



THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE  
RESEARCHING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION,  
VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING



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# Can we speak the same language about sexual violence against children?

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‘Life skills, leadership, limitless potential:  
Supporting children and young people affected by sexual violence in  
Europe by strengthening and facilitating participatory practice’

# Sexual abuse

Imagine a childhood disease that affects one of five girls and one out of seven boys before they reach the age of 18;

- ▶ Disease that can cause dramatic mood swings, chaotic behavior, and even severe behavioral disorders among the affected people;
- ▶ Disease that disturbs adults and undermines the possibility of future normal sexual relationships;
- ▶ Disease that can have serious consequences for the future physical health of children by increasing the risk of problems such as substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and suicidal behavior;
- ▶ Disease where some of its victims can now reproduce and put at risk of disability and future generations.

Imagine what we will do as a society if there is such a disease.

**WE WOULD NOT SAVE ANY COSTS!**

We will invest heavily in fundamental and applied research. We will develop systems for identifying affected persons and providing services to treat them. We will develop and widely implement preventive campaigns to protect our children.

**WOULD WE DO THAT?**

Such a disease exists. It is called SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN.

James Mersey, Center for Disease Control, Atlanta

# *What is sexual violence?*

Sexual violence is:

- ▶ any unwanted sexual intimacy committed by one person over another. It can include any intimacy that is experienced as unpleasant or undesirable
- and
- ▶ includes a wide repertoire of behaviors that force the victim to have sex at a time, place, or in a way that he/she dislikes and does not want.

# ***ANALYSIS OF SITUATION***

- ▶ European studies in 2014 show that approximately every fifth child is the victim of sexual violence in the family;
- ▶ Children who are victims of rape are at greater risk between 8-17 years. By 2014, in our country they are approximately 20%;
- ▶ In November 2015, the Children's Policy Commission in England published an important report on sexual abuse in the family. This report confirms that more (66%) of child sexual abuse is committed in the family or family environment and estimates that only one out of every eight victims of sexual abuse is identified as a child.

# ***RESULTS***

Up to now, 1 out of 20 children have been believed to be victims of fornication.



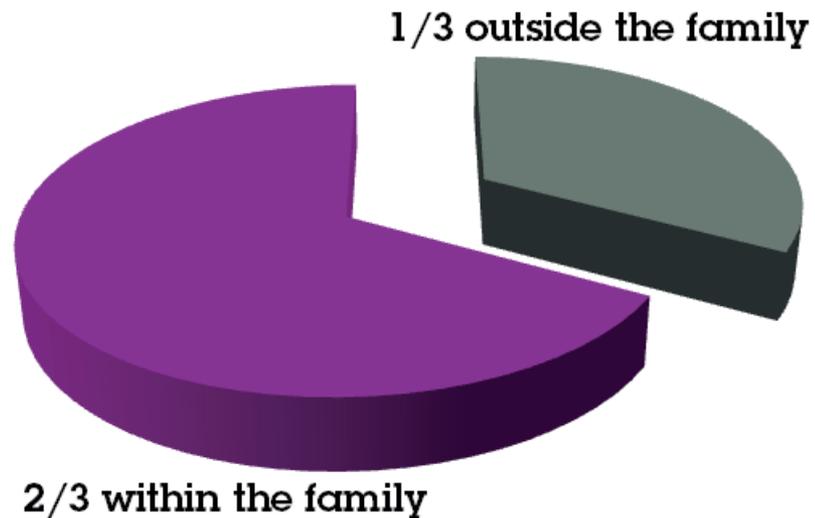
## **What has been discovered by the research team?**

Only 1 in 8 children who are victims of sexual violence are known to police and childcare services.



# ***RESULTS***

*Study on sexual abuse of children in the family environment.*



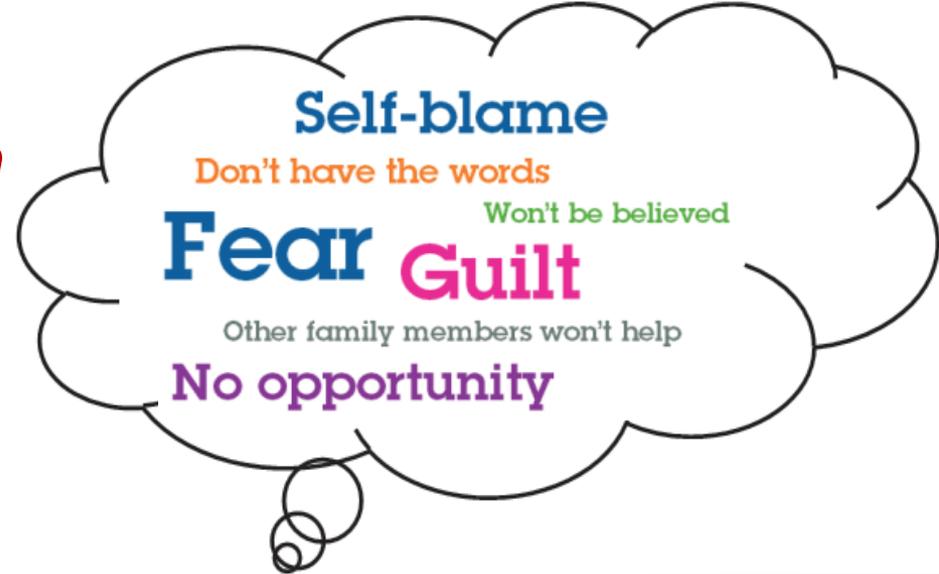
# *What is Sexual Abuse against Children?*

- ▶ A child is the victim of sexual violence (fornication) when forced or persuaded to engage in sexual activities.
- ▶ This does not require physical contact, **can happen online.**
- ▶ Sometimes the child will not understand that what is happening with him/her is abusive.
- ▶ He/she can't even understand that this is wrong.

