



**Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury**  
**Webinar Series**  
"Prevention of Sexual Abuse in Children"

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April 28, 2016 1-2:30 p.m. (ET)

*Operator:*

Welcome, and thank you for standing by. All participants will be in listen only mode throughout today's conference. Today's call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I would like to turn the meeting over to Dr. Vladimir Nacev. Sir, you may begin.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Thank you very much and good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today for the DCoE Psychological Health April Webinar. My name is Dr. Vladimir Nacev. I'm a clinical psychologist and currently acting chief of the Implementation Division at the Deployment Health Clinical Center at the Defense Centers of Excellence. I will be a moderator for today's webinar.

Today's presentation and resource list are available for download from the files pod below.

Before I will begin, I'll just review some webinar details. Live closed captioning is available through federal relay conferences ... Captioning, please see the pod beneath the presentation slides. Should you experience technical difficulties, please visit [DCoE.mil/webinars](http://DCoE.mil/webinars) and click on the troubleshooting link under the monthly webinar setting. There may be an audio delay as we advance the slides in the presentation. Please be patient as the connection catches up with the speaker's comments. This continuing education activity is provided through the cooperation between DCoE and professional education services group. All who wish to obtain a continuing education credit or certificate of attendance, and who meet eligibility requirements, must register by 3:00pm Eastern time today, April 28, 2016 to qualify for the receipt of credit. After the webinar, please visit [DCoE.cds.pesgce.com](http://DCoE.cds.pesgce.com) to complete the online [inaudible] evaluation and download or print your [inaudible] certificate or certificate of attendance. The evaluation will be open through Thursday, May 12, 2016.

Throughout the webinar, you're welcome to submit technical or content related questions via the Q&A pod located on the screen. All questions will be anonymous. Please do not technical or content related questions via the chat pod. Participants are encouraged to chat among each other during the webinar using the chat pod, but please refrain from marketing or promoting your organization or product in the chat pod.

I will now move to today's webinar. Child sexual abuse refers to the entire spectrum of sexual crimes and offense in which children up to age 17 are victims. The US Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau report child maltreatment in 2010 found that 9.2% of victimized children were sexually assaulted, with children being the most vulnerable sexual abuse between the ages of 7 and 13. Child sexual abuse victims often feel significant distress and display a myriad short to long term psychological symptoms and developmental delays. They are at increased risk for experiencing future sexual assaults. Today's webinar will discuss promising strategies for prevention of child sexual abuse, including school-based education, parent education, treatment for victims, treatment for juvenile and adult offenders, law enforcement training, and interviewer training.

At the completion of this webinar, participants will be able to recognize the adverse dynamics involved in sexual abuse of children, demonstrate knowledge about the prevention of child sexual abuse, illustrate comprehension of the role of the internet in child sexual abuse. I would like, now, to introduce our presenter, Dr. David Finkelhor. Dr. Finkelhor is the director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, co-director of the Family Research Laboratory, and professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire. He studied the problem with child victimization and child maltreatment and family violence since 1977. On a personal note, I have known Dr. Finkelhor since 1990. He's well-known conceptual and empirical work on the problem of child sexual abuse, reflected in publications such as source book on child A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse, published by Sage in 1986, and Nursery Crimes, published by Sage in 1988. He has also written about child homicide, missing and abducted children, children exposed to domestic and peer violence, and other forms of family violence.

In his recent work, he has tried to unify and integrate knowledge about all the diverse forms of child victimization in a field he has termed "Developmental Victimology." He's also the editor and author of 11 books and over 150 journal articles and book chapters. He has received grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the US Department of Justice, and a variety of other sources. In 1994, he was given the distinguished Child Abuse Professional Award by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. In 2004, he was also given a significant achievement award from the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abuse. Dr. Finkelhor received his doctorate degree, PhD from the University of New Hampshire and his masters from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, as well as his bachelor's degree from Harvard College. It is now my pleasure to introduce you to Dr. Finkelhor. You're on, sir.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Okay. Thank you very much. I'm really very excited to be giving this presentation. I gather there are over 120 participants. That seems very impressive to me. I want to thank all of you. I want to thank the organizers who have spared me ... Been on an airplane and spend the night in a motel in order to be able to do a presentation, which is usually how it works when I give a talk. I'm sitting here in my office at the University of New Hampshire, which is in Durham, New Hampshire ... About an hour north of Boston. The main thing, though, that I regret is not getting a chance to meet a lot of you individually. I suspect that many of you are doing very interesting

and important work in this area that I typically benefit a great deal from when I get a chance to meet colleagues from all around the world.

Here is what I'm going to do ... This talk is divided into two sections. The first is going to cover material that many of you are probably familiar with, although I hope to give it a little bit of fresh spin. That is just a reminder about the diversity and complexity of the problem of child sexual abuse in some more structured ways of thinking about this diversity and complexity. Then, for the largest part of the talk and the remainder, I want to go over ideas that I have about how we could be doing a better job in terms of preventing sexual abuse and protecting kids from this particular scourge.

We all get exposed to an enormous amount of information about sexual abuse these days. If you just read the newspaper yesterday, for example, there were lengthy stories in most of the National Papers about the conviction of former Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert for ... It was on a separate crime, but he was clearly talking about his perpetration of sexual abuse on a number of youth 30 or 40 years ago who he had coached in a high school wrestling sport. There was a considerable amount of information about the actual offenses that he had committed. It's a reminder, both, of how common this problem is and also the diversity of forms that it takes. When someone as prominent as Dennis Hastert commits these kinds of offenses, it certainly makes a lot of news. That may create a little bit of bias about just how it is that we think about these crimes. I think it is important to reflect on the very diverse kinds of situations in which sexual abuse can occur and not to stereotype it as one kind of thing. The kinds of prevention strategies and the kinds of recognition strategies that we need to adopt really depend on us recognizing this diversity and understanding that things can be very different in different situations.

