



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

advocacy. counseling. education.

Child Sexual Abuse: When the Victim is Male

What keeps boys silent?

Studies estimate between 10-16% of men have been sexually abused during childhood. The problem is getting boys to come forward and disclose the information of abuse.

Due to how boys are raised and socialized in society, the issue of male sexual abuse becomes more complex and unique. Unlike young girls, young boys receive messages that emphasize thinking rather than feeling and receive praise for using aggression and violence to solve problems. When abuse occurs, boys struggle with a great deal of hurt and anger. Without tools to process these feelings, boys try to "think them away" or just ignore them. This does not work well. Sideways anger develops and boys act out their frustration aggressively.

This behavior is enforced by male role models from television, movies, sports, and music. Boys receive a message indicating they must be tough, aggressive, and show strength. In order to do so, boys are encouraged to believe that fighting is a way of life. They are governed by rules that teach you are never to walk away from a fight and even if you're hurt, you are not to cry. If these "rules" are broken, the boy is labeled as being a coward, too girly, a sissy, etc.

Why would a boy choose not to disclose abuse? There are a variety of reasons why boys choose to remain silent:

- Boys may feel confused and ashamed of the abuse.
- Boys may be unsure of whether their experience was abuse if an erection or ejaculation occurred. They may misperceive this natural bodily reaction as participation.
- Boys may struggle with the question "Does this now mean I'm gay?" Boys may equate victimization with loss or absence of masculinity and fear being labeled as a homosexual. They are aware society expects males to be dominant and fight their own battles.
- Often there is a strong emotional connection to the abuser prior to the abuse. Reporting this person may mean letting go of all the positive aspects of the relationship.
- Boys fear not being believed.
- Boys struggle with feeling responsible for the abuse.
- Boys fear reporting sexual abuse may result in losing independence and freedom to participate in activities outside of the family environment.

24-hour Crisis Line (701) 293-7273
www.raccfm.com

07/12

This material may be reproduced provided credit is
given to the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center.

F: Education/Revised Handouts/child sexual abuse-when the victim is male

How is sexual abuse different for males and females?

- Fewer boys than girls are removed from their abusive homes.
- Girls are more likely to receive counseling.
- Boys are more likely to be threatened with, or experience physical violence in connection with the sexual abuse.
- Boys are more likely than girls to be abused by a non-family member they know.
- Boys are more likely to be abused outside the home.

How can a parent help?

- Let your son know you care and you are interested in "his world."
- Give him a hug.
- Encourage him to express himself by asking open-ended questions.
- Be knowledgeable about his interests.
- Be aware of who your son is spending his time with.