



ECONOMIC & FISCAL IMPACTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN FLORIDA

MARCH 2015



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This white paper serves to illustrate and quantify how the effects of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Florida continue after abuse ends and how these effects impact our communities. Well beyond the emotional and physical trauma CSA victims endure, sexual abuse during childhood has proven to lead to significant complications throughout life, including the economic costs related to lost productivity and diminished quality of life. Using the most conservative figures available on the prevalence and economic impacts of CSA, this paper finds:

PRODUCTIVITY AND LOST INCOME COSTS

- Between 361,923 and 596,458 Florida children are or will become victims of sexual abuse before turning 18. This constitutes between 9 and 15 percent of Florida's current child population.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Prior research has estimated that victims of CSA will experience between \$210,012 and \$241,600 in lost earnings and other related costs over their lifetimes as a result of this abuse.
 - Based on the more conservative of these figures, Florida's current cohort of youths will see between **\$76.6 billion and \$125.2 billion** in lost earnings and related costs over their lifetimes. This means an annual loss of between \$952 million and \$1.58 billion for these children and their families.
- Looking only at Florida's current population of 205,000 third-graders, it is estimated that between 18,969 and 30,955 have or will become victims of CSA.
 - The aggregate lifetime costs for this cohort of current Florida third-graders are estimated to be between **\$3.98 billion and \$6.5 billion**. This means an annual loss of between **\$49.9 million and \$81.8 million** for this cohort of Florida third-graders.
- These cost estimates do not include those associated with cycles of abuse, increased crime and incarceration rates or greater utilization of other social services. In other words, the costs presented here are limited to selected cohorts of Florida children; are shouldered mostly by the individuals themselves; and do not account for the greater societal costs that result from child sexual abuse.

CRIME AND INCARCERATION COSTS FOR FEMALE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS

- We know from prior research that female victims of CSA are twice as likely as their peers to be arrested for a violent offense. This paper finds that while CSA victims conservatively represent between 14.3 and 20 percent of all adult females, they comprise between 25 and 35 percent of the adult female inmate population.
- In Fiscal Year 2012-13 Florida spent \$17,338 per inmate. This means that for the portion of incarcerated females with a history of CSA, Florida taxpayers spend between **\$12 and \$16 million annually** in direct prison costs alone.



INTRODUCTION

This white paper serves to illustrate and quantify how the effects of child sexual abuse in Florida continue after abuse ends and how these effects impact our communities.

According to widely cited figures, 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys have experienced or will experience child sexual abuse (CSA).ⁱ Children are most vulnerable to sexual abuse between the ages of 7 and 13, and in one large-scale study of CSA, the mean age at which abuse occurred was 10.6 years.ⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, most cases of CSA go unreported. In 2012, approximately 67,087 cases of child maltreatment were investigated by state authorities in Florida. Of these cases, about 2,529 involved sexual abuse, and substantially more children endured these abuses with no such intervention.ⁱⁱⁱ

Well beyond the emotional and physical trauma CSA victims endure, sexual abuse during childhood has proven to lead to significant complications throughout life, including the economic costs related to lost productivity and diminished quality of life.



WHAT WE KNOW

THE MANY COSTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

PRODUCTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT

About 62 percent of workers with a history of child sexual abuse are employed in menial or semi-skilled occupations, compared to about 42 percent of workers who do not share a history of CSA.^{iv} Furthermore, sexual abuse victims are more than twice as likely to spend their working lives sick or disabled, contributing to a substantial loss of income. The loss of productivity these victims experience places their household incomes at an average of 40 percent less than those who did not experience sexual abuse early in life.^{iv}

The experience of CSA strongly affects a victim's adolescent years as well. During these years, children are likely to still be in school. Following sexual abuse, 26 percent of 7- to -12-year-old girls reported that their grades dropped and 48 percent of these children had below-average grades.^{vi}

