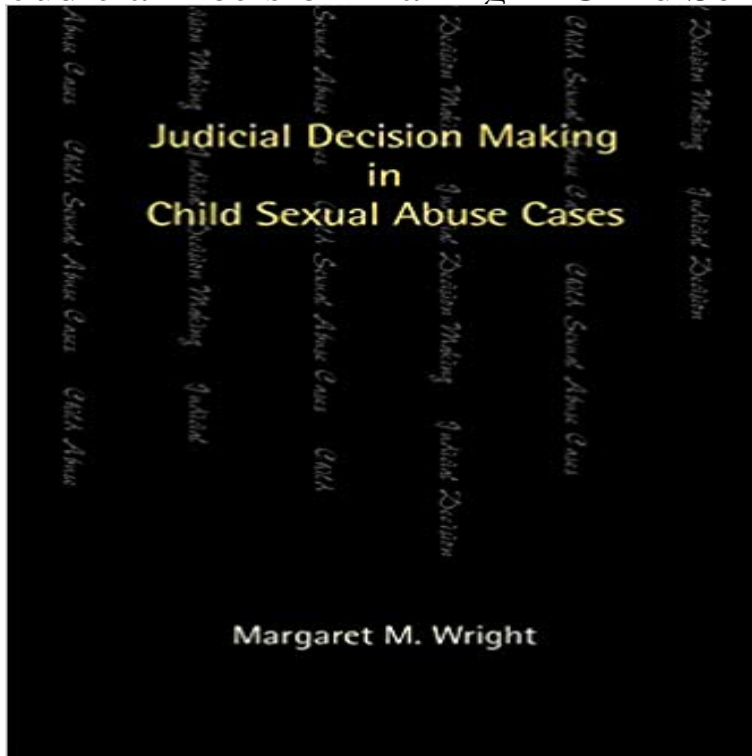


Judicial Decision Making in Child Sexual Abuse Cases



In the 1980s, Canada witnessed a public outcry over child sexual abuse cases that were being reported in the media. Elected officials sought a remedy not through policy changes or other social mechanisms but rather through legal reforms. Amendments were made to the Criminal Code of Canada and sexual assault was redefined. The word rape was replaced with a continuum of sexual assault categories intended to reflect the full range of sexually intrusive behaviours. Most womens groups, having fought for recognition of harm done to women and children, supported this legislation, though some questioned the approach. Margaret Wright examines how the courts have dealt with child sexual abuse cases since then and what effect the resort to law has had. Analyzing the sentencing phase of these cases, she demonstrates that although the laws may have changed, their interpretation still depends on the social construction of children at the court level and on judges own understanding of what constitutes child sexual abuse. *Judicial Decision Making in Child Sexual Abuse Cases* is a rich and detailed study of the court process that will be welcomed by students and scholars of law and society, social work, criminal justice, and social policy.

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