

**EXTINGUISHING
THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

A REPORT OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 70 years, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, and its predecessor agencies, has been working to inform, educate, and mobilize people, groups, organizations, and agencies to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace. In recent years, the outrageously egregious victimization of some of our most vulnerable community members for commercial sexual exploitation has been identified as an insidious and growing local injustice. Commercially sexually exploited children are victims of traumatic mistreatment that may include sex-trafficking, sex tourism, pornography, and sexual performance^{1, 2}.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas publicly pledged to do everything in his power to “help these young people leave conditions that absolutely no one should endure.”³ Others have expressed concern as well, including Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe, who has acknowledged that Los Angeles County is recognized as one of the centers of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the nation.⁴ LA County District Attorney, Jackie Lacey, observed earlier this year that “[s]elling a girl several times a day is more lucrative than selling drugs or guns” for the growing number of sex traffickers preying on victims often as young as 12 years old.⁵

In response to the needs of sex-trafficked minors, the county Board of Supervisors, during its January 10, 2012 meeting, instructed county departments “to develop an aggressive strategy to combat child prostitution...and the feasibility of establishing a unit within the Probation Department dedicated to sexually exploited minors, as well as the development of specialized aftercare services.”⁶ More recently, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion to instruct the

¹ “sexual performance” includes sexually suggestive or explicit conduct presented for viewing by others

² Small, Kevonne, William Adams, Colleen Owens, and Kevin Rowland. *An Analysis of Federally Prosecuted CSEC Cases since the Passage of Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: Final Report*. Washington DC: Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, February 2008.

³ April 1, 2013 Blog, “Helping Victims of Human Trafficking.” <http://ridley-thomas.lacounty.gov/index.php/human-trafficking-2/>

⁴ Testimony by Mr. Don Knabe, Supervisor, Fourth District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 7, 2013, in the Hearing: “Local and Private Sector Initiatives to Combat International Human Trafficking.”

⁵ News release, January 20, 2015. “District Attorney Jackie Lacey Highlights Human Trafficking Awareness Month.”

⁶ “Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles.” Tuesday, January 10, 2012.

county's Interim Chief Executive Officer to convene a work group to determine the feasibility of a Los Angeles County Human Trafficking Task Force to serve as "a centralized unit responsible for acting as the coordinating body and clearinghouse for all human trafficking related issues and items," including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.⁷

In order to explore the appropriate and best role for the Human Relations Commission and Commission staff in collaborating with others to extinguish the injustice of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles County, application was made and approved for a 12-month graduate fellowship with the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. Consequently, Luskin public policy Master's degree student Begoña Guereca began more than a year ago to investigate what is happening with commercially sexually exploited minors in LA County. She enlisted fellow Luskin students, Rocio Bonsall and Morgan Sokol to help. Together they prepared a report, including recommendations, for dismantling the sex trafficking of minors in Los Angeles County. The document they produced is a primary source for this report. Building on their work, this report reflects extensive enhancement from the significant contributions of Commission staff member, Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson, and current UCLA Luskin Graduate Fellow, Kelsey Mulcahy.

In the following section, brief descriptions are provided for ten recommendations of policy and program actions considered crucial for extinguishing commercial sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles County. The ten recommendations were adopted by the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations on October 5, 2015. More complete descriptions of rationale for the recommendations follow.

⁷ "Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles." Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Stop treating minors as criminals.

Federal law calls for commercially sexually exploited minors to be treated as victims rather than charged as criminals. It is possible, however, under California law, for persons under the age of 18 to be charged with solicitation or prostitution.

Recommendation: *Work with law enforcement agencies and prosecuting jurisdictions in Los Angeles County to end the arrest of minors for, and charging them with, solicitation or prostitution, and endeavor to codify this change in California state law.*

2. Coordinate and evaluate intervention strategies and programs.

Multiple public and private agencies and organizations are investing substantial effort and resources to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles County. Many of them are aware of and in frequent contact with each other. There is no formal network structure in place, however, to facilitate ongoing, routine communication, collaboration, and synchronization; nor are there county-sponsored research and evaluation strategies in place to determine the effectiveness of different programs and approaches.

Recommendation: *Create or designate, and adequately resource, an office or agency to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the LA County strategies for commercially sexually exploited children. Include in the office or agency's responsibilities the establishment of comprehensive, shared, interactive data base(s) that can both enable true coordination of assessments and service provision, and also provide aggregate data analyses to guide policymaking, while protecting confidentiality of individual case information. Partnering with other governmental agencies, research organizations, and academic institutions for the needed research on the effectiveness of the overall strategy and its programs is critical and can be taken on by this office or agency as well.*

3. Standardize training.

Excellent training in various forms is now available to instruct interested persons in LA County regarding the distinctive trauma experienced by sex-trafficked children, the devastating consequences they endure, screening to identify them, and effective ways of engaging with them. There is considerable variety, though, in the content of available training. And, there is no standard requirement regarding who must complete the training.

Recommendation: *Conduct rigorous evaluation of relevant training, including what is available both locally and in other areas, to design best-practice learning experiences, and require law enforcement, child protective services, judicial officials, and social service providers to complete them.*

4. Provide secure and appealing placement.

Currently in Los Angeles County, when commercially sexually exploited minors are identified they may be detained and placed in locked facilities or assigned to open placements, such as group homes. Locked facilities can further traumatize these young people and encumber them with the stigma of criminalization. However, trafficked minors are commonly threatened by traffickers to return immediately unless they are locked up. Under such conditions, open placements may provide severely inadequate protection, security, and engagement.

Recommendation: *Begin right away to work for change in California law to establish legal support for sufficiently protective placement that does not require the filing of criminal charges. In the meantime, substantially improve the security, effectiveness, and appeal of many more open placement options.*

5. Expand First Responder Protocol.

A superb, multi-agency protocol has been implemented to bring together representatives of key agencies to plan placement and services for minors identified as having been sex-trafficked. Currently, though, this protocol is only being used in Compton, Long Beach, and south Los Angeles.

Recommendation: *Provide resources to expand use of this protocol county-wide.*

6. Build DCFS capacity.

State legislation has extended Child Protective Services jurisdiction to include intervention in behalf of and service to commercially sexually exploited minors. In LA County, the Department of Child and Family Services is laboring to develop the capacity to serve the local need.

Recommendation: *Increase significantly DCFS' capacity to serve commercially sexually exploited children by greatly increasing the number of Children's Social Workers and supervisors trained and assigned to serve this population, and the support and treatment services available for this population under DCFS auspices and its partner provider organizations.*

7. Supply crucial social support.

Many sex-trafficked children were initially vulnerable to exploitation because they were disconnected from the crucial primary social support on which all of us depend to thrive. When they are trafficked beginning at a highly impressionable age, and enslaved for several years, they can become convinced that their only alternative to being alone is returning to the dominion of the trafficker.

Recommendation: *Develop and fund a sustainable program that utilizes government agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, and other community groups to enlist and deploy well-trained advocates, mentors, foster parents, and primary social support networks specifically assigned to individual minors being assisted in recovery from commercial sexual exploitation.*

8. Furnish essential services.

Commercially sexually exploited children most often suffer from multiple, complex physical, mental, and emotional trauma, and are severely educationally disadvantaged. They usually lack a strong sense of self-esteem and personal agency. Serious medical and mental health conditions likely have been ignored. They frequently have limited marketable job skills, little to no career options, and a dearth of contacts that can assist them in developing needed skills, referrals, and resources.

Recommendation: *Provide the necessary funding and resources to create and sustain a comprehensive, regularly updated, and easily-accessed array of needed medical, psychological, social, educational, empowerment, training, and educational services from providers specifically trained and prepared to serve persons recovering from commercial sexual exploitation. It also will be necessary to build upon initial efforts with LA County 211 to maintain current access to needed information regarding services as they are created.*

9. Challenge contributing factors.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children flourishes in our society because of an intersecting array of entrenched attitudes and patterns of interaction that objectify women, disenfranchise people of color, marginalize the poor, victimize vulnerable youth, support the inequitable distribution and unethical use of power, and commercialize sex.

