



## Teen Sexual Assault and Abuse

Sexual violence is any act (verbal and/or physical) which breaks a person's trust and/or safety and is sexual in nature. Victims/survivors of sexual assaults are forced, coerced, and/or manipulated to participate in the unwanted sexual activity. Adolescent women are at a higher risk for sexual violence than any other age group. Part of the reason for this is the large number of date/acquaintance rapes, which occur at this age. This is coupled with the fact that many adolescents are victims of sexual abuse and incest as well. Due to past or ongoing sexual abuse, teens with these experiences are more likely than their non-abused peers to participate in "delinquent" teenage behaviors including those which result in social problems, conflict with authority, early sexual behavior, and eating problems. These behaviors may help the teen escape from jeopardy and/or to serve as a cry for help.

Date/acquaintance rape is sexual assault perpetrated by someone known to the victim such as: a friend, an employer, a date, or someone the victim/survivor recently met. It is almost entirely perpetrated by males against females. It is NEVER the victim/survivor's fault no matter what she wore, where she was, whether or not she fought back, or whether or not she was drinking. The perpetrators are 100% responsible for their actions. Rape, including date/acquaintance rape, is violence where sex is used as a weapon. Date/acquaintance rapists often believe myths such as: women owe men sex if they spend money on her; some women play hard to get and say "no" when they mean "yes;" and women enjoy being pursued by an aggressive male.

Individuals who have been assaulted and/or abused by someone they know may feel guilty or responsible for the abuse, feel betrayed, question their judgement, or have difficulty trusting people. Recovery from an assault can be assisted by contacting an advocate who understands the needs of sexual assault victims. Many communities have rape crisis centers with 24-hour counseling and advocacy services. Adolescents who are being sexually abused can contact the 24-hour National Child Abuse Hotline for assistance and referral: 1-800-422-4453.

### HERE ARE THE FACTS:

- Approximately, 1.8 million adolescents in the United States have been the victims of sexual assault. (Kilpatrick, D., Acierno, R., Saunders, B., Resnick, H., Best, C., Schnurr, P. National Survey of Adolescents Executive Summary. Charleston, SC: Medical University of South Carolina, National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, 1998.)
- 33% of sexual assaults occur when the victim is between the ages of 12-17. (Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, 2000.)
- Females comprised 82% of all juvenile victims. (Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, 2000.)
- Teens 16 to 19 years of age were 3 1/2 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. (Bureau of Justice Statistics. National Crime Victimization Survey. U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.)
- A survey of high school adolescents showed that 12% of girls and 5% of boys had experienced sexual abuse. (The Commonwealth Fund. Improving the Health of Adolescent Girls: Policy Report of the Commonwealth Fund Commission on Women's Health. New York, NY. 1999.)

*This information sheet was compiled in 2000 by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA). WCASA is a membership organization of sexual assault centers, other organizations, and individuals throughout Wisconsin working to end sexual violence. For information sheets on other topics or to become a member, contact WCASA 600 Williamson St., Suite N-2, Madison, WI 53703, (608)257-1516, [www.wcasa.org](http://www.wcasa.org). For more information about sexual assault or to receive support with a sexual assault experience, contact your local sexual assault program. This sheet may be reproduced in its original format only.*

