



*CSA is a silent epidemic throughout the United States, and, indeed, the world, creating social havoc. It can be prevented and it can be treated with a sustained effort. Stop the Silence provides that effort.*

### **Stop the Silence supports a National Commission on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)**

**The Mission of Stop the Silence is to expose and stop child sexual abuse and help survivors heal worldwide. That is why we support a White House Commission on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).** There are many reasons why this is a critical issue and the Commission a critical step to address it. Policymakers need to know more about the issue, pass better laws, and more support is needed from them in support of programming; parents, guardians and community members need to know how to keep children safe; children need to be given developmentally-appropriate information so that they can help us keep them safe, and know what to do and who to tell in compromising situations.

CSA) includes voyeurism, exhibitionism, inappropriate touching, pornography, fondling, insertion, and rape, occurs at enormous numbers around the world, and often the types of behaviors involved becomes worse over years. It is difficult to address due to the sensitivity of the topic, as well as the near-invisibility of its victims. There is massive underreporting of the problem due to fear, a sense of guilt, shame, and a resistance to believe minors. There were a total of 62,939 cases of CSA reported in the U.S. according to a 2012 U.S. maltreatment report (9.3 percent of cases of maltreatment of children in 2012 were classified as sexual abuse). Of the victims who were sexually abused, more than one quarter of them were in the age group of 12-14 years and more than one third of them were younger than 9 years (DHHS/ACF, 2012). Information about CSA is difficult to gather due to the sensitivity of the issue itself. Moreover, the information that is available has been gathered using varying research methods, resulting in a lack of complete information. However, we do know that, in the U.S., CSA affects at least one in four girls and one in six boys before they turn 18 (APA, A2014).

Here is some of what we know about CSA:

- It is most often committed by people the victim knows.
- Nearly half of offenders of victims under age six were family members, over 40 percent of offenders of victims ages 7-11 were family members, and nearly one quarter of offenders of victims ages 12-17 were family members. And, they often times target their victims by getting into the the child's life through their family, school, religious venues and hobbies (Snyder reported by DOJ, 2000).
- CSA offenders are also often times described as friendly, kind, engaging, likeable, and able to make others believe they are trustworthy.
- An article published in the *American Psychologist* presented survey information showing that 1 in 25 youths received an online sexual solicitation in which the solicitor tried to make offline contact and pictures were often requested of the child (Wolak, 2008).
- CSA is committed by male and female offenders. More than 10 percent of the children under the age of six years were offended against by females, and six percent of victims ages 6-12 and three percent of the victims aged 12-17. Male offenders who abused girls had an average of more than 50 victims each. Men who molested boys had an astonishing average of 150 victims each. DOJ estimates there are approximately 400,000 convicted pedophiles currently residing in the United States alone (Snyder in DOJ, July 2000).
- Not all sexually abused children exhibit symptoms-some estimate that up to 40 percent of sexually abused children are asymptomatic but some have serious symptoms and consequences that can include unexplained injuries, poor growth, weight gain, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, depression, poor school attendance and performance, PTSD, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, re-victimization and/or other violence, and, as children and/or adults, suicide, homicide, and chronic disease (CDC, 2014)
- CSA costs the nation billions of dollars each year for medical and psychiatric treatment, special education, and legal/judicial and incarceration costs (Leadership Council, 2005).

The vast majority of our public and policymakers, however, know little about this crime or its victims. Action is needed. We need, together, to bring the issue out of the shadows! New, well-considered policies are needed. And advocacy, education and training programming must be designed to prevent and treat CSA.