

Acronyms Used In Organised Abuse

ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences

Events that occur during childhood, between birth to age 17, that likely cause trauma. Studies have shown that the more ACEs someone experiences, the higher the risk of chronic health problems as an adult. ACEs also increase the risk that an individual will experience domestic violence or be a perpetrator of domestic violence in adulthood. You can learn your ACE score here.

BW: Battered Woman

In the 1970s, when the social movement to combat domestic violence started in earnest, survivors of abuse were often referred to as “battered” in conjunction with “battered woman syndrome” The phrase is largely outdated now, replaced with “survivor” in many instances, though some shelters are still referred to as “battered women’s shelters.”

BWS: Battered Woman Syndrome

Originally introduced in the 1970s by psychologist Lenore Walker, this phrase was used to explain common experiences and behaviors of women who were abused by their intimate partners, similar to PTSD. It was used as a legal defense by women who fought back against or killed their abusive partners. It isn’t used as much today, as advocates say its definition is limited and can stigmatize survivors.

CC: Coercive Control

Any pattern of behavior an abuser uses to dominate their partner in all areas of their life, limiting their freedom. This can include physical violence, but often, coercive control is more subtle and relates to things like isolation, stalking, gaslighting and intimidation.

CCB: Coercive And Controlling Behaviour

Coercive and controlling behaviour refers to a pattern of behaviour carried out by perpetrators in an attempt to exhibit control over their victim. Coercive and controlling behaviour may also be referred to as ‘the invisible noose’ due to the concealed nature of this crime. Women are far more likely to be victims, men are more likely to be perpetrators

CDV: Childhood Domestic Violence

A term often used to describe the effects of children who grow up witnessing and/or are direct victims of domestic abuse by a parent’s spouse or partner. CDV can result in lifelong mental and physical health consequences if there is not adequate intervention.

CS: Chattel Slavery

Chattel slavery is the only type of slavery where an individual is considered the legal property of another. It exists today primarily in Mauritania and other parts of Northern Africa (Slavery is technically illegal in these areas, but law enforcement there often returns escaped slaves to their slaveholders based on the asserted ownership, just as if the practice was legal.) This is the type of slavery that existed in the antebellum United States.

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CSA: Child Sexual Abuse

This is another broad term that may be used in conjunction with or interchangeably with CSE. RAINN's definition of CSA does an excellent job of describing CSA. Content warning: this description is difficult to read.

“Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse that includes sexual activity with a minor. A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity, period. When a perpetrator engages with a child this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim for years. Child sexual abuse does not need to include physical contact between a perpetrator and a child.”

As RAINN notes, this can include sharing obscene materials or messages with a child, or other sexual misconduct beyond hands-on abuse.

CSA: Commercial Sex Act

Any act in which sex is exchanged for money.

CSAM: Child Sexual Abuse Material

Child sexual abuse material (legally known as child pornography in the U.S.) refers to any content that depicts sexually explicit activities involving a child. Visual depictions include photographs, videos, live streaming, and digital or computer generated images, including AI-generated content, indistinguishable from an actual minor.

CSAM better describes the reality of this crime, rather than the legal term of child pornography. Pornography implies consent, which a child can never give. It's important we use terminology that reflects the impact of this crime on its victims.

CSAI: Child Sexual Abuse Imagery

CSAI may at times be used interchangeably with CSAM, but as the term implies it refers specifically to images (not all CSAM contains imagery, it could be an audio file, for example). This may include still images, video, or live stream content.

CSE: Child Sexual Exploitation

CSE is a broad term that encompasses all forms of child sexual exploitation. Sometimes CSEA (Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) is also used. This may include many of the other terms on this list, such as child sexual abuse material, child sex trafficking, and others like sextortion. This is one of the broadest ways to talk about the issue as a whole, rather than the individual and nuanced pieces.

CSEC: Commercial Sexual Exploitation Of Children

Refers to a “range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person.”

CSEI: Child Sexual Exploitation Imagery

CSEI is another term you may see used instead of child pornography. Along with CSAM and CSAI, it more appropriately describes the nature of this content, but is more widely encompassing than those terms.

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Note: Thorn uses the term CSAM to describe any sexually explicit content that depicts a child. This is the most accurate term that encompasses both the trauma these crimes inflict as well as the variety of files and formats of the content itself.

CST: Child Sex Trafficking

Child sex trafficking (CST) as defined by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) “is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, or advertising of a minor child for the purpose of a commercial sex act, which involves the exchange of anything of value – such as money, drugs or a place to stay – for sexual activity.” It’s important to note that while the term “trafficking” implies movement, a child does not have to be moved for CST to take place.

DARVO: Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender

It describes a manipulative tactic often used by abusers to avoid taking responsibility for their actions and shift the blame onto their victims.

DASH: Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence

DMST-Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

The “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” within domestic borders in which the person is a US citizen or lawful permanent resident <18 years of age.