- Each year an estimated 4000 incidents of rape or other types of sexual assault occur in public schools across the country. (U.S. Department of Education, Violence and Discipline Problems in the U.S. Public Schools. 1997.)
- 7 out of 10 rape or sexual assault victims knew their attacker. ( Rennison, Calli M. Criminal Victimization 1998: Changes 1997-1998 with Trends 1993-1998. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. 1999.)
- Approximately 22% of victims are raped by intimates such as current or former boyfriends, 47% by acquaintances, and 2 % by other relatives. (Rennison, Calli M. Criminal Victimization 1998: Changes 1997-1998 with Trends 1993-1998. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. 1999.)
- 69% of the teen sexual assaults reported to law enforcement occurred in the residence of the victim, the offender, or the residence of another individual. (Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, 2000.)
- In 1999 only 28.3% of total rapes were reported to police. (1999 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics. 2000.)
- 23% of all sexual offenders were under the age of 18. (Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, 2000.)
- An offender was arrested in 32% of the cases involving victims ages 12-17. (Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, 2000.)
- In 1998, juveniles accounted for 77.9% of sexual assault victims in the state of Wisconsin. The majority (83%) of these victims were female. (Crime and Arrests in Wisconsin-1998. Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, 1998.)
- In Wisconsin, the average age of a sexual assault victim was 15; the average age of a sexual assault offender was 25. (Department of Health and Family Services. Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy. Plan, Recommendations, and Special Areas of Concern. Sexual Assault and Statutory Rape, 2000.)
- 42% of girls younger than 15 years reported that their first intercourse was nonconsensual. (Abma, JC, Driscoll, A., Moore, K. Young Women's Degree of Control Over First Intercourse: An Exploratory Analysis. Family Planning Perspective. Vol. 30. 1998.)
- From one-half to two-thirds of teenage mothers were sexually molested prior to their first pregnancy; between 30% and 44% had been the victims of rape or attempted rape. (Wisconsin Subcommittee on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention. Department of Health and Family Services, 1998.)
- Teen males only father 29% of babies born to teen mothers. 71% are fathered by adult males over 20 years old. In 20% of the cases, the fathers are at least six years older than the mothers are. (Wisconsin Subcommittee on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention. Department of Health and Family Services, 1998.)
- A history of sexual abuse has been linked to high-risk behaviors that may account for increased risk of early unplanned pregnancy, including young age at initiation of sexual intercourse, and failure to use contraception. (Stock, J., Bell, M., Boyer, D., Connell, F. Adolescent Pregnancy and Sexual Risk Taking Among Sexually Abused Girls. Family Planning Perspective. Vol.29, 1997.)
- Girls who are sexually abused often suffer from a traumatic and profound lack of self-esteem. These girls engage in disempowering and self-defeating behaviors which can propel them into a cycle of prostitution, addiction, drug dealing, and violence. (Richie, B., Tsenin, K., Spatz, C. Research on Women and Girls in the Justice System Series. Widom Publishing: National Institute of Justice, 2000.)
- 26.6% of women suffering from bulimia nervosa were raped at some point in their lives, while only 13.3% of women with no eating disorder had been raped. (Dansky, B.; Brewerton, T.; Kilpatrick, D.; and O'Neil, P.; The National Women's Study: Relationship of Victimization and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder to Bulimia Nervosa. International Journal of Eating Disorders. Volume 21(3): pp. 213-228, 1997.)

- In a nationally representative sample, youth who experienced sexual assault were twice as likely as their nonvictimized peers to report past-year alcohol or other drug abuse or dependence. (Kilpatrick, D., Acierno, R., Saunders, B., Resnick, H., Best, C., Schnurr, P. Risk Factors for Adolescent Substance Abuse and Dependence: Data from a National Sample. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 68 (1): 1-12. 2000.)
- 48% of surveyed teens believed that if a girl says yes to sex and then changes her mind and the guy has sex with her anyway, it is not sexual assault. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)
- 41% of surveyed teens believed that if a man forces his wife to have sex, it is not sexual assault. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)
- 44% of surveyed teens believed that if a girl had sex with a guy before, it is not sexual assault if he forces her to have sex later. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)
- 42% of surveyed teens believed that if a girl or guy have been drinking and are a little drunk, then it is not sexual assault if he forces or coerces her to have sex. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)
- 19% of surveyed teens believed that if a guy and a girl have been dating for at least six months, he has a right to expect and force her to have sex. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)
- 18% of surveyed teens believed that if a guy buys a girl dinner, he has a right to have sex with her. (Attitude and Behavior Assessment Among Wisconsin High School Students. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault Media Campaign, November, 2000.)

### **Wisconsin Statutory Rape Statistics:**

Based on Reports made to Law Enforcement in 1998:

- \* 22% of all sexual assault offenses were statutory rape.
- \* The average victim age was 14, and the average offender age was 19.
- \* Statutory rape offenders were arrested in 69% of the cases.
- \* 85% of arrested offenders were referred to criminal or juvenile court.

*Source of Wisconsin Statistics: Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance. Sexual Assaults in Wisconsin 1998: September 1999.*