

INTRODUCTION

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

It is estimated that there are over 27 million victims of human trafficking worldwide. Nationally, it is estimated there are upwards to 125,000 commercial sexual exploited children/youth and an additional 300,000 at risk youth. Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry and the 2nd largest criminal market enterprise. The average entry age of American minors into the sex trade is child falling victim to commercial sexual exploitation is 12 – 14 years of age ¹

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSECY) involves the sexual exploitation of minors for economic profit. It includes “any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person” (Clayton, Krugman, and Simon, 2013). CSECY is a form of human trafficking and is child abuse.²

Global Statistics

Estimates from the 2010 Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. Department of State

- Number of slaves around the world: 12.3 million
- Percentage of victims identified: 0.4% (not even 1%)
- Ratio of convicted offenders to victims identified: 8.5 to 100

Although state and federal law divides human trafficking into the categories of sex trafficking or labor trafficking, in many cases a survivor has experienced both forms of exploitation. When working with youth, it is important to ask about potential sex and labor exploitation to identify the full range of services they may need.

¹ [The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children](#)

² To Report Suspected Child Abuse in Los Angeles County, contact the Child Protection Hotline (CPS) Hotline with DCFS at 1-(800) 540-4000 [For more on Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting for Mandated Reporters: <http://mandatedreporterca.com/images/pub132.pdf>]

PURPOSE

This toolkit is designed to support mental health professionals in Los Angeles County who will be responding to and serving children, youth and young adults who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). This toolkit provides resources, strategies, and protocol guidelines to improve identification and engagement with CSEC youth and to enhance the quality of supportive service delivery to this vulnerable population. It is the aim of this toolkit to equip the mental health professional with knowledge and resources to adequately assist CSECY.

This toolkit is designed to provide information in an easy online format. Many external publications and resources are hyperlinked throughout the toolkit, making it very accessible for the service provider to obtain key information. Full website links are also listed for your reference along with information on local, state and national resources available to the service provider serving CSE youth in Los Angeles County.

Human Trafficking Defined

- Federal Law
 - [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 \(TVPA\)](#)
 - [What is HT?](#)
 - [UN Human Rights](#)
- National Reports – Prevalence: FBI + DMST/CSEC
 - [FBI Report \(2009\)](#)
 - [Shared Hope Report](#)
 - [Statistics: Polaris Project](#)
- California State Definitions
 - [What is HT? \(CA\)](#)
- California Legislation
 - [SB 1279](#)
 - Prop. 35: [CA Ban on Human Trafficking Initiative](#)
 - [SB 855](#)
 - [SB 1322](#)
- Los Angeles County
 - [Law Enforcement Protocol for CSEC](#)

Fact Sheets / Quick Tips and Resources

- [Los Angeles County Dept. of Mental Health](#) (English)
- [Los Angeles County Dept. of Mental Health](#) (Spanish)
- [Innocence Lost](#)
- [For Parents and Guardians \(LAUSD\)](#)
- [U.S. Dept. of Education](#)
- [Making Appropriate Referrals for CSEC Youth](#)
- [Office for Victims of Crime - e guide](#)

IDENTIFICATION / INDICATORS

Youth who are especially vulnerable to trafficking include:

- children who have a history of sexual abuse, physical abuse, maltreatment, and neglect;
- children with a history of substance abuse;
- children with disabilities;
- LGBTQ youth;
- refugees, immigrants, and non-English speaking youth;
- children in foster care or who have interacted with the justice system;
- homeless youth and youth who left home.

Below is a list of indicators, or “red flags,” that might suggest a youth trafficking situation:

General Indicators of Youth Trafficking (Sex and Labor)³

- Leaves home frequently and/or for significant periods of time
- Shows signs of mental, physical, or sexual abuse
- Uses street slang for sex work
- Has a significantly older partner/spends a lot of time with a controlling person or older adult
- Relies on another person to speak for them
- Indications or reports of domestic violence/intimate partner violence
- Lies about age or carries a fake form of identification
- Describes a stalking situation
- Lives in housing provided by employer
- Significantly reduced contact with family, friends, or other support networks
- Displays a pattern of staying in the homes of friends or a non-legally responsible adult
- Is reluctant to discuss how they make money, where they live, or how or when they came to the United States
- Lacks control over schedule and/or money
- Has large amounts of money or costly items he or she cannot reasonably afford
- Is involved in systems (social services, PINS, courts, etc.)
- Works more than he or she is in school or does not often attend school
- Experiences suicidal ideations and/or depression

SCREENING TOOLS & RESOURCES

[Matrix of Screening Tools](#)

[CSEC Action Team - CA](#)

[WestCoast Children's Clinic](#)

³ [Responding to CSE and Trafficked Youth: A Handbook \(NY State\)](#)

Physical Indicators of Child Trafficking

- Has untreated injuries
- Has old and new injuries and/or is injured frequently
- Explanations for injuries are inconsistent with their severity
- Has had multiple sexually transmitted infections and/or abortions
- Has suspicious tattoos or burn marks (branding)
- Exhibits overt sexualized behavior
- Exhibits evidence of sexual abuse

