

12 Approaches to Engaging with Children who have Suffered Sexual Abuse

This section summarizes 12 reports documenting approaches appropriate for work with children who have experienced sexual abuse. The included reports reflect research from European contexts, but also draw upon case studies from other non-European countries. In addition to specific practices, some reports discuss methods and approaches for working with the families of these children, as well as the implications of different legal and policy frameworks on service provision.

1. Guidelines for Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse (International Rescue Committee, 2012). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/caring-child-survivors-sexual-abuse?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/caring-child-survivors-sexual-abuse?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT LANGUAGE***)

This document contains guidelines on knowledge areas, child-friendly attitude competencies, principles of communication and case management for carers of child survivors of sexual abuse. The goal of this resource is to assist staff in providing high quality care to children and families affected by sexual abuse. The document offers a logic model displaying a theory of change and what elements of care remain essential in serving this population. As identified in the model, the key elements are: child-centered case management, child-specialized treatment and clinical services, and service providers who apply best-practices. The guidelines are organized into seven chapters, yet equally important is the inclusion of several practical assessment tools. For example, a sample “Child Needs Assessment and Case Action Plan” and “Child Case Follow-Up Form” are included. Especially for caseworkers and NGOs already engaged in work with children and families, such forms may be of immediate use and assistance.

2. 10 Essential Learning Points: Listen and Speak out against Child Sexual Abuse (Save the Children, 2005). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/10-essential-learning-points-listen-and-speak-out-against-sexual?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/10-essential-learning-points-listen-and-speak-out-against-sexual?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT LANGUAGE***)

This report draws attention to the issue of violence (mainly sexual abuse) towards children by presenting country specific case studies as a means to highlighting key principles relevant to those working with this population. Information is drawn from Save the Children’s work in the following countries: Romania, Spain, Canada, Colombia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Syria, South Africa,

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Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, Bangladesh and Nepal. Participants were asked to report on good practices and lessons from their respective context, as well as to include findings from children's participation in the study. Key finding of this study are that perpetrators are: often known by the child, usually are male, and often someone the child should be or is relying on for protection (father, sibling, police officer, and/or religious leader). The 10 Essential Learning Points were gathered from child victims of sexual abuse and provide guidance on how to best care and provide support.

3. Towards a Child-friendly Justice and Support for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse - European Children's Houses (Excerpt from publication by Council of Europe, 2011).

[http://childhub.org//self-study-materials/towards-child-friendly-justice-and-support-child-victims-sexual-abuse?listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=](http://childhub.org//self-study-materials/towards-child-friendly-justice-and-support-child-victims-sexual-abuse?listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=)

This chapter examines the phenomenon of child abuse in Europe, including the stages of societal awareness, Europe's policy and legislative response, and then provides a case study from Iceland from their "Children's Houses (Barnahus)" as an example of a child-friendly approach to supporting children who have experienced sexual abuse. After reviewing the milestones of European policy, the author describes common characteristics of child sexual abuse and underscore the need for disclosure of the crime. Additionally, the author stresses that after disclosure, the need for a multi-agency (disciplinary) response as a means to assisting the child in the healing process. Before the case study, the author refers to the standards provided by the National Children's Alliance, which provide a good starting point for NGOs interested in working with child survivors of sexual abuse.

4. From Victim to Survivor, from Survivor to Leader (GEMS, 2014).

[http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/victim-survivor-survivor-leader?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/victim-survivor-survivor-leader?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

This paper discusses the effects of leadership programmes for female victims of commercial child sexual exploitation. The founder of the US-based (New York) NGO GEMS (Girls Educational and Mentoring Services) has written this paper in order to suggest that victims of sexual exploitation need opportunities for leadership. The paper is based on GEMS's research with 11 of their own clients, who are all child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and range between 18-24 years old. This qualitative study revealed several themes pertaining to leadership, with participants indicating that opportunities for leadership have played a strategic role in their healing process. The paper is saturated with exact quotations from research participants and offers key, practical insights into what is needed to help a victim transition into a leader.

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5. Recovery Services for Child Victims of Sexual Violence and Their Families - What Can Be Offered? (Excerpt from publication by Council of Europe, 2011).
[http://childhub.org//self-study-materials/recovery-services-child-victims-sexual-violence-and-their-families-what-can-be?listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=](http://childhub.org//self-study-materials/recovery-services-child-victims-sexual-violence-and-their-families-what-can-be?listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=)

This chapter outlines the needs of children who have experienced sexual violence, as well as their families, and discusses gaps and promising approaches in order to address these needs. The author begins by justifying the need to respond to children and families affected by sexual violence and then notes that there is a general lack of evidence-based practices. Yet, in spite of a relatively small empirical foundation, there remains a number of key services which can assist this population. The author recognizes services, such as case management and the need for specialist services, but also draws attention to basic needs, such as housing, food, and healthcare. In terms of family services, the author discusses reintegration situations, as well as services for families who do not include the perpetrator.

6. It's a Lonely Journey: A Rapid Evidence Assessment on Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse (Office of the Children's Commissioner UK, 2014).
[http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/its-lonely-journey?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/its-lonely-journey?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

This report examines the specific issue of child sexual abuse by a family member or within a family environment and sets out some best practices for engaging child victims. Specifically, the authors conducted a "Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)" (similar to a scoping review) in order to understand better what is already known about the prevalence, scale and scope of child sexual abuse within the family concerning both the victims and perpetrators, and to also identify gaps in knowledge. Additionally, the authors were interested to explore interventions, effective treatment and support. After examining a large volume of material, the authors note a key finding, mainly that the voices of child victims were not often included in research and instead, many studies rely upon adult victims to "flashback" and account their stories. The report includes 9 Key Features of Good Practice with this population, but also notes that overall evaluation research on interventions remains scarce.