WHAT WE KNOW

Furthermore, girls who experience sexual abuse are three times more likely to drop out of school as compared to their non-abused peers.^{vii} Children who are sexually abused are twice as likely to run away from home^{vii} and among children who voluntarily become homeless, 61 percent of girls and 16 percent of boys report having been sexually abused before leaving their homes.^{ix}

An increase in criminal activity also is associated with child sexual abuse. Female victims of CSA are two times more likely than their peers to be arrested for a violent offense;^x and among women who are incarcerated, 82 percent report having been abused sexually or physically during childhood. Similarly, 31 percent of adolescent males who are arrested for sexual offenses report having been sexually abused.^{xi}

These consequences of child sexual abuse have been estimated by prior studies to total a loss in earnings of \$241,600 over one's lifetime,^{xii} with the per annum loss totaling approximately \$5,000 per victim. A somewhat more conservative figure provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates this loss in income and other related costs to be about \$210,012 per victim.^{xiii}

QUALITY OF LIFE AND HEALTH

Child sexual abuse leads to loss of quality of life for victims. This includes interrupted personal relationships, substance abuse problems and general health issues. The costs of pain, suffering and reduced quality of life are substantial for victims. However, because there is no established "market value" for these intangible costs, researchers commonly base their cost estimates on jury awards to crime victims. Macmillan (2000) reported that sexual assault victims receive jury awards of about \$81,000 — far less than they will stand to lose over their lifetimes due to enduring child sexual abuse.^{xiv}

Although "quality of life" is inherently difficult to measure or quantify, other more tangible effects of CSA are easily noted. In many ways, these effects can be understood as, or are similar to, those that are present in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Researchers have identified PTSD as a "core manifestation" of child sexual abuse.^{xv} This includes a wide range of challenges that a victim of CSA may experience ranging from nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, self-harm and depression to long-term interferences with learning, relationships and social

activities. Major psychological and medical symptoms are known to follow child sexual abuse, some immediately while others may manifest over time.

PTSD is often accompanied by eating disorders such as anorexia, binge eating or bulimia. A substantial body of research has related the effects of CSA to body image, and it is believed that nearly one-third of individuals with eating disorders have been sexually abused.^{xvi} Female CSA survivors in their early- to mid-twenties are four times more likely to have eating disorders than their peers who were not sexually abused^{xvii} and any woman who experiences sexual abuse is twice as likely to be obese.^{xviii}

Further, adults who experienced CSA are 30 percent more likely to report serious medical conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, cancer and diabetes.^{xix} Medical bills associated with each reported case of child abuse, including sexual abuse, are estimated to total \$32,648 in direct health costs following the event,^{xx} and another \$10,530 in adult medical costs.^{xxi}

Other mental health problems are also known to arise in victims of CSA. Women who experienced child sexual abuse are twice as likely to experience depression^{xxii} and three times as likely to develop psychiatric disorders as those who are not abused.^{xxiii} For male survivors of CSA, approximately 70 percent seek help for psychological issues such as suicidal thoughts and attempts.^{xxiv} Fifty percent of these victims will incur costs for their mental health services,^{xxv} adding to the already high cost of enduring abuse. And of these victims, 20 percent will sustain severe psychological issues for the rest of their lives.^{xxvi}

Survivors of CSA also report higher levels of substance abuse. Sixty-five percent of men report substance abuse issues after being victim to CSA, which is 2.6 times higher than the national average.^{xxvii} Similarly, approximately 40.5 percent of female survivors experience substance abuse issues, which is almost three times the national average. In terms of personal relationships after abuse, victims are 2.2 times more likely to become separated from their partners or go through a divorce.^{xxviii}

Teen pregnancy is also a social and economic cost that occurs as a result of CSA. Girls who experience sexual abuse are 2.2 times more likely to become teen mothers, with 45 percent of all teen mothers reporting some form of sexual abuse in their childhood.^{xxix}



WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL IMPACTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The magnitude of child sexual abuse is perhaps understood most clearly when population-level numbers are portrayed. Figures such as "10 percent" or "\$5,000 per year" may seem small out of context, but when multiplied against a state's population become staggeringly large.

