

Child Abuse Definitions

Abuser: Abusers can be neighbors, friends and family members. People who sexually abuse children can be found in families, schools, churches, recreation centers, youth sports leagues, and any other place children gather. Significantly, abusers can be and often are other children. (www.d2l.org)

Acceptance: Acceptance is one of the emotional stages of the Grieving Process. Caregivers come to accept that the abuse occurred, that it has impacted their lives and the lives of their child(ren) and family members, and that they are ready to move forward with this new reality.

Allegation: An Allegation is a statement or saying that someone has done something wrong or illegal. (www.merriam-webster.com)

Anger: Anger is one of the emotional stages of the Grieving Process. Caregivers often feel anger toward themselves, the abuser, a higher power, and sometimes the child.

Arraignment: The Arraignment is a hearing held in Superior Court. The purpose of an Arraignment is to read the charges to the defendant. At this time, the defendant enters a plea of 'guilty,' 'not guilty,' or 'nolo contendere,' which means a person will accept punishment, but is not admitting guilt. The defendant can choose not to have this hearing, which indicates that the defendant is pleading 'not guilty' and the case will move forward to trial. This hearing is open to the public. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Arrest: Arrest means the apprehending or detaining of a person in order to answer for an alleged or suspected crime. The U.S. Constitution's Fourth Amendment authorizes Arrests only if the police have "probable cause" to believe that a crime was committed and that the suspect did it. (www.uslegal.com)

Bargaining: Bargaining is one of the emotional stages of the Grieving Process. Caregivers may experience just wanting their lives to go back to the way it used to be. They may find themselves asking, "What if...?"

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt is the certainty necessary for a juror to legally find a defendant guilty. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov) Beyond a Reasonable Doubt is the standard that must be met by the prosecution's evidence in a criminal prosecution. It means that no other logical explanation can be derived from the facts except that the defendant committed the crime, thereby overcoming the presumption that a person is innocent until proven guilty.

CAC: Children's Advocacy Center - A CAC is a comprehensive, child-focused program based in a facility that brings together law enforcement, child protection professionals, prosecutors, victim advocates, and the mental health and medical communities to collaborate when intervening in child abuse cases.

Child Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other. Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or Internet. An agonizing and traumatic experience for its victims. A crime punishable by law. (www.d21.org)

Child Victim: According to Delaware law, a "Child" shall mean any person who has not reached that person's own 18th birthday. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov) A child who has experienced maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and/or another serious crime) is a child victim.

Civil Court System: The Civil Court System is concerned primarily with the safety of the child and focuses on issues like custody and visitation. A number of different court hearings can be held to decide these issues. The decisions in the civil system do not depend on whether the Criminal Court System finds guilt. The civil process involves judges, attorneys, and sometimes representatives from the Division of Family Services and victim advocates.

Coping: Coping is how people deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties. There are healthy and unhealthy ways of coping with difficulties. (www.meriam-webster.com)

Counseling: Counseling is professional guidance offering advice and support to help people deal with problems, issues, or concerns. (www.meriam-webster.com) Counseling provides an opportunity to meet with a trained professional who is able to establish treatment goals and a pathway toward achieving those goals.

Counselor/Therapist: A Counselor or Therapist is a person who offers counseling. Counselors/Therapists receive special training and may utilize various techniques and methods to offer help and assistance to clients.

Criminal Court System: The Criminal Court System is concerned primarily with determining if there is evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty of a crime. The criminal process involves judges, juries, and attorneys.

DAG/Prosecutor: Deputy Attorneys General – A DAG is a Prosecutor, a lawyer who represents the State of Delaware on behalf of the public. DAGs, with critical support from criminal investigators, social workers, paraprofessionals, and administrative staff, prosecute criminal cases, enforce environmental laws, provide counsel to state

agencies, ensure the public's access to open government, protect the abused, and much more. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Defendant: A Defendant is the person accused of a crime in a criminal case. An alleged abuser officially becomes a Defendant when s/he is formally charged with a crime. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Denial: Denial is one of the emotional stages of the Grieving Process. Caregivers may feel disbelief that the abuse occurred. This is commonly used as a coping mechanism because accepting and dealing with the reality of child sexual abuse is just too difficult.

