

Fast Facts About Adolescents

Fact 1: Adolescents commit sexual offenses.

Not all individuals who sexually offend are adults. Adolescents (teens ages 13-17) commit approximately 25% of all sexual crimes and 35% of all sexual offenses against minors.

Fact 2: Adolescent offenders can be any gender.

Boys commit 90-95% of the sexual offenses perpetrated by teens, while girls account for 5-10%.

Fact 3: Adolescent offenders come from all areas of society.

There is no typical profile of someone who sexually offends. Teens who sexually abuse others come from all walks of life. They cross all socioeconomic, educational, gender, age, and cultural lines.

Fact 4: Most adolescents who sexually offend know their victims.

As with adults, most teens who sexually abuse others know their victims. They may be neighbors, attend the same schools or churches, or belong to the same clubs.

Fact 5: Sexual offenses committed by adolescents tend to take place in group settings.

Sexual offenses by teens against younger children typically take place in schools and other group settings such as sports clubs, but can take place in one-on-one settings such as babysitting. Perhaps because girls do more babysitting, their victims tend to be younger.

Fact 6: Most adolescents do not commit a second offense.

The good news is that most teens who commit a sexual offense do not do so again. With the right treatment and other interventions, 90-97% of teens who commit a sexual offense remain crime-free and are able to build positive, productive lives.

Fact 7: Effective treatment can help change adolescents' behavior.

Effective treatment for teens who have engaged in sexually abusive behavior incorporates family or caregiver involvement and is individualized based on the specific needs, developmental level, and risk for other forms of misconduct. Community-based treatment is effective for most teens, and allows them to gain and practice important prosocial skills within normal social environments.

Fact 8: The goal of treatment is to help adolescents mature into successful, prosocial adults.

Therapists working with teens who have sexually offended can help them learn and practice better interpersonal, coping, and decision-making skills, and help them build a positive and prosocial life. The right balance of sanctions and treatment can create better futures for them, their families and friends, reduce future victimization, and make society safer.

Fact 9: Most adolescents can safely reintegrate back into their communities.