Psychological/Behavioral Indicators of Child Trafficking

- Has heightened sense of fear or distrust of authority
- Is unwilling to disclose whereabouts or information about parents or caregivers
- Is restricted in communication and/or displays anxious, fearful, depressed, submissive, tense and nervous behavior
- Is unwilling or unable to identify as a victim
- Displays behaviors aligned with a trauma history or PTSD
- Has many inconsistencies in his or her story
- Multiple youth retell the same story in the same way many times, giving the appearance that the story has been coached
- Is scared of consequences to a degree greater than a situation (for example, being late) warrants

Boys can also be victims

- ECPAT Publication (2003)
<https://d1qkyo3pi1c9bx.cloudfront.net/00028B1B-B0DB-4FCD-A991-219527535DAB/1b1293ef-1524-4f2c-b148-91db11379d11.pdf>
- Fact Sheet on Boys
<http://iofa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Fact-Sheet-CSE-of-boys.pdf>

Supporting LGBTQ youth and families

Recent efforts throughout the US have been notably made to support victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including children, youth and young adults. As efforts, initiatives and reforms increase, so does the need to be more inclusive in service provision to these victims. The need to recognize, identify and serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth is of utmost importance— It is crucial that service providers seeking to protect sexually exploited children include interventions and support services for LGBTQ youth and their families.

Research conducted by A. Irvine (2010)⁴, uncovered a disproportionate number (15%) of youth in detention identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, and/or gender non-conforming. That survey also found significant differences in detentions for prostitution. Lesbian, bisexual, and questioning girls are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to be held for prostitution—11% compared with 5%. The statistics are starker for gay, bisexual, and questioning boys. Only 1% of heterosexual boys are detained for prostitution compared with 10% of their gay, bisexual, or questioning peers.

LGBTQ Disproportionality in CSEC population⁵:

- The prevailing consensus is that the high level of homelessness among LGBTQ youth is the main contributing factor. A recent survey reported that about 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, and they are homeless mostly due to family rejection based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. This same report found that more than 40% of agencies serving homeless youth do not address issues related to this rejection.
 - Many homeless youth engage in survival sex (exchanging sex for food, shelter, clothing, etc.). A survey of LGBTQ youth service providers in New York City highlighted the prevalence of survival sex among this population; while some providers thought it was more common among young boys, another provider reported that the majority of homeless LGBTQ youth were sexually exploited and it was evenly distributed across sexes.
- [Sex Trafficking and LGBTQ youth](#)
 - [HT Search - Sex Trafficking + LBGT youth](#)

Screening, Identifying and Engaging

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- Asking the question plants the seed!
- Maintain a Compassionate and Non-judgmental attitude
- Follow through on anything you say you will do
- Provide information relevant to the situation
- Avoid a “rescue” mentality
- Identify the youth’s strongest healthy relationship AND/OR
- Connect them to someone who can build the relationship

⁴ Irvine, A. (2010). “We’ve had three of them:” Addressing the invisibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in the juvenile justice system. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, 19 (3), 675-701.

⁵ Durso, L. E., & Gates, G. J. (2012). *Serving our youth: Findings from a national survey of service providers working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

Principles for Service Delivery to CSEC

- <http://www.kristihouse.org/pdfs/csecmaterials/AllModule5Handouts.pdf>

Core Competencies for Serving CSEC & Holistic Needs (CSEC Action Team – CA)

- <https://youthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Core-Competencies-for-Serving-CSEC.pdf>
- <https://youthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Holistic-Needs-of-CSEC.pdf>

Trauma-Informed Care

A trauma-informed approach to providing services in systems such as foster and juvenile justice systems, homeless shelters, health and mental health settings where sexually exploited youth may present for services is key.

A trauma-informed approach recognizes the symptoms of (complex) trauma, understands the impact of past trauma on the youth's life and coping, and incorporates this understanding into practices to empower and avoid re-traumatizing the youth. Implementing a trauma-informed model of care can improve identification, diminish harm, and enhance care of youth who have been sexually exploited and victimized.

- [Responding to CSE Youth & Trafficked Youth: A Handbook for Child Serving Professionals](#)
- [Understanding & Addressing Trauma - \(NCTSN\)](#)
- CSECY Brochure – LACDMH [Trauma-Informed](#)
- TRAUMA BONDS: [Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

Safety Planning

Safety Planning Guidelines:

(Excerpt from: Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Youth Toolkit (2015), King County, WA State)

Safety Planning is a set of techniques intended to increase safety by:

- Creating strategies to reduce or avoid harm
- Identifying sources of support
- Identifying and developing coping Strategies

CSEC victims often form “trauma bonds” with perpetrators. This can be the biggest obstacle in their recovery.

How are trauma bonds formed?

