

Signs of Teen Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is an unwanted offense that occurs against an individual. Below are signs of sexual abuse experienced by teenagers with known or unknown perpetrators and available resources.

Sexual behavior

- Very knowledgeable about sex
- Multiple sex partners
- Early sexual experiences

Relationships

- Abuser is often known to teen
- Mothers usually supportive of abusive husband
- Social isolation from peers

Social aspects

- Runaway / living with friends
- Provocative attire
- Substance abuse

Economic

- Dating or living with older males
- Older males a source of security and supplemental income

Five Phases of Abuse

1. Engagement—First encounter of abuse
2. Sexual interaction—Progression of sexual activity over time
3. Secrecy—Keeping relationship secret
4. Disclosure—Accidental (physical or behavioral indicator) or purposeful (revealed by young person)
5. Suppression—Retraction of original accusation

Where to get help...

Local hospitals, rape crisis center, domestic abuse and homeless shelters, church, school, social worker, police department, day care centers and other social service agencies. To report suspected abuse call 1-800-252-5400.

Sources:

Betts, P. (2003). Something to think about... reflections on ten girls and sexual assault. *Center for Research on Women at The University of Memphis*.
Powers, J. (1989). *Understanding survivors of abuse: Stories of homeless and runaway adolescents*. Lexington, MA: Lexington.