I'm going to talk about these seven distinct kinds of environments where we see cases of sexual abuse. Then, give you a little bit more specifics about each one of those, just to make sure we're all talking about the same thing. In familial sexual abuse, abuse in a child's neighborhood or social network environment, abuse at the hands of adult leaders, teachers, mentors or other authorities ... Two categories of sexual abuse at the hands of other youth, one being older youth who victimize considerably younger youth ... Then the kinds of abuse that occur at the hands of same-age peers ... Then, I want to talk about commercial sexual exploitation, a particularly complicated type of sexual abuse. I want to talk a bit about what I call statutory victim or compliant victim sexual abuse, which is something we haven't discussed that much, but I think deserves more attention. I want to talk about the internet as a context for sexual abuse.

Getting on with this ... First thing which is important to recognize is that sexual abuse can be committed by both adults and juveniles. The family setting is a setting where considerable amount of sexual abuse occurs. Perhaps as much as a quarter of all sexual abuse occurs in the family setting. When you're talking about the kinds of cases that come to the attention of Child Protection Authorities, we're talking about maybe 80%. Inter familial sexual abuse typically involves fathers, step-fathers, uncles, grandfathers, older siblings. It is the kind of sexual abuse that tends to start at the earliest age and it tends to go on for the longest because it's occurring in an environment where the abuser typically has a considerable amount of control over the

victim. These are some of the kinds of sexual abuse situations that are the most traumatic and the most destructive because, frequently, after disclosure, they result in a disruption or a breakdown of the family environment. This kind of abuse really puts the child's whole support system environment at risk so that it's not really functioning in the way that it should for children.

The second category sexual abuse occurs in neighborhood and social network. That is the next door neighbors, parents of childrens' friends, people that the family knows through church or religious environments or other social contacts. These offenders get to know the child ... Children of all ages ... Have opportunities to be alone with the child and engage the child in sexual activities. The third category, epitomized by the case I just mentioned, Dennis Hastert, involves adult leaders, teachers, mentors, or religious figures and other authorities. We've heard a lot about these kinds of cases in recent years, like the case of Jerry Sandusky at Penn State, or the case of priests in church environment or coaches or scout leaders. These are adults who have considerable amount of prestige and authority and status, and oftentimes can misrepresent norms and appropriate behaviors. They can offer tremendous incentives to the kids for participating in the sexual activities with them.

The disclosure of these kinds of offenders typically is very challenging because these are often highly regarded people. Family members and parents of other youth are typically unwilling or reluctant to believe that this person could have engaged in this activity. Often time there's an organization which has some incentive to keep the information about that activity from getting out. There's oftentimes efforts to squelch any disclosure or keep kids from even getting help for what was going on. These are complicated situations for people to report about and for investigators to find out what's going on because, frequently, there's tremendous allegiance, even on the part of victims to the offenders who abused them.

About a third of all cases that come to the attention of authorities involving sexual offense against kids actually involve other youth. We're only now paying more attention to this aspect of the problem. In fact, when we do general population surveys where we ask people about childhood sexual offense that occurred to them that either did or did not come to public attention, we find out that it's more than 50% of the offenses that young people experience that are at the hands of other young people. I break these down into two categories: older youth who are victimizing younger children ... Some of the situations where this occurs are, for example, babysitters who abuse kids in their charge, older siblings, cousins, neighbors, older brothers and sisters of friends. We see an interesting spike in this behavior among young people when they get to be pubescent. It seems as though that the developing interest in sexual topics, increasing discussion and exposure to sexual related materials or information sometimes prompts kids at that point to take advantage of younger kids in their social network or under their authority who they can use to explore some of their sexual interests.

We see an unusual number of female abusers in this category as well. There's increasing concern, some of it supported by research that suggests that exposure to media that contains sexual images can provoke kids at this age, maybe, to act out some of the things that they see with younger kids. In the second category of youth on youth sexual abuse is same-age peers.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Probably the most common situation where this occurs is among young adolescents who are starting to date or have been engaged in dating a while, where they get sexually abused by a dating partner or somebody who they thought they wanted to check out a romantic interest in when that person imposes various kinds of sexual acts or rapes them. It happens in some other environments as well. It happens as part of bullying. It turns out that a large amount of peer bullying that goes on has sexual content. Some of it involves grabbing or touching or hitting kids in a sexually provocative way. It can involve sexual harassment and denigration of their victims in a sexual way.

This is clearly also a part of sexual abuse. Some of this activity involves group assaults where the goal may not be so much the sexual gratification on the part of the offenders, but an attempt to harass or humiliate the victim. You often get, in these group encounters, kids who might not engage in sexually abusive or sexually aggressive behavior, but because of the group environment, they're drawn in and act out these kinds of things towards the victim, because the leaders of the group are expecting them to do that.

