

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CURRICULUM
FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sol R. Rappaport, Ph.D., is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in private practice with Neuropsychiatric Associates in northern Illinois. Doctor Rappaport earned his Ph.D. from DePaul University in Chicago. His expertise is in the assessment and treatment of children and families. Doctor Rappaport also specializes in forensic issues and regularly testifies in court. He has consulted to numerous schools and agencies serving people with developmental disabilities and has taught at the university level. Doctor Rappaport has published articles on children and families with emotional and behavioral difficulties as well as a book chapter on the assessment and treatment of people with developmental disabilities.

Sandra A. Burkhardt, Ph.D., is a clinical child psychologist. She earned her doctoral degree from DePaul University in Chicago. An Associate Professor and Graduate Practicum Coordinator in the Department of Psychology at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, Doctor Burkhardt is a practicing clinician who specializes in childhood disorders. She is a former elementary school educator and has written articles on child development and the treatment of children with exceptionalities.

Anthony F. Rotatori, Ph.D., has taught undergraduate courses in assessment, behavior therapy, and exceptional children at the university level for over twenty years. He is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and consultant to a variety of mental health agencies. Currently Full Professor and Program Director of Counseling Psychology at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, Doctor Rotatori has authored and edited 18 books and written over 90 research articles.

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By

SOL R. RAPPAPORT, PH.D.

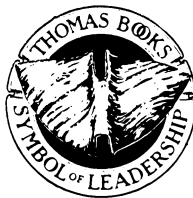
*Neuropsychiatric Associates
Libertyville, Illinois*

SANDRA A. BURKHARDT, PH.D.

*Department of Psychology
Saint Xavier University
Chicago, Illinois*

ANTHONY F. ROTATORI, PH.D.

*Department of Psychology
Saint Xavier University
Chicago, Illinois*



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*To Jori and Benjamin
you have given me more than you could ever know*

PREFACE

The sexual abuse of children has received a significant amount of attention in professional literature as well as in the general media. Unfortunately, little has been written in regards to children with developmental disabilities who experience sexual abuse. Children with developmental disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than other children. In reading this book it is important to have an understanding of the development of children with developmental disabilities.

The course of development for children with developmental disabilities is, by definition, delayed or, in some cases, impaired. If children following a typical course are vulnerable to perpetrators, it is logical to assume that children with developmental disabilities are as vulnerable if not more vulnerable due to lags or limitations in the acquisition of social reasoning. Children, in general, and children with developmental disabilities, in particular, may have considerable difficulty knowing when and how to recognize, resist, and report inappropriate adult actions.

Children with developmental disabilities may encounter the same social hazards as children without disabilities. Educational and political movements, such as the Regular Education Initiative and inclusion, lead to increasing numbers of children with developmental disabilities attending the local school, the children's choir, scout troops, and park district recreational programs. A child with developmental disability and limited social cognitive capabilities may physically look like his or her peers, but display social and emotional behaviors of a younger child. Thus, children with developmental disabilities may encounter perpetrators in much the same ways that other children do, and be no better prepared or even less prepared to recognize, resist, and report inappropriate actions.

Children with developmental disabilities face policies and prejudices regarding the experience of sexuality in their lives. Individuals with developmental disabilities are often viewed as in need of being protected from rather than prepared for many aspects of adolescent and adult sexuality. The appropriateness and effectiveness of both sex education

and sexual abuse prevention efforts for the children with disabilities are of ongoing concern. The pursuit of typical, normalizing activities associated with sexuality, including dating, marriage, intercourse, pregnancy, and contraception for individuals with developmental disability has been a goal of advocates for rights for the disabled (e.g., Robb, 1990). Yet burgeoning concerns about the detrimental effects of childhood sexual abuse for all children also extends to children with developmental disabilities who may be even more affected by abuse or at greater risk for being targets of perpetrators than other children.

A call to protect children with developmental disabilities from harm and exploitation should not supplant the movement away from overprotection and infantilization. Sexual abuse prevention programs for children with developmental disabilities are charged with the difficult task of focusing upon sexual abuse as a negative example of sexual behavior while preserving a positive image of sexuality. At the same time, the programs must teach at the developmental and social reasoning level of children with developmental disabilities.

