

1. Definition and Elements of Sexual Abuse

General Definition

Sexual violence is a sexual action of an adult or a youth with a younger boy or girl or with a small child. The victims, due to their limited intellectual and emotional development, are unable to consent to this action in a free and informed manner. The adult uses his knowledge and power to his advantage, and he persuades the child/young person to cooperate. Often the victim is forced into secrecy and thus condemned to silence, defenselessness and helplessness.

The Perpetrators

They satisfy their own sexual needs or their craving for power without considering the personal boundaries of the other party. Possibly they pretend to feel a deep love or to be more aware of the victim's unexpressed, true needs than the victim himself or than others close to the victim.

Even though children are often warned about strangers, most perpetrators are usually acquainted with their victims. Frequently they have power over or responsibility for their victims. Youth groups as well as churches provide situations that enable opportunities for abuse.

Children and youths might also become perpetrators; however, they cannot be held responsible in the same way as adults.

The Victims

Girls and boys, youths, women and men of all age groups can become victims of sexual violence, while females are affected twice as often as males.

It is characteristic for a situation of violence that the victims of sexual abuse are unable to consciously and voluntarily agree to the act.

Perpetrator-Victim Relationships

The offenders are authority figures to the victims in a significant way. For example:

- in the family (father - child; aunt - nephew/niece etc.)
- at work (manager/principal - subordinates/employees/apprentices)
- in old age and/or during physical-sexual development/puberty
- in a situation of emotional dependence (leaders - children; spiritual advisor/minister - persons being counseled)

- in a case of developmental disability (nurse/guardian - person with a mental disability)
- in a case of great physical strength or aggression
- in a position of superior knowledge
- in a high social position or in other areas

Such perpetrator-victim relationships frequently exist between leaders or helpers and participants (youths or children).

Silence

The inability to speak about the occurrence can be due to different reasons:

- open threats of dire consequences ("If you tell someone, I will have to go to jail / I will never play with you again"), even threats of murder or suicide
- the victims, due to ambivalent (uncertain) feelings, do not wish to embarrass the offender
- feelings of shame
- feelings of guilt
- inability (not knowing proper words/lack of experience) to describe the occurrence
- the violence is not clearly discerned because it's being covered up (for example by nursing or personal hygiene, therapy, rituals or games)
- the victim expects that due to the offender's higher social standing no one would believe his/her accusations
- to enable the victim to survive the occurrence it must be expelled from his/her memory or perhaps be projected to a dream world.

(This summary makes no claim to completeness.)

2. Forms of Sexual Violence

Forms of sexual violence are

- genital, anal or oral rape
- entering by force (penetration) into the anus or vagina of the child/young person by fingers, penis or foreign objects
- masturbation in the presence of the child
- sexual acts in which the child is forced to touch the genitals of the adult
- looking at pornographic images together with adults
- watching sexual intercourse
- manipulation of the body without penetration, which must never be considered as harmless (this is the most frequent kind of sexual violence)

Subtler forms of sexual violence are

- all types of voyeurism (watching the child while undressing or taking a bath for one's own sexual satisfaction)
- all types of verbal invasions of privacy (for example, ongoing comments about the child's physical development in regard to his/her sexual characteristics)

Depending on a family's habits or the child-rearing style of the parents, improper sexual conduct can begin with a variety of actions. For instance, if the father of a family with rigid sexual standards undresses in front of a child, this act can be a serious violation of the child's boundaries.

Youths, children and leaders each introduce their different backgrounds and thereby their individual boundaries into the group. What some of them consider as being inoffensive or normal would hurt the feelings of others. A willful disdain or ridiculing of such feelings (for instance, by pressure to shower naked in a group or by forced participation in "sex education" talks) must be considered to be a serious trespassing of boundaries and is therefore unacceptable.

3. Consequences of Sexual Violence

Every kind of sexual violence, even without penetration¹ or physical violence, plunges the child into a state of emotional chaos and has very serious psychological effects.