Depression/Withdrawal: Depression and Withdrawal together is one of the emotional stages of the Grieving Process. Caregivers may experience feelings of depression as a psychological side effect of their losses. Depression can include having sleep troubles, changes in appetite, and having variations in mood, including deep sadness. Withdrawal occurs when caregivers find themselves lacking interest in daily activities and lacking motivation to accomplish tasks.

DFS: Division of Family Services - The Delaware Division of Family Services investigates child abuse, neglect and dependency, offers treatment services, foster care, adoption, independent living and childcare licensing services. The Mission of the Division of Family Services is to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families through prevention, protection, and permanency. (www.kids.delaware.gov)

Disclosure: Disclosure is when a child tells another person that s/he has been sexually abused. Disclosure can be a scary and difficult process for children. Some children who have been sexually abused may take weeks, months, or even years to fully reveal their experiences. (www.nctsn.org, National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

DOJ: Department of Justice – The Delaware Department of Justice is the Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Office of the Attorney General is to protect Delawareans from harm by enforcing the law and being your advocate. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Dynamics: Dynamics refers to how something happens and the effect or impact of what happened. For victims, the effects of child sexual abuse can be devastating. Victims may feel significant distress and display a wide range of psychological symptoms, both short- and long-term. They may feel powerless, ashamed, and distrustful of others. The abuse may disrupt victims' development and increase the likelihood that they will experience other sexual assaults in the future. (www.victimsofcrime.org)

Enmeshment: Enmeshment has various meanings. In terms of child sexual abuse, enmeshment refers to the blurring of boundaries, both physical and psychological.

Family Court: Family Court is the court which has jurisdiction over most civil and criminal matters involving family members and juveniles. (www.courts.delaware.gov)

Felony: A Felony is a crime of a more serious nature than a crime designated as a Misdemeanor or violation. (www.courts.delaware.gov)

Forensic Interview: Forensic Interviews are conducted as one component of an investigation. Forensic Interviews are scheduled when cases are referred by law enforcement or child/adult protection investigators. A Forensic Interview is a neutral, fact-finding inquiry conducted with consideration for the developmental and emotional needs of each individual. The Interview provides an opportunity for the individuals to report any experiences they may have had and allows the individuals to provide details regarding those experiences. (www.cornerhousemn.org)

Genital Contact: Physical touching of or contact with the reproductive organs with one's body or objects (i.e. fondling, penetration).

Grand Jury: The Grand Jury is a randomly selected group of Delaware citizens who consider evidence to see if a case should be indicted (see below). The Grand Jury hearing is closed to the public. Usually only the police officer testifies at Grand Juries, as opposed to all the witnesses in a case. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Grief: Grief is a deep sadness caused by an extreme distress, usually a great loss. (www.meriam-webster.com)

Grooming: Is the process by which an offender draws a victim into a sexual relationship and maintains that relationship in secrecy. The shrouding of the relationship is an essential feature of grooming. Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process of building trust with a child. It is deliberate and purposeful. Abusers may groom children for weeks, months, or even years—before any sexual abuse actually takes place. It usually begins with behaviors that may not even seem to be inappropriate. Abusers generally groom the child's caregivers and others as well. Although not all child sexual abuse involves grooming, it is a common process employed by abusers. (www.dcf.vermont.gov)

Healing Process: The Healing Process is the process through which people resolve concerns and problems in their lives. The Healing Process allows people to move forward with a healthy, normal, and fulfilling life.

