

HEALING and support

If you or someone you know has been harmed, the first thing to do is ensure safety. If the person harming you still has immediate access to you, seek help immediately. For more information go to our website www.southlandhelp.nz or www.theharbour.org.nz

If you have been harmed in the past and the person who harmed you no longer has any access to you, the first thing is for you to begin your journey to heal. People who seek counselling are better equipped and resourced to heal from their experiences and are less likely to suffer from more acute physical and mental health problems.

We understand that everyone is unique, that no two responses to sexual abuse are exactly the same, and therefore each individual's healing path is unique.

WHO IS Southland Help?

For three decades, Southland Help has been providing support for women and children harmed by sexual abuse. Previously called Womens Supportline and Rape and Abuse Support Center/Hine Tuturu Ki Murihiku – our centre has gone through many changes to deliver responsive specialist sexual violence prevention and intervention services. We now also provide services to male survivors and male family members of survivors.

Among our services is a phone information service, advocacy support for people with legal processes including police interviews and forensic medicals, face-to-face therapy, social work support, education programmes, support groups and court services.

All counsellors and social support staff working at Southland Help are professionals trained in dealing with issues arising from harmful sexual behavior or rape. We are also committed to working towards the elimination of all forms of sexual harm against children, young people, women, men and their families/whanau in our community.

OUR services

All services are provided free of charge.

Coping with the effects of sexual abuse can be very difficult for individuals who experience this type of trauma, and also challenging for their family and friends. Our agency specialises in working with survivors to ensure that they receive the best information and support.

Support

We provide support and information to survivors of rape and sexual abuse and to their families, whanau and friends. We have resources and information, including a library available. This support includes crisis intervention, social work support and support groups.

Counselling

We offer free counselling – crisis counselling, family therapy and ACC counselling on-site.

Advocacy

We are available to provide advocacy support when accessing legal services such as police, DSAC (Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care), court education and trial support, and any financial and practical assistance required to recover from sexual abuse.

Education

We run education programmes for women and youth called IMAGINE Women and IMAGINE Youth – and work collaboratively to deliver Self Defence for those accessing our service. We also provide professional training and organise community workshops on various topics e.g. Sexual Violence and Justice, Dealing with Disclosures.

Drop-in Centre

No first time appointment is necessary. You will be able to ask questions about services or request specific services at that time with one of our staff.

Address: 26 Nelson Street, Invercargill
Drop-in hours: 9am-5pm Monday to Friday



Call us in confidence, a free, safe,
non - judgemental service

- Support
- Advocacy • Information
- Counselling
- Prevention Education

P: 03 216 2079

E: contact@southlandhelp.nz

W: www.southlandhelp.nz

WHAT IS harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour is a sexual activity that lacks mutual consent and exploits another person. This includes someone pressuring you to do something you don't want to do, touching you without your permission or forcing you to engage in sexual connection when you don't want to.

One key difference between healthy sexual activity and harmful sexual behaviour is if power or manipulation is used over you to get another person's sexual needs met.

Not all harmful sexual behaviour is violent or involves penetrative sex. The following are all considered sexually abusive behaviours:

- Using a child to meet sexual desires
- Pressured sex
- Making explicit sexual threats
- Viewing or distributing abusive material
- Peeping at someone else's body or exposing a body inappropriately
- Sexually obscene phone calls
- Sexual harassment or innuendo
- Sexual innuendo
- Sexual touch that is unwanted or uncomfortable
- Being forced to watch or participate in pornography
- Rape: acquaintance rape, stranger rape, drug rape, partner rape, date rape, gang rape and child rape
- Unwanted sex

There are many cases of strangers committing harmful sexual behaviour, however, more often than not it's the people you know and trust who do this. Abuse within the family is common and people who sexually offend come from every sort of ethnic, cultural, religious, or socio-economic background.

STATISTICS ON Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is one of the key social problems undermining the health and wellbeing of our population today. It has a wide prevalence and can have a high impact.

- **1 out of 3 girls** may be sexually abused before she turns 16 years old. Most of this abuse (90%) will be done by someone she knows and 70% will involve genital contact.
- **1 in 7 boys** may be sexually abused by adulthood.
- Approximately **1 in 5 New Zealand women** experience a serious sexual assault. For some women, this happens more than once.
- **Young people** are statistically at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted; **the 16 – 24 year old** age group is **four times more likely** to be sexually assaulted than any other age group.
- People who are **vulnerable** in some way are also a more common target for sexual abuse, especially those with physical disabilities.
- **More than 23% of women** who participated in a recent Auckland study reported that they had been sexually abused as children. Most of the abuse was perpetrated by male family members with an estimated median age of 30 years. For **50%** of the women, the abuse had occurred on multiple occasions. The study also found that victims of childhood sexual abuse are **twice as likely** as non-victims to experience later personal violence.
- Only about **10 out of 100** sexual abuse crimes are reported and 3 of those get to court. Sadly, only one of those is likely to get a conviction.

COMMON impacts and ongoing effects

- **Immediate Symptoms** can include shock, numbness, confusion, shaking, feeling panicky and rapid breathing, nausea, being on alert all the time, anger, changes in sleeping/nightmares, not feeling safe, thinking it's going to happen again, changes in appetite, feeling out of control, feeling dirty, disbelief, self-blame, guilt, physical injuries or medical worries, feeling disconnected (like you're in a dream, like it's not really happening to you), flashbacks, difficulty concentrating.
- **Longer Term Symptoms** can include being on "alert" all the time, loss of trust in people, flashbacks, moodiness and depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts or plans, self-harming, not feeling safe, finding it hard to be in relationships, sleeping difficulties (being scared to sleep, nightmares, or sleeping too much), guilt, shame, finding it hard to be on your own and feel o.k., anger, low self-esteem, using too many drugs and/or too much alcohol to help you feel better, taking risks you didn't use to e.g. wagging school, swearing at the teacher, fighting, having sex more frequently than usual but not really knowing why or feeling good about yourself afterwards, not wanting any intimacy, feeling like your anger is "out of control".
- Untreated impacts of abuse in childhood can continue to impact on survivors as adults in the form of depression, anxiety, impaired interpersonal relationships, parenting difficulties, eating difficulties, and/or drug and alcohol misuse to cope with strong feelings.
- The long-term effects of sexual abuse on children have been correlated with almost every known mental health disorder and most of society's 'social problems' such as early teenage pregnancy, single parenting and lifetime low socio-economic status.