

Support for Sexually Exploited Minors

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1 Introduction



“Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors not only are illegal activities, but also result in immediate and long-term physical, mental, and emotional harm to victims and survivors.”

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are frequently overlooked, misunderstood, and unaddressed domestic problems. In the past decade, they have received increasing attention from advocates, the media, academics, and policy makers. However, much of this attention has focused internationally. This international focus has overshadowed the reality that commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors also occur every day within the United States.

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors not only are illegal activities, but also result in immediate and long-term physical, mental, and emotional harm to victims and survivors. A nation that is unaware of these problems or disengaged from solving them unwittingly contributes to the ongoing abuse of minors and all but ensures that these crimes will remain marginalized and misunderstood.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

In September 2013, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies published the report *Confronting*

Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States. The purpose of that report is to:

- increase awareness and understanding of the crucial problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States;
- examine emerging strategies for preventing and identifying these crimes, for assisting and supporting victims and survivors, and for addressing exploiters and traffickers; and
- offer a path forward through recommendations designed to increase awareness and understanding and to support efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to these crimes.

The IOM/NRC report includes chapters on specific sectors with a role to play in addressing the problem. Because the report is lengthy and broad in its reach, the IOM/NRC, with the support of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, decided to develop a series of guides offering a more concise and focused perspective on the problem and emerging solutions for several of these sectors.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this guide is providers¹ of victim and support services for children and adolescents who have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. These service providers include individuals (policy makers, leaders, practitioners), organizations, and programs at the local, state, and federal levels. They encompass child welfare and child protective services, other agencies and programs within the state and federal governments (e.g., the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime), and nongovernmental organizations.

HOW THIS GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

Following this introduction, Section 2 provides definitions of relevant terms, a set of guiding principles, a summary of what is known about the extent of the problem, and an overview of risk factors and consequences.

Section 3 describes some emerging strategies for preventing and responding to these crimes. It describes both strategies specific to the victim

¹Note that throughout this guide, the term “provider” is intended to encompass all of the entities—from individuals to organizations—that make up the victim and support services sector.

and support services sector and multisector, collaborative strategies in which providers of victim and support services play a role.

Section 4 reviews approaches to providing services for victims and survivors of these crimes, including trauma-informed care, case management, and survivor-led and survivor-informed models. It also describes several key challenges to service provision.

Finally, Section 5 presents strategies for making progress in identifying, preventing, and responding to these crimes, based on the recommendations offered in the IOM/NRC report.

2 The Problem



“Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be understood as acts of abuse and violence against children and adolescents.”

This chapter first defines terms relevant to the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. It then presents a set of guiding principles that should inform any efforts to address the problem. Next is a brief discussion of what is known about the extent of the problem. The final section summarizes the current understanding of risk factors and consequences. One of the messages that emerges from this discussion is that, while the gravity of the problem is clear, critical gaps in the knowledge base for understanding and addressing it need to be filled.

THE DEFINITION ISSUE

The language used to describe aspects of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking crimes and their victims and survivors—a collection of terms derived from the range of agencies, sectors, and individuals working to prevent and address these crimes—varies considerably. Some terms are diagnostic and scientific (e.g., *screening* and *medical forensic exam*). Others are legal terms (e.g., *trafficking*, *offender*, *perpetrator*). Some terms are used frequently in popular culture (e.g., *pimp*, *john*, *child prostitute*). Still others are focused on the experiences of exploited children (e.g., *victim*, *survivor*,

modern-day slavery). The result is the absence of a shared language regarding commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.

The implications of this absence of a common language can be significant. For example, a child or adolescent victim identified as a prostitute may be treated as a criminal and detained, whereas the same youth identified as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation will be referred for a range of health and protective services. Box 1 provides the definition used in the IOM/NRC report for the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Box 2 presents the report's definitions for some of the more common terms related to these crimes.

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are distinct but overlapping terms. Indeed, disentangling commercial sexual exploitation from sex trafficking is impossible in many instances. Two points are particularly important for readers of this guide. First, programs designed for victims and survivors will need to account for a range of experiences and needs among those being served. Second, as reflected in the guiding principles presented in the next section, it is crucial to recognize and understand commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors as part of a broader pattern of child abuse (as illustrated by Figure 1).

BOX 1 **Definition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors**

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors encompass a range of crimes of a sexual nature committed against children and adolescents, including

- recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, and/or maintaining (acts that constitute trafficking) a minor for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- exploiting a minor through prostitution;
- exploiting a minor through survival sex (exchanging sex/sexual acts for money or something of value, such as shelter, food, or drugs);
- using a minor in pornography;
- exploiting a minor through sex tourism, mail order bride trade, and early marriage; and
- exploiting a minor by having her/him perform in sexual venues (e.g., peep shows or strip clubs).

BOX 2 Definitions of Other Key Terms

Minors—Refers to individuals under age 18.

Prostituted child—Used instead of *child prostitute*, *juvenile prostitute*, and *adolescent prostitute*, which suggest that prostituted children are willing participants in an illegal activity. As stated in the guiding principles in the text below, these young people should be recognized as victims, not criminals.

Traffickers, exploiters, and pimps—used to describe individuals who exploit children sexually for financial or other gain. In today's slang, pimp is often used to describe something as positive or glamorous. Therefore, the IOM/NRC report instead uses the terms trafficker and exploiter to describe individuals who sell children and adolescents for sex. It is also important to note that traffickers and exploiters come in many forms; they may be family members, intimate partners, or friends, as well as strangers.

Victims and survivors—Refers to minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes. The terms are not mutually exclusive, but can be applied to the same individual at different points along a continuum. The term *victim* indicates that a crime has occurred and that assistance is needed. Being able to identify an individual as a victim, even temporarily, can help activate responses—including direct services and legal protections—for an individual. The term *survivor* is also used because it can have therapeutic value, and the label *victim* may be counterproductive at times.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

“Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes should not be considered criminals.”

The IOM/NRC report offers the following guiding principles as an essential foundation for understanding and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors:

- Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be understood as acts of abuse and violence against children and adolescents.
- Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes should not be considered criminals.
- Identification of victims and survivors and any intervention, above all, should do no further harm to any child or adolescent.



FIGURE 1 Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are forms of child abuse.

NOTE: This diagram is for illustrative purposes only; it does not indicate or imply percentages.

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

“Despite the current imperfect estimates, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States clearly are problems of grave concern.”

Despite the gravity of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States, these crimes currently are not well understood or adequately addressed. Many factors contribute to this lack of understanding. For example:

- Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States may be overlooked and underreported because they frequently occur at the margins of society and behind closed doors. Their victims are often vulnerable to exploitation. They include children who are, or have been, neglected or abused; those in foster care or juvenile detention; and those who are homeless, runaways (i.e., children who leave home without permission), or so-called throw-aways (i.e., children and adolescents who are asked or told to leave

home). Thus, children and adolescents affected by commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking can be difficult to reach.

- The absence of specific policies and protocols related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, coupled with a lack of specialized training, makes it difficult to identify—and thus count—victims and survivors of these crimes.
- Victims and survivors may be distrustful of law enforcement, may not view themselves as “victims,” or may be too traumatized to report or disclose the crimes committed against them.
- Most states continue to arrest commercially exploited children and adolescents as criminals instead of treating them as victims, and health care providers and educators have not widely adopted screening for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. A lack of awareness among those who routinely interact with victims and survivors ensures that these crimes are not identified and properly addressed.

As a result of these factors, the true scope of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors within the United States is difficult to quantify, and estimates of the incidence and prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are scarce. Further, there is little to no consensus on the value of existing estimates. This lack of consensus is not unusual and indeed is the case for estimates of other crimes as well (e.g., rape and intimate partner violence).

The IOM/NRC report maintains that, despite the current imperfect estimates, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States clearly are problems of grave concern. Therefore, the report’s recommendations go beyond refining national estimates of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States to emphasize that unless additional resources become available existing resources should be focused on what can be done to assist the victims of these crimes.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors have been identified at the individual, family, peer, neighborhood, and societal levels (see Figure 2).¹ Adding to this complexity, these risk factors, as well as corresponding protective factors, interact within and across levels.

¹It should be noted that the evidence base for risk factors, as well as for consequences (discussed in this section) is very limited. Therefore, the IOM/NRC report draws heavily on related literature (such as child maltreatment, sexual assault/rape, and trauma), as well as evidence gathered through workshops and site visits.

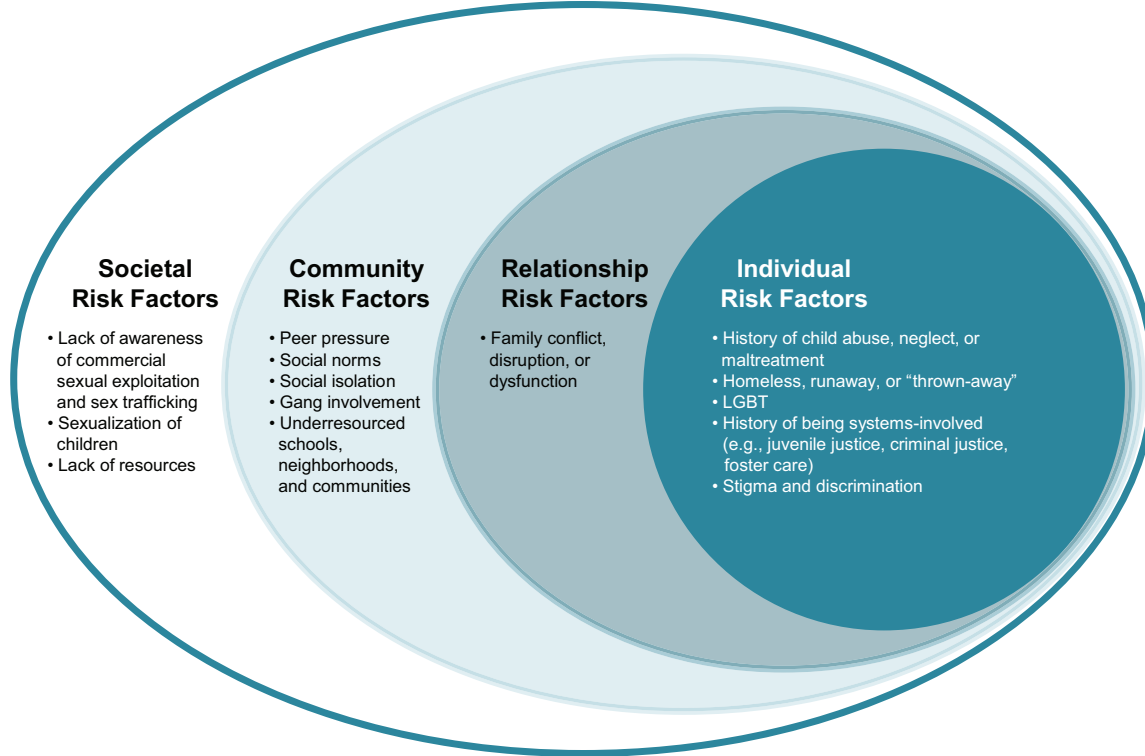


FIGURE 2 Possible risk factors for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
NOTE: LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Figure 2 highlights the complex and interconnected forces that contribute to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. It should be noted, however, that the factors shown are likely only a subset of the risk factors for these crimes. Moreover, these factors do not operate alone. For example, the presence of one or more risk factors would not result in the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors without the presence of an exploiter or trafficker. The factors depicted in Figure 2 may function independently of one another or in combination. In addition, risk factors in one sphere may trigger a cascade of effects or initiate pathways into or out of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

Finally, the factors in Figure 2 may also be risks for other types of adverse youth outcomes. Therefore, their presence does not necessarily signal commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, but should be considered as part of a more comprehensive assessment to determine youth at risk of or involved in these crimes.