Human Trafficking: The two types of human trafficking are sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex, debt bondage, or forced labor. They are young children, teenagers, men and women. Trafficking in persons occurs throughout the world, including in the United States. The trade in humans is most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labor or

commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others. The two types of human trafficking are sex trafficking and labor trafficking. (www.acf.hhs.gov)

Impact: The effect or influence of one person, thing, or action, on another. (www.oxforddictionaries.com)

Indictment: An Indictment is the finding of the Grand Jury that a crime probably occurred and charges may proceed against the defendant in Superior Court. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

LE: Law Enforcement – The term Law Enforcement refers to police agencies or officers. Police officers are responsible for enforcing laws, investigating crimes, and making arrests. (www.merriam-webster.com)

Loss/Losses: A Loss is the experience of having something taken from you. (www.merriam-webster.com)

MDT: Multidisciplinary Team – An MDT is a group of professionals from various disciplines who work together for a common goal. Delaware uses an MDT response to intervene in child sexual abuse cases. The MDT consists of law enforcement, child protection professionals, prosecutors, victim advocates, and the mental health and medical communities.

Misdemeanor: A Misdemeanor is a crime which is less serious than a Felony but more serious than a violation. Misdemeanors are categorized as Misdemeanor A, Misdemeanor B, or unclassified. (www.courts.delaware.gov)

Non-contact sexual acts: Sexual acts that do not include actual touching. Some non-contact acts include exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet. (www.d21.org)

Non-violent Sexual Contact: Physical contact with sexual intent that lacks elements of violence (i.e. use of aggression, anger, threats, intimidation or physical force).

Personal Safety: Personal Safety is keeping one safe from physical and emotional harm. When considering one's Personal Safety, it is important to remember both of these aspects. Oftentimes, people will focus on their physical safety and neglect to think about what will keep them safe and healthy emotionally.

Plea: A Plea is a formal statement to the court by the defendant in response to charges. The defendant enters a Plea stating that s/he is 'guilty,' 'not guilty,' or 'nolo contendere,' which means the person will accept punishment but is not admitting guilt. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Plea Agreement: Plea Agreement is an agreement between the Prosecutor and the defendant, where the defendant agrees to plead guilty to a lesser offense and/or to fewer than all of the charges in exchange for a lesser sentence and/or dismissal of some charges. This means the defendant gives up his/her right to a trial. Plea agreements may be initiated by either the defendant or the Prosecutor. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Pornography: The portrayal of sexual subject matter for the purpose of sexual arousal. Pornography may be presented in a variety of media including books, magazines, postcards, photographs, sculptures, drawings, paintings, animations, sound recordings, films, videos, and video games.

Power: The possession of control or command over others. In terms of sexual abuse this means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes. (www.un.org)

Preponderance of the Evidence: The Preponderance of the Evidence is the standard of proof needed by the Division of Family Services to substantiate an allegation of abuse. The Preponderance of Evidence means that the evidence shows that it is more likely than not that the abuse occurred. (www.regulations.delaware.gov)

Probable Cause: Probable Cause means having sufficient reason, based upon known facts, to believe a crime has been committed or that certain property is connected with a crime. Probable Cause must exist for a law enforcement officer to make an arrest without a warrant, search without a warrant, or seize property in the belief the items were evidence of a crime. (www.dictionary.law.com)

Problematic Sexual Behavior: This phrase refers to sexual behaviors a child exhibits which are not considered normal and healthy in relation to the child's age and development. Children who have sexual behavior problems can be divided into three groups: (a) sexually-reactive, (b) children who engage in extensive, mutual sexual behaviors, and (c) children who molest other children. The range of behaviors can include children who react to victimization or trauma with compulsive, self-stimulating activity, children who engage in extensive mutual sexual interaction with other children, and sexually aggressive children who are intrusive and coercive. (Cavanagh Johnson, T., PH. D, 2013 *Updated 2013 Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors What's Natural and Healthy*)

Recantation: A recantation is formal retraction of a previous statement or belief. In child sexual abuse cases, recantation refers to the child taking back his/her statement of abuse.