PRODUCTIVITY AND LOST INCOME COSTS

The most conservative estimates on the prevalence of child sexual abuse are used in this report. While the statistic of 1 in 3 girls (33 percent) and 1 in 5 boys (20 percent) is widely supported across studies and represents an accurate portrayal of child sexual abuse prevalence, this paper considered a range of alternative figures to ensure that the economic impacts presented from prior studies were applied as accurately as possible to the Florida context.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

Two alternative prevalence figures were considered toward this goal. First, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 1 in every 3 to 5 girls (a minimum of 20 percent), and 1 in every 6 to 10 boys (a minimum of 10 percent) experience some form of child sexual abuse.

The prevalence of child sexual abuse also has been estimated as broken down by the different types of abuse that children experience. Through a meta-analysis of prior studies, Townsend and Rhinegold estimate that "contact-related" child abuse — abuse in which a child is touched or forced to touch another person — impacts 1 in 7 girls and 1 in 25 boys prior to age 18. Non-contact abuse, such as being forced to watch or hear sexual acts, being photographed in sexual poses or being deliberately exposed to an adult's genitals, was estimated to impact 20.2 percent of boys and 34.9 percent of girls.^{xxx}

Prior studies on the economic impacts of child sexual abuse each use different criteria for estimating the prevalence of abuse. Further, many of these studies rely on survey data in which adults self-report whether they experienced abuse. Where these survey questions do not explicitly dictate what constitutes abuse, individuals use their personal definitions or concepts of abuse in responding. The lack of consistent definitions among studies makes it difficult to offer reliable population-wide economic or fiscal impact estimates. For this reason, the most conservative figures available are used in this paper, even if they radically underestimate the actual prevalence of child sexual abuse.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED LIFETIME AND ANNUAL COSTS FOR CURRENT 0-18 AND THIRD-GRADE COHORTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS IN FLORIDA

	Estimate Set 1: Uses CDC outer range estimates on prevalence of CSA			Estimate Set 2: Uses "contact-only" estimates on prevalence of CSA		
	Girls	Boys	TOTAL	Girls	Boys	TOTAL
Population < 18 in 2013	1,957,778	2,049,017	4,006,795	1,957,778	2,049,017	4,006,795
Estimated prevalence of CSA	20%	10%	~15%	14.3%	4%	~9%
Estimated population of CSA victims	391,556	204,902	596,458	279,962	81,961	361,923
Estimated lifetime costs per individual CSA victims	\$210,012	\$210,012	\$210,012	\$210,012	\$210,012	\$210,012
Estimated lifetime costs for the current 0-18 cohort of child CSA victim	\$82.2 billion	\$43.0 billion	\$125.2 billion	\$58.8 billion	\$17.2 billion	\$76.0 billion
Average life expectancy	81 years	76 years	79 years	81 years	76 years	N/A
Estimated annual costs for the current 0-18 cohort of child CSA victims	\$1.0 billion	\$565.8 million	\$1.58 billion	\$726 million	\$226 million	\$952 million
Estimated population of current third-graders in Florida	104,550	100,450	205,000	104,550	100,450	205,000
Estimated population of current Florida third-graders who are or will become CSA victims	20,910	10,045	30,955	14,951	4,018	18,969
Estimated lifetime costs for current cohort of Florida third-graders who are or will become CSA victims	\$4.4 billion	\$2.1 billion	\$6.5 billion	\$3.1 billion	\$843.9 million	\$3.98 billion
Estimated annual costs for the current Florida third-grade cohort of CSA victims, assuming a life expectancy of 76 for males and 81 for females	\$54.2 million	\$27.6 million	\$81.8 million	\$38.8 million	\$11.1 million	\$49.9 million

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

Using 2013 U.S. Census estimates, Florida has about 19.6 million residents, of whom approximately 20.6 percent, or 4,006,795, are under the age of 18. This cohort of children — those born between 1995 and 2013 — consists of about 51 percent boys (2,049,017) and 49 percent girls (1,957,778).^{xxxii}

Using the most conservative figures within the CSA prevalence range provided by the CDC, approximately 391,556 girls (20 percent) and 204,902 boys (10 percent) in Florida are, or will become before turning 18, victims of sexual abuse. Together this sums to a staggering 596,458 Florida children, or about 15 percent of Florida's current child population.