The next category that I want to remind you about, and one that hasn't gotten a great deal of attention, or not as much attention, has to do with what are called statutory victims and some people call compliant victims. These are primarily teenagers who have sexual relationships with adults, where the teenagers, at least initially, participate very willingly and even sometimes initiate the encounters based on a crush or a romantic interest they have in this older person. Frequently, the fact that this older person has resources and status and money, maybe a job, is a very alluring thing for the teenagers. These, we see some of this occur in school environments, where high school students develop relationships with adults, teachers, or other staff in the school. There are a considerable number of female offenders ... Cases where a 30 year old woman who's a friend of the family develops a relationship with a 16 year old boy that she knows.

These sexual abuse situations are somewhat different than the ones that we often hear about, in a sense that, to some degree, in some of the relationships, the teenagers seem to feel very positive about the relationship and seem to be resistant to wanting to be seen as a victim. We'll talk a little bit more about this and the prevention of it later on. A particular group who's vulnerable to these kinds of offenses are kids who are dealing with sexual orientation issues, because they frequently are not getting much help about that, feel a certain amount of shame and conflict about their situation and go out looking for somebody who can help them out. Then someone will offer to help them, someone that they meet online or in person, will offer to help them out and it involves having an actual sexual relationship with this person.

Probably worth distinguishing in these statutory sexual relationships between situations where the offender is just somewhat older, an adult, but where they're dealing with someone who could possibly part of their social set ... A 16 year old who is thinking that they're going to go out on dates with someone who's 19 or 20 ... Situations where the adult is much older than that, 25 or more ... Point out that conventional prevention messages don't tend to work for this part of the problem, because they often focus on touches or overtures that make the potential victim

feel uncomfortable or encouraging them to resist. That's not typically what's going on in these particular types of sexual abuse.

Then, there are quite a few sexual abuse situations that are really classified as commercial sexual exploitation, that is where there's money or other valuable items that are being exchanged for various kinds of sexual activity. There's also a fair amount of diversity to this. We probably are most familiar with pimps, facilitated types of prostitution where teenagers of various ages, some as young as 13, 14, are being advertised and sold for sexual activities with adults. That's not the only form of commercial sexual exploitation. There's also considerable amount of prostitution that occurs from teenagers on their own offering sexual services, either online or in places where they know that potential buyers will congregate to look for sexual activities. This is particularly true about teenage boys, who oftentimes operate and get involved in prostitution without a facilitation of a pimp. We also have some cases ... This is the smallest category ... Of very young victims, non-teenagers, who are actually being prostituted for sexual activities or for images by adult family members or caregivers. Some of this happens in an international context. We see sex tourism. We also see internet imaging that is being requested and provided across international boundaries.

A lot of this activity has been termed sexual trafficking in recent years. New terminology has come to apply to it. The only caveat I think it's important for people to know is that, although we call it trafficking ... Some of it does involve taking children from one geographic location to another for the purpose of them selling their sexual access ... A lot of children are sexually abused for commercial purposes in their hometown, in their own neighborhood, by people who know them. There isn't actually a lot of moving around that's going on. We can still refer to this as trafficking, but one shouldn't assume that it involved, necessarily, a lot of movement.

Final category that I wanted to mention ... I guess I didn't have a slide here on it or my slide got missed ... Was the internet context. One of the things, and one of the debates in the field is whether the internet has really created a different kind of environment for sexual abuse. Is it simply that other forms of sexual abuse have migrated to the digital, electronic communications world, like all other kinds of social relationships have? I would say that, for the most part, what we're seeing is a replication of other kinds of sexual abuse that now have internet forms. It turns out, in studies that we've done about sexual abuse online, that the majority of victims and offenders who were communicating online actually have met each other from other face to face environments in their lives.

There are some young people who meet people online that they don't know in face to face context and get groomed and seduced and involved in sexual activities. This isn't ... The stereotype that people have about this is that it involves primarily adults who deceive kids by thinking that they're other kids and luring them to locations where they could abduct and sexually assault them. More often, the online recruitment of victims looks more like what I described as statutory rape, adults who actually are pretty open about their sexual and romantic interests with young people that they meet and admit to being older, but try and interest kids by being interested in them and kind to them and giving them gifts and compliments and help and

support in their lives. Then, these kids think that these are possible relationships that they might turn into something romantic and go off to meet these individuals with that kind of hope.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

The other form that the internet sexual abuse takes is the trading and the consumption of child pornography, which has become much more frequent because these images are now so readily accessible, due to both digital photography and the ability to transmit this online. It does appear as though we have some new set of offenders here who consume child pornography, but don't act on it in other ways, don't act on sexual interest in children in other ways. They do seem to have a set of characteristics and dynamics that are somewhat unique compared to other offenders. I'm not going to have time to go into that in great detail. We can answer questions about that if you have some later on.

Let me just make a few points that I think are very important about this diversity and represent misconceptions I think people sometimes have about sexual abuse. This term pedophile is frequently used to refer to offenders who sexually abuse kids, but pedophile actually refers to someone who has a primary and enduring sexual interest in prepubescent children. That doesn't describe most victims of sexual abuse. Half of the victims are post pubescent. It turns out that even among those who victimized younger kids, most of them have a primary sexual interest ... I'm sorry. A third of them have a primary sexual interest in adults. Then, all the youth who sexually abuse children could not be classified as pedophiles since a pedophile has to be somebody who has gone through a full stage of development into adulthood.