Box 3 summarizes findings from the IOM/NRC report that highlight the risk factors depicted in Figure 2.

CONSEQUENCES

“Overall, research suggests that victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking face developmental, social, societal, and legal consequences that have both short- and long-term impacts on their health and well-being.”

The available literature shows that child maltreatment, particularly child sexual abuse, has significant negative impacts on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of victims in adulthood, and leads to increased health risk behaviors and mental health problems among adolescents. While studies focused on consequences for commercially sexually exploited children and adolescents are rare, the data based on child sexual abuse are useful given evidence that these problems are linked in some cases. Overall, research suggests that victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking face developmental, social, societal, and legal consequences that have both short- and long-term impacts on their health and well-being.

BOX 3

Findings on Risk Factors

- Child maltreatment, particularly sexual abuse, is strongly associated with commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Psychogenic factors, such as poor self-esteem, chronic depression, and external locus of control, in addition to low future orientation, may be risk factors for involvement in these crimes. This possible link is supported by the association between child maltreatment and these psychogenic factors.
- Off-schedule developmental phenomena, such as early pubertal maturation, early sexual participation, and early work initiation, have negative consequences for youth.
- While commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking can affect youth across the board, some groups are at higher risk, including those who lack stable housing (because of being homeless, runaways, or “thrown aways”) and sexual and gender minority youth. In addition, some settings and situations—homelessness, foster care placement, and juvenile justice involvement—are particularly high risk under certain circumstances, providing opportunities for recruitment.
- Substance use/abuse is a risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and also may perpetuate exploitation.
- The sexualization of children, particularly girls, in U.S. society and the perception that involvement in sex after puberty is consensual, contribute to the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Disability should be considered a vulnerability for involvement in these crimes given its association with child sexual abuse.
- Online and digital technologies are part of a complex social system that includes both risk factors (recruiting, grooming, and advertising victims) and protective factors (identifying, monitoring, and combating exploiters) for these crimes.
- Beyond child maltreatment, the experience of childhood adversity, such as growing up in a home with a family member with mental illness or substance abuse or having an incarcerated parent, may increase the risk for involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Peer pressure and modeling can influence a youth’s entry into (or avoidance of) commercial sexual exploitation.
- The neighborhood context—such as community norms about sexual behavior and what constitutes consent and coercion, and whether the community is characterized by poverty, crime, police corruption, adult prostitution, and high numbers of transient males—can increase the risk for involvement in these crimes.

3 How Victim and Support Services Can Help



By definition, all victim and support service professionals work with vulnerable and victimized youth. Minors who have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are often subject to other forms of abuse and may be receiving victim and support services in connection with that abuse. Therefore, victim and support service professionals should be able to recognize past, ongoing, or potential victimization by commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking among the youth in their care. Failure to recognize victims and survivors of these crimes is not uncommon among these professionals, however [1, 2]. As a result, those at risk may become victims, and victims may miss opportunities for assistance and remain vulnerable to further exploitation and abuse.

This section describes some noteworthy examples of efforts by child welfare and governmental and nongovernmental victim and support service organizations that show promise as ways of preventing these crimes and providing victims and survivors with the help they need. At the same time, however, the IOM/NRC report emphasizes that no one sector, discipline, or area of practice can fully understand or respond effectively to the complex problems surrounding these crimes; collaboration and coordination among multiple sectors and agencies are necessary to mount an adequate response. Therefore, this section also describes examples of multisector and interagency collaborations in which victim and support services play a role.

Before proceeding, it must be emphasized that none of the efforts described here have undergone sufficient research and evaluation to be recommended for replication. The need for further research and evaluation of all

strategies for addressing commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors is a key theme in Section 5 on recommended strategies for progress.

“No one sector, discipline, or area of practice can fully understand or respond effectively to the complex problems surrounding these crimes; collaboration and coordination among multiple sectors and agencies are necessary to mount an adequate response.”

CHILD WELFARE

As noted in Section 2, involvement in the child welfare system, including out-of-home placement, such as in group homes and foster care, may be a risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Understanding the potential risks related to involvement in the child welfare system can help child welfare professionals recognize and address those risks and potentially prevent these crimes among youth already involved in the system.

While one of the primary responsibilities of child welfare is to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, this responsibility traditionally has not been applied to extrafamilial victimization, which generally has fallen within the purview of law enforcement [3, p. 2]. As emphasized in Section 1, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, at their core, are forms of child abuse. Child welfare agencies, therefore, have a responsibility to assist victims and survivors of these crimes. In addition, child welfare case-workers may serve an important role as “gateway providers” to supportive services for victims and survivors of abuse [4].

The IOM/NRC report offers specific examples of efforts to enhance the involvement of child welfare in addressing these crimes. They include creating a specific “allegation of harm” for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors to improve case management, requiring reporting to child protective services, raising awareness and building capacity in child welfare, and developing state guidelines and tools for child welfare professionals.

“Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, at their core, are forms of child abuse. Child welfare agencies, therefore, have a responsibility to assist victims and survivors of these crimes.”

BOX 4
Creating an Allegation of Harm for Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors

The Illinois Safe Children Act includes “human trafficking of children” as an allegation of harm in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, a central data collection point that helps maintain a complete case management history of child maltreatment. The law stipulates that victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be considered “abused,” so that when an individual under age 18 is taken into custody for a prostitution offense, law enforcement must notify the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services of the allegation of human trafficking. The Department of Children and Family Services, in turn, is required to open an investigation into the abuse within 24 hours of the initial report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Children’s Bureau. 2012. About SACWIS/TACWIS.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/state-tribal-info-systems/about>

State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. 2011. Allegation of Harm #40/90 Human Trafficking of Children.

http://www.state.il.us/dcf/docs/ocfp/policy/Policy_Guide_2013.05.pdf

Creating an “Allegation of Harm”

Several states, including Connecticut, Florida, and Illinois, have designated human trafficking as a specific abuse allegation, as distinct from other reported types of child maltreatment (e.g., domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest, or other forms of physical abuse) (see Box 4). This designation can help officials collect and analyze state-level data and coordinate case management for victims.

Requiring Reporting to Child Protective Services

In Massachusetts, all suspected cases of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors must be referred to child protective services [5]. A report to child protective services prompts referral to a case coordinator, which, in turn, activates a comprehensive, coordinated response to the victim/survivor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Suffolk County Massachusetts' Response to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). 2012.

http://www.suffolkcac.org/assets/pdf/From_the_Life_to_My_Life_Suffolk_County_Response_to_CSEC_June_2012.pdf

Raising Awareness and Building Capacity in Child Welfare

As noted earlier, the role of child welfare in addressing the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors may be limited by the failure to recognize victims and survivors of these crimes and by the perception that victims should be handled in the juvenile justice system [2, 6]. The International Organization for Adolescents and the Center for the Human Rights of Children at Loyola University Chicago, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, developed the *Building Child Welfare Response to Child Trafficking Handbook* [2]. The purpose of this handbook is to help child welfare agencies fulfill their responsibility of identifying and serving trafficking victims as required by the Illinois Safe Children Act.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The International Organization for Adolescents and the Center for the Human Rights of Children at Loyola University Chicago. 2011. Building Child Welfare Response to Child Trafficking Handbook.

<http://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/chrc/pdfs/BCWRHandbook2011.pdf>

Developing State Guidelines and Tools for Child Welfare Professionals

The State of Florida's Department of Children and Family Services has developed specific guidelines to assist child welfare and child protection professionals with reporting allegations of human trafficking of children. In addition, the state developed a tool to assist child protection investigators in identifying trafficking victims. Currently, guidance of this nature is lacking at the federal level and within most states.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

State of Florida Department of Children and Families. 2009. Human Trafficking of Children Indicator Tool.

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/humantrafficking//docs/HumanTraffickingOfChildrenIndicatoTool0109.pdf>

State of Florida Department of Children and Families. 2009. Intakes and Investigative Response to Human Trafficking of Children.

http://centerforchildwelfare2.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/DCF_Pol/Family%20Safety%20CFOP's/175-14HumanTrafficking2013.pdf

FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

The federal government addresses the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors by providing support for services, training, technical assistance, outreach to increase public awareness, and information resources. Examples include making federal benefits and services available to trafficking victims, funding service organizations, and providing employment and job training to trafficking victims. At the state level, governments can help address the problem by using a statewide coordinated care approach to the provision of victim and support services.

Making Federal Benefits and Services Available to Victims of Trafficking

Efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) include regional training and meetings; outreach efforts to raise public awareness (e.g., the Rescue & Restore Victims of Human Trafficking campaign); technical assistance to program grantees who work with victims of human trafficking; and funding for the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, a national resource for victims of human trafficking and the public. In addition, HHS developed a guide to federal benefits and services available to trafficking victims [7]. This resource provides program-by-program information on benefits and services and includes eligibility requirements.

The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons recently released a 5-year federal strategic action plan on services for victims of human trafficking in the United States. Among its goals, the plan calls for expanding access to services from a range of agencies for victims of human trafficking throughout the United States.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking Campaign.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/about-rescue-restore>

National Human Trafficking Resource Center.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/fact-sheet-national-human-trafficking-resource-center>

Services Available to Victims of Human Trafficking.

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/trafficking-services_0.pdf

U.S. Department of State. 2012. Annual Meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/reports/pitf/>

President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. 2013. Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017.

<http://ideascale.com//userimages/accounts/91/912839/Victim-Services-SAP-2013-04-09-Public-Comment-B.pdf>

Funding Service Organizations

The U.S. Department of Justice provides funding to victim services organizations at the local, regional, and national levels through grants made by the Office for Victims of Crime. The 2013 reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) has supplemented these programs by authorizing HHS to issue up to four grants to state or local entities, with the requirement that two-thirds of the funding be used for residential care and services for victims and survivors of sex trafficking who are minors. Funds are also used to develop interagency partnerships and public outreach and awareness campaigns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Grants Made by Office for Victims of Crime.

<http://ojp.gov/ovc/grants>

Reauthorization of Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/laws>

U.S. Department of State. 2012. Annual Meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/reports/pitf/>

Providing Employment and Job Training to Trafficking Victims

The U.S. Department of Labor offers employment and training services to trafficking victims, as required by the TVPA. In addition, the TVPA stipulates that victims of convicted traffickers are entitled to full restitution for the labor they performed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

U.S. Department of State. 2012. Annual Meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/reports/pitf/>

Using a Statewide Coordinated Care Approach to the Provision of Victim and Support Services

Georgia Care Connection was established by Georgia's Governor's Office for Children and Families to serve as a central, statewide hub for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and for professionals (e.g., law enforcement personnel, school personnel, child welfare professionals, health care providers) seeking to help them. Through a broad network of state and local service providers and professionals, Georgia Care Connection coordinates a "comprehensive care plan" for victims and survivors. This comprehensive plan integrates and coordinates prevention, intervention, and treatment services (e.g., legal, mental and physical health, housing) that are guided by the specific needs of each victim/survivor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Georgia Care Connection.

