

A Review of Findings from the 2005 Task Force on Juvenile Sexual Offenders and Their Victims

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Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Juveniles who sexually offend vary considerably with regard to demographics, characteristics, and offense behaviors, which leads to difficulties with interpretation and generalizing study findings. ¹



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- It is estimated that nearly half of all child molestations and one-fifth of all rapes are committed by juveniles.²



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Compared to adults who sexually offend, juveniles who sexually offend are less aggressive and less serious in their sexual offenses.¹



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Most adolescent sex offenders are not sexual predators, do not meet the definition of pedophile, do not have deviant sexual arousal, and do not have the same long-term tendencies as adults.¹



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Juveniles who sexually offend are generally treatment responsive. The overall sex offense recidivism rate for juveniles is relatively low, usually between 5% and 15%. Juveniles who successfully complete sexual offender treatment have been found to have a lower recidivism rate than their untreated counterparts.³



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Non-sexual delinquent behavior is typical among juveniles who sexually offend. ⁴
- Juveniles who sexually offend are more likely to re-offend with non-sexual delinquent offenses than with new sexual offenses. ¹



Overview of Juveniles with Sexual Behavior Problems

- Conservative estimates of sexual abuse histories among male juveniles who sexually offend indicate they are three to four times more likely to have been sexually abused than male adolescents in the general population. Various studies have found sexual abuse rates for juveniles who sexually offend have reported sexual abuse rates between 40% and 80% and physical abuse rates between 20% and 50%.²