The majority of cases of sexual violence happen within trusted relationships. Most of the perpetrators are personally known by the victims, who respect them as a parent, an uncle or a leader in church and youth groups. The situation of abuse confronts them with a sexuality they have not yet become acquainted with and for which they are not prepared. They cannot handle what happens to them; they consider it to be repulsive, perhaps painful and, at the same time, possibly even fascinating. In the case of camouflaged violence they suspect intuitively that something is wrong but are unable to describe what it is.

A break in the relationship occurs: Trust is abused, frequently under the assertion of a special affection. The abused person feels deeply hurt by a close confidant.

Some examples of possible consequences:

Physical consequences

(mainly in the genital area)

- psychosomatic pains

Social consequences

- fear of crowds
- sexualized behavior: misinterpreting closeness for sexuality, which leads to promiscuity (willingness to have sex with anybody) or acting with great restraint/self-consciousness
- uncertainty about one's own sexual orientation
- acting sexually aggressive

Psychological consequences

- reverting to toddler's behavior (incontinence, thumb-sucking ...)
- insomnia (fear of falling asleep, nightmares)
- fear of closeness and of being touched
- addictive problems of different kinds

¹ For an explanation of this word see under "Forms of Sexual Violence" (2.)

4. A Perpetrator's Course of Action

"Inner" step-by-step actions of perpetrators

1. Sexual fantasies ...
2. ... are indulged to a greater extent
3. Viewing sexual stimuli in print/in the Internet
4. Fantasies are combined with an action (masturbation)
5. A victim is chosen
6. Fantasizing / actions are coupled with fantasies
7. Inner barriers are overcome
8. Victim is manipulated
9. Environment is manipulated
10. Sexual abuse
11. Guilt / feelings of shame

These steps can be considered as a cycle that progressively intensifies with each step. If a chosen victim refuses to submit, the perpetrator looks for someone else.

Strategies of perpetrators towards their victim

Iris Kohler² describes the strategies of perpetrators in the following sequence:

- creating trust in parents (and/or colleagues)
- taking advantage of normal bodily contact, step-by-step expansion of normal boundaries
- building up close relationships with possible victims; offer of privileges
- making demands, manipulation of the victim, transfer of responsibility: "You must tell me when it is no longer okay with you/if I go too far."
- create isolation of the victim by granting favors or by speaking ill of other colleagues and parents
- threats, blackmail



² From: Iris Kohler: "In sports we just touch each other like this ..."
Self-published by the Swiss Union for the Protection of Children

Report from a Victim

My name is Conny Krispin, and I come from a family that seemed relatively “normal” on the outside.

Certainly there were a few differences; as a family we had very few friends, visitors were rare, and we lived in a very harsh, authoritarian atmosphere with strict rules (for instance, I was not allowed to stay out past 6:00 p.m. until after I turned 16). Notwithstanding that, neither my teachers, neighbors nor physicians ever had any idea that something more might be going on – even though at an early age I already suffered from different psychosomatic disturbances and had become an overly nervous person.

From the start of puberty I was sexually abused by my stepfather. What first began with offensive remarks and open voyeurism developed into strong physical attacks to which I was defenselessly exposed. There was no one I could have spoken to about this - Who would have believed me? Where would I find the right words? (The expression “sexual violence” was totally foreign to me.) Besides I had developed a method of survival by which I separated the happenings of the nights from the daily routine (dissociation), and sometimes during the daytime I even managed to forget all the horrible experiences of the nighttime. The only one who clearly perceived what was happening was the mother of a girlfriend, who herself had experienced similar abuse as a girl and who could correctly interpret the difficulties I had in relating to other people and also to myself. One day she said to me: “Conny, if there is ever anything that you feel you cannot tell to anyone, you can always come to me!”

When the abuse became too great for me to be able to dissociate it from myself, and when I feared I would die from the nausea, shame and fear, only then was I able to speak to this woman. It was unbelievably difficult and she had to gently help me bring the truth to light, since at that time, like before, I could not find the words to describe the abuse properly.

She would have preferred to go with me to “Pro Familia” and to turn the offender in, but in my frightened condition I would not have been able to bear it. Above all, I thought I had to protect my mother and could not burden her with the truth.

