

Sexual Abuse in Blended Families

In stepfamilies, sexuality becomes more apparent because of a new couple relationship and because children are suddenly living with others that they did not grow up with. The incest taboo is not present and while the children should receive affection and see tenderness between the new couple, parents should be mindful of limiting the sexual aspects of the household, helping the children control their sexual attraction to other children and/or adults (Burt, 1989; Berger, 1998).

- The risk of stepfathers sexually abusing their stepdaughters is six to seven times greater in a blended family than in a traditional family (Berger, 1998).
- There is often sexual competition between the new spouse and children of the same gender from a previous marriage, especially adolescents (Berger, 1998).
- Stepfamilies have a much greater incidence of violence and abuse as opposed to traditional families (McGoldrick & Carter, 1999).
- The boundary problem of incest taboos arise when previously unrelated teenagers are supposed to view each other as siblings all of a sudden (McGoldrick & Carter, 1999).
- Sexual attraction can occur between stepsiblings and between stepparents and stepchildren. Children can also have difficulty accepting their biological parent's sexuality (McGoldrick & Carter, 1999).

References:

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- McGoldrick, M. & Carter, B. (1999). Remarried Families. In B. Carter & M. McGoldrick (Eds.), *The expanded family life cycle: Individual, family, and social perspectives* (3rd ed., pp. 417-435). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.