



**The Minnesota Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (MnATSA) is a multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse.**

Through research, education, and shared learning MnATSA and its parent organization, ATSA, promote evidence-based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to sexually abuse.

MnATSA is committed to public safety while providing responsible management and effective treatment to those who have sexually offended. We believe public policies should support both the prevention of sexual abuse and evidenced-based interventions to prevent reoffending. While the issue of sexual abuse is painful and emotional, the most effective public policies are based on scientific research.

**Commonly Asked Questions regarding Child Sexual Abuse Image (CSAI) Offenders**

**Do CSAI offenders have histories of hands on offenses?**

In a recent study looking at online child exploitation cases from the FBI, it is estimated that 38% of CSAI offenders engaged in contact sexual offenses, while 62% of CSAI offenders did not have a known history of contact sexual offenses. (Owens, Eakin, Hoffer, Muirhead, & Sheldon, 2016)

After eliminating studies that have not been replicated, an estimated 60-65% of child sexual abuse image offenders do not have a history of contact sexual offenses.

Butner Study (Bourke & Hernandez, 2008)	80% (N=155)
Bourke (2016)	53% (n=127)
Dutch Sample (Buschman, 2007)	44% (N=43)
CAMH Sexology (Seto, 2006)	43% (N=100)
Police Cases (Eke, et. al., 2011)	30% (N=541)
FBI Study (Owens, et.al., 2016)	38% (n=150)
Ontario Sex Offender (Seto, 2006)	24% (N=201)
NJOV study (Wolak, et. al., 2003)	10% (N=630)
New Zealand (Sullivan, 2005)	7% (N=202)

While it is difficult to accurately estimate the exact percentage of CSAI offenders who have a past contact sexual offense in their history, it does appear that not all CSAI offenders have a past contact sexual offense. The data above would suggest 39% of CSAI offenders have a past contact sexual offense

### **Are CSAI offenders likely to engage in contact sexual offending in the future?**

When compared to contact sex offenders, CSAI offenders pose a comparatively low risk for any type of sexual offense behavior in the future.

A small subgroup does appear to move on to either  
a contact sexual offense = about 2% (Seto, 2013)  
a new CSAI charge = about 5.7% (Seto, 2013)  
a new sexual offense of any type = about 5.7% (Faust et al., 2009)

These numbers compare to an estimated 13 – 18% recidivism rate for contact sexual offenders.

CSAI offenders who have a prior or concurrent violent or contact sexual offense were significantly more likely to be reported for a sexual re-offense (Eke et al., 2011)

### **What risk factors are associated with sexual recidivism for CSAI offenders?**

The following factors have been demonstrated to be associated with sexual recidivism with CSAI offenders. (Seto, 2015)

Offender age  
Any prior criminal history/Any contact sexual offending  
Any failure on conditional release  
Admission or diagnosis of sexual interest in children  
More boy than girl child pornography content  
More boy than girl other child-related content

### **How do CSAI offenders compare to contact sexual offenders?**

CSAI offenders are  
more likely to be first time offenders  
more likely to have previous pro-social lives  
significantly less likely to miss treatment appointments and/or drop out of treatment and/or fail in community

(Babchishin et al., 2011; Elliott et al., 2009; Faust, 2014; Merdian et al., 2016; Seto, 2013; Webb et al., 2007)

## **What are appropriate consequences/sentencing considerations for CSAI offenders?**

In order to reduce recidivism and protect the community it is important to consider the risk level of the CSAI offender when considering appropriate consequences and sentencing implications.

Research has found that consequences and treatment intensity targeted to sex offender's risk level is most effective. High-risk offenders need more severe consequences and more intense treatment interventions, while low risk sex offenders need fewer consequences and less intensive treatment. When risk, consequences, and treatment are not matched accurately, the offender's risk increases. (Andrews & Bonta 1998, 2006; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004)

When we take lower-risk offenders who by definition are fairly pro-social and place them in a highly structured, restrictive program, we actually disrupt the factors that make them low risk. They often lose their jobs, experience family disruptions, and are exposed to criminal influences. When this happens the low-risk individual now becomes a high-risk individual for recidivism. (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004)

The US Sentencing Commission (2013) has suggested the following issues be considered during sentencing for CSAI offenders:

The content of an offender's child pornography collection and the nature of an offender's collecting behavior (in terms of volume, types of sexual conduct depicted in the images, age and gender of the victims depicted, and extent to which an offender has organized, maintained, and protected his collection over time, including through the use of sophisticated technologies)

The degree of an offender's involvement with other offenders — in particular, in an Internet "community" devoted to child pornography and child sexual exploitation

Whether an offender has a history of engaging in sexually abusive, exploitative, or predatory conduct in addition to his child pornography offen

## **How can we prevent the viewing of child sexual abuse images?**

The viewing and possession of child sexual abuse images is a public health issue. The problem is too pervasive to make prosecution of those who view and possess child sexual abuse images the only solution.

From October of 2009 to March of 2010, a law enforcement operation conducted in the Gnutella peer to peer network found 3 million unique IP addresses sharing CSAI images (Liberatore, Levine & Shields, 2010)

A child pornography site discovered by police had over 70,000 (primarily) males users willing to pay \$29.95 a month to see images of children being sexually abused. (Ernie Allen, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2010)

Youth and adults need education on the impact of viewing/possessing child sexual abuse images and the serious consequences of the behavior. These conversations are difficult but important.

While some individuals view child sexual abuse images because of sexual interest in children, others view child sexual abuse images due to developmental curiosity, compulsive sexual behavior, mental health issues and/or features of the digital world that encourages online behaviors that would not occur offline.

Education is needed related to:

- the impact of viewing CSAI on the victims portrayed in the images.
- the legal and psychological consequences of viewing CSAI.
- the relationship between specific mental health issues and viewing CSAI.
- the impact of the psychology of the digital world on behavior.

Education can make a difference in the number of people viewing and possessing child sexual abuse images.