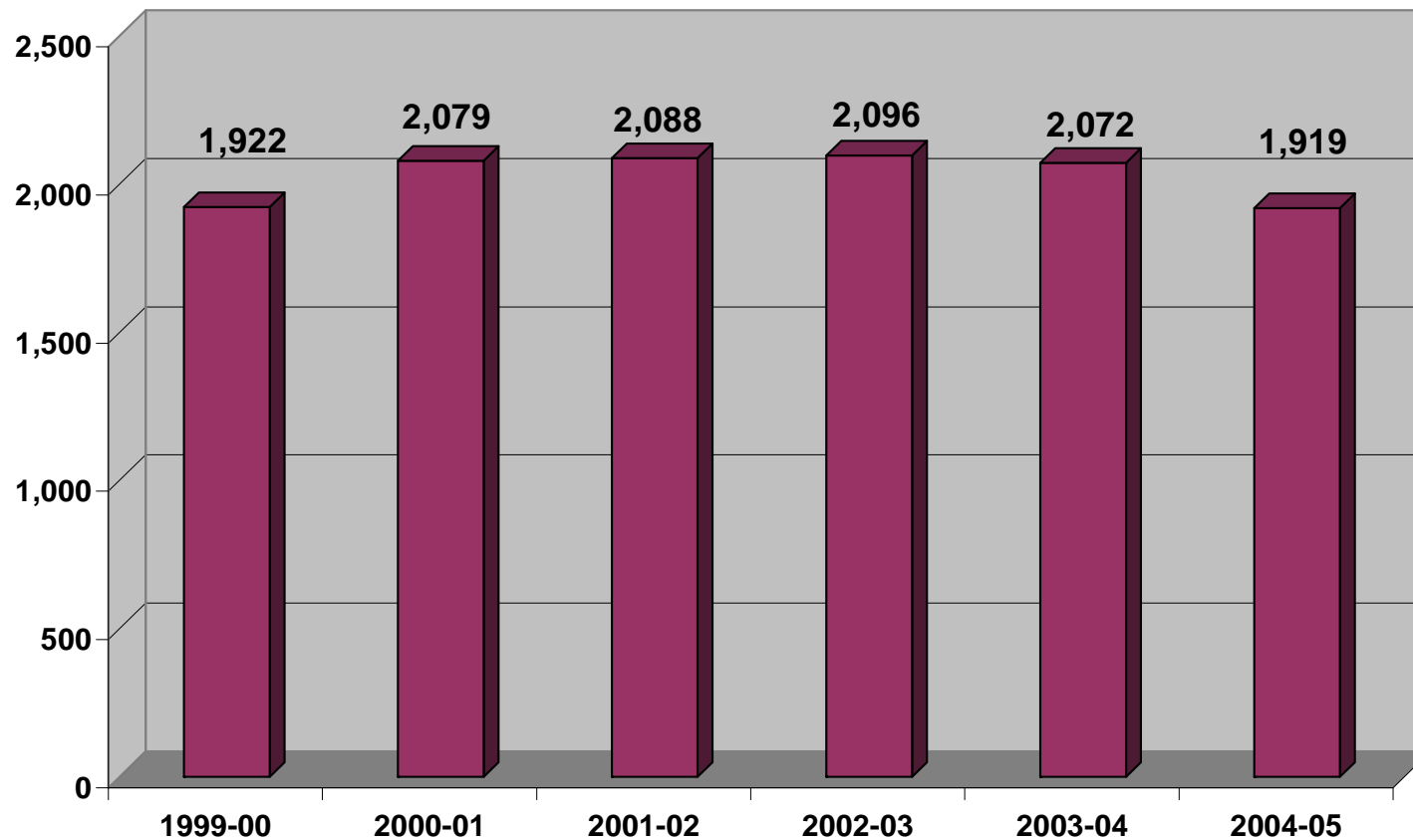


Post Treatment Recidivism Rates in Florida

- In a cohort of youth released from Department of Juvenile Justice sex offender treatment programs between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002, the sexual offense recidivism rate was 1.6% over a one year follow up period.⁵

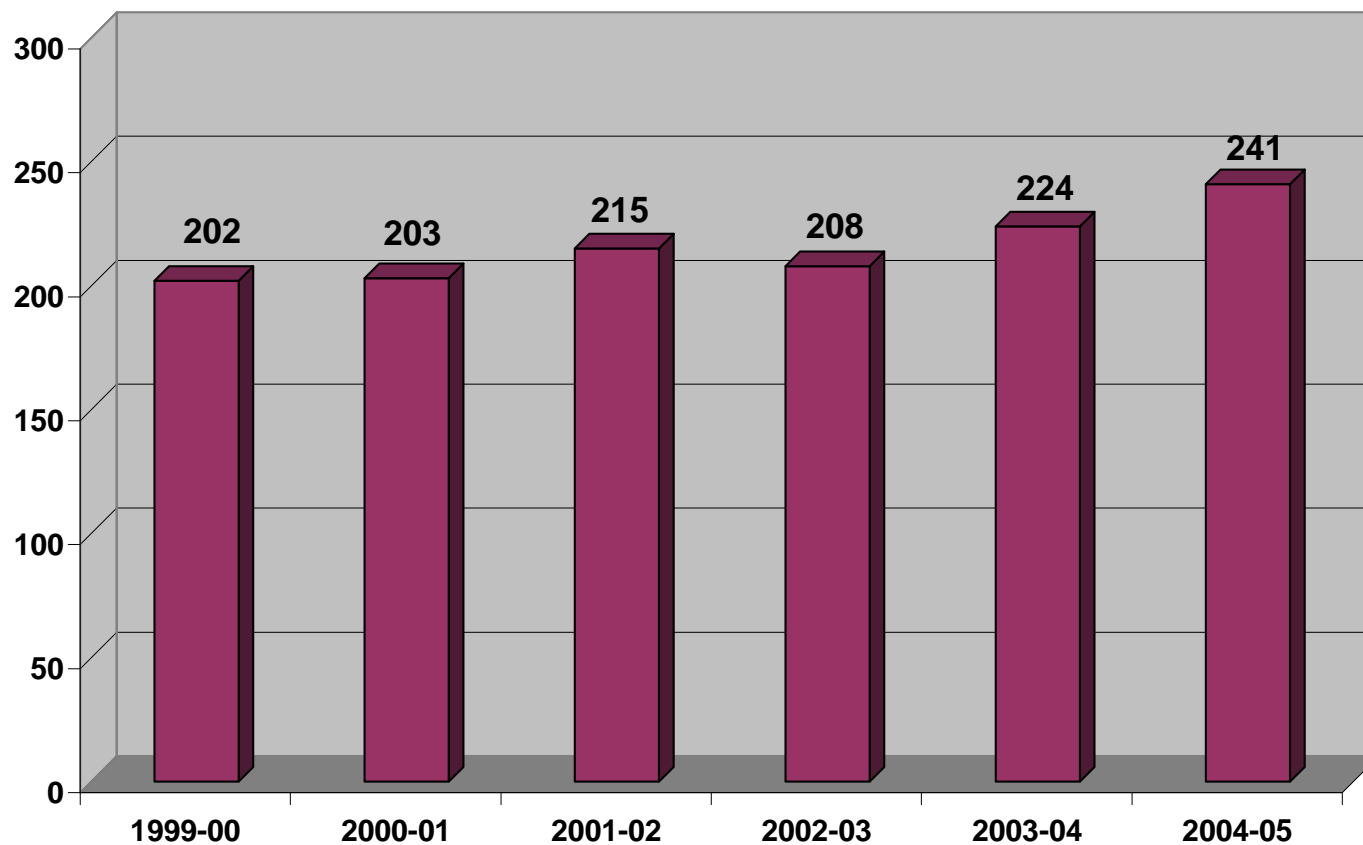
Incidence of FL Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems⁶