DT: Domestic Trafficking

Refers to the trafficking of U.S. citizens within the United States. Most often seen in the sex trafficking of persons by a pimp.

DVA:Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic Violence and Abuse is a term used to define abuse in the forms of physical, emotional, psychological, and/or sexual abuse typically occurring in relationships or between family members or personally connected. Although DVA can be perpetrated by anyone against anyone, it is much more commonly perpetrated by men against women

FGM-Female Genital Mutilation

Refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is most often carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15.

HBV: Honour Based Violence

Honour based violence or HBV refers to abuse which is carried out to enforce the rules of various beliefs, cultures, values, and/or social norms. Perpetrators of this form of abuse claim upholding these rules as a justification for their actions. This form of violence is more commonly carried out against women and girls.

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HS: Human Smuggling

The facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation, or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border, in violation of one or more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents.

HT: Human Trafficking

The modern-day trade of humans for sexual slavery, forced labor, or exploitation. In the realm of domestic violence and abuse, young victims can be groomed by a predator to believe they are in a relationship with that person, only to then be used for sexual exploitation, forced sexual slavery or forced labor as a means of control and profit.

IDS: Involuntary Domestic Servitude

A form of forced labor involving domestic workers in private residences. Such an environment, which often socially isolates domestic workers, is conducive to exploitation because authorities cannot inspect private property as easily as formal workplaces.

IS: Involuntary Servitude

Under the TVPA, involuntary servitude includes a condition of servitude induced by means of (A) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint or (B) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

LT: Labour Trafficking

Under the TVPA, labor trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 U.S.C. § 7102).

MATH-Mental Abuse To Humans

Mental abuse, also known as psychological or emotional abuse, involves deliberately hurting someone and causing them emotional pain, or trying to control or manipulate them through verbal or non-verbal communication.

MC: Mind Control

Mind control refers to a process in which a group or individual "systematically uses unethically manipulative methods to persuade others to conform to the wishes of the manipulator, often to the detriment of the person being manipulated". The term has been applied to any tactic, psychological or otherwise, which can be seen as subverting an individual's sense of control over their own thinking, behavior, emotions or decision making. Theories of brainwashing and of mind control were originally developed to explain how totalitarian regimes appeared to succeed systematically in indoctrinating prisoners of war through propaganda and torture techniques.

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NCII: Non-consensual Intimate Imagery

Sexual explicit images and videos that are captured, published or circulated without the consent of one or more persons in the frame. This is often done in an effort to shame, humiliate, or retaliate against the victim since the relationship ended. This is known as non-consensual intimate imagery, but is also sometimes called “revenge porn.”

OEA: Organised and Extreme Abuse

The acronym was created by the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD). OEA describes the structured manipulation of attachment needs through extreme conditioning and sadistic torture.

ORCAN: Organised Ritualised Crime Abuse Network

OA: Organised Abuse

Organised abuse involves multiple adults who conspire to sexually abuse one or more children. Organised abuse can include the sexual exchange of children between perpetrators as well as the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material.

RA: Ritual Abuse

Can be defined as organised sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, which can be systematic and sustained over a long period of time. It involves the use of rituals, with or without a belief system. It usually involves more than one person as abusers. Ritual abuse usually starts in early childhood and involves using patterns of learning and development to sustain the abuse and silence the abused.

RAMCOA: Ritual Abuse, Mind Control, Organised Abuse

SA: Sexual Abuse

Is abusive sexual behavior by one person upon another. It is often perpetrated using physical force, or by taking advantage of another.

SG-CSAM: Self-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material

What we colloquially call “nudes” or “naked selfies” are more formally known as self-generated child sexual abuse material (SG-CSAM) when they have been taken by the minor in the material. Thorn’s research dives into youth attitudes about SG-CSAM in more detail.

SI: Sex Industry

The sex industry consists of businesses that either directly or indirectly provide sex-related products and services or adult entertainment.

SRA: Satanic Ritual Abuse

Defined as an assault (either psychological, physical, or sexual) that takes place on an individual as part of a liturgy or ordered pattern incorporated into a ceremony of worship aimed at Satan, the Christian devil.

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SS: Supply Side

Numerous factors contribute to the supply of individuals as slave labor: poverty, gender inequality, racism, lawlessness, military conflict, social instability, and economic breakdown are just a few factors. Each factor is also directly exacerbated by the sweeping phenomenon of economic globalization.

ST: Sex Trafficking

Under the TVPA, sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 U.S.C. § 7102; 8 C.F.R. § 214.11(a)).

SV: Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is the broad term used to refer to all manner of unwanted sexual acts. Sexual violence is not limited to, but includes rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, indecent exposure, and flashing. Due to under-reporting of this crime, sexual violence is categorised as hidden violence.

UCSE: Underground Commercial Sex Economy

The illegal financial system around the sale of human beings for sexual purposes.

WFCL: Worst Forms of Child Labour

A term used in the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182 which refers to child labor involving slavery, trafficking, forced labor, child soldiering, commercial sexual exploitation.