Comparatively, when applying prevalence rates that assume to identify only "contact-related" forms of child sexual abuse, approximately 279,962 girls (14.3 percent) and 81,961 boys (4 percent) in Florida are experiencing or will experience these horrific assaults during their youth. These figures sum to 361,923 Florida children, or about 9 percent of Florida's current child population.

Apart from the horrors that these children endure in the short term, what does this mean for their individual lifetime financial outlooks and for fiscal costs that are consequently imposed on Florida as a whole?

We know from prior research that each victim of child sexual abuse will earn an average income that is 40 percent lower than his or her peers and will be more likely to hold menial or semi-skilled jobs. As discussed, it is estimated that victims of CSA will experience between \$210,012 and \$241,600 in lost earnings and other related costs over their lifetimes as a consequence of this abuse. Based on the more conservative of these figures, Florida's current cohort of youths ages 0 to 18 will see between \$76.6 billion and \$125.2 billion in lost earnings and related costs over their lifetimes, using CDC prevalence figures and "contact-only" prevalence figures respectively.

Dividing these lifetime figures by the average life expectancy of 81 years for females and 76 years for males, it is estimated that between \$952 million and \$1.58 billion will be lost each year by this 0-18 cohort of CSA victims and their families. Although dividing total lifetime costs by 47 "working-age" years only (ages 18 to 64) may provide a larger and perhaps more accurate depiction of the annual costs associated with CSA, methods were selected to provide the most conservative possible estimates.

In an effort to depict the economic impacts of CSA on an even smaller or more tangible population of children from within this cohort, we estimate that there are approximately 205,000 third-graders (8- to 9-year-olds) in Florida today.^{xxxiii}

Of these children, approximately 20,910 girls and 10,045 boys (using CDC prevalence figures), or 14,951 girls and 4,018 boys (using "contact-only" prevalence figures), have or will become victims of child sexual abuse. Assuming, again, average lifetime costs of at least \$210,012 per CSA victim, the aggregate lifetime costs for this cohort of current Florida third-graders are estimated to be between \$3.98 billion and \$6.5 billion, using CDC and "contact-only" prevalence figures respectively. Divided again by average life expectancies, we estimate that between \$49.9 million and \$81.8 million will be lost each year in Florida for this cohort of third-graders.

These cost estimates do not include those associated with cycles of abuse, increased crime and incarceration rates or greater utilization of other social services. These estimates also do not consider the vast number of Floridians over the age of 18 who already have endured CSA or those who have and will be born following the 2013 Census report. In other words, the costs presented here are limited to selected cohorts of Florida children; are shouldered mostly by the individuals themselves; and do not account for the greater societal costs that result from child sexual abuse.

CRIME AND INCARCERATION COSTS FOR FEMALE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS

The increased risk of crime and incarceration by those who have endured child sexual abuse also has a substantial fiscal impact on states and communities. While estimates vary considerably on the individual financial impacts of incarceration, the impacts of incarceration on state budgets are easily estimated.

As already stated, research suggests that female victims of child sexual abuse are twice as likely as their peers to be arrested for a violent offense. Comparable probability figures are not reliably available for male offenders.

In 2014, approximately 7,167 (7.1 percent) of Florida's 100,942 state prisoners were women.^{xxxiii} Of these women, approximately 2,623 (36.6 percent) were imprisoned for a violent crime.^{xxxiv}

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

According to prior studies, the probability of arrest for a violent crime is about 4.4 percent for adult females without a history of abuse and about 9.3 percent for adult females with a history of CSA. Using these figures, along with CSA prevalence data, it is possible to estimate the fiscal impact of child sexual abuse on a state's correctional system.

