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# Sexual Assault: Background and Our Schools' Response Policies

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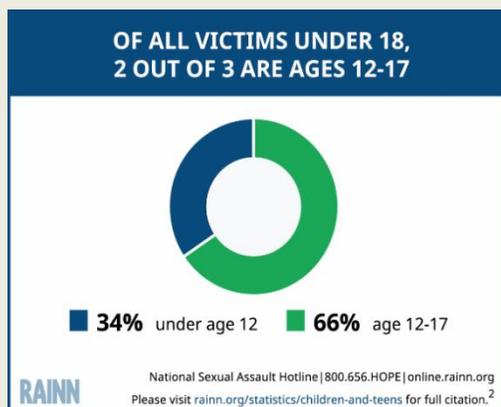
## Definitions

According to **Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, sexual assault is defined as “illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent (because of age or physical or mental incapacity) or who places the assailant (such as a doctor) in a position of trust or authority.” Sexual harassment is defined as “uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate (such as an employee or student).” Let’s learn more about these topics and the policies our schools have in place to protect our children.

## Incidence

The numbers regarding sexual assault are staggering, and its consequences may linger for the rest of an individual’s life. Although sexual assault statistics are hard to digest, processing these numbers serves well as a head’s up. Child Protective Services gathered data from 2009-2013 which suggests that in the United States, 63,000 children a year are victims of sexual assault and abuse. When you think about that information,

you must also consider that children with disabilities may be more likely to be victims of sexual abuse due to their higher level of vulnerability.



The following statistics were recently provided by an ally of sexual assault victims, the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN):

- 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult.
- Females ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.



Sexual assault directly impacts the victim's mental health, and that impact can last many years beyond the time of the incident. Some of the most common effects of sexual assault on a victim's mental health can be the development of PTSD, depression, and drug abuse. Another often overlooked consequence for victims of both sexual assault and sexual harassment is that after an accusation is made, the victim may continue to face harassment and victim-blaming from his/her peers, which, in turn, may lead to a drop in attendance and poor academic performance.

You are beginning to see how important it is for schools to have a sexual assault response policy. That policy needs to be clear and communicated to all staff involved in the school's day to day functions. If you are not sure about your school's policy, ask an administrator. If a sexual assault is reported, the school is obligated by law to investigate. All teachers are mandatory reporters so if they know or hear about a sexual assault, they must report it to law enforcement.

### **Federal and State Laws and Our Schools' Policies**

#### **Federal Law**

[Supreme court adopts standard under Title IX](#): This standard can help protect children from sexual assault and harassment in primary and secondary schools. It is a basic civil rights law that defines sexual harassment and assault as a form of discrimination that limits a student's ability to use and benefit from a school's educational program. Essentially, Title IX protects our right to promote equal education access in primary and secondary schools. Title IX requires schools to make specific arrangements for students making sexual assault complaints while an investigation is underway, such as seeing to it that the victim can still attend school and is protected from harassment. This helps separate the victim from his/her attacker.

#### **State Law**

[Erin's Law](#) has been passed in 31 states, including Colorado. This law makes public schools teach students how to come forward if they are being sexually abused, and it also helps instruct staff on how to handle these situations.

#### **Aurora Public Schools (APS)**

[APS code: AC](#): Aurora Public Schools covers sexual harassment of students in section AC. Click the link above for details. Complaints may be submitted orally or in writing.

#### **Cherry Creek School District (CCSD)**

[Cherry Creek AC-R-4](#): Click this link to learn about Cherry Creek School District's sexual harassment response procedures. Cherry Creek Schools also has a Care Line.



This is a 24-hour phone line where students, parents, and teachers can express concerns about children's safety or about a sexual assault. All calls are anonymous and confidential. These calls are forwarded to personnel for further investigation. CCDC's Care Line number is 720-554-2273.

### **Our Children's Safety**

No doubt, elected officials, school personnel, disability advocates, and parents are all concerned about children's safety. In fact, systems are in place to help insure that safety. All advocacy-related questions, including those about your child's safety or additional resources for support, should be directed to your Arc of Aurora advocate. Don't have one and need one – contact Hanni Raley at 720-213-1420 or at [hraley@thearcofaurora.org](mailto:hraley@thearcofaurora.org).