

The challenge of addressing child sexual abuse within the circle of trust



Assoc.prof. Gordana Buljan Flander, Ph.D.
Psychologist and psychotherapist

Child Protection Center of Zagreb (Croatia)

Disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA)

- **many cases remain undiscovered** – some authors estimate only **1 in 10 children** disclose sexual abuse (e.g. Sanderson, 2005)
- **patterns of disclosure** (Collings, Griffiths and Kumalo, 2005):
 - accidental detection (43%)
 - indirect disclosure (9%)
 - eyewitness detection (18%)
 - *purposeful disclosure* (30%) – minority of cases



**10-16
years**

- **average delay between abuse onset and disclosure**
(McGregor, Coggan & Thomas, 2006; Read, McGregor, Coggan & Thomas, 2006; Somer & Szwarcberg, 2001)

**1 mth -
56 yrs**

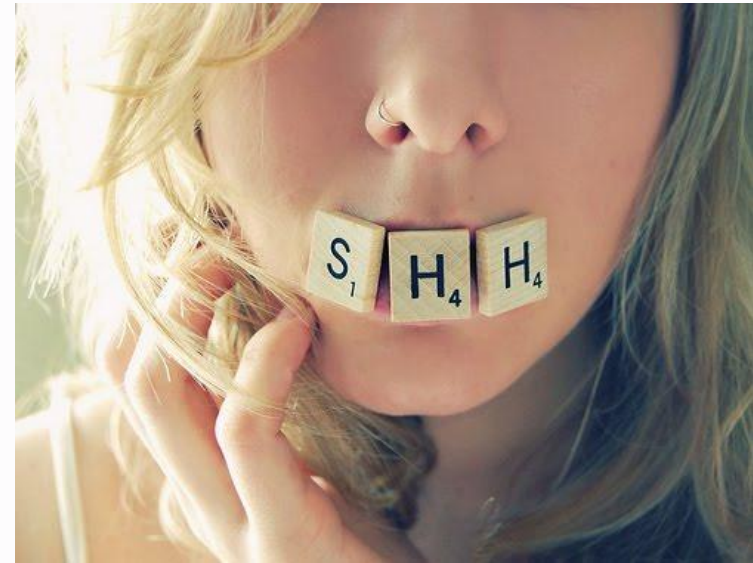
- **time between abuse onset and disclosure**
(Read et al., 2006)

21-28%

- **number of children who have never disclosed the abuse - more often males** (Hébert et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2000)

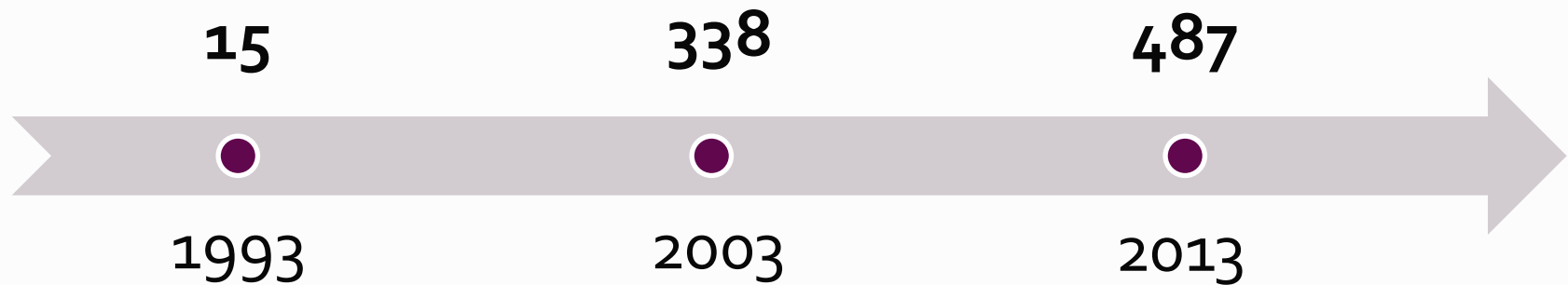
Why is disclosure important?

- necessary for initiating interventions to **stop the abuse**
- key component in **reducing the likelihood and severity** of abuse **consequences**



Number of reported CSA cases

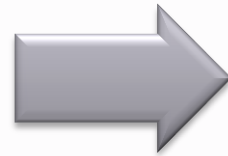
- Republic of Croatia Ministry of the Interior



- Brave Phone - child helpline



**Greater public
awareness**



**More cases
reported**

Process of disclosure and the reactions of family members and experts can (Lovett, 2004):

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graph TD; A[Process of disclosure and the reactions of family members and experts can (Lovett, 2004):] --> B[help the victims heal]; A --> C[be a source of secondary traumatization];
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help the
victims heal

be a source of
secondary
traumatization

Disclosure – hope or trauma?