The other thing that I think is very important for people to recognize is that not all offenders are strictly predatory. Many are, but in the sense of actually going into an environment seeking out a child to abuse ... There are a large number of sexual abuse situations, both involving adult offenders and juvenile offenders, that occur when adults or peers have contact that is perfectly healthy, normal, and valuable. Then, once in the situation, because of a bond that occurs or opportunity to be alone, the offender recognizes that they can take advantage of it and they do. One of the things that it means is that we can't easily identify who offenders are going to be on the basis of their interests, sexual orientation, polygraphy, motives, or screening. It's a very difficult thing to do, both because the groups are so diverse and oftentimes aren't even necessarily aware of their own interest or capacity in taking advantage of a child.

In the area of sexual abuse prevention, one sees a lot of effort and a lot of enthusiasm for ways of controlling offenders, lengthening their sentences, putting them on registries, restricting where they can live, restricting who they can have contact with. The problem is that most new offenders do not have an offense history. Even if those kinds of offender control measures were 100% effective at keeping people from continuing to offend, it would only eliminate about 10% of newly identified episodes of sexual abuse, unfortunately. Those kinds of offender control policies can certainly be of some benefit, but we clearly have to have prevention strategies that go beyond that if we're going to be successful, because 90% of the cases, the person does not have a previous record.

Another thing that I think is important and does come to the issue about how much effort to put into prevention activity is that it does turn out that most offenders do not re offend under our current regimen of punishment and supervision. The rates are about 14% re offending over 5 years, maybe 24% over 15 years. These are considerably lower than re offense rates for other violent crimes. There's some categories of offenders who have actually very dramatically low re offense rates, particularly juveniles and inter familial offenders. It simply says that we don't want to over-emphasize the draconian punishment and expensive management, and that we do have relatively good risk-assessment tools to distinguish people who do need the more severe kinds of controls on their behavior.

As people have gotten aware of youth offenders, we have done a great deal to provide services and take these kinds of offenses more seriously. I do think that this has had a very positive and preventative impact on the problem. There is inclination for people to think that, because someone is starting out offending when they're young that that is a sign of incipient pedophilia or of the certain likelihood of a long career of sexual offending, but that is not the case. Some youth appear to offend due to transient kinds of influences such as peer pressure or the desire for more sexual knowledge. We find that, when kids take sexual advantage of other kids, it's more likely associated with a general delinquency than a problem of sexual deviation. I think that the conclusion that most people in the field is that intervening when kids are young, picking up signs that they're engaging in offensive behavior is a good time to catch them, but with relatively brief and non-stigmatizing kinds of interventions, we can interrupt that sequence. Long term sanctions and supervision is not typically necessary.

The diversity of sexual abusers means it's very hard to sketch a profile for them, to give a list of attributes that employers or family members can look for. They, in general, have a better education and more social skills than the typical criminal population. They occur throughout the socioeconomic spectrum, and they engage in an enormous diversity of sexual behavior, from hands-on contact to voyeurism. They engage children in a variety of different ways, using force as well as grooming and incentives. Typically, when people think that they could have an intuition about who would be dangerous for kids or who is likely to be a sexual abuser, this is typically quite mistaken. In the way of giving people education, it's much more important to train them about identifying behaviors that are risky or that are violative, rather than personal characteristics about the people. The personal characteristics are not likely to be very helpful.

It's also important for us, as part of our prevention education, to help people to know that most sexual abuse ... The vast majority of it ... Does not involve violence, physical assault, coercion, or physical threats. Because so much of it occurs in relationships of trust, typically involve simply the manipulation of the child through what's called grooming, misrepresenting what standards of behavior are like, presenting things as games, as fun, as education, offering attention, affection, a gift, as a way of encouraging kids to participate in these kinds of things. The reason why this is particularly important to include in all of our prevention is that, if people are under the impression that real sexual abuse involves violence and coercion, then they will not recognize it when it's occurring. Also, when it comes out, they'll be asking questions about, "Why didn't you resist? How come you went along with this," which will tend to make the victims



feel blamed and guilty about ... They're already inclined to do so and this is not typically helpful in both getting them to cooperate with investigations, and also in their recovery.

We also have to recognize that because these offenders are typically people who kids like in many ways, respect in many ways, and may have offered very important kinds of education or attention, affection, things that the kids value greatly, the kids do not always find the contact with them unpleasant, sometimes participate voluntarily ... Often act to protect offenders when the abuse is revealed. This has implications for prevention because we can't simply prevent all sexual abuse by instructing kids to resist yucky touches or things that people ask them to do that they feel funny about. Youth feel guilty and blame themselves and they sometimes lie about what happened because they want to make the abuse situation appear more like one that involved violence or coercion or that covers their own participation in the situation. They are often devastated by the revelation because they know it involves considerable stigma and loss for themselves.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

As a result, kids do not necessarily experience disclosure as a uniform benefit. Sometimes they do. It allows sexual abuse to stop, but frequently they encounter a negative response. Some family and friends' exposure of what happened to people that they can't control and who they're very embarrassed to know about these episodes. They get subject to investigations. It can be very hard and harsh and unpleasant. It's sad to tell you, but the studies that have actually compared older persons who say they had sexual abuse that they disclosed and ones who didn't disclose it, there's no difference in impact. It suggests that we need to improve our response, make sure that kids who disclose are cushioned from the impact that disclosure and not additionally harmed by the way in which we conduct investigations and respond.

All right. Now I'm going to turn and talk more about prevention strategies. A lot of my concepts for prevention grow out of what I call the four preconditions of sexual abuse. It basically says that there are four different kinds of places where we can prevent sexual abuse. We can prevent it by reducing the development of a motivation to sexually abuse in a potential offender. We can prevent it by strengthening any internal inhibitors that that person had that would keep them from acting on that interest. We can prevent it by making it harder for potential offenders to get access to kids, to groom them or exploit them. We can improve it by strengthening the ability of children to resist overtures or to not participate in grooming or offers that they receive.

