



# FRAMING THE ISSUE OF THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a federal law passed in 2000, any child under the age of 18 years old that is used for the purpose of exploitation through sexual servitude (prostitution), regardless of the absence of economic leverage, manipulation, fraud, coercion, threats, force and violence is considered a **commercially sexually exploited child (CSEC)**.<sup>1</sup> A child victim of human trafficking does not have to prove that they were tricked or violently forced into sexual exploitation in order to be considered a victim of human trafficking under this federal law. This federal law applies to every child human trafficking victim in the United States.

## KEY ISSUES FACING CSEC NATIONALLY

- 1. Earlier childhood sexual abuse greatly increases vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation during teens.** According to national statistics children who are sexually abused in earlier childhood are four times more likely than their peers to be targeted and victimized by commercial sexual exploitation. Nationally, 95% of “teen prostitutes” were victims of earlier childhood sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Psychological trauma, especially Stockholm’s Syndrome, greatly impacts CSEC’s ability to cooperate with law enforcement efforts.** Many CSEC who suffer psychological trauma are seen as willing participants in their own exploitation. The psychological trauma they suffer is similar to what is seen in domestic violence victims.
- 3. Commercially sexually exploited children are routinely arrested as prostitutes and charged with prostitution.** Every act of “prostitution” where a child is involved is actually an act of child rape and sexual exploitation. Every child that is involved in “prostitution” is actually a victim of child abuse, even when they don’t fit the legal definition of a CSEC.
- 4. A large number of CSEC have been removed from the care and custody of their families and are wards or dependents of the state.** The resources available to social workers and probation officers, especially placement and facilities, do not meet the current needs of CSEC. Specialized staff, placement, facilities, programs and services are needed within the Juvenile Probation and Child Welfare Systems to fill this gap and serve these children as victims.
- 5. The public systems’ adherence to the TVPA (2000) is critical to the recovery and sustainability of commercially sexually exploited children.** Adherence to the TVPA will rely on state & local policy. Education and training coupled with CSEC-specific services and facilities within the public system is required for implementation of the TVPA.

## TECHNIQUES USED BY EXPLOITERS

- Recruitment
- Seduction
- Isolation
- Coercion
- Violence

## CSEC RISK FACTORS

- Earlier childhood sexual abuse
- Homelessness
- Running away
- Inadequate supervision or care
- Inadequate food, clothing and shelter
- Family and/or community history of exploitation
- Exposure to domestic violence in the home

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CSEC

- Computer/Internet
- Cell Phones/Text Messaging
- Digital Cameras
- Web Cameras
- Global positioning system (GPS)

## LOCAL POPULATION STATISTICS\*\*

- 61% had been raped one or more times
- 55% of them were foster care youth from group homes
- 82% of them had previously runaway from home multiple times
- 60% of them had previously been arrested for solicitation
- 58% of them were currently on probation

*\*\*Of 149 youth assessed by the program between August 30, 2006 and September 30, 2007*

**Q:** What is the difference between sexual exploitation and the commercial sexual exploitation of children?

**A:** Sexually exploited children exchange sex to have their basic needs met (ie: food, clothing, shelter, care). Whereas commercially sexually exploited children, exchange sex so that a third party can profit from the sale of their body. Both children are victims, CSEC are victims of human trafficking.

1 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, H.R. 3244, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. (2000).

2 <http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/stats>