For my courageous and sympathetic helper it was hard to be patient, but if she had taken further steps against my wishes, our confidential relationship would have been shattered, and I would have experienced yet another trauma. For me it was most important that there was somebody who accepted me as a truthful person and believed in my story. This encouraged me to continue living.

Only today, after numerous steps to healing, which have not yet come to an end by far, can I speak in public about the injustice done to me. Not until now could I bring myself to initiate a lawsuit - 18 years after the abuse, even though the statute of limitations has long since passed. At the beginning of 2001, during a ten-week stay at the clinic “Hohe Mark” I experienced a major breakthrough - for the first time I could confront my parents, and therefore the perpetrator, with the abuse and stop playing the “healthy family game” that I had been a part of for such a long time. For me this was a very important step for inner healing that helped me to overcome the inner schism of yesterday-today, day-night, and to start living exclusively in reality.

Regrettably, among Christians I experienced much misunderstanding and resistance, as if what should not be true, could not be true. After my conversion about 11 years ago and after taking the first steps in the direction of forgiving, I often felt the expectation from others that now that everything was finally settled, this unpleasant topic would never have to be dealt with again. Healing is possible but requires a lot of time and courage as well as a fighting spirit on both sides, that of the victims and also that of their supporters.

Possible Scenarios of Sexual Violence

Scenario 1

Andreas, 20 years of age, leader of a youth group, keeps a watchful eye on the many young girls who have a crush on him. Again and again he starts a strictly secret relationship with one or another of them, often the shy, home-ly ones, during which the two also have sex together. He insists that the affair must be kept strictly confidential, due to the responsibility he has for the entire group. He ends the affairs, always in tears and with assurances of his deep love, claiming that his responsibility for the entire group forces him to lead a celibate life. Relapses are numerous and end only when he has found another girl - which normally does not take very long.

Commentary

Andreas takes advantage of the inexperience of the young girls, his social prestige and his standing in the group to satisfy his sexual needs. As a leader of the group he thus violates his guardianship responsibilities and can be held accountable, even if he does not start his "friendships" with girls under the age of 16. His behavior definitely disqualifies him to be a leader in an organization that is committed to the welfare of young people. For a young woman, this kind of abuse can have grave consequences, especially in regard to later relationships. The first sexual experiences are always the defining ones. The supervisors of this group can also be held liable, if they are aware of the behavior of their coworker. They can be criminally charged for the offense of tolerating or aiding and abetting a punishable act.

Scenario 2

Jan, who is 25 years old and married, is always ready to listen to the concerns and worries of young people. Karin, 18 years old, learned to trust him during a youth group retreat. In the course of several conversations she explains her difficult situation to him. Her great trust flatters him and he falls in love with her. On her part, she hints that she has strong feelings for Jan. After an extraordinarily emotional discussion Jan hugs Karin, their mutual restraint breaks down, and kisses and fervent embraces follow. Bewildered, the two go their separate ways. By the next morning Jan distances himself from Karin; he accuses her of having seduced him and threatens to spread rumors about her if she talks about the experience.

Commentary

Jan has no psychological or pastoral education and falls into a trap that is always present in ministerial relationships: He becomes infatuated. If he had a proper education in this area, he would have known that feelings of infatuation often occur in such situations and must never be acted on. He loses control of his actions. Although he is unequivocally responsible, he places the blame on Karin. She, with the loss of the - to her very important - relationship with Jan, with the first experience of her sexuality, with her own feelings of guilt and those dumped on her by Jan, and with being strictly forbidden to talk about the affair, must deal with an enormous burden. One of the many possible results might be thoughts of suicide.



Scenario 3

Lars, 12 years old, comes from a complicated family background. In the pathfinder group, he is often very hard to deal with. Recently he has been attracting negative attention because of his sexually aggressive language. No one knows that for some time now he has been forcing Michael, also 12, to masturbate with him. He threatens Michael with serious acts of revenge should he tell anyone. Nevertheless Michael breaks his silence when the leader asks him if something is wrong.