These four sites suggest ways in which prevention can be developed. To talk about ... Not taking these in exact order ... Strengthening the internal inhibitions. There are individuals who have some interest or orientation to sexually abuse kids, but to the extent that they are afraid of being detected, to the the extent that we have set out bright line perimeters saying, "It's wrong to engage in activities of this sort ..." To the extent that many of these people have rationales that help them justify their behavior. "This isn't really sex. This isn't really harmful. This is just education." To the extent that we can debunk those rationales, we can raise the level of inhibition. I said that not all sexual abusers are predatory. There are people who find themselves having sexual feelings for children in situations where they didn't expect to have it. If we help people like teachers in the same way that we help psychologists and counselors deal with

feelings that they have that can arise in situations, we can help them better manage those kinds of impulses so that they don't act on them.

Then we also know that there are things that can undermine peoples' inhibitions ... Alcohol, substance, alcohol and drugs, mental illness, psychological problems, depression can be things that can undermine inhibitions. Extent that we provide treatment for people who have alcohol problems and treatment for people who have mental health problems, we're probably reinforcing inhibitions that will keep kids safer.

In addition to reinforcing the internal inhibitions, we also need to help make kids safer by building support systems and supervisory systems that surround them so that other people are on the lookout for dangers and can help prevent sexual abuse from happening. Making sure parents have awareness, making sure that other staff and teachers in youth serving organizations have awareness, structuring environments so that adults aren't alone with kids in high risk situations, having clear organizational protocols and guidelines about what behaviors are acceptable and what are not, so people notice and intervene when those standards are being violated ... Also doing what I mentioned before, a good job of keeping people who have highly repetitive sexual impulses towards children out of kids' environments.

Then, childrens' resistance is important too. I've heard people say, "It's morally wrong to expect children to prevent themselves from being sexually abused." I think that, as part of a comprehensive prevention package, it's a perfectly good thing. Of course, we tell kids to wear bicycle helmets. That's putting the responsibility of bicycle safety on their heads, so to speak. Because we know it works, we think it's a good thing to do. I think kids want to have this information, themselves. It would be sorry that we didn't give it to them if they ended up getting abused because of it. Teaching kids what the appropriate norms are for sexual behavior, teaching them about the kinds of things that people who are grooming them might do ... A very important skill that young people need to have that is useful, not just in sexual situations, but in all kinds of risk situations is refusal skills, knowing how to say no, knowing how to stick to no, knowing how to get out of a situation, even if you're dealing with somebody who seems to be considerably more powerful, more authoritative, and somebody that you like ... Getting to practice how you actually say that kind of thing.

We find that kids are more likely to succumb to grooming and sexual overtures when they're emotionally insecure, when they feel badly about themselves, when they don't feel like they have people that they can turn to. Reinforcing childrens' sense of emotional security and confidence can be very important in helping them resist. Positive knowledge about sex ... Kids get involved and get lured into sexual behavior with adults and other kids because they want to get information about sex. They want to learn about this thing that everybody seems to be talking about and is interested in. That we provide positive knowledge about sex and get that curiosity satisfied in other healthful environments, they're less likely to succumb. They need to know that they have adult support. They need to know that when they go and talk to an adult about something that's been going on, the adults will believe them.

Then, finally ... Although I think this is one of the most difficult areas, I do think there are ways in which we can reduce the potential motivations to sexual abuse on the part of potential

offenders. One way, of course, is by treating victims of abuse, because we know that kids who are abused are more likely, although it's not certainly an inevitability. They are more likely to grow up and become abusers themselves. Family violence, shame-based parenting, absence of information about sex ... These are all elements that seem to be part of brewing a sexual interest in children among potential offenders. Images of sexual exploitation and norms of masculinity that require that someone have sexual experiences to prove that they are real males ... These are all kinds of things that contribute.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Let me talk about some of the more promising strategies. I'm a very big fan of school-based education. Schools are a place where we can get access to kids where they learn about a lot of things where there are curricula into which sexual abuse prevention education can be integrated. The elements of school-based education include, as I said, knowledge about appropriate rules and norms of behavior, resistance and avoidance training, promotion disclosure ... Helping kids learn how to disclose and who to disclose to ... Bystander mobilization ... This is very important: Helping kids who know about situations that are occurring with their friends or are concerned about situations that could occur with their friends, taking some action, telling someone or advocating on behalf of their friend, or helping to interrupt something that's going on.

What I call secondary harm prevention is giving kids information in the course of this education that will make sure that, if they do get sexually abused, they won't blame themselves. It's simply saying that if something like that happens to them, it's never their fault. They should never be held responsible for it, whatever they did. That would help them not feel so guilty and blame themselves if it does happen. Stigma reduction is also very important. One of the things that research suggests is that when kids feel like, "I'm the only person this has happened to. There's something wrong about me that caused this to happen," they tend to have a much stronger negative reaction, be much more harmed by the sexual abuse. Telling kids this happens to a lot of other kids, and it's not really their fault if it happens, this is very important to reducing the stigma.

