



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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## **Probation's DMST Unit is L.A.'s Weapon against Child Sex-Trafficking**

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a growing problem across the state of California and nationally. According to FBI, approximately 300,000 U.S. children are "at risk" of becoming victims of Domestic Minor Sex-Trafficking (DMST). DMST is the commercial sexual exploitation of American children through prostitution, pornography, or sexual performance for compensation (monetary, drugs, shelter or food).

Los Angeles County is considered to be a significant hub of exploitation of youth within the illicit sex trade. In 2010, the Los Angeles County Probation Department identified 174 sexually trafficked youth in the local juvenile justice system. Most of the identified youth have a long history of abuse and neglect, are cross-over from child welfare services, and a disproportionate number (92%) are minorities being targeted for prostitution. Based on national research the average age American girls are first prostituted is 13 years old. Pimps and traffickers prey on vulnerable youth (primarily girls) and groom their victims to enter "the life" of prostitution.

In 2011 in an effort to combat child sex trafficking. And to provide victim-centered services, the Probation Department together with the Courts successfully applied for a Title II grant. The grant funded the Department's DMST program and collaborative "STAR" Court to effectively target the issue of sex trafficking and implemented rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking.

In 2012, Probation was successful in implementing a multi-systemic partnership with the Juvenile Collaborative Courts, Federal and local law enforcement agencies, medical services, and community providers to address the need of this population. Over 45 program participants have been referred to Star Court and are currently receiving services which consist of intensive supervision by specially trained DMST DPOs, placement in group homes (local and out-of-state) that provide victim-centered services, with advocacy and mentoring services provided by survivors of trafficking.

In addition, Probation has implemented "My Life My Choice" prevention curriculum for at-risk girls between the ages of 12-17 residing in SPA 6 and 8. Probation has trained over 1600 collaborative partners and community stakeholders on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation.

The DMST Unit is located within the Placement Services Bureau at Probation Headquarters in Downey.

***Rebuild Lives and Provide for Healthier and Safer Communities***