



STUCKLE & ASSOCIATES PLLC
THE FALSE ALLEGATION LAW FIRM

PROUDLY SERVING THE STATE OF TEXAS

Child Sexual Abuse Allegations – Why Lies Multiply

A false allegation of sexual abuse is a lie and more often than not, that lie will grow following the initial disclosure, for many reasons. For survival and defense purposes, it is vital that anyone being falsely accused understand the mechanics of why the story becomes expanded, simply because they will probably find themselves accused of one thing one minute and something else the next. This also includes why there is one child accuser initially and then several others make allegations as time passes.

First, think carefully about what usually happens when a child tells a lie about anything. Obviously, they want to be believed, so they carefully watch the person they are telling the lie to in order to see if what they are saying is being accepted or not. Don't think that a child, even of tender years, is incapable of easily reading visual reactions. If a young girl told her mother or father that she had seen Santa Claus, she would probably continue her story or not depending on the reaction she got. If her mother or father smiled and said, "You did?" that would signal the child that they are being believed. Now, suppose the same parent said, "Really, and what was he doing, or where was he?" the child may begin supplying details, even to the point of saying they actually talked to Santa. The fact is, although innocent, the story is still a fabrication, but positive support of that fabrication usually leads to additional fabrication.

Now, a child does not have to have positive reinforcement to expand on fabrication. Expansion can also result from negative reinforcement. If, in the same story above, the young girl told her father that she saw Santa and his reaction was, "Oh come on, you know he does not exist," the child's response could easily become, "Yes, he does, he put me in his sleigh and I talked to him." Again, a fabrication, but again an example that a child is capable of expanding a fabrication whether there is positive reinforcement or not.

Unfortunately, most people believe that a child will lie about Santa, the Easter Bunny or whether they did their homework or not, but would never lie about something as serious as being touched or sexually molested. What most adults fail to realize is the fact that most children have no real concept about how serious a false allegation is when they make it or what the consequences may be. They do not look at allegations of abuse in the same light as an adult does. Now, I am speaking about false allegations, not genuine abuse, but when a child does make a false allegation, they are not consumed with the same internal rage that the adult who hears about it is, at least not initially.

In order to honestly understand the mechanics behind the growth of allegations, one needs to examine what normally transpires from the initial disclosure, forward and, once again, I am speaking only about false allegations, not real abuse.

There are many reasons for the initial disclosure. A child could be mad at someone, they could be prompted for their story or they could actually be coached by a parent in a custody battle, but it is vital to look carefully at what was taking place when the initial allegation was made and to whom it was made. For example purposes, we will look at an allegation that was made following a young girl's weekend visitation with her father. When she got home, she appeared sad and withdrawn. In reality, her reaction was because she was sad to leave her father, but she knew she could not tell her mother that, so she gives no explanation when her mother asks her what is wrong. Her mother, realizing that something is wrong, becomes concerned because the child will not say anything, so she may begin asking questions specific to issues that are of a concern to her. Note, I said, of concern to her, not the child.

Many adults, even some well meaning counselors, surmise that if a child is sad and withdrawn and is not telling why, something bad must have happened to them. To many adults, that something bad may easily equate to being inappropriately touched, so they ask, "Did he touch you somewhere he was not supposed to?" Many children, who simply may not wish to talk, give an immediate and positive response, without even realizing what they are saying, but to the adult, they immediately become a victim and need to be "pampered." That pampering could consist of the adult crying, cuddling and protecting the child, but to the child, this attention may be new and fantastic. They are getting attention they never got before and normally, children thrive on attention and that attention resulted from nothing more than a simple "yes" response; no details and no facts, just a yes.

Now again, the initial “disclosure” may have amounted to a simple yes response to the question, “did he touch you somewhere he was not supposed to?” Following the “yes,” the child was immediately given attention that they may never have previously received and in many cases, the child loves it. That child is not thinking, “Gee, I said daddy touched me sexually and he could go to prison for doing it.” Their main thoughts are on the newly acquired attention they are receiving.

In some cases, after the child has said “yes,” the mother may push for details or may take the child to a counselor, human services or a local police department, but whoever she takes the child to, depend on the fact that the mother will do the initial talking. If she does take the child to the police, the mother will tell the detective what she was told and normally, at that point, in everyone’s mind, including the detective, the child was molested and indeed, is a victim. Once the detective completes his interview with the mother, he/she may interview the child. At this point, carefully consider the psychology of what is taking, or about to take place.

Most children are told the “police” are good, are there to protect them, but never lie to a policeman. Here is the child, talking to a detective, well meaning or not, who already has a preconceived opinion and the child has been brought up not to lie to the police. At that point, the child may reason, “Well, I have to tell him what I told mama,” so they repeat the allegation. The problem is, usually the detective will want more details than the child’s mother did, so the child begins to provide them. Why? Because the detective is all but in tears, something the child may easily see as positive support and something that gives a clear message to the child that they can say just about whatever they want.

