, a friend, or a friend of a friend. Incidents of acquaintance sexual assault make up a large percentage of all sexual assaults. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, the majority of both female and male victims know the offender (Basile et al., 2022).

As is true of all types of sexual violence, acquaintance sexual assault is not primarily about sex but about power, control, and domination. When the offender knows the survivor, the offender may isolate and manipulate the survivor by:

- Locking the door and not allowing them to leave.
- Promising to take them home from a party, but taking them somewhere else.
- Using financial pressure, i.e., feeling entitled to sex because of paying for dinner.
- Applying emotional pressure, such as threatening not to go out with them again if they do not agree to have sex.
- Threatening public embarrassment by telling others they were sexually intimate whether they were or not.

Multiple Offender Sexual Assault

In the past, when sexual violence involves more than one offender it was often referred to as "gang rape;" the literature now suggests using "multiple perpetrator sexual violence." Research indicates the following about multiple perpetrator sexual violence:

- In one study, 16% of the male students surveyed had committed rape, and 10% of those who attempted a rape took part in episodes involving more than one offender (Warshaw, 1994).
- In 75.6% of sexual assaults committed by multiple offenders, the offenders were strangers to the victim (Rand & Catalano, 2006).
- From 2005 to 2010, it was reported that 10% of all sexual assaults committed against women were perpetrated by two or more people (Planty, Langton, Krebs, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2013).

Substance-Facilitated Sexual Assault

When drugs and/or alcohol are intentionally used to increase a person's vulnerability to sexual violence, it is called Substance-Facilitated Sexual Assault (SFSA). Offenders use drugs and/or alcohol to incapacitate potential victims by initially making the victim feel more intoxicated and increasing dependency on the offender. This will also impair someone's memory, judgment, and physical ability to resist or fight back.

Offenders use a wide range of drugs to facilitate sexual violence, but alcohol is the most frequently used substance. Most drugs used to facilitate sexual assault are central nervous system depressants, which lower breathing and heart rates, can result in loss of consciousness, and in extreme circumstances cause a comatose state or death.

When drugs are mixed with alcohol, the victim may feel more intoxicated than at another time when a similar amount of alcohol was consumed. However, the presentation of these drugs varies, and in many cases is undetectable due to the drugs' characteristics:

- Colorless (GHB and Ketamine only).
- Odorless.
- Easily dissolved in liquid.
- Easily masked taste.
- Effective immediately or within 15 to 30 minutes
- Effects last for several hours.
- Leave the system quickly, limiting detection.

Impacts

The impacts of drugs used to facilitate sexual assault on individuals vary and are difficult to predict. They depend on the type of drug used, the amount ingested, whether the drug was mixed with alcohol or other drugs, and the weight, gender, and metabolism of the person who ingests it. Impacts can depend on how quickly the survivor receives medical assistance and can include:

Physical Impacts

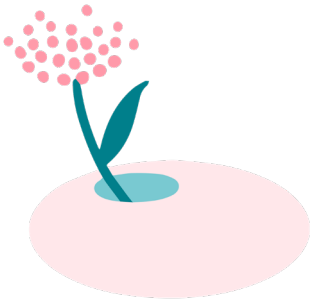
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Loss of muscle control
- Slurred speech
- Decreased inhibitions
- Memory loss or impairment
- Loss of consciousness
- Vomiting

Emotional Impacts

The emotional impacts may be similar to other acts of sexual violence, and survivors of drug-facilitated sexual assault often have additional concerns that complicate the trauma including, but not limited to:

- Vague memories or mental snapshots of being sexually assaulted and not being able to move or speak.
- No memories or partial memories of the event, which can be overwhelming, create self-doubt, and leave the survivor not knowing what to believe or who to trust.
- A sense of helplessness intensified by the inability to remember the details of the event.
- Self-blame or self-doubt stemming from the belief that personal choices allowed the offender to sexually assault them.

The Option of Medical Care



Advocates should give the option for callers to seek medical care, which can treat any health impacts, and minimize the risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.

When discussing options with a survivor it's important to give them clear information on how medical care may be able to assist them in gaining insight into what drugs they may have been given. When drugs are used in the sexual assault, the body metabolizes the drugs quickly, therefore if a survivor is interested in getting medical care, the sooner the survivor receives the care, the more likely that evidence can be found and the substance(s) identified. Drugs are more likely to be detected in urine than in the bloodstream because of how quickly they pass through the body's system. A hospital or clinic may take blood and urine samples to be held for testing.

The Advocate's Role

Advocates are not responsible for knowing and discussing medical details of suspected drugs with callers.

The advocate's role when a caller expresses concerns over memory loss, loss of time, feelings of extreme intoxication after only having one drink, or other concerns that may be related to being given a drug is to listen and to validate the caller's feelings. The advocate may also need to ask the caller about the possibility that they were drugged. Advocates will also give the survivor the option of seeking medical attention and explain the process of the exam and the survivor's options during the exam.

Due to the loss of time and the lack of concrete memories that many survivors experience, survivors and advocates cannot determine what may have happened. Medical professionals may not be able to provide concrete information about what happened either.

References

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Child Sexual Assault

Child sexual abuse is the term used to describe sexual violence against children, particularly when it is ongoing and repetitive. Sexual violence against children includes any sexual activity perpetrated against a child by threat, force, intimidation, or manipulation. The sexual violence may be perpetrated by a family member or another person known to the child, by a casual acquaintance, by a stranger, or by other children.

Depending on their age, children cannot consent to any sexual activity regardless of any perceived “consent” by the abuser. Children may cooperate with offenders because they are afraid, confused, or seeking acceptance and love. Children are not capable of giving consent because they do not understand the involvement or consequences of their behavior.

When someone within the family system perpetrates sexual abuse, it is referred to as intra-familial abuse or incest. The family system is often defined to include non-blood relatives, such as step-parents or step-siblings. It can also include others who are close to the family or who share the same household. Sexual abuse may also be called incest when the offender is a person whom the child perceives as a member of their family. People also refer to child sexual abuse as molestation, child molestation, or sexual molestation. Various states use the term molestation in their laws to describe sexual violence against a child.

Child sexual abuse includes a wide range of acts, including, but not limited to:

- Actual or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus, and/or mouth.
- Oral to genital contact.
- Touching and fondling of sexual body parts.
- Masturbation of a child.
- Kissing.
- Genital exposure.
- Bathing a child in intrusive ways.
- Performing unnecessary medical exams or treatment.
- Forcing a child to participate in ritualistic abuse and physical or sexual torture.
- Obscene talk.
- Voyeurism.
- Sexual exploitation and acts related to child pornography and prostitution.
- Showing a child pornographic pictures or films.
- Forcing a child to watch and/or engage in the sexual acts of others.
- Telling a child that they are only good for sex or asking the child inappropriate sexual questions.

The physical acts noted could be either forcing the child to touch the offender or the offender touching the child.

In some cases of child sexual abuse, the behavior cannot be legally prosecuted. For example, perhaps children are given no privacy and someone always watches them take a bath or go to the bathroom. These situations are highly inappropriate but may not be illegal. Responsible people interact with a child in ways that show respect for the child's boundaries while maintaining a healthy and caring relationship. For instance, when a child says "no" to tickling, that "no" is respected, and physical contact stops.

Indicators of Abuse

Although there are many reasons children may not disclose sexual abuse directly, they may experience symptoms that can act as signals that they are being victimized. These symptoms may vary with the age of the child and the child's personality and experience. The presence of any one of these indicators does not mean that the child is experiencing sexual abuse, but it may raise the question.

A change in a child's typical behavior may be the best indicator that the child has experienced sexual violence. It may be helpful for the advocate to explore this with the caller, pointing out that many of these indicators can also be the result of other kinds of trauma.

The following is a list of some of the possible indicators of child sexual abuse to explore with a caller. This list is an offering of examples and not meant to be a screening for child sexual abuse or mandated reporting:

- Separation anxiety in which a formerly independent and outgoing child becomes more dependent;
- Unusual need for reassurance about safety;
- Regression to infantile behavior (such as thumb sucking);
- Sudden drop in school achievement;
- Onset of behavioral problems, such as aggressive behavior or violence against others, especially younger children and animals;
- Inappropriate violence and/or sexuality in artwork; schoolwork, language, and play;
- Fear of going home after school;
- Fear of going to a person's house or to another specific location;
- Unwillingness to participate in physical education classes (fear the abuse is evident or physical activity may be painful because of injuries from abuse);
- Explicit and contextual knowledge of sex and sex acts or unusual talk about sex;
- Sleep disturbances (such as nightmares, fear of the dark, or trouble sleeping);
- Excessive or compulsive masturbation;
- Avoiding certain people or places;
- Extreme changes in behavior;
- Detachment from others, depression, or withdrawal; and
- Sudden mood swings (such as rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal).

(Stop it Now, n.d.)

There are times when the presence of these indicators, particularly multiple indicators, can be a sign that sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring. However, the absence of any of these indicators is not proof that the child has not experienced sexual abuse. Many children do not disclose until well after the sexual abuse happens, so any physical signs may have disappeared. And, some types of child sexual abuse, such as fondling or non-contact offenses, may not leave any evidence.

Impacts

The impacts and consequences of child sexual abuse are unique to each child and may have different effects on children at different stages of development. Note that there is some overlap in the indicators discussed above and the impacts of child sexual abuse. Many physical and emotional impacts that children might have are similar to those experienced by other survivors. However, the presence of several signs over a period of time may indicate that the child has been, or is being, abused. Because children may not reveal that they are experiencing sexual abuse, it is up to concerned adults to recognize the signs.

Physical Impacts

In many cases, children's bodies may be impacted by sexual abuse. Physical effects can be temporary or may stay with children well into their adult lives. Some of the physical impacts listed here may be present as a result of abuse. They could also occur as a result of other stressful events in a child's life, such as divorce or loss of a family member, friend, or pet. These impacts include:

- Abdominal pain or unexplained stomach illness.
- Loss of appetite or trouble eating or swallowing.
- Unexplained bruises, pain, bleeding, or redness on the child's genitals or anus.
- Sudden weight loss or gain.
- Frequent vaginal infections or irritations.
- Difficulty with bowel movements or urination.

(Stop It Now, n.d.)

Emotional & Behavioral Impacts

While sexual contact itself can cause significant harm, most survivors also struggle with the violation of trust and the confusion which stems from having to act as if nothing is happening.

Some survivors have specific and clear memories of the abuse while others may remember only bits and pieces. Even children who have repressed all memory of the abuse still experience its effects. If a child does not talk about the abuse, this does not mean that they have forgotten about it. In many cases, the child will try to hide their confusion, fear, or anger because they are afraid to talk about the abuse or feel that adults in their lives do not want to hear about it.

They may feel guilty about the abuse and about the negative consequences that it had on their family. It is very important that the child be given an opportunity to talk about the abuse both with non-offending caregivers and professionals like a therapist. Some of the most common responses are:

Fear. Any type of child sexual abuse is emotionally hurtful and confusing because of the trust and power dynamics involved. Children may be less trusting of the world around them and of their own instincts after the experience.

Guilt. Some children will feel guilty, as if they are responsible and they've done something wrong. They may believe that it was their fault or that they caused trouble by telling.

Shame. Children may feel that people can tell by looking at them that they are a survivor, and this may cause them to feel embarrassed. They may feel like a bad person.

Anger. A child's anger could be directed at the offender, at the non-offending parent(s) for failing to protect them, and at anyone who intervened and caused changes in their lives. A child may also experience anger at adults they believe "should have known" about the abuse.

Low self-esteem. The negative or conflicting messages survivors often receive can lead to low self-esteem. Although this is also true for all survivors of sexual violence, children are still in the process of developing their self-esteem. Therefore, the sexual abuse is not affecting a characteristic that is already in place, but rather interfering with the initial building of self-esteem. Since this can have such a significant impact on the very basis of self-esteem, the effects can be long-lasting.

Confusion. Children may be confused because of the lies, trickery, or manipulation that the offender used to perpetrate the abuse. If the child experienced some physical pleasure from the sexual touch, this can contribute to their confusion as well. Children are often taught to respect and obey grown-ups. When these grown-ups commit sexual abuse against them, the child may be confused because following the rules hurt them. Children also experience confusion because they may simultaneously feel love, anger, and hurt towards the offender.

Difficulty understanding feelings. Children may have a more difficult time verbalizing their feelings than adults do. This may be because they have not had much practice identifying and naming feelings, or because they aren't sure where their emotions are coming from. Additionally, there may be feelings that do not feel safe. For example, if the offender is the person who provides food and shelter, it may feel unsafe for the child to be angry at the offender.

Sexual Behaviors

Some sexual behavior is normal in young children, especially when it takes place between children of similar ages, when there is no coercion, or the children are playing. Sexual behavior becomes problematic when manipulation, trickery, or peer pressure is evident. It demands serious attention when it involves secrecy, physical force, threats, bribes, or violence (Hollander, n.d.).

The presence of any yellow or red flags is not always indicative of sexual abuse, but could also clue adults into other problems the child is facing. It is important to avoid assumption or blame and when in doubt, it is okay to check for context using questions like "can you tell me more about [insert behavior/thing here]."

Typical Developmental Behavior

- Genital or reproductive conversations with peers or similar-age siblings; show me yours/ I'll show you mine with peers.
- Playing "doctor."
- Masturbation without penetration, and when older child masturbates in private.
- Imitating seduction (i.e. flirting or kissing).
- Dirty words or jokes within cultural or peer group norm.

Yellow Flags

- Preoccupation with sexual themes (especially sexually aggressive ones).
- Repeatedly attempting to expose each other's genitals (i.e. pulling other's skirt up or pants down).
- Sexually explicit conversation with peers.
- Sexual graffiti.
- Sexual innuendo/teasing/embarrassing others.
- Advanced sexual knowledge beyond what is developmentally expected.
- Single occurrences of voyeurism/exposing/obscenities/pornographic interest.
- Preoccupation with masturbation.
- Mutual or group masturbation.
- Simulated foreplay with dolls or peers with clothing on (i.e. petting, "French" kissing).

Red Flags

- Sexually explicit conversations with others of significant age or power difference.
- Touching genitals of others.
- Degradation/humiliation of self or others with sexual themes.
- Forced exposure of others' genitals in the context of a social setting (i.e. pulling down pants or exposing breasts).
- Inducing fear/threats of force.
- Sexually explicit proposals/threats, including written notes, text messages, or social media messages.
- Repeated or chronic peeping/exposing/obscenities/pornographic interests.
- Compulsive masturbation/task interruption to masturbate.
- Female masturbation that includes vaginal penetration
- Simulating intercourse with dolls, peers, children, or animals.

Definite Problems

- Oral, vaginal, anal penetration of dolls, children, animals.
- Forced touching of genitals.
- Simulated intercourse with peers with clothes off.
- Any genital injury or bleeding not explained by accidental cause.

Family Impacts

Sexual abuse that occurs within a family may have added effects. In addition to the sexual abuse itself, there may be other manipulation of "normal" family roles. For example, in situations where the offender is a parent, the child may be forced to take on adult roles and responsibilities. The child may be given inappropriate household duties and be expected to fulfill the role of sex partner for the offender.

These sorts of role manipulations make it difficult for the child to experience the positive aspects of childhood and may be confusing and hurtful to other family members. Other family members may notice that the child is being treated differently. If the treatment is perceived as special, other family members may be resentful and act negatively towards the child being sexually abused.

If the offender is a female caregiver, additional challenges may arise.

> Although women sometimes abuse in overtly sexual or violent ways, their abuse is typically more subtle and less forceful. Women's abuse is often masked in cuddling and daily care-taking. The violation is often fuzzier, less clear-cut…. But it is no less devastating…. [Since] children frequently bond most closely with their mothers, abuse by mothers, in particular, can leave a child with a severe lack of boundaries between self and offender (Bass & Davis, 1994, p. 97).