<http://children.georgia.gov/task-force-overview>

Nongovernmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) serving victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors include specialized direct service providers, faith-based organizations, service providers and community organizations that serve other populations, advocacy organizations, and private foundations, among others. These organizations help address the problem through curriculum development and education, training for victim and support service professionals, direct care and services, outreach and public awareness initiatives, prevention efforts, hotlines, and direct support to state and local organizations.

Curriculum Development and Education

A number of NGOs have developed and implemented curricula designed to reach current and potential victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. One example is described in Box 5.

Training for Victim and Support Service Professionals

Some NGOs have developed and implemented training for victim and support service professionals who work with minors that have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. One example, Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS), is described in Box 6. Other examples of organizations that conduct training for an array of victim and support service providers include Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth; Polaris Project; Standing Against Global Exploitation; and Shared Hope International.

BOX 5 My Life, My Choice

My Life, My Choice (MLMC) is an educational curriculum developed by the Boston-based My Life, My Choice initiative, which works to identify and intervene with adolescent girls who are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [8]. The MLMC curriculum consists of 10 sessions led and facilitated by trained staff, typically a licensed clinician and a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking. The curriculum can be delivered in a variety of settings (e.g., group homes and residential facilities, child protective services offices, juvenile justice facilities, community-based organizations).

The goals of the curriculum include preventing commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking among at-risk adolescents and preventing revictimization among those previously exploited. The curriculum was designed to alter participants' behavior by changing their attitudes, knowledge, and skills (i.e., improving attitudes regarding sexual health and self-esteem, increasing knowledge of the relationship between substance use and commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, and developing skills to access resources and recognize potential exploiters) [9].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

My Life, My Choice (MLMC).

<http://jri.org/services/behavioral-health-and-trauma-services/community-based-behavioral-health-services/my-life-my-choice>

BOX 6 Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS)

GEMS, a New York City–based nonprofit organization that provides services to girls and young women (aged 12 to 24) who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, has developed and implemented two curricula for organizations working with victims and survivors of these crimes.

The first, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Community Intervention Project Train-the-Trainer curriculum, is designed to provide an overview of issues related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors for victim and support service providers, law enforcement personnel, health care professionals, child welfare professionals, legal professionals (e.g., prosecutors, legal aid professionals/public defenders, family court officials), school personnel, and first responders. Specific topics include prevention and identification strategies, assessment and counseling techniques, and investigation and interviewing strategies, among others.

Second, the Victim, Survivor, Leader™ curriculum is designed to assist organizations interested in developing and providing “specialized services” for female victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

In addition to these two curricula, GEMS offers technical assistance to organizations seeking additional guidance on the design and delivery of services to the victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

GEMS (Girls Educational & Mentoring Services). 2013. Training and Technical Assistance.
<http://www.gems-girls.org/get-trained/training-and-technical-assistance>

Direct Care and Services

Various organizations provide direct care and services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. These services include temporary and longer-term shelter, intensive case management, victim outreach, support groups, counseling and therapeutic services, mentoring, and legal assistance. Two examples are described in Box 7.

Several direct care service providers also focus on specific vulnerable populations, such as boys/adolescent males; lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youth; and homeless youth. As discussed in Section 4, boys/adolescent males and LGBT youth are often overlooked as populations at risk for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. As a result, victim and support services for these youth are especially scarce. One example of an effort to meet this need is Larkin Street Youth Services, a San Francisco–based

BOX 7
**Examples of Direct Care and Services
for Victims and Survivors**

Courtney's House is a survivor-run organization that provides services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area [10]. Services include case management; educational assistance; survivor-led support groups for male, female, and transgender victims and survivors; mentorship programs; counseling; group therapy; and academic tutoring. In addition, an overnight street outreach program is aimed at identifying victims, survivors, and minors who are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking. Finally, Courtney's House maintains a hotline staffed by victims and survivors of these crimes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Courtney's House.
<http://www.courtneyshouse.org>

The Salvation Army's STOP-IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking provides services to victims of human trafficking in 11 counties in Illinois [11]. The program creates individualized service plans for victims and survivors and provides referrals for shelter and housing, transportation, legal services, medical care, mental health services, education, and employment services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Salvation Army's STOP-IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking.
<http://sa-stopit.org>

nonprofit organization that provides a range of support services to homeless and runaway youth aged 13 to 24, many of whom are male, LGBT, or questioning [12]. Larkin Street provides underage emergency shelter, transitional living programs, primary medical care, case management, education and employment services, HIV prevention information and testing, mental health services, and substance abuse intervention [1]. In addition, Larkin Street collaborates with other area service providers that serve primarily girls and women to make services available to those it may be unable to assist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Larkin Street Youth Services.
<http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org>

Other examples of organizations that serve boys and LGBT and questioning youth include the Center on Halsted, Courtney's House (discussed in Box 7), and Boston Gay & Lesbian Adolescent Social Services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Center on Halsted.

<https://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Boston GLASS (Boston Gay & Lesbian Adolescent Social Services). 2013. Services.
<http://www.jri.org/services/health-hiv-lgbtq-services/health-and-prevention-services/boston-glass/services>

"Boys/adolescent males and LGBT youth are often overlooked as populations at risk for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. As a result, victim and support services for these youth are especially scarce."

Outreach and Public Awareness Initiatives

A number of NGOs have created outreach campaigns to raise public awareness of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. Three national-level examples are Shared Hope International, Polaris Project, and ECPAT-USA:

- **Shared Hope International** has worked to increase public awareness of these crimes by producing a series of reports focused on demand [13], domestic sex trafficking of minors [14], and state-by-state legal responses [15]; by using various media (e.g., billboard campaigns and YouTube videos); and by holding national conferences and public events.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Shared Hope International.

<http://sharedhope.org>

- **Polaris Project** operates the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. The Polaris Project website includes downloadable resources for the public, a range of service providers and professionals, victims and survivors, and individuals at risk for human trafficking. These resources include information on existing and pending federal- and state-level legislation on human trafficking, downloadable flyers that

publicize the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's hotline number (translated in 20 languages), an online directory of selected state-by-state resources, and general information about commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center.

<http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtrc/overview>

- In addition to providing resources on its website, **ECPAT-USA** organizes a youth-led educational outreach program, the Youth Committee, that engages high school students in efforts to address commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. In addition, ECPAT-USA's Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct provides a set of principles that encourage domestic travel and tourism companies to adopt policies addressing these crimes [16].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking-United States of America). 2013. Youth Committee: Involving Young People in Ending Trafficking.

<http://www.ecpatusa.org/overview>

ECPAT-USA. 2013. About the Code: The Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct.

<http://www.ecpatusa.org/6012/code>

In addition to these national-level examples, many other NGOs engage in outreach and public awareness campaigns using a range of strategies, including testimony before Congress, print and media campaigns, and presentations to community-based groups.

Prevention Efforts

Most current prevention efforts focus on raising awareness of the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and improving capacity to identify children and adolescents at risk of victimization (the curricula described in Box 6, developed by GEMS, are examples). Other organizations' prevention work is aimed primarily at assisting and supporting

those at risk for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking (GEMS and MLMC, described in Box 5, are examples). At least one organization has focused on educating adolescent males. The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) created Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation, a prevention program for adolescent males that is implemented in Chicago-area high schools [17].

Additional prevention strategies are aimed at deterring and eliminating demand by promoting victim- and survivor-centered law enforcement strategies and laws. For example, End Demand Illinois, a statewide campaign of CAASE, supports the creation of new laws and resources for law enforcement to facilitate the arrest, filing of charges against, and prosecution of exploiters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation.
<http://caase.org/prevention>

End Demand Illinois. 2013. Campaign Goals.
<http://www.enddemandillinois.org/campaign-goals>

Hotlines

Various hotlines (or help lines) are operated to assist victims of human trafficking; provide referrals; and, to the extent possible, connect individuals with support services in their communities. Examples are described in Box 8.

Direct Support to State and Local Organizations

Some statewide community foundations directly support the efforts of state and local organizations to prevent and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. One example is the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, which in 2011 launched the 5-year "Minnesota Girls Are Not for Sale" campaign to support services, research, and public education on commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of girls. Grantees have included local governments and nonprofit organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Women's Foundation of Minnesota. 2011. Women's Foundation of Minnesota Launches Campaign to End the Prostitution of Minnesota Girls.
http://www.wfmn.org/PDFs/WFM_MNGirls_Nov12011_final.pdf

BOX 8

Examples of Hotlines for Victims of Human Trafficking

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a 24-hour national hotline funded by HHS and operated through a cooperative agreement with Polaris Project. This hotline answers crisis calls (e.g., from trafficking victims in need of immediate assistance), provides referrals to local victim and support services, receives tips related to human trafficking, and responds to inquiries for general information and technical assistance.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Polaris Project. 2013. National Human Trafficking Resource Center.
<http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtrc/overview>

In Chicago, the Salvation Army's STOP-IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking, discussed in Box 7, operates a 24-hour hotline. This hotline helps connect callers with local service providers. There also are hotlines that exist exclusively to assist commercially sexually exploited youth. One example is a hotline operated by Courtney's House, also discussed in Box 7. This hotline, which connects victims with local resources, is answered by survivors of commercial sexual exploitation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

STOP-IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking.
<http://sa-stopit.org>

Courtney's House.
<http://www.courtneyshouse.org>

MULTISECTOR AND INTERAGENCY EFFORTS

Each of the sectors involved in addressing commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors—victim and support services, health care, education, the legal sector, and the commercial sector—has specific roles to play. As noted earlier, however, an adequate response to these crimes requires collaboration and coordination among all of these sectors, as well as at all levels—federal, state, and local. Yet the efforts of individuals, groups, and organizations in different sectors and with different areas of expertise tend to be disconnected. The IOM/NRC report highlights a number of examples of initiatives that have overcome this barrier to a comprehensive response.

Models from Other Domains

Because of the lack of research and evaluation of collaborative initiatives to address commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, the IOM/NRC report describes such initiatives in the related domains of child maltreatment, domestic violence, and sexual assault, all of which involve providers of victim and support services:

- **Child maltreatment**—Children’s advocacy centers centralize and coordinate the investigation of child abuse cases and related social services and mental health care, as well as advocacy services [18]. They require the use of multidisciplinary teams that include law enforcement investigators, child protection workers, prosecutors, and mental health and other health care professionals, among others, to coordinate forensic interviews, medical evaluations, therapeutic interventions, and victim advocacy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kristi House. 2012. Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

<http://www.kristihouse.org/commercial-sexual-exploitation>

National Children’s Alliance. 2013. History of National Children’s Alliance.