The child protection system

- repeated interviews by different professionals, at different locations
- lack of well trained professionals
- length of the process



Significant **predictors of stress** during the court procedure, and clear examples of **child rights violation** (Gudbrandsson, 2005)

Family members

- disbelief, blame and pressure to deny the abuse
- CSA victims describe the disclosure as a partially traumatic experience (Hunter, 2011):
 - many felt that it **did not change anything**; or
 - stated that the **adults did not believe them** and showed **lack of support**

When the system fails to understand...

*„I was raped when I was 13, now I am 15. First I was at Children's Hospital where I was examined and questioned by a **gynecologist and a psychiatrist**. Later I went to the Child Protection Center where I spoke to a **psychiatrist, a psychologist and a social worker**. Then I had to go to the Police where I was interrogated **4 times**. I also had to talk **twice** about what happened to Social Services. At the Court I was questioned **once via video link**. I also had to undergo a forensic evaluation and I spoke again to a **psychiatrist and a psychologist**.*

*Altogether, I had to talk about what happened to me **11 times**. It felt terrible to talk about it so many times, as if I was to blame."*

Ja sam doživjela SILOVANJE kada sam imala 13 godina, sada imam 15 godina. Prvo sam bila u Klaićevog bolnici (ginekolog i psihijatar)
Poslje sam bila u policiji i tamo sam razgovarala : psihijatar, psiholog
socijalni radnik.
Poslje sam morala ići na policiju i tamo sam bila ispitivana 4 puta
Pozvana sam u socijalnu skrb i tamo sam o onome što mi se dogodilo
razgovarala 2 puta.
Na sudu sam ispitivana preko video linka jednom.
Morala sam ići na vještačenje kod psihijatra i psihologa.
Ukupno sam 11 puta pričala o tome što mi se dogodilo.
Grozno se osjećam zato što moram toliko puta govoriti o onome što
mi se dogodilo a kao da sam ja kriva.

When family fails to understand...

*„I want to **withdraw** my statement because of my mom, they love each other so I don't want him to go to jail. She called me a hundred of times, asking me not to take her husband away from her.*

Now mom will be happy, and I will be happier for her. It's my fault that he behaves badly towards her.

*All of it happened, but **my mom never believed me, nor did my teacher, or anyone else I told.** Often I can't sleep at night because my mom doesn't trust me. I feel like I don't have anyone. I want my mom to be happy, then she will love me.”*

