

“What About Our Boys and Men?” Unique Challenges Facing Male Survivors

The following are strategies and resources for offering “trauma informed” interventions and support to male victims of sexual abuse and assault:

- 1) Professionals first need to receive training about the myths and misconceptions that make it difficult for boys and men to disclose when they’ve been sexually abused or assaulted. Here are common myths about male victims that can prevent disclosures and/or providing support to victims:

Myth # 1 Boys and men can’t be victims of sexual abuse.

Myth # 2 Sexual abuse is less harmful and less traumatic to boys than to girls.

Myth # 3 Most of the men who sexually abuse boys are homosexuals.

Myth # 4 Boys abused by males are, or will become, homosexual.

Myth # 5 If a boy experiences sexual arousal or orgasm during the abuse, it means he wanted it.

Myth # 6 If the perpetrator is a woman, the boy should feel “lucky.”

Myth # 7 Boys who are sexually abused in childhood will go on to abuse others.

- - from www.malesurvivor.org

- 2) Professionals need to familiarize themselves with “The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study” and its findings about the frequency of male sexual victimization (1 in 6), the gender of the perpetrators and the long-term effects on victims. Information on the ACE Study can be found on the CDC website - <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>
- 3) Give the client control wherever and whenever possible.
Allow him to choose to talk with and work with either male or female professionals.
(Male victims may feel more comfortable talking with a female, but not always.)
Be respectful in terms of the setting. Privacy and anonymousness may be primary concerns for the victim; may fear being “outed” as a victim of sexual abuse/assault.
Be respectful and sensitive to the client’s needs and pacing.
- 4) Explore the services for male victims in your area.
Do local rape crisis centers/sexual assault programs offer *and publicize* services for male victims as well as female? Counseling? Support groups?
Is help available both on-site and off-site? Telephone “hot lines?”
Do all of their brochures and media advertisements/campaigns include both male and victims?
- 5) Publicize on-line resources for male victims:
“One in Six” at <https://1in6.org>
MaleSurvivor at <http://www.malesurvivor.org/>