

Where can I go for help?

Many people find that it can take time and effort to work through their feelings about the abuse. It can help to talk to someone, especially if you're finding that the effects of abuse are effecting your day-to-day-life.

Seeing a counsellor can give you a place where you can talk safely and openly with someone who can empathise with how you feel.

The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) helps pay for the cost of counselling for most people who have been sexually abused. Counsellors who are registered with ACC have experience in helping survivors of sexual abuse and work in a variety of different ways.

You can access ACC subsidised counselling by contacting Rape Prevention Education and asking for information about counsellors in your local area. Rape Crisis Auckland offers a referral service which is culturally appropriate, safe and supportive. Call (09) 360 4001 during office hours, email info@rapecrisis.org.nz.

Auckland Sexual Abuse Help has a 24 hour crisis and information line. They offer ACC subsidised counselling from a range of experienced counsellors. Their phone number is (09) 623 1700, or check out www.asah.org.nz.

South Auckland Counselling Services has a 24 hour crisis and information phone line. They offer ACC subsidised counselling and their phone number is (09) 277 9324.

Check out the Rape Prevention Education website for other sexual assault agencies in New Zealand.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL ABUSE



Rape Prevention Education

RAPE CRISIS AUCKLAND INCORPORATED
WHAKATU MAURI

*Supporting survivors of sexual violence & their whanau.
Working to eliminate rape and sexual abuse through
education and community work.*

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Understanding Sexual Abuse

Rape Prevention Education

Rape Crisis Auckland Inc.

Ph. (09) 360 4001

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What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse happens when someone uses a person in a sexual way for their own needs, without that person feeling like they have control over what is happening. It includes any sexual behavior that is unwanted, or that makes you feel uncomfortable. It can include:

- Sexual touching (e.g. touching genitals, breasts)
- Being made to touch another person sexually
- Oral sex
- Sexual intercourse
- Anal sex
- Some non-touching behavior (e.g. being made to watch sexual behavior, being made to watch pornographic material)

Sexual abuse often involves the use of trickery, manipulation, threats, coercion, bribery and sometimes force. Some abusers take a considerable time to develop the victim's trust before starting the abuse.

Who are the offenders?

Sexual abuse can occur between children, between adults, or more frequently between adult and child.

The abuser can be male or female and is most often known to the victim. They may be in a position of power such as an older family member, teacher, counsellor, minister or family friend.

It is also common for survivors of sexual abuse to think that they are the only victim. Research from the Christchurch-based sexual offender treatment programme 'STOP' shows that, on average, each sexual offender has 50.2 victims in the course of their lifetime.

How common is it?

It can be difficult to accurately assess the number of survivors of sexual abuse for a variety of reasons. In the NZ Youth 2000 study, 22% of girls and 11% of boys reported they had been sexually abused by the time they were 18. Statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggests that girls are three times as likely to be sexually abused than boys.

Any sexual activity with a child (someone under 16) is illegal.

The law in New Zealand protects everyone from sexual abuse. Some of these laws include:

- Section 128 – Sexual violation
- Section 130 – Incest
- Section 131 – Sexual intercourse with a girl under care and protection
- Section 132 – Sexual intercourse with a girl under 12
- Section 133 – Indecency with a girl under 12
- Section 134 – Sexual intercourse with a girl between 12 and 16
- Section 135 – Indecent assault on woman or girl
- Section 136 – Conspiracy to induce sexual intercourse
- Section 138 – Sexual intercourse with severely subnormal woman or girl
- Section 139 – Indecent act between woman and girl
- Section 140 – Indecency between man and a boy

This list is not to be considered as professional legal advice. If you have any questions about the law and how it protects you, contact Rape Prevention Education for an appropriate referral.

FAQs about sexual abuse

'Do offenders sexually abuse because it has happened to them?'

Only around half of offenders have themselves been sexually abused. More offenders have experienced emotional and physical abuse. If all people who have been sexually abused went on to offend, then there would be more female offenders than male; this is not the case. Offenders are responsible for whether or not they go on to sexually abuse.

'If I have been abused by someone of the same gender, does that make me gay?'

No. Your sexuality is not determined by any abuse you have suffered.

'If I sometimes enjoyed the physical feeling, does that mean it wasn't really abuse?'

No. It is natural for our body to respond to stimuli even when we don't want to and feel emotionally uncomfortable about it. Consenting sexual activity is when you feel positive about the experience and your body also responds. There are certain circumstances when the relationship between the two people is too unequal for consent (e.g. adult and child)

'If I didn't say no, is it still abuse?'

Different people have different responses to sexual abuse – some can say no, fight back, and others can stay quiet and still. If you were unable to say no, it does not mean that you wanted it to happen. You did the right things at the time to survive.

'Is sexual play between children the same as sexual abuse?'

Not always, but sometimes it clearly is. Rape Prevention Education is happy to talk through any concerns you have.