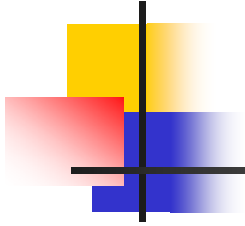
Table 1: Youth Referred for Sexual Delinquency



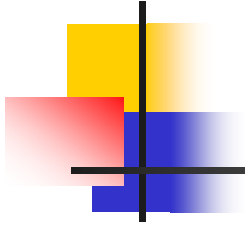
Commitment of FL Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems⁶

Table 2: Youth Committed for Sexual Delinquency





Findings of the Task Force



- 18 findings across 6 areas:
 - Response to Victims
 - Prevention and Awareness
 - Assessment and Evaluation
 - Treatment and Supervision
 - Legal Issues
 - Interagency Collaboration



Response to Victims

- Finding 1: Limited Resources for Victims and Families
 - Funding needed for long-term counseling
 - Expand role of CPT in child on child cases
 - DJJ & DCF to collaborate on development & delivery of training on the effects of trauma on child sexual abuse victims
 - Fund Sexual Abuse Intervention Networks (SAIN) in all 20 Judicial Circuits



Response to Victims

- Finding 2: Family Relationships Need Attention
 - DJJ or DCF to conduct home studies and victim trauma assessments prior to placement or reunification in sibling incest cases



Response to Victims

- Finding 3: Service Gap for Victims of Child-on-Child Offenses
 - DCF should centralize mandated reporting of child-on-child sexual battery
 - DCF to maintain open case so victim and family can receive services at reunification
 - Coordinate and advocate services with other victim assistance agencies for victim
 - Require Abuse Hotline to provide callers with information about treatment services



Response to Victims

- Finding 4: Limited Victim Advocacy
 - Legislature should reestablish Victim Services Unit of DJJ to address sexual victimization issues in the family
 - Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all family members for appropriate referrals and safety planning



Prevention and Awareness

- Finding 5: Lack of Education About Sexual Offending and Its Consequences
 - DOH should conduct public awareness campaign about consequences of inappropriate sexual behavior
 - DJJ or DOH develop a simple fact sheet for distribution to youth



Prevention and Awareness

- Finding 6: Lack of Educational Effort in Communities
 - DOH should encourage all school districts to include information on legal consequences of inappropriate sexual behaviors



Assessment and Evaluation

- Finding 7: Sexual Offender Assessments are Under-Funded and Poor in Quality
 - Legislature should require and fund comprehensive psychosexual evaluations conducted by qualified practitioners post adjudication and presentence



Assessment and Evaluation

- Finding 8: Inadequate Certification for Assessment Professionals
 - DJJ contract with qualified practitioners as defined by:
 - Active license under F. S. 458, 459, 490, or 491
 - 55 hours of post degree continuing education
 - Have 2,000 hours post-graduate supervised experience with youth who have committed sexually delinquent acts
 - 20 hours of biennial continuing education



Assessment and Evaluation

- Finding 9: Need for Valid Risk Assessment Tools
 - There are currently a number of risk assessment instruments in development which have not been adequately validated. DJJ should continue to monitor the development of these instruments



Treatment and Supervision

- Finding 10: Lack of Community-Based Treatment Resources
 - Explore reallocation of resources from high-risk residential programs to lower risk residential or community treatment; up to 25 youth can be treated in the community for the cost of one in residential treatment
 - Reinstate \$2.4 million cut from community-based sex offender budget with goals of making treatment available in every circuit



Treatment and Supervision

- Finding 11: Little Specialized Training for Probation
 - DJJ should expand use of specialized caseloads for officers supervising youth who have committed sexual offenses
 - DJJ to train probation and conditional release staff on specialized issues in supervising juveniles who have committed sexual offenses



Treatment and Supervision

- Finding 12: Need for Use of New Treatment Technologies
 - Legislature to authorize and fund DJJ to utilize polygraph and physiological assessment as deemed appropriate by qualified practitioners



Treatment and Supervision

- Finding 13: Lack of a Continuum of Treatment Options
 - Legislature should fund a pilot project to examine more effective ways to reintegrate youth back into the community
 - DJJ probation officer should begin working with youth and family 90 days prior to release
 - Legislature should require DCF to participate in transition planning for youth
 - Legislature should fund transitional living facilities



Treatment and Supervision

- Finding 14: Need for Specialized Quality Assurance Standards
 - DJJ to develop standards of treatment and quality assurance standards for the treatment of juveniles who have sexually offended.



