

CHILD WELFARE AND DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

WHAT IS DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING?

Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST)—also known as “domestic minor sex trafficking,” “survival sex,” “child prostitution,” and “juvenile prostitution”—is the exchange of anything of value (e.g., food, shelter or money) for sex with a person under 18.ⁱ

WHAT MAKES A YOUTH VULNERABLE TO BE TRAFFICKED?

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

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

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD WELFARE AND DCST?

While much more research is needed, current data suggests that the majority of trafficked youth in the United States have a history of child welfare involvement:

- In 2013, 60% of the child sex trafficking victims recovered as a part of an FBI nationwide raid from over 70 cities were children from foster care or group homes.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 2012, Connecticut reported 88 child victims of sex trafficking. Eighty-six were child welfare involved, and most reported abuse while in foster care or residential placement.^{iv}
- In 2012, Los Angeles County, California reported that of the 72 commercially sexually exploited girls in their Succeed Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court Program, 56 were child-welfare involved.^v
- In 2013, 85% of trafficking victims in New York had prior child welfare involvement.^{vi}
- In Alameda County, California, a one-year review of local CSEC victim populations found that 53% had lived in a group home, and 83% had previously run away from home.^{vii}
- In Florida, an FBI agent and head of a law enforcement task force to rescue and restore trafficking survivors estimated that 70% of identified victims in Florida were former foster youth.^{viii}

ⁱ As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, DCST is the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” where the victim is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18. 22 U.S.C. §§ 7102(9)-(10). A commercial sex act is defined as “any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.” § 7102(4).

ⁱⁱ Kate Walker, California Child Welfare Council, [*Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California*](#) (2013), pp.18-20.

ⁱⁱⁱ Carrie Johnson, Michael Martin & Malika Saada Saar, NPR, “[Finding and Stopping Child Sex Trafficking](#)” (August 1, 2013).

^{iv} Connecticut Department of Children and Families, [*A Child Welfare Response to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking*](#) (2012).

^v Kate Walker, California Child Welfare Council, [*Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California*](#) (2013), p.10.

^{vi} Representative Louise M. Slaughter Human Resources Subcommittee Testimony, House Ways and Means Hearing on “[Protecting Vulnerable Children: Preventing & Addressing Sex Trafficking of Youth in Foster Care](#)” (October 23, 2013).

^{vii} Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY), [*MISSEY Data Report*](#) (June 2009).

^{viii} Jessica Vander Velde, Tampa Bay Times, “FBI agent leads task force targeting pimps in child prostitution” (October 4, 2010).