Recommendation: *Formulate a comprehensive description of and plan for challenging relevant societal factors through targeted and sustained county-wide prevention, public awareness, and education.*

10. Debilitate demand and supply.

Commercial sexual exploitation is a part of the sexual gratification market in which traffickers supply children as commodities to eager customers. It thrives because the demand is sufficient to support enormous profit for relatively little financial, legal, or social cost.

Recommendation: *Research the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at significantly decreasing the demand for and increasing the cost and consequences of commercial sex with minors, such as increased penalties for repeat offenders and traffickers, and “Shame Campaigns” which publicize the identity of those convicted of*

commercial sex with minors. Implement those policies, programs and initiatives that have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the market demand for sex with minors.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Stop treating minors as criminals.

Work with law enforcement agencies and prosecuting jurisdictions in Los Angeles County to end the arrest of minors for, and charging them with, solicitation or prostitution, and endeavor to codify this change in California state law.

Currently, in Los Angeles County it is possible for a minor to be subject to criminal charges for activity influenced or coerced by a sex trafficker. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is helping to lead the way in changing this practice. During the October 20, 2015 regular Board meeting, the supervisors approved a motion calling for a countywide effort to ensure that commercially sexually exploited children are treated as victims rather than criminals.⁸ The motion included a specific encouragement that the county Sheriff's Department not charge anyone identified as a victim of child sex trafficking with prostitution or any related offense. The motion also encouraged the Sheriff's Department not to hold sex-trafficked minors in criminal detention facilities. The following day, LA County Sheriff Jim McDonnell announced that the department will no longer arrest minors on prostitution charges, beginning immediately.⁹

While this change in Sheriff's Department practice is an immense step forward in decriminalizing victims of child sex trafficking, much remains to be done. There are more than 40 other law enforcement agencies in LA County. Criminal charges can be filed against sex-trafficked minors because, as the overview that follows shows, California Penal Code provisions do not expressly prohibit the practice. This is contrary to both federal policy and international standards. Concentrated effort is needed to influence change in California state law because treating sexually exploited children as criminals in effect re-victimizes them, treats them with punitive measures that can reinforce negative perceptions of law enforcement and the judicial system, and is a grave injustice.¹⁰

⁸ "Agenda for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors," County of Los Angeles, Tuesday, October 20, 2015.

⁹ Gerber, Marisa, and Garrett Therolf. "Sheriff to Staff: Stop arresting children on prostitution charges, stop saying 'child prostitute'." Los Angeles Times, October 21, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-sheriff-children-sex-trafficking-20151021-story.html>

¹⁰ Kotrla, Kimberly. "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking in the United States." *Social Work*, 55 (April, 2010). See also: Clawson, Heather J., Amy Salomon, and Lisa Goldblatt Grace. "Treating the Hidden Wounds: Trauma Treatment and Mental Health Recovery for Victims of Human Trafficking." Washington DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; and Basson, Donna, Erin Rosenblatt, and Hannah Haley. Research to Action: Sexually Exploited Minors (SEM) Needs and Strengths. Oakland, CA: WestCoast Children's Clinic, 2012.

Federal law specifically encourages states to not treat sex-trafficked children as criminals. It was in 2000 that the U.S. Congress passed the “Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act,”¹¹ which established human trafficking as a crime, identified the commercial sexual exploitation of persons under 18 years of age as a severe form of trafficking, and allocated federal funds for victims of human trafficking, including support for reintegration services for sex-trafficked children. This legislation has been reauthorized and expanded by several laws since its passage, including the federal “Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act” of 2013, which calls on states to legally require that minors arrested for engaging in or attempting to engage in commercial sexual activity be treated as victims of sex trafficking and to legally prohibit charging or prosecuting them for any prostitution offense. These provisions are not dependent on any consideration of whether a minor indicates consent.¹²

This federal legislation follows international attention to the injustice of child sex-trafficking. In 1990, the United Nations adopted the “Convention on the Rights of the Child,”¹³ which calls for the protection of persons under 18 years of age from all forms of sexual exploitation. Ten years later, this Convention was enhanced with the adoption of an “Optional Protocol” explicitly calling for the prohibition of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. Between these two actions, the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was held in 1996, producing the “Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action,” which includes a call to prevent sex-trafficked children from being treated as criminals.

In California, however, though the Penal Code¹⁴ defines and describes punishment for crimes related to sexual activity with minors, state law does not prohibit criminal charges against minors for activities influenced or coerced by traffickers. On the following page there is an overview of relevant sections of the California Penal Code with notes regarding specific provisions.

¹¹ Information about federal legislation, including text of specific bills, can be accessed at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/>

¹² Finklea, Kristin, Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, Alison Siskin. *Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States: Overview and Issues for Congress*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, January 28 2015.

¹³ The text of United Nations human rights instruments can be accessed at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UniversalHumanRightsInstruments.aspx>

¹⁴ The text of the CA Penal Code can be accessed at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=pen>

CA Penal Code Sections	Notes
261	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defines rape as nonconsensual sexual intercourse • specifies unlawful sexual intercourse as sexual intercourse with a non-spousal minor • describes consent as being indicated when a fully-informed person cooperates freely and voluntarily; no limitations or exceptions regarding consent by minors • sets an additional fine for conviction of attempting to obtain, or obtaining, the sexual services of a “prostitute” who is a minor
264	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires additional time in prison for rape of a minor • establishes that assisting someone to commit rape is a felony, and includes additional time in prison when the victim is a minor
647, 653.20-653.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defines the crime of prostitution and the crime of engaging someone in prostitution or earning proceeds from it • does not include any limitations or exceptions based on willingness or consent, whether one has been trafficked, or the age, of a person allegedly engaged in prostitution
266	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defines and describes penalties related to prostitution • designates as a crime enticing into prostitution “any unmarried female, of previous chaste character” who is a minor • defines and describes punishment for material benefit from another person’s prostitution, with additional time in prison when the person engaged in prostitution is a minor • defines and describes punishment for the crime of pandering, with additional time in prison required when the victim is a minor • specifies as a felony the provision of, or offer to provide, a minor for any lewd or lascivious act
267	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes kidnapping a minor for prostitution as a felony
269, 286, 288, 289	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes specific criminal designations and punishments for delineated sex acts committed on minors
236	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sets forth that trafficking a minor for commercial sexual exploitation is a human trafficking felony offense • specifies that consent of a trafficked minor is not a defense for criminal prosecution under this part of the law • recognizes the federal definition of severe trafficking • requires law enforcement to assess whether any minor found to have engaged in a commercial sex act is a victim of trafficking, with specific indicators that must be considered • requires additional consequences for those found to have trafficked minors for commercial sexual exploitation • no provision is made for preventing the charging of a trafficked minor with a crime, even for acts performed under the duress of trafficking

In the last several years, new legislation in California has given increased attention to the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. In 2005, for example, the governor signed into law The California Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This legislation amended the state's Penal Code to specifically designate trafficking as a felony, provide for financial restitution to trafficking victims, include trafficking in the state Attorney General's priorities, establish a statewide task force to address trafficking, and give trafficking victims the right to bring civil action against traffickers. Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation is explicitly included in the law's provisions. In addition, there are special considerations given for the distinct needs of trafficked minors. There is no provision, however, regarding any prohibition or even limitation on bringing criminal charges against trafficked minors.

In 2006, the CA Access to Benefits for Human Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes Victims Act was signed into law. It ensures that certain public benefits and services are available to noncitizen victims of trafficking, domestic violence, and other serious crimes. While sex-trafficked minors are not explicitly mentioned, they are not explicitly excluded.

In 2014, California Senate Bill 855 was signed into law, thoroughly revising the Family Code, the Healthy and Safety Code, and the Welfare and Institutions Code. Included in the revision of the Welfare and Institutions Code was the establishment of the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Program. This program is intended to ensure adequate prevention and intervention services for minors who have been, or are at-risk of being, victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This legislation also declared that a sex-trafficked minor is to be treated in juvenile court the way neglected and abused children are treated. In other words, responsibility for a commercially sexually exploited minor may be assigned to Child Protective Services (i.e. the Department of Children and Family Services in Los Angeles County) rather than juvenile probation. There is no requirement, however, that this be done. Nor is there any mention of limiting or prohibiting criminal charges applied to commercially sexually exploited minors.