# ***What is Sexual Abuse against Children?***

- ▶ A man who is in the position of a stronger (adult or youngster) imposes his or her power, physical supremacy, or psychological dependence on the teenager, taking advantage of his/her trust, love and curiosity in order to impose his own desires.
- ▶ Due to the inequality between a perpetrator - victim, there is no possibility for the victim to express his or her free will or to disagree with acts of violence.
- ▶ The stronger sets the definitive rule of what is going on to be kept as a secret.

# *Protect children from injury!*



- ▶ Sexual violence occurs with boys and girls - **children of all ages from all communities.**
- ▶ It is **very difficult** for a child to **tell someone**, especially when is sexually abused by a family member.
- ▶ When children are younger, they **may not know that they have abused** or they **may not be able to explain** what is happening.
- ▶ Children who are victims of sexual abuse by a family member are **afraid** to tell someone.
- ▶ They may worry that they will not believe them or fear them for what will happen if they confess it.

# *How to recognize sexual violence*

## *Signs*

Children who have been victims of sexual violence may look like:

- ▶ Worried;
- ▶ Shy;
- ▶ Aggressive;
- ▶ Seductive;
- ▶ Dependent on closeness to someone they like;
- ▶ With disturbed sense of boundaries between people - emotional and physical.

# *How to recognize sexual violence Signs*

It is possible for children to :

- ▶ Stimulate their genital zones;
- ▶ Express sexual gestures to other children;
- ▶ Make drawings with symbolic representations of sexual scenes and / or genitals;

# *Consequences of sexual violence against children*

- ▶ Troubled sleep. Nightmares;
- ▶ Loss of event memory;
- ▶ Eating disorders;
- ▶ Distrust of people from the surrounding environment;
- ▶ Decreased concentration of attention.
- ▶ Abuse of other children using coercion, threats, bribery or manipulation.

# *Consequences of sexual abuse against teenagers*

- ▶ Sleep in class;
- ▶ Deviant behavior;
- ▶ Unstable school success;
- ▶ Excuses of violence;
- ▶ Promiscuous behavior that puts the child at risk of being repeatedly raped;
- ▶ Impurities for dirt - over-frequent washing.

# Detecting the signs of sexual abuse is not easy!

## What are the recommendations

Anyone working with and supporting children (including teachers and police) should:

- ▶ Make sure that children feel safe and secure, help them understand that there are people they can talk to.
- ▶ To work with other professionals so that the child learns that more people care about it.
- ▶ Stop the abuse and take care of the injured children and support their families.
- ▶ They have to do this in a careful way so as not to make things worse.

Children need help and support :

- ▶ Knowing how to recognize violence.
- ▶ To recognize their feelings when something is done over them that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ Where they can go for help and support.
- ▶ Find out which adults the children can trust when they are upset and worried so they can talk to them.

# *What professionals are involved in supporting a teenage victim of sexual abuse*

- ▶ In Bulgaria there is a Coordination Mechanism for interaction in cases of children, victims or at risk of violence;
- ▶ The co-ordination mechanism aims to pool the resources and efforts of organizations to help and support a child and / or a teenager at risk. It is written in the Council of Ministers and is published on the SACP website;

## ***What professionals are involved in supporting a teenage victim of sexual abuse***

- ▶ Multidisciplinary teams at the local level have been set up with a leading SSD and CPD. At high risk for the child's life, professionals from the multidisciplinary team are gathered within 24 hours.

## ***What professionals are involved in supporting a teenage victim of sexual abuse***

- ▶ Where necessary, representatives of the police, court, prosecution, school, family doctor and social service provider are invited.
- ▶ All professionals are united in the help around the case, as the CPD coordinator of the case.

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

Young people trained in the recognition of sexual violence predispose children and teenagers in sharing in case they are victims of violence.

In doing so, they prevent future abuse against them;

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

Through trained youngsters, teenagers can learn about :

- ▶ sexuality;
- ▶ emotions;
- ▶ body image;
- ▶ self image;
- ▶ relationships, love, sex.

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

Trained youngsters, creating a sheltered space for sharing, empower child victims of violence to talk freely about their experiences.

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

Training teenagers can be useful to any teenager who is interested in sexual education.

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

Teenagers try to find answers about sexual development on the Internet, but they usually find porn.

# Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

- ▶ Porn can confuse the teenagers about their body and personality and make them vulnerable to abuse.
- ▶ Training youths can **facilitate** this process.

## Participation of youngsters helping teenagers, victims of sexual violence

- ▶ Young facilitators can recognize teenagers who are victims of violence, alert for youth in a risk at the CPD, and accompany the young person to a social service provider. In this way, they empower the victims, giving explicit messages of their innocence, and clearly state that the responsibility for the act is of the abuser.

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION**

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