

CHILD RAPE—REALITIES AND MYTHS

Realities:

- It is more likely that the child knows the offender.
- The majority of attacks on children take place indoors, either in the victim's or offender's home.
- Children, as compared with adult and adolescent victims, are least likely to be the object of physical violence. All forms of physical force are less common with children than with other age groups. Children are usually tricked or coerced into sexual abuse.
- Child assaults take less time than adult rapes.
- Most child assaults involve only one attacker.

Myth #1: *Children who are raped are primarily older teen-aged children.*

This is simply NOT TRUE. Victims as young as two months have been raped. The average age of sexually abused children (not all of whom are rape victims) tends to be around eleven years, but ANY child of ANY age may be a victim of rape.

Myth #2: *Children who are raped are developmentally disabled or mentally retarded.*

It is true that developmentally disabled and mentally retarded children (along with foster children) are at high-risk for sexual abuse, but the vast majority of child victims ARE NOT developmentally disabled or mentally retarded. Any child can be a potential victim, regardless of the child's age, race, intelligence or social class.

Myth #3: *The child victim comes mainly from families in lower socioeconomic levels.*

Family income and social status ARE NOT related to sexual abuse.

Myth #4: *Children are molested on playgrounds and other outdoor places.*

In fact, children are in more danger in their own homes and in the homes of friends and family. When a child is raped outdoors, the offense still tends to occur fairly near either the victim's or the offender's house. Most of the child offenses occur during daylight hours, with the majority between noon and 8:00 P.M.

Myth #5: *The child is in greatest danger from a total stranger.*

In fact, a child is raped or molested more often by someone he/she knows such as a neighbor, mother's boyfriend, relative, baby-sitter, or an acquaintance of the family. This is even more true for a younger child.

Myth #6: *Sexually abused children are fairly evenly divided between young girls attacked by men and young boys attacked by women.*

In fact, the vast majority (over 95%) of sex offenses are committed by men, including attacks on young boys.

Myth #7: *Child molesters fit the stereotype of Dirty Old Men.*

The proportion of child rapes committed by senile men is minuscule. The average age of men rapists and molesters is in the early thirties. There has also been an increase in the number of rapes committed by young persons in their late teens and early twenties.