Abuse by a sibling frequently occurs in the family home when an older sibling is placed in charge, or during the night when everyone is sleeping.

> The [abuse] continued and [progressed] to other and different kinds of sexual abuse, often accompanied by physical and emotional abuse. Survivors of sibling sexual violence report 'feeling more responsible for their abuse' as compared to those who experienced other forms of sexual violence within the family (Weihe, 1990, p 60-79).

How Children are Victimized

One reason that children are vulnerable to sexual abuse is that they are generally warned to be cautious around strangers, but are not warned about the possibility of being abused by family and friends. Our society encourages children to trust and obey the adults they know. Offenders use this to their advantage.

In addition to being trained to be trusting and obedient, many children are taught that they must give affection to certain people. For example, many children are told that they have to hug or kiss a particular family member, even when this may be uncomfortable for them. This teaches children that they must submit to unwanted touch and that they do not have the right to say no to such interactions.

Children are also vulnerable to sexual abuse because they rely on adults for most of their physical and emotional needs. They are dependent upon adults for love, guidance, attention, a sense of self-worth, and basic survival necessities, such as shelter and food.

Offenders also take advantage of society's tendency to not believe children. Adults tend to be seen as more credible than children. Offenders can use this belief to convince a child that it would be useless to tell anyone else about the abuse.

How Offenders Get Children Involved

Children are victimized by people more powerful than them who may use different forms of power to engage them and keep them involved in the sexual violence. In some cases, offenders use physical force to make children engage in sexual activity, to restrain them, or to intentionally inflict pain. An offender might threaten to hurt or kill the child or someone the child loves.

Tricks and manipulation are also effective ways for an offender to involve a child. Examples of this include the use of games or bribes. Children might be told that they deserve the sexual violence, are responsible for it, or that they will not be believed if they tell. Frequently, offenders use a process called 'grooming,' in which they gradually establish an emotional bond with children in order to reduce the child's resistance or desensitize the child to sexual abuse (Stop It Now, n.d.).

Children might be told that they deserve the sexual violence, are responsible for it, or that they will not be believed if they tell. Frequently, offenders use a process called 'grooming,' in which they gradually establish an emotional bond with children in order to reduce the child's resistance or desensitize the child to sexual abuse.

Five Stages of Child Sexual Abuse

The following section is adapted from Sadock, Kaplan, & Sadock, 2007

Researchers and observers have identified five phases that offenders use when committing child sexual abuse.

Engagement. An offender must find a way to become involved with the child without getting caught. To achieve this, they seek opportunities to be alone

with the child without arousing suspicion. For example, an offender may offer free baby-sitting to a single parent. To gain access, the offender may use methods to interest a child. These may include providing much needed adult attention, appealing to a child's natural curiosity about sex, or using games or gifts. A ploy often used with adolescents is to supply them with cigarettes, drugs, or pornography. Gaining access might also look like filling a need for the family, including money, housing, food, substances, child care, and more.

An offender may also threaten or trick the child by threatening to harm people or pets the child loves.

During this engagement phase, offenders may begin the process of grooming. They may, for example, create opportunities to touch the child appropriately at first and slowly progress to an abusive or violent touch. This process desensitizes the child to boundary violations and allows the offender to test the safety of further sexual activity with the child. The offender may also groom the adults responsible for the child (if the offender is not the parent or guardian) to make them believe that their child will be safe with the offender. For additional information about grooming, refer to the Offenders section of this manual.

Sexual interaction. In this phase, the offender begins to involve the child in some type of sexual activity. The behavior tends to start gradually and escalate, both in the degree of involvement expected of the child and in the frequency.

Once in this phase, offenders can use their position of authority to persuade the child that the situation is acceptable. The child gets trapped into thinking they are somehow responsible for what is going on, or that they have to go along with the adult's wishes. Sometimes, force or threat of force may be used to intimidate the child.

Secrecy. Secrecy is necessary to protect the offender and prolong access to the child. Getting the child to keep the secret may involve many strategies. Offenders often threaten the child or convince the child that other adults will be angry and blame the child for the behavior if it is revealed. Once secrecy is assured, the sexual activity can escalate, and may go on indefinitely never reaching disclosure or suppression.

There are many reasons why children might be afraid to tell anyone about these experiences. Some fear ridicule from the people they tell. Others are afraid that something bad will happen to them or their families. The offender may have threatened to hurt someone or something the child cares about if the child tells. Sometimes children are ashamed that they could not protect themselves or are worried that they will not be believed. It is also possible that they might feel guilty if they felt physical pleasure during the experiences or have accepted gifts from the offender. Offenders may commit child sexual abuse and the child knows they provide housing, food, or other necessities. As a result, the child may feel that they cannot tell anyone about the abuse because they will lose those items for their families.

Disclosure. This is the point at which the secret is revealed, intentionally or accidentally. Accidental disclosure generally happens when someone witnesses the adult's sexual involvement with the child, when medical evidence of sexual abuse is found (for example, a sexually transmitted infection in a 7-year-old), or when someone observes certain behavioral changes in the child.

Intentional disclosure occurs when the child decides to tell someone what is happening. This disclosure may be direct or indirect. Despite the offender's attempts to enforce the secret, a child may decide to talk directly about the sexual abuse. Sometimes this happens following an educational presentation at the child's school where children are taught about the importance of telling. Other times, the disclosure may occur because of a change or an increase in the level of sexual activity. For example, a child may tell when the offender moves from touching to penetration, or when the child begins menstruating and is afraid that they could become pregnant.

At other times, children try to tell what is happening but do not or cannot talk about it directly. They may initially talk about their discomfort with a certain person, such as "I don't like it when you leave me alone with Uncle Jim" or disclose just a small aspect of the abuse: "Uncle Jim always wants me to sit on his lap and it feels funny to me."

Adults who are not paying attention or who would never consider the possibility of sexual abuse may miss these early disclosures. Children who tried to tell may interpret this in many ways. For example, they may feel that the adult is not interested in helping them or that something is so wrong that others cannot help them.

It is also common that children disclose to other children, instead of to adults in their lives. There is a lot of work being done in CSA prevention to help children establish systems of support not only for themselves, but also for friends who may be experiencing abuse to hopefully yield the best possible outcome for the child experiencing abuse.

Suppression. Suppression happens when a person pressures the child to "take it back." The person may be unable to believe the child, or may believe the child, but be unwilling to deal with the reality or consequences. For example, a mother may tell her child that Daddy will go to jail, they will never see him again, and they will not have any money for food or clothing. The child may also be made to feel responsible for the abuse.

In the face of this pressure, the child often recants (takes back) what they said. To gain some insight into why children do not tell or recant, here are a few reasons, in child survivors' own words.

"I didn't tell because I didn't like talking about it. (10 year old)

Daddy said it was a personal thing, so I didn't tell. (10 year old)

He was too much bigger than me, so I didn't say nothing. (4 year old)

He told me if I told, he'd spank the...out of me. (9 year old)

He'd pull on my breast and he'd tell me if I screamed or told, he'd pull it off. He really hurt me. I didn't want my brother to go to jail. (12 year old)

He said if I told my mother, he would kill her and eat her, and he said if I told anyone else, he would just kill me. (8 year old)

He said if I told, he'd stuff a peanut butter sandwich down my throat and I hate peanut butter. (6 year old)

He beat me before and I know if I told, he'd do it again. (14 year old)

I was told that I'd be put in a foster home if I said anything. (11 year old)"

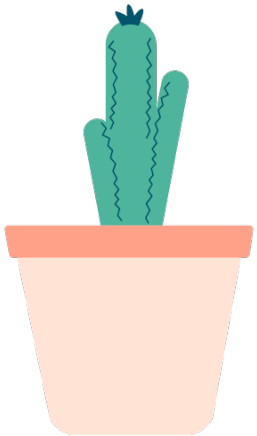
Children may also fear they will be sent away from their family, lose their family's love, be hurt, or lose something they like. Most children do not want anything bad to happen to the offender. They don't want drastic changes in their families. They want the sexual abuse to stop.

A male survivor shares,

> About age 4 or 5, my older brother performed oral sex on me, made me available to his older peers, and threatened me with physical violence if I told my parents. He showed me pornographic pictures, invited little girls over, and forced me into sexual play. I felt I had absolutely no control. I felt I was inferior, bad, and that there was something very wrong with me. I doubted I would be able to have a normal sex life and had fears about homosexuality and of becoming insane. Fortunately, at age 13, my grandmother found out about the molestation and she rescued me and became my legal guardian. My parents were happy to relinquish me because they felt I was weird and had initiated these sex acts (Wiehe, 1990, p. 68).

When a Child Discloses

To many children who have experienced sexual abuse, the world is no longer a safe place. If the offender is a sibling or parent, the survivor's home and family can evoke pain, fear, and mistrust. The responses of the first people who are told will strongly influence the healing process of the child. It is the adults' responsibility to respond compassionately and promptly.



Children need to hear that the sexual abuse is not their fault. One of the most common dynamics in these situations is blaming the child for the sexual abuse. The offender, non-offending parents, and siblings may make the child the scapegoat for the family's problems. As a result, the survivors may begin to blame themselves. Hearing from a trusted adult that the abuse was not their fault and that they did nothing to deserve it can help counteract such negative messages.

Supporting Non-Offending Caregivers & Concerned Others

An advocate might speak with a concerned other who has noticed physical or behavioral indications that seem worrisome. In this situation, the concerned other might try talking to the child. The advocate can caution the concerned other that the child could be frightened and may not disclose sexual abuse even if it is happening or has happened in the past.

In some cases, more indirect forms of communication may be helpful. For example, the adult may want to get a pamphlet about child sexual abuse and place it where the child could find it (if the child knows how to read). This could allow the child to know that the adult is thinking about the issue without pressuring the child to disclose.

An advocate may also suggest to the concerned other (depending on their setting) organically work in conversations about consent, boundaries, and body safety. Reminding a child that they are the bosses of their bodies, that no one ever has the right to touch them without their consent, and that touches from certain adults are only to keep them safe and healthy (doctors, support with bathing/hygiene, etc.). This can help them understand that the abuse they may be experiencing is not okay. A concerned other can also support a child they suspect may be experiencing abuse by helping them identify safe adults they can talk to if they are hurt, scared, or if someone touches their genitals.

Advocates may speak with a parent who knows or suspects that their child is experiencing sexual abuse, but has little power to protect the child. This may be the case if a person has joint custody of a child and the other parent is the offender. In this type of situation, it would be helpful give the option of calling the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to explain any suspicions.

The parent could also speak with an attorney about changing the custody or visitation agreement. Keep in mind that this does not relieve the advocate of the obligation to report to DHHS independently if the advocate has concerns about a child experiencing sexual abuse. Remind the caller that even if DHHS does not appear to respond immediately to a report, calls will be tracked, and a response is assured if enough credible reports come in. The caller's report may be just one part of the network, along with teachers, neighbors, other family members, and more.

Advocates may speak with someone who is unsupportive and possibly angry at the child. For example, the adult might accuse the child of lying just to get back at someone. This attitude can be damaging to that survivor. The advocate can talk to the adult about sexual abuse never being the survivor's fault. The advocate may give the caller information about how children have very little power, that children very rarely lie about sexual abuse.

Family Members' Own Feelings

When a child has been harmed, the whole family is affected and may need support. It is common for the family to have feelings of outrage, sadness, helplessness, as well as feeling invaded and judged by systems.

Guilt. It can be difficult to hear about or see that a child has been hurt. Sometimes family members will feel guilty if their child experienced sexual abuse and they were unaware that it was happening. They may look back and see clues that it was happening and wonder why they did not notice them at the time or feel guilty that they didn't protect the child.

Denial. Some family members may find it extremely difficult to accept the fact that the survivor has experienced sexual abuse. It might be hard to cope with the idea that something this traumatic has happened to a loved one. Some family members may be in denial because they have a positive relationship with the offender. They may not have had any experiences when the offender's behavior was inappropriate, so it may be difficult to imagine that the offender could do something as hurtful as committing sexual abuse against a child.

Facing changes. When a child discloses, the family must make certain choices. For example, a decision must be made whether to believe the offender or the child. If the offender lives with the family, it may be necessary for the family to ask the offender to leave to ensure that the child is adequately protected. Some family members may be in denial because they have a positive relationship with the offender. They may not have had any experiences when the offender's behavior was inappropriate, so it may be difficult to imagine that the offender could do something as hurtful as committing sexual abuse against a child.

Changes may cause difficulties in more practical ways as well. For example, the offender might provide the family's main source of income. The family might be faced with losing their home or being unable to support themselves without the offender. It is possible that family members in this situation may try to minimize the effects of the sexual abuse to avoid making difficult changes.

Seeing the child as "damaged goods." Some family members may believe that the trauma the child has experienced will prevent healing from ever taking place. They may act as if the child has been irreversibly ruined by the sexual abuse.

Fear that the child will become an abuser. Most sex offenders were not sexually assaulted as children, and most children who are sexually assaulted do not sexually assault others (Center for Sex Offender Management, 2010). Appropriate intervention and support can help children to move forward in a healthy and positive way.

Concerns about whom the child talks to about abuse. Some parents may want their child to talk to people about the sexual abuse, while others may encourage their children to keep it a secret. It is important for children to be allowed some degree of control over whom they talk to. It can be important for the child to be allowed to talk if they want to, and to avoid talking if it makes them uncomfortable.

Addressing personal trauma & abuse. If the parent or caregiver experienced sexual violence at some point in their life, the child's experiences can bring up big feelings, memories, and feel quickly overwhelming and/or destabilizing. What's important for advocates to know is to make space for the these caregivers to also be survivors and that it makes sense that their child's experience might trigger their own history of sexual violence.

Ways Family & Friends Can Show Support

Resiliency refers to the ability of someone to cope and adapt in difficult situations. People around a child survivor play a key role in bolstering resiliency, and the following are suggestions to share with concerned others regarding how to support a child who has experienced sexual abuse. Resiliency is also discussed in the Survivor Healing section of this manual.

Listen. Although the thought of addressing a sexually abusive relationship can be a difficult one, a survivor needs communication to heal. Letting the child talk to an adult by their own choice, and in their own time, about the sexual abuse can make a considerable difference in healing. An advocate can remind family and friends that children have their own process and need to work through it in their own unique way.

Believe. Tell the caller that it is helpful to reassure the child that they are believed and the abuse was not the child's fault.

Be patient. The caller may want to question the child and learn about the sexual abuse. Remind the caller not to pressure the child to talk. It is better to be available for the child when the child is ready to talk. Allowing the child to talk naturally without specific questions is the best method.

Be supportive. Adults can be available to listen, to let the child know they care about them, and be ready to do whatever they can to help keep the child safe.

Help them get help. Make sure the child receives sensitive and competent medical attention and counseling.

Avoid making promises. As supportive adults, it can be tempting to tell the child that they will never see the offender again, or that the offender will go to jail. No outcome is ever guaranteed and the caller must understand this when responding to a disclosure.

Helping Children Deal with Their Reactions

Adapted from materials from The Diagnostic Program for Child Abuse, Waterville, Maine. Printed with Permission.

As advocates, we are more likely to work with parents or caretakers of a sexually abused child than with the child themselves. Sexually abused children often develop symptoms that can be challenging and frustrating for the family. The following information may be provided to assist the family to choose the most helpful way to respond to some of the most common reactions children experience.

Fearful Reactions

Possible Symptoms:

- Nightmares
- Fear of a certain person
- Fear of people with a given characteristic
- Becoming withdrawn
- Regressive behavior

It would be helpful to...

- Accept the child's fears as real.
- Encourage the child to gradually return to their normal activities.
- Give the child choices in situations where they are afraid (such as sleeping with a night light or with the door open).
- Tell the child you will protect them as much as you can.

It would be unhelpful to...

- Force the child to do things they fear.
- Allow the child's fears to control their life or the parents' lives.
- Punish the child for being afraid.
- Tell the child their fears are "silly" or "stupid."

