

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FOSTER CARE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Foster Care + Human Trafficking

- 50% percent of children sold into trafficking in California are foster care children.
- “At least 85% of all CSEC in New York had a child welfare background and 75% of those residing in New York City had spent time in foster care.”
- “98% of children who are identified as survivors of sex trafficking had previous involvement with child welfare services, and many were legally in the care and custody of the state while they were being prostituted by traffickers.”



What We Know for Sure



- As many as 300,000-400,000 children are commercially sexually exploited in the United States each year.
- At least 800,000 runaway children will be lured into commercial sexual exploitation each year.
- *...being in foster care was the perfect training for commercial sexual exploitation. I was used to being moved without warning, without any say, not knowing where I was going or whether I was allowed to pack my clothes. After years in foster care, I didn't think anyone would want to take care of me unless they were paid. So, when my pimp expected me to make money to support 'the family,' it made sense to me.*

*Statistics from the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse

Definitions



Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC): refers to a range of crimes of a sexual nature committed against children and adolescents, including...

- recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting or providing a minor for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- exploiting a minor through prostitution;
- exploiting a minor through survival sex;
- using a minor in pornography;
- exploiting a minor by having her / him perform in sexual venues.

Definitions (Cont'd)



Child Welfare System: By its broadest definition, child welfare is the set of public and private agencies that provide social services to children and their families.

Foster Care: a system for children who are (a) removed from their parents / guardians, or (b) surrendered to the state by their parents. These children are placed with non-relative foster families or relatives, in exchange for a stipend.

Group Home: a home for several foster children that is licensed by the state. Group homes are run either by house parents, who live with the children, or by shift staff, who transfer in and out during every 24 hours.

Typical Experiences of CSEC

- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect / Abandonment
- Runaways / Throwaways
- Homeless / “Aging Out” Youth

Sexual Abuse



- *“We’ve all been molested. Over and over, and raped. We were all molested and sexually abused as children, don’t you know that? We ran to get away ... We were thrown out, thrown away. We’ve been on the street since we were twelve, thirteen, fourteen.”*
- A University of Hawaii report stated that 57% of sex trafficking victims reported being sexually assaulted as a child.
- Prostitution Research and Education estimated that 65-95% of sex trafficking victims were sexually assaulted as children.
- The National Institute of Justice states that “persons who were sexually abused as children are 28 times more likely than their non-abused peers to be arrested for prostitution.”

Long-term Effects of Sexual Abuse

- Survivors of sexual abuse may experience difficulty in establishing interpersonal relationships. Common relationship difficulties may be...
 - Ability to trust
 - Fear of intimacy
 - Fear of being different or weird
 - Difficulty establishing interpersonal boundaries
 - Passive behaviors & getting involved in abusive relationships

- Years of abuse may lead survivors to avoid others, believing they are worthless and have nothing to offer.



Childhood Neglect / Abandonment

- Childhood neglect and abandonment are other factors predisposing children and youth to trafficking. Some psychological effects may be:
 - ▣ Difficulty trusting
 - ▣ Inner anger, hostility towards others
 - ▣ Guardedness, defensiveness
 - ▣ Mood swings / depression
 - ▣ Disconnection from community, family, self and friends
 - ▣ Insecurity (feeling unloved, unwanted)
 - ▣ Emotional numbness
 - ▣ Fear of rejection (need to please others)



Runaways / Throwaways



- Of the 1.7 million foster care youth who run away a year...
 - ▣ An estimated 1.3 million return; however, 6,300 youth do not return at all.
 - ▣ 371,000 children remain away from their foster care placements for longer than a month.
 - ▣ 14,900 children were sexually assaulted or someone attempted to sexually assault them during their time away.
 - ▣ 1,700 children engaged in sexual activity in exchange for money, drugs, food or shelter during the episode.

**Reported by The Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART).*

Homeless / Aging Out Youth



- 22% of youth “aging out” of the foster care system end up homeless.
- 21-42% of homeless youth were sexually abused prior to running away from home.
- 75% of all sex trafficking victims were at one point homeless.
- 1 in 3 homeless teens are lured into CSE by a trafficker within 48 hours of leaving home.

The Connection Between Foster Care and CSE

Process #1

Foster Care



Runaway /
Throwaway



Homeless



CSE

Process #2

Foster Care



Aging Out
Youth



Homeless



CSE

Process #3

Foster Care



Lured Away



CSE

Who are the Traffickers?

- 24% were at one point committed into foster care as a child.
- 48% of the interviewees had run away from home due to physical or sexual assault.
- 100% of the ex-traffickers interviewed experienced physical violence in their home or foster care placement.
- 80% had experienced sexual abuse as a child by a family member, foster care parent or close family friend.



Actual Photos of Traffickers: these are photos of real traffickers convicted for the sex trafficking of minors.

You do the Math...

1 girl
@ \$50/15min
x 20 tricks /day
x 7 days/week
\$365,000 /year

x 4 girls =
\$1,460,000/year

1 girl
@ \$250/hour
x 8 tricks /day
x 6 days/week
\$626,000 /year

x 4 girls =
\$2,496,000/year

How Traffickers Recruit:



1. Boyfriend Technique:

- ▣ *I fell in love with this guy and thought he was the one...and he called himself a pimp. But he always tell me I'm his Bottom Bitch and whatever. He put me on the stroll, out there with black eyes and broken noses. I was out there messed up.*

2. Gorilla Technique:

- ▣ *...all I heard was, 'Man, go get that girl!' And one of them came out and dragged me by my hair, and he pulled me into the car...after[I] was kidnapped, at least six men gang-raped [me]. [I] was then driven to Sacramento, where [my] thirty-two year-old pimp put [me] out on the street as a prostitute.*

How Traffickers Recruit, (Cont'd)

3. Internet:

Rain Smith

Heyy thanks for adding me your very pretty would you be interested in a job making easy money

Jane Doe

What is it?

Rain Smith

I work with girls that dance nude do partys dates one on ones and more does any of that interest you

Jane Doe

Lol, I would totally do that. But I'm only sixteen.. Haha.



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4. Peer Recruiting:

- *I ran away from the group home I was staying at upstate, and one of my friends she introduced me to stripping. We was in a house party in Brooklyn and, well, she intoxicated me because I felt uncomfortable with it. She put three E-pills in my drink and after that, I was just turnin' tricks like there was no tomorrow.*

Where do Traffickers Recruit?



- Foster Care / Group Homes
- Homeless Shelters
- The Street
- Alternative High Schools
- Juvenile Justice Facilities

Recommendations:



- Increased Awareness
 - ▣ Expand Skills for All Service Providers
 - ▣ Introduce CSEC to Young People

- Expand Prevention Programs
 - ▣ Strengthen CSE Training Programs
 - ▣ Encourage Cooperation Among All Stakeholders

- Develop Intervention Approaches
 - ▣ Require that all Training be Trauma Informed and Culturally Sensitive
 - ▣ Develop Residential Facilities for Survivors

Proposed Future Research:



- Demographics of traffickers and victims of CSE and reasons for racial disparities.

- Approaches to decrease the vulnerability of foster care children and youth.

- Advancement of knowledge about...
 - ▣ Perpetrators / Buyers / “Johns”
 - ▣ Male victims of CSE

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