Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a student's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Sexual abuse is defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act as "the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any student to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children."

What Are the Effects of Sexual Abuse?

The effects of sexual abuse extend far beyond childhood. Sexual abuse robs students of their childhood and creates a loss of trust, feelings of guilt and self-abusive behavior. It can lead to antisocial behavior, depression, identity confusion, loss of self-esteem and other serious emotional problems. It can also lead to difficulty with intimate relationships later in life.

Identifying Sexual Abuse Among Students

Students who are sexually abused may exhibit behavioral changes, based on their age.

Children ages 2 to 9 may exhibit:
- Fear of particular people, places or activities
- Regression to earlier behaviors such as bed wetting or stranger anxiety
- Victimization of others
- Feelings of shame or guilt
- Nightmares or sleep disturbances
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Fear of attack recurring
- Eating disturbances

Symptoms of sexual abuse in older children and adolescents include:
- Depression
- Nightmares or sleep disturbances
- Poor school performance
- Promiscuity
- Substance abuse
- Aggression
- Running away from home
- Eating disturbances
- Early pregnancy or marriage
- Suicidal gestures
- Anger about being forced into situation beyond one’s control
- Pseudo-mature behaviors