<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/index.php?s=35>

- **Domestic violence**—In a family justice center, as in a children’s advocacy center, a multidisciplinary team of professionals is collocated and works together to provide coordinated care to victims of domestic violence [19]. Services encompass advocacy, interviews with law enforcement personnel, medical assistance, information on shelter, and help with transportation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Family Justice Center Alliance. 2013. What Is a Family Justice Center?

<http://familyjusticecenter.com/home.html>

- **Sexual assault**—Sexual assault response teams are community-based interventions that provide comprehensive care to victims of sexual assault and coordinate the legal, medical, mental health, and advocacy response [20]. They represent a shift from a case focus to a victim/survivor focus [21, 22]. Their activities include conducting

multidisciplinary training, providing direct support and advocacy to victims and survivors, developing protocols and policies for responding to cases, conducting case review to coordinate the response to cases, and educating the public about sexual violence and resources available to survivors [23].

Multisector and Interagency Initiatives Addressing Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors

Multisector and interagency efforts to address commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors at the federal level include task forces and other partnerships, such as those mandated by the 2013 reauthorization of the TVPA [2, 11, 24, 25].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BJA (Bureau of Justice Assistance). 2013. Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force Initiative.

https://www.bja.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?Program_ID=51

Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force.

<http://www.cookcountytaskforce.org>

OVC (Office for Victims of Crime). 2013. OVC-Funded Grantee Programs to Help Victims of Trafficking.

<http://www.ojp.gov/ovc/grants/traffickingmatrix.html>

OVC and BJA. 2011. Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force Strategy and Operations E-guide.

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/Default.aspx>

OVC and BJA. 2013. Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking FY 2013 Competitive Grant Announcement.

<https://www.bja.gov/Funding/13HumanTraffickingSol.pdf>

President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. 2013. Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017.

<http://ideascale.com//userimages/accounts/91/912839/Victim-Services-SAP-2013-04-09-Public-Comment-B.pdf>

U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. 2013. The D.C. Human Trafficking Task Force.

http://www.justice.gov/usao/dc/programs/cp/human_trafficking.html

U.S. Department of State. 2012. Annual Meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/reports/pitf/>

Examples of state and local efforts include the following:

- **Washington State**—Washington state's statewide Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children for responding to cases of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors is focused on fostering collaboration and coordination among agencies, improving identification of these crimes, providing services to victims and survivors, holding exploiters accountable, and working toward ending these crimes in the state [26]. The protocol calls for use of a victim-centered approach by law enforcement, the courts, victim advocacy organizations, youth service agencies, and other youth-serving professionals to ensure that victims of these crimes are treated as such rather than as criminals. The protocol encourages multisector collaboration through state, regional, and local efforts. For example, it calls for the use of multidisciplinary teams to provide immediate consultation on cases of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors as they arise and to participate in meetings to share information and collaborate in the management of each ongoing case.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

<http://www.ccyj.org/Project%20Respect%20protocol.pdf>

- **Multnomah County, Oregon**—In 2008, Multnomah County initiated a coordinated multisector response to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Specific work groups focus on legislation, assistance for victims and survivors, law enforcement practices (e.g., arrests, investigation, and prosecution of exploiters and traffickers), and physical and mental health care. Steering committee members include law enforcement; the district attorney's office; the Departments of Health, Community Justice, and Human Services; survivors; and nongovernmental service providers. Sev-

eral strategies are used to ensure collaboration across agencies and among various systems. For example, the county created a special unit within the state child welfare agency for victims and survivors of these crimes [27, 28].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Multnomah County Community Response to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.
<https://multco.us/csec>

- **Suffolk County, Massachusetts**—In Suffolk County, more than 35 public and private agencies participate in the Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition. SEEN’s multisector, coordinated approach to identifying and serving high-risk and sexually exploited minors includes three components: (1) cross-system collaboration, (2) a trauma-informed continuum of care (see Section 4), and (3) training for professionals who work with children and adolescents. To facilitate collaboration and communication among coalition members, SEEN established formal relationships and protocols, including a steering committee and advisory group, multidisciplinary teams of professionals, and a case coordinator who serves as the central point of contact for all reported victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [5].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition.
<http://www.suffolkcac.org/programs/seen>

- **Alameda County, California**—H.E.A.T. (Human Exploitation and Trafficking) Watch is a multidisciplinary, multisystem program that brings together individuals and agencies from law enforcement, health care, advocacy, victim and support services, the courts, probation agencies, the commercial sector, and the community to (1) ensure the safety of victims and survivors and (2) pursue accountability for exploiters and traffickers. Strategies employed by H.E.A.T. Watch include, among others, stimulating community engagement, coordinating training and information sharing, and coordinating the delivery of victim and support services. The program uses a multisector approach to coordinate the delivery of support services. For example, multidisciplinary case review (modeled on the multidisciplinary team approach) is used to create emergency and long-term safety plans.

Referrals for case review are made by law enforcement, prosecutors, probation officials, and social service organizations that have come into contact with these youth. This approach enables members of the multidisciplinary team to share confidential information with agencies that can assist youth in need of services and support.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Alameda County District Attorney's Office. 2012. H.E.A.T. Watch Program Blueprint.

http://www.heat-watch.org/heat_watch

4 Approaches and Challenges to Service Provision



This section describes three approaches to providing victim and support services for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors: (1) trauma-informed care, (2) case management, and (3) survivor-led and survivor-informed models. As is the case for the initiatives discussed in Section 3, research and evaluation of these approaches is sparse. Thus, the discussion here draws on research from related domains, such as sexual assault and domestic and partner violence. (Box 9 describes one program that reflects recognition of the value of these approaches and of the interrelatedness of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, intimate partner violence, and sexual abuse.) This section ends with a review of challenges to the provision of victim and support services that must be overcome if victims and survivors are to receive the services they need.

APPROACHES TO THE PROVISION OF SERVICES

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care (also referred to as trauma-specific treatment and trauma-focused services) is based on recognizing and addressing the symptoms that commonly occur in response to multiple forms of trauma [29, 30]. Given the nature of abuse and violence experienced by victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking—including exposure to repeated physical, sexual, and in some cases psychological abuse or witnessing violence—services specifically designed to address trauma can provide much-needed help.

BOX 9
**Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence
Intervention (SAVI) Program**

The SAVI Program is a hospital-based violence prevention and intervention program that has expanded its scope of work to include services and support for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. This expansion is based on SAVI's recognition of the associations among sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. SAVI offers individual trauma-informed counseling, group and family counseling, and case management to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. It also connects victims and survivors with community resources to provide support for education and job training, assistance in the process of applying for public benefits, legal advocacy and services, and health care services. SAVI clinicians coordinate services with partners in the Mount Sinai Medical Center, including the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, and with community-based resources, such as GEMS (discussed in Box 6 in Section 3) [23].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention (SAVI) Program.
<http://www.mountsinai.org/patient-care/service-areas/community-medicine/areas-of-care/sexual-assault-and-violence-intervention-program-savi>

Experiences with trauma can exceed a person's ability to cope, and often have adverse impacts on health and behavior that can last long into the future. Symptoms may include depression, anxiety, anger, disassociation, fearfulness, hopelessness, poor self-image, distrust of the environment, and difficulty maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships [31]. Without treatment, traumatic experiences can lead to changes in the brain that may create an inherent sense of distrust toward others, including those trying to help; a distrust of authority; and a sense of betrayal and resentment toward society in general [32].

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the design of trauma-informed systems of care is "based on an understanding of the vulnerabilities or triggers of trauma survivors that traditional service delivery approaches may exacerbate, so that these services and programs can be more supportive and avoid re-traumatization." Elements of such a system include ongoing training in trauma for staff and leadership, use of trauma assessment tools and provision of trauma-specific services, an environment that is physically and psychologically safe, and meaningful participation by both staff and those receiving services in the design and operation of the organization [33].

Evidence supports the effectiveness of trauma-specific services for victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse and complex trauma and for women with criminal justice involvement. Trauma-specific services have also been evaluated and found to be effective for women experiencing co-occurring disorders, including substance abuse and depression. The IOM/NRC report notes that trauma-informed care is standard practice for many providers of services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [34, 35, 36, 37, 38].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SAMHSA. 2012. Working Definition of Trauma and Principles and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach.

<http://www.samhsa.gov/traumajustice/traumadefinition/index.aspx>

“Given the nature of abuse and violence experienced by victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking—including exposure to repeated physical, sexual, and in some cases psychological abuse or witnessing violence—services specifically designed to address trauma can provide much-needed help.”

Case Management

Through case management, an individual in need of assistance receives support from a professional—often a case manager—who develops a service plan and serves as a central point of contact for a range of service providers and systems. This professional can assess an individual’s needs and identify and coordinate services on his or her behalf. Case management can be especially beneficial for those who have complex needs (e.g., health care, mental health services, legal services) or must interact with multiple systems (e.g., criminal/juvenile justice, child protective services, foster care). As noted in Section 3, case management is a common component of a multidisciplinary team approach to assisting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, child abuse, and sexual assault. The IOM/NRC report notes that many providers of services for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking use and/or support the use of case management [39].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Clawson and Dutch. 2008. Case management and the victim of human trafficking: A critical service for client success.

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/humantrafficking/CaseMgmt/ib.htm>

“Case management can be especially beneficial for those who have complex needs (e.g., health care, mental health services, legal services) or must interact with multiple systems (e.g., criminal/juvenile justice, child protective services, foster care).”

Survivor-Led and Survivor-Informed Models

Many providers of services for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking also use and/or support the use of survivor-led and survivor-informed models. For example, survivor-led services and programs are central to GEMS (discussed in Section 3). Youth leadership by survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking was found to be important to the personal growth and development of GEMS participants. According to one service provider quoted in the IOM/NRC report: “It is also such a testament to the youth to be able to see people, and have tangible conversations, and interact with people who can say, ‘Yes I have been there. It is possible to get out. It doesn’t always have to be this way.’”

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

GEMS (Girls Educational & Mentoring Services).

<http://www.gems-girls.org>

Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY).

<http://www.missey.org>

CHALLENGES TO SERVICE PROVISION

Providers of services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking generally agree that too few services are available to meet current needs. Moreover, the services that do exist are unevenly distributed geographically, lack adequate resources, and vary in their ability to provide specialized care. Some of the challenges to adequate service provision are summarized in this section. The IOM/NRC report stresses the importance of conducting research to identify ways of overcoming these challenges.

“Providers of services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking generally agree that too few services are available to meet current needs.”

Lack of Adequate Shelter and Housing

Many law enforcement personnel familiar with sex trafficking cases identify shelter and housing as the most needed service for victims [40]. Yet emergency, short-term, and long-term housing for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking is limited, and in many parts of the country is nonexistent [15, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49]. Appropriate and acceptable shelter options are in particularly short supply for certain groups [50, 51]. For example, transgender youth may not be given the opportunity to designate the sex-specific housing with which they identify, potentially exposing them to violence and/or discrimination.

Few Victim and Support Services for Boys

Few victim and support service providers work with male victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [42]. As noted in Section 3, there is growing recognition that boys and young men are victims and survivors of these crimes, and greater attention is needed to preventing and identifying these crimes among these youth and providing them with gender-specific services.

