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MYTHS AND FACTS REGARDING SEXUAL OFFENSES

Unless otherwise noted, these sexual offense myths were taken directly from the Megan's Law website - https://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/Education_MythsAndFacts.aspx

- **Myth: Most men who commit sexual offenses do not know their victims**

TRUTH: Over **90%** of child victims know their offender, with almost half of the offenders being a family member. Of sexual assaults against people aged 12 and older, approximately **80%** of the victims know the offender.

- **Myth: Most child sexual abusers find their victims by frequenting such places as school yards and playgrounds**

TRUTH: Most child sexual abusers offend against children whom they know and with whom they've established a relationship. Many sexual assaults of women are referred to as "confidence rapes", in that the offender knows the victim and has used that familiarity to gain access to her. This fact proves that the registry doesn't serve any real purpose except to perpetually punish the offender, long after their time has been served.

- **Myth: Most child sexual abusers use physical force or threat to gain compliance from their victims**

TRUTH: In the majority of cases, abusers gain access to their victims through deception and enticement, seldom using force. Abuse typically occurs within a long-term, ongoing relationship between the offender and victim and escalates over time.

- **Myth: The word "pedophile" describes ANY type of child sexual offender**

TRUTH: According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the true definition of a "pedophile" is as follows: "a psychiatric disorder in which an adult has sexual fantasies about or engages in sexual acts with a **prepubescent** child". This term is misused frequently by society and legislators to refer to **ALL** individuals who are charged with *any* sexual offense against a person under the age of 18. This is simply not true.

- **Myth: Most sex offenders reoffend**

TRUTH: Recidivism data shows this is not the case. Research from the DOJ Bureau of Justice shows that those who have been arrested for sex offenses have a low rate of re-offending.

[\(Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from State Prison: A 9-Year Follow-Up \(2005-14\): Full report \(ojp.gov\)\)](#)

- **Myth: Sex offender registries prevent sexual abuse**

TRUTH: Sex offender registries demonstrate no effect on reoffending. A recent [meta-analysis](#) (a larger study that combines the findings of previous studies) of 25 years since the establishment of sex offender registration and notification laws found that the legislation demonstrated no effect on reoffending, meaning there was no decrease in reoffending for those individuals who are on the registry. This, combined with findings that **only 5 percent of new sex crimes** were committed by someone on the sex offender registry (meaning that **95%** of those arrested for sex crimes had not been previously apprehended for a sex crime), suggests that sex offender registries **cannot** be relied upon to keep communities safer. ([Psychology Today, Elizabeth L. Jeglic, Ph.D. November 22, 2021](#))