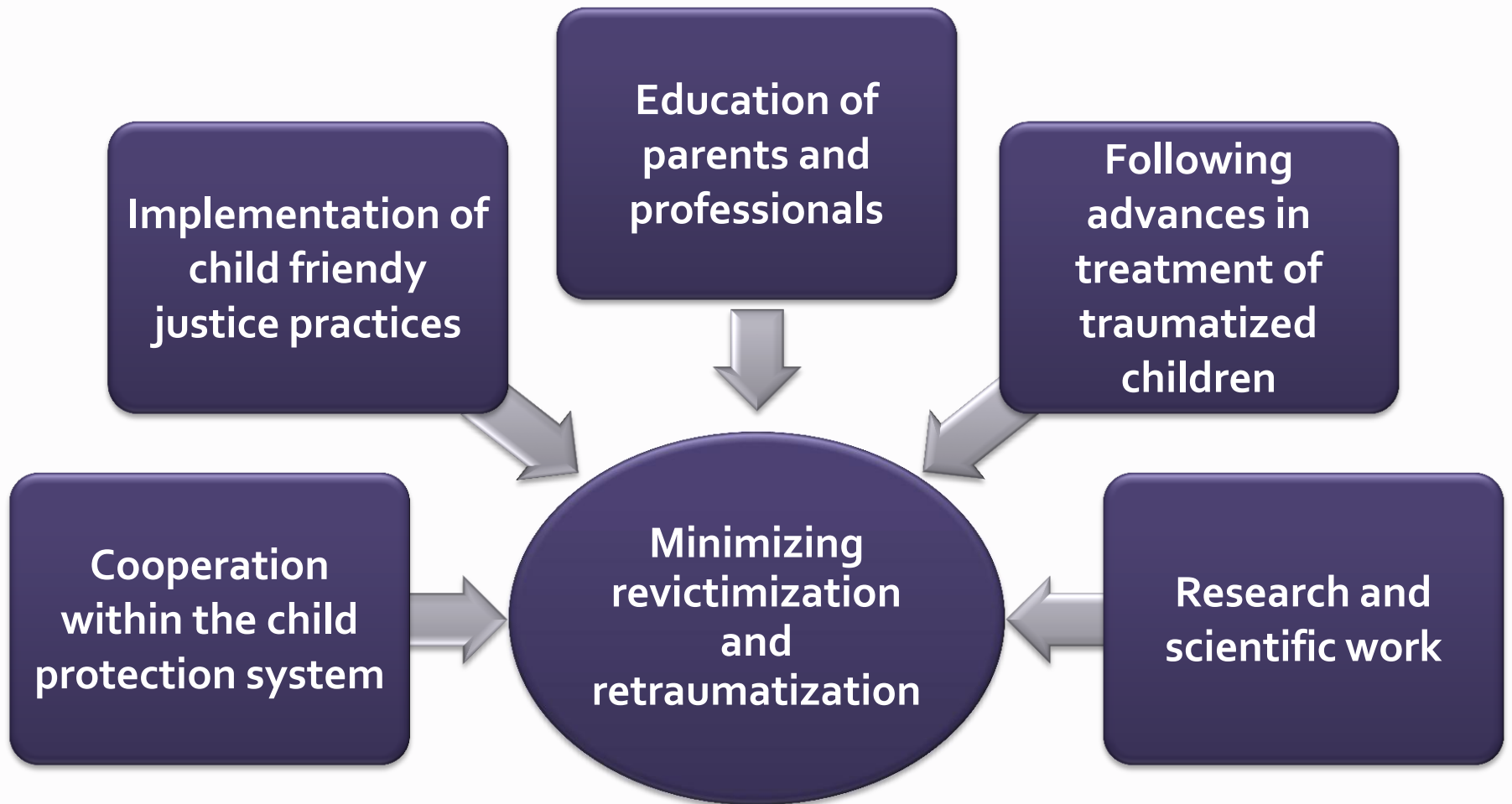
Želim povući iskaz radi mame jer se oni vole pa ne želim da on bude u zatvoru, a ona bez njega. Sto puta me nazivala u dom i govorila mi da joj ne oduzmem muža. Sad će mama biti sretna a i ja ću biti sretnija radi nje. Ja sam knoća što je on sad loš prema njoj. Sve se ono dogodilo ali mama mi nikad nije vjerovala ni susreduica ni odgovateljica. Često ne mogu po noći spavati jer mi mama ne vjeruje pa nikog nemam. Želim da mama bude sretna pa će onda i mene voljeti.

When family and the system are supportive...

