Commonalities and Differences Among Female and Male Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse:

The following have been identified as possible common characteristics among female perpetrators of sexual abuse:

- History of maltreatment and victimization, including sexual abuse;
- Mental health and substance abuse problems;
- Problematic or lack of intimate relationships;
- Primarily victimize children and adolescents;
- Likely to perpetrate against victims related or well-known to them;
- An increased occurrence of perpetrating sexual abuse with an intimate partner;
- Perpetrate the abuse when acting in a care giving role.

The most commonly cited typologies of female perpetrators (identified by Matthews, Matthews, and Speltz, 1989):

- Male-coerced: Characteristics include passivity and dependent with histories of sexual abuse and difficult relationships. Often pressured by male partners to participate in abuse against their children in order to avoid losing their relationship.
- Pre-disposed: Characteristics include history of familial victimization, mental health issues, and deviant sexual fantasies. Generally act alone in abuse, and tend to victimize their own or other children within their families.
- Teacher/lover: Characteristics include struggling with peer relationships, regression and perception of having a “romantic relationship” with adolescent victims and do not consider their actions abusive or criminal in nature.

Male and female perpetrators of sexual abuse have many characteristics in common, including:

- Poor coping skills;
- Difficulties with relationships;
- Cognitive distortions;
- Difficulty empathizing with their victims.

There are also several differences between the two groups, which include:

- Sexual victimization histories are more common among female perpetrators, with more long-term and severe histories;
- Women are more likely to perpetrate in cooperation with a male, or as a result of being coerced by a male;
- Female perpetration is more likely to occur during care giving;
- Victims of rape perpetrated by females are more likely to be the same gender, whereas male perpetrators are more likely to abuse females.