- Violence and threats of violence.
- Alternating violence and kindness increases bonding.
- Believe if they even think a disloyal thought, exploiter will know and retaliate.
- Isolation increases bonding.
- Shame and stigma associated with prostitution, rape, losing virginity increases bonding.

http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/BTB_XXII_IVF_1.pdf

Much of the guidance around safety planning is focused on domestic violence/stalking, sexual assault and suicide prevention. Safety planning with sexually exploited youth requires understanding the various layers of harm that routinely impact their day to day lives. Rather than focusing on a primary relationship or leaving an abuser, safety planning with this population requires navigating a multitude of harms and threats as well as physical and psychological barriers to establishing safety. Safety planning can range from a few short-term strategies to address an immediate situation to a long term, multi-step plan to leave an abuser or leave the life entirely. The following briefly describes several techniques to increase safety and safety-focused conversations between youth and service providers.

Formal Safety Planning:

- Build on what a youth is already doing to survive.
- Let the youth lead the conversation and make as many choices as possible.
- Create detailed plans to respond to or plan for dangerous situations such as changes in an abusive relationship, family instability, or leaving the life (squaring up).
- Identify safe family, friends, and other safe places. *"Who are the people that you can call when you need support or are in a crisis?"*
- Identify safe(r) strategies for youth who are still "working" (always having and using condoms, screening buyers, working in familiar places, working in pairs, checking in).
- Identify the essential items to take should one need or decide to leave.
- Include information about local resources (housing, medical, crisis support)
- Consult with supervisor on critical or imminent-safety concerns facing youth.

Building safety into conversations:

- Specificity is helpful but isn't necessary to make a good safety plan. *"I respect your privacy, we can talk about some strategies without going into details, does that sound ok?"*
- Find opportunities to offer choice (even small ones). *"We have a few things to do today, what would you like to do first?"*
- Follow up! Follow up! Follow up! After making a plan with the youth always check back during the next conversation, *"How did things go? Did you use any of the strategies/ideas you came up with/that we talked about?"*
- Practice refusal skills. Do mini role plays with youth to practice saying "no", declining drugs/alcohol, leaving safe housing, etc. *"So, next time you run into that person (you used to get high with) what will you say if they ask you to party with them?"*
- Support youth to identify and resolve ambivalence. Use open-ended questions to encourage youth to explore their ideas and come up with their own strategies and solutions.

Identifying Sources of Support:

Relationship is the intervention! Youth have many obstacles and harms facing them; and, the support of caring adults and safe peers is critical for their stability and recovery. As service providers establish trust with youth they should also focus on building the youth's larger support network. The goal over time is for the youth to develop a supportive network of people providing a variety of support, encouragement and mentorship.

Identifying and Developing Coping Strategies:

Chronic stress and the effects of trauma can greatly inhibit youth's safety, particularly when they are experiencing frequent dissociation and/or drug/alcohol addiction. Coping strategies can include (but are not limited to): deep breathing, visualization, journaling, talking with a trusted person, counting backwards, focusing on senses, affirmations/mantras, movement/exercise, or progressive muscle relaxation.

Sample Safety Planning Questions:

1. How have you kept yourself safe in the past?
2. When you are working, how do you usually meet buyers (clients, dates)?
3. How do you negotiate with buyers to avoid doing things you don't want to do?
4. What locations or businesses are you most likely to work? (specific track, hotel, someone's house)
5. What businesses or safe locations exist in the area you are most likely to go to?
6. Who will you contact if you need help and how will you contact them?
7. Are there locations or neighborhoods where you are in danger? (like rival gangs or pimps)
8. One reason why I will seek help if I am in a dangerous situation is?...
9. When I get stressed out I can use the following ways to calm myself down....

Safety Plan Considerations:

- <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Child%20Welfare/1.%20Key%20Components%20of%20Safety%20Plan.pdf>

CSEC Safety Plan (Sample):

- <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Child%20Welfare/CSEC%20Safety%20Plan%20Example%20from%20the%20LA%20FRP.pdf>

Service Providers

TOOLKITS / RESOURCES

- [LA County First Responder Protocol](#)
- [LAC Dept. of Mental Health - CSECY](#)
- [Provider Directory](#)
- [Addressing the Trafficking of Children & Youth for Sexual Exploitation in BC](#)
- [Alameda Co. H.E.A.T Watch Toolkit](#)
- [CSEC Protocol - San Diego, CA](#)
- [US Dept. Health & Human Services- Admin. for Children & Families](#)
- The [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) is a national anti-trafficking hotline serving victims and survivors of human trafficking and the anti-trafficking community in the United States. National Human Trafficking Hotline- 1-888-373-7888 Text: 233733
- The National Hotline can also be accessed by emailing help@humantraffickinghotline.org, submitting a tip through the online tip reporting form, and visiting the web portal at www.humantraffickinghotline.org
- Los Angeles County:
 - Department of Children and Family Services
<http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/>
1-800-540-4000 to report suspected child abuse
Outside LA County call: 800-422-4453 (1-800-4 A CHILD)
 - 211 Youth Services
<https://www.211la.org/youth-services>
 - LAUSD
<https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/9794>
 - Alliance for Children's Rights
<http://kids-alliance.org/programs/csec/>
 - [iempathize - Training & Resources](#)
 - [Nola Brantley Speaks \(NBS\) - Training & Resources](#)
 - [LA Regional Human Trafficking Task Force](#)

IF THERE IS AN IMMINENT THREAT TO THE YOUTH'S SAFETY AND ALL EMERGENCIES CALL 9-1-1