Commentary

The strongly sexualized behavior of Lars suggests that he himself is a victim of sexual abuse. Nevertheless he must be given strict limits in order to protect the group and above all Michael.

The duty of the leader in this case is to stand up for Michael because otherwise his conduct would lead to a breach in trust. He cannot care for Lars at the same time, who is also in urgent need of help. Professional intervention is necessary.

Scenario 4

Nicky is a person who is always ready to have a good time. One of the 16 year old boy's passions is swimming pool games. In this area he has developed into a great expert. When he appears at the pool - which happens very often - he is always surrounded by a group of children. Things are pretty lively. Most of the children are very enthusiastic. But not Oliver; he keeps his distance. He has the impression that Nicky grabbed his genitals, just for a moment, lightly, but it was inappropriate and unpleasant nonetheless.

Oliver speaks to Peter, another group leader about it. Peter laughs and expresses the opinion that Nicky surely did not do it on purpose, and in the course of games in a pool something like that might accidentally happen. Oliver shouldn't be so sensitive and should just enjoy the games like all the other children.

Commentary

Peter should have definitely taken the case seriously. Children often feel intuitively whether a touch is sexualized. Children will never express such feelings frivolously. If an adult does not believe them, this will weaken their trust in their own self-awareness and also their trust in their leader. Moreover the child is left alone with his/her emotional injury.

As far as Nicky is concerned, Peter faces a very difficult challenge. If Nicky is confronted he will probably burst out laughing. He will mobilize his numerous friends and so maneuver Peter into an uncomfortable situation. Peter should proceed very careful-

ly, preferably with outside guidance and after consulting with Oliver. The guidelines presented in this brochure will provide him with advice for effective action.

Scenario 5

8 year old Renate is a very affectionate child and has no sense of boundaries. For instance she repeatedly crawls into the lap of her youth leader Silvia, even though Silvia has already rebuffed her several times. At the coed summer camp she seeks contact with 17 year old Thomas. He senses that she needs a lot of attention and thus spends extra time with her. Thomas feels uneasy when Renate tries to kiss him on the lips. On the other hand he doesn't have the courage to reject this sexual action, rather he sees it as a game, and eventually it pleases him. He looks for situations which allow him to be alone with Renate.

Commentary

Renate shows by her behavior that she herself is probably being sexually exploited. Silvia recognizes her own personal boundaries and sets them firmly in place. In this way she can set an important example for Renate. Silvia could help Renate to an even greater extent if she were to interpret her behavior as a distress signal and seek help from a professional support organization. Thomas, on the other hand, sets no limitations and does not interpret Renate's actions as distress signals but as an invitation to satisfy his own needs. Thus he becomes an offender and intensifies Renate's problems. The fact that in the beginning Renate was the instigator does not release him from his responsibilities.

Scenario 6

The married couple G. has questions about the handling of their daughters' sexuality. Their concern is the sexualized behavior of their elder daughter Anne, seven years of age. During a family reunion they discovered the girl's 9 year old cousin Stefan and Anne playing "having sex" behind a living room couch - both of them with exposed genitals in an obviously sexual position practicing sexual intercourse with each other. Anne's parents separated them and asked themselves whether that was the right thing to do. At the same time they reported that Stefan was often present in his parent's bedroom while they watched hardcore pornographic videos because his parents did not want to appear uptight.

Commentary

By just separating the children, the couple G. acknowledges that the behavior of the children is inappropriate. They do not blow

the matter out of proportion or overly moralize it. They might speak to Stefan's parents about the situation and point out their suspicion that watching pornographic videos could have caused Stefan's and Anne's behavior and that pornography is not meant to be viewed by children. Moreover in their role as parents, they have the duty to respect and uphold child protection laws in their home. Here we have a breach in the responsibilities of the parents, which is punishable under "acting against penal law," No. 176, § 3, sentence 3. They could explain to their daughter Anne why her and Stefan's behavior was unacceptable and that Anne need not allow sexual advances from anybody.

