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.).

WHAT MAKES A YOUTH VULNERABLE TO TRAFFICKING?
The following factors make youth vulnerable to sex trafficking and exploitation:

- 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 many sex trafficked youth in the United States have a history of child welfare involvement:

- In Illinois, a 2016 study revealed that nearly two-thirds of children believed to be trafficking victims had a history of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement.
- Since launching its first responder protocol in 2015, Los Angeles county found that 85% of identified child sex trafficking survivors had prior child welfare involvement.
- In 2018, Connecticut identified 210 child sex trafficking victims, of which approximately 28% were child welfare involved.
- In Hawaii, a 2020 study revealed that nearly one out of five sex trafficking victims reported being in foster care as a child.

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1 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).


