

What is Stewards of Children?

Stewards of Children is:

- A free 2 – 2¹/₂ hour onsite training program for adults. It teaches practical, evidence-based ways to prevent, recognize, and respond to child sexual abuse. The training can be conducted in either one or two sessions.
- Appropriate for professionals and non-professionals, and especially for parents and other caregivers.
- Eligible for continuing education credit for nurses, child care staff, mental health and substance abuse professionals, clergy, law enforcement, and others.
- Produced by the Darkness to Light Foundation in cooperation with physicians, counselors, educators, law enforcement professionals, parents whose children have been abused, and adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

How big is the problem?

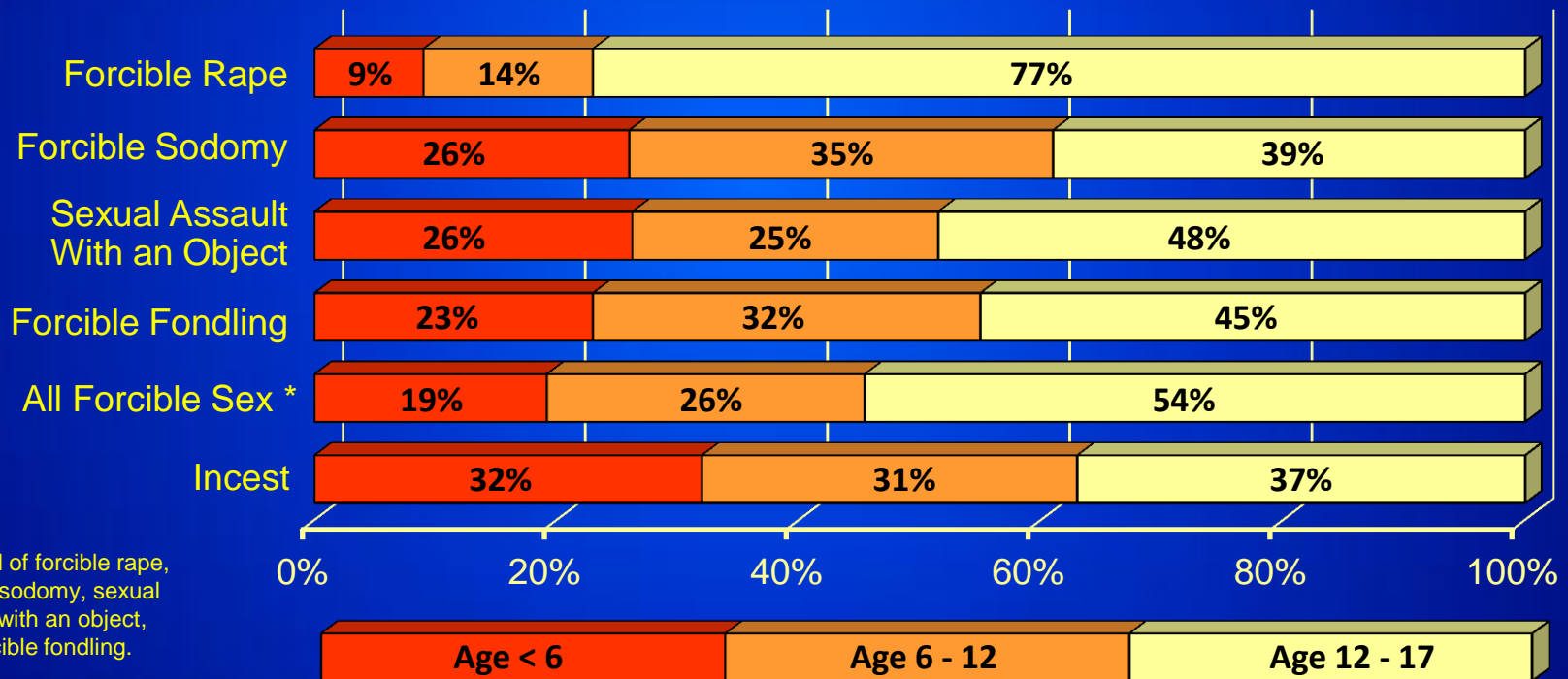
Several reliable studies indicate that 1 of every 10 children has been sexually abused before age 18. This includes only physical forms of sexual abuse. It does not include online solicitation or other non-contact acts, which affect many more children. People are often surprised to learn how widespread child sexual abuse actually is.



Doesn't this problem mostly involve teens?

No. Most children who are victims of sex crimes (excluding statutory rape) are less than 12 years old.

Percentage of Juvenile Victims by Crime and Age Group



* Subtotal of forcible rape, forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, and forcible fondling.

Source: Finkelhor & Shattuck, *Characteristics of Crimes Against Juveniles*, University of New Hampshire, 2012.

What are the effects?

Understandably, child abuse is often deeply traumatic. Although some abused children have no obvious outward signs, child sexual abuse has been shown to contribute to many personal, family, and social problems, including:

- Mental illness and substance abuse
- Sexual risk-taking and early pregnancy
- Commercial sexual exploitation, including human trafficking
- Suicide, cutting, and other types of intentional self-harm
- Disruptive behaviors and learning problems
- Other emotional, social, and physical problems, often lasting into adulthood

Child sexual abuse does not just harm individuals. It damages our communities deeply.