Scenario 7

Due to a job internship, Beate has changed to another church. Consequently in her new environment she must try to make new friends. Quite soon she develops a friendly relationship with Elvira, who is close to her age, single and leads the girls group. After Beate has spoken to her about her own homosexual desires, Elvira starts to keep a distance between them but does not end the friendship. Beate starts to invite girls from the religious instruction group and the girls group more frequently into her home. As time goes by,

more and more girls mention to Elvira that now is the time for them to develop their own female sexuality. Whenever Beate appears, the girls respond to her in a noticeably tender way, asking her for a massage because she does it so well. Elvira speaks to the pastor about her observations and experiences with Beate, and he informs her that he too has observed the same reactions of the teenagers to Beate.

Commentary

After Elvira distances herself from Beate, Beate takes advantage of the situation of the girls' puberty, which is an important and sensitive time for the development of sexuality, and of her position of authority with the girls to satisfy her own sexual needs. Even if up to this point no sexual acts have taken place, Beate violates her duty of guardianship to the girls in her care in a very subtle manner. Her behavior disqualifies her from working for and with young people. The covert exploitation by Beate might deeply impair the development of the girls' identity. Due to their observations Elvira and the pastor find themselves in a very delicate position. Being responsible for the well being of the girls, they must plan their further proceedings with great care; preferably they should seek professional help from a counseling center.



5. Legal Aspects of Sexual Abuse of Children

General overview of the penal law pertaining to sexual abuse and possible modes of intervention of the Office for Family and Children of the Family Court and of the Police

1. Introduction

Human sexuality, of adults as well as of children and youths, is an essential component of human dignity (Art. 1, National Statute) and is protected through the exercise of personal rights and general liberty of action (Art. 2, Par. 1). This protection is expressed in particular by the fact that no one may be forced to take part in sexual actions against his/her will. Children and young people especially are, because of their age-related development and due to their social dependence on certain persons, particularly vulnerable and need special protection. Besides sexual penal law, which makes certain acts of offense against children punishable, the legislative assembly has in addition created tools to enable immediate response on behalf of the child's welfare in cases of sexual abuse.

2. What is a (punishable) sexual action?

Exactly what constitutes a (punishable) sexual action cannot be explicitly defined, even by the legislative body. Therefore § 184 f Penal Law states very abstractly:

§ 184 g Penal Law - Definitions

In the sense of this law are

1. only those sexual actions which are - in view of the protected legal claim - of relative importance,
2. only those sexual actions that are performed in front of another person who discerns the nature of the incident.

Through the administration of justice this description is becoming increasingly more concrete. According to the Federal Court of Justice the sexual aspect of the deed must be objectively recognized for what it is; that is, as seen from the outside it must be recognized as a sexual action. This means, for instance, French kissing, touching the breasts or genitals, attempting to undress someone or similar acts. In such cases the feelings or intentions of the perpetrator do not matter. Therefore, if an action is perceived by a third party as a sexual act, the perpetrator can not talk his way out of it by stating that he himself had felt or thought nothing of the kind.

3. When will a sexual action be punished?

a) Principle

The fundamental rule regarding punishment of sexual acts is to be found in § 177, (Penal Law)

- (1) Whoever compels another person
 1. by **force**,
 2. by **threat** of present danger to life and limb or
 3. by taking **advantage** of a situation, which forces the powerless and unprotected victim to endure sexual actions of the perpetrator or a third party, or to be forced to perform sexual actions on the perpetrator or a third party, will be punished by serving a term of imprisonment of not less than one year.
- (2) In extremely grave cases punishment consists of a term of imprisonment not less than 2 years. As a rule an extremely grave case exists, if
 1. the perpetrator forces his victim to have sexual intercourse or similar sexual actions with him, or if he makes the victim perform sexual actions on him by which he is humiliating the victim, especially if these actions include penetration (rape), or
 2. the deed is committed by **several persons** acting together....