Legal Issues

- Finding 15: State Should Avoid Label 'Juvenile Sex Offender'
 - Legislature should continue policy of not registering juveniles
 - Legislature should change F. S. 800.04 (4) (a) from a felony to misdemeanor in cases involving 'consensual' behavior between same age/developmental status youth



Legal Issues

- Finding 16: Establishing Intent as a Critical Element in Charging and Prosecution
 - DJJ and courts should ascribe greater weight to recommendations in psychosexual evaluations
 - State Attorneys and Courts should consider criminal intent and culpability before charging and adjudicating youth



Legal Issues

- Finding 17: Very Young Should not be Criminalized
 - Very young (under the age of 12) or developmentally immature children should be referred to DCF for treatment rather than prosecuted



Interagency Collaboration

- Finding 18: Poor Coordination of Services for Juvenile Sexual Offenders and Their Victims
 - DJJ should take the lead to establish an on-going collaboration between DJJ, DCF, FDLE, DOH, DOE, & AHCA
 - Legislature should require DJJ to assemble a Task Force every five years to review the issue of juveniles who commit sexual offenses



Summary

- Incidence of juvenile sexual offending has decreased in Florida
- Juveniles who commit sexual offenses have a very low recidivism rate
- A significant percentage of juveniles who commit sexual offenses where victims of sexual assault



Summary

- Victims are often siblings or young neighbors for whom services should be ensured
- Public awareness must be increased to ensure youth understand what is inappropriate sexual behavior and the consequences



Summary

- Comprehensive assessments should be conducted by qualified practitioners and the results of the assessment should drive placement and treatment decisions
- A continuum of services needs to be established with a decrease in high risk residential placements in favor of more community based care options



Summary

- Changes in Florida Statutes are recommended to clarify the term juvenile sex offender and the issue of consensual sex between adolescents
- State agencies which serve these youth and their families need to better coordinate their efforts so limited state resources can be maximized



The Good News!

- Sexual offenses committed by juveniles appear to be on the decline.
 - In 1995, juveniles accounted for one fifth of all rapes and almost one half of all child molestation^{2,7}
 - In 2004, juveniles accounted for 25.8% of all sex offenders and 35.6% of offenses against children⁸



If I Can Be Of Further Assistance

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References

- ¹ National Center for Sexual Behavior of Youth. (July, 2003). NCSBY Facts Sheet: What research shows about adolescent sex offenders [electronic version]. *National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth*, No. 1, 1-3.
- ² Ryan, G., Miyoshi, T.J., Metzner, J.L., Krugman, R.D., and Fryer, G.E. (1996). Trends in a national sample of sexually abusive youths [electronic version]. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 35, No. 1:17 – 25.
- ³ Worling, J.R. & Curwen, T., (2000). Adolescent sexual offender recidivism: Success of specialized treatment and implications for risk prediction. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(7), 965-982.
- ⁴ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2001). Juveniles who have sexually offended: OJJDP Report [electronic version]. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*.



References

- ⁵ Program Accountability Measures report, 2006, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.
- ⁶ Juvenile Sexual Offenders and Their Victims: Final Report (2006). Task Force on Juvenile Sexual Offenders and Their Victims. Available at:
http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Research/Sex_Offender_Task_Force_Report.pdf
- ⁷ Understanding Juvenile Sexual Offending Behavior: Emerging Research, Treatment Approaches and Management Practices (December 1999). Available at: www.csom.org/pubs/juvbrf10.pdf
- ⁸ Finkelhor, D., Ormord, R., & Chaffin, M. (December 2009). Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors. U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/ojjdp/227763.pdf>



Other Resources

- Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (www.ATSA.com)
- Florida Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (www.FloridaATSA.com)
- Center for Sex Offender Management (www.csom.org)
- Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (www.ojp.usdoj.gov)



Other Resources

- National Adolescent Perpetrators Network
(www.kempe.org/index.php?s=25)