

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

At NEARI, we have seen an increasing number of professionals interested in understanding and treating the children and adolescents who sexually abuse. This growing interest corresponds with data indicating that over one-third of those known to have sexually abused an adolescent or child are under the age of eighteen.

This month's article provides an excellent overview of what is currently known about this population and the emerging information we need to know to recognize, assess, treat, and prevent future sexual abuse by the adolescents and children in our care.

As always, we welcome your feedback. And if you want us to examine a particular issue in an upcoming issue, please let us know.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

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What Does the Latest Research Say about Working with Children and Adolescents?

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

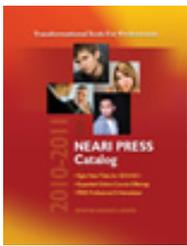
The Issue

Professionals working with children and adolescents frequently need easy access to the latest information on sexually abusive behaviors in children and adolescents.

The Research

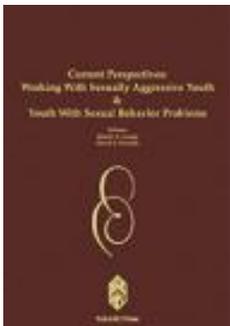
Three leading researchers, David Finkelhor, Richard Ormrod, and Mark Chaffin teamed up to gather and present information regarding this most challenging population. Their source of information is the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), established by the U.S. Department of Justice. The NIBRS collects a wide range of information on victims, offenders, and circumstances related to crime. The Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention presented their review and conclusions available in a 2009 Juvenile Justice Bulletin.

The authors note that adolescents and children who sexually abuse are responsible for just over one-third (35.6%) of those known to have committed sex offenses against other adolescents or children. These children and adolescents are more likely than adults to sexually abuse in groups and within a school setting. This younger population will sexually abuse more boys than girls and in general the victims will be younger. They further note that a small number--1 out of 8 youth who abuse--is younger than twelve, and that females constitute 7% of known sexual crimes by juveniles. In addition, females are found more frequently among children than adolescents who commit sex offenses. Of particular concern is the inconsistency of reporting sexual abuse by adolescents and children, including wide variability within some jurisdictions in reporting the sexual



FEATURED NEARI PRESS BOOK

Current Perspectives:
Working with Sexually
Aggressive Youth and
Youth with Sexual
Behavior Problems



by (Editors) Robert E.
Longo & David S. Prescott

A companion volume to *Current Applications*, *Current Perspectives* represents the best thinking and practice from leaders and front-line workers who assess and treat sexually aggressive and abusive adolescents and young people with sexual behavior problems. With chapters ranging from considerations of diversity to ethics and developing integrity, from developmental concerns in pre-pubertal clients to girls with sexually abusive behaviors, from research on resilience to an examination of attachment styles, from drama therapy to neurological impacts.

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abuse by children and adolescents to the NIBRS and there is far more variability than tracking the reporting of adult sex offenders.

The authors further review a number of ways in which adolescents and children differ from adults (including the *time of day* that abusive incidents occur). They note that the victims of juveniles tend to be somewhat younger than perpetrators on average, with some exceptions (e.g., male victims tend to be much younger). The authors conclude that adolescents and children engaging in sexual abuse are indeed a diverse population separate from adults who abuse, and note that they are more likely than adults to stop their abusive behaviors and live safely in the community. Most importantly, the authors emphasize the importance of prevention (including in schools, within youth organizations, and on the Internet) as well as treatments that have been shown to help reduce sexual re-offense.

Implications for Professionals

Adolescents and children who engage in sexual crimes are different from adult sexual offenders. Although this fact is well known in many circles, this article provides excellent summary information to shatter a myth that pre-dates adequate research of this vulnerable population.

Professionals should know what works...and what doesn't. The authors note that abuse-specific treatment that considers the multiple factors leading to abusive behaviors reduces the likelihood of further sexual harm. Strikingly absent is any indication that current legislative mandates such as technological monitoring systems, registration, or community notification contribute substantially to safer communities when applied to children or adolescents.

Implications for the Field

All adults have a meaningful role in preventing sexual abuse. The authors highlight the importance of prevention generally, and encourage programs to focus attention and resources towards teenager-on-teenager sexual assault as an urgent issue requiring further attention. The authors' findings highlight the fact that abuse-specific treatment in the context of the child's life and environment prevents further sexual harm. In the eyes of those who are not victimized because of the earlier interventions of others, the treatment of children and youth are an essential piece of future prevention strategies.

Reference

- David Finkelhor, Richard Ormrod, and Mark Chaffin. (2009). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

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Featured Website

[Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program](#)

OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program), supports states, local communities, and tribal jurisdictions in their efforts to develop and implement effective programs for juveniles. The Office strives to strengthen the juvenile justice system's efforts to protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and provide services that address the needs of youth and their families. Among the many services that are available through OJJDP are the publications created in collaboration some of the leading experts in the field.

Abstract

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is committed to improving the justice system's response to crimes against children. OJJDP recognizes that children are at increased risk for crime victimization. Not only are children the victims of many of the same crimes that victimize adults, they are subject to other crimes, like child abuse and neglect, that are specific to childhood. The impact of these crimes on young victims can be devastating, and the violent or sexual victimization of children can often lead to an intergenerational cycle of violence and abuse. The purpose of OJJDP's Crimes Against Children Series is to improve and expand the Nation's efforts to better serve child victims by presenting the latest information about child victimization, including analyses of crime victimization statistics, studies of child victims and their special needs, and descriptions of programs and approaches that address these needs.

Article available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227763.pdf>.

To print a pdf of this article, click [NEARI NEWS](#).

About the Editor:
David S. Prescott, LICSW

[David Prescott website](#)

A nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is the President of ATSA and is currently the Clinical Director at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

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