Essentially the punishment depends on whether the action took place against the victim's wishes. The offender must have deliberately forced the action on his victim by the use of violence, threats or by taking advantage of the victim's helpless situation. Thus anyone has the potential to be a victim as well as an offender, independent of age or gender.

b. Underage persons

The legislative body makes the punishment for sexual abuse dependent on the age of the child or young person. Thus sexual actions are generally prohibited under the protected age of 14 years:

§ 176 (Penal Law) Sexual abuse of children

- (1) Whoever performs sexual actions on a person under the age of 14 (child) or lets the child perform sexual actions on him/her will be punished by serving a term of imprisonment from 6 months to 10 years.

- (2) Whoever forces a child to perform sexual actions on a third party or lets a third party perform such actions on the child will be punished as well.

...

Moreover a person will be punished (§ 4) if

- he/she performs sexual acts in front of a child
- he/she causes a child to perform sexual acts on himself
- he/she causes a child to perform sexual acts on himself or to tolerate sexual acts from somebody else by showing him printed matter
- he/she influences a child through the use of pornographic images, sound recordings or related talk.

Every sexual act with or by a child under the age of 14 is therefore categorically subject to punishment. Moreover an especially grave case of sexual abuse of children according to § 176 a, paragraph 2 of the Penal Law (imprisonment of at least 2 years) exists if

- the perpetrator is older than 18 years of age and has intercourse with the child, or if he performs or allows performance of actions that are associated with a penetration of the body
- the deed is committed by several persons acting together
- the perpetrator by his deed places the child in danger of a severe injury or serious damage to his/her physical or mental development.

From the age of 14 upwards sexual actions will not generally be liable to punishment, but punishment depends on further criteria. According to § 174 (Penal Law), a relationship of guardianship or of dependence, or the abuse thereof, is essential for the liability to punishment, since this relationship in particular ought to guarantee the protection of the young person. This might be, for example, an employment relationship or the relationship between a pathfinder group leader and a pathfinder.

Generally it is understood that:

- Any sexual contact with children under the age of 14 is punishable.
- Sexual contact with youths between the ages of 14 and 16 is punishable if a relationship of guardianship exists.
- Sexual contact with youths between 16 and 18 years of age is punishable if a relationship of guardianship or dependence exists and is abused.
- Moreover all cases of sexual contact that are committed against the will of the victim are punishable.



4. What can I do?

According to one's own judgment, if there is a well-founded suspicion or concrete knowledge of abuse, then either the child welfare office and/or the police should be informed. In urgent or life-threatening situations, the police should always be called since only they have the authority to remove the child, with force if necessary, from the (family) environment.

Moreover, in doubtful situations, the General Social Services (ASD) or alternatively the child welfare office should be informed, and the available counseling services should be taken advantage of. This can be done anonymously at least in part; frequently local contact numbers are available for telephone counseling, etc. Trained professionals in the child welfare offices deal with these matters and according to § 8a (Penal Law) VIII are required to investigate the cases. Contrary to many sensationalized media reports, child welfare offices and the ASD employ committed and competent staff members who also offer counseling services.

In addition independent sponsor organizations function as competent points of contact, such as the German Children's Protection League³ or the Children's Protection Center⁴, and are not only ready to help children and youths but also offer counsel to support personnel. Anonymous counseling centers have been set up for children and adolescents, as well as for parents, where children can get information and receive help.⁵ If suspicions about or knowledge of possible abuse is not taken seriously or not followed up for other reasons, this can also make one liable to punishment. Moreover it should be a matter of concern to pastors, youth or pathfinder leaders, nursery school or daycare teachers, volunteers of church institutions as well as every church member to offer every conceivable protection to children and young people.

³ <http://www.dksb.de>

⁴ <http://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org>

⁵ For example, <http://www.nummergegenkummer.de>

Guidelines for Conduct in Our Churches/Groups

If you ...

... suspect or recognize sexual violence or exploitation:

1. Watch carefully and take your hunch seriously! Observe and write down (including the date) what you see or have seen. Do not take matters into your own hands and do not act rashly. The wrong course of action can cause great harm.
2. Do not discuss the matter with either the child or the suspected offender. There must be no undue hurry, not even due to criminal considerations.
3. Do not talk about it prematurely with your colleagues. Conversations about suspected sexual violence might lead to reactions that could get out of control. Seek out a competent and trustworthy confidant.