It is clear, then, that California law recognizes the appalling distress of commercially sexually exploited children. In fact, in recent years, much has been done to substantially increase attention to and provision for both prevention and intervention services for children who have been or are at risk of being victims of commercial sex trafficking. However, despite the extensive increase in attention to their plight, we have found no action in the state to clearly establish the standard called for in federal legislative policy fifteen years ago prohibiting the charging of a sex-trafficked minor as a criminal. In contrast, in New York state, sex-trafficked

minors must be treated as “Persons in Need of Supervision,” and cannot be detained with criminal charges.¹⁵

To bring criminal charges against minors because of their behavior under the severe duress of sex traffickers reflects judgments that these young people have the psychological capacity to make informed, mature, independent choices regarding the behavior, and that they bear moral responsibility for having done so, both of which are faulty judgments in regard to the distinct experiences of commercially sexually exploited children.¹⁶ They are most often lured and gradually entrapped into commercial sexual activity by initial attention and apparent affection, slowly replaced by mental, emotional, and physical manipulation and abuse, establishing complete control by intimidation.¹⁷

Treating trafficked minors as criminals not only hinders or prevents them from receiving the help they need, but actually multiplies the trauma.¹⁸ There is urgent need to correct this injustice without further delay.¹⁹ Effort is needed to work with law enforcement agencies and prosecuting jurisdictions in Los Angeles County to follow the lead of the Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff’s Department to end the arrest of minors for, and charging them with, solicitation or prostitution, and to codify this change in California state law. As part of this effort to decriminalize and de-stigmatize victims of child sex-trafficking, the use of the term ‘prostitute’, as in ‘child prostitute’, must be abolished.²⁰

Recommendation 2: Coordinate and evaluate intervention strategies and programs.

Create or designate, and adequately resource, a countywide office or agency to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the LA County strategies for commercially sexually exploited children. Include in the responsibilities of this office or agency the establishment of comprehensive, shared, interactive data base(s) that can both enable true

¹⁵ Walker, Kate. “Legislation Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation.” Sacramento, CA: California Child Welfare Council CSEC Group.

¹⁶ Beckett, Helen. ‘Not a World Away’: *The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland*. Barnardo’s Northern Ireland, October 2011. See also: Harlan, Emily K. “It Happens in the Dark: Examining Current Obstacles to Identifying and Rehabilitating Child Sex-Trafficking Victims in India and the United States.” *University of Colorado Law Review*, 83.

¹⁷ Finklea, et. al. 2015. See also: Clawson, et. al. “Treating the Hidden Wounds...”.

¹⁸ Smith, Linda A., Samantha Healy Vardaman, and Melissa A. Snow. *The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America’s Prostituted Children*. Vancouver, WA: Shared Hope International, 2009.

¹⁹ Finklea, et. al. 2015.

²⁰ Small, et. al. 2008.

coordination of assessments and service provision, and also provide aggregate data analyses to guide policymaking, while protecting confidentiality of individual case information. Partnering with other governmental agencies, research organizations, and academic institutions for the needed research on the effectiveness of the overall strategy and its programs is critical and can be taken on by this office or agency as well.

Multiple public and private agencies and organizations are investing substantial effort and resources to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles County. Involved county government agencies currently include the Sheriff's Department, the Probation Department, and the Department of Children and Family Services. Also involved, of course, are the juvenile courts, schools, and the nonprofits seeking to serve at-risk youth, including sex-trafficked minors.

Many of these entities are aware of and in frequent contact with each other. Their experience is the same as providers serving sex-trafficking minors throughout the country who are identifying coordinated collaboration as a significant need.²¹ There is no comprehensive formal network structure in place locally, however, to facilitate overall ongoing routine communication, cooperation, synchronization, data-sharing, or collaborative research and evaluation strategies to determine the effectiveness of different programs and approaches. Clearly, coordination presents a challenge due to the myriad leadership structures, protocols, priorities, data systems, communication styles, and funding streams. This need for coordination was highlighted by the leaders of both the county's Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department in a memo to the Board of Supervisors in July 2013²², and it remains a pressing concern.

Leaders in Sacramento have recognized the need for increased coordination and collaboration at the state level and locally. Senate Bill 855 (2014) established the state Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Program, which authorized funding for counties to provide services to children who are victims of, and are at risk of being victimized by, commercial sexual exploitation. The funds also can be used to provide relevant training to some who provide services to these minors. The legislation specifically requires that any county choosing to use

²¹ Clawson, Heather J., Kevonne M. Small, Ellen S. Go, and Bradley W. Myles. "Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims." Fairfax, VA: Caliber, October 2003. See also: *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report: An Inventory and Evaluation of the Current Shelter and Services Response to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking*. ECPAT USA, Shared Hope International, The Protection Project of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies; and Beckett, 2011.

²² Browning, Philip L., and Jerry Powers. "Response to the November 27, 2012 Board Motion on Sex Trafficking Task Force." Los Angeles, CA: County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, July 15 2013.

the funds as described must create policy and procedures for interagency collaboration in providing services to sex-trafficked children who are recipients of child protective services.

As part of CA Senate Bill 855 (2014), the state Department of Social Services was instructed to issue guidelines for counties wanting to use the authorized funding. Included in the guidelines released by the department was a Model Interagency Protocol Framework, including suggestions for structure and practice toolkits.²³ The California Child Welfare Council also has identified collaboration as a crucial, needed improvement to services for sex-trafficked minors.²⁴

Leaders in Los Angeles County have addressed this need by taking several recent actions to enhance local coordination of services for commercially sexually exploited children, increase resources directed to their needs, and seek state funding. During their meeting on June 30th of this year, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion to investigate the integration of several of these recent actions by unanimously approving a motion to instruct the Interim Chief Executive Officer to bring recommendations for unifying county effort related to human trafficking, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.²⁵ The motion called for investigation of “one collaborative entity” and the creation of “a unified operational model to administer and oversee programs and services for commercially sexually exploited children.”²⁶

Alameda County and its regional partners in the Bay Area have addressed similar concerns regarding the need for local coordination in responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Specifically, they have endeavored to enhance collaboration and communication, collection of reliable data, quality programmatic responses, and sustained funding.²⁷ Their experience can be instructive for LA County efforts.

In regard to the need for coordinated data sharing and collection, the U.S. Department of Justice offers to Trafficking Service grantees of its Office for Victims of Crime its Trafficking

²³ All County Information Notice (ACIN) No. 1-23-15: “Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Model Interagency Protocol Framework.” CA Department of Social Services, April 7, 2015.

²⁴ “Model Programs: Interventions and Preventions.” California Child Welfare Council CSEC Group.

²⁵ “Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles.” Tuesday, June 30 2015.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Guzman, Julie Posadas. “Draft Protocol Recommendations for a CSEC Coordinated System Response in both Alameda County and Bay Area Region.” The Alameda County District Attorney’s Office and the Interagency Child Policy Council of Alameda County. August 25, 2011. See also: Basson, et. al. 2012.

Information Management System.²⁸ This tool facilitates collection, recording, analysis, and reporting of key information. The features of this system, and its development and deployment, can provide useful guidance to efforts in LA County to address this crucial need.

The establishment of a coordinated response also can support urgently needed research and evaluation. In the last several years, attention to and actions regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children have vastly increased throughout the nation, across the state, and here in Los Angeles County. This increase has included rapid growth in much needed experimentation regarding the best ways to prevent this injustice, as well as ways of responding to, and supporting, sex-trafficked minors. There is a need to take stock of what has been attempted and what is being done, in order to identify the most productively strategic alternatives moving forward.

With national recognition of the need for increased coordination, state support for it, and county leaders calling for it, there is an important opportunity now to take action. An appropriate countywide office or agency needs to be established and adequately resourced to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of LA County strategies in behalf of commercially sexually exploited children.

Recommendation 3: Standardize training.

Conduct rigorous evaluation of relevant training, including what is available both locally and in other areas, to design best-practice learning experiences, and require law enforcement, child protective services, judicial officials, and social service providers to complete them.

