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Causes: Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Miller, Vernon & Capella, 2005

I. d/hh stu lack of info re. sex education + caretakers lack of knowledge of sexual signs...

"Many deaf children receive little or no sex education presented in sign language by responsible adults. This is due, in part, to the caretakers' lack of knowledge of the appropriate signs of sexual behavior (Harry, 1984)."

"Only small numbers of educators and service providers are aware of sign language that describes sexual behavior as used by deaf people (Harry, 1984; Job, 2004). Thus, sex education and knowledge of illegal sexual behavior is often lacking."

II. limited language skills of stu who are d/hh - impedes their ability to effectively tell others of

their abuse...

"In terms of reporting sexual abuse, deaf children who are language delayed may not possess the language skills to be able to identify body parts and actions taken against them. Previous research also suggested that deaf children who report sexual abuse may not receive an appropriate response from school administrators in terms of making police reports or removing an abuser from the campus (Sullivan et al., 1987)."

Obinna, Kruger, Osterbaan & Sadusky, 2005

- I. insufficient opt. for indi in Deaf Community to acquire needed info re. sex education and sexual abuse...**

" P. 21

o "The Deaf community (collectively and individually) faces unique challenges in dealing with sexual abuse in that,

" Among the Deaf population, there are many factors influencing the lack of knowledge regarding sexuality. Insufficient opportunities to acquire information, parental reluctance to provide sexuality education, inadequate school-based instruction, and misinformation from peers are often investigated for the role they play in the transfer of sexual knowledge to Deaf adolescents and adults (Job, 2004)."

o "If Deaf individuals as compared to hearing individuals have less information regarding sexuality and less terminology to

discuss sexuality, it will be more difficult for them to engage both informal social supports and formal support systems."

II. myths re. sexuality and deaf individuals, ergo the lack of need for information action on the topic of sexual abuse...

o "Griffiths (cited in Watson, 2002) proposed a model of the seven "myth-conceptions" of sexuality of individuals who have developmental disabilities. Job (2004) found that these "myth-conceptions" provide a suitable framework for examining the sexuality of Deaf individuals in that they parallel the realities of others considered by society to be "disabled." Job's "myth-conceptions" are as follows:

" Deaf Individuals are eternal children and asexual.

" Deaf individuals need to live in environments that restrict and inhibit their sexuality, to protect themselves and others.

" Deaf individuals should not be provided with sex education, as it will only encourage inappropriate behavior.

" Deaf individuals should be sterilized because they will give birth to children who are also disabled.

" Deaf individuals are sexually different from other people and are more likely to develop diverse, unusual, or deviant sexual behavior.

" Deaf individuals are oversexed, promiscuous, sexually indiscriminate, and dangerous, and you have to watch your

children around them.

" Deaf individuals cannot benefit from sexual counseling or treatment (2003)."

Sullivan, Brookhouser & Scanlon, 2000

I. communication problems...

"Communication problems inherent in many disabilities render children unable to understand and/or verbalize episodes of maltreatment (Brookhouser et al., 1986; Morgan, 1987)."

"...non-verbal children are at increased risk of maltreatment, as are children with disabilities limiting their speech and language skills (Sobsey and Varnhagen, 1988)."

II. need for physical assistance...

p. 152

"Finkelhor et al. (1988) found that most daycare abuse occurs around toileting, suggesting that disabilities enhancing the need for toileting assistance may be associated with increased risk of sexual abuse.

III. residential schools for the deaf...

p. 166-167

Dynamics of abuse in institutions

...describes how/why sexual abuse occurs...how abused children

often feel/react...plus common pattern of administrative response

p. 168-169

...work of Sobsey...conceptual presentation of why residential schools are such a pervasive site of abuse + how such schools can be made safer

MacDougall, 2000

I. lack of sex education in schools...

"Lack of sexual education in the school system whether in the residential school or in the mainstream setting is often mentioned as a significant factor to be addressed in terms of prevention of future family violence (Hill,1999a, 1999b, 1999c)."

II. lack of knowledge by indi who are d/hh re what constitutes abuse...

P. 16

"The issue of what constitutes abuse is a pervasive one. There is a profound lack of knowledge of the varieties of abuse, how to deal with abuse and

how to report abuse

to the appropriate authorities (Doe, 2000). Again the situation here parallels that for

other minority groups but because of the early educational and linguistic

deprivation, for many deaf people (MacDougall,1991), the situation is particularly troubling."

Sullivan, Vernon & Scanlon, 1987

I. deaf children conditioned to comply with authority figures...

. Deaf children who are conditioned to comply with authority, are in subordinate positions, are fearful of threats and are susceptible to bribes and the promise of reward. They tend to be intensely curious and are usually highly naïve about sexual norms and values. Finally, children are also sensual beings who may respond willingly to intimate contact which they often associate with feelings of being loved and cared about. These dynamics can play a major role in children's vulnerability to sex abuse and reluctance to report it."

Vernon & Miller, 2002

I. d/hh kids have little or no sex education, do not understand what is happening...

"Most youth who are deaf get little or no sex education from their parents, and many do not get it at school. Hence, they often may

not know that it is wrong for an adult to fondle them or initiate sexual relations. The children may sense that it is wrong and feel uneasy about it, but because someone in authority does it to them, it is often accepted as being all right, or at least tolerable.

