

PUBLIC INFORMATION ON

MEGAN'S LAW

CREATED BY THE CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

*In 1994, Megan Kanka,
a 7-year-old New Jersey girl
was killed by a two-time
sexual offender who lived
across the street from her.*

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY NOTICE

The information under the flap pertaining to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Safety Sex Offender Registry is currently not accurate. Pursuant to the May 18, 2001 ruling by the United States District Court in the matter of John Doe v. Dr. Henry C. Lee, et al. Internet and public access to sex offender registration information has been restricted and will not be available from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Safety nor its website. The decision in this case is currently being appealed. This ruling does not affect the registration obligations of any individual pursuant to Connecticut state law.

In 1995, as a result of Megan Kanka's murder, Connecticut's version of Megan's Law went into effect. Megan's Law is, in essence, community notification of convicted sex offenders. Megan's Law mandates that offenders register with police and notify officers when they change addresses.

The Department of Public Safety was mandated by PA 98-111 to establish and maintain a centralized sex offender registry in the State of Connecticut. It was also required to make this information available to the public. The Sex Offender Registry Unit came into existence in October of 1998 and registry information was published on a web site as of December 30, 1998.

The Sex Offender Registry Unit monitors over 2,100 offenders within the state. Members of the Unit complete and verify sex offender registrations and respond to questions generated by police agencies and the public. The addresses of all sex offenders are updated on a ninety day or annual basis depending on conviction and conditions of release. Law enforcement officials throughout the state are notified when a registered sex offender resides in their town.

To access the Department of Public Safety's sex offender registry, log onto www.state.ct.us/dps.

The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety, the Board of Parole, the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc., and Connections, Inc., has developed a program designed to explain to parents and children how to better protect themselves from sexual assault and abuse.

A panel of statewide experts in law enforcement, sex offender treatment and sexual assault victims' services travel throughout the state to provide information to members of the public about the myths and facts about sex offenders, ways to protect themselves and their children from abuse, and what information they are entitled to receive under Connecticut's version of Megan's law.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact the External Affairs Division of the Connecticut Judicial Branch at (860) 757-2270.

WHO ARE SEX OFFENDERS?

When most people hear “sex offender,” they think of sexual assault - child molesters, rapists, strangers who have accosted victims. In fact, sexual offenders can be defined two ways: legally and clinically. No matter what the definition, it must be kept in mind that the vast majority of sexual offense victims are assaulted by a family member or an acquaintance, not by a stranger.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL DEFINITIONS OF “SEX OFFENDER”?

A “sex offender” is a person who has been convicted of one of this state’s laws relating to sexual behavior. Charges may range from felony sexual assault involving forcible intercourse to public indecency.

While legal definitions address the cases of serious sexual assault feared by most citizens, they also include sexual activities that are not a threat to most citizens -- activities that are illegal, but are consensual. For example, an 18-year-old adult engaging in sexual contact with a 15-year-old minor can be prosecuted, even when that activity is consensual. By law, the 15-year-old is unable to “consent” to sexual activity.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL DEFINITIONS OF “SEX OFFENDER”?

Clinicians are concerned primarily with the cases of non-consensual sexual contact that are feared by most of us. While sexual offenses can be broken down into many categories, there are two overarching types of sexual offenses -- those involving child sexual abuse, and rape -- and within those categories there are two primary types of offender motivation and behavior.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A child sexual abuser is an adult who has sexual activity of any kind with a child or youth 17 or younger. Child molestation occurs most frequently when the child is between the ages of 5 and 11. However, abuse can occur from birth until adulthood (age 18). There are two primary types of child sexual abusers:

REGRESSIVE MOLESTERS (the majority of child molesters) are interested primarily in adults, but, often because of personal inadequacies, find it more comfortable and pleasing to be sexually involved with a child. This is the most common type of child sexual abuser. The abuser is usually a family member or one who knows the child, and the abuse often begins with sexual fondling.

FIXATED MOLESTERS (about 35% of child molesters) are those who are typically called pedophiles, and who are feared by most parents. Most people who molest children are not pedophiles. To be a pedophile, one must have an ongoing pervasive interest in sexual activity with children.

RAPE: There are two predominant types of rapists:

ANGER RAPISTS commit a rape as a way of acting out extreme anger. They tend to use physical violence. The victim is often bruised or hurt and has identifiable bruises.

