

# **Disclosure Patterns of Sexual Abuse and Psychological Functioning at a 1-year Follow-up**

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**Abstract**— This study describes the disclosure processes of a sample of 68 sexually abused girls, with a focus on the manner in which the abuse was revealed—on purpose accidentally, or resulting from a precipitating event. This categorization is a more descriptive conceptualization of the disclosure process than has been proposed or assessed in previous studies. The circumstances surrounding disclosure are found to be related to long term psychological functioning. Children who disclosed accidentally were younger, experienced abuse for shorter durations, and received the most therapy. At follow-up, children who purposely disclosed had greater anxiety and greater difficulties coping. Discussion focuses on ways in which identifying and encouraging the least traumatic methods of disclosure would contribute to better outcomes for victims of sexual abuse. *1997 Elsevier Science Ltd.*