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## CHILD WELFARE AND DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

### **WHAT IS DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING?**

**Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST)** occurs any time a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18 exchanges sex for anything of value (e.g., food, shelter, money, etc.).<sup>i</sup>

### **WHAT MAKES A YOUTH VULNERABLE TO TRAFFICKING?**

The following factors make youth vulnerable to sex trafficking and exploitation:<sup>ii</sup>

- A history of sexual and/or physical abuse
- Community or family instability and dislocation
- Child welfare involvement, especially out-of-home foster care placement
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- Disconnection from the education system and being off-track for achievement
- Poverty

### **WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD WELFARE AND DCST?**

Current data suggests that the majority of sex-trafficked youth in the United States have a history of child welfare involvement:

- In 2016, 86% of the likely child sex trafficking victims reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children were missing from foster care or social services.<sup>iii</sup>
- In 2013, 60% of the child sex trafficking victims recovered as part of a nationwide child trafficking raid from over 70 cities were children from foster care or group homes.<sup>iv</sup>
- According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, 70% of child sex trafficking survivors identified locally are from foster care.<sup>v</sup>
- In 2013, 85% of sex trafficking victims in New York had prior child welfare involvement.<sup>vi</sup>
- In 2017, Connecticut identified 202 child sex trafficking victims of which approximately 40% were child welfare involved.<sup>vii</sup>
- In 2016, the Florida Department of Children and Families identified 1,382 unique child sex trafficking victims out of the 1,892 reports received.<sup>viii</sup>



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<sup>i</sup> 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).

<sup>ii</sup> 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.

<sup>iii</sup> National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, [\*Child Sex Trafficking in America: A Guide for Child Welfare Professionals\*](#) (June 2017), p.1.

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

<sup>v</sup> Kristy Plaza & Alana Victor, Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, “[Los Angeles Trying New Tactics to Help Children. Many in Foster Care Who are Sexually Trafficked](#)” (May 3, 2016).

<sup>vi</sup> 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).

<sup>vii</sup> Connecticut State Department of Children and Families, The Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team, [\*HART Helps\*](#) (Winter 2017), pp.4-5.

<sup>viii</sup> Florida Department of Children and Families, [\*Florida Department of Children and Families Annual Human Trafficking Report\*](#) (December 2016), p.4.