Sexualized Behaviors

Possible Symptoms:

- Increased or excessive masturbation.
- Putting objects inside their genitals.
- Being sexually involved with other children, particularly younger or smaller children.
- Being "seductive" with adults.

It would be helpful to...

- Instruct the child about the importance of keeping their genitals private.
- Gently remind the child that no one likes to be touched against their will. Make clear rules about not touching others' genitals, and likewise no one should be touching their genitals.
- Depending on the child's age, talk with the child about healthy sex and the differences between love and sex. For younger children, that might be as simple as talking about keeping our bodies safe and listening for a yes, while respecting a no.
- Remember that masturbation is normal for children and is okay if done in private.
- Make every effort to protect the child from further victimization. A sexualized child may be at high risk because of the victimization.

It would be unhelpful to...

- Tell the child they are "bad" because of their sexual behavior. The child may already feel they are bad because of the victimization.

Aggressive Behavior

Possible Symptoms:

- Hitting, biting, kicking others.
- Breaking toys.
- Refusing to obey.
- Hurting themselves (head banging, hitting themselves).
- Tantrums.

It would be helpful to...

- Talk with the child about why they are angry. Let them know that you understand.
- Gently remind the child that no one likes to be hit or hurt.
- Make clear rules about not hurting themselves or others or destroying property.
- Suggest healthy ways of releasing anger, such as exercise or art.

It would be unhelpful to...

- Hit a child as punishment for hitting others. This is confusing and harmful to them.

The advocate may suggest that parents distinguish between feelings for the child and feelings about the child's behavior. A parent may let the child know the behavior is not okay, but that the parent still loves the child (I love you and I cannot let you hit me).

Advocates may remind parents not to see their child's fearful, sexualized, or aggressive behaviors as being purposefully "bad" or "naughty." These symptoms are often reactions to the trauma of being sexually abused.

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Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

This section focuses on the impact of childhood sexual trauma later in life and how advocates may be able to provide support. Survivors may call the helpline at any point in their healing process. They may be beginning to acknowledge the trauma of their childhood. They may be in the midst of healing. They may be thriving and continuing their growth.

Without appropriate intervention and treatment, childhood sexual abuse, as with other traumatic experiences, may continue to affect the lives of adult survivors. Survivors may experience a variety of impacts from the trauma they experienced.

Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse may be affected differently, depending on factors such as their personality, their relationships with others, the nature and duration of the abuse, and the healing they have already accomplished.

Impacts of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Adult Survivors

Survivors have varying levels of memory about sexual violence. Some will be completely unaware of it or may repress particular memories.

Sometimes individuals will have "sensory flashes" of a place or a physical feeling without understanding its meaning. These flashes can sometimes result in strong, seemingly unexplainable negative reactions to people, places, or events. There might also be physical pain or numbness associated with a particular memory, emotion, or situation.

In cases where adult survivors have little or no memory of sexual abuse, the effects of trauma may not be connected to their experience of trauma. This can leave survivors and the people in their lives questioning what is wrong without being able to find an answer. Other survivors may remember the sexual abuse, but avoid addressing it because they feel that their experience was not bad enough to warrant attention, or believe that it was too terrible to ever speak about.

While survivors of all types of sexual violence may experience similar effects from the trauma they endured, individuals who experienced sexual abuse as children experience unique impacts. During their childhood, survivors of childhood sexual abuse may have devoted significant time and energy to keeping themselves safe and alive. They may have been denied the opportunity to experience many things that other people experience as children. The following list includes many of the impacts experienced by adult survivors, but there may be others not included here.

As a result, the survivors may begin to blame themselves. Hearing from a trusted adult that the abuse was not their fault and that they did nothing to deserve it can help counteract such negative messages.

Physical Impacts

Suffocation feelings: The survivor may feel revulsion when getting water on their face while bathing or swimming. They may have sensitivity to swallowing or an extreme gag reflex in certain situations. For example, a gagging reflex could occur at the dentist.

Alienation from the body: Some survivors may not feel comfortable in their own skin. They may fail to pay attention to body signals of distress or to take care of their bodies. Some survivors may be uncomfortable with noises that their bodies make, such as when they laugh, eat, or have sex.

Weight changes or eating disorders: Some survivors may feel that sexual abuse happened to them because

> **Children learn there is no one they can trust, and that sharing leads not to help, but to harm or neglect, that it's not safe to tell the truth...they learn shame, secrecy, and silence.**
>
> - Maine Survivor

of the way they looked and may feel that gaining or losing weight will protect them from further abuse. This may be a conscious or an unconscious choice.

Health problems: There are a variety of health problems a survivor might face. Some common examples include: stomach, intestinal, urinary or genital problems, gynecological disorders, headaches, arthritis or joint pain, and jaw pain or dysfunction.

Self-destructive behaviors: Self-destructive behaviors by adult survivors of child sexual abuse might include cutting or other self- injury, eating disorders, drug or alcohol abuse, and other addictions.

Body memories: Some survivors might find that they have memories that emerge in the form of physical sensations. During a body memory, survivors may re-experience some of the physical reactions they had during the experience of sexual abuse. Survivors may have body memories without having any other sorts of accompanying memories. For many, this experience can be frightening and hard to understand.

Emotional Impacts

Dissociative coping mechanisms: Sometimes survivors will "space out" or "leave their body" when confronted with a particular situation. This is commonly referred to as dissociation. In stressful situations the survivor may also react by going into shock or shutting down completely. This behavior may have become an automatic response in childhood and can be frustrating as survivors attempt to engage in the world around them as adults.

Flashbacks: A flashback is a sudden and often uncontrollable re-living of the trauma, bringing with it all of the thoughts and feelings associated with the experience. It can feel like re-experiencing the abuse and can be multi-sensory (hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling parts of the past). While flashbacks are difficult for anyone to experience, for survivors without intact memories of specific events this can be a frightening and confusing experience. In some cases, flashbacks may bring survivors new memories of sexual abuse. Although flashbacks can be a terrifying experience, some theories suggest that they might actually be helpful to survivors. They may be the body's way of allowing a survivor time to cope with issues and emotions they were unable to process at the time of the sexual abuse.

Triggers: The term trigger is used in a broad sense, and may mean anything from having a flashback at the dentist's, to getting upset when a friend, co-worker, or supervisor is rude or thoughtless. Some advocates are moving away from the use of the term "trigger," because of the violence that the term implies. The general idea of a trigger is that experiences can activate or elicit memories of trauma for survivors that result in an overwhelm on the nervous system and re-experiencing the physical and emotional impacts of their assault. An important task for survivors is to learn to recognize triggers before becoming panicked and powerless. Triggers vary from person to person, and what is harmless or normal for one survivor can send another into a panic. Callers may talk about being triggered or may be triggered while on a call. If this happens, it may be helpful for the advocate to talk openly with the survivor about what is going on for them. It also might be a great place to use grounding techniques.

Recovered Memories: There may be times when adult survivors recall details from the past regarding sexual abuse they experienced as a child. The survivor may not have remembered the event at all, or the memory may add new details to what they already knew. This type of memory is called a recovered memory, described as "the recollection of a memory that is perceived to have been unavailable for some period of time." (Sivers, Schooler & Freyd, 2002, 169) It may be common to have a recovered memory as part of a daily routine. For example, someone cannot find their keys and then has a memory that they put the keys in a special place so they could find them. Though recovered memories can happen in daily life, they are typically associated only with a traumatic event such as sexual violence or abuse.

Recovered memories can create challenges for survivors, who may question their own beliefs as well as the denial or distortions of offenders, family members, or others.

Confronting memories: Memories might begin to surface for survivors for a variety of reasons. Each individual is different and processes experiences in different ways. For some, memories come after the death of a family member, a birth, a celebration, or a trauma. Others will remember their experiences once they become sober, quit drugs, or stop eating compulsively. It is also common for survivors to begin remembering when they are feeling happy and stable, and therefore strong enough to cope with the pain of remembering.

> **The memories were like one of those plastic raincoats that come in a two-inch package. Once I opened them up, I could never fold them neatly back inside.**
>
> - Survivor

It can be confusing when a survivor's memories begin to surface. Memories may emerge clearly like videos, or fuzzy, like old pictures, or as "body memories" such as pain or itching. It can be difficult for a survivor to trust that a memory is real since as a child the sexual abuse may have been too painful to remember, so the memory may feel unreal.

> **Reliving a memory is part of your healing, not an extension of the abuse.**
>
> - Survivor

It can be confusing when a survivor's memories begin to surface. Memories may emerge clearly like videos, or fuzzy, like old pictures, or as "body memories" such as pain or itching. It can be difficult for a survivor to trust that a memory is real. As a child, the sexual abuse may have been too painful to remember; the memory may feel unreal.

Missed pieces of childhood: Survivors approach the world with unique outlooks and with varying social and coping skills. How survivors view the world around them, and the coping skills they have in place, will be different for each individual. Some adult survivors might want to experience some positive things they did not experience as children, and this can be a powerful part of healing.

Fears & need for security: Survivors might experience a wide range of fears and phobias tied to their individual experiences. For many survivors, some fears may occur in the form of nightmares or feelings of terror. In some cases, this condition might lead to a fear of being alone in the dark or of sleeping alone. It is also common for survivors to fear that they are being watched. Those who have this fear may startle easily and may put a lot of energy into making themselves feel secure.

Staying silent: Survivors of all types of sexual violence may experience individual or cultural pressure not to speak about their experience. Survivors may still fear the offender(s), feel threatened, or feel they will be punished if they talk about their experience(s). Adult survivors of child sexual abuse may remain silent because they experienced sexual violence before they had the opportunity to develop and establish their own identities. Early experiences of sexual abuse can greatly influence an adult's views or beliefs about violence and relationships. These views or beliefs can be challenging to change because they may have formed at an early developmental stage.

Hyper-vigilance: Some survivors have become acutely aware of their surroundings. As children, they learned to carefully observe other people to detect indications of danger. This hyper-vigilance can carry over to adulthood, when survivors continue to act with a heightened awareness of their environment and the people they interact with. For example, an adult survivor may interpret a look from someone as being threatening and may react with anxiety or defensiveness. It can be challenging for survivors to feel comfortable assessing people's looks, moods, or behaviors. As a result, they may feel the safest option is to assume that no one is safe, and react accordingly.

Relating to People: Adult survivors may feel an acute need to feel loved and taken care of as a result of their trauma. Past abandonment by people they care about may cause adult survivors to fear being abandoned again. It might also be hard for a survivor to distinguish between who should or should not be trusted. Some survivors may be overly trusting, while some may be distrustful.

Many people who have been victimized may be victimized again in another relationship. This may be because they were not given an opportunity to learn about healthy relationships when they were children. Survivors were not allowed to reject unwanted behavior when they were growing up. As a result, they may not be able to recognize or deflect such behavior as adults.

Control: Children who experience sexual abuse are not allowed control over their bodies. For some, this lack of control during childhood may lead to a strong need for control in their adult life. Being out of control may be frightening for survivors, and some may go to great lengths to control their lives, including the smallest details. Some survivors translate this need for control into qualities which make them disciplined and well-organized. Others may experience difficulties in their lives and relationships because they cannot tolerate anything less than full control.

Mood & emotion: Childhood sexual abuse may affect the individual's emotional reactions in any number of ways. As adults, some survivors may have a hard time recognizing, expressing, or moderating feelings because they could not express them as children. In particular, adult survivors may struggle to access their anger, or to direct it in a constructive way once it surfaces.

Low self-esteem: Many adult survivors of childhood sexual violence were taught to believe that they are bad and worthless. The offender may have told them or implied that they deserved the sexual violence they experienced. These beliefs may carry over into the survivor's adult life, affecting who they choose as friends or partners. It may also affect what kind of education they get, the type of work they do, and how they relate to their children. Adult survivors may be vulnerable because offenders target individuals who question their own value.

Trusting perceptions: Children who experience sexual abuse are often lied to. They are blamed for the abuse, told to forget about it, told that it never happened, or told it was not significant. These messages conflict with the child's experience. If the child was constantly being told that experiences were not as they perceived them to be, the child may stop trusting their ability to interpret what is happening. This may carry over into adulthood.

Sexual Concerns

Learning to say no to sexual activity: When children experience sexual abuse, offenders deny them the right to control what happens to their bodies. Adult survivors may still not know or feel that they have this right or be unable to make their own sexual decisions.

Flashbacks during sexual activity: These can be very frightening and may make survivors or their partners uncomfortable with sexual activity. Some survivors may need to be given time to process either the flashback or its impacts. Other survivors may want to be brought back to the present and reassured that they are safe. Partners may be able to help the survivor achieve either of these goals.

Disassociation: When children experience sexual abuse, some learn to dissociate. This means they create a separation between their conscious awareness and what is happening to their body. Adult survivors may continue, even once the abuse has ended, to dissociate during sexual encounters. This might be frustrating for a survivor who wants to fully experience sexuality but continues dissociating.

Pleasure & sexual activity: As previously discussed, some children experience physical pleasure during sexual abuse experiences. This may create confusion about whether they consented. They may also feel guilty that they enjoyed it, which creates a general association between guilt and sexual activity. Adult survivors of child sexual abuse may find that they do not feel any pleasure during sexual activity. Other survivors may experience pleasure but feel guilty about it.

Control of one's body & sexuality activity: Children who experience sexual abuse are not allowed control over their bodies and sexual interactions. They may not have received healthy and truthful messages about their bodies and development. As a result, adult survivors may want or need a heightened level of control over sexual activity in general.

Maine Survivors Speak Out About the Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse

"You may have stopped feeling because of the pain.

It has prevented me from living a comfortable life. It has destroyed everything in my life that has been of value.

I live on other people's hopes...on other's faith that life will get better.

I know now that every time I accept my past and respect where I am in the present, I am giving myself a future."

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Stalking

Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a person to feel fear. While many crimes consist of a single act, stalking consists of a series of actions that create a pattern and cause fear in the victim. These actions can include following, watching, calling, texting, messaging, emailing, sending gifts. Any of these actions can be considered legal, but when they are part of a pattern and create fear in the victim is when the series of actions together may become illegal.

> **I have been stalked for so many years...no one believed me...then I found [sexual assault advocacy] and you gave me the hope and the courage to make a police report knowing that I finally had someone on my side.**
>
> - Maine Stalking Survivor

Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a person to feel fear. While many crimes consist of a single act, stalking consists of a series of actions that create a pattern and cause fear in the victim. These actions can include following, watching, calling, texting, messaging, emailing, sending gifts. Any of these actions can be considered legal, but when they are part of a pattern and create fear in the victim is when the series of actions together may become illegal.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics:

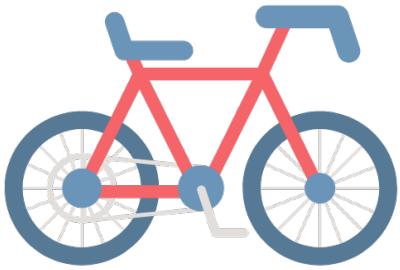
- 3.4 million people (16 and older) are stalked annually in the United States.
- Nearly 67% of victims know the stalker in some capacity.
- Unwanted phone calls and messages, followed by being followed or watched, were the most common type of stalking behavior experienced.
- Compared to white persons, stalking prevalence was higher among persons of two or more races (3.9%) and persons who were American Indian or Alaska Native (3.3%).

(Morgan and Truman, 2022)

Studies also show that:

- Stalking victimization most often starts before age 25 (Smith et. al., 2022).
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual men and women experience stalking at a higher rate than heterosexual men and women (Chen et. al, 2020).
- There is a significant association between stalking and other acts of sexual violence (Logan & Cole, 2011) with some studies finding between 25% and 33% of their sample were stalked and had experienced rape by that partner (Logan et al., 2007; Logan & Cole, 2011).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics tracks stalking and harassment together because harassment often escalates into stalking. Harassment is defined as a pattern of behavior which does not cause the target to be fearful.