Lack of Awareness Among Service Providers

As noted in Section 3, victim and support service providers working with vulnerable youth may not recognize those in their care who have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. As a result, they may fail to connect these youth to appropriate and timely services. Section 3 describes efforts to train service providers in and raise public awareness of these crimes. Broadening the reach of these existing efforts is one strategy for increasing understanding and recognition of the problem.

Lack of Information Sharing and Communication

Victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking may require a range of victim and support services (e.g., mental health and substance abuse services, housing/shelter). Unfortunately, information sharing and communication may be lacking among the various providers of these services. Multisector collaboration (discussed in Section 3) and case management (discussed on page 35) are potential strategies for closing this gap.

Impact on Service Providers of Working with Victims and Survivors

Professionals may experience negative effects from working with vulnerable and traumatized individuals [52, 53, 54]. These effects include impacts on physical and psychological health [55], burnout, and secondary traumatic stress (e.g., sleep disturbance).

Lack of Consensus on Services and Service Delivery

While there is some agreement on specific services needed, consensus currently is lacking on the range of services that should be available to assist and support victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking effectively over time. Consensus is also lacking on the most effective or efficient model of service delivery for victims and survivors of these crimes.

5 Recommended Strategies



“The human cost of the status quo is simply unacceptable.”

The IOM/NRC report concludes with a series of recommendations for making progress toward preventing and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. The strategies for progress articulated in the report’s recommendations are summarized in this section.

INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

As discussed in prior sections, a lack of training among professionals who interact with children and adolescents—especially those who are vulnerable—is a barrier to timely and appropriate action to assist victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking and prevent these crimes among youth at risk. These professionals are often dismayed to learn that they have missed opportunities to help these youth and want to know more about how to identify and assist them.

Training

Training for professionals and others who interact with young people needs to target and reach a range of audiences in a variety of settings (e.g., urban

RECOMMENDATION TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Develop, implement, and evaluate:

- training for professionals and others who routinely interact with children and adolescents,
- public awareness campaigns, and
- specific strategies for children and adolescents.

and rural; tribal lands, territories, and states). Relevant sectors (e.g., health care, law enforcement, victim and support services) should participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of training activities that use evidence-based methods. Further, each sector should be consulted to determine the best methods for that sector, given that needs may vary, for example, between law enforcement personnel and health care providers.

Public Awareness Campaigns

A lack of public awareness is a significant barrier to preventing, identifying, and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. To address this gap, existing public awareness initiatives could be expanded to encompass these crimes.

Strategies for Awareness Among Children and Adolescents

Child and adolescent victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking may not view themselves as victims, and youth who are at risk for this kind of exploitation may not recognize their individual risk. Therefore, special efforts are needed to increase the awareness of children and adolescents to help them avoid becoming victims and to help victims and survivors obtain the assistance they need.

STRENGTHEN THE LAW'S RESPONSE

“Individuals who sexually exploit children and adolescents have largely escaped accountability.”

A small but growing number of states have enacted laws—sometimes referred to as “safe harbor” laws—designed to redirect young victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from the criminal or juvenile justice system to child welfare or other agencies to receive supportive services. While

recognizing that additional time and research are needed to assess the effectiveness of specific state laws, the IOM/NRC report recommends that the core principle underlying these safe harbor laws—that children and adolescents who are survivors of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking must be treated as victims, not criminals—should be advanced without delay.

In addition, despite laws in every state that enable the prosecution of individuals who purchase sex with a minor, function as exploiters/traffickers, or otherwise sexually exploit children and adolescents, and despite the hard work of prosecutors and law enforcement in many jurisdictions, individuals who sexually exploit children and adolescents have largely escaped accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE LAW'S RESPONSE

Develop laws and policies that **redirect** young victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from arrest and prosecution to systems, agencies, and services that are equipped to meet their needs. *Such laws should apply to all children and adolescents under age 18.*

Review, strengthen, and implement laws that hold exploiters, traffickers, and solicitors **accountable** for their role in commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. *These laws should include a particular emphasis on deterring demand.*

STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ON PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

As noted previously, the evidence base on strategies and approaches for preventing and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States is extremely limited.

RECOMMENDATION TO STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ON PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Implement a national research agenda focused on:

- advancing knowledge and understanding;
- developing effective interventions; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of prevention and intervention laws, policies, and programs.

SUPPORT COLLABORATION

As discussed in Section 3, collaborative, coordinated approaches that bring together resources from multiple sectors will be most effective in identifying victims and survivors and in meeting their challenging needs.

RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Develop **guidelines** on and provide **technical assistance** to support multisector collaboration and coordination.

SUPPORT INFORMATION SHARING

“The difficulty of locating services and programs available to victims is a very real obstacle for children and adolescents seeking to access services and for professionals and caregivers trying to help them.”

One of the most significant barriers to preventing, identifying, and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors is a lack of reliable, timely information. A number of organizations maintain lists of services available to child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. However, there is no exhaustive list of national-, state-, local-, and tribal-level resources for victim and support services. The difficulty of locating services and programs available to victims is a very real obstacle for children and adolescents seeking to access services and for professionals and caregivers trying to help them.

RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT INFORMATION SHARING

Create and maintain a digital information-sharing platform to deliver **reliable, real-time information** on how to prevent, identify, and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are in the same developmental stage that efforts to deal with physical and sexual abuse of children were in during the 1970s, when a handful of multidisciplinary approaches for addressing those problems were emerging around the country. Approaches to domestic and interpersonal violence were at a similar stage in the early 1980s. The nation today has a real opportunity to build on lessons from those earlier efforts, as well as current noteworthy practices, to address the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, and the victim and support services sector has a crucial role to play in achieving this goal. The children and adolescents who are at risk and are victims and survivors of these crimes cannot wait. The human cost of the status quo is simply unacceptable.

1 Introduction



“Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors not only are illegal activities, but also result in immediate and long-term physical, mental, and emotional harm to victims and survivors.”

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are frequently overlooked, misunderstood, and unaddressed domestic problems. In the past decade, they have received increasing attention from advocates, the media, academics, and policy makers. However, much of this attention has focused internationally. This international focus has overshadowed the reality that commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors also occur every day within the United States.

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors not only are illegal activities, but also result in immediate and long-term physical, mental, and emotional harm to victims and survivors. A nation that is unaware of these problems or disengaged from solving them unwittingly contributes to the ongoing abuse of minors and all but ensures that these crimes will remain marginalized and misunderstood.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

In September 2013, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies published the report *Confronting*

Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States [1]. The purpose of that report is

- to increase awareness and understanding of the crucial problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States;
- to examine emerging strategies for preventing and identifying these crimes, for assisting and supporting victims and survivors, and for addressing exploiters and traffickers; and
- to offer a path forward through recommendations designed to increase awareness and understanding and to support efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to these crimes.

The IOM/NRC report includes chapters on specific sectors with a role to play in addressing the problem. Because the report is lengthy and broad in its reach, the IOM/NRC, with the support of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, decided to develop a series of guides offering a more concise and focused perspective on the problem and emerging solutions for several of these sectors.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this guide is health care professionals, such as physicians, nurses, advanced practice nurses, physician assistants, mental health professionals, and dentists, who see children and adolescents for prevention and treatment of injury, illness, and disease. At any of these encounters—in settings that include, among others, emergency departments, urgent care, primary care clinics, adolescent medicine clinics, school clinics, shelters, specialty clinics (obstetrics/gynecology, psychiatry), community health centers, health department clinics, free-standing Title X clinics, Planned Parenthood, and dental clinics [2]—these health care professionals can have an opportunity to identify and assist young people who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

Ideally, these professionals would be involved in efforts focused on the prevention of victimization by these crimes and work to identify and provide treatment/referral for victims and survivors. Yet despite the potential opportunities for intervention, health care professionals often overlook or fail to identify these youth. The result can be missed opportunities for intervention and the continued perpetration of these crimes. This guide is intended to raise awareness of these opportunities so that health care professionals will be better equipped to fulfill their important role in preventing, recognizing, and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking among the youth in their care.

HOW THIS GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

Following this introduction, Section 2 provides definitions of relevant terms, a set of guiding principles, a summary of what is known about the extent of the problem, and an overview of risk factors and consequences.

Section 3 reviews barriers to the ability of health care professionals to identify victims and survivors of these crimes, as well as some promising opportunities for overcoming these barriers.

Section 4 describes some ways in which health care professionals are responding to these crimes. It also summarizes multisector, collaborative strategies in which the health care sector plays a role.

Finally, Section 5 presents strategies for making progress in identifying, preventing, and responding to these crimes, based on the recommendations offered in the IOM/NRC report.

2 The Problem



“Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be understood as acts of abuse and violence against children and adolescents.”

This chapter first defines terms relevant to the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. It then presents a set of guiding principles that should inform any efforts to address the problem. Next is a brief discussion of what is known about the extent of the problem. The final section summarizes the current understanding of risk factors and consequences. One of the messages that emerges from this discussion is that, while the gravity of the problem is clear, critical gaps in the knowledge base for understanding and addressing it need to be filled.

THE DEFINITION ISSUE

The language used to describe aspects of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking crimes and their victims and survivors—a collection of terms derived from the range of agencies, sectors, and individuals working to prevent and address these crimes—varies considerably. Some terms are diagnostic and scientific (e.g., *screening* and *medical forensic exam*). Others are legal terms (e.g., *trafficking*, *offender*, *perpetrator*). Some terms are used frequently in popular culture (e.g., *pimp*, *john*, *child prostitute*). Still others are focused on the experiences of exploited children (e.g., *victim*, *survivor*,

modern-day slavery). The result is the absence of a shared language regarding commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.

The implications of this absence of a common language can be significant. For example, a child or adolescent victim identified as a prostitute may be treated as a criminal and detained, whereas the same youth identified as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation will be referred for a range of health and protective services. Box 1 provides the definition used in the IOM/NRC report for the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Box 2 presents the report's definitions for some of the more common terms related to these crimes.

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are distinct but overlapping terms. Indeed, disentangling commercial sexual exploitation from sex trafficking is impossible in many instances. Two points are particularly important for readers of this guide. First, programs designed for victims and survivors will need to account for a range of experiences and needs among those being served. Second, as reflected in the guiding principles presented in the next section, it is crucial to recognize and understand commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors as part of a broader pattern of child abuse (as illustrated by Figure 1).

BOX 1
**Definition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation
and Sex Trafficking of Minors**

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors encompass a range of crimes of a sexual nature committed against children and adolescents, including

- recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, and/or maintaining (acts that constitute trafficking) a minor for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- exploiting a minor through prostitution;
- exploiting a minor through survival sex (exchanging sex/sexual acts for money or something of value, such as shelter, food, or drugs);
- using a minor in pornography;
- exploiting a minor through sex tourism, mail order bride trade, and early marriage; and
- exploiting a minor by having her/him perform in sexual venues (e.g., peep shows or strip clubs).

BOX 2 Definitions of Other Key Terms

Minors—Refers to individuals under age 18.

