



## Council on Sex Offender Treatment Treatment of Sex Offenders - Female Sex Offenders

Although the majority of sex offenders are male, it is clear that female sex offenders exist and this population of offender is largely unrecognized and neglected. Recent research consistently reveals that females account for about one in four offenders (Pearson, 1997). Additionally, because females often fulfill care-taking roles, female sex offenders may abuse a child under the guise of appropriate care (Jennings, 1993; Mitchell & Morse, 1998). However, there is a paucity of professional literature and clinical practice that describes the needs of the female sex offender. Professional literature often presents females as victims even when they are identified as perpetrators. This lack of attention is regrettable for those who have been victimized by females.

A female as a sex offender is an idea that society has difficulty acknowledging and it challenges society's beliefs about females. The notion of females as aggressive, exploitive, violent, and deviant offenders is not compatible with society's picture of women as mothers, sisters, wives, and the "gentler sex". Many professionals do not accept the idea that females would use their position and power in this manner. This creates a professional and cultural state of denial.

In a 2000 study, Snyder estimated that females commit 12% of all sexual offenses against victims under the age of 6 and 6% of the sexual offenses against children between six (6) and twelve (12) years old.

It is estimated that 64% of the sexual abuse committed by females were crimes against biological relatives and 19% were against victims who were unrelated to the offender (Saradjian, 1996). The age of onset of the abuse was 3.2 years old (Rosencrans, 1997).

Recent findings strongly challenge the belief that female sex offenders are rarely violent (Marvasti, 1986, Johnson and Shrier, 1987). Seventy percent (70%) of the female sex offenders in this study used extraneous violence against their victims. It is important to acknowledge that this population of female sex offenders does exist.

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