

# Types of Sexual Violence: Sexual Assault

## What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any forced or unwanted sexual contact or activity. It may also involve verbal or visual behaviors, or any type of pressure designed to coerce or force someone to join in the unwanted sexual contact or activity. Typically, this type of abuse occurs one time rather than being repeated over time as with sexual abuse. It can be perpetrated by:

- An acquaintance, friend, or dating partner;
- A stranger;
- A family member;
- Counselors, therapists, teachers, clergy or other persons in a position of authority over the child or youth.

## Sexual assault can occur in the form of touching, such as:

- Being asked or forced to touch “private parts” or having their “private parts” touched;
- Playing sexual games;
- Having oral, genital, or anal intercourse or penetration with objects or body parts;
- Forcing a child/youth into prostitution.

## Sexual assault can also occur as non-touching sexual activity, such as:

- Sharing pornographic material;
- Exposing oneself to a child/youth;
- Inappropriately photographing a child/youth in sexual poses;
- Forcing or encouraging a child/youth to watch or hear sexual acts;

## Preventing Child and Youth Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Assault

### A Resource for Iowa's Families



### Facts:

*Sexual assault must  
be reported to law  
enforcement!*

*30-50 percent of  
offenders are  
under age 18.*

# Preventing Child and Youth Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Assault

## A Resource for Iowa's Families

### Fact:

*Among women in Iowa who experienced sexual violence before age 18, the perpetrator was most commonly a family member or friend, acquaintance, or a date.*

- Verbally or emotionally assaulting a child/youth in a sexual nature (e.g., making fun of a child's body parts, calling a child "slut" or "stud");
- Placing/sending obscene telephone calls or e-mails;
- Asking a child/youth for a sexual act.

### Sexual offenders may:

- Use force or trickery to get the child or youth to submit to the assault;
- Take advantage of a child or youth's weaknesses to accomplish the assault;
- First test a child or youth to see if s/he will allow the offender to exploit them;
- Use alcohol or drugs to get the child or youth to comply.

### Prevention Tips for Families

- Help your children develop skills in assertiveness and self-protection—so they can feel more prepared if they are in a situation where they need to resist someone's advances.
- Know with whom your child or youth spends time, and what they are doing.
- Caution your child/youth about anyone who tries to trick him/her into getting into a car or doing something sexual for favors.
- Develop a "safety plan" so your children know what to do if they are ever in a frightening or dangerous situation.
- Do not allow your child or youth to use the Internet without appropriate supervision and clearly established guidelines.
- Carefully screen babysitters and caregivers.
- Be alert to your teenager's dating partner(s) if s/he tries to control or isolate your youth.
- Confirm that there is always adult supervision at teenage parties.
- Talk with teenagers about the increased risk of assault if they are at parties where there is drinking.

## **Red Flags: What to look for as a family member if your child or youth has been sexually assaulted.**

Does your child or youth have:

- Trouble sleeping or nightmares;
- Anxiety or worry about certain people or situations;
- Frequent crying spells or sadness;
- Sudden mood swings;
- Increased fear of certain people or situations, being alone;
- A change in eating habits — eating more than usual, or less than they should;
- Mental confusion or a lack of concentration;
- Increased behavior problems (“acting out”) at school;
- Increased anger;
- Increase in sexual behaviors (“acting out” sexually);
- Decreased trust in you or others;
- A greater sense of secretiveness.

## **What to Do: If your child or youth has been the victim of sexual assault.**

- Support and comfort your child/youth and help him/her feel safe.
- Listen calmly and ask questions without judgment until you have all the facts.
- Tell your child/youth that you believe him/her, even if the story is not entirely consistent — children/youth rarely make up stories of assault.
- Seek medical assistance *as soon as possible* to assure your child/youth is okay and to collect evidence (you can go to a local emergency room or call 911 for information).
- Seek crisis services or counseling for your child/youth and other family members (may also be available at the hospital).

# **Preventing Child and Youth Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Assault**

## **A Resource for Iowa's Families**

### **Fact:**

*For each year since 1997, the largest number of sexual assault victims in Iowa was females age 13-17.*

# Preventing Child and Youth Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Assault

## A Resource for Iowa's Families

### **Fact:**

*Nationally, sexual assault is the most under-reported crime, with only 1/3 being reported to law enforcement.*

- Report the sexual assault (and the name of the offender, if known) to law enforcement authorities.

For more information on sexual violence go to:

**[www.icyd.org](http://www.icyd.org)**