

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

## THE ISSUE

The sexual abuse of children is rampant in the United States. Studies estimate that 25% of girls and 10% of boys experience some type of sexual harm during childhood.<sup>10</sup> Such abuse is usually committed by someone the victim knows and trusts. The emotional and physical consequences of this abuse can last a lifetime, and survivors of childhood sexual abuse experience high rates of mental health and social functioning problems, and suffer extreme powerlessness, guilt, shame, stigmatization and low self-esteem.

## DEMAND CHANGE

### Everyday Actions

1. In order to intervene early in abuse, parents should educate their children about appropriate sexual behavior and what constitutes unwanted or uncomfortable physical contact. Parents should create a safety plan for their children if they do experience harm and ensure that lines of communication about these issues remain open. For a recommendation, visit: <http://www.familyctr.org/SA/SafetyPlan.pdf>.
2. Challenge media that sexualize children. Write to magazines and companies that use sexualized images of children to sell their products and boycott them until they change their advertising practices.
3. Child sexual abuse does not go away by avoiding it. It needs to be reported to your local child protection agency. Call the hotline if you suspect a child is being abused or have questions about reporting abuse. National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-25-ABUSE.

### Raise Awareness

4. One of the reasons child sexual abuse continues to be a significant issue is because it remains hidden. Help raise awareness by setting up a movie screening with your friends or choosing a book about the issue for your book club. Both the book and film versions of *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison are a good place to start.

### Volunteer

5. If you are a college student, make sure that this issue is addressed on your campus by student groups and within your classes. If the issue is not being addressed, meet with teachers and groups to strategize on ways to incorporate the information into curriculum and existing classes. If no student groups are interested in working on this issue, start your own.

6. Donate your time or financial resources to an agency involved with ending child sexual abuse such as Chicago Children's Advocacy Center ([www.chicagocac.org](http://www.chicagocac.org)) or Prevent Child Abuse Illinois ([www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org)).

7. Become a mentor to a child who has been sexually abused. Contact a local mentoring agency or organization in your area.

### Advocate for Change

8. Make sure your child's school has a protocol for reporting sexual abuse. Ensure that teachers have proper training available to them to identify and deal with sexual abuse in children. Make sure that safety plans are in place in case a child is at risk or has experienced abuse.

9. Lobby your local hospitals and health clinics to train nurses and physicians to treat child victims of sexual abuse. Learn more about the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) trainings available to medical personnel and work to ensure that at least one SANE trained individual is on staff at medical facilities in your communities.

[www.sane-sart.com](http://www.sane-sart.com)

### Keep Learning

10. Learn more about the issue. Check out these Web sites for more information:
  - American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/child\\_sexual\\_abuse](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/child_sexual_abuse)
  - American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/releases/sexabuse/>
  - Child Abuse Prevention Network: [www.child-abuse.com](http://www.child-abuse.com)
  - Chicago Children's Advocacy Center: [www.chicagocac.org](http://www.chicagocac.org)
  - Child Help: [www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)
  - Child Welfare League Of America: [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)
  - The Health Care Notification Network: <http://www.medem.com/medlib/article/ZZZ1LW3YA7C>
  - Prevent Child Abuse America: [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)
  - Prevent Child Abuse Illinois: [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org)
  - Stop It Now: [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration of Children and Families: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

10. [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/child\\_sexual\\_abuse](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/child_sexual_abuse)