



## SEXUAL OFFENDERS

### Who Are Sexual Offenders?

There is no “typical” sexual offender. Rapists and child molesters come from all backgrounds and can often seem like ordinary law abiding people. Although most offenders are male, females can also commit sexual offenses.

Sexual offenders can range in age, from young teenagers to senior citizens. More than half of adult sexual offenders begin offending in their teens.

### Common Behaviors and Characteristics of Sexual Offenders

- **Grooming:** Most offenders plan and manipulate relationships over time to assault their victims. They usually know their victims and make them feel responsible.
- **Coercion:** Offenders often trick, pressure or use guilt to keep victims quiet.
- **Threats:** Many offenders threaten emotional or physical harm to victims and their families in order to overcome resistance and prevent them from telling anyone or reporting to authorities.
- **Violence:** Offenders often use some level of physical force (holding, choking, restraints, weapons) to overpower and overwhelm a victim’s resistance to assault.

### Punishments for Sex Crimes and Sex Offender Treatment

- **Investigation and prosecution:** Police investigate sexual offenses and present evidence to prosecutors for possible criminal charges.
- **Courts:** If convicted, sex offenders may: be sentenced to prison; pay fines for victim counseling, medical and legal costs; or avoid going to prison by staying in the community and getting treatment under the supervision of the court.
- **Sex offender treatment:** Specialized sexual offender programs focus on changing offenders’ abnormal sexual interests, correcting attitudes, teaching skills that prevent re-offending and increasing victim empathy.

If you have more questions about sexual assault and offenders, please contact us at Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress (206/521-1800). We will be glad to answer your questions.

**HARBORVIEW CENTER FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT  
AND TRAUMATIC STRESS  
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