

Leadership Briefing



COMMUNITY
CHILD ABUSE
COUNCIL

prevention *education* treatment

The Silent Crisis...

It's all over the news, receiving lots of attention, but no one wants to talk about it. Child sexual abuse is an ugly truth that's easier to turn away from, or whisper about, than to act upon. Unfortunately, this sad reality does nothing to help the increasing number of child victims *waiting* for help. From where we sit the only number that's going down is the age of the children who come to our door for help. Right now nearly 70% of the children on our wait list are age 5 and under. We ask you to think about these children as you're reading the research reports and considering the information in this issue. And we ask that you join us in doing more to respond to this silent crisis. Write a letter, donate online, host an event, mail a cheque, volunteer, do what you can – it *will* help make a difference. Silence will only risk what limited capacity we have now to change children's lives.

Inside:

- Research: The science of child sexual abuse
- From the Field: new prevention initiatives
- Council Updates
- *Leaders For Kids*



An Urgent Special Request...

We simply *must* find ways to serve more children and their families. We ask our supporters to please consider making a donation to the Community Child Abuse Council of Canada when planning your charitable giving this year. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations of \$10 or more, along with our most sincere appreciation. To donate online, go to our web site: www.childabusecouncil.on.ca

Please share this briefing, post it prominently, or use its content to educate others.

**May is
Sexual Assault
Prevention Month.**

SPOTLIGHT ON PARENTING

News, information and research

Researchers are looking more and more at child abuse, and child sexual abuse in particular, in the context of parenting. How does a survivor or childhood sexual abuse compare with other parents? Are there trends or findings that might help parents deal with their own childhood trauma, or protect their children from abuse?

Overall patterns suggest that childhood sexual abuse survivors may experience difficulties with some aspects of parenting, including establishing clear generational boundaries with their children, being more permissive as parents, and being more likely to use harsh physical discipline (DiLillo & Damashek, 2003).

Erdmans & Black (2008) have explored the relationship between child sexual abuse and adolescent motherhood and found that the failure to articulate the violation of child sexual abuse and to appropriately construct blame results in a range of self-destructive behaviors, some of which placed mothers at greater risk of teen pregnancy. Repressed feelings associated with the trauma often resurfaced with motherhood as victims re-experienced their innocence and vulnerability as children. As one young mother put it: *It's like I blocked everything, 'cause if I don't block it I won't be able to live my life. I still think about it but I don't stress it as much.*

Parents continue to disproportionately focus on strangers as potential offenders and provide limited information particularly in terms of the nature of sexual abuse and the secrecy associated with it. Parents with no direct or indirect experience with child sexual abuse were least likely to talk with their children about the issue in general and when they did so provided less information.

Deblinger, Thakkar-Kolar, Berry & Schroeder, 2009

Victims of child sexual abuse are twice as likely to get pregnant as teenagers than non-abused adolescents (National Vital Statistics Report, 2003; Roberts, O'Connor, Dunn, Golding, & ALSPAC Study Team, 2004). In the United States, studies have found as many as 60% of teen moms were victims of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Martin, Bergen, Richardson, Roeger, & Allison, 2004). "The path from sexual abuse to teen pregnancy tends to follow a well-trod trajectory: sexual assault as a child, precocious and risky sexual behavior as an adolescent, withdrawal from school, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and finally pregnancy and adolescent motherhood" (Erdmans & Black, 2008).

For information about the Community Child Abuse Council's parenting programs, including group sessions, please contact us.



Each day, the safety and well-being of some children across the nation are threatened by child abuse and neglect. Intervening effectively in the lives of these children and their families is not the sole responsibility of any single agency or professional group, but rather is a shared community concern.

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

The Science of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is associated with serious mental and physical health problems, substance abuse, victimization, and criminality in adulthood. Mental health problems include posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicide. CSA may interfere with attachment, emotional regulation, and major stress response systems. It has been used as a weapon of war and genocide and is associated with abduction and human trafficking.

Much of the research on child sexual abuse has been plagued by non-representative sampling, deficient controls, and limited statistical power. Moreover, CSA is associated with other forms of victimization, which complicates causal analysis of its role in adult functioning. Policy-makers have difficulty using available scientific knowledge, and gaps in the knowledge base are not well articulated.

We recommend interdisciplinary research initiatives and a series of international consensus panels on scientific and clinical practice issues related to CSA. This can promote (i) increased inclusion of CSA education in the curriculum in medical and mental health fields; (ii) improved education of the public, the media, and professionals who work with alleged CSA victims; (iii) greater visibility and improved dissemination of CSA research; (iv) increased focus on CSA by researchers in a range of disciplines; and (v) improved cost-benefit analyses of intervention, including prevention efforts. We call on researchers from social science, medical, and criminal justice fields to gather better information on the prevalence, causes, consequences, prevention, and treatment of CSA.. A 1996 report from the Department of Justice estimated rape and sexual abuse of children to cost \$1.5 billion in medical expenses and \$23 billion total annually to U.S. victims. Whereas \$2 is spent on research for every \$100 in cost for cancer, only \$0.05 is spent for every \$100 dollars in cost for child maltreatment.