... are affected by sexual violence yourself:

1. It is not your fault. It is always the fault of the offender. It is normal for the victim to experience feelings of guilt in such a situation, although there is no valid reason for them.
2. Any kind of sexual violence can be sickening and might cause horrible feelings. This too is normal. Nevertheless, you need not be ashamed.
3. You don't have to protect the perpetrator.

Dealing with persons whom we suspect are victims of sexual violence

Sexual violence in most cases is not a single occurrence. Abused children, youths or adults are abused again and again, in some cases even by several offenders. That means that they, in the midst of all their suffering, develop survival strategies. They have a potential reserve of strength that helps them to handle their situation.

A quick response to a suspected case of sexual violence can under certain circumstances cause great harm: The protective wall that the victim has built around herself/himself should not simply be torn down. It is of absolute necessity that qualified help is called upon to provide their services. An intervention always demands a period of preparation, during which it must be expected that the violence will continue. It is one of the most difficult challenges for the victim's supporters to endure this waiting period without giving in to despair. As a preliminary form of support, sympathy and an attitude of openness should be provided to the victim. The victim should be given the opportunity to talk, if and when he/she have this desire. Any insistent questions or attempts to force the victim to talk about the matter are to be strictly avoided.

Dealing with persons who claim to be victims of sexual violence

As a basic principle persons who say they are victims of sexual violence must be believed. The danger that children or youths might express unjustified charges is extremely remote - proven by experience and corresponding studies.

Persons who say they are victims of sexual violence are to be taken seriously and to be considered as having the ability to act and decide for themselves, so that any planned intervention should first be discussed with them. Victims should be informed that the person they have confided in will be seeking support from a professional counseling office.

For the process of dealing with experiences of sexual violence, qualified therapeutic and/or spiritual help will be necessary. As a general rule, it would be expecting too much to seek counsel from pastors, ministers or therapists who have had no special training in this area. For this reason victims should be encouraged to engage help from qualified professionals. Confrontation of victims by offenders must be avoided. If the victim thinks such a confrontation might be helpful, it should be prepared with therapeutic and/or pastoral support.

These measures are meant to protect potential child and youth victims as well as the accused themselves. They also



contribute to the safety and protection of the SDA church, since the accused cannot cover up the facts, thereby refuting the suspicion that is based on those facts.

Fundamental protection from the violation of sexual boundaries

Boundaries and a sense of propriety are to be taken seriously and to be respected. This also emphatically applies to time periods which fall outside the officially organized elements of the program.

In concrete terms this means among other things that:

- during camps/retreats separate dormitories and bathrooms for boys and girls must be available
- a conversation about sexuality must always be voluntary
- during a conversation of this kind the leader must sensitively consider the boundaries of all persons present
- special regard must be given to peer pressure. Children and young people who do not submit to this pressure must be supported
- the circle of leaders and coworkers should discuss such subjects beforehand as a means of preparation

Dealing with possible offenders

Often when someone justifiably suspects that another person is committing abusive acts, he/she will react by either looking the other way or by confronting the suspect. Both reactions are useless. In confrontation the accuser is generally either appeased, made to feel sorry for the suspect or sidelined. For this reason, it is important to first discuss one's suspicions with a competent expert. Only then, and not without competent support, should the matter be discussed with the suspected person.

If during his/her employment or activity within the SDA Church someone is found liable for sexual abuse in the manner described above, this person is to be removed from his/her official position. It is to be expected that offenders will not voluntarily stop their abusive actions – not even if they have promised to do so. For their own sake and the sake of others they must no longer be allowed to work in such a capacity.

Lines of communication and support

Employees or volunteers who suspect or recognize sexual violence within the Church will need help. In addition to their own personal shock they must consider the reputation of the church: Cases of sexual abuse could – for obvious reasons – have severe consequences for the church. For these two reasons the officers of the respective Conference must be informed about observations or confirmed suspicions of sexual abuse.