Deterrents ... One of the things that abuse prevention education programs do is they reach potential perpetrators as well as potential victims. Kids growing up might otherwise have become perpetrators find out what the norms are, find out that this can be harmful, find out that there can be serious consequences. They may be deterred. The teachers, the parents, the other school personnel, as well as the other kids who learn about this, are going to be able to do a better job protecting and providing guardianship for the kids having gotten this kind of information. School-based education programs are a proven prevention paradigm. That is to say these kinds of programs have been proven under research to be successful in a whole range of educational problems like drug abuse prevention, like driving safety, and bullying prevention. That means that there's a good chance they're going to be successful. They're relatively low cost to carry out. As I said, they combine prevention with harm reduction and they reach potential perpetrators.

The main problems with these school-based prevention programs, from my point of view ... One is that they pose a burden on schools and teachers who are already very much burdened with tasks that they have performed in the way of education and child safety and health, and math skills and reading skills and so forth. We don't actually have, yet, the strong empirical evidence that it does prevent sexual abuse. Although, we do have evidence that the kids do learn the content, that they can carry out some of the behaviors. They do tend to disclose it more.

Going to skip that. I think the real challenge with these school-based education programs is they need to be integrated into more comprehensive and developmental curricula that cover a lot of topics. We're increasingly facing a situation where schools are being deluged with requests from people of poor prevention programs of all sorts around dating violence, around drug abuse, around internet safety, around sexual abuse, around mental health promotion, around suicide prevention, and so forth. It's just not possible for schools to negotiate with each one of these advocacy groups. What we really need to do is have a fully integrated safety and health curriculum for young people that is developmentally informed and that incorporates all of these skills, socio-emotional learning, bullying prevention, safety skills, as well as all the skills that would be useful in preventing sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Very important additional part of these programs or stand-alone parts of these programs are ones that targets parents. Parents do have a hard time raising or talking about these issues with young people. They're afraid that kids aren't prepared to talk about sex. They're afraid that they're going to scare their kids unnecessarily. They need a fair amount of support. They need models, examples of what the conversations can look like, where the kinds of situations where these topics might be raised. For example, in the bathtub or when a news item appears on television. These would be opportunities where parents can perhaps have these kinds of discussions with kids of different ages. They need to get some support and some scripts for working on that. They need to be encouraged to provide sexual vocabulary to their kids so that kids can provide accounts of what's going on.

Other things that parent education needs to be able to do is do more involvement of men. It turns out when men are more involved in childcare, they're less likely, actually, to sexually abuse their children, reduce punitiveness and shaming around sexual topics. It turns out that when kids feel a fair amount of shame, that's one of the situations that inhibits disclosure and may actually promote negative curiosity behavior. Also, a considerable number of sexual abuse episodes occur in the sibling relationship and so sibling conflict management and promoting healthy sibling relationships can be a very good way of preventing sexual abuse.

I want to talk a little bit about the statutory rape issue, because I think this is one that we're not doing a very good job addressing in terms of prevention. One of the things is we need to talk more about why we have prohibitions on allowing teenagers to have sexual and romantic relationships with adults who are much older than themselves, or adults in general, or people who are older than themselves. It comes from a belief that we want adults to be mentors and models for young people. Giving them an incentive or allowing them to have sexual relationships with those young people isn't the way of promoting that kind of objective thinking that we want from them about the young people. We think that because of the age difference

and the experience difference, that younger people are developmentally not prepared to have relationships with somebody who has more authority. Given the disparity in knowledge and often power and resources, there's an intrinsic inability to consent in a imbalanced situation of that sort.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

In preventing these situations, we have to be honest about the dynamics of how they occur. Young people do, sometimes, initiate them, or go off to be with an adult in a voluntary, even enthusiastic way. We have to target the bystanders. Oftentimes, in these situations, the victims have friends who know about what's going on, but who haven't spoken up about it. They feel like it's not their role to speak up about it. They don't know what to say. Again, giving them the vocabulary and ideas about how to express doubts about these relationships with their friends, and empowering them to feel authorized to do is something that would really be very helpful.

We also need to have some prevention programs that are targeted at high risk vulnerable youth, teens who are looking for sympathetic adults, because they're not getting that kind of support in their home environment, because their family is disrupted and they don't have good supervision. A part of family support and family therapy programs should be providing good prevention education for teens. This is a high risk group. We also need to help kids who are dealing with sexual orientation questions to get help from adults and peers who are knowledgeable and thoughtful about these issues, but who will not use this as an opportunity to engage the younger person in sexual activities themselves.

I like this slide. It's an example of how, in some African countries, where adults hitting on kids is a big problem. They have big public relations campaign to discourage this kind of activity. We also need to build organizations. I'm realizing that I want to hurry on and allow some time for discussion, but this is my sixth suggestion for how organizations can become better, more resistant organizations for sexual abuse to occur in them. They need ways of screening people who come in, not just through doing background record checks, but by making clear to applicants to these organizations that this is an organization that takes this issue very seriously and does a lot of training and sensitivity around this. Organizations need to develop clear standards and norms. They need to train staff about how to detect violations of these standards. As I mentioned before, they need to help people manage their impulses and not succumb to impulses that may arise to get involved with kids. They need to have parts of their program that educate youth and parents, both how these situations occur and to promote disclosure.

I think I'm going to put out one more thing that I think is very interesting. We have been doing a good job. All the evidence suggests that sexual abuse has been declining for the last 20, maybe 25 years, since the mid-1990s. Fewer cases are coming to the attention of law enforcement. Fewer cases are coming to the attention of child protection agencies. In our surveys of general population, we find that fewer young people report that they have been sexually abused. That's very good news and suggests that some of this prevention education program and some of the new awareness that we have about it actually has been working, and that we need to do more of it to make further in rows on the problem.

