

HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT FOR GIRLS

CHILD WELFARE AND DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

Domestic Child Sex Traffickingⁱ is a form of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) here in the United States. As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, it is the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” where the victim is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18. Domestic Child Sex Trafficking is not limited to the selling of children through prostitution.

It is estimated that between 100-300,000 American youth are at currently at risk for becoming victims of CSEC and trafficking.ⁱⁱ

The following factors make youth vulnerable and easy prey for traffickers and exploiters:ⁱⁱⁱ

- Being a female between the ages of 12 and 14
- A history of sexual and physical abuse
- Child welfare involvement, especially out-of-home foster care placement
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- Living in an impoverished community
- Disconnection from education system and off-track for achievement
- Substance dependency

While much more research is needed, current data suggest that the majority of trafficked youth in the United States are child welfare involved:

- In 2013, 60% of the child sex trafficking victims recovered as part of a FBI nationwide raid from over 70 cities were children from foster care or group homes.^{iv}
- In 2012, Connecticut reported 88 child victims of sex trafficking. Eighty-six were child welfare involved, and most reported abuse while in foster care or residential placement.^v
- In 2012, Los Angeles County, California reported that of the 72 commercially sexually exploited girls in their Succeed Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court Program, 56 were child-welfare involved.^{vi}
- In 2007, New York City identified 2,250 child victims of trafficking. Seventy-five percent of those experienced some contact with the child welfare system, mostly in the context of abuse and neglect proceedings.^{vii}
- In Alameda County, California, a one-year review of local CSEC victim populations found that 55% were from foster youth group homes, and 82% had previously run away from home multiple times.^{viii}
- In Florida, FBI agent Gregory Christopher (head of Florida interagency rescue and restore law enforcement task force) estimated that 70% of victims identified in Florida were foster youth.^{ix}

HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT FOR GIRLS

ⁱ Also known as domestic minor sex trafficking.

ⁱⁱ This estimate is used by the Department of Justice and is originally sourced from the report THE COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE U.S., CANADA, AND MEXICO, produced by University of Pennsylvania, 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ MISSEY. MISSEY Statewide and National Advocacy Plan. March 2008. Available at <http://www.missey.org/resources.html>

^{iv} “Finding and Stopping Child Sex Trafficking.” NPR, August 1, 2013. Available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=207901614>

^v Connecticut Department of Children and Families “A Child Welfare Response to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking” (2012). Available at http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/humantrafficking/pdf/response_to_domestic_minot_sex_trafficking.pdf

^{vi} Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi System Collaboration in California.” California Child Welfare Council. Available at http://www.youthlaw.org/fileadmin/ncyl/youthlaw/publications/Ending-CSEC-A-Call-for-Multi-System_Collaboration-in-CA.pdf

^{vii} Feldman, Cassi. “Report Finds 2000 of State’s Children are Sexually Exploited, Many in New York City” NEW YORK TIMES April 24, 2007. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/24/nyregion/24child.html?_r=2&oref=slogin

^{viii} MISSEY Resources <http://www.missey.org/csec.html>

^{ix} Vander Velde, Jessica. “FBI agent leads task force targeting pimps in child prostitution.” TAMPA BAY TIMES October 4, 2010.