II. lack of adults that can understand their sexual signs...

Furthermore, there may be no responsible adult they can talk to about it because frequently their residence hall counselors, parents, or teachers do not know sexual signs, nor are they fluent in American Sign Language."

III. once a sexual molester is hired, they frequently encourage others to engage in the molestation...

"Once a sexual molester gains employment in or other access to a school, over time his or her victims tend to victimize and otherwise involve other students, thus spreading the behavior. Often the adult molester will encourage a fellow molester to get a job at the school. Very soon, what was an isolated incident becomes an epidemic."

[Chandler - n.d.](#)

I. lack of necessary educational material and learning opt...

" P. 5

o "...there is a lack of appropriate cultural and linguistic resources related to education about safety and sexual abuse

" P. 7

o "Deaf/Hard of hearing individuals often do not have equitable access to education and information as a whole. Instruction about

sexuality and socially appropriate sexual conduct may not be provided, with the assumption that the students are incapable of understanding (Reynolds, 1997). In educational settings, teachers may not be sufficiently competent in the student's optimal language or communication mode to provide clear instruction and discussion on the topic. Without this knowledge, Deaf/Hard of hearing individuals may not realize that it is wrong for an adult (or adolescent) to be sexual with a child, or that they have the right to say "no" and not be touched or forced to participate in an activity with which they are uncomfortable. Victims may blame themselves or feel guilty if they are physically responsive to unwanted stimulation (Potts and Lewis, 1989). If the perpetrator is someone who has been affectionate and kind to them, or who is a caretaker, the individual may be confused about what has happened even though something feels "wrong." Or they may think this is something that happens to everybody (Reynolds, 1997; Mouny, 1988; Mouny and Fetterman, 1989; Westerlund, 1990, 1993)."

" Reynolds, L. A. (1997). People with mental retardation and sexual abuse. The Arc. Retrieved January 14, 2005 from <http://www.thearc.org/faqs/Sexabuse.html>."

" Mouny, J. L. (1988, June). Deaf CAP and Diversity: Integrating multicultural issues into our lives. Panel presented at

the New England Child Assault Prevention Conference, Worcester, MA."

" "Mouny, J. L., & Fetterman, R. J. (1989, June). An abuse prevention program for deaf and hard of hearing children. Paper presented at the convention of the Council of American Instructors of the Deaf, San Diego, CA."

" "Westerlund, E. (1993). Thinking about incest, deafness, and counseling. In M. Nagler (Ed.), *Perspectives on disability* (pp. 341-344). Palo Alto, CA: Health Markets Research."

" Westerlund, E. (1990). Thinking about incest, deafness, and counseling. *Journal of the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association*, 23, 105-107."

II. parent's & children's limited com ability...

o "Deaf children and teens, like many children without any disability, are often not believed by professionals or family members when they report abuse, and for a Deaf/Hard of Hearing child with a limited ability to communicate and speak for themselves in a hearing world, they are not able to counter the arguments of those who both speak for them and abuse them (Wambach, 2005)."

" "Wambach, M. (2005). *Investigations within deaf institutions: A start-up guide for law and forensic professionals*. Update,

American Prosecutors Research Institute's National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse, 18 (4)."

" P. 16

o "Many Deaf children normalize their experience of having been sexually or physically abused because their fund of knowledge may be limited. More often than not, their parents are unable to communicate with them on a level sophisticated enough to explain what kinds of interactions are unacceptable or inappropriate, thus preparing them to deal with potentially abusive situations. In the absence of shared accessible communication, Deaf/Hard of hearing children and their parents cannot discuss the abuse that has already occurred, and there are likely to be misunderstandings if such discussions or disclosures are attempted by the child or the parents. Communication issues may lead some parents to disbelieve a child who attempts to report abuse or inappropriate sexual experiences."

III. children may not understand that the abuse they are experiencing is wrong...

" P. 17

o "Deaf/HOH children, like many children, may discuss the abuse with their peers and discover that their friends have been abused also. This may serve to reinforce the Deaf child's perception that

physical and sexual abuse "typically" occur, and subsequently, the child will not be inclined to tell an adult. The Deaf/Hard of hearing child may not realize that the abuse was wrong, or they may experience denial, shame, or guilt for not stopping or preventing the abuse (Mertens, Wilson, and Mouny, 2005). As a result of limited access to education about sexuality, appropriate intervention, and the insularity within the population; some Deaf adults may be survivors themselves and may normalize inappropriate and abusive sexual experiences, and thus possibly minimize or discount the veracity of reports made by their own children. A study of 47 cases of Deaf parents with Deaf and hearing children involved in the California Child Protective Services system found a high percentage (36 percent) of the mothers had been abused as children, were victims of domestic violence, were likely to be substance abusers, and were largely poor and unemployed (Charlson, 2005)."

" "Charlson, E. S. (2005). At-risk deaf parents and their children. In Austen S., & Crocker, S. (Eds.) Deafness in mind: Working psychologically with deaf people across the lifespan. London: Whurr Publishers Ltd., Chapter 15."