POWER OR CONTROL RAPISTS look for control or power over another person. They use coercion or the threat of violence instead of actual physical violence.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

A guide for parents to teach their children personal safety rules to reduce their risk of sexual abuse.

SEXUAL ABUSE INCLUDES:

- Fondling or touching the child's private parts, or forcing the child to touch another's private parts.
- Exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic materials.
- Having children perform in pornographic movies, or pose for pornographic materials.
- Sexual intercourse.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE INCLUDE:

(These signs are possible indicators and do not necessarily mean sexual abuse has occurred.)

- Excessive clinging or crying.
- Sleep disturbances; nightmares.
- Fear of particular adults or places.
- Bed-wetting.
- Problems with school (refusal to attend, or a drop in grades).
- Depression; withdrawal from family and friends.
- Alcohol or drug use.
- Change in eating habits.
- Frequent touching of private parts.
- Unexplained bleeding, pain, irritation of mouth or private parts.
- Any unexplained change in behavior, or development of new behaviors.

TEACH YOUR CHILD THESE PERSONAL SAFETY RULES

- The difference between safe and unsafe touches; what is appropriate physical affection.
- The proper names for all their private parts; many children are not able to tell about the abuse because they don't know the words to use.
- Safety rules apply to all adults; not just strangers.
- Their bodies belong to them and it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts.
- It is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable, no matter who the person is.
- They should not keep secrets about touching, no matter what the person says. If someone touches them, tell and keep telling until someone listens.

STATISTICS

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted before age 18.¹
 - 90% of child sexual abuse is committed by relatives, close family friends or an adult that the child knows and trusts.²
 - The median age that girls and boys are sexually abused is 9 years old.³
 - In Connecticut, 32% of victims seen at sexual assault crisis services in 1999-2000 were under the age of 18.⁴
- 1 Diane Russell, *The Secret Trauma*, N.Y.:Basil Books, 1986. 2 Dean Kilpatrick et al, *Rape in America: A Report to the Nation*, Arlington, VA, 1992 and Finkelhor, David, 1994, "Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse", *The Future of Children* 14(2):31, 46-48. 3 Finkelhor, David, 1990, "Sexual Abuse in a National Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics and Risk Factors." *Child Abuse and Neglect* 14: 19-28. 4 CONNSACS Annual Report 2000.

Note: You may want to include your conversation about personal safety rules when teaching your child about fire safety, bike safety, or traffic safety. You should role play the above rules (lessons) several times. Do not expect your child to memorize them.

DATE/ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

One out of four women reported being the victim of rape or attempted rape during their college years.

Whether a high school teenager, a college student or an adult, there are those who are victims of date or acquaintance rape. Below are some definitions that apply in these situations.

RAPE: a crime of power and control in which one person forces, coerces, or manipulates another person into sexual intercourse.

STATUTORY RAPE: sex between a person who is 13-15 years old and a person who is two or more years older.

DATE/ACQUAINTANCE RAPE: date rape means that the rape was committed on a date. Acquaintance rape means that someone the victim knows committed the rape.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: occurs when a person forces another person to engage in certain sexual activities by the use of force or without the other person's consent. The law defines certain people of being incapable of giving consent, such as youth of a certain age or people of a particular mental capacity.

INCEST: when the offender is a family member.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

- *Trust your feelings:* If you feel uncomfortable with a situation, follow your instincts and get out of the situation.
- *Know your limits:* Decide what you are willing and unwilling to do sexually. Stick to your limits and spend time with people who respect them.
- *Be assertive:* Say NO if someone is trying to intimidate or pressure you into something you don't want to do. Be firm and direct.
- *Pay attention and be aware of behavior that is disrespectful to you:* Someone who gets hostile when you say no, ignores your wishes or opinions, or tries to make you feel guilty for saying no, does not respect your wishes.