1. Situation in a camp/retreat: The employee should inform the camp leader (provided he is not involved, otherwise a Conference officer or a counseling center should be informed). The leader contacts a counseling center and informs a trusted Conference officer.
2. In a ministerial counseling setting the minister should ask for help from a counseling center.
3. When a person is discovered through conversation to be an offender, an immediate removal from his/her responsibilities must follow; victim and perpetrator must be separated in order to protect the victim.
4. Should a worker on a team be suspected of having sexually abused or taken advantage of children or youths, he/she must not be informed about this suspicion.
5. Rumors about sexual violence must be taken seriously and investigated with the support of one of the counseling centers mentioned in the appendix. Rumors can be elucidated effectively only with help from an outside source.
6. No independent investigation or search for victims and no questioning of possible children, youth or adult victims should be undertaken.
7. Suspected or accused persons should not be informed about a planned or current investigation.
8. If churches or groups desire to offer internal training, this should be carried out only by qualified professionals. The counseling centers and organizations mentioned in the appendix can help in the search for suitable experts.

These regulations are meant to protect potential child and youth victims as well as the accused themselves. They also contribute to the safety and protection of the SDA church, such that the accused persons cannot cover up the facts and thus invalidate the suspicion.

Additional References and Addresses

Counseling Center (Seventh-day Adventist Church)

Dr. Thomas Steiningger,
Kinder- u. Jugendlichen-Psychotherapeut,
Heidelberger Landstr. 171,
64297 Darmstadt,
Tel.: 06151/53 80 07

Counseling Centers of the White Cross e.V.

Weißes-Kreuz-Straße 1-4
34292 Ahnatal

The White Cross in Kassel can provide addresses of ministers, counselors and mental health care providers in the respective regions - addresses of some of them are given here (as of January 2010):

04103 Leipzig, Am Roßplatz 8/9,
Tel. 0177/447 92 87

25335 Elmshorn, Feldstr. 17,
Tel. 04122/404 86 94

32657 Lemgo, Echternstr. 12,
Tel. 05261/77 01 33

34290 Ahnatal/Kassel,
Weißes-Kreuz-Str. 1-4,
Tel. 05609/83 99-0

44879 Bochum, Tiefbauweg 5b,
Tel. 0234/956 65 98

65934 Frankfurt/Main, Lotzstr. 54,
Tel. 0160/92 54 81 10

99084 Erfurt, Mainzerhofstr. 2,
Tel. 0361/550 79 22

Additional Counseling Centers of the White Cross can be found at:
www.weisses-kreuz.de

Counseling Centers of the Federal Association of Child Protection Centers

Bundesgeschäftsstelle
Bonner Str. 147
50968 Köln
Tel. 0221/56 97 53
www.kinderschutz-zentren.org

White Ring - Aid for victims of criminal assaults and their families in the Federal Republic of Germany

Bundesgeschäftsstelle Weißer Ring e.V.
Weberstraße 16
55130 Mainz
Tel. 06131/8 30 30

Toll-free Tel.:
0800/0800 343
www.weisser-ring.de

N.I.N.A. - National Infoline, Network and Contact for boys and girls who are victims of sexual violence

Tel. 01805/12 34 65 www.nina-info.de

Wild waters - Internet site that combats the sexual abuse of girls and women

Tel. 06142/96 57 60 www.wildwasser.de
- against sexual violence!

Bittersweet - Internet site of the Cologne Info-Center which combats the sexual abuse of girls and boys

www.zartbitter.de

Inpatient Facilities

IGNIS-Akademie, Kitzingen,
www.ignis.de
Clinic Hohe Mark, Oberursel
www.klinik-hohe-mark.com

Summary of several (further) links:

www.c-stab.de

Christian ministers, therapists, physicians, counselors (all denominations)

www.dunkelziffer.de

Dunkelziffer e.V. fights the sexual abuse of children and child pornography with therapy, counseling, prevention and further education.

www.weisses-kreuz.de

The White Cross is an independent Christian organization whose mission is to counsel and support people in diverse situations of crisis and difficulty.