Stalking Behaviors
Stalking consists of a wide range of behaviors. In some cases, stalking may be so subtle that the victim may not even be. Despite years of research, there are no definitive profiles of stalkers. Stalkers may be current or former intimate partners or strangers to the victims. They are just as likely to have no criminal history as to have a violent one, and only in rare cases does the offender have a mental health diagnosis (Mohandie et al., 2006).

Stalkers may pursue victims because they seek affection, feel rejected, experience obsession, seek information to commit a different crime, or for sexual gratification. Stalking, as with all sexual violence, is always about power and control. Offenders may view victims as objects, or flawed in ways that support their desires to "rescue" or "punish" the victims. Stalkers may believe that they have no ill intent, believing that the victim would like them if the victim knew them.

Stalkers may use manipulative behavior, such as bringing legal action against the victims, or threatening to commit suicide to force victims to have contact with them. They may also use threats and violence to frighten victims. They may attempt to isolate a victim from friends, co-workers, and family by spreading false information. Offenders may engage in vandalism and property damage to victims' or their family and friends' cars or homes. They may escalate to physical violence. Physical violence may be a power and control tactic meant to intimidate or frighten, or it may be intended to actually cause physical harm.

Survivors may share experiences of a wide variety of stalking behaviors. While not an inclusive list, the Stalking Resource Center (SRC) within the National Center for Victims of Crime has compiled this list of stalking behaviors and includes:

- Repeated, unwanted, intrusive, and frightening communications from the offender by phone, mail, text message, and/or email;
- Frequently leaving or sending the victim unwanted items, presents, or flowers;
- Following or waiting for the victim at places such as home, school, work, or recreation place;
- Threatening, directly or indirectly, to harm the victim and/or the victim's children, relatives, friends, or pets;
- Damaging or threatening to damage the property of the victim or the victim's friends or family;
- Posting information or spreading rumors about the victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth; and
- Obtaining personal information about the victim by accessing public records, using internet search services, hiring private investigators, going through the victim's garbage, following the victim, or contacting the victim's friends, family, work, or neighbors.

(BJS, n.d.)

The rise of affordable, accessible technology has increased the tools available to stalkers and has made it easier for them to monitor victims, collect information, and initiate contact. It also makes it easier to avoid detection. That also means keeping a list of current ways stalkers track victims would be out of date by the time we wrote it. It is better to rely on organizations like the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)'s Safety Net Project which will include the most current guidance and tools for tech safety planning with survivors.

Some types of technologies used by stalkers include:

- *Cell phones/mobile devices*. Most cell phones are Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) equipped, allowing stalkers to pinpoint victims' locations. Social networking GPS software supports this capability. Silent hands-free modes automatically connect a call with no action necessary on the part of the call recipient and allow stalkers to call victims and listen without detection. Spyphones are not available in the US but can be ordered online, and can enable a stalker to monitor a victim's calls and track their location.

- *Anonymizers*. "Spoofing" via text message, cell phone, or email allows stalkers to mask their identity, or pretend to be a victim's friend or family member. Most services are free and do not require registration. Other services, such as IP Relay, are legitimate tools for individuals who are Deaf, but can also be used by stalkers to mask identity.

- *GPS Tracking*. GPS technologies are smaller and more affordable than ever. They can be hidden in cars, purses, and other places to trace a victim's location and provide maps with satellite imagery.

- *Computers*. Software such as spyware can be installed remotely through email or other methods, and allow a stalker to track a victim's emails, chats, passwords, and more. They can also control the functions of the computer, such as freezing or restarting. Keystroke logging hardware, which memorizes all of the keys pressed on a keyboard, is another tool a stalker may use to track a victim's computer contacts.

- *Information made public*. Victim information such as phone number, email, and address are readily available online through directories and search engines, public information sites, and social media. Online communities can make it especially easy for stalkers to track victims' location, activities, class or work schedule, and more. This information may also enable a stalker to intimidate or impersonate victims.

(SRC, 2009)

Impacts of Stalking

Stalking can be a terrifying experience for victims, placing them at risk of psychological trauma and possible physical and sexual violence. Survivors report their greatest fear as a result of stalking is about not knowing what will happen next. They also fear that the stalking will never stop, and that it will result in death.

Stalking can also impact a victim's ability to work. One in eight survivors reports lost time from work as a result of stalking, and more than half lost five days or more (Baum, 2009). Survivors of stalking may experience long-term effects, especially if the stalker continues the behavior over an extended period of time. Victims may:

- Manage and minimize the behavior.
- Screen calls or change telephone numbers.
- Stay with family and friends.
- Hide.
- Move and change jobs.
- Call the police.
- Record stalking behavior.
- Arrange escorts to places.
- Comply with stalker's demands such as meet or withdraw a complaint.

In some cases, victims do not know that what they are experiencing is illegal. Some feel responsible for the behavior and believe that they somehow caused it. Popular culture, such as music and movies, often portray stalking behaviors as humorous, romantic, or desirable. For example, a film character may take extreme measures to date someone, and the film portrays this as comedic or romantic. Such a movie could trigger a stalking victim, survivor, or concerned other. It also ignores the real dangers involved in stalking, and perpetuates societal myths. This can minimize the victim's experience.

A victim's emotional connection to the stalker can be varied and complex. They could be annoyed by the behavior or be afraid the stalker might kill them. A victim may be too scared to involve law enforcement, fearing an escalation of the behavior. In another case the victim might continue to meet with the stalker or request that law enforcement drop the case in an attempt to stop the stalking. Victims may attempt to manage stalking behavior by making bargains with themselves such as, "If I talk to him now, he won't call me in the middle of the night," or "If I agree to see him for coffee, he won't bother my parents."

How Advocates can Support Survivors of Stalking

The first step toward safety planning is to clarify and then support the survivor to clearly communicate a desire to sever all ties with the stalker. The safest option to communicate may be by writing a letter, email, or text message that states what inappropriate behaviors must stop and how these behaviors have impacted this person's life. The survivor also needs to make it clear that they do not want to continue any type of relationship with the stalker. They should keep a copy of this written notification. If writing a letter, email, or text message is not an option, the survivor can call the stalker and record the phone call for future reference.

Comprehensive survivor support is important for several reasons. It empowers a survivor to take control over the places in their life they have control, provides practical ways to decrease risks of physical and emotional harm, and puts a survivor in contact with a variety of services and individuals who can help. Important steps include:

- *Threat Assessment*: Allowing victims to explain their stalking experience can help them to make sense of the situation, target problems, and provide validation. Understanding the current pattern of behavior can help victims understand the level of threat they face. Law enforcement and advocates can conduct validated threat assessment tools with specialized training.

- *Safety Planning*: The advocate can help the person they're working with identify risk factors such as working second shift or living alone. They can also talk about protective factors such as car-pooling or owning a dog. They can explore next steps to take in the eventt hat something else happens.

Be sure to discuss the need to balance freedom with absolute safety and what is in their control and what isn't.

Victims who are continually harassed may want to consider changing their mailing address through the State of Maine Address Confidentiality Program (see individual centers' resource manuals for more information). They may also want to change their email address, internet service provider, and phone number. They can look into encryption software or privacy protection programs. Any local computer store can offer a variety of protective software, options, and suggestions.

- *Documentation*: As discussed above, many stalking behaviors alone are not a crime. As a result, stalking is difficult to investigate. It is one of the few crimes in which victims need to document their own experience to establish a pattern of behavior. Documentation can be helpful for law enforcement or prosecution, can be used as evidence, and can establish credibility. An advocate can help the victim to create a physical (not digital if the stalker has any risk to accessing it) documentation folder.

  Some items to include:
  - Victim and offender information such as phone number, address, emergency contact, vehicle, workplace, and more.
  - Victim and offender photos.
  - A copy of the original "no contact" letter/text/email.
  - A log including all behaviors and contacts from the offender. Include witnesses and how the incidents made the victim feel, since fear is a key element in charging stalking.
  - Copies of all letters, emails, caller ID logs, or voicemails from the offender, including those which are "spoofs" and appear to be from someone else.
  - "Gifts" from the offender.
  - Copies of any protective orders the victim has received.
  - Photos of bruises from physical contact, vandalism, or other physical evidence, and the dates they occurred.
  - Steps the victim has taken to end or minimize the stalking behaviors and it has impacted their life.

- *Legal Action*: Survivors of stalking may want to report to law enforcement. Stalking laws make it a crime to intentionally or knowingly engage in a course of conduct directed at or concerning a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to suffer serious inconvenience or emotional distress, to fear bodily injury or to fear bodily injury to a close relation, to fear death or to fear the death of a close relation, to fear damage or destruction to or tampering with property or to fear injury to or death of an animal owned by or in the control of that specific person (17-A M.R.S.A. section 210-A).

  Protective orders may be an option for some survivors. These orders can be obtained through the local District Court with the support of a Pine Tree Legal attorney, and require the offender to stay away from, and not interfere with, the complainant. It should be discussed with the survivor that stalkers have a high rate of violating protective orders. The orders may be seen by the stalker as proof of rejection, and can elevate the stalking behaviors and increase the risk to the victim. As a result, other parts of the safety plan must be addressed simultaneously (Baum, 2009).

- *Contingency Plans*: While a victim may not be in immediate danger, the potential always exists. A contingency plan, similar to a "fire escape plan," may be appropriate. Suggested considerations include:
  - Knowledge of, and quick access to, critical telephone numbers, including law enforcement numbers and locations; safe places, such as friends, families, or shelters; and contact numbers for use after safety is secured, such as friends, neighbors, attorneys, prosecutors, medical care, child care, pet care, and more;
  - Accessible reserve of necessities, including a small packed suitcase in the trunk of the car or another readily accessible location for quick departure. This should include:
    - Reserve cash.
    - Important numbers, such as creditors' contact information.
    - Personal welfare items such as medication, birth certificates, social security information, passports, and more.
    - Miscellaneous items, such as backup keys for neighbors. If the victim has children, they may want to pack a few toys, books, or other special items belonging to the child;

    - Keep a full tank of gas.
    - Alert critical people to the situation who could help create a contingency plan, such as law enforcement, employers, family, friends, neighbors, and security personnel.

- *Someone in Immediate Danger*: This is exceedingly rare, and if the person you're working with is in immediate danger, determine with them what place feels safe for them: hotel, shelter, hospital, friend's house, etc. Domestic Violence Resource Centers are a valuable resource to collaborate on availability of safe places and logistics to support someone fleeing immediate danger.

(SRC, 2009)

Stalking Laws

In 1990, California was the first state to criminalize stalking in the United States because of several high profile stalking cases.

Within three years, every state in the United States had followed suit and criminalized stalking. Laws against stalking in different jurisdictions vary, as do the definitions. Stalking is defined under different names such as criminal harassment or criminal menace. Maine stalking laws were enacted in 2001.

In 1996 Congress passed an anti-stalking law as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Under this law it is a federal felony to cross state lines to stalk or harass an individual if the conduct causes fear of serious bodily injury or death to the stalking victim or to the victim's immediate family members.

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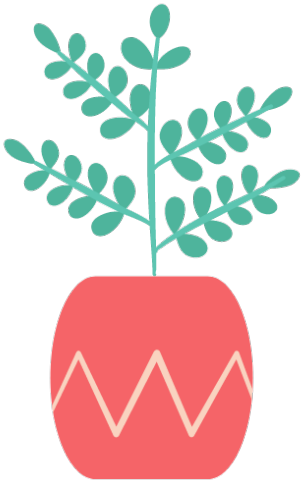
The Sex Industry

The term "sex industry" refers to sexually explicit commerce, entertainment, or services. Examples may include in person sex acts for money, dating/companion services, dancing and stripping, adult films and movies, online sex acts, and pornographic print materials like magazines. Large sectors of the sex industry are unlawful in the United States, or subject to a variety of legal restrictions. In addition to the stigma associated with sex work, this may make it difficult for survivors of sexual violence who work in these trades to seek services or report sexual assault.



Like so many industries, some people are there by choice, and some out of economic necessity. Advocates must consider that some survivors who work in the sex industry might be victims of commercial sex trafficking or exploitation. This means that they are working as a result of force, fraud, or coercion, and not by choice.

We should not assume all sex workers are female or children. Men and people with other gender identities are involved in sex work as well. Many sex workers are gay, bisexual, lesbian, or transgender.

Sexual Violence in Sex Work

Rape culture has contributed to harmful stigmatization of people who work in the sex industry. There is a cultural belief that says if you consent to trade sex for something of value (like money) you don't retain the dignity of consent or boundaries.

But it is the stigma surrounding their work that means sex workers often face much higher levels of violence in their lives than others. As a study done by the Sex Workers Project (SWP, 2003) has found:

> Sex workers experience a harmful impact of rape culture which proposes that it is not possible for a sex worker to be sexually assaulted because their job is to have sex for money. Therefore they are always willing as long as they are paid.. In reality, sex workers are firstly, people outside of the work they choose to do and may experience sexual violence outside of their work just like any other person.
>
> Secondly, in their sex work they are entitled to their bodily autonomy and consent. Sex workers create limits and boundaries on what they are willing to do with clients, and all acts and money to be exchanged are negotiated beforehand; and
>
> Sexual assault is a violent encounter with painful consequences for sex workers just as much as for anyone else. The tacit acceptance of such violence, represented by indifference to these crimes on the part of the police and society, only encourages such violence. (p. 10)

In part because of the widely held perception that sex workers could not be victims of sexual violence, it is difficult to find statistics relating to sex workers and sexual violence. However, we know the following:

- In one study, 82% of women engaged in street-based sex work reported being physically assaulted, and 68% reported having been raped (Farley & Kelly, 2000).
- A study of dancers found that 100% had been physically assaulted in the clubs where they were employed, with a prevalence ranging from 3-15 times over the course of their involvement in exotic dancing. Violence included physical assault, attempted vaginal penetration, attempted rape, and rape (Holsopple, 1999).
- In another study, 51.2% of women working as dancers had been threatened with a weapon (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004).
- In a study of indoor sex work, researchers found that 46% of respondents had been forced to do something they did not want to do; 42% had been threatened or beaten for being a sex worker; 16% had gone to the police and found the police to be helpful (SWP, 2005).
- In a study of street-based sex workers, researchers found that 80% experience violence or threats of violence through their work. 60% had experiences where men became violent and tried to force them to do something they did not want to do, including rape, assault, and robbery (SWP, 2003).

Impact of Sexual Violence on Sex Workers

Survivors who work in the sex industry experience the physical and emotional impacts common to all survivors of sexual violence. However, survivors of sexual violence who work in the sex industry, especially victims of sex trafficking, may have unique feelings and reactions to the trauma they've experienced. The impact of violence on sex workers may also be informed by whether they fit the traditional 'norm' within sex work. A male former sex worker explains:

> Men in the sex industry and the [sex workers'] rights movement must be prepared to face homophobia and invisibility in addition to the traditional ignorance of and hostility toward the profession…. Because sexual identity is such a charged absolute, and because [of] the ramifications of not picking the right answer, these men are in a service and support twilight zone. (St. Blaise, 2005, paragraph 10)

"The ramifications of not picking the right answer" is most likely about the violence sex workers experience, especially sex workers who may fall outside of what is often considered traditional gender norms and expectations. Sex workers live under consistent threats of arrest, deportation, and violence.

According to the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, the dangers associated with sex work are compounded by the stigma, isolation, and invisibility associated with their work (SWP, 2005).

The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) analyzed the importance of understanding the diversity of sex workers' experience. The following considerations are important and helpful for advocates to consider:

- The caller may have been forced into the sex trade by being deceived, trafficked, or sold into prostitution. Please see the Human Trafficking section of this manual for additional information.
- Once the caller entered the sex trade, they may have been surrounded by dominant or dangerous individuals including managers, clients, law enforcement officers, or intimate partners. These individuals may have aggressively dictated all aspects of the caller's daily lives using violence, forced drug and alcohol use, threats of turning them into law enforcement, or subtly control of them by holding a debt or other means of manipulation (CHANGE, 2003).

