



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

# Teens and Sexual Assault

## Fact Sheet

### What are the facts about sexual assault and teens?

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- In Colorado, in 2005, 8.4% of female youth and 2.1% of male youth surveyed in the YRBS reported that they had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.<sup>1</sup>
- Girls ages 16-19 are four times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.<sup>2</sup>
- A 2005 survey of high school students found that 10.8% of girls and 4.2% of boys from grades 9-12 were forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their lives.<sup>3</sup>
- In a nationally representative survey, 60.4% of female and 69.2% of male victims were first raped before age 18.<sup>4</sup>

### Are there common responses of teen victims?

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Responses to sexual assault will vary, depending on the individual and the situation. However, some common responses may include:

- Unwillingness to report to law enforcement
- Anxiety and fear due to threats of harm if s/he reports the assault
- Belief that s/he won't be believed if s/he reports the assault
- Lack of trust of authority figures and system-based services
- S/he doesn't identify the incident as sexual assault or as a crime
- Self-blame, depression and low self-esteem
- Self-destructive or suicidal behavior

### What are the issues specific to teen sexual assault?

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Teens with a physical or mental disability, homeless or "couch-hopping" teenagers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth are thought

to be at an increased risk for sexual victimization. Children and adolescents who have been sexually victimized are also vulnerable to increased risk for HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy.

### What are the best practices for working with youth victims?

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When working with youth victims, take the time to build the relationship.

Be aware of the power differential, and try to be laid back and relaxed.

Talking with a "professional" can be intimidating and disenfranchising for a teen victim.

Make sure they know they are not to blame for their circumstances, such as homelessness, drug/alcohol use, working in the sex industry, etc. Be sure to explain confidentiality and its limits.

Be honest about the potential "system" responses and likely outcomes.

### Where can I learn more?

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National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
(p) 717.909.0710  
resources@nsvrc.org  
www.nsvrc.org

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network  
(p) 1.800.656.HOPE  
info@rainn.org  
www.rainn.org/contact-us

### References

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1. CDPHE. (2006). 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results. <http://www.cdph.state.co.us/hs/yrbs/2009COHSampleStatistics.pdf>
2. *ape, Abuse, and Incest National Network*
3. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
4. *Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence Victimization, 2007*

For more information, please contact:

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