7. What Works in Tackling Child Abuse and Neglect? A Manual for Policy Makers, Managers & Professionals (Netherlands Youth Institute, 2012).
[http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/what-works-tackling-child-abuse-and-neglect?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/what-works-tackling-child-abuse-and-neglect?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

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This publication looks at how child abuse (including sexual abuse) is handled in terms of policy and legal frameworks, as well as the provision of services to victims in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands. Several conclusions and recommendations are included and range in terms of topic, such as prevention, detection, and treatment. In the included topics, a cross-country comparison is conducted, showing the strengths and weaknesses of different countries. This approach allows readers to evaluate their own contexts in light of these comparisons and ideally identify tools while becoming aware of weaknesses or gaps. The section on treatment will likely be of interest to practitioners, as it reviews different approaches and/or features of interventions and is drawn from examples from different countries.

8. Learning from Children Exposed to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation: The Bamboo Project Study on Child Resilience - Bulgaria (Oak Foundation, 2014). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/learning-children-exposed-sexual-abuse-and-sexual-exploitation?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/learning-children-exposed-sexual-abuse-and-sexual-exploitation?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

This publication examines different ways in which sexually abused children express resilience and how various resources (family, state, NGO, etc.) can help them recover. This study, conducted in Bulgaria, is a result of research among children, parents and leaders about their lives, with a particular focus on what helps them to overcome difficulties and recover from trauma. The team explored the life narratives of children and adults who have experienced violence and/or are from abusive environments in order to identify resources that helped them move forward. More specifically, the researchers focused on “turning points”, or moments in the participants’ lives when they either were able to grow or they experienced trauma and (more) difficulty. The authors note that the key finding was that children remember the people who invested in them and helped them to overcome life’s challenges.

9. Hidden Violence: Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Adolescent Boys (Promundo/MenCare, 2012). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/hidden-violence-preventing-and-responding-sexual-exploitation-and?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/hidden-violence-preventing-and-responding-sexual-exploitation-and?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

This short (13 pages) report summarizes findings from a research study exploring the challenges faced by male child victims of sexual abuse. A guiding aim of this study was to raise awareness and direct attention to the challenges faced by boys, while also not detracting from female victims of sexual abuse. The findings are based on international data gathered from nine countries: Brazil, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Nepal, Nicaragua, and South Africa. The report narrows its focus to Nicaragua and the experience of NGO workers

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in raising awareness of male sexual abuse and exploitation through participatory action research. The report closes with key conclusions and recommendations from the case study (Nicaragua) and the broader data set.

10. Child Welfare Practices for Cases with Child Sexual Abuse (The Oregon Department of Human Services, 2012). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/child-welfare-practices-cases-child-sexual-abuse?language=en&listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/child-welfare-practices-cases-child-sexual-abuse?language=en&listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***)

This publication provides detailed advice for caseworkers on interviewing children about sexual abuse and following up with victims and their families. These guidelines were developed for social service workers and administrators in the US state of Oregon, with the goal being to offer workers the best practice standards for assessment, intervention, and planning for cases involving child sexual abuse. Organized into different sections, the guidelines cover specific principles for working with sexually abused children, understanding sex offenders, and then also provides case (situational) specific instances of sexual abuse in order to better understand methods of intervention. Although the case examples are drawn from the US context, the review of intervention strategies and practice implications can be generalized to other contexts.

11. Therapeutic Services for Sexually Abused Children and Young People: Scoping the Evidence Base (NSPCC, 2012). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/therapeutic-services-sexually-abused-children-and-young-people?listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/therapeutic-services-sexually-abused-children-and-young-people?listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=)

This report discusses the impact of sexual abuse and different therapeutic approaches. Specifically, the authors were interested to uncover and explore the effectiveness of different therapeutic interventions. Practitioners providing direct care to child victims will find the review of therapeutic approaches useful, with the authors organizing the approaches into two broad categories: "talking" and "creative". The authors note that although therapy is generally reported as being helpful for victims, there remains very little evidence in terms of effectiveness for specific types of therapy. The one exception is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which is why it remains a leading approach. The authors call for more research of other approaches in order to diversify the therapeutic response and evidence base.

12. Out from the Shadows: Sexual Violence against Children with Disabilities (Save the Children, 2011). [http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/out-shadows-sexual-violence-against-children-disabilities?listlang\[\]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=en](http://childhub.org/child-protection-online-library/out-shadows-sexual-violence-against-children-disabilities?listlang[]=***CURRENT_LANGUAGE***&language=en)

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This publication looks specifically at the sexual abuse of children with disabilities, which is a particularly vulnerable population due to increased discrimination and marginalization. Findings are the result of qualitative research conducted in 2010 in four African countries (Burundi, Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania (Zanzibar)) among 89 adults with disabilities who had been abused as children, as well as 152 care providers and professionals associated with their protection (lawyers, police, social workers, and teachers). The researchers have made five recommendations, with a key being the need to actively draw this population into a more visible position in society. Although the findings are from an African context, the principles and recommendations are generalizable to other geographic contexts.

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