AT PARTIES, ON DATES

- Don't leave your drink unattended. Never take an open container drink or drink from a punch bowl.
- Pour your own drink or watch the person pour it. People sometimes put drugs in drinks in order to rape a person.
- Think carefully about leaving a party with someone you just met.
- Friends should "watch out" for each other.
- Set your own limits and decide how far you want the date to progress before going out.
- Let someone know where you are going.
- Find out as much as possible about the person before going out on a date.
- Carry money for a phone call, your own dinner or a cab ride home.
- Remember that the same precautions should be followed whether you're in high school, middle school or college.
- It is important to remember that NO does not mean YES and a person can say NO any time.
- When going out at night, always walk with a group of friends.
- Be aware of your surroundings so that if you need to leave a situation, you know where to go.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND, CHILD OR FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

- Believe that person.
- Tell them that they are not to blame for the assault.
- Don't gossip about the assault.
- Urge them to get medical assistance.
- Remember, your supportive response will help the victim to deal with the trauma of the abuse.
- Ask before touching the victim.
- Don't pressure them to give any details; allow the victim to talk at their own pace.
- Call the sexual assault hotline if you have questions or need support for yourself.
- Deal with your anger another time.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD ONLINE

“Surfing the net” means different things to different people. For some, it means a quick look at the local news, for others it means a day of learning about their newest hobby, and for many it simply means a fun and educational way to spend their spare time.

The term online refers to any communication that occurs on the internet (email, websites, etc). Unfortunately, the internet can also be used in ways that hurt children. For example, the rapid growth of the internet has allowed for easy access to, and exchange of, pornographic material. In addition, some sex offenders may use the internet to identify and make contact with potential child victims.

WHAT ARE THE LAWS RELATED TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ON THE INTERNET?

In general there are two types of laws which can be used to address online sexual exploitation. Those which are designed to forbid visual depiction of children engaging in sexual acts and those which are designed to protect children from becoming victims of sex offenders by those who attempt to contact them via the internet.

Often these crimes violate federal and state laws because the internet can be used by a person from one state to lure a child from another state into sexual activities and/or to send child pornography between states.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Family Guidebook -- A parent's guidebook to the internet - www.familyguidebook.com

PedoWatch -- pedowatch.org/parenting.html

Cyberangels -- cyberangels.org/about/index.html

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children -- www.missingkids.com

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS (Adapted from *Child Safety on the Information Highway*.

Reprinted with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1994.)

- Get to know your computer. Spend time with your child online. Ask your child to show you their favorite website(s).
- Talk to your child about sexual exploitation and potential dangers when using the internet.
- Tell your child that if they feel uncomfortable with something that has happened online, they should tell you immediately.
- Tell your child that they should never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they “met” online.
- Do not allow your child to respond to messages or bulletin board items that are suggestive, obscene or threatening.
- Remind your child to never share personal information (name, address, etc.) or pictures of themselves on the internet.
- Keep the computer in the family room where you can monitor your child's activities.
- Share an email account with your child so you are aware of the types of email they receive.
- Do not allow your child to go into private chat rooms.
- Monitor your credit card bills.
- Consider an online service that has special child accounts with restricted access to chat rooms and the internet.
- It is important to discuss the above personal safety rules with your child several times.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MAY BE AT RISK ON THE INTERNET

- Spends a lot of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from people you don't know, or is making long distance calls to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail or gifts from unknown individuals.
- Your child quickly turns off the computer when you enter the room.

MYTHS & FACTS

Dispelling myths about sexual offenses can help in prevention, protection and recovery.

Myth: Child molesters typically use physical force and/or threats to gain compliance from their victims.

FACT: Only 10-15% of child molesters use physical force or threats to gain compliance from their victims. In fact, many child molesters will entice their victims through *grooming*, which is a process by which the offender forms a relationship with his victim. Through grooming, the offender encourages the victim to trust him and to keep his actions a secret.

Myth: Most child molesters are “dirty old men.”

FACT: While it’s true that the vast majority of sexual offenders are males, research suggests that approximately 20% of sex offenses against children are committed by females. Adults are identified abusers in two-thirds of the assaults, and the remaining one-third of abusers are under the age of 18 years. Men who offend against children are typically in their late 20s or early 30s, with the average age being 26-27. Aside from their offending behavior, most lead what would appear to be an average lifestyle. Child molesters can come from any socio-economic background, religious affiliation, or ethnic group.

Myth: Children generally recover from the effects of sexual abuse on their own. It is best to keep the abuse a secret, so that they don’t have to endure talking to anyone else about it.

FACT: The level of trauma that is incurred as a result of sexual abuse is based on many different factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Whether or not the victim is believed by significant others who can be of assistance to the victim (parents, police, teachers, school counselors, etc).
- Whether or not the victim is supported by significant others.
- Whether or not the victim feels that he/she is being protected from further abuse.
- Whether or not the victim is provided with counseling in a safe, nurturing environment.

It is important for the level of trauma to be assessed by a professional, and for a course of treatment to be established based on this and other pertinent factors.