What sort of person does it?

Child sexual abusers are found in all communities, neighborhoods, age groups, races, social and economic groups, and types of jobs.

- Of the 19,000 convicted sexual offenders who are registered in North Carolina, most have been convicted of sex crimes against children. This includes only the abusers who have been caught, successfully prosecuted, and successfully tracked.
- An estimated 90% of abusers are male, though only about 60% of their victims are female.
- An abuser may victimize children of either or both sexes, regardless of the abuser's sexual orientation toward other adults.
- Child sexual abuse tends to be a serial crime. An estimated 25%-30% of abusers victimize more than 10 children. An estimated 5%-10% of abusers victimize more than 40 children.

Source for Greenville area registered sexual offender map and conviction data: North Carolina Sexual Offender Registry.

Why hasn't this problem received more attention?

It may seem surprising that such a serious problem hasn't received more public attention until the last few years. Here's why it continues to be frequently denied and overlooked:

- Compared with other health and social problems, we have not known much about child sexual abuse until recently. Most of the reliable research has taken place in the past 25 years.
- Not surprisingly, child sexual abuse often elicits reactions of shock, horror, and revulsion. It is difficult for many people to talk about or even think about. When it occurs, people are often reluctant believe that it could happen to their families.
- Most sexually abused children don't tell anyone.

Why don't most kids tell?

- An estimated 30% of abusers are members of their victims' families. Children can become deeply confused when their abusers are also the people who take care of them, and on whom they are expected to rely for guidance, support, and protection.
- Abusers are often careful to choose victims who will probably not tell, or who are not likely to be believed if they do tell.
- Abusers frequently manipulate children and their caregivers before and during abuse. Many abusers establish trusting relationships with the child and family before abuse begins.
- If a child is not easily manipulated, abusers may threaten the child or other people who the child cares about. Abusers often tell children that no one will believe them, or that the children will be blamed for allowing the abuse to occur, or that they will be responsible for disrupting the family. Abusers use shame, guilt, and fear.

What causes child sexual abuse?

- No one knows why some adults want to sexually abuse children. The unexplained nature of this crime is one reason for people's reluctance to believe it can be perpetrated by apparently "normal" friends, family members, or colleagues. Abusers and potential abusers cannot be identified by their appearance or by their public behavior. Abusers often work hard to appear responsible and trustworthy.
- The presence of an abuser is not, in itself, enough to cause abuse. There must also be an opportunity for the abuser to spend unobserved and uninterrupted time with a child, and an apparent probability that the abuse will be kept secret.
- Most child sexual abuse can be either prevented or stopped if adults maintain safe environments for children, and if parents and other caregivers know some simple preventive measures. Also, all adults should know what to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed.

Who is capable of reducing child sexual abuse?

- We all are. All responsible adults can help to protect children – especially parents, guardians, and the people who lead schools, churches, and other organizations that care for children.
- Parents, guardians, and other family members should know how to talk with kids to help them be “hard targets” for abusers. Children need to know about their bodies, and how to maintain their personal boundaries. If kids are touched in a way that leaves them confused, angry, or uncomfortable, they need to know how important it is to talk with a parent or other trusted adult. And adults need to know how to respond effectively.
- Organizational leaders should know what policies will help to keep children – and the organizations themselves – safe from child sexual abuse and the devastation it can cause.

How can Stewards of Children help?

- Stewards of Children empowers participants by providing reliable information about child sexual abuse, clearing away myths, and pointing out the importance of prevention.
- Participants learn about: 1) the circumstances in which abuse typically occurs; 2) how to share information with their children in order to help prevent them from becoming victims; 3) signs of possible abuse; 4) how to respond if abuse is suspected, or if a child asks for help; and 5) ways to help children stay safe when they cannot be with a parent or guardian.
- Organizational leaders learn which types of policies have been shown to be most effective at keeping children safe from sexual abuse.

What do people say about Stewards of Children?

- The effectiveness of Stewards of Children has been documented by several studies since 2003. The most recent research was conducted at the Medical University of South Carolina, and was funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- The TEDI BEAR Children's Advocacy Center at ECU's Brody School of Medicine has been offering Stewards of Children since 2006. Thousands of participants have offered comments like these:
 - “I'm glad I got to take such an important training. It's something I can apply daily.”
 - “This is a wonderful program. I feel that it has opened my eyes.”
 - “It's very important that we all get this information. We could save someone.”
 - “I learned so much valuable information. Thank you!”

How can I learn more about Stewards of Children?

- View this [6-minute video](#) that provides more details about the training, or this [22-minute video](#) that discusses child sexual abuse generally.
- Contact the TEDI BEAR Children's Advocacy Center's Community Educators Kelly Baxter (baxterke@ecu.edu) or Kevin Krisher (krisherk@ecu.edu) at 252-744-8334. They can answer your questions, and can arrange for your organization to sponsor this free training on any day or evening of the week. TEDI BEAR offers Stewards of Children training in 13 counties of eastern North Carolina. For trainings that require a significant travel time from Greenville, it is requested that at least 15 participants attend.
- If you would like to participate in a Stewards of Children training session before arranging for one to be offered at your organization, please consider attending [one of our public training sessions](#) in Greenville.
- Thank you for your interest in Stewards of Children, and for your concern about keeping children safe from sexual abuse.