

Special Populations Who Have Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behavior

Adolescent Females Who Have Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behavior

- A higher percentage of females who engage in sexually abusive behavior have a history of sexual victimization.
- Females who have been sexually victimized generally have been victimized earlier than males and are more likely to have had more than one perpetrator.
- A higher degree of family dysfunction has been reported in the homes of adolescent females who have sexually abused when compared with males, including physical and emotional abuse and parents (especially mothers) with serious mental health problems.
- Females who engage in sexually abusive behaviors evidence a higher incidence of comorbid mental health problems than males. In particular, females who a higher incidence of internalizing mental disorders such as PTSD and depression.
- Adolescent females have higher rates of suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation, and other self-harming behavior (e.g., cutting) than adolescent males.
- Adolescent females may have higher rates of co-offending or group offending than adolescent males.

- Adolescent females are more likely than males to engage in sexually abusive behavior toward young children in the family or children with whom they are familiar.
- Adolescent females are more likely than males to target both genders and are more likely to commit offenses within the context of child care roles.

(ATSA, 2017, pp. 65-66)

Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities Who Have Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behavior

- It is unclear what percentage of adolescents engaging in sexually abusive or problematic behavior meet the criteria for intellectual disabilities.
- The prevalence of intellectual disabilities has been reported as being approximately 2 percent in the general population, and approximately 15 percent among children ages 3-17.
- One factor to consider is research indicating that children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at a significantly greater risk for experiencing maltreatment and sexual abuse than individuals without disabilities. Research has shown that early histories of abuse and neglect, exposure to violence, and other adverse childhood events can lead to adolescents engaging in a range of problematic behaviors that may include sexually abusive behaviors. Many adolescents who are

evaluated and treated for sexually abusive behaviors may present with histories of maltreatment and trauma.

- There is mounting evidence that the early experiences of trauma, neglect, and attachment disruptions may have a significant neurodevelopmental impact on children and adolescents, with earlier and more pervasive trauma experiences creating broader functional difficulties.

(ATSA, 2017, pp. 69-70)

Adolescents with Co-Occurring Mental Health Problems

- Prevalence rates among adolescents who have sexually offended:
 - 69 percent had at least one mental disorder
 - 51 percent had conduct disorder
 - 44 percent had at least two mental disorders
 - 30 percent had at least one substance use disorder
 - 18 percent had anxiety disorder, with PTSD at 8 percent
 - 14 percent had ADHD
 - 9 percent had affective disorder

- Externalizing problems were more common in offenders with same age and older victims, while adolescents with child victims were more likely to manifest internalizing problems.

- Studies have not found a direct connection between mental health diagnoses and sexual recidivism for adolescents who engage in sexually abusive behavior.

(ATSA, 2017, p. 72)