Myth: Men who often rape do so because they have been unsuccessful in forming intimate relationships, and they cannot find a consenting adult sexual partner.

FACT: Studies suggest that most rape offenders are married or in consenting adult relationships when they commit their offenses.

Myth: Young children often lie by making up stories of sexual abuse.

FACT: Cases in which children make up stories about sexual abuse are very rare. In the case of very young children, most do not have the knowledge or vocabulary to make up such stories. On the contrary, however, research has shown that most sex offenders lie to themselves and others about their offenses, (at least initially) and may try to blame their victims.

Myth: If a child doesn’t tell anyone about the sexual assault, then he/she must not have cared.

FACT: Children often don’t tell for reasons such as fear, shame, embarrassment, wanting to protect their parents, or for many other reasons. Some common fears include:

- The fear of being held responsible (blamed) for the abuse.
- The fear of being punished.
- The fear of the offender doing harm to themselves or their families if they tell of the abuse.
- The fear of losing an important person in their life (the offender) to the authorities, who may remove the offender from the home.

This fear is often the result of the offender telling the victim that if he/she tells, the victim will never get to see the important person (the offender) again. Remember, victims often have some kind of relationship with the offender. They are often emotionally attached to the offender in some way, and while they do not like the abuse, they tolerate it in order to maintain the connection/relationship with the offender. Many child molesters prey on these and other fears in children as a way of keeping the child silent.

FOR HELP/LEARN MORE

There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse. What is more common is a child denying that abuse happened when it did.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

- Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse regardless of cultural background or income level.
- Children need to feel loved, valued and protected.
- Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well-being.
- Often there are no physical signs of sexual abuse.
- Many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.
- The offender may have threatened to hurt a family member, or the child feels that he/she is to blame for the abuse.
- It is important to show interest in your child's activities. Let him/her know that you are available to talk and listen. Allow your child to share thoughts and feelings with you.
- The child is never to blame for the abuse; children cannot prevent abuse, only the offender can.
- Studies suggest that personal safety rules can be taught and understood by children ages 3 and up.

CALL TOLL FREE SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE

1-888-999-5545

[en Español 1-888-568-8332]

IF YOU HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

- Talk to a friend that you feel comfortable confiding in and call the sexual assault hotline.
- The hotline is available anytime day or night you want to talk. It's free, confidential and you don't have to give your name.
- Remember that you can't control another's persons behavior. It's not your fault.
- Consider getting medical assistance.
- You are not alone.

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IF HE/SHE HAS BEEN ABUSED

- Believe your child.
- Reassure your child that his/her safety is important.
- Assure your child that he/she is not to blame for the abuse.
- Remember that how you respond to your child is critical to his/her ability to deal with the trauma of the abuse.
- Don't pressure your child to talk (or stop talking) about the abuse. Allow your child to talk at his/her own pace.
- Get your child medical help.

Explain to your child what you need to do to help him/her. Get support for yourself; this is a difficult issue for any parent to handle. Call your local sexual assault crisis center for assistance for your child and yourself.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Center for Women and Families E. Fairfield County, Inc. Rape Crisis Services	(203) 333-2233
Women's Center of Greater Danbury Sexual Assault Crisis Services	(203) 731-5204
YWCA of the Hartford Region Sexual Assault Crisis Services	(860) 522-6666
YWCA of the Hartford Region Sexual Assault Crisis Services SE Connecticut	(888) 999-5545
Women and Families Center	Middletown (860) 635-4424 Meriden (203) 235-4444 SE Connecticut (860) 437-7766
Rape Crisis Center of Milford	(203) 878-1212
New Britain YWCA Sexual Assault Crisis Services	(860) 223-1787
Coordinating Council for Children for Children in Crisis, Inc.	
Sexual Assault Crisis Services of Greater New Haven	(203) 624-2273
Sexual Assault Crisis Center, Inc. (Stamford)	(203) 329-2929
Susan B. Anthony Project, Inc. (Torrington)	(860) 482-7133
Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury	(203) 753-3613
Women's Center for Northeastern Connecticut, Inc.	
Sexual Assault Crisis Service (Willimantic)	(860) 456-2789

or call toll free 1-888-999-5545 [en Español 1-888-568-8332]. You will be connected to the nearest sexual assault crisis service. Each center can provide information and referral, advocacy for children and non-abusing parent with police and court, counseling, support groups, and more.

This project has been funded with a grant from the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.