In their 2003 needs assessment of trafficking victims, including sexually exploited persons, for the US Department of Justice, Caliber Associates identified “training at all levels” as an urgent need for those seeking to serve this population.²⁹ Last year, the First Focus State Policy

²⁸ “Trafficking Information Management System.” Office of Justice Programs.
<https://tims.ovcttac.gov/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

²⁹ Clawson, et. al. 2003. See also: Clawson, Heather J., Nicole Dutch, Amy Solomon, and Lisa Goldblatt Grace. “Human Trafficking Into and Within the United States: A Review of the Literature.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, August 30, 2009; Beckett, October 2011; “H.E.A.T. Watch: Stop Human Exploitation and Trafficking.” Oakland, CA: Office of the District Attorney, Alameda County; Clawson, et. al. “Treating the Hidden Wounds....”; and Basson, 2012.

Advocacy and Reform Center³⁰ included in its priority policy action items crucial to providing sexually exploited children and youth with the services they need, the provision of training in best practices for working with sex trafficking victims.³¹ Similarly, a report issued by Shared Hope International³² identified “a profound lack of awareness” among law enforcement, service providers, and the public regarding the experiences and needs of sex-trafficked minors as a major concern.³³

The federal government recognizes that specialized training for law enforcement, judicial officials, and service providers is essential to adequately serving commercially sexually exploited minors. As with earlier legislation, the federal Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, which was signed into law in May of this year, included in its eligibility requirements for states and other units of government, in order to receive funding authorized by the act, that they must already be engaged in providing specialized training regarding sex-trafficked children.

In California, the need for specialized training regarding this population is well established. For example, state Senate Bill 855 (2014) required the provision of training as part of the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Program it created. This bill also authorized the state Department of Social Services to establish guidelines for the use of program funds by counties. The department’s guidelines, released in April of this year, identified training as a crucial need, and allocated funds to support it.³⁴

Los Angeles County leaders have been supporting the design and delivery of specialized training related to the commercial sexual exploitation of minors for several years. In her testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance in June 2013, Michelle Guymon, co-founder of LA County Probation Department’s Child Trafficking Unit, reported that at that time more than 2,500 persons had received specialized training, including representatives from “various departments within the county, law enforcement, court system, faith-based community,

³⁰ First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions <http://firstfocus.org/about/>. The organization’s State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center works to strengthen connections between state child welfare advocates <http://childwelfaresparc.org/about/>

³¹ Gluck, Elliott, and Rricha Mathur. “Child Sex Trafficking and the Child Welfare System.” Washington, DC: First Focus State Policy and Reform Center, July 2014.

³² Shared Hope International works to prevent conditions that foster sex trafficking, restore sex-trafficking victims, and bring justice to vulnerable women and children <http://sharedhope.org/about-us/our-mission-and-values/>

³³ Smith, et. al. 2009.

³⁴ All County Information Notice (ACIN) No. 1-23-15.

community based organizations.”³⁵ This training continues, and many more professionals have been trained since her testimony. In their June 24, 2014 meeting, the County Board of Supervisors mandated county departments to create and provide sex trafficking training for foster parent and group home providers.³⁶ In their May 19th meeting this year the board allocated funds for training in awareness and identification of the commercial sexual exploitation of children.³⁷ Among the actions taken by the Board of Supervisors during their June 30, 2015 meeting were motions requiring the evaluation and design of training for those who serve sex trafficked minors.³⁸

Excellent training in various forms is now available to instruct interested persons in LA County regarding the distinctive trauma experienced by sex-trafficked children, the devastating consequences they endure, screening to identify them, and effective ways of engaging with them. There is considerable variety, though, in the content of available training. And, there is no standard requirement regarding who must complete the training. Shared Hope International identified the importance of integrating appropriate training for including assessment in intake and using victim-centered terminology and perspective in interviewing as key considerations.³⁹

It is time for rigorous evaluation of relevant training, including what is available both locally and in other areas, to design and standardize best-practice learning experiences, and require law enforcement, child protective services, judicial officials, and service provider personnel to complete them.

Following are some materials that, following careful review and evaluation, may enhance available training:

- Child Sex Trafficking Tool Kit for Law Enforcement – International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment – Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center

³⁵ Testimony by Ms. Michelle Guymon, Probation Director, Los Angeles County Probation Department, to the Senate Committee on Finance, June 11, 2013, in the Hearing “Sex Trafficking and Exploitation in America: Child Welfare’s Role in Prevention and Intervention.” See also: Browning and Powers July 15 2013.

³⁶ “Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles.” Tuesday, June 24 2014.

³⁷ “Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles.” Tuesday, May 19 2015.

³⁸ “Statement of Proceedings...”, June 30 2015.

³⁹ Smith, et. al. 2009.

- Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States – Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice
- Core Competencies for Serving Commercially Sexually Exploited Children – CA Child Welfare Council CSEC Action Team
- Domestic Sex Trafficking: The Criminal Operations of the American Pimp – Polaris Project
- H.E.A.T. Watch Tool Kit – Alameda County District Attorney’s Office
- Possible Indicators for Identifying Commercially Sexually Exploited Children – San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking
- Training Institute – Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth
- Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children – Center for Children and Youth Justice

Recommendation 4: Provide secure and appealing placement.

Begin right away to work for change in California law to establish legal support for sufficiently protective placement that does not require the filing of criminal charges. In the meantime, substantially improve the security, effectiveness, and appeal of many more open placement options.

It is apparent that, after emergency services, proper placement for commercially sexually exploited children is critical for their recovery.⁴⁰ Stable living environment provides the necessary foundation for other essential services. If a young survivor of commercial sex trafficking is able to return home to a safe, nurturing family environment, that would most likely be the optimal alternative.⁴¹ For those for whom home is not safe, not nurturing, or not available, other alternatives are needed. This may often be the case. Providing stable, specialized, and effective placement is a particular challenge for sexually exploited minors.⁴²

⁴⁰ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report*; See also: Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; and Hotaling, Norma, Kristie Miller, and Elizabeth Trudeau. “Symposium: Sex for Sale: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls: A Survivor Service Provider’s Perspective.” *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 18 (2006).

⁴¹ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report*.

⁴² Walker, 2013. See also: Clawson, Heather J. and Lisa Goldblatt Grace. “Finding a Path to Recovery: Residential Facilities for Minor Victims of Domestic Sex Trafficking.” Washington DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, US Department of Health and Human Services; Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; Smith, et. al. 2009; and Beckett, 2011.

In their 2013 call for collaboration to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children, the state Child Welfare Council cited research indicating that more than half, perhaps well over half, of victims of commercial sexual exploitation have a history with the child welfare system.⁴³ Similar findings were cited in a report by the State Policy and Reform Center.⁴⁴ The CA Child Welfare Council also listed in their call for collaboration several challenges to stable, effective placement for these young people, including the potential for leaving placement prematurely, and under-developed or maladaptive relational skills. The distinct, severe trauma they have experienced may cause them to leave the placement prematurely, either because they fear retribution from the trafficker if they do not try to “escape,” or because they have bonded with the trafficker in spite of violent abuse.⁴⁵ Trauma-bonding can be a coping response to chronic abuse.⁴⁶

Currently in Los Angeles County, when commercially sexually exploited minors are identified, they may be detained and placed in locked facilities, or placed in child protective services care and assigned to open placements, such as foster homes or group homes. Neither locked nor open placements are universally ideal. Locked facilities can further traumatize these young people, encumber them with the stigma of criminalization, and hinder their cooperation with treatment services.⁴⁷ However, when trafficked youth are threatened by their pimp, as is common, to return immediately to their pimp unless they are locked up, open facilities may provide severely inadequate protection and security.⁴⁸

One study investigated the challenge of premature exit from placement, and the attendant services, by youth who have been commercially sexually exploited. The study was conducted by the West Coast Children’s Clinic to review information regarding 113 girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 24 years who were clients of service providers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The study found that 62% of them had run away from home or foster care multiple times every month. Three-fourths went to different locations different times they left prematurely, or indicated “no planned destination.” Eighty-seven percent went to places

⁴³ Walker, 2013.

⁴⁴ Gluck and Mathur, July 2014.

⁴⁵ Kalergis, Karen Irene. “A Passionate Practice: Addressing the Needs of Commercially Sexually Exploited Teenagers.” Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work, Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, 2009. See also: *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report*; and Gluck and Mathur, July 2014.

⁴⁶ Walker, 2013. See also: Clawson, et. al. “Treating the Hidden Wounds...”.

⁴⁷ Clawson and Grace. “Finding a Path...”.