Now, keep in mind, that in many circumstances, it is impossible for a child to supply details to events that never took place, so normally if proper interviewing techniques were used, the allegation would be shown to be false, but that is rarely the case. The detective may begin by educating the child with leading and suggestive questioning or by the use of anatomically correct dolls or anatomically correct drawings, where a child is asked to identify body parts and “show” where they have been touched. They may begin by telling the child, “I am here to protect you and nothing bad is ever going to happen to you again.” “Do you know what good touch, bad touch and secret touch is?” Good touch is like if someone patted you on your head.” “Bad touch is if someone touched you, like where your bathing suit covers you and secret touch is when someone touches you in a bad place and then tells you not to tell about it.” Now, you said your daddy touched you and that was in a bad place, like where your bathing suit covers you, right?” That detective just educated the child as to exactly

what he was looking for and actually prompted the child for what he expected them to say.

Again children, of even tender years are not stupid. The child may rationalize, “well, I said daddy touched me and the detective told me it was a bad place and a bad place is where my bathing suit covers me so, yeah, that is where he touched me.” When asked what daddy touched her with, an obvious response would be his hand or his finger/fingers, so now the story begins to develop. Now, at the conclusion of the interview with the detective, the child may have disclosed that her daddy touched her, between her legs, with his hand and that is the extent of the allegation. Once the interview is complete, it is not unusual for the detective to “hug” the “victim” and assure her that everything is going to be okay.

We began with the child simply responding “yes” to a mother’s question, to admitting that her father touched her between her legs, but in each step, that child was led, positively reinforced and given special attention, attention they do not want to lose. They feel needed, important and very special. What child would not want to feel that?

Following the interview, the detective and the mother may talk again. The detective may reason, “she said she was touched between her legs by her father, but I don’t think she has really told us everything.” “I have a female partner and I want to get her to talk to your daughter because she may feel more comfortable talking to a woman about this.”

Several days later, a second interview is arranged between the child and the female detective. Again, this new detective would have been advised of all prior disclosures and again, this new detective may well have already formed an opinion that the child was abused. Now, here is the child during the second interview and, to the child, maybe they are there because they have not told enough, so by the time that interview ends, the child may be saying “daddy put his hand inside my bathing suit and put his finger in my private,” so basically, now we have our third story.

Normally, when the detectives finish, they may refer the child to a hospital or doctor for a physical examination, or even a facility who specializes in child sexual abuse. In that case, here come more interviews. The child may also be referred to the Department of Human Services and, again, more interviews. Amazingly, none of these interviews are usually recorded and even when they are, the child has already

told their story so many times that any prior mistakes they may have made telling it earlier would have, for the most part, been corrected.

It is very rare that any detective, police officer, social worker and in many cases, counselors and psychologists, have had any formal training in proper interview techniques and, in most cases, these individuals immediately believe the child and are only interested in evidence to validate the allegation. Usually, the more times the child tells the story, the more it becomes expanded and regardless of how ridiculous any of the details are, that child was abused simply because the child said it happened.

An allegation, which began as a simple yes with prompting, fueled by newly acquired attention and expanded because the child could not admit they lied, suddenly became a major criminal case against a father who had done absolutely nothing, yet found himself branded as a child molester.

So, one child's story grew, but how do other children get involved? Let's say the child accuser has a sister who is a year younger than she is. The younger sister will see all the attention that is being given to her sister and she may want it too. After all, all she has to say is, "daddy touched her too." Since there is no way the mother, learning that one daughter had been abused, is not going to ask the other and, before you know it, we now have two girls accusing their father.

On occasion, even well meaning police and social workers involve other children. It is not uncommon for a detective to go to another child and say, "Sally said her father touched her in a bad place and she also said he may have touched you, did he?" Again, prompting the child for a response and it is not unusual to get it.

False allegations do grow and they grow many times because a child believes that they must keep refreshing, or adding to their story to be believed and to keep the attention they are getting. The unfortunate thing is that the "professionals" who deal with these children are not looking for the truth, just information to validate the allegation.

The key to breaking down a false allegation, as is discussed in other areas of this website, is to carefully analyze every statement a child has made, and compare each individual allegation against the other. For the most part, a description of real abuse remains constant where a false allegation tends to change like the wind. It is also beneficial to carefully examine exactly what was taking place in the child's life when the initial disclosure was made.

Most false allegations of abuse would surface quickly if these “professionals” interviewed these children properly and did not simply accept a story, at face value, as being the complete truth. Yes, sexual abuse does happen, but so do false allegations of abuse and until we, as a society, learn to properly deal with these issues and distinguish fact from fantasy, innocent people, falsely accused, will continue to have their lives and families destroyed, spend years in prison and be labeled for the rest of their lives as being a child molester when in reality, they have done absolutely nothing.

To anyone falsely accused, expose the lie or risk conviction.

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