

Child sexual abuse occurs predominantly in domestic settings, most commonly in the offender's or victim's home. A smaller but significant proportion of incidents occur in organisational settings, including schools.

Concerns about sexual abuse in schools have grown as a result of numerous inquiries into institutional child abuse, increased public attention to sexual abuse generally, and some highly publicised cases involving teachers and other school personnel. No reliable data are presently available on the absolute or relative prevalence of sexual abuse in, or related to, schools.

**DEFINITION:** Child sexual abuse is generally defined by law as any sexual behaviour involving a person under the age of consent – usually 16 years of age. It encompasses a diverse set of problem behaviours, including exposure of genitals, producing or showing sexual images, sexual harassment, grooming and procuring, and contact offences ranging from sexual touching through to violent sexual assaults causing physical injury and in rare cases death.

In schools, sexual involvement of a staff person with any student, regardless of age, is likely to be prohibited by school policy, teacher registration rules, and sometimes also by law.

Sexual activity is common among children and especially among adolescents, and is rarely harmful. It is usually considered sexually abusive when there is a significant age-gap (usually 3-5 years), when it involves violence, aggression, or undue pressure, or when it occurs despite the unwillingness of one or more of those involved.