Prostituted child—Used instead of *child prostitute*, *juvenile prostitute*, and *adolescent prostitute*, which suggest that prostituted children are willing participants in an illegal activity. As stated in the guiding principles in the text below, these young people should be recognized as victims, not criminals.

Traffickers, exploiters, and pimps—Used to describe individuals who exploit children sexually for financial or other gain. In today's slang, pimp is often used to describe something as positive or glamorous. Therefore, the IOM/NRC report instead uses the terms trafficker and exploiter to describe individuals who sell children and adolescents for sex. It is also important to note that traffickers and exploiters come in many forms; they may be family members, intimate partners, or friends, as well as strangers.

Victims and survivors—Refers to minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes. The terms are not mutually exclusive, but can be applied to the same individual at different points along a continuum. The term *victim* indicates that a crime has occurred and that assistance is needed. Being able to identify an individual as a victim, even temporarily, can help activate responses—including direct services and legal protections—for an individual. The term *survivor* is also used because it can have therapeutic value, and the label *victim* may be counterproductive at times.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

“Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes should not be considered criminals.”

The IOM/NRC report offers the following guiding principles as an essential foundation for understanding and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors:

- Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be understood as acts of abuse and violence against children and adolescents.
- Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes should not be considered criminals.
- Identification of victims and survivors and any intervention, above all, should do no further harm to any child or adolescent.



FIGURE 1 Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are forms of child abuse.

NOTE: This diagram is for illustrative purposes only; it does not indicate or imply percentages.

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

“Despite the current imperfect estimates, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States clearly are problems of grave concern.”

Despite the gravity of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States, these crimes currently are not well understood or adequately addressed. Many factors contribute to this lack of understanding. For example:

- Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States may be overlooked and underreported because they frequently occur at the margins of society and behind closed doors. Their victims are often vulnerable to exploitation. They include children who are, or have been, neglected or abused; those in foster care or juvenile detention; and those who are homeless, runaways (i.e., children who leave home without permission), or so-called throw-aways (i.e., children and adolescents who are asked or told to leave home). Thus, children and adolescents affected by commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking can be difficult to reach.

- The absence of specific policies and protocols related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, coupled with a lack of specialized training, makes it difficult to identify—and thus count—victims and survivors of these crimes.
- Victims and survivors may be distrustful of law enforcement, may not view themselves as “victims,” or may be too traumatized to report or disclose the crimes committed against them.
- Most states continue to arrest commercially exploited children and adolescents as criminals instead of treating them as victims, and health care professionals and educators have not widely adopted screening for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. A lack of awareness among those who routinely interact with victims and survivors ensures that these crimes are not identified and properly addressed.

As a result of these factors, the true scope of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors within the United States is difficult to quantify, and estimates of the incidence and prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are scarce. Further, there is little to no consensus on the value of existing estimates. This lack of consensus is not unusual and indeed is the case for estimates of other crimes as well (e.g., rape and intimate partner violence).

The IOM/NRC report maintains that, despite the current imperfect estimates, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States clearly are problems of grave concern. Therefore, the report’s recommendations go beyond refining national estimates of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States to emphasize that unless additional resources become available existing resources should be focused on what can be done to assist the victims of these crimes.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors have been identified at the individual, family, peer, neighborhood, and societal levels (see Figure 2).¹ Adding to this complexity, these risk factors, as well as corresponding protective factors, interact within and across levels.

Figure 2 highlights the complex and interconnected forces that contribute to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. It should

¹It should be noted that the evidence base for risk factors, as well as for consequences, is very limited. Therefore, the IOM/NRC report draws heavily on related literature (such as child maltreatment, sexual assault/rape, and trauma), as well as evidence gathered through workshops and site visits.

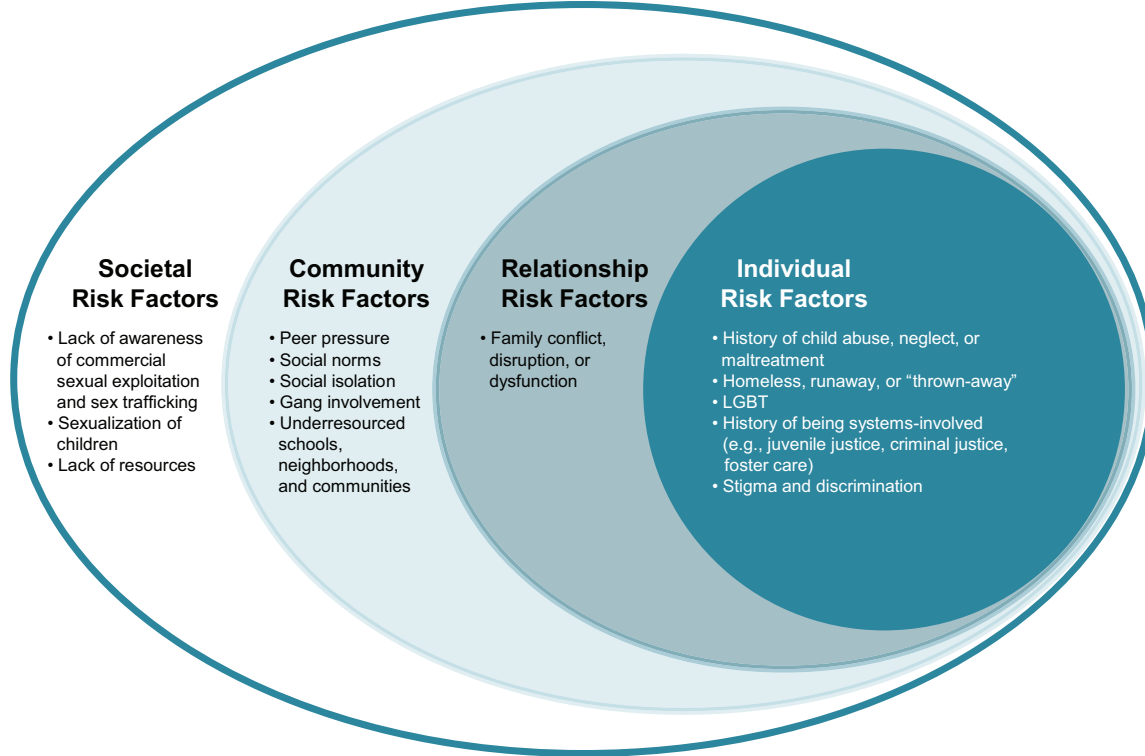


FIGURE 2 Possible risk factors for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
NOTE: LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

be noted, however, that the factors shown are likely only a subset of the risk factors for these crimes. Moreover, these factors do not operate alone. For example, the presence of one or more risk factors would not result in the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors without the presence of an exploiter or trafficker. The factors depicted in Figure 2 may function independently of one another or in combination. In addition, risk factors in one sphere may trigger a cascade of effects or initiate pathways into or out of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

Finally, the factors in Figure 2 also may be risks for other types of adverse youth outcomes. Therefore, their presence does not necessarily signal commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, but should be considered as part of a more comprehensive assessment to determine youth at risk of or involved in these crimes.

Box 3 summarizes findings from the IOM/NRC report that highlight the risk factors depicted in Figure 2.

CONSEQUENCES

“Overall, research suggests that victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking face developmental, social, societal, and legal consequences that have both short- and long-term impacts on their health and well-being.”

The available literature shows that child maltreatment, particularly child sexual abuse, has significant negative impacts on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of victims in adulthood, and leads to increased health risk behaviors and mental health problems among adolescents. While studies focused on consequences for commercially sexually exploited children and adolescents are rare, the data based on child sexual abuse are useful given evidence that these problems are linked in some cases. Overall, research suggests that victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking face developmental, social, societal, and legal consequences that have both short- and long-term impacts on their health and well-being.

BOX 3 Findings on Risk Factors

- Child maltreatment, particularly sexual abuse, is strongly associated with commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Psychogenic factors, such as poor self-esteem, chronic depression, and external locus of control, in addition to low future orientation, may be risk factors for involvement in these crimes. This possible link is supported by the association between child maltreatment and these psychogenic factors.
- Off-schedule developmental phenomena, such as early pubertal maturation, early sexual participation, and early work initiation, have negative consequences for youth.
- While commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking can affect youth across the board, some groups are at higher risk, including those who lack stable housing (because of being homeless, runaways, or “thrown aways”) and sexual and gender minority youth. In addition, some settings and situations—homelessness, foster care placement, and juvenile justice involvement—are particularly high risk under certain circumstances, providing opportunities for recruitment.
- Substance use/abuse is a risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and also may perpetuate exploitation.
- The sexualization of children, particularly girls, in U.S. society and the perception that involvement in sex after puberty is consensual, contribute to the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Disability should be considered a vulnerability for involvement in these crimes given its association with child sexual abuse.
- Online and digital technologies are part of a complex social system that includes both risk factors (recruiting, grooming, and advertising victims) and protective factors (identifying, monitoring, and combating exploiters) for these crimes.
- Beyond child maltreatment, the experience of childhood adversity, such as growing up in a home with a family member with mental illness or substance abuse or having an incarcerated parent, may increase the risk for involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.
- Peer pressure and modeling can influence a youth’s entry into (or avoidance of) commercial sexual exploitation.
- The neighborhood context—such as community norms about sexual behavior and what constitutes consent and coercion, and whether the community is characterized by poverty, crime, police corruption, adult prostitution, and high numbers of transient males—can increase the risk for involvement in these crimes.

3 Barriers to Identification of Victims and Survivors



“In contrast with intimate partner violence and child abuse, few health care settings have established screening practices, policies, and protocols related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.”

Victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors may experience a variety of physical and mental health illnesses and injuries. Thus, they might be expected to present for treatment at some point during their exploitation. If each of these encounters is viewed as a potential opportunity to offer needed assistance, it would follow that health care professionals must be prepared to identify these youth and provide this assistance.

Yet a number of factors contribute to a failure to recognize and identify victims and survivors of these crimes among professionals not just in health care, but in all the various sectors that provide services to youth [9, 10, 11, 12]. Several of these factors are similar to those found to contribute to a failure to identify victims of child abuse and neglect [13]. These factors include, among others, a lack of understanding of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors (by both professionals and victims/survivors), a lack of disclosure by victims, potential and perceived complications related to mandated reporting, and a lack of policies and protocols related to these crimes to assist health care professionals in assessing and treating victims and survivors.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Health care professionals need education and training to overcome a widespread lack of understanding of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, which may prevent them from identifying and providing services to victims and survivors [14, 15, 16]. They need not only to be aware of the issue but also to have the knowledge and skills to identify and provide assistance to victims, survivors, and those at risk for exploitation, including reporting and referrals to other service providers. Among specific needs are training in confidentiality issues, identifying and gaining the trust of victims and survivors, collaboration and networking, outreach methods, medical and mental health issues, cultural and religious issues, and staffing challenges [17]. Yet a number of barriers to the training of health care professionals in these areas exist:

- **Stereotypes and misperceptions**—Two persistent stereotypes in particular may inhibit the identification of victims and survivors [4, 18, 19]: (1) the notion that the victims of these crimes are young, adolescent girls from foreign countries who are brought to the United States and coerced into prostitution [18], whereas in fact they include girls, boys, and transgender youth of different races/ethnicities and both domestic and international backgrounds; and (2) the tendency to label victims of these crimes who are minors as “child prostitutes” or to view them as being willingly engaged in criminal behavior [4, 19].
- **Lack of training opportunities**—Health care professionals may find it difficult to identify appropriate, well-designed training and education offered by individuals qualified to facilitate or provide it. Given that similar issues arise with domestic violence and child abuse and with commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, the current training of health care professionals in the former fields in medical and nursing schools, in residency, and during fellowships may provide an opportunity for improving training in the latter. Furthermore, many national health care organizations can help promote awareness through continuing medical education and sponsored training and meetings. Section 4 of this guide describes some current education and training programs that may meet this need but require further evaluation.
- **Funding constraints**—As in other areas of health care, limited funding is available with which to develop, provide, and evaluate training and curricula on commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors for health care professionals [20, 21, 22].