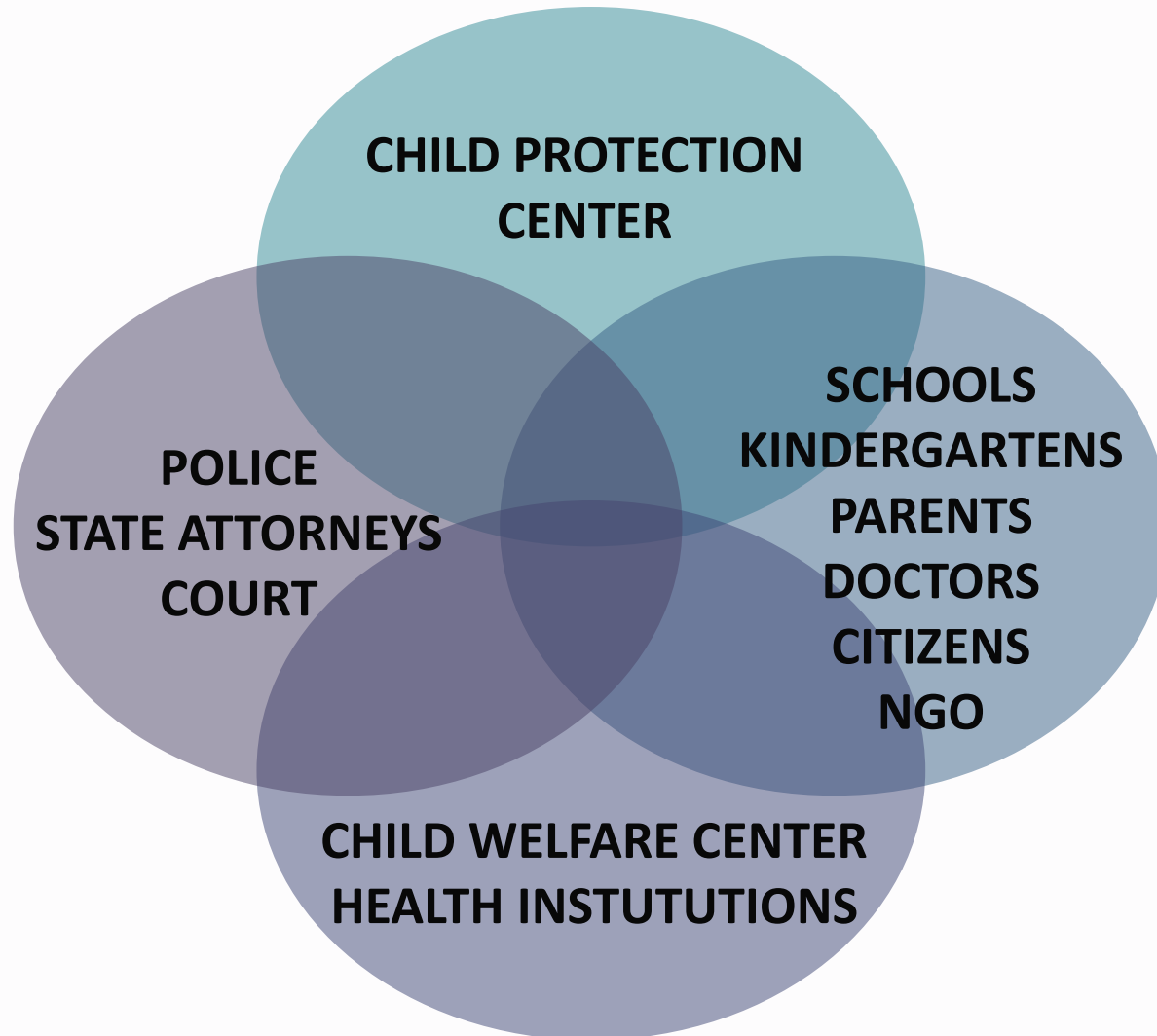


- her family believed her
- adequate reaction of the system – the abuse was stopped, prompt court process, psychological treatment provided
- today she is a psychologist

Our efforts during the past decade



Child Protection Center of Zagreb: cooperation with other institutions



Child Protection Center of Zagreb: cooperation with the court of law

WE ENCOURAGE JUDGES TO INTERVIEW CHILDREN ON THE CENTER'S PREMISES

- **One room** – Center's interviewer and the child
- **Another room** – SA, judge, defendant, defense lawyer, social worker, police...
- **Judge and involved parties ask the child through the mental health expert**
- **Expert adapts the questions according to the developmental level and emotional state of a child and uses other techniques**



**THE WHOLE PROCEDURE IS AUDIO AND VIDEO
RECORDED – USED AS AN EVIDENCE IN THE COURT
PROCEDURE**

**In this way multiple interviewing of the child by
various professionals at various institutions can be
avoided and the court processes shortened.**

Child Protection Center of Zagreb

- **recognized and presented as a model of good practice in working with sexually abused children**

Recent educational efforts

Croatian Bar Association (2014)

- Lawyers educated on child rights protection

Association of youth and family judges and specialists (2012; 2014)

- Judges educated on interviewing juvenile victims and child participation

Child Protection Center of Zagreb (2012 – 2014)

- Training for social workers and psychologists on recognizing child abuse

In preparation...
(2014)

- UNICEF Croatia:
Juvenile justice experts training

Recent educational efforts: regional cooperation



Slovenia

- Training on forensic interviewing for mental health professionals (2013)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Child abuse prevention and intervention training – multidisciplinary team members (2012; 2013)

Montenegro

- **UNICEF Montenegro - Justice for Children Project (IPA 2011)** – lawyers, police officers, SAs, judges
- **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**
 - Forensic interview training – multidisciplinary team members (2012)
 - Child friendly justice training – judges (2013)
 - Child friendly justice training – legal representatives of children (2014)

International cooperation

Council of Europe Pact of Towns and Regions to Stop Sexual Violence against Children

one in five
un sur cinq



- list of initiatives and strategies

Prevention

Protection

Prosecution

Participation

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Croatia (IPA, 2011 – 2012)

- training for Croatian police officers, judges and SAs on developing skills for working with sexually abused children
- equipping rooms adapted for the purpose of interviewing children and minors
- currently developing CA protocol