Once again, this paper relies on more conservative prevalence figures in order to best apply the projections of prior research. Using the outer range of CDC prevalence data, approximately 20 percent of the adult female population experienced CSA in childhood. From this and estimates on the probability of arrest, we can assume that of the 2,623 females incarcerated in Florida for violent crimes, about 918, or 35 percent, are females with a history of CSA.

Using "contact-only" prevalence figures, approximately 14.3 percent of Florida females were victims of sexual abuse in childhood. From this, we estimate that of the 2,623 females incarcerated in Florida for violent crimes, about 684, or 26 percent, are females with a history of CSA.

In other words, while CSA victims conservatively represent between 14.3 and 20 percent of all adult females, CSA victims comprise between 25 and 35 percent of the adult female inmate population.

In Florida, persons convicted of violent crimes are incarcerated for an average of five years.^{xxxv} In Fiscal Year 2012-13 Florida spent \$47.50 per day per incarcerated inmate, or \$17,338 per year.^{xxxvi} These figures add up quickly. Using CDC prevalence figures, the annual cost to Florida taxpayers was a staggering \$15.9 million for an estimated 918 incarcerations for violent crimes by the portion of female inmates who were likely victims of sexual abuse during childhood. Using "contact-only" prevalence figures, this annual cost is estimated to be \$11.9 million.

This means that for each of the female CSA victims incarcerated in Florida in 2014, the five-year cost to Florida taxpayers spikes to between \$59.3 million and \$79.5 million in direct prison costs alone.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

TABLE 2: COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INCARCERATION OF FEMALE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS FOR VIOLENT CRIMES IN FLORIDA

	Estimate Set 1: Uses CDC outer range estimates on prevalence of CSA	Estimate Set 2: Uses "contact-only" estimates on prevalence of CSA
Probability of arrest for violent crime by female CSA victim	9.3%	9.3%
Probability of arrest for violent crime by female without history of CSA	4.4%	4.4%
Total Florida female prison population (2014)	7,167	7,167
Percent of Florida female prisoners incarcerated for a violent crime	36.6%	36.6%
Total Florida female prisoners incarcerated for a violent crime	2,623	2,623
Estimated prevalence of CSA for females	20%	14.3%
Estimated population of female CSA victims in Florida prisons	918	684
Estimated portion of female inmates with a history of CSA	35%	26%
Annual cost per Florida inmate	\$17,338	\$17,338
Estimated annual corrections costs attributed to female CSA victims incarcerated in Florida prisons for violent crimes	\$15.9 million	\$11.9 million
Average sentence for violent offenders in Florida	5 years	5 years
Estimated five-year costs for the current cohort of female CSA victims incarcerated in Florida prisons for violent crimes	\$79.5 million	\$59.3 million

WHAT THIS MEANS IN FLORIDA

These estimates, once again, do not account for any of the costs associated with the violent crimes themselves, such as costs to the victim or families or burdens on the court system. Further, because the likelihood of arrest for nonviolent crimes is also far greater among those with a history of CSA, the costs of child sexual abuse to court and correctional systems are also far greater in actuality than they are as portrayed in this report.

Obviously, a history of child sexual abuse is not the only determinant of future criminal behavior. In any individual case it would be difficult to know whether avoiding CSA would have prevented arrest. However, even if a fraction of incarcerations would have been avoided through preventing child sexual abuse, the cost savings to the state remain astronomical.

COSTS UNDERSCORE THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION

The vast majority of child sexual abuse can be prevented through educating children and parents about the signs of abuse and on behaviors that help prevent exploitation. Sexual predators put their victims through a grooming process, and gradually build up from small instances of abuse to large ones. Because this process may take a while to develop, there are multiple points at which a child or caregiver may be able to interrupt the cycle and prevent greater abuse.

Additionally, early and appropriate therapy has been shown to dramatically improve the psychological and social lives of children who are victimized by sexual abuse.^{xxxvii} Preventing child sexual abuse and providing early and appropriate therapy will save lives and improve the overall health of our state and community.

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