

# ***Talking Points for Journalists:***

## ***General Information about Sexual Abuse & Adult Male Sexual Abusers***



- ATSA recognizes sexual abuse as a complex public health issue that impacts everyone – individuals, communities, institutions, and society as a whole.
- ATSA encourages and supports a comprehensive public health approach to sexual abuse as this focuses our efforts on prevention of sexual abuse both *before* and *after* it happens. Too frequently our current response to sexual abuse almost solely focuses on intervention and prevention *after* an assault.
- Sexual abuse is a broad term that includes any sexual or sexually motivated behavior that is the result of someone being forced, coerced, or manipulated into witnessing or experiencing unwanted sexual activity without their consent.
- Sexual abuse exists in all communities, although there are certain groups who are at higher risk for victimization such as children, people with disabilities, cultural minorities, and LGBTQ communities.
- Although there has been a decline in sexual abuse coupled with an increase in reporting rates of sexual abuse over the past twenty years, many sexually abusive incidents are still not reported to law enforcement, making the true rate of sexually abusive behavior difficult to determine.
- The prevention of sexual abuse has made positive progress in recent years and research on individuals who have been convicted of sexual crimes has provided a great deal of information about the most common characteristics of sexual abuse.
- We now know that the majority of sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the victim, such as a family member, acquaintance, teacher, coach or friend.
- Research indicates that 93% of people who sexually abuse children abused a child they knew and approximately 7% sexually abused a stranger.

- Although adults have a slightly higher likelihood of being sexually abused by a stranger, 73% of rapes against females age 12 and older were perpetrated by someone they knew. For male victims, 52.4% reported being raped by an acquaintance and 15.1% by a stranger.
- Adults who perpetrate sexual abuse are a diverse group and there is no specific “profile” or “type” – they can be from any socioeconomic, educational, gender, age and cultural background.
- The majority of sexual abuse is perpetrated by adult males, with approximately 5% of sexual abuse perpetrated by females.
- Most adult males convicted of sexual crimes do not continue committing sexually abusive behavior (i.e., reoffend) and the rate of sexual reoffense (i.e., rearrest and/or reconviction) is lower than the public generally believes. Large scale studies have identified sexual reoffense rates of between 7% and 15% after approximately five years.
- Most people who commit sexual abuse do eventually return to our communities. To prevent any further abuse, effective treatment and management is essential.
- Effective treatment and management of adult males who commit sexual abuse is an important component of a comprehensive system to prevent sexual abuse.
- Effective treatment and management of adult males who commit sexual abuse provides accountability for their behavior (past and current), teaches them the necessary skills to engage in appropriate (i.e., non-abusive) behavior, and reduces the individual’s risk for reoffense.
- Prevention of sexual abuse requires:
  - community involvement;
  - a well-planned, comprehensive, interdisciplinary response founded on evidence based strategies and policies that both protect communities and support the rehabilitation of adults who commit sexual abuse to achieve long-term community safety; and
  - ongoing education, collaboration, and participation of everyone - community members, violence prevention professionals, victim advocates, law enforcement professionals, treatment professionals, journalists, and policy makers.
- Through treatment, prevention and management, the prevention of sexual abuse can become a reality.

To learn more about the above topics and/or for a list of references, please see:

- [Statements for Journalists: General Information about Sexual Abuse & Adult Male Sexual Abusers](#)
- or
- [8 Things Everyone Should Know About Sexual Abuse & Sexual Offending](#)