Freyd, J., Putnam, F., Lyon, T., Becker-Blease, K., Cheit, R., Siegel, N., Pezdek, K. The Science of Child Sexual Abuse. *Science*, Vol. 308, April 2005 Policy Forum.

Trauma and Substance Use

It is well established that many adolescents use alcohol and drugs. The likelihood of Substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood increases with several risk factors, including childhood maltreatment, indicated by physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and/or neglect. With 15% of reported child welfare cases having confirmed caregiver alcohol and/or other drug abuse, youth involved with the child welfare system are an at-risk group for substance abuse and substance use-related problems, such as academic problems, unsafe sex practices, driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, getting into fights, and dating violence. A wide range of strategies are indicated: targeted prevention and drug education activities and multifaceted treatment programs that address both trauma backgrounds and substance abuse issues.

Wekerle, C., Leung, E., Goldstein, A., Thornton, T., Tonmyr, L. (2009). *Up Against A Wall: Coping with Becoming a Teen When You Have Been Maltreated as a Child*. London, ON, University of Western Ontario

"As citizens, no matter how [sexual abuse] may cross our paths, we have a responsibility to listen if told, to tell if victimized, and to act whenever possible to stop this killer of children's souls. And if you have a child, boy or girl, who plays organized sports, participates in social organizations, belongs to a church, has a babysitter from time to time, or even has a sibling, I hope you have taught them to tell. If not, you may become an expert on the subject in a way that no parent ever should. "

Trish Kinney. Huffington Post. April 7, 2010.

If we're really listening, teenagers tell us they like feeling a part of their families, schools and communities. There's a lot of research that proves this is so. What that research also shows is that small efforts by parents and other caregivers to reach out to teens pay big dividends. They are desperate to be offered a part-time job, a chance to be helpful, or a place to show-off their talents. Even the most challenging of young people, the ones already troubling us with their delinquent behaviour, want to feel a small embrace now and again. They want to bask under the gaze of someone who says with their eyes, and occasionally their words, "You count."

*Raising Today's
Teens
Why Parents Matter*
National Clearinghouse
on Family Violence
2008



From The Field

Child sexual abuse is one of the most horrific crimes, if not the worst. It attacks the most vulnerable people in our society, affects victims for life and rips away significant chunks from their most informative years. Yet for many it is a crime that stays hidden away. Indeed the human mind often finds it difficult to cope with the issue and minimizes the emotional impact so that people find it easier to manage the consequences. But we ignore this threat at our peril. That is not saying we fully expose this often hidden world for all to see but instead take a very measured, intelligence driven approach that tracks the perpetrators, supports the victims and minimizes the risk to the wider majority. We are saying enough is enough and from the start realize that law enforcement cannot and must not work alone.

Jim Gamble

Chief Executive, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (UK)



The Prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse

New from Dr. David Finkelhor

In this recent issue of *The Future of Children* (www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV192.pdf) David Finkelhor examines initiatives to prevent child sexual abuse, which have focused on two primary strategies—offender management and school-based educational programs. Recent major offender management initiatives have included registering sex offenders, notifying communities about their presence, conducting background employment checks, controlling where offenders can live, and imposing longer prison sentences. Although these initiatives win approval from both the public and policy makers, little evidence exists that they are effective in preventing sexual abuse. Moreover, these initiatives, cautions Finkelhor, are based on an overly stereotyped characterization of sexual abusers as pedophiles, guileful strangers who prey on children in public and other easy-access environments and who are at high risk to re-offend once caught. In reality the population is much more diverse. Most sexual abusers are not strangers or pedophiles; many (about a third) are themselves juveniles. Many have relatively low risks for re-offending once caught. Perhaps the most serious shortcoming to offender management as a prevention strategy, Finkelhor argues, is that only a small percentage of new offenders have a prior sex offense record that would have involved them in the management system. He recommends using law enforcement resources to catch more undetected offenders and concentrating intensive management efforts on those at highest risk to re-offend. Finkelhor explains that school-based educational programs teach children such skills as how to identify dangerous situations, refuse an abuser's approach, break off an interaction, and summon help. The programs also aim to promote disclosure, reduce self-blame, and mobilize bystanders. Considerable evaluation research exists about these programs, suggesting that they achieve certain of their goals. Research shows, for example, that young people can and do acquire the concepts. The programs may promote disclosure and help children not to blame themselves. But studies are inconclusive about whether education programs reduce victimization. Finkelhor urges further research and development of this approach, in particular efforts to integrate it into comprehensive health and safety promotion curricula. Finkelhor also points to evidence that supports counseling strategies both for offenders, particularly juveniles, to reduce re-offending, and for victims, to prevent negative mental health and life course outcomes associated with abuse.