This book is designed to teach sexual abuse prevention skills to children with developmental disabilities based on their social reasoning abilities. The vulnerabilities just described show the importance of providing this information to children with developmental disabilities at a level consistent with their reasoning abilities. In order to educate children with developmental disabilities about sexual abuse prevention, one must first teach children about their bodies. The curriculum presented in this book meets both of these goals.

This book is composed of five chapters and an appendix. Chapter 1 provides an understanding of the sexual abuse of children with developmental disabilities. It includes information on prevalence and incidence rates, the etiology of sexual abuse, the vulnerability to sexual abuse, and information about perpetrators of sexual abuse. Chapter 2 reviews current treatment methods for children who have been sexually abused, especially methods designed for children with developmental disabilities. Chapter 3 discusses the short-term and long-term effects of sexual abuse in children. Research regarding the effects of sexual abuse on children with developmental disabilities is also presented. Chapter 4 discusses the effects that age and gender have on how children respond to being sexually abused. Other mediating factors are also presented in this chapter.

The book culminates with Chapter 5, a comprehensive sexual abuse prevention program for children with developmental disabilities. This chapter gives a background to how the program was developed. The

program has two major components. The first five lessons present vital information children with developmental disabilities need about their bodies. Without this information children with developmental disabilities will likely have difficulty preventing sexual abuse. The goal of the sex education lessons is to arm children with knowledge for the purpose of safety. However, this arming is often associated with the fear of overwhelming young minds with frightening and confusing messages about adults, sex, and sexual feelings. Yet, there is no evidence to suggest that sex education and prevention are a danger to children (Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). The second major component consists of lessons six through ten which are sexual abuse prevention lessons. These lessons were developed using current knowledge about sexual abuse prevention and children's reasoning abilities.

Appendix A includes review lessons for parents/caretakers. These review lessons are to be done by the parent/caretaker on the evening the information was presented to the child by the teacher/instructor. The purpose of the parent/caretaker forms is to reinforce what the child has learned and to increase communication between children with developmental disabilities and their parents/caretakers. Finally, Appendix B is stories to be used with Lessons six through ten.

The book's primary audience are special education teachers, social workers, nurses, and psychologists who provide services to children with developmental disabilities. A secondary audience are administrators and other educators who provide consultation and program development services for agencies and schools who service children with developmental disabilities.

The authors wish to acknowledge the significant contribution of Kathleen Keating and Christine Kernwein to Chapter 1. A special thanks to Sheila Ribordy, Ph.D., Linda Camras, Ph.D., and Derise Tolliver, Ph.D., for useful suggestions regarding Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The authors wish to personally thank Michelle Rappaport and Dale Burkhardt for providing patience and the time to complete this book. A special thanks to Edward and Evelyn Rappaport, for without their years of support and guidance this book would never have been possible. Finally, we want to thank our children, nieces, and nephews, the reason for wanting to keep children protected and safe.

S.R.R.
S.A.B.
A.F.R.

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Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE OF THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Rappaport (1992) stressed that “although children have been sexually abused since biblical times, it has only been relatively recently that this topic has received attention in the literature and in the public domain” (p. 1). This attention has lead professionals to realize that sexual abuse is also a serious problem for children with developmental disabilities. This chapter provides the reader with information to understand child sexual abuse of people, especially children, with developmental disabilities. Topics covered in this chapter include definitions of sexual abuse, incidence estimates of child sexual abuse, etiology of child sexual abuse, and vulnerability to child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse of children with developmental disabilities and the role of caretakers as perpetrators in this population are also discussed.

DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

The prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse requires professionals to be aware of the definitions which are used in clinical research and prevalence studies. One of the greatest problems in comparing and evaluating the results of different studies and reports on child sexual abuse is that different definitions of sexual abuse are often used. For better understanding, the authors have chosen the definition of child sexual abuse adopted in 1978 by the National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) which follows:

Contacts or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. Sexual abuse may also be committed by a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the victim or when the perpetrator is in a position of power or control over another's child. (p. 2)

While other definitions exist (see Table 1), a number of aspects are central to defining child sexual abuse. One is that the contact is unwanted

(Glaser & Frosh, 1988). Second, the child is being used for another person's sexual purpose (Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). Last, it involves the exploitation of a child who is vulnerable to a perpetrator's power. Burkhardt and Rotatori (1995) stressed that child sexual abuse can involve any of the following activities:

- Incest—any physical contact between closely related persons. (p. 126)
- Molestation—a disturbing or annoying unwarranted sexual act toward a child. (p. 127)
- Rape—an act of violence and humiliation that involves forcible sexual intercourse without the partner's consent. (p. 127)
- Child Prostitution—the practice of children receiving money for engaging in sex acts. (p. 128)
- Child Pornography—the arrangement and photographing of minors in sexual acts regardless of guardian consent and the distribution of these materials. (p. 128)
- Exhibitionism—the exposure of one's genitals to a stranger or an unsuspecting individual. (p. 128)

Burkhardt (1995) emphasized that “Beyond technical definitions of who is doing what to whom is the implication that children are vulnerable to perpetrators in psychological as well as physical ways” (p. 3).

INCIDENCE ESTIMATES OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

It is difficult to estimate the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse since much of it escapes detection (Hunter, Kilstrom, & Loda, 1985). This may partially explain why there is disparity among the rates of sexual abuse cited in the literature. Finkelhor and Hotaling (1984) report that an estimate of 44,700 sexually abused children were known to professionals during a one-year period. Other studies have estimated larger rates ranging from around 123,000 (Russel & Mohr-Trainor, cited in Finkelhor, 1987) to 500,000 (Gagnon, cited in Swift, 1987). A recent national 50 state survey on the sexual victimization of children reported that 404,100 children between the ages of birth to 17 years were sexually abused during 1990 (Daro & McCurdy, 1991).

In terms of percentages, Russel (1983) estimates that half of all female children will encounter some type of sexual abuse by the age of eighteen years. Furthermore, Finkelhor and Dziaba-Leatherman (1994) indicated that nationally, girls are sexually abused twice as often as boys and that this rate does not change during adolescence. As for males, Risin and

Table 1. DEFINITIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

<i>Researcher(s)</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
Cohen, Galenson, Van Leeuwen, Steele, Sherkow, & Etezady (1987)	The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend. It can be a single isolated episode or repeated over many years and may be heterosexual or homosexual, involve intercourse, fondling, oral or anal contact with various degrees of gentleness or threats and violence. (p. 469)
Farber, Showers, Johnson, Joseph, & Oshins (1984)	(1) any unexplained trauma to the genitalia; or (2) sexual interaction between a child and a person who is either significantly older than the victim or is in a position of power over him/her. (p. 296)
Friedrich, Urquiza, & Beilke (1986)	Sexual contact with an adult, whether by force or consent, to include direct contact, that is, genital, oral, anal intercourse, and observed contact (i.e., adult exposing self to child. (p. 50)
Hodson & Skeen (1987)	The exploitation of a child for sexual gratification of an adult. The behaviors may range from exhibitionism and other nontouching offenses to fondling to actual intercourse. (p. 215)
Horowitz (1985)	The involvement of children and adolescents who are dependent and have not reached developmental maturity in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles. (p. 172)
Mrazek & Mrazek (1981)	The sexual use of a child by an adult for his or her sexual gratification without consideration of the child's psychological sexual development (p. 80)
Risin & Koss (1987)	(1) there was a significant age discrepancy between the child and the other person (i.e., 5 or more years older for boys under 12, 8 or more years older for boys 13 or older), (2) some form of coercion was used to obtain the participation of the victim (e.g., gifts, candy or money, threats to hurt or punish, use of power over victim , or actual physical force), and/or (3) the other person was a caregiver or an authority figure (e.g., babysitter, uncle, aunt, grandparent, stepparent or parent (p. 311)

Koss' (1987) nationwide study found that 7.3% reported having an abusive sexual experience before the age of 14 years. In Alter-Reid, Gibbs, Lachenmeyer, Sigal, and Massoth's (1986) review of the research, all of the studies showed a ratio of four or five to one (female to male) for cases