- **Competing priorities**—Health care professionals are often overburdened with mandatory training and education within their practice environments. It is important to note that simply adding another required educational topic, whether through in-person training or computer-based module, may not result in a more informed provider; education and training must be thoughtfully designed.

LACK OF DISCLOSURE

“These youth may not perceive themselves as victims or may believe that they are responsible for their exploitation.”

An additional barrier to identifying victims and survivors is their lack of disclosure of being commercially sexually exploited or trafficked. This lack of disclosure may be due to a fear or distrust of professionals and the systems within which they operate [20, 23]. Victimized youth also may fear how their exploiter will respond to their disclosure [10, 12, 24, 25, 26]. These youth may be coached by their exploiter in how to answer questions from authority figures or health care professionals so as not to draw attention to their exploitation. Moreover, they may not perceive themselves as victims or may believe that they are responsible for their exploitation [4, 8, 10, 12]. Box 4 describes one potential approach to overcoming this barrier.

BOX 4 **Overcoming the Barrier of Nondisclosure**

Given the similar issues of nondisclosure encountered with victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking and domestic violence, strategies used with victims of domestic violence may hold promise for overcoming lack of disclosure as a barrier to the identification of victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Accordingly, some organizations seeking to help victims and survivors of these crimes have adapted a model screening protocol used for domestic violence. For example, Asian Health Services in Oakland, California, ensures that all patients are interviewed alone and uses interpreters of patients' native language to interview them instead of interviewing family members who may speak English [20].

POTENTIAL AND PERCEIVED COMPLICATIONS RELATED TO MANDATED REPORTING¹

In all 50 states and the District of Columbia, health care professionals are mandated reporters, required to report all cases of suspected child abuse. In a significant number of states, however, mandatory reporting applies only when the suspected abuser is a family member or caregiver. Yet the perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are not always family members, and the victims are often not living at home. In those states, therefore, most commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors does not fall within the mandatory reporting requirements.

Several states have passed legislation that makes commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors by non-family members reportable forms of child abuse. Yet such mandated reporting could undermine health care professionals' willingness to screen for these crimes or respond to victims' voluntary disclosure [8, 27, 28, 29]. Clinicians may worry that reporting could make it more difficult to create trust with and obtain sensitive information from their patient. They also may worry that reporting may place victims at greater risk from their exploiters. Thus, to avoid the unintended consequences of being compelled to notify child protective services and/or other authorities, health care professionals may decide not to ask specific questions related to possible exploitation or trafficking [8, 27, 28, 29]. Clinicians' reservations about mandatory reporting are clear from published data showing that mandated reporting of child abuse and intimate partner violence makes health care professionals more reluctant to screen and intervene in these areas [30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35]. Likewise, victims may not disclose their exploitation if they know or suspect that a health care professional will report it to the authorities.

LACK OF POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

The kinds of established screening practices, policies, and protocols used for intimate partner violence and child abuse in health care settings do not exist for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Ideally, such policies and protocols should be evidence-based and evaluated for their effectiveness in assisting providers with identification, treatment, and referral for services.

¹The IOM/NRC report [1, pp. 26-27] includes a detailed explanation of the complexities of mandatory reporting of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States in the context of the current practices of the legal, health care, and support service sectors. Available online: www.iom.edu/sextraffickingminors.

4 How Health Care Professionals Can Help



“Regardless of how they are identified, it is essential that health care professionals recognize and treat the myriad acute and chronic medical and mental health needs of minors who are victims or survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.”

The health care response to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and research on the strengths and weaknesses of specific health care practices in this area are much less well developed than is the case for other health domains. However, the IOM/NRC report highlights a number of current practices and opportunities described by a variety of sources that show promise as ways of preventing commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and providing victims and survivors with the help they need. As emphasized in the IOM/NRC report, additional research is needed to evaluate these approaches for their efficacy in preventing or responding to these crimes (see the recommended strategies in Section 6).

MODELS OF CARE

Health care professionals lack evidence-based models to use in identifying and assisting victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. However, the challenges they face in seeking to help these youth

are similar to those encountered with intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, sexual assault services, and public health. Some agencies have therefore adapted models used in these fields to provide health care services to victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

Intimate Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment

Many health care professionals have been trained to recognize victims of intimate partner violence and child abuse, and these skills could potentially be adapted for use in identifying victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors [29, 36]. Models of care for intimate partner violence and child maltreatment also may be applicable to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors given the similar risks, signs, symptoms, and emotional and social consequences shared by victims and survivors [20, 29, 36, 37, 38].

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

Many victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking have a history of childhood sexual assault and are sexually abused repeatedly as part of their exploitation. Therefore, intervention programs for victims and survivors of these crimes could potentially use the SANE program as a model.

SANE providers evaluate cases referred by their local jurisdiction using forensic interviews and forensic medical exams as part of a sexual assault investigation. The SANE examiners are already working in a system of care that is victim centered and collaborates with many of the same agencies likely to be encountered by a victim of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking of minors (such as child protective services, law enforcement, and prosecutors). Thus, they could potentially provide the same kind of care to victims and survivors of these crimes [8, 29].

Integration of Services

Some agencies have integrated services and resources for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking into established child abuse and/or intimate partner violence programs. Two examples are described in Box 5.

Child Advocacy Centers and Sexual Assault Response Teams

Victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking have multiple needs that cut across a number of different disciplines. Child advocacy centers (CACs) and sexual assault response teams (SARTs) both offer

BOX 5

Examples of Integrated Services

The Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention (SAVI) program at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City has begun serving trafficking victims identified through the court system; referrals from other clients; and disclosure from a sexual assault evaluation, including such an evaluation in the health care setting [38]. These victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are provided free and confidential services, including case management, medical care, crisis shelter, legal assistance, and trauma therapy services, all of which are already provided to other sexual assault victims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program.

<http://www.mountsinai.org/patient-care/service-areas/community-medicine/areas-of-care/sexual-assault-and-violence-intervention-program-savi>

Asian Health Services in Oakland, California, has modified its screening tool for interpersonal violence for use in identifying victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It also has worked with those who deal with victims of interpersonal violence, including police investigators and health and mental health care professionals, to serve victims of commercial sexual exploitation as well as domestic violence victims [20].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Asian Health Services.

<http://www.asianhealthservices.org>

multidisciplinary services, and are therefore a potential model for identification, assessment, and management of victims and survivors of these crimes [29, 39]. The SAVI program described in Box 5 demonstrates the expansion of services provided to sexual assault victims by a SART center to include victims of these crimes. This approach may offer important advantages, particularly in those jurisdictions that lack specialized services for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitations and sex trafficking. At the same time, however, care must be taken to ensure that the services thus provided meet the special needs of these youth, which may exceed or differ from those of other youth served by CACs and SARTs.

Public Health

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are associated with several public health issues of concern to local communities, including

domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, basic unmet primary preventive health care needs among adolescents (e.g., immunizations, tuberculosis screening), drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, and numerous other often unmet medical and mental health needs [8, 40, 41]. Accordingly, some health care professionals and local communities have developed integrated programs to prevent and respond to these crimes through a public health model of care.

Asian Health Services in Oakland, California, for example, developed several such programs. These programs focus community efforts on (1) early primary prevention (e.g., education on healthy relationships for the younger adolescent population); (2) secondary prevention (identification of those at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking and their referral to local service provider Banteay Srei [42], which provides resources to prevent them from becoming victims); and (3) tertiary prevention (e.g., a program to help those identified as victims and provide services to assist them in transitioning out of their victimization) [20]. Others have described a public health model for basing primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention on the stage of trafficking of victims [10, 40].

Telehealth/Telemedicine

Telehealth has been used successfully to deliver care for sexually abused children in rural, underserved areas [43, 44], for adolescents and children needing psychiatric services [45, 46], and for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in rural communities [47]. Similarly, health care professionals who may lack the resources for evaluation, referral, and/or assistance for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking within their own communities may be able to use telehealth to access those resources.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

As discussed in Section 3, a lack of training is a significant barrier to the ability of health care professionals to identify victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. To help overcome this barrier, a growing number of organizations providing services to victimized or at-risk youth are offering education and training programs for health care professionals [26, 48, 49]. However, the vast majority of training developed for health care professionals focuses on the broader topic of human trafficking, and although content on commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors may be included, programs specific to these issues are lacking.

Programs identified in the IOM/NRC report were designed to help health care professionals recognize the signs and symptoms of commercial sexual

exploitation and sex trafficking, provide tools for screening, and highlight reporting requirements and how/when to refer victims and survivors for additional services [20, 21, 26, 27, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52]. Three examples are described in Box 6.

BOX 6

Examples of Education and Training Programs

The Houston Rescue and Restore Coalition (HRRRC) is a nonprofit organization in Houston, Texas, focused on raising awareness of human trafficking. In collaboration with the University of Texas School of Public Health, it developed a curriculum titled "Health Professionals and Human Trafficking: Look Beneath the Surface, H.E.A.R.^aYour Patient" for front-line health care professionals and health care organizations [53]. The intent is to provide health care professionals with not only the information and knowledge but also the skills necessary to identify and refer trafficking victims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Houston Rescue and Restore Coalition.
<http://www.houstonrr.org>

Children's Health Care of Atlanta, along with the Georgia Governor's Office for Children and Families, developed and provided training for medical professionals via a webinar/computer-based training series. The five-session series provides an overview of commercial sexual exploitation of minors, the medical evaluation of suspected victims, extended medical history, special related topics, and a victim/survivor-centered approach to working with these youth [51].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Children's Health Care of Atlanta. Child Sex Trafficking Webinar Series.
<http://www.choa.org/csecwebinars>

Polaris Project offers free, online training and webinars that provide education and training on various topics related to human trafficking and sex trafficking in particular.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Polaris Project. Online Training.
<http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/access-training/online-training>

^a H.E.A.R. is an acronym for H: Human Trafficking and Health Professionals, E: Examine History, Examine Body, Examine Emotion, A: Ask specific questions, and R: Review options, Refer, Report.

TOOLS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

Box 7 describes a variety of tools, instruments, and lists of questions designed to assist health care professionals in identifying victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Again, none of these tools have as yet been evaluated for their ability to correctly identify these youth.