⁴⁸ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report*.

that were not safe, not sufficiently supportive of their basic needs, and/or placed them at high risk of being victimized again. Two-thirds attempted to avoid being found and resisted being returned to home or foster care. And, three-fourths expressed little to no recognition of the risks of leaving the setting and services.⁴⁹

Attention to the design and provision of optimal placement options for commercially sexually exploited minors in LA County is a critical, immediate need. One alternative that is being used in various parts of the country but is not currently available in LA County is placement in geographically distant or remote locations.⁵⁰ While this may be a viable longer-term alternative, very high costs make it prohibitive in the near future. In response to the urgent concern for appropriate placement, during its May 19, 2015 meeting the county's Board of Supervisors instructed county departments to identify safe housing options for commercially sexually exploited children where they can receive the specialized services they need.⁵¹ The completion of this task, and implementation of the best options identified, is a priority.

Recommendation 5: Expand the First Responder Protocol.

Provide resources to expand use of this protocol county-wide.

During its meeting on September 24, 2013, the LA County Board of Supervisors approved a motion calling for the leaders of county departments to work together to create a "multi-agency response model to combat the sex trafficking of children in Los Angeles County."⁵² The eventual result was LA County's Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.⁵³ The protocol seeks to build crucial connection with commercially sexually exploited minors and avoid their arrest and detention by bringing together law enforcement, child welfare, medical professionals, advocates, and shelter staff for a victim-centered, strengths-based coordinated response from initial identification through the first 72 hours of contact.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Basson, et. al. 2012.

⁵⁰ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report*. See also: Clawson, and Grace. "Finding a Path to Recovery..."

⁵¹ "Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles." Tuesday, May 12 2015.

⁵² "Statement of Proceedings for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles." Tuesday, September 24 2013.

⁵³ *Los Angeles County, Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. Los Angeles County, 2015.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The decision was made to pilot implementation of the protocol in parts of the county “with disproportionately high rates of arrest of children and young adults for prostitution and related offenses.”⁵⁵ Implementation began in Long Beach, Compton, and south Los Angeles in August, 2014. Through April of this year, 32 minors have been served using the First Responder Protocol. Nine of those, 4 of whom were from out of state or out of county, were initially detained in juvenile hall. The others were initially placed in settings supervised by the county Department of Children and Family Services. Of the 32 minors who have received services, only 3 of them ran away within the first 72 hours. Due to the increased attention and sustained success of this effort, the numbers of commercially sexually exploited minors identified in the pilot areas appears to be declining. There is some indication that traffickers have shifted operations to other areas of the county.⁵⁶

The design and implementation of this superb, multi-agency response to the needs of sex-trafficked minors in Los Angeles County has been deliberate, comprehensive, responsive, and monitored. The early results are exceptional. Action is needed, with sufficient resources, to expand the implementation of the First Responder Protocol to all areas of the county where there are signs of CSEC activity.

Recommendation 6: Build DCFS capacity.

Increase significantly DCFS’ capacity to serve commercially sexually exploited children by greatly increasing the number of Children’s Social Workers and supervisors trained and assigned to serve this population, and the support and treatment services available for this population under DCFS auspices and its partner provider organizations.

Mention has been made already in this report of CA Senate Bill 855 that became law just over a year ago. Included in its provisions was a new alternative for jurisdiction of commercially sexually exploited children in the state. Beginning immediately upon enactment of the legislation, sex-trafficked minors can become recipients of child protection services if parents or guardians did not or could not protect them. In Los Angeles County, child protection services are provided under the auspices of the county’s Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

LA County DCFS responded right away to this new assignment.⁵⁷ Specific guidelines for workers have been added to the department’s policy manual.⁵⁸ The department is actively training members of law enforcement to refer commercially sexually exploited children for child protective services rather than arresting them on criminal charges.⁵⁹ While the amount of minors known to be victims of sexual exploitation is not large, it can be expected that greater attention will increase the number identified as needing services. In fact, it has been reported that up to 300 minors currently in foster care in LA County have been sexually trafficked.⁶⁰ DCFS Director, Philip Browning, has acknowledged that the agency is not yet ready to provide needed housing and services for all the sex-trafficked children in LA County.⁶¹

It is important that the LA County Department of Children and Family Services be supported in their efforts to develop sufficient capacity to serve the distinct and myriad needs of commercially sexually exploited children. The needed capacity includes specialized expertise, adequate workforce, specialized contracted services, appropriate placement alternatives, and comprehensive training.

Recommendation 7: Supply crucial social support.

Develop and fund a sustainable program that utilizes government agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, and other community groups to enlist and deploy well-trained advocates, mentors, foster parents, and primary social support networks specifically assigned to individual minors being assisted in recovery from commercial sexual exploitation.

Much evidence has been documented regarding the horrendous physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of sexual exploitation, particularly commercial sex trafficking, on children. Attention is given to these consequences in the discussion of Recommendation 8 of this document. What can be underemphasized, or even overlooked, though, in discussions of these personal traumas, are the additional debilitating social challenges they also face.

⁵⁷ FYI Issue 14-17 – “Effective Immediately: Filing WIC Petitions for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.” LA County Department of Children and Family Services, August 19, 2014.

⁵⁸ The LA County DCFS Child Welfare Policy Manual can be accessed at <http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/aboutus/policy.html>

⁵⁹ Therolf, Garrett. “LA County Plans Court to Help Child Prostitutes.” LA Times, February 27, 2015.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gerber, 2015.

A large portion of sex-trafficked minors were initially vulnerable to exploitation because they were disconnected from the crucial primary social support on which all of us depend to thrive.⁶² It is the kind of support that frees us to feel confident that if we need help at two o'clock in the morning, someone we trust who cares and is capable will respond to our call.⁶³ For too many of these young people, the only consistent presence available at two o'clock in the morning is their trafficker. For many survivors of sex trafficking, connection with anyone not involved with commercial sex is rare to nonexistent.⁶⁴

Recognition of social support as crucial to our safety, our survival, and our satisfaction is well-established in research literature.⁶⁵ It has been found to be very important for both physical and mental health, enhancing our capacity to deal with stress, as well as reducing the impact of trauma and the likelihood of serious medical conditions.⁶⁶

More specifically, research regarding services for victims of other forms of abusive trauma suggests why providing necessary primary social support to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation can be so important. One study, for example, compared two groups of women in a domestic violence shelter, one receiving deliberate, intensive social support and the other experiencing routine interactions. The social support provided to the experimental group focused on improving the group members' sense of belonging, capacity for self-appraisal, self-esteem, and tangible support for basic needs. The researchers found that the experimental group had much better psychological and physical health outcomes than the control group.⁶⁷

As with other victims of abusive trauma, sex-trafficked minors lack basic social support. Nearly fifteen years ago, ECPAT-USA reported that a majority of commercially sexually exploited children in this country had run away or been ejected from their homes by families that had

⁶² Jackson, Annette. *Literature Review: Young People At Risk of Sexual Exploitation, Absconding, and Other Significant Harms*. Melbourne, Australia: Berry Street Childhood Institute, 2014. See also: Basson, et. al. 2012; and Beckett, October 2011.

⁶³ Kalergis, 2009.

⁶⁴ Clawson, et. al. August 30, 2009.

⁶⁵ Flannery, Raymond B. "Social Support and Psychological Trauma: A Methodological Review." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3 (4): 593-611, 1990.

⁶⁶ Ozbay, Faith, Douglas C. Johnson, Eleni Dimoulas, C.A. Morgan, Dennis Charney, and Steven Southwick. "Social Support and Resilience to Stress." *Psychiatry*. 4 (5): 35-40, 2007.