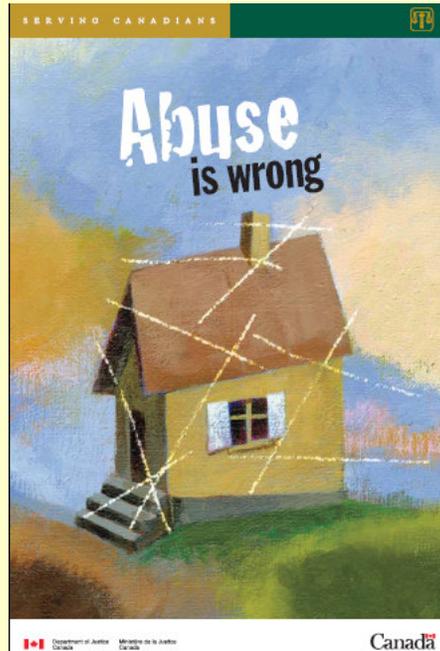
Dr. David Finkelhor is the Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center and a professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire. He was the featured speaker at the Council's 2008 educational symposium.

News & Research



Thanks Bulldogs!

Our second charity game with the Hamilton Bulldogs on December 28th was another huge success, raising \$13,675 to support the Community Child Abuse Council. Our sincere thanks to the Bulldogs, J-Core Marketing, Brian Melo and all those who attended the game. Special thanks to our amazing volunteers for all their hard work and enthusiasm, and to Olympic torchbearer Margaret Maillet for sharing the spirit of the Games with us all. Photos with the torch, along with 50/50 draw ticket sales, helped raise much-needed funds supporting our work.



New Publication

Abuse Is Wrong is a new booklet produced by the Family Violence Initiative, Department of Justice Canada (2009) for anyone experiencing abuse in a relationship or in a family. For a free copy, visit: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/index-eng.php>

Prevention without effective and meaningful intervention will never be enough...communities working together on behalf of child victims of abuse can make all the difference in terms of response and intervention – and in the lives of the child victims themselves.

Teresa Huizar, Executive Director, National Children's Alliance



According to the law, sexual abuse is any kind of sexual contact forced on a child or young person by someone who is significantly older, usually an adult. Sexual abuse might involve sexual touching of a child, or inviting a child to touch an adult in a sexual way. Most often the person who sexually abuses a child or young person is in a position of trust and authority over the victim. Studies show that often the person who sexually abuses a child is a family member – like a step father, uncle, or older brother – or someone else known to the child like a family friend, a neighbour or a teacher.

Sexual abuse of children is a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power. Sexual abuse is a crime.

Leaders For Kids

Meet Rocco Gizzarelli, Director of Services, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton. Rocco is the volunteer Chair of the Board of Directors at the Community Child Abuse Council and an extremely dedicated **Leader For Kids**. As he finishes his term as Chair later this year, we extend our deep and heartfelt appreciation for his very strong and effective leadership, for being such an excellent ambassador for the Council, for his dedication to furthering the Council's mission, and for his courage to advocate strongly on behalf of the Council, sometimes against very difficult odds, and the children and youth we serve. Rocco has also participated in every fund raising event held by the



Council, from staffing auction tables at our CAPPY Ride to working at our Bulldogs charity games and selling chocolate bars. He has spoken on behalf of the Council at numerous events. His enthusiasm and commitment are contagious. When he's not busy with his work on our behalf, Rocco pursues a variety of personal and professional development opportunities. He will continue to serve as Past Chair. Thank you so much Rocco – you are a true **Leader For Kids** in so many ways and we are truly grateful.



UPCOMING EVENTS

19th ANNUAL CAPPY RIDE (one of the Council's biggest fund-raising events) will take place on **Sunday, July 11th**. The Child Abuse Prevention and Protection of Youth (CAPPY) Ride is a police-escorted motorcycle ride open to all. Tickets for the grand prize draw, **2 return flights anywhere with West Jet**, are on sale at several Scotia Bank branches or by contacting the Council. For more details go to: www.cappyrider.ca.

GREAT GOLF for a GREAT CAUSE

Loud Mouth Skins Game with John Daly, **July 19/20**, Thundering Waters Golf Club in Niagara and **LanHack Engineering Charity Golf Classic**, **August 26th**, at Heron Point. To register for either of these events supporting the Council please call 905-523-1020, ext. 10 or visit our web site: www.childabusecouncil.on.ca.

**Don't Miss
Out!**

We're going green! Future issues of these Leadership Briefings will be available electronically but no longer sent by mail in hard copy. Please provide your email address if you wish to receive future issues electronically and save paper. Call (905) 523-1020, ext. 10 or email us: laurie.gallagher@childabusecouncil.on.ca

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