I think I'm going to stop there and then move on to the next stage of our program, which is the question and answer portion. Do I turn it back to Vladimir?

*Dr. Nacev:*

Thank you so much, Dr. Finkelhor. That was a great presentation. The content very much we need. At this point, I will introduce and start our session with the ... To answer questions from the audience. If you have not done so, please submit your questions via the questions pod located on the screen. We'll respond to as many questions as time permits. Also ... One question that was asked, "In the education of sexual abuse survivors, do you include the sexual feelings children have had in this first experience? Mainly parents have a difficult time acknowledging or understanding."

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

I'm not fully understanding the question. Most of the prevention education I've been talking about is not directed specifically at survivors, but at children, for the most part, prior to being abused. I do think that education for survivors is also important, because sometimes survivors have a hard time talking to their own children about these issues. Sometimes they even over-react to what happened to them and are concerned about their kids being sexually abused that they don't give them the normal amount of independence that they should get. We have really good treatment programs for people who have been sexually abused as children. One of the best researched is a program called Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I think somebody who had been sexually abused, who has feelings that there are a lot of unresolved issues around that would probably benefit from that kind of treatment. I think that, with a little bit of support and education, even those who had difficult childhood experiences can get comfortable with asking questions of children and giving children the information that they need.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Let me ask you another question. "Who do you think is best qualified to facilitate a school-based education?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

There are two models. There's a model that relies on specially trained educators to do this. There's a model that relies on ordinary classroom teachers. I think both of those can be successful, but I think the key is not to have somebody doing it who doesn't feel fully comfortable and has gotten enough training to be able to do it. Unfortunately, given shortages of time and manpower in schools, sometimes when they do prevention education, they delegate it to somebody who isn't really fully comfortable. That's when the kids don't get a good exposure to the information.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Another question was asked, "What website resource provide parents with good age-appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about staying safe and speaking up?" Do you have any suggestions there?

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

There's some materials that are available at the website of the Committee for Children out of Seattle. Some of their material has to be purchased, but I think that there may be some information in their child protection unit. The Boy Scouts is another organization that provides information to parents about talking to their kids about sexual abuse. Those are two possible places.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Not a problem. Next question: "Do you know what percentage of pedophiles were also sexually abused as children?" Do we have any data on that?

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Yes. Once again, a pedophile is not the same as a child molester. A pedophile is somebody with a primary sexual interest in prepubescent children. The rates tend to be about 50%. About half of them will report some sexual abuse. What that means is that ... That's a rate that is higher than typical for a male population, which will be somewhere more around 10%, people who become child molesters without having had some sexual abuse episode in their own background.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Another question is, "Do you have any references for program liability mitigation for those interested and addressed in sexual abuse prevention, which are the clubs or organizations?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

No, I am not really knowledgeable about that. The only ... Yeah, I'm not really knowledgeable about that. Sorry.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Fair enough. That's good. Next question: "Are there any ..." Oops. Lost my question. "Are there any good books to assist parents when educating their children?" I assume that's with regards to sexual abuse.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Yes, there are, but I'm not going to be able to give you the titles right now. I could put that up. There's some place on the website when we're ... Afterward.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Probably, if you sent it to us, we'll add it to your presentation on the website. That will probably be the best way to do it. Another question was, "What [inaudible] best treatments in case of therapies needed for both adults and children?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

I mentioned the Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is an important one. There's a strong evidence base to that.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. ... "Why is it that when a child [inaudible] court system [inaudible] all the help ..." Try to understand the question here. Let's see. [inaudible] "Why is that, when a child gets into the court system to have all the help ... What prevention can be helpful before it gets into the system ... Before the child gets into the system?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

That's a very good question. One of the big problems we have is that we don't have the most child-friendly judicial system, so that when cases come out in the course of the investigation and the prosecution and the sentencing, there can be situations that are very troubling for the child ... Either in the way that the investigations or the outcomes of the case, or the exposure in the media ... We really need to try and make those systems much more child-friendly and cushion kids from the impact of that. One of the things, of course, that turns out to be very important is for people to be honest with them about what's going to go on. Another thing is for there to be good communication between them and their family and the people who are doing the investigation or in charge of the prosecution, so they're not left with questions and confusion about what actually is happening.

Another is for them to have advocates and counselors who they can get support from. We have these children's advocacy centers, which there are 7 or 800 now around the United States. One of the main goals of these children's advocacy centers is to cushion the impact of investigation and justice system involvement on children. It's very important that all the people who are interacting with the children around this case have some developmental training, have some understanding of the kinds of concerns and anxieties that kids bring to it. Another thing that I think is very important, that we don't talk enough about, is making sure that we resolve these cases much more quickly. They typically can take a year, two, three years, sometimes to come to a resolution. That can be really agony for kids who are trying to get on with their lives.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. David, would you elaborate a little bit more in terms of the substantiated and non substantiated and the difference between the two and percentages of reported cases? Not every reported case is substantiated, as you know.

*Dr. Finkelhor:*



That is true. In the child protection system ... This varies from state to state ... Typically, if a report comes in, a decision is made about whether to assign it for investigation. If it is investigated, the investigation comes to a conclusion about whether the preponderance of the evidence suggests that the child was abused. In which case, many states, the allegation is deemed to be substantiated. Some states have a classification, which is in-between substantiated and unsubstantiated. They may call it ... There's some evidence, but it's not certain. Overall, the substantiation rate for reports coming in to child protection agencies vary tremendously from state to state, from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and according to the type of abuse. Overall, something on the order of only about 20 to 25% of reports are substantiated. In sexual abuse, they tend to be higher. It's very important ... They tend to be higher. They're more on the order of 40%.