⁶⁷ Constantino, Rose, Yookyung Kim, and Patricia A. Crane. "Effects of a Social Support Intervention on Health Outcomes in Residents of a Domestic Violence Shelter: A Pilot Study." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 26:575-590, 2005.

failed to nurture or even protect them.⁶⁸ More recently, the U.S. State Department confirmed this finding, stating in its 2010 *Trafficking in Persons Report* that, frequently, child sex-trafficking victims in this country who are citizens are runaways and otherwise homeless.⁶⁹ Further illustrating this aspect of their experience, one survey of survivors of child sexual exploitation found that 35% had been initially trafficked by a family member or foster parent.⁷⁰

Indications are that relational disruption is still true for commercially sexually exploited children. In its *Trafficking in Persons Report* released only two months ago, the State Department stated that those most vulnerable to trafficking in the U.S. include “children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems [and] runaway and homeless youth.”⁷¹ Here in California, the founder and director of SAGE (Standing Against Global Exploitation) in San Francisco has described the failure of family caregivers and other trusted adults to provide basic protection and nurture as being foundational to the trauma she and others who suffered sexual exploitation as minors bear.⁷²

When they are trafficked beginning at a highly impressionable young age, and enslaved for several years,⁷³ commercially sexually exploited children can become convinced that their only alternative to being alone is returning to the dominion of the trafficker. And the thought of being alone can be even more terrifying than the familiar violent abuse of a known trafficker. When, as is often the case, the relationship with trafficker is one in which there was initial trust and apparent affection that later became a betrayal into abusive and violent control, the victim’s capacity to trust others and establish healthy reciprocal relationships can be severely compromised.⁷⁴

Moreover, one of the psychological and emotional consequences of being trafficked as a sex object is what has been called “psychological paralysis” which leaves a victim utterly hopeless

⁶⁸ Kotrla, April, 2010. See also: Spangenberg, Mia. “Prostituted Youth in New York City: An Overview.” ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), 2001.

⁶⁹ *Trafficking in Persons Report: 10th Edition*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 2010.

⁷⁰ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*

⁷¹ *Trafficking in Persons Report: July 2015*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 2015. See also: Gluck and Mathur, July 2014.

⁷² Hotaling, et. al. 2006. See also: Smith, et. al., 2009.

⁷³ Hotaling, et. al., 2006.

⁷⁴ Clawson, et. al. “Treating the Hidden Wounds....”

of any possibility of real escape, even when presented with possible alternatives.⁷⁵ Another often exacerbating factor is the existence of trauma-bonding,⁷⁶ which was mentioned earlier in this report (page 20). This is similar to what may occur in domestic violence, and can occur in any abusive relationship. Relational power imbalance is combined with intermittent episodes of violence that may happen at any time without warning, separated by periods of apparent affection and even tenderness. The result can lead to even lower self-esteem for the victim, greater insecurity and fear, and increased feeling of dependence on the abuser.⁷⁷

What is clear, then, is that any effort to support victims of commercial sexual exploitation must go beyond the provision of essential rehabilitative services that address personal physical, emotional, and psychological effects. There also must be deliberate extensive attention to the social rehabilitation and reintegration of sex-trafficked minors.⁷⁸ The restoration, or establishment, of consistent, nurturing relationships with reliable caregivers is essential to their recovery.⁷⁹ This may mean working intensively for extended periods of time with their families of origin to facilitate genuine, comprehensive, long-term reconciliation.⁸⁰ Or, it may require enlisting and thoroughly equipping alternative primary support networks (family substitutes in a sense) to “adopt” (either formally or at least functionally) children in recovery from commercial sexual exploitation.

The relationships that are essential to recovery from sexual exploitation, the need for which has been betrayed by those who should have provided it and seized as a primary tool of cruel exploitation by traffickers, are those that offer the long-term, secure support that many of us take for granted from our families of origin. Serious efforts are needed to explore the development of a sustainable program in LA County that utilizes government agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, and other community groups to enlist and deploy not only advocates and mentors, but also guardians and primary social support networks specifically assigned to individual minors being assisted in recovery from commercial sexual exploitation.

⁷⁵ Hotaling, 2006.

⁷⁶ Walker, 2013. See also: Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; and Beckett, October 2011.

⁷⁷ “traumatic bonding.” WEAVE inc <http://www.weaveinc.org/post/traumatic-bonding-0>

⁷⁸ Harlan. See also: Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009; and Clawson, et. al. “Treating the Hidden Wounds...”.

⁷⁹ Beckett, October 2011. See also: Kalergis, 2009.

⁸⁰ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*

Recommendation 8: Furnish essential services.

Provide the necessary funding and resources to create and sustain a comprehensive, regularly updated, and easily-accessed array of needed medical, psychological, social, educational, empowerment, training, and educational services from providers specifically trained and prepared to serve persons recovering from commercial sexual exploitation. It also will be necessary to build upon initial efforts with LA County 211 to maintain current access to needed information regarding services as they are created.

Multiple sources have identified diverse, complex, interrelated needs that commercially sexually exploited children may experience. These include:

- Basic necessities of food and clothing⁸¹
- Safety and security⁸²
- Medical services⁸³, including treatment of
 - Acute physical injury
 - Chronic physical injury and disorders, including sexually transmitted diseases
 - Malnutrition
 - Habitually poor personal hygiene
 - Substance abuse and addiction
- Shelter⁸⁴, including
 - Emergency housing
 - Long-term, secure placement
- Financial resources⁸⁵
- Mental health services⁸⁶, including support for dealing with

⁸¹ Kotrla, 2010. See also: Small, et. al. February 2008.

⁸² Delaney, Stephanie and Colin Cotterill. *The Psychological Rehabilitation of Children Who Have Been Commercially Sexually Exploited*. Bangkok: ECPAT (Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking) International, 2005. See also: Beckett, October 2011; *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; and "Model Programs..."

⁸³ Clawson, et. al., October 2003. See also: Delaney and Cotterill. 2005; Clawson and Grace. "Finding a Path..."; Beckett, October 2011; Smith, et. al. 2009; Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; Kotrla, April, 2010; Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds..."; and Small, et. al., February 2008.

⁸⁴ Beckett, October 2011. See also: Delaney and Cotterill, 2005; *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; Kotrla, 2010; and Small, et. al., February 2008.

⁸⁵ Delaney and Cotterill, 2005.

⁸⁶ Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds...". See also: Delaney and Cotterill, 2005; Beckett, October 2011; Smith, et. al., 2009; Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; Kalergis, 2009; Clawson

- Post-traumatic stress syndrome
- Trauma bonding
- Deep-rooted stigma and shame
- Ingrained sense of personal powerlessness
- Social/Relational rehabilitation and support⁸⁷, including attention to
 - Maladaptive attachment patterns and debilitated capacity to trust
 - Underdeveloped or problematic social skills
 - Guidance in making choices regarding sexual activity
- Education support⁸⁸
- Vocational Training⁸⁹
- Legal services⁹⁰

The experiences of professionals engaged in serving sex-trafficked minors, as well as interviews of survivors, have been compiled and analyzed to identify key features of the essential services that these young people need. Key features that have been identified include the necessity for services for this population to be trauma-informed,⁹¹ strengths-based,⁹² consistent,⁹³ flexibly customizable,⁹⁴ culturally-adapted,⁹⁵ and survivor-engaged.⁹⁶ In addition, care needs to be

and Grace. "Finding a Path..."; Kotrla, 2010; Jackson, 2014; Smith, et. al., 2009; Small, et. al., February 2008; and Basson, et. al., 2012.

⁸⁷ Delaney and Cotterill, 2005. See also: Beckett, October 2011; "Model Programs; Clawson and Grace. "Finding a Path..."; and Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds...".

⁸⁸ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...* See also: Delaney and Cotterill, 2005; Clawson, and Grace. "Finding a Path to Recovery..."; and Small, et. al., February 2008.

⁸⁹ Small, et. al., February 2008. See also: Delaney and Cotterill, 2005; Clawson and Grace. "Finding a Path to Recovery..."; and Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds...".

⁹⁰ Clawson, et. al., October 2003. See also: Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; Kotrla, April, 2010; Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds..."; and Small, et. al., February 2008.

⁹¹ Smith, et. al., 2009. See also: *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; Gluck and Mathur, July 2014; "Model Programs..."; Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009; and Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds...".

⁹² *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*

⁹³ Gluck and Mathur, July 2014.

⁹⁴ *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*

⁹⁵ "Model Programs..." See also: *National Colloquium 2012 Final Report...*; and Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

⁹⁶ Hotaling, et. al. 2006. See also: Smith, Linda A., et. al., 2009; Kalergis, , 2009; "Model Programs; and Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

given to supporting the restoration of dignity shattered by how they have been treated.⁹⁷ And it is essential that the myriad services provided to any individual minor be integrated into a productive, collaborative effort.