Additionally, sex workers often have no access to healthcare services because of violence or fear of violence and discrimination. This puts them at higher risk for STIs and HIV/AIDS. Rape can increase a sex worker's risk of STIs and HIV/AIDS because of the vaginal trauma that occurs during sexual violence and the resulting increased risk of transmission (WHO, 2005).

Sex workers are also hesitant to report physical and sexual violence to law enforcement officers out of fear of facing criminal charges. Law enforcement may not take sex workers' complaints seriously, or fail to investigate the crimes committed against them. Like all other survivors who call the sexual assault helpline, it takes a lot of courage for them to come forward and talk about their experiences.

The Advocate's Role

As with all callers, it is important that advocates be available to listen, believe, and provide support and information. This may be the first time the caller has reached out for support, in part because of their fear of being harshly judged by others, or having services refused because of their involvement in the sex industry.

As with any caller, it is important to inquire about safety, and, if appropriate, explore potential options. Because the risk factors are high for those working in the sex industry, the advocate might also ask the caller if they would like to make a safety plan. Give the option for the caller to seek medical attention, and be aware of the unique challenges faced by someone working in the sex industry, especially if you suspect the caller is a victim of human trafficking. Offer to provide support and assistance through the legal process if the caller chooses to report the violence to law enforcement. It is important to recognize the complexity associated with reporting to law enforcement. Sex workers may have experienced, or fear experiencing, problems with law enforcement because of their profession.

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Human Trafficking

Over the past decade, human trafficking has become an increasingly visible issue. Victim rights movements, law enforcement, and communities continue to grapple with how to identify and support human trafficking survivors. Communities and providers are also creating strategies for awareness and prevention.

The response to human trafficking can be challenging for several reasons. The issue is newer to our communities in the sense that it's become more increasingly discussed. Multidisciplinary groups are still developing a best practice response. As advocates we may be asked to work with partners we have not engaged with previously, some of whom may be new to victim services. Even among long-time partners, there may be philosophical differences in the best way to approach the issue. Meeting the needs of survivors is complex and may require significant time and effort (and change to our typical practices), without additional resources to do so (Freedom Network 2010).

Human trafficking is also an easily sensationalized topic. The fact that it is rooted in vulnerabilities like poverty, lack of economic opportunity, unstable housing, non-permanent immigration status, previous trauma or child sexual abuse, and other forms of oppression (like sexism and racism) is often overlooked. Human trafficking can be the result of the failure of many systems, and the intersection of many forms of violence and oppression. For this reason, it is one of the most complicated issues we work on.

Definitions and Intersections with Sexual Violence

Human trafficking is the act of compelling someone into labor (including commercial sex work, which is the trade of any sex act for something of value), through force, fraud or coercion, for the economic gain of a trafficker. By law, any minor in commercial sex work is a victim of human trafficking. Our definition of human trafficking is rooted in state and federal laws, which can be found at mainesten.org.

Commercial sexual exploitation is the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust to profit monetarily, socially, or politically from the commercial sex work of another. Human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation can happen to US citizens and non-citizens and people of any gender, class, age, culture, race, or other identity.

Human trafficking and sexual assault are both traumatic crimes, premised upon the power, control, abuse, and exploitation of another human being (Freedom Network 2010). Though sexual violence is most commonly associated with sex trafficking, it can occur in almost every type of trafficking situation, including cases of forced labor. Traffickers use sexual violence as both a physical and psychological means to compel labor of all kinds (including sex work) (Global Freedom Center, n.d.).

Not all who work in the sex industry are trafficked. However, anyone trading sex for something of value is vulnerable to sexual assault, violence, and exploitation. Because commercial sex is so stigmatized, this violence goes underreported and tends to be minimized (Freedom Network 2010). We think of commercial sex as a spectrum ranging from choice to circumstance to coercion. Anyone on this continuum may need support and services that can be addressed by sexual assault support center outreach and advocacy.

A History of Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Maine

The first statewide initiative to examine human trafficking in Maine was a legislatively-established trafficking work group, facilitated by the Attorney General's Office in 2005. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, along with partners such as the Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, and migrant labor services participated. The group suggested several statutory changes to Maine's law (some of which were enacted) and the group continued by legislative mandate until 2010. At that time, the group decided to continue without a legislative mandate to maintain a statewide coalition dedicated to these efforts.

In addition to statewide efforts, local initiatives have arisen, beginning with the Greater Portland Coalition Against Sex Trafficking and Exploitation in 2011. There is now a network of local teams across Maine. Advocates can find information at mainesten.org. Local and statewide efforts strive to stay connected with one another through shared membership in local Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and the Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network (Maine STEN) Provider Council, a group staffed and facilitated by MECASA.

Since 2011 specialized clinical programs, emergency shelters, survivor leadership, specialized residential substance treatment, and a statewide emergency fund have been developed in support of sex trafficking and exploitation survivors.

Philosophy: The Human Rights Framework

As a movement we know where we stand on the issue of sexual violence. We developed and instituted best

practices, and we continue to evolve from a common foundational philosophy. However, anti-trafficking efforts (especially those that involve partners with whom we may not have previously worked) may not have the same shared set of beliefs. Some emerging responses to human trafficking may conflict with or challenge core concepts of anti-sexual violence work. It's important for sexual assault service providers to consider their individual and organizational philosophies regarding trafficking and exploitation and the intersections with sexual violence.

Several philosophies, values, and practices come together within the anti-human trafficking movement. We have found it helpful to begin with the philosophies of anti-sexual violence advocacy when creating policies, training, and services that may impact survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. The model of voluntary, non-judgmental assistance with an emphasis on self-determination to best meet a survivor's needs (Freedom Network 2015) is considered a "human-rights based approach."

The human rights framework generally supports decriminalization of sex work, due to a belief that criminalizing people for their circumstances is harmful. The human rights framework views sex work as different from sex trafficking, and considers confusing the two harmful. This framework also includes the belief that all labor (including sex work) happens by choice, circumstance, or coercion. This is an acknowledgment that it is possible for a person to choose to engage in sex work freely and that sex work is not inherently exploitive or harmful. It is also possible that a person could engage in sex work as a result of their circumstances (for example, a person trading sex for a place to stay). These circumstances might be exploitative, as with other types of labor. Finally, the human rights framework acknowledges that people can engage in sex work by force. Forcing, coercing, or defrauding someone into trading sex is sex trafficking. Freedom Network USA, a national partner and technical assistance provider, shares this:

> **Our years of work with trafficked persons have shown that those served using a rights-based approach tend to regain trust, safety, and self-sufficiency, and more fully recover from their crime than those who do not. In contrast, those who are treated like criminals instead of victims, who feel that their needs are not being considered, that their stories are not believed, or that their decisions and actions are being judged, are more likely to abandon services and the criminal justice process altogether. This leads to poorer justice outcomes and increases the risk that the individual will return to the trafficker or will face other challenges to safety and well-being.**
>
> **Trafficked persons are trapped not only by the actions of their traffickers, but also by the structural inequalities that create fear and vulnerabilities. Poverty, discrimination, weak worker protections, restrictive immigration policies, distrust of government institutions and shame are all manipulated by traffickers to entrap those who see no better or safer option. Laws, policies, and community attitudes can foster freedom and empowerment or repression and dependency.**
>
> - Freedom Network USA, 2018

MECASA uses the following guiding principles regarding victim services and training/awareness efforts (*Adapted from the Wisconsin Human Trafficking Protocol and Resource Manual, 2012*):

- Human trafficking violates a person's human rights.
- There are many conditions that foster human trafficking, including: poverty, forced migration, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism.
- The intersections of oppression (gender, immigration status, ability, history of abuse, economic status, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and others) increase vulnerability to trafficking and present barriers to accessing services.
- Individuals and organizations alone cannot end the conditions that promote human trafficking, and a broad community response is necessary to make social and institutional change.

Victim services should be:

- Trauma-informed, evidence-informed, and based on the empowerment model of service provision and recovery. An empowerment model of service provision is strengths-based, comprehensive, and respects an individual's autonomy and self-determination.
- Connected formally and informally with a victim-centered, multi-disciplinary response, and informed by organizational policies and protocols. In a victim-centered approach, the victim's wishes, safety, and well-being take priority.
- Training and awareness efforts should be:
- Built on existing statewide and/or regional training efforts and curricula.
- Reliant on local expertise and information and connected with local experts as well as statewide infrastructure such as the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Work Group.
- Strategically aimed at audiences where there is the highest risk for exploitation or the greatest opportunity for identification and referral.
- Inclusive of survivors in the development and implementation of programming.

MECASA & Local Sexual Assault Support Center Work

Maine's sexual assault support centers and coalition are a part of this work to support trafficking and exploitation survivors because of the many intersections between human trafficking and sexual violence. Anti-trafficking response is an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to systems-level anti-violence work, which intersects with many social concerns. It also may present us with more questions than answers in this early stage.

Multidisciplinary Teams

Sexual assault support centers and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) advocates have long been key participants in a multidisciplinary response to sexual violence. Sex trafficking and sex exploitation are forms of sexual violence where survivors may intersect with the criminal justice system as both victims and defendants. Throughout the state, sexual assault support centers' facilitation of local anti-trafficking multidisciplinary teams is an extension of our long-standing commitment to systems-level coordinated community response. There are several multidisciplinary anti-trafficking teams in Maine. These teams create locally-led anti-trafficking services and protocols and are the foundation of Maine's anti-trafficking response.

Direct Services

Many trafficking survivors have already experienced sexual abuse and trauma outside a trafficking situation. This creates a long history of sexual victimization which can normalize the experience, increase vulnerability to trafficking, and decrease a survivor's ability to eventually seek help or stability outside of trafficking. Sexual assault advocates understand and can support the survivor regarding previous sexual violence or child sexual abuse experiences.

People who experience trafficking face vulnerabilities often like those faced by survivors of sexual violence. These vulnerabilities may complicate their lives and make accessing and receiving services more challenging. They include unstable housing, immigration status, age, isolation, and a mistrust of the criminal justice system. All of these may be an issue for survivors of any type of trafficking.

Empowerment-based advocacy can benefit trafficking survivors, but often additional intensive case management is necessary. Support is often needed for longer periods of time than we generally provide services to sexual violence survivors. People who have experienced trafficking or exploitation might have unique or heightened needs for services like medical care, dental care, tattoo or brand removal, substance use treatment and recovery, or mental health treatment.

Trafficking survivors may also have criminal records related to being trafficked or otherwise, that create barriers to employment, housing, and healing. Working with defense attorneys who represent survivors may be a new experience for many local sexual assault

programs. Additionally, the multiple traumas experienced over long periods of time by trafficking survivors make for new and complex cases with which advocates may not have had experience.

In addition to typical advocacy services, a survivor of forced or exploitive labor may seek services that can address workplace rights violations, workplace sexual harassment, possible protections from deportation (including U and T visas – specific to crime victims (U) or trafficking victims (T)), access to medical services, and support for current or previous sexual violence.

The advocacy model teaches us that each individual has a right to decide how to approach, define, and heal from their victimization. Individuals who experience trafficking or sex exploitation may identify as survivors of trafficking, sexual assault, both, or neither. Our job is not to decide or define what happens to a survivor or how they name their experience. We provide the resources a survivor asks for or find someone who can. This can be a place to come together with system partners, fellow programs, and organizations serving trafficking survivors.

Outreach

Outreach to trafficking victims can mirror approaches our movement has taken with many underserved populations. It is based in education and relationship building. Having conversations in our communities about rights and ways we can support trafficking survivors with civil and legal remedies create opportunities and space for self-identification. These approaches open the door for conversations and disclosures of debt bondage, forced labor, forced sexual servitude, ongoing sexual harassment, and sexual assault where they work or live, and other concerns. Outreach is about making sure people know their rights and know that they can access services without judgment of their circumstances or background, and so they can make informed decisions for themselves about their own lives.

Prevention

Sex trafficking and exploitation prevention efforts overlap with sexual violence prevention work. Specifically, the prevention of child sexual abuse and a cultural shift towards healthy sexuality and teaching consent are key components of trafficking prevention.

Many factors make someone vulnerable to trafficking, such as child sexual abuse, family trauma, and poverty. Programming that help people address these vulnerabilities and traumas, such as child sexual abuse, sexual assault prevention, and programming supporting at-risk youth are preventative in nature. Furthermore, educational initiatives aimed at shifting societal stereotypes that contribute to the 'adultification' of youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth strive to reduce the vulnerability of these groups and increase access to services. Additionally, providing targeted, education-based intervention with at-risk youth by trained clinicians, advocates, and survivors is an effective means of prevention.

National Human Trafficking Hotline

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) is a project of Polaris. NHTH receives urgent and non-urgent calls and makes referrals to Maine providers as needed.

While the NHTH may contact you as the experts for local referrals, they are also available for you to find out more about trafficking and exploitation laws, tools, and resources.

Types of Calls from NHTH

In 2014 the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Workgroup determined that the NHTH protocol should refer after-hours callers to local sexual assault support centers or domestic violence resource centers.

If calls have an element of danger, law enforcement (not advocates) will be the primary contact for the NHTH.

In recent years, examples of the kinds of calls that come to Maine include:

- A service provider in Maine working with a client who might be a victim of human trafficking and looking for ways to support them.
- A law enforcement officer who has come across a victim of human trafficking asking for referrals for shelter.
- A victim of human trafficking who is not ready or able to leave, but wants to know about their options for if/when they do.
- A victim who needs a safe place to stay while they explore options.

Legislation

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) enacted in 2000 made human trafficking a federal crime.

TVPA is designed to protect survivors while helping them rebuild their lives, to prevent international human trafficking, and to prosecute traffickers. Prior to this act, comprehensive federal laws to protect survivors and

hold traffickers accountable did not exist. Under TVPA, anyone under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sexual activity is experiencing human trafficking, even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion (National Human Trafficking Resource Center [NHTRC], n.d.).

Maine has several laws to address human trafficking. The Maine Human Rights Act (5 M.R.S.A. Part 12, Chapter 337-C), provides civil remedies and defines the offence of human trafficking, as:

- Aggravated sex trafficking and sex trafficking (see Title 17-A Maine Revised Statutes, sections 852 and 853), and criminal forced labor and aggravated criminal forced labor (see Title 17-A, sections 304 and 305, respectively).
- Except as provided in subparagraph (1) above, all offenses in Title 17-A, chapters 11, 12 and 13 if accompanied by the destruction, concealment, removal, confiscation or possession of any actual or purported passport or other immigration document or other actual or purported government identification document of the other person or done using any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause the other person to believe that if that person does not perform certain labor or services, including prostitution, that the person or a 3rd person will be subject to a harm to their health, safety or immigration status.

Human trafficking victims may seek financial reimbursement from the Victims' Compensation Fund (Maine Victims Compensation) for losses suffered MECASA also manages the Maine Human Trafficking Survivor Fund, which is a flexible, accessible and timely source of funds to support immediate needs of victims of trafficking as they seek to increase their safety and start a new life. Direct service providers and law enforcement across Maine can apply to access these funds on behalf of individuals who have a demonstrated need and who are victims of sex trafficking, labor trafficking or commercial sex exploitation.

Maine law defines sex trafficking as compelling a person to enter or remain in prostitution through a variety of means: using or withholding drugs or alcohol, making false statements, debt bondage (in which a person must continue to engage in the act in order to pay a debt), and using a pattern of force or coercion to instill fear (of death, injury, etc.).

If a victim is under 18 or suffers from a 'mental disability', then they may be a victim of aggravated sex trafficking without being compelled or forced (17-A M.R.S.A. section 852).