That still means that the majority of reports are not substantiated. It doesn't mean that the abuse did not occur. It simply means that, based on the evidence that's available, the investigator was not able to actually determine what happened. More intensive studies suggest that the number of intentionally false reports of sexual abuse are quite small, on the order of about 82% of all reports. It does happen, but most of the unsubstantiated reports are people carrying out the mandate that they report suspicions of abuse and then the investigation being unable to really determine if anything happened.

*Dr. Nacev:*

A quick follow-up to that [inaudible] back when I was doing clinical practice, an alarming phenomena where, particularly mothers would report child sexual abuse in order to gain custody of their child or children. Any thoughts on that?

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

There are some statistics about that, but they're not very recent. Studies that have been done suggest that when sexual abuse allegations arise in the case of custody disputes, about a third of the time they are deemed to be false allegations. About a third of the time, they're confirmed. About a third of the time, it could not be ... A firm conclusion could not be arrived at.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Thank you. Moving on to another question. "How can providers encourage parents to provide sexual education to their children to include being honest about their sexual orientation?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

It's hard for a one size fits all response to that, because there are many different value positions on the issue of sexual orientation and its meaning. It is, I think, important for daycare providers and school counselors and all that to make recommendations to parents that they provide basic sex education, including information about sexual abuse, to their children and to suggest the kinds of things that are appropriate at different ages. Parents may want to get additional advice

on this from books or from their religious authorities. Many churches and faiths have sex education programs for parents and children. That's another source of information.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Okay. Another question: "Is there research to indicate that non-offending parent groups are of benefit?" Can they serve as role models? [inaudible]

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

The research is very clear that the reactions and responses of non-offending parents are very crucial to the recovery of children who have been the victims, particularly, of inter familial abuse. We should do everything that we can to help improve the ability of parents, other relatives and siblings, to support victims in the wake of inter familial sexual abuse. It's typically a very devastating experience for the victims who find themselves alienated from everybody in their family and quite isolated.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Probably dear to us folks in the military, "Do you have any statistics on if military children are at a higher risk for sexual abuse?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

I don't have those statistics. We did do a study of sexual abuse in the context of the Air Force and deployment quite a few years ago. One of the findings that was of use to the people in planning is that parental involvement in childcare and child rearing is a very important protective factor. Among people who were out of the home due to deployments and things of that sort, if that interfered with them being closely related to the children, those individuals were at higher risk of later on engaging in sexual activities with their children. It is something important for people who are working with military to think about. I'm sure it's an issue that everybody ... Trying to keep enlisted parents engaged with their children is, I'm sure, a very large priority.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Our last question for today is, "What do you think of EMDR for treatment of sexual abuse victims?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

I'm not really a treatment provider. I know that there is some evidence that EMDR is effective in treating trauma. I'm not really aware of what the evidence is about EMDR treating specifically sexual abuse trauma. I'm sorry. I let you down on that. Is that the last question? Do you want to ask one more?

*Dr. Nacev:*

One more question. "Aren't there children or groups who are more vulnerable to abuse?"

*Dr. Finkelhor:*

Yes there are. It's important ... The two main things that create vulnerability to abuse are poor supervision and emotional problems. Kids who don't have good adult relationships and good adult supervision are at more risk. That can happen for a variety of reasons ... Because their parents are compromised. It could happen because their parents are deployed. It could happen because the family has broken up for some reason. Kids who are emotionally vulnerable, who are needy, who don't have friends, who are depressed, who have low self esteem ... These kids are much more vulnerable to the kinds of grooming or incentives that abusers or malicious peers have to offer them. By strengthening supervision of kids and their own emotional resilience, we can protect them from sexual abuse.

I am available. You can find me at the University of New Hampshire if you have questions that you'd like to send me. I would try and respond to them later on. If you feel I could be helpful to you in some way, please feel free to get in touch with me. I really admire all of you who are out there working with young people and with families to try and keep them safe. I really wish you good luck in all your work. Thank you very much.

*Dr. Nacev:*

Thank you very much, Dr. Finkelhor. Today's presentation will be archived in the monthly webinar section of DCoE websites. To help us improve future webinars, we encourage you to complete the feedback tool that will be open in a separate browser on your computer. To access the presentation and resource list for this webinar, visit the DCoE website at [dcoe.mil/webinars](http://dcoe.mil/webinars). A downloadable audio podcast and edited transcript of the closed caption text will be posted to the link as well. The chat function will remain open for an additional ten minutes after the conclusion of the webinar to permit attendees to continue to work with each other ... That is to network with each other. The next DCoE TBI webinar, which is on "Cognitive Rehabilitation in mild TBI Applications in Military Service Members and Veterans" is scheduled for June 9, 2016 from 1:00 to 2:30. Our next DCoE psychological health webinar "Facilitating Help-seeking Behaviors for Military Health Concerns" is scheduled for May 26, 2016, again, from 1:00 to 2:30 Eastern time.

The 2016 DCoE Summit, "State of the Science: Advances in Diagnostics and Treatments of Psychological Health in Traumatic Brain Injury in Military Healthcare" is scheduled for September 13-15, 2016. Summit registration and continuing education information will be available soon. Thank you again for attending, and have a great day.

*Operator:*

Thank you. This does conclude the presentation. You may disconnect at this time.