Though there are still far too few organizations providing services to help young people escape and recover from commercial sexual exploitation,⁹⁸ some have been identified as exemplary by researchers and policy advocates. Examples include the following. In Boston, the Home for Little Wanderers, the oldest child welfare agency in the U.S., provides its “My Life, My Choice” program to young victims of sex trafficking.⁹⁹ In New York City, GEMS (Girls Educational and Mentoring Services) serves girls and young women who have been sexually exploited.¹⁰⁰ Near Atlanta, Angela’s House includes services for sex-trafficked girls.¹⁰¹ In San Francisco, SAGE (Standing Against Global Exploitation Project, Inc.) was begun by a survivor 25 years ago and serves more than 350 women and girls weekly.¹⁰² In the Los Angeles area, Children of the Night serves boys, girls, and transgender individuals who have been commercially sexually exploited,¹⁰³ and CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking) provides peer and group mentoring and support.¹⁰⁴

Awareness of the special needs of local commercially sexually exploited minors is informed by review of those served by the STAR (Succeed Through Achievement and Resilience) Court. STAR Court was established in LA County in 2011 to work with girls arrested for prostitution or who disclose involvement with commercial sexual activity after having been arrested on other charges.¹⁰⁵ In January, 2014, STAR Court representatives reported that 90 young women, ages 12 to 18 years were being served by the court at that time. The court also reported that

⁹⁷ Smith, et. al., 2009.

⁹⁸ Kotrla, April, 2010.

⁹⁹ Kalergis, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. See also: Clawson and Grace. “Finding a Path to Recovery...”.

¹⁰¹ Clawson, et. al. “Finding a Path to Recovery...”.

¹⁰² Hotaling, et. al. 2006. See also: Kalergis, 2009; “Model Programs...”; and Clawson and Grace. “Finding a Path to Recovery...”.

¹⁰³ Clawson and Grace. “Finding a Path to Recovery...”.

¹⁰⁴ Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ “Handbook for STAR Court.” January 15 2014. This program outline can be accessed at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/27693.htm>

approximately 210 female minors were being arrested annually in LA County for prostitution-related charges, with 80% having had prior involvement with the county's Department of Children and Family Services, and 84% coming from either the South or the South Bay areas of the county.¹⁰⁶

In cooperation with Commissioner Catherine Pratt of STAR Court, 2014-15 Luskin Graduate Fellow Begoña Guereca initiated an analysis of the court's case files. This analysis is currently still in progress under the direction of current Luskin Graduate Fellow Kelsey Mulcahy. Preliminary results from 71 cases have found an average age of 16 years for these justice system involved minors in LA County, with the youngest being 12 years of age. Sixty-eight percent of them have been identified as African-American, 23% Latina, and 3% nonHispanic White. Fifty-five percent have been found to need mental health services. Nearly 60% were placed after arrest in group homes and a little more than 1/5 were placed in foster homes.

It is clear that commercially sexually exploited children suffer from multiple, complex physical, mental, and emotional traumas.¹⁰⁷ The U.S. State Department has reported on research that found that 68% of women in prostitution "met the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder in the same range as treatment-seeking combat veterans and victims of state-organized torture."¹⁰⁸ Research on trauma and its impact has found that the seriousness of the consequence of trauma can be far greater when there has been repeated victimization and when the experiences occur or begin at a young age, as well as when the traumas are associated with disruptions in parent-child relationships and/or limited social support, economic disadvantage, and stigma.¹⁰⁹ These research findings further highlight the magnified damaging nature of trauma experienced by young victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sex-trafficked minors also may be seriously educationally disadvantaged. In addition, they may lack a strong sense of self-esteem and personal agency. Serious medical and mental health conditions likely have been ignored as well. And they frequently have limited marketable job

¹⁰⁶ "Commercially Sexually Exploited Children." STAR Court Training presentation, January 2014. This presentation can be accessed at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/27693.htm>

¹⁰⁷ Yen, Iris. "Of Vice and Men: A New Approach to Eradicating Sex Trafficking by Reducing Male Demand through Educational Programming and Abolitionist Legislation," 98. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 653 (200708).

¹⁰⁸ "Trafficking in Persons Report." Washington, DC: US State Department, June 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Clawson, et. al. "Treating the Hidden Wounds..."

skills, little to no career options, and a dearth of contacts that can assist them in developing needed skills, referrals, and resources.¹¹⁰

Much has been written regarding the insufficient quantity and quality of services for sex-trafficked minors.¹¹¹ Since the transition in LA County from criminal justice-based control of these young people to recovery-based treatment is still new, it is no surprise that there is great need for additional services. The requirement is for massive investment of expertise, energy, and resources for identifying, creating, and providing the services essential to their personal rehabilitation and social reintegration. A few providers have been focused on the special needs of this population for some time. Support for their efforts, and the creation of many additional services, are crucial to adequately addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in LA County. In addition, ready access to information about this growing array of services, through 211 LA County (a service that provides ready access to information regarding health and social services for LA County residents) for example, must be maintained.

Recommendation 9: Challenge contributing factors.

Formulate a comprehensive description of and plan for challenging relevant societal factors through targeted and sustained county-wide prevention, public awareness, and education.

A common theme in the literature regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children is the importance of identifying and addressing key factors that contribute to its existence in this country. There are efforts in other countries to deal with the same question. This common theme is pursued in a variety of ways in the literature.

Much of the focus in the literature is on what authors refer to as risk factors, primarily having to do with conditions, experiences, and behaviors of individual youth which leave them distinctly vulnerable to being trafficked. Identified factors placing youth at risk of being commercially sexually exploited include young age,¹¹² limited or missing family support,¹¹³ and previous

¹¹⁰ Smith, et. al., 2009. See also: "Trafficking in Persons Report." June 2005.; Kalergis, , 2009; Finklea, et. al., January 28 2015; and Beckett, Helen, October 2011.

¹¹¹ Smith, et. al., 2009. See also: Kalergis, 2009; Clawson and Grace. "Finding a Path to Recovery..."; Finklea, et. al., 2015; and Beckett, October 2011.

¹¹² Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

¹¹³ Ibid.

neglect or abuse,¹¹⁴ particularly sexual abuse.¹¹⁵ Also identified as risk factors are family conditions such as poverty¹¹⁶ and unemployment.¹¹⁷

Response to awareness of these risk factors has led to a growing number of prevention efforts. These efforts primarily take the form of training experiences for young people, particularly at-risk youth. The previously mentioned “My Life, My Choice” course is used in many places across the nation. Project P.R.E.V.E.N.T. is another program offered for similar purposes. Locally, the LA County Probation Department has a prevention training course titled, “Word on the Street.” The Los Angeles Unified School District CSEC Task Force has created a prevention module and is working on a prevention curriculum for students. Similarly, the Lynwood Unified School District is partnering with Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives to pilot “The Trafficking-Free Community,” a school-based trafficking prevention curriculum.¹¹⁸ Such prevention efforts need to be strengthened and widely expanded in LA County.

Beyond the need for prevention, there is an additional critically important element largely missing from the literature, and intervention efforts. The missing element is recognition of, and attention to, societal factors that comprise cultural milieus which allow the commercial sexual exploitation of children to thrive.¹¹⁹ Examples of these societal factors include gender inequity, glamorization of commercial sex and sexual exploitation of women and children, sexual violence against women, myths about women of color, and disproportionate criminalization of African-American young women.

Gender inequity is a solidly entrenched characteristic of American society.¹²⁰ It has been observed that American culture, through multiple venues of entertainment industries, glamorizes both prostitution and those who profit from trafficking, and that commercial sex is increasingly promoted and accepted as a normal activity.¹²¹ Presentations of sexual exploitation

¹¹⁴ Jackson, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Benz, Robert. “The Trafficking-Free Community: Eliminating Modern-Day Slavery.” Frederick Douglas Family Initiatives, August 2015.

¹¹⁹ Yen, Iris, 2007-08.

¹²⁰ Clawson, et. al., August 30, 2009.

¹²¹ Kotrla, April, 2010. See also: Smith, et. al., 2009.

of women and children as apparently acceptable content for games, music, and display on clothing are prevalent.¹²² For many, the social expectation of ‘normal’ males includes expectation of at least periodic, if not regular, participation in commercial sexual activity.¹²³ Consider, for example, what would likely be viewed as acceptable behavior for young adult men participating in college fraternity revelry or a bachelor party.