Resiliency: Refers to the ability to recover readily from illness, disease or trauma. Many factors determine a person's resiliency. In child sexual abuse cases, a child's healing process will be impacted by a child's resiliency.

Sexual Development: Sexual development is the gradual process of reaching sexual maturity. Sexual development involves physical and emotional growth and is affected by a combination of biological, genetic (hereditary), and environmental factors.

Sexually Reactive Behavior: This phrase refers to problematic sexual behaviors of sexually reactive children. These behaviors often happen in view of adults and may be frequent. Many of the behaviors are self-directed but may be directed towards other children or even adults. There is no coercion or force used by sexually reactive children. (Cavanagh Johnson, T., PH. D, 2013 *Updated 2013 Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors What's Natural and Healthy*)

Substantiated: If DFS determines that the abuse or neglect occurred, then the allegation is "Substantiated." If a case is Substantiated, this means that the Division of Family Services found by a preponderance of the evidence that child abuse or neglect occurred. (www.regulations.delaware.gov)

Superior Court: Superior Court is the name of the court that hears Criminal issues. The Superior Court, the State's court of general jurisdiction, has original jurisdiction over most criminal and civil cases. The Court has exclusive jurisdiction over felonies and almost all drug offenses. (www.courts.delaware.gov)

Support System: A Support System is a network of people who provide an individual with practical or emotional support. (www.meriam-webster.com)

Symptoms: Effects or signs that indicate illness, disease or trauma.

Testifying: Testifying occurs when a person answers questions in court while under oath. This is often referred to as 'giving testimony.'

The Grieving Process: The Grieving Process is a series of five (5) emotional stages experienced when someone faces a loss. This model was developed by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross who pointed out that the stages are tools to help people frame and identify what they may be feeling as a result of various losses in their lives; they are not stops on a linear timeline and not everyone goes through all of them.

Therapeutic Relationship: A Therapeutic Relationship is the type of relationship that is developed between the Counselor/Therapist and a client. A healthy, effective Therapeutic Relationship will prove beneficial for the client by allowing the Counselor/Therapist and the client to work together to address issues and concerns.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is a type of therapy that is utilized with children who have experienced traumas, such as Child Sexual Abuse. This type of therapy relies on cognitive-behavioral theory and principles. This means that the technique focuses on thoughts and behaviors and the connection of the two throughout the healing process. Counselors/Therapists must receive special training in order to deliver this type of therapy. TF-CBT was developed by Judith Cohen, MD, Anthony Mannarino, PhD, and Esther Deblinger, PhD.

Traumatic Event: A traumatic event is an experience that can be extremely emotionally distressing when witnessed or experienced. Many times during a traumatic event the person fears for his/her safety and/or the safety of others. There are many different kinds of traumatic events, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to violence, loss of a loved one, natural disasters, house fires, car accidents, etc.

Traumatic Experience: Traumatic events or situations that upset and overwhelm a person's ability to cope. When signs and symptoms interfere with daily life, a person is experiencing traumatic stress.

Trial: A Trial is a court process to determine if a defendant is 'guilty' or 'not guilty.' In Delaware, felony trials are held in Superior Court. Most felony trials are heard by a jury; however, some defendants choose to have a judge decide their case. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

VCAP: Victims' Compensation Assistance Program - The purpose of the Victims Compensation Assistance Program is to alleviate some of the financial burdens faced by victims, those that are directly related to the specific offense, by providing compensation for certain losses. (www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov)

Victims' Bill of Rights: This first comprehensive piece of victims' right legislation in Delaware was signed into law in 1992. The law mandates that crime victims remain informed about the criminal justice process, including notification of and participation in all applicable court processes.

Voyeurism: The sexual interest in or practice of spying on people engaged in intimate behaviors, such as undressing, sexual activity, or other actions usually considered to be of a private nature.