Red Flags & Assessment Questions

Human trafficking is a crime that is designed to be undetected, and is very difficult to spot. Still, there are some "red flags" and warning signs that can be seen. Some common signs that a person is a survivor of human trafficking include:

- Being under the age of 18 and engaging in commercial sexual activity.
- Having no freedom to leave their living or working situation. People who have been trafficked often live where they work, or are transported from group living quarters to their job site by their trafficker each day.
- Having few or no personal possessions or money; may not be in control of their own identifying documents.
- Having visible signs of abuse/restraint: cuts; bruises; broken teeth; burns; etc. They may also have visible "brands," such as tattoos or scarring from their pimp or trafficker.
- Having restricted or controlled communication, such as always having someone else present while they have phone calls or go places.
- Having excessively long/unusual working hours.
- Presenting inconsistencies in their story. This may be a result of being coached or trained by their trafficker, or from their experience of trauma.
- Exhibiting behaviors that include fear, paranoia, hyper-vigilance, being tense or submissive, defensive, or nervous.
- Youth who are being sexually exploited may have inconsistent or contradictory stories about their age, name, upbringing, home life, and more.
- Sexually exploited youth may also express an interest in or history of relationships with older men, and often are in controlling or dominating relationships.

(Polaris Project, n.d.)

If you believe that the caller is a survivor of human trafficking, questions should focus on their mobility, safety, and living or working conditions:

- Could you leave your working or living situation if you wanted to?
- Has anyone threatened you, your family, or friends?
- Do you feel safe at work/at home?
- How habitable or safe are your working/living conditions?
- Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep, or use the bathroom?

(U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, n.d.a)

The Advocate's Role

It is unlikely that someone will reach out to an advocate with a request for help and say, "I'm being trafficked." Survivors don't always identify the pattern of harm or perpetrators in their life as trafficking. But like supporting all survivors, you will follow the lead of the survivor and model their language.

Together you can assess this person's most immediate need and explore what impacts sexual violence or trafficking is having on their lives. Because trafficking can disrupt a person's entire emotional and material life, the person you're talking to might need a safe place to stay, basic necessities, safety planning, and or transportation. For this reason, advocates have access to a statewide Trafficking Survivor Emergency Fund and agency protocols for connecting someone to a shelter or hotel for the night.

As with all cases of sexual violence, survivors may have a variety of reasons for choosing whether or not to report to law enforcement. The criminalization and stigmatization of sex work means many people in the sex industry do not trust they will be safer by engaging law enforcement. It is a place to emphasize confidentiality and choice.

Some survivors may have been trafficked into the United States illegally, and are undocumented. It is important for advocates to know and to share with survivors, if appropriate, that the TVPA discussed earlier in this section creates protections for such victims. If they are willing to cooperate with a law enforcement investigation, a survivor may be eligible for a T visa, which could allow them to stay legally in the United States (USDHHS, n.d.b). For more information, contact the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP).

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Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

Intimate partner violence, also called domestic violence or abuse, battering, or spouse/partner abuse, refers to a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviors used by one person against their dating partner or ex-partner. Intimate partner violence involves a range of behaviors that include, but are not limited to, physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse and threats, stalking, isolation, spiritual abuse, harm to children, economic control, destruction of personal property, and animal cruelty. Like sexual violence, these behaviors are caused by an offender's desire to gain power and control over others.

Intimate partner violence occurs in heterosexual, same-sex and other gender-identified relationships, between married and unmarried partners, current and former partners, and can include related violence to other family and household members. It crosses all lines of economic status, education level, ability, age, geography, race and ethnicity, and religion.

Some survivors of intimate partner violence may also be survivors of sexual violence, as sexual violence is a method or tactic domestic violence offenders use. A person who experiences intimate partner violence may also experience sexual violence outside of that relationship. In some situations, the abusive partner may feel a sense of "sexual ownership" of the survivor (Lichtenstein, 2003).

If the abusive partner views a sexual assault as a challenge to their "possession," the survivor may be sexually assaulted by their partner as a means of reclaiming their power, control, and sexual access to the survivor.

We know that women are not the only survivors of sexual assault within intimate partner relationships, yet the vast majority of published research focuses on female survivors. Most research has included couples who are married, separated, divorced, or live together, making the connection that the dynamics of sexual violence in married or cohabitating relationships are similar (Mahoney & Williams, 1998). Published studies about such violence generally do not include people who are LGBTQ-identified. Information about LGBTQ-identified survivors of sexual violence can be found in that section of this manual.

Studies often also neglect to examine the impact of intimate partner violence on people with disabilities. However, one study suggests women who are disabled are at greater risk for intimate partner rape as compared to women without a disability (Breiding and Amour, 2015).

The complexity of sexual violence in intimate partner relationships makes it challenging to get statistics that fully represent the issue. Here is a breakdown of some statistics:

- In one study, women who reported rape by an intimate partner (as defined by the survey) were less likely than women who reported rape by someone else to label their experiences as a rape (Jaffe, et. al., 2021).
- Sexual assault occurs in 40-45% of relationships involving domestic violence (Campbell, 2003).
- More than half of female victims of rape (51%) reported that at least one perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner (Black et al. 2011).
- 34% of women indicated that they had unwanted sex with their partner – most frequently as a result of marital obligation (Basile, 2002).

Reproductive Sexual Coercion

Reproductive coercion involves behaviors related to reproductive health that a partner uses to maintain power and control in a relationship. Many of these behaviors may be physical or sexual violence in their own right, and include:

- Explicit attempts to impregnate a partner with a vagina against their will.
- Controlling the outcomes of a pregnancy.
- Forced non-condom use.
- Threats or acts of violence if a person doesn't agree to have sex.
- Intentionally exposing a partner to an STI/HIV.

(Miller & Levenson, 2012)

Sexual coercion includes a range of behaviors that a partner may use to pressure or coerce a person to have sex without using physical force. This behavior includes repeatedly pressuring a partner to have sex, forcing sex without a condom or not allowing other STI prevention/birth control, intentionally exposing a partner to a sexually transmitted infection (STI), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or threatening retaliation if notified of a positive STI test result (Chamberlain & Levenson, 2012).

While these forms of coercion are especially common within an intimate partner relationship that includes

physical or sexual violence, they may occur independently of other forms of violence within a relationship, or outside of an intimate partner relationship. Reproductive and sexual coercion most often impacts females, but males may experience these behaviors as well. A recent national survey on intimate partner and sexual violence provided the first national look at reproductive coercion among both women and men, but more research is needed to fully understand the issue (Black et al., 2011).

Survivors' Reasons for Staying

Often people who have never experienced domestic violence fail to understand why survivors do not leave a relationship immediately after the first violent or abusive incident. This kind of attitude allows people to feel "safe" from intimate partner violence, by thinking that if their partner ever abused them they would leave. However, this wrongly places the blame on the survivor and perpetuates survivor-blaming myths. In actuality, there are many reasons survivors stay in abusive relationships.

Love & Responsibility: A survivor of intimate partner violence may feel a strong connection to the offender for many reasons. The survivor may love the offender deeply and may also have invested a great deal in the relationship, making it difficult to walk away. If the survivor has made a long-term commitment to the relationship, and if the survivor and the offender have children together, the potential loss of the relationship may feel even greater.

Lack of Support: Offenders can be diligent about isolating survivors, so there may be limited support or resources available to a survivor who is ready to escape an abusive relationship. A survivor may not have access to an independent source of income, may not have friends or family members willing or able to support them, and may not have access to community services. For many survivors, the choice becomes an economic one: remain in an abusive relationship, or face poverty, homelessness, and an even more uncertain future.

Risk of Harm: It becomes clear that many of these risks do not go away when a survivor leaves. Survivors who remain in abusive relationships face injury, losing their job, having their children at risk for abuse, depression and loss of self-esteem, living in poverty, or being killed. Survivors who consider leaving abusive relationships understand the reality that many of these risks would not go away. In fact, some risks would increase. When an offender starts to lose control over the survivor, the reaction can be to do whatever is necessary to regain that control.

Approximately 75% of intimate partner violence related homicides occur during or after the time the survivor leaves the relationship (Wilson & Daly, 1993), which makes telling survivors that they should "just leave" very dangerous. In a meta-analysis on 17 studies examining male intimate partner homicide perpetration and female victimization, findings suggested the strongest risk factors for intimate partner homicide were the perpetrator having direct access to a gun, inflicting previous nonfatal strangulation, previously raping the victim, and threatening the victim with a weapon or other harm (Spencer and Stith, 2020). With additional risks including physical violence, harassment, economic devastation, and risks to children, some survivors choose to stay.

If survivors have children or animals, they may be afraid of the negative impact that leaving the offender might have on the children or the animals. They may fear losing custody of their children to the offender. Financially, survivors may not be able to provide for their children alone. They may fear for their children's or animals' physical safety if they leave. Many offenders threaten to harm the children or animals to keep their partners from leaving. If survivors are able to leave the offender, it may not be possible to bring the children or animals along.

Lack of Resources: Survivors may lack the resources needed to leave their partners. It takes time to plan and make preparations to leave. They may be economically dependent on their abusive partner. It is typical for offenders to do everything in their power to make the survivor dependent on them. This includes manipulating them into isolation from friends and family. Because of the injuries that the abuse causes, many survivors also lose their jobs because they miss so many days of work.

Survivors of intimate partner violence may also be unable to use existing resources because of how they are provided. Male survivors, people who are LGBTQ-identified, individuals who are non-English speaking,

older adults, or individuals with disabilities, for example, may experience specific additional barriers to accessing services.

Offenders will also often actively attempt to lure survivors back into the relationships and regain control. They may create fear in survivors by stalking or harassing behaviors, threatening survivors that they will be injured or killed if they leave the relationship, or even using the legal system against survivors. Or, they may attempt to lure survivors back by putting on a more positive face.

They may apologize and offer gifts and promises to change. They may suddenly appear desperate to reconnect with their children. They may become more religious or spiritual, they may become sober or promise to do so, and they may promise to attend counseling alone or with the survivors.

The goal of all these tactics is to achieve face-to-face contact with survivors, to wear down the survivor's resistance, and reestablish the power and control dynamic. One of the reasons these things can be effective is that often survivors may not want the relationship to end; they just want the abuse to stop.

The Advocate's Role

Because domestic and sexual violence are closely linked, advocates will receive calls from people who are survivors of both. When someone has experienced intimate partner violence, they have experienced a loss of control in their lives, much like a survivor of sexual violence.

The majority of survivors of intimate partner violence are able to safely escape abusive relationships. However, an offender who is focused on keeping a survivor under their control and in the relationship will make escape as difficult as possible by instilling fear or by continuing to convince the survivor that the offender loves the survivor like no one else could. Ending an abusive relationship is a complicated process in which a survivor has many issues to work through while, at the same time, the offender will be working to keep the survivor in the relationship.

Advocates can support survivors of intimate partner violence by listening and reinforcing that they are not responsible for the abuse. As with survivors of sexual violence, offering options and considering safety planning strategies supports survivors of intimate partner violence in regaining control over their decisions and their lives. Advocates can help survivors by connecting with your partner domestic violence resource center and discuss what additional support and expertise they can provide.

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Ritualistic Abuse

Rituals are an important part of every culture and society. A ritual, or a series of actions or type of behavior regularly and invariably followed, may exist to fulfill a religious obligation, satisfy a spiritual or emotional need, strengthen social bonds, socially and morally educate, demonstrate respect, and at times just for the pleasure of the ritual itself. The actions may be completed by a group or individual and may occur in a formal or informal setting. Attending a formal religious service, informally saying hello while walking down the street, or brushing teeth in the morning at the bathroom sink are all examples of rituals.

Sexual violence, particularly ongoing sexual abuse, may be ritualized in many ways. Certain clothing, times of day, words, or other actions may accompany acts of sexual violence or the response of survivors, and rituals may be a part of many kinds of sexual violence, directed toward people of all backgrounds.

Some sexual violence takes place within a formalized ritual setting. A cult, organization, religion, family, or individual offender may participate in organized rituals which include sexual violence, referred to here as ritualistic abuse.

In cases of ritualistic abuse, rituals are used to facilitate physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, often ongoing over a long period of time. The abuse may be severe, sometimes including torture and killing, and may involve sadistic abuse, defined as deriving pleasure from inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others (Oxford, n.d.). As with other types of sexual violence, ritualistic abuse is intended to gain dominance over the survivor. Mind control, drugs, and intimidation tactics are used to gain psychological control over the victim.

Regardless of the name given to a cult or religious or spiritual group, or the deity they are said to worship, advocates should remain focused on supporting individual callers, and refrain from engaging in a broader consideration of whether a particular cult or religious or spiritual group is ritualistically abusive.

Prevalence

Although it is not known exactly how widespread ritualistic abuse is, sexual assault support centers do receive calls from survivors of ritualistic abuse. Most calls are from people who are not currently experiencing ritualistic abuse. This type of abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of race, age, or gender identity. While public awareness of difficult topics, such as sexual and domestic violence, has increased, the existence of ritualistic abuse against children or adults is seldom recognized. Because of the unusual or extreme practices described by some survivors, and the challenge in our society of facing painful topics, the issue is ignored or often disbelieved. Such acts are also often secret. Acknowledging that ritualistic abuse is real and a dangerous form of violence is the first step towards addressing it.

The Dynamics of Ritualistic Abuse

In addition to often being well-organized and intentional, ritualistic abuse involves many interwoven abusive behaviors. Physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual violence can all occur and are designed to be sadistically painful and humiliating, and may include:

- Torture and killing.
- Food and sleep deprivation.
- Sexual abuse including group sex, sex with animals and corpses.
- Witnessing and receiving physical abuse/torture.
- Being forced to participate in the abuse of others.
- Death threats to self/family.
- Usage of/forced drug usage.
- Usage of/forced ingestion of blood, feces, urine.
- Witnessing of and forced participation in human adult and infant sacrifice.
- Forced cannibalism.
- “Marriage” to Satan or to another religious entity.
- Buried alive in coffins/graves and “reborn.”
- Forced impregnation and sacrifice of one's own child.
- Being put in “the hole” which may be filled with blood, body parts, snakes, bugs, rotten meat, etc.

Another common dynamic of ritualistic abuse involves the use of mind control, programming, or brainwashing. In this case, part of a person may have been programmed or trained to obey without question, while other parts of the mind may be unaware of this situation. This tactic is used to force people to participate in behaviors that may be violent or criminal, thus making survivors afraid to leave the group or come forward. It is systematic and is designed to bind the survivor to the group. Offenders may set out to create multiple personalities which they can control, using techniques such as inducing a deep trance; physical and psychological torture; extreme pain; sexual arousal; drugs; electroshock; sleep, food, or water deprivation; temperature extremes; loud noise or strobe lights; and induction of helplessness and hopelessness.

Indicators of Ritualistic Abuse

Survivors of ritualistic abuse may have a resulting fascination with, or phobia of, objects, events, or symbols specific to ritualistic abuse.

In addition, if advocates hear callers describing any of the following experiences, behaviors, or impacts, it is important to consider the possibility that they have experienced ritualistic abuse:

- Repeated harassment or stalking by family, friends, or unknown individuals.
- Letters, phone calls, messages, or gifts sent directly from offenders or through others.
- Sounds outside the house at night, such as banging, gunshots, beeping horns.
- Delivery of dead animals, feces, urine, blood, body parts.
- Criminal activity that may have a pattern.
- Major loss of time for the survivor with increased terror/symptoms.
- Unexplained bruising or other physical injury.
- Unexplained puncture wounds.
- Unexplained actual drugged states.
- Unexplained cuts or lacerations, blood on self or on possessions.