Moreover, high rates of sexual violence against women in the U.S., including intimate partner violence and sexual assault are well-documented.¹²⁴ Myths about women of color make them particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and susceptible to being disregarded when violated.¹²⁵ At least half of African-American young women report having experienced sexual abuse by the time they reach 18 years of age¹²⁶ which is twice the rate of adult women overall in the U.S.¹²⁷ Their frequent experiences with entrenched institutional racism often leave them reluctant to risk the victim-blaming that may occur if they report violence.¹²⁸ Apparently overlooked is the additional serious consequence of early sexual abuse of young women of color as one of the chief identifiers of those who will enter the juvenile justice system.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the culturally normative expectation is for them to remain “self-sacrificing and devout” in the face of overwhelmingly disproportionate mistreatment.¹³⁰ This mistreatment reaches, perhaps, some of its most damaging expressions in the ways African-American young women are criminalized. Examples include their suspension from school, their arrest and

¹²² Kotrla, April, 2010.

¹²³ Yen, 2007-08.

¹²⁴ Black, Michele C., et.al. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. November 2011.

¹²⁵ Olive, Victoria C. “Sexual Assault Against Women of Color.” *Journal of Student Research*, 1 (2012).

¹²⁶ Axtell, Brooke. “Black Women, Sexual Assault and the Art of Resistance.” *Forbes*, April 25, 2012.

¹²⁷ “Sexual Violence: Facts at a Glance.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹²⁸ Olive, 2012.

¹²⁹ Saar, Malika Saada, Rebecca Epstein, Lindsay Rosenthal, and Yasmin Vafa. *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls’ Story*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Project for Girls, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, and Ms. Foundation for Women.

¹³⁰ Hutchinson, Sikivu. “Policing Our Girls, Taming ‘Topsy’.” *The Feminist Wire*, February 9 2015.
<http://www.thefeministwire.com/2015/02/policing-girls-taming-toppsy/>

detention by law enforcement, and their criminal conviction at far higher rates than White girls.¹³¹

There have been sustained, and ultimately successful, initiatives in the past to address and reduce, if not eliminate, long-held, deeply-entrenched societal attitudes and attendant behavior. Fifty years ago, for example, tobacco use was common, commonly valued, and even promoted by many medical professionals. Ten years ago the legalization of same-sex marriage was probably viewed by many, including many of its advocates, as impossible in this country. It is past time for concentrated attention to changing the widespread attitudes and practices that make the commercial sexual exploitation of children possible.

One part of a comprehensive strategy to change societal factors contributing to sex trafficking of minors in LA County would be to work with youth to shape their acceptance of basic values of gender identity and role equity, and respectful, genuinely reciprocal relationships.¹³² LA County Commission on Human Relations staff have been involved with efforts to influence the attitudes and behavior of youth regarding social justice issues for many years. These efforts have included working with schools and other youth-serving organizations in some of the areas of the county in which sex-trafficked minors have been identified.

If directed to address the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children, it would be necessary for the work to include focus in culturally competent ways on self-identity and self-esteem, racialized gender role formation, gender justice, holistic sexual violence prevention education, healthy relationships among youth of diverse genders and sexual orientations, cultural and social cues that normalize sexual violence, appropriate historical and social contextualization, educational empowerment, and leadership development.

In summary, locally, as with the nation as a whole, sex trafficking of minors flourishes because of an intersecting array of entrenched attitudes and patterns of interaction that objectify women, disenfranchise people of color, sexually stereotype women of color, marginalize the poor, victimize vulnerable youth, support the inequitable distribution and abuse of power, and commercialize sex. The elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles County requires strategic, sustained effort to challenge the entrenched social factors that maintain it.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Kotrla, April, 2010. See also: Yen, 2007-08.

Recommendation 10: Debilitate demand and supply.

Research the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at significantly decreasing the demand for and increasing the cost and consequences of commercial sex with minors, such as increased penalties for repeat offenders and traffickers, and “Shame Campaigns” which publicize the identity of those convicted of commercial sex with minors. Implement those policies, programs and initiatives that have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the market demand for sex with minors.

In its report on sex trafficking of children in the United States released earlier this year, the Congressional Research Service observed that there is widespread agreement among experts that efforts to address the commercial sexual exploitation of minors must include attention to both demand and supply in the illicit, abhorrent, devastating trade in children as objects for sexual gratification.¹³³ Similarly, the California Child Welfare Council, in its call to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children, identified the need for efforts to reduce the demand and increase the penalties.¹³⁴

The prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S. is supported by a steady demand and increasing profits. It has been found that sex trafficking minors is more profitable than other criminal activities such as dealing drugs.¹³⁵ One report of sex trafficking found that a sex trafficking victim may cost \$14,000 to \$40,000 annually to support, while earning for the trafficker from \$75,000 to \$250,000 a year.¹³⁶ One reason for the greater profitability of child sex trafficking, which escalates even more the horrendous nature of this activity, is that a child can be sold repeatedly, while a quantity of drugs can be consumed only once.

More recently, identification and apprehension of buyers and sellers has been made even more difficult by the growth in use of the internet and mobile devices to advertise and procure the trafficked young people.¹³⁷ It has become apparent that “[d]istribution requires relatively little skill, and supply is plentiful and easily acquired, presenting few barriers to entry or startup

¹³³ Finklea, Kristin, et. al., January 28 2015. See also: Shively, Michael, Kristina Kliorys, Kristin Wheeler, Dana Hunt. “A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report.” Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30 2012; Smith, et. al., 2009; “Trafficking in Persons Report,” June 2005; and Beckett, October 2011.

¹³⁴ Walker, 2013.

¹³⁵ Basson, et. al., 2012.

¹³⁶ Yen, Iris, 2007-08.

¹³⁷ Finklea, et. al., January 28 2015. See also: “H.E.A.T. Watch...”.

costs.”¹³⁸ In addition, successful prosecution often is very difficult due to the fear of severely intimidated victims based on their perception of the likelihood of serious, if not lethal, retribution.¹³⁹

A wide variety of alternatives for reducing demand for and supply of young people for commercial sexual exploitation has been attempted in different places. Examples are listed below. These efforts need to be thoroughly reviewed so that effective initiatives can be identified and implemented.

Alternatives for reducing demand for commercial sex with minors have included:

- Increasing public awareness¹⁴⁰
- Reverse stings¹⁴¹
- Shaming campaigns¹⁴², e.g. letters to home addresses; publication of names on news outlets, billboards, or web sites
- Prioritizing arrests and prosecutions of buyers¹⁴³
- Confiscating vehicles used in commission of the crime¹⁴⁴
- Suspending driver’s licenses if vehicle used in commission of the crime¹⁴⁵
- Geographic restriction for convicted buyers¹⁴⁶
- Community service cleaning streets where trafficking frequently occurs¹⁴⁷

Alternatives for reducing supply of minors for commercial sex have included:

- Strengthening investigations and prosecutions of traffickers¹⁴⁸

¹³⁸ Shively, et. al., April 30 2012.

¹³⁹ Ibid. See also: “H.E.A.T. Watch...”.

¹⁴⁰ Finklea, et. al., January 28 2015. See also: Shively, et. al., April 30 2012; and “H.E.A.T. Watch...”.

¹⁴¹ Shively, et. al., April 30 2012.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Finklea, et. al., January 28 2015.

- Including related charges in prosecutions of traffickers, e.g. “witness intimidation, false imprisonment, battery, criminal threats, and kidnapping”¹⁴⁹
- Special services for protection of survivors serving as prosecution witnesses¹⁵⁰
- Increasing harsher penalties of traffickers¹⁵¹

Commercial sexual exploitation is a part of the sexual gratification market in which traffickers supply children as commodities to eager customers. It thrives because the demand is sufficient to support substantial profit for relatively little financial, legal, or social cost. Sustained attention and effort is needed to evaluate available alternatives and apply the most promising in persistent efforts to curtail behavioral demand for and eliminate the profitable supply of minors in LA County for commercial sexual exploitation.

¹⁴⁹ “H.E.A.T. Watch...”

¹⁵⁰ Becket, October 2011.

¹⁵¹ Gluck and Mathur, July 2014.

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