



A Child Safety Information Series † Diocese of Colorado Springs

Kids Will Be Kids?

The image that most of us have of a child molester is one of an adult who establishes a connection with a child and/or a family member to develop trust, lower inhibitions, and gain access to a child. While this is often the case, it may surprise many to learn that as many as 40% of children who are sexually abused are abused by older, or more powerful children. Children who have been sexually abused by other minors share many of the same problems as children who have been victimized by adults.

- Child-on-child sexual abuse often goes unreported, especially when it involves siblings.
- Juveniles who commit sex offenses against other children are more likely than adult sex offenders to offend in groups, at schools, and tend to have more male victims and younger victims.
- The number of youth coming to the attention of police for sex offenses increases sharply at age 12 and plateaus after age 14. Females constitute 7% of juveniles who commit sex offenses.
- Most adolescent sex offenders are not sexual predators and will not go on to become adult offenders, and are more responsive to treatment than adults.
- Many adolescent offenders were themselves sexually victimized, have been exposed to pornography, or have witnessed adult sexual behavior.
- It is helpful to know the difference between age-appropriate sexual behavior between children and age-inappropriate behavior that may fall into the category of abuse.
- Examples of age-inappropriate behaviors include:
 - Seeking out the company of much younger children.
 - Taking a younger child to “secret places.”
 - Routinely touching or cuddling a younger child who doesn’t want to be touched.
 - Becoming anxious when a particular child is around them.
 - Showing or talking about sexual material to younger children.
 - Repeatedly exposing his or her genitals to a younger child.
- For comparison, developmentally normal behaviors for young children include:
 - The children are ongoing school friends.
 - The children are each the same relative age and size.
 - The children are in the middle of the same “phase” of development.
 - The children generally obey the limits and rules that guardians set forth.
- The importance of proper supervision of children cannot be overstated.

Source documents: <http://keepkidssafe.org/children-sexually-abuse-other-children/>;
http://www.d21.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/all_statistics_20150619.pdf



The Diocese of Colorado Springs
 Office of Child and Youth Protection
 228 North Cascade Avenue
 Colorado Springs, CO 80903
 719-636-2345