(Adapted from Woodsum, 1998)

Impacts of Ritualistic Abuse

Because ritualistic abuse is often severe and prolonged, its impacts may be especially strong and persistent. Since some survivors of ritualistic abuse have witnessed or "participated" in the abuse, torture or death of another, they may see themselves as the offender. Ritualistic abuse offenders intentionally place responsibility on survivors, leaving them with intense feelings of shame and the distorted belief that they are "evil" or as dangerous as those who abused them. Some impacts faced by survivors may be:

- *Fears*: Fear that family will be killed; generalized terror; extreme claustrophobia or flashes of being caged or kept in small, isolated spaces; belief that they have committed a crime and fear being arrested or that they are evil; fear of masks; reaction of terror or extreme intolerance to the sound of crying babies or children; fear that members of the ritualistically abusive group will come to kidnap or kill them.
- *Image memories*: Flashes of dismemberment, mutilation, feces, blood, murder, or animal sacrifice; drawing pentagrams, stars, other satanic symbols; fixation on "Satan" or "demons;" obsession with blood, urine, feces, mutilation; talking about multiple personalities as if they are actual people and they have interacted with them or are fearful of them; obsession with fire, candles, death, the dead, etc.
- *Emotions*: Feeling "crazy" in response to memory flashes; feelings of being possessed or controlled by someone or something else; compulsion to return to the group; urges to commit suicide or engage in self-injury.

(Adapted from Woodsum, 1998)

Survivor Guilt

Survivors of ritualistic abuse may feel powerful guilt specifically regarding their participation in others' abuse or in committing other crimes. If they have watched the death of another person, or participated in causing another person's death, they may feel an intense guilt that they have survived. This is sometimes referred to as survivor guilt.

Dissociation & Body Memories

Dissociation and body memories may be common to survivors of ritualistic abuse, and are normal responses to experiencing sexual violence. For more on both of these topics, see the section on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, and the section on Mental Health and Substance Use.

Screen Memories

A 'screen memory' is a memory that hides, or screens, another memory. The screen memory may be of a real event or may be placed in the survivor's memory by the programmer through hypnosis, staged scenes with appropriate costumes and props, movies, cartoons, or some other "virtual reality." The screen memory is designed to provoke disbelief and serves to protect the offender(s).

Triggered Messages

Triggers are situations, actions, or words that bring a memory or feeling and may be common to all survivors of sexual violence. A full description is found in the section on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. For survivors of ritualistic abuse, their abuser or offender may intend to trigger a feeling or activate a program with phone calls, letters or greeting cards, and symbolic objects sent as gifts.

Breaking from Family

If the survivor's family members took part in the ritualistic abuse, and the survivor remains in contact with them, they may be constantly at risk of being

triggered or programmed. Survivors may feel they need to stay in contact to ensure the safety of loved ones, who may be targets of further abuse. This creates further isolation for the survivor.

It may be necessary for survivors to make a complete break (no contact, an unlisted phone number, no mail, and no visits). This is very difficult and may require a change of residence. The break may need to be done several times if someone is tracking the survivor. Sexual assault support centers can help with this by arranging temporary shelter or locating resources in a new area.

An alternative to a complete break would involve limited contact with family or other offenders with clear limits set by the survivor, and a support system that would help to support and monitor the survivor's safety. As always the choice is the survivor's, not the advocate's.

Anxiety Around Holidays & Family Events

Ritualistically abusive individuals or groups will often steal, pervert, mock, and blend the holidays and traditions of religions or faith belief systems. Many versions of holiday calendars or traditions exist and reflect various belief systems, and any of these can be used by ritualistically abusive individuals or groups. For survivors of ritualistic abuse, certain days of the year may act as triggers. Survivors may become terrified that ritualistically abusive individuals or groups will come to kidnap or kill them. Some are overcome by flashbacks of the abuse, some feel compelled to attempt suicide or to self-injure, and others feel a deep compulsion to return to the individual or group.

Fear of Disclosure

Disclosure to others about ritualistic abuse can be very difficult. Survivors often don't talk about the abuse because of fear of being killed and guilt about the acts they may have been forced to commit. Survivors often struggle to understand that they had no choice and often feel a terrible responsibility for the decisions they were forced to make. Individuals may also feel that what they experienced was so extreme that no one will believe it really happened. Some survivors may also have been told that they have been implanted with an internal tracking device or bomb that will activate if they disclose. Some survivors may not disclose because they may have no memories of the abuse until years after the abuse occurred. This can be because of dissociation, programming, and other factors discussed earlier in this section.

The Role of the Advocate

When survivors call the statewide sexual assault helpline they may not mention any connection with a ritualistically abusive individual, group, or cult. They may call when having overwhelming reactions, including severe flashbacks, intense fears, or self-abusive behaviors.

Callers may or may not know that their abuse was ritualistic, or they may remember that they were abused but not remember the ritualistic component. A first call to the sexual assault helplines often a test for the caller to see how someone will relate to them. It is very difficult for ritualistic abuse survivors to trust that it is safe to talk to another person about their experiences.

If a survivor is requesting accompaniment services through the medical or criminal justice system, they may need specialized support, as some legal or medical functions may seem ritualistic or authoritarian, and therefore particularly challenging to survivors or ritualistic abuse. Abusive group members may have dressed up as, or could actually have been, doctors, police, or other people of authority. They may need additional support in a medical setting, as the uniforms, drugs, smells, blood, or procedures may serve as triggers.

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Religious & Spiritual Abuse

Sexual violence, including sexual abuse, by those with influence and/or power in a faith community, is a painful and confusing experience. Offenders may include priests, pastors, as well as other members of a religious or spiritual community. The feelings of hurt and betrayal are often aggravated by the misuse of faith teachings, which offenders may use to justify the sexual violence and/or abuse.

> **My abuser was a master of deceit and manipulation. He knew that his role as a [religious leader] granted him instant trust by adults -- my parents included. He knew I would not question his authority at 12 years old, especially as a student taught in [religious] schools since kindergarten.**
>
> - Furnish, 2002

Research about abuse inside the Catholic Church indicates that from 1950-2002:

- A total of 10,667 individuals made allegations of childhood sexual abuse by priests. Of those individuals, 17.2% of them had siblings who also alleged abuse.
- In 38.4% of cases, the abuse occurred during a single year. In 21.8% of cases, the abuse lasted for more than a year, but less than two. About 28% of cases lasted for two to four years; and 10.8% of cases lasted for five to nine years. Less than 1% lasted for more than ten years.
- Dioceses reported that allegations that were not withdrawn or known to be false had been made against 4,392 priests and deacons from 1950-2002.
- Religious communities reported that allegations had been made against 647 of their members from 1950-2002.
- Overall, 4% of all priests active from 1950- 2002 were accused.

(JJCCJ, 2004)

According to some studies, approximately 14% of clergy sexual abuse are reported to civil authorities. Researchers suggest that victim grooming by the clergy member perpetrating the abuse accounts for low reporting rates, particularly reverential fear and religious duress that makes it especially challenging for clergy sexual abuse survivors to identify the abuse and separate from this person who they may revere and respect (Spraitz and Bowen, 2020).

Following widespread disclosures of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, a model was put forth by the State of Maine Best Practices Team to address a variety of types of institutional abuse. Additionally, Maine law provides that civil actions for sexual acts toward minors may be brought at any time. There is no statute of limitations for actions based upon sexual acts or sexual contact toward minors (17-A M.R.S. section 251, subsection 1, paragraphs C and D). This applies to all actions based upon sexual acts toward minors regardless of the date of the sexual act and regardless of whether the statute of limitations on such actions expired prior to the effective date of this subsection (14 M.R.S. section 752-F).

Regarding criminal actions, a prosecution may be brought at any time if the victim had not attained the age of 16 years at the time of the crime and the crime was incest, unlawful sexual contact, sexual abuse of a minor, or rape or gross sexual assault (formerly gross sexual misconduct).

Effective June 27, 2019, the criminal statute of limitations was extended from 8 years to 20 years for prosecutions for a Class A, Class B or Class C crimes involving unlawful sexual contact or gross sexual assault against persons 16 years of age or older. These changes apply only to those Class A, Class B and Class C crimes of unlawful sexual contact or gross sexual assault committed on or after the effective date or for which the prosecution has not yet been barred by the statute of limitations in force immediately prior to the effective date of this legislation (17-A M.R.S. section 8).

Another form of abuse occurs when the religious or spiritual community fails to offer supportive responses when a member of their community discloses experiencing sexual violence. The offender may or may not be a member of the religious or spiritual community. Individuals who face this unsupportive response from their faith community may identify themselves as a survivor of "sanctuary trauma."

"Sanctuary trauma occurs when a [survivor] of a 'psychologically traumatic experience' seeks safety in what is believed to be a 'supportive and protective' environment, only to encounter circumstances that emphasize guilt, encourage repression, and prevent [healing]" (Gerdes, Beck, & Miller, 2002). The survivor may experience a secondary trauma that may prolong and intensify the effects of the initial trauma. Survivors may also be reluctant and discouraged from seeking additional assistance, which may prevent them from moving forward in their healing (Gerdes, Beck, & Miller, 2002).

Impacts

Because religion and spirituality is personal and important, a survivor who experiences sexual violence within their religious or spiritual community may experience unique and weighty impacts.

In addition to impacts experienced by many survivors of sexual violence, survivors of religious or spiritual abuse may also lose or feel forced to abandon their religious or spiritual community, including peers, spiritual mentors, and their place of worship. For survivors who have a strong identification with their religious or spiritual community, this can be a significant and possibly devastating loss.

Healing from Religious & Spiritual Abuse

Healing from abuse by a religious or spiritual leader or member takes a unique form and depends on a variety of factors such as religious or spiritual beliefs, how disclosure of the abuse(s) was handled (if a disclosure was made), and whether a person chooses to include religion or spirituality in their healing.

Although religion and spirituality can be a powerful support system for some, not all survivors will find it helpful to continue with, or resume, their religious or spiritual practices. It may be negative and retraumatizing for some survivors. Disclosure within a religious or spiritual setting also may not be a safe option for a survivor or a family. If disclosure was previously attempted, advocates cannot assume that because a survivor went to a religious or spiritual setting to disclose sexual violence that they were believed and treated with respect and support. "Because the disclosure of past sexual abuse might be seen as threatening the legitimacy of authority figures or the church itself, survivors are often retraumatized when they seek religious sanctuary" (Gerdes, Beck, & Miller, 2002).

Organized groups such as The Voice of the Faithful and The Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) exist to provide support and assistance to survivors of religious or spiritual abuse. These and other resources specific to a particular area may be helpful for advocates to provide to survivors and families so that they can best decide whom they want to include in their network of support.

The Role of the Advocate

Depending on where someone is in their healing, they may be interested in getting connected with a survivor network specific to their religion. These certainly exist and maybe require some shared research. The same is true for exploring the idea of making a report to law enforcement. If someone waits decades to disclose abuse by their religious leader they may have assumptions or worries about what accountability is available to them via the criminal or civil legal systems.

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Sexual Harassment

Sexually harassing behaviors can occur anywhere, but the legal term 'sexual harassment' applies only in particular settings: the workplace, in schools, and some housing, where it is illegal.

Victims and people engaged in harassment can be of any gender identity, sexual orientation, physical appearance, age, race, marital status, education level, employment, and/or financial status.

One of the difficulties in understanding sexual harassment is that it involves a wide range of behaviors and it is often difficult for the victim to describe exactly what they are experiencing. Often, behaviors are not immediately obvious and motives vary. The person who is causing harm can be anyone, such as a supervisor, a client, a co-worker, a teacher or professor, a student, a friend, or a stranger. In addition, consider:

- The victim does not have to be the person directly harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Sexual harassment may occur without financial injury or loss of employment for the victim.
- The person causing harm may be unaware that their behavior is offensive or constitutes sexual harassment, or may be unaware that their actions could be unlawful. However it is the impact on the victim, not the intention of the other person, which defines sexual harassment.
- To be defined as sexual harassment, the conduct must be unwelcome.

Sexual harassment also occurs in group settings as part of rituals or ceremonies, such as when members engage newcomers in abusive or sexually explicit rites as part of hazing or initiations.

Laws & Definitions

Employment

Sexual harassment is a violation of federal Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended in 1972, and the Maine Human Rights Act (5 M.R.S.A. Chapter 337). These laws apply only to sexual harassment in situations of employment.

Title VII applies to employers with 15 or more employees, including state and local governments. It also applies to employment agencies and to labor organizations, as well as to the federal government (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.)

In Maine, a sexual harassment training and notification law requires employers to (26 M.R.S.,Section 807, 1991):

- Notify all employees on an annual basis about the definition of sexual harassment, examples of behavior that could be sexual harassment, and instructions about reporting complaints to the employer and to the Human Rights Commission.
- Post notices containing the above information in all work sites.
- Train new employees about sexual harassment within a year of starting a new job.

Education

Sexual harassment at school is prohibited in federal Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 , which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment of students is considered to be a form of discrimination (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2008).

Students' academic performance and emotional and physical well-being can deteriorate when they are harassed or exposed to harassment regardless of their sex or gender identity. Therefore, the elimination of sexual harassment of students in federally assisted educational programs is a high priority and is essential to ensure nondiscriminatory, safe environments in which students can learn. Title IX requires schools to address incidents they know about or which they ought to have known about (Ibid.).

Quid Pro Quo (this for that) Sexual Harassment

Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when a work or academic outcome or benefit is directly tied to submitting to unwelcome sexual advances. For example, a supervisor promises an employee a raise if they will go out on a date with them, or a teacher promises a good grade if a student kisses the teacher.

Quid pro quo sexual harassment also includes an employee, supervisor, teacher, coach, or individual in a position of responsibility and power making an evaluative decision, or providing or withholding professional or educational opportunities based on one's submission to verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Quid pro quo harassment is equally unlawful whether the victim resists and suffers the threatened harm or submits to avoid the threatened harm (American Bar Association [ABA], n.d.).

Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment

Hostile environment sexual harassment is when harassing behavior makes the workplace or academic setting hostile, intimidating or offensive, and/or unreasonably interferes with a person's employment or educational performance. Impacts of the behavior must be sufficient enough to interfere with the victim's ability to participate in an employment setting or an educational setting in a healthy, safe, and productive way (Ibid.).

Obscenities, sexual joking, sexually explicit graffiti, viewing pornography, sexually degrading posters and objects, etc. are common in sexualized environments. None of these behaviors or objects may necessarily be directed at anyone in particular. However, they can create an offensive environment consistent with hostile environment sexual harassment (Ibid.).

For the most part, a single isolated incident will not prove a hostile environment harassment unless it involves extremely outrageous and egregious conduct. The line between quid pro quo and hostile environment harassment is not always clear and the two forms of harassment often occur together.

Housing (PTLA, n.d.)

Sexual harassment is sex discrimination under both Maine and Federal law and that extends to housing. Sexual harassment by landlords or neighbors can make it hard to live in your home.

Sexual harassment includes:

- Offers to pay rent with sex or sexual acts instead of money.
- Refusing to make repairs without a sexual favor.
- Sexual gestures.
- Use of sexual words in front of you and/or your family.
- Unwanted touching.
- Sexual assault or rape.

This list is not complete. There are many other things landlords have done of a sexual nature that are illegal harassment. Sexual harassment might also include sexual harassment specific to your sexual orientation (including gender identity and expression).

The definition of "landlord" in these cases includes:

- Public housing authorities.
- Property management companies
- Individual property managers
- Private landlords

Fair housing laws protect people living in all different kinds of housing, including:

- Public housing.
- Houses.
- Apartments.
- Condominiums.
- Mobile home parks.
- Nursing homes.
- Homeless shelters.

A few types of homes are exempt from fair housing laws.

You are protected when you are renting. This includes:

- Any housing related communication.
- Asking about renting an apartment or house.
- Visiting an apartment or house you would like to rent.
- Signing a lease.
- Paying rent.
- Living in your home.
- Moving out of your home.

You are also protected when you are buying or selling your home. This includes:

- Talking to a real estate agent.
- Visiting a house or condo you would like to buy.
- Living in your home.
- Moving out of your home.
- Selling your home.

