



No Such Thing Campaign Media Recommendations

There is **No Such Thing** as a “child prostitute.” There are only victims and survivors of child rape.

All across the United States, American children are bought and sold for sex. Each year in this country, more than 1,000 victims of child sex trafficking are arrested and charged with prostitution. Many of these children experience torture and abuse at the hands of traffickers and buyers. Despite the fact that these children are too young to consent to any sexual activity, and the fact that federal law defines them as victims of human trafficking, they are not contemplated as victims. Instead, these children, many of them girls between the ages of 12 and 16, are arrested and criminalized for prostitution when they are in fact, victims of crime.

How We Are Named is How We are Treated

The **No Such Thing** Campaign seeks to eradicate the term “child prostitute” in language and in law. The phrase trivializes and masks the egregious abuse experienced by the most vulnerable members of our communities— our trafficked and exploited girls. We owe it to trafficked children to make clear that the victimization and abuse they suffered is no different or more tolerable than other forms of child sex abuse.

Recommendations for Media

The Associated Press recently changed its 2016 Stylebook to discourage the use of the term “child prostitute” and similar variations on the phrase. This change came after more than a year of intense advocacy from those of us who have been fighting to change the way that America treats underage girls who are trafficked for sex.

We recognize the need to report on trafficked girls in a way that is clear and direct. But it is also crucial that reporting is accurate. The following terms provide more accurate and precise language about children bought and sold for sex:

- Sex-trafficked child
- Sexually-exploited child
- Victim of child sex trafficking
- Child sex trafficking survivor

All of these terms evoke the elements of abuse and victimization that characterize the condition of children bought and sold for sex. The language here represents an important departure from “prostitute,” a term that can easily convey choice, agency, or criminality to the reader.

We stand ready to work with you and help you and your colleagues better understand this problem and explain the reasons why change is urgently needed. Indeed, the way the media reports on this issue will affect the way society perceives this problem.