The agencies and providers that developed these screening tools emphasize the need for health care professionals to be aware of the unique experiences of victims and survivors of these crimes (such as repeat and/or chronic sexual victimization, potential stigma and shame associated with victimization, and possible negative interactions with authority figures and support systems). Specifically, it is recommended that the tools be used by

BOX 7

Examples of Tools for Identifying Victims and Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking

The following tools have been developed to assist health care professionals in identifying victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking:

- **Rapid Screening Tool for Child Trafficking and Comprehensive Screening and Safety Tool for Child Trafficking:** Two screening tools developed by the International Organization for Adolescents for use as a guide in identifying minors that are potentially being trafficked [54].
- **Commercial Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Screening Procedure Guideline:** A screening tool developed and used by health care professionals at Asian Health Services in Oakland, California, that is used with patients aged 11-18 exhibiting high risk factors for sexual exploitation [55].
- **Rescue and Restore:** A screening tool developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and used by health care professionals, social workers, and law enforcement to determine potential victims of human trafficking [56].
- **Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment:** A screening tool developed by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and adapted by Polaris Project and its partners for assessing potential signs of a client's having been a victim of human trafficking [57].
- **Home, Education/employment, peer group Activities, Drugs, Sexuality, Suicide/depression (HEADSS) [58]:** A screening tool developed for assessing an adolescent's psychosocial development. Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center has adopted HEADSS, integrating specific questions into its regular assessment to screen for the potential of commercial sexual exploitation among patients seen in the clinic [49].

providers who are trained in or understand the nature of the trauma these particular victims and survivors suffer. The emphasis is on the importance of being trauma-aware when screening for commercial sexual exploitation and working with identified victims and survivors [8, 29, 12, 59, 60, 61].

HEALTH CARE OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS: MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

Regardless of how they are identified, minors who are victims or survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking have myriad acute and chronic physical and mental health needs. It is essential that health care professionals recognize and respond to these complex needs, which include not only basic primary preventive care services but also specialized services such as substance abuse treatment, chronic illness management (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B/C, diabetes, asthma, depression, anxiety), ongoing assessment and refilling of essential prescriptions, and overall and specific dental care [27, 62, 63]. Moreover, health care professionals who identify victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors likely will need to refer patients to other specialists, including mental health professionals and local nongovernmental organizations/agencies that can meet the specific mental health needs of these youth. They should be active in the development and implementation of the kinds of multisector approaches discussed below.

MULTISECTOR AND INTERAGENCY EFFORTS

Each of the sectors involved in responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors—victim and support services, health care, education, the legal sector, and the commercial sector—has specific roles to play. However, an adequate response to these crimes requires collaboration and coordination among all of these sectors, as well as at all levels—federal, state, and local. Yet the efforts of individuals, groups, and organizations in different sectors and with different areas of expertise tend to be disconnected. The IOM/NRC report highlights a number of examples of initiatives that have overcome this barrier to a comprehensive response.

Multisector and interagency efforts to address commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors at the federal level include task forces and other partnerships, such as those mandated by the 2013 reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act [54, 64, 65, 66].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BJA (Bureau of Justice Assistance). 2013. Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force Initiative.

https://www.bja.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?Program_ID=51

Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force.

<http://www.cookcountytaskforce.org>

OVC (Office for Victims of Crime). 2013. OVC-Funded Grantee Programs to Help Victims of Trafficking.

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OVC and BJA. 2013. Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking FY 2013 Competitive Grant Announcement.

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U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. 2013. The D.C. Human Trafficking Task Force.

http://www.justice.gov/usao/dc/programs/cp/human_trafficking.html

U.S. Department of State. 2012. Annual Meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/reports/pitf>

Examples of state and local efforts include the following:

- **Washington State**—Washington state's Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children for responding to cases of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors is focused on fostering collaboration and coordination among agencies, improving identification of these crimes, providing services to victims and survivors, holding exploiters accountable, and working toward ending

these crimes in the state [67]. The protocol calls for use of a victim-centered approach by law enforcement, the courts, victim advocacy organizations, youth service agencies, and other youth-serving professionals to ensure that victims of these crimes are treated as such rather than as criminals. The protocol encourages multisector collaboration through state, regional, and local efforts. For example, it calls for the use of multidisciplinary teams to provide immediate consultation on cases of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors as they arise and to participate in meetings to share information and collaborate in the management of each ongoing case.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Washington State's Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

<http://www.ccyj.org/Project%20Respect%20protocol.pdf>

- **Multnomah County, Oregon**—In 2008, Multnomah County initiated a coordinated multisector response to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. Specific work groups focus on legislation, assistance for victims and survivors, law enforcement practices (e.g., arrests, investigation, and prosecution of exploiters and traffickers), and physical and mental health care. Steering committee members include law enforcement; the district attorney's office; the Departments of Health, Community Justice, and Human Services; survivors; and nongovernmental service providers. Several strategies are used to ensure collaboration across agencies and among various systems. For example, the county created a special unit within the state child welfare agency for victims and survivors of these crimes [68, 69].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Multnomah County Community Response to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

<https://multco.us/csec>

- **Suffolk County, Massachusetts**—In Suffolk County, more than 35 public and private agencies participate in the Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition. SEEN's multisector, coordinated approach to identifying and serving high-risk and sexually exploited

minors includes three components: (1) cross-system collaboration, (2) a trauma-informed continuum of care (see Section 4), and (3) training for professionals who work with children and adolescents. To facilitate collaboration and communication among coalition members, SEEN established formal relationships and protocols, including a steering committee and advisory group, multidisciplinary teams of professionals, and a case coordinator who serves as the central point of contact for all reported victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking [70].

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition.
<http://www.suffolkcac.org/programs/seen>

- **Alameda County, California**—H.E.A.T. (Human Exploitation and Trafficking) Watch is a multidisciplinary, multisystem program that brings together individuals and agencies from law enforcement, health care, advocacy, victim and support services, the courts, probation agencies, the commercial sector, and the community to (1) ensure the safety of victims and survivors and (2) pursue accountability for exploiters and traffickers. Strategies employed by H.E.A.T. Watch include, among others, stimulating community engagement, coordinating training and information sharing, and coordinating the delivery of victim and support services. The program uses a multisector approach to coordinate the delivery of support services. For example, multidisciplinary case review (modeled on the multidisciplinary team approach) is used to create emergency and long-term safety plans. Referrals for case review are made by law enforcement, prosecutors, probation officials, and social service organizations that have come into contact with these youth. This approach enables members of the multidisciplinary team to share confidential information with agencies that can assist youth in need of services and support.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Alameda County District Attorney's Office. 2012. H.E.A.T. Watch Program Blueprint.
http://www.heat-watch.org/heat_watch

5 Recommended Strategies



“The human cost of the status quo is simply unacceptable.”

The IOM/NRC report concludes with a series of recommendations for making progress toward preventing and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. The priorities for progress articulated in the report’s recommendations are summarized in this section.

INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

As discussed in prior sections, a lack of training among professionals who interact with children and adolescents—especially those who are vulnerable—is a barrier to timely and appropriate action to assist victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking and prevent these crimes among youth at risk. These professionals are often dismayed to learn that they have missed opportunities to help these youth, and want to know more about how to identify and assist them.

Training

Training for professionals and others who interact with young people needs to target and reach a range of audiences in a variety of settings (e.g., urban

RECOMMENDATION TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Develop, implement, and evaluate:

- training for professionals and others who routinely interact with children and adolescents,
- public awareness campaigns, and
- specific strategies for children and adolescents.

and rural; tribal lands, territories, and states). Relevant sectors (e.g., health care, law enforcement, victim and support services) should participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of training activities that use evidence-based methods. Further, each sector should be consulted to determine the best methods for that sector, given that needs may vary, for example, between law enforcement personnel and health care professionals.

Public Awareness Campaigns

A lack of public awareness is a significant barrier to preventing, identifying, and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States. To address this gap, existing public awareness initiatives could be expanded to encompass these crimes.

Strategies for Awareness Among Children and Adolescents

Child and adolescent victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking may not view themselves as victims, and youth who are at risk for this kind of exploitation may not recognize their individual risk. Therefore, special efforts are needed to increase the awareness of children and adolescents to help them avoid becoming victims and to help victims and survivors obtain the assistance they need.

STRENGTHEN THE LAW'S RESPONSE

“Individuals who sexually exploit children and adolescents have largely escaped accountability.”

A small but growing number of states have enacted laws—sometimes referred to as “safe harbor” laws—designed to redirect young victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from the criminal or juvenile justice system to child welfare or other agencies to receive supportive services. While

recognizing that additional time and research are needed to assess the effectiveness of specific state laws, the IOM/NRC report recommends that the core principle underlying these safe harbor laws—that children and adolescents who are survivors of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking must be treated as victims, not criminals—should be advanced without delay.

In addition, despite laws in every state that enable the prosecution of individuals who purchase sex with a minor, function as exploiters and traffickers, or otherwise sexually exploit children and adolescents, and despite the hard work of prosecutors and law enforcement in many jurisdictions, individuals who sexually exploit children and adolescents have largely escaped accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE LAW'S RESPONSE

Develop laws and policies that **redirect** young victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from arrest and prosecution to systems, agencies, and services that are equipped to meet their needs. *Such laws should apply to all children and adolescents under age 18.*

Review, strengthen, and implement laws that hold exploiters, traffickers, and solicitors **accountable** for their role in commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors. *These laws should include a particular emphasis on deterring demand.*

STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ON PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

As noted previously, the evidence base on strategies and approaches for preventing and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States is extremely limited.

RECOMMENDATION TO STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ON PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Implement a national research agenda focused on:

- advancing knowledge and understanding;
- developing effective interventions; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of prevention and intervention laws, policies, and programs.

SUPPORT COLLABORATION

As discussed in Section 3, collaborative, coordinated approaches that bring together resources from multiple sectors will be most effective in identifying victims and survivors and in meeting their challenging needs.

RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Develop **guidelines** on and provide **technical assistance** to support multisector collaboration and coordination.

SUPPORT INFORMATION SHARING

“The difficulty of locating services and programs available to victims is a very real obstacle for children and adolescents seeking to access services and for professionals and caregivers trying to help them.”

One of the most significant barriers to preventing, identifying, and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors is a lack of reliable, timely information. A number of organizations maintain lists of services available to child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. However, there is no exhaustive list of national-, state-, local-, and tribal-level resources for victim and support services. The difficulty of locating services and programs available to victims is a very real obstacle for children and adolescents seeking to access services and for professionals and caregivers trying to help them.

RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT INFORMATION SHARING

Create and maintain a digital information-sharing platform to deliver **reliable, real-time information** on how to prevent, identify, and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are in the same developmental stage that efforts to deal with physical and sexual abuse of children were in during the 1970s, when a handful of multidisciplinary approaches for addressing those problems were emerging around the country. Approaches to domestic and interpersonal violence were at a similar stage in the early 1980s. The nation today has a real opportunity to build on lessons from those earlier efforts, as well as current noteworthy practices, to address the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, and the health care sector has a crucial role to play in achieving this goal. The children and adolescents who are at risk and are victims and survivors of these crimes cannot wait. The human cost of the status quo is simply unacceptable.

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies. (2013, September). Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States. Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies.

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