Sexually Harassing Behaviors (USDOE, 2008)

Verbal

- Referring to anyone as "girl," "hunk," "doll," "babe," "honey," "stud," etc.
- Making sexual comments or innuendos
- Turning work discussions to sexual topics
- Telling sexual jokes or stories
- Asking or talking about sexual fantasies, preferences, or personal histories
- Making sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy, or looks

- Whistling at someone, catcalling, making kissing sounds, howling, and smacking lips
- Telling lies or spreading rumors about a person's sex life
- Repeated propositions, invitations or pressure for sex

Non-Verbal

- Staring at someone in a sexual way, looking a person up and down (elevator eyes)
- Blocking a person's path in a suggestive manner
- Displaying sexual pictures/other suggestive material
- Making facial expressions such as winking, throwing kisses, or licking lips
- Making sexual gestures with hands or body movements
- Sending emails, texts, instant messages, letters, or notes with sexual content

Physical

- Touching the person's clothing, hair, or body such as giving a massage around the neck and shoulders
- Hugging, kissing, patting, or stroking
- Sexually touching or rubbing oneself near another person
- Standing close or claiming to "accidentally" brush against a person

For the behaviors listed above to be considered sexual harassment, they must be sexual in nature and unwelcome by the recipient or an observer of the behavior (25 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.). It does not matter whether the person doing the behavior intended to cause discomfort or harm. Sexual harassment is based on the impact on the victim.

Consideration is given to the severity and the frequency of the behavior. If the behavior is severe, it may only have to happen once to have an impact on the victim. If the behavior is not considered severe, it usually has to happen over a period of time to be considered sexual harassment. For example, if a person tells one sexual joke, it probably would not be considered sexual harassment. However, if the person tells frequent sexual jokes and the offensiveness increases, that may be considered sexual harassment. Most sexual harassment involves sexual comments and is a result of a pattern of behavior directed toward the victim.

And just like any experience of sexual violence, if the behaviors do not meet the legal definition of sexual harassment that person still needs belief, support, and options. Explore the impact of that sexual harassment and options for support.

As the harassment continues, the victim may feel increasingly powerless and the harasser may see their power, whether real or perceived, as increasing. Without intervention, sexual harassment often escalates. Sexually harassing behaviors can escalate to a point where they cease to be harassment and are classified as assault. The direct touching of a person's sexual parts, coerced sexual intercourse, sexual assault, and stalking are all behaviors that can result in criminal charges against the harasser.

Street Harassment

Street harassment is an umbrella term for sexually harassing behaviors perpetrated in public places, such as the grocery store, public transportation, the park, and of course, on the street. As mentioned previously, sexually harassing behaviors can occur anywhere, but the legal term "sexual harassment" applies only in the workplace and in schools, where it is illegal. Street harassment is believed to be one of the most commonly occurring and socially accepted forms of gender bias in our culture.

Street harassment takes many different forms, from whistling and catcalling, comments such as "hey baby" and sexual comments/innuendos, to sexually suggestive stares and public masturbation.

Victims, as well as people engaged in harassment can be of any gender identity, sexual orientation, physical appearance, age, race, marital status, education level, employment, and/or financial status. Victims and those causing harm do not have to be of the opposite sex or gender identity.

Most research has focused on why individuals harass others and how people experiencing harassment react, rather than the perception of street harassment and the effects of it (Black, et al, 2014). It happens across the world in different countries and cultures. The effects of street harassment vary depending on the individual, and the severity and duration of the harassment. The impact often mirrors that of sexual harassment. There are national and international movements to change the culture that accepts street harassment.

Certain groups of people have been shown to be at particular risk for encountering street harassment; specifically, women, people of color, people of low income, lesbian/gay/bisexual (LGB) persons, and people who are trans or gender non-conforming (Black, et al, 2014). Studies suggest 78% to 85% of all women in the US have experienced street harassment (Black, et al, 2014; MacMillian, Nierobisz and Welsh, 2000).

Impact of Sexual Harassment

The effects of sexual harassment can vary depending on the individual, and the severity and duration of the harassment. Psychologists and social workers report that severe/chronic sexual harassment can have the same psychological impacts as sexual assault. Some of the common professional, academic, financial, and social effects of sexual harassment include (Fitzgerald, 1993):

- Decreased work or school performance and satisfaction; increased absenteeism.
- Loss of job or career, loss of income.
- Loss of references/recommendations.
- Having to drop courses, change academic plans, or leave school.
- Defamation of character and reputation.
- Becoming publicly sexualized; i.e. groups of people evaluate the victim to establish if they are worth the sexual attention or the risk to the harasser's career.
- Loss of trust in environments similar to where the harassment occurred.
- Loss of trust in the types of people that occupy similar positions as the harasser or their colleagues.
- Weakening of support network, or being ostracized from professional or academic circles.
- Fear for personal safety or of going certain places alone.
- Having to relocate to another city, another job, or another school.

Sexual Harassment in School

A 2011 report (Hill & Kearl, 2011) found that nearly half (48 percent) of the students surveyed experienced some form of sexual harassment within the previous school year, and the majority of those students (87 percent) said it had a negative effect on them.

In a national survey of LGBTQ youth (6th-12th grade), a majority (58.3%) reported being sexually harassed at school, and 13.4% reported that such events occurred often or frequently (Kosciw, et. al., 2020).

Among college students, a surveyfound that of all students responding, 41.8 percent reported experiencing at least one sexually harassing behavior since enrollment. Overall, 18.9 percent of students reported sexually harassing behavior that either "interfered with their academic or professional performance", "limited their ability to participate in an academic program" or "created an intimidating, hostile or offensive social, academic or work environment." Graduate and professional students were the most likely to be subject to sexually harassing behavior by a faculty member or instructor. (Cantor, et. al. 2020).

A small study of high school students in Memphis, TN suggested that if students perceived school officials tolerating the sexual harassment of girls, girls at those schools reported more frequent experiences of peer sexual harassment (Ormerod, et. al., 2022).

Common effects of sexual harassment in schools include:

- Decreased academic quality by students experiencing sexual harassment and those impacted by it.
- Decrease in success at meeting academic, athletic, or social goals.
- Decreased happiness at school or after school activities.
- Increase of students who leave school to avoid harassment.
- Increased absenteeism because of the physical and mental health consequences of harassment.

Victim Recourse

Many sexual harassment victims respond to the offensive behavior by attempting to ignore or avoid it. Often a victim of sexual harassment will decide to leave a job or change schools rather than deal with the offensive behavior. However, there are other options for victims to resolve the situation.

The following list of options is compiled from the American Bar Association (n.d.), the Maine Human Rights Commission (2005), and the U.S. Dept. of Education (2008).

Internal Report

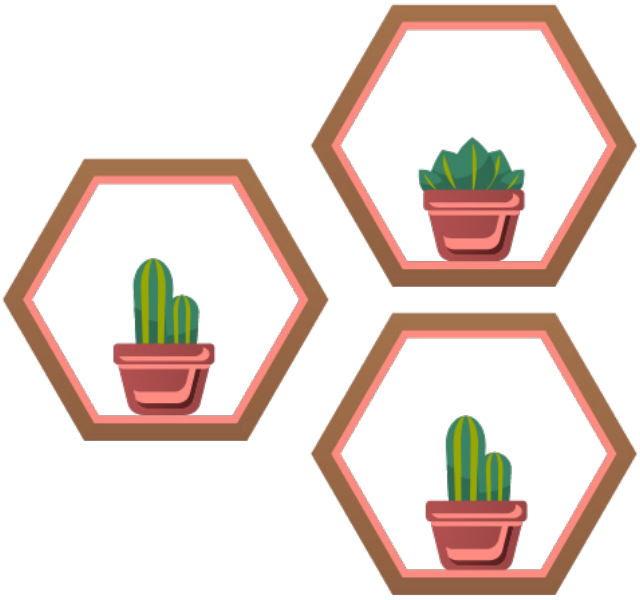
Individuals have the right to file a complaint or make a report by following the sexual harassment policy outlined in their employment or school policy handbook. If such a policy does not exist, there may be other policies and corresponding procedures that a person could utilize to report unwanted behaviors.

To proceed with a claim of sexual harassment, the victim MUST let the person who is harassing them know that they are unwilling to tolerate the harassment. In some cases, the harasser may not even realize that the behavior is offensive. While it is critical to note that a victim is never responsible for stopping the harassment they are experiencing, in most cases, this initial notification is necessary to proceed with a legal claim of sexual harassment.

The victim can notify the person causing harm in one of three ways:

- Make a brief statement in person to the person who has harassed them outlining the offensive behavior and demanding that it stop. This can be done alone or in the presence of a supervisor or school administrator.
- Write a letter or email to the person. The letter should explain the offensive behavior, the feelings that resulted from the behavior, and a statement demanding that the behavior stop. It may be a good idea for the victim to send the letter by certified mail and to keep a copy of it for their records.
- Talk to a supervisor or school administrator and have the supervisor or school administrator talk to the person who has caused harm.

If the harassment stops after the initial notification, then the situation has been resolved and there may not be a need for any further action. However, in some instances a policy may require that the victim notify someone at the workplace or school about the harassment so that subsequent behavior can be supervised.



If the harassment continues after the initial notification, the victim can file a sexual harassment complaint with the employer or school. In these cases, it may be helpful for the victim to keep a journal to describe any offensive behavior. The journal should be specific about the date, time, and location of each incident. It should also note if witnesses were present and should include the victim's reaction to the harassment. For confidentiality and possible safety reasons, it is recommended that the journal not be kept on employer or school property such as office computers or in desks, vehicles, etc.

Sexual harassment complaints may be filed directly with the victim's school or employer if the harassment took place there. Review school or employee policies to determine if there is a standard way to receive a complaint. After receiving the complaint, the school or employer is required by law to respond to the complaint. In most cases, an investigation into the situation occurs.

The investigation usually includes an interview with the victim, the person who caused the harm, and any others who were witness to the incident(s) or were told about the incident(s). Sometimes the investigator is an employee of the workplace or institution, or an attorney hired to do an internal investigation. After completing the investigation, a determination is made if the evidence supports the complaint of sexual harassment. If there is a finding of sexual harassment, then the law requires that there be prompt and appropriate corrective action against the person who caused the harm. The nature of that action may be determined by the nature of the harassing behavior and by workplace or school policy.

In most instances, cases of sexual harassment are handled in a confidential manner. However, the victim should be prepared for the reactions of other students or coworkers. The victim has the right to be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.

External Report

Another option for victims of sexual harassment is to file a complaint with the Maine Human Rights Commission (HRC). This governmental body is charged with investigating and resolving cases of discrimination in Maine. A complaint must be filed with the HRC within 300 days of the most recent incident of sexual harassment.

The HRC will take the information from the victim and determine if they consider the complaint to be sexual harassment. They will then conduct their own investigation, interviewing all involved parties. They may also interview representatives of the employer/school who were responsible for responding to the complaint. If they determine that sexual harassment took place and/or that the employer/school did not take appropriate steps to respond to the complaint, the HRC will make efforts to mediate a settlement between the victim and the employer/school.

If they are not able to reach an acceptable resolution, the HRC will file a civil suit against the school/employer on behalf of the victim. In this instance, the HRC provides the attorney and pays associated court fees (Maine HRC, n.d.).

Additional Options

Victims may file their own civil suit against the person who harassed them or against the employer or school where the harassment took place. In this case, the victim would hire an attorney and pay all related court costs. For more information, see the Legal Response and Resources section of the manual.

Many victims decide to quit their jobs rather than face ongoing harassment. In this situation, they may still be eligible for unemployment compensation if they can prove to a hearing officer that they had no other choice. In this case, the "quit" is determined to be a "constructive termination" and unemployment can be awarded.

Some victims find that the stress of dealing with the sexual harassment makes them unable to work for a period of time. In this situation, a person might be awarded workers' compensation if they can prove to a hearing board that the stress and its effect were caused solely by the harassment and not by any other factors. While this is generally difficult to prove, workers' compensation has been awarded to some victims of sexual harassment.

Reasons Victims Do Not Report

There are many reasons why a victim may not report that they have been sexually harassed. Most often, the victim may not want to get the person causing the harm into trouble or may not believe that the complaint will be taken seriously. Victims may blame themselves for the harassment or feel embarrassed or powerless

in the situation. They may also question their perception of what happened (maybe it's not that bad, or is this all in my head?) or fear that the harassment will escalate if they report. In some cases, the victim may not know that there is legal recourse, may not know who they should report the behavior to, or they might fear loss of employment or worry about getting a bad grade.

Retaliation & Backlash

Retaliation and backlash against a victim are common. Victims who speak out against sexual harassment are often labeled troublemakers or liars or that they are looking for attention. They risk hostility and isolation from colleagues, supervisors, teachers, fellow students, and even friends.

Retaliation occurs when a person suffers a negative action as a result reporting sexual harassment, filing a grievance, assisting someone else with a complaint, or participating in discrimination prevention activities. Retaliation can take on many forms, for example:

- Given poor evaluations or low grades.
- Having projects sabotaged.
- Being denied work or academic opportunities.
- Having work hours cut back, and other actions which undermine productivity, or the ability to advance at work or school.
- Being suspended, asked to resign, or fired.

Sometimes someone accused of sexual harassment can use their power to see that a victim has difficulty finding another job or transferring to another school. Retaliation can involve further sexual harassment and stalking of the victim.

Under the Maine Human Rights Act of 1971, employees are protected against retaliation for filing a complaint. If a victim files a good faith complaint of sexual harassment and the investigation does not result in a finding of sexual harassment, the victim filing the complaint cannot be punished for making the claim.

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Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse occurs in an institutional setting, where clients live or receive services. Examples include but are not limited to, schools, hospitals, religious organizations, childcare facilities, group homes, military bases, prisons and other jails, nursing homes, and board-and-care facilities. In some cases like in certain group home settings, and in jails and prisons, any sexual act between the person in power and the person who lives in the setting is against the law.

An important dynamic of institutional abuse is the relationship between the survivor and the offender. Offenders of institutional abuse generally have legal access to the survivor by nature of the survivor's involvement in the institution. In many cases, the survivor and offender know each other, and the offender may be in a position of power over the survivor.

Professional abuse occurs when a professional uses physical force or coercive power toward a client. Professionals who engage in abusive behaviors may use a client's emotional or physical dependence to manipulate the client into a sexual relationship. It is also considered abuse when an institution or a professional at an institution knowingly ignores sexual violence, fails to take appropriate measures when sexual violence is reported, or tries to cover up incidents of sexual violence.

Impacts

Institutions and professionals provide expertise in specific areas and they are afforded a certain amount of trust and power. Parents and guardians may see institutions and professionals as an extension of family resources to provide guidance, training, socialization, and skill building.

Likewise, family and friends may have expectations that loved ones placed in group homes, hospitals, or detention facilities are in a safe environment where they can receive specialized assistance and support.

When institutional and/or professional abuse occurs, it is a physical violation, and as with all forms of sexual violence, is a violation of trust, an emotional violation, and may be a spiritual violation. For information about the general impacts of sexual violence, refer to the Introduction to Types of Sexual Violence section of this manual.

Reasons People Might Not Disclose Institutional Abuse

A survivor of institutional or professional abuse may not disclose for a variety of reasons. The survivor may be:

- Unable to verbalize what happened.
- Afraid of what will happen to them if they report.
- Unsure that anyone will believe them, especially if the offender is a caregiver, therapist, doctor, teacher, or clergy person.
- Unclear that what happened to them was assault/abuse.
- Confused, feeling like they participated willingly.
- Unwilling to report since a previous report resulted in no accountability.
- Too embarrassed or ashamed to disclose details of the abuse.
- Dependent on the offender for a variety of reasons.
- Worried and/or scared about what will happen to the offender.

No institution is immune from the potential of sexual violence occurring within its organization. Sexual violence within institutions includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual assault, overt sexual exploitation, restraint, invasion of privacy, humiliation, and voyeurism. A survivor may be engaged through force, bribery, threats, seduction, or pressure, or may not be aware of the abuse (as in cases of voyeurism, where the offender's acts are not known to the survivor). The offender may be a caregiver, teacher, clergy person, healthcare provider, peer, employee, visitor, or resident of a facility.