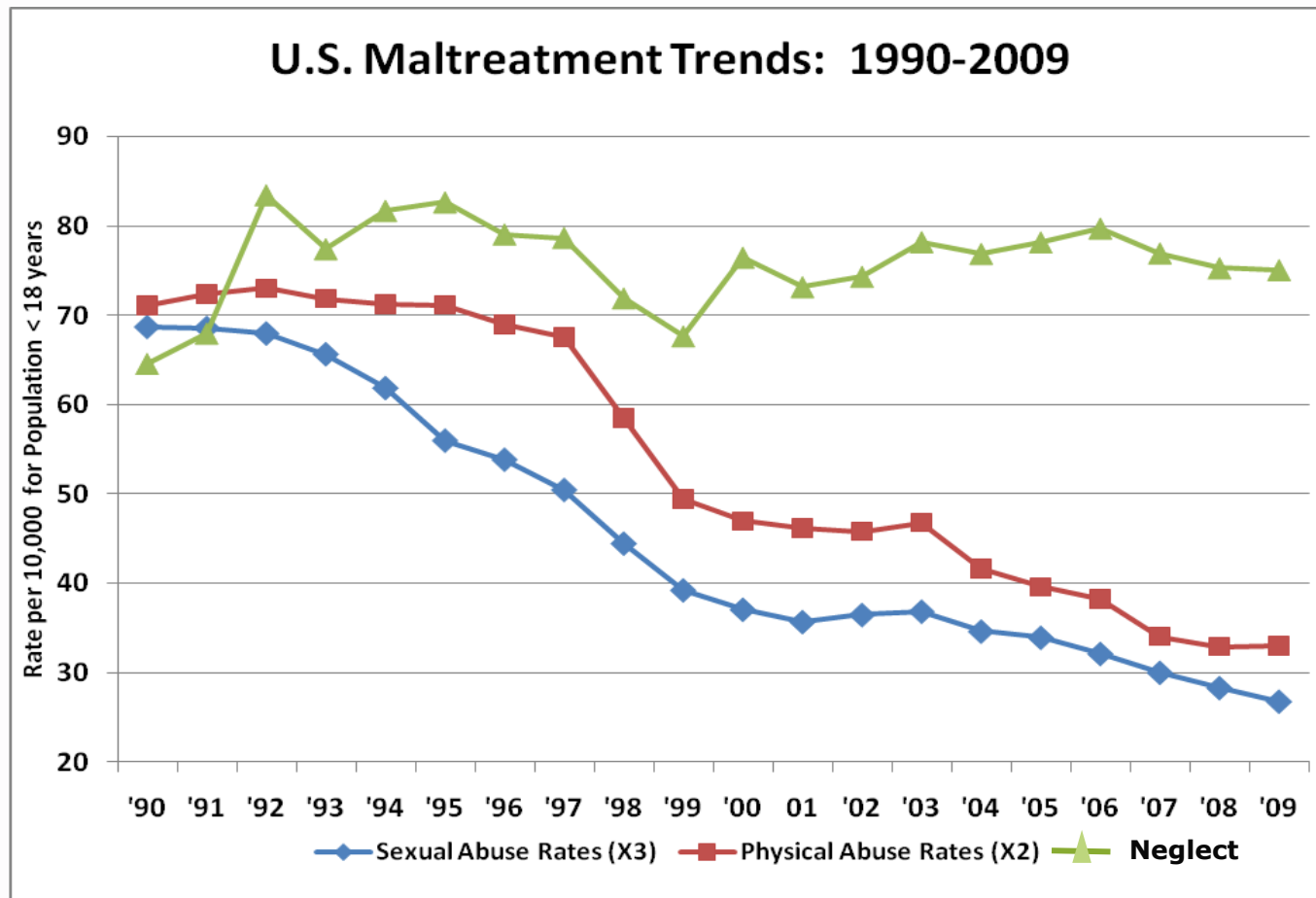
Future directions

- introducing **obligatory education** for law and mental health students, as well as **continuous education** of experts working with sexually abused children in all EU countries
- implementing **research based practices**
- **international cooperation** in defining current trends, challenges and future directions
- recognizing **models of good practice** (e.g. multidisciplinary approach, work with non-abusive parents, services providing help and support to victims and families)

Future directions (2)

- defining **international standards** of legal protection and support for sexually abused children
- developing a **national strategy** for child victims
- enhancing **cooperation** within the child protection system, as well as cooperation between GOs and NGOs
- investing personnel and financial resources in the **prevention** of CSA

Children benefiting from child abuse prevention (Finkelhor et al., 2010)



“I was just four when a teenager attempted to molest me. Miraculously, I got away, and I told my dad. My father made three important choices that day: He listened to me, he believed me, and he took action. I was one of the fortunate ones - I had a childhood.”

— Carolyn Byers Ruch

**Thank you for
your attention...**