

Commercial Sex Exploitation: Child Welfare State of the Knowledge

Rowena Fong

Ruby Lee Piester Centennial Professor

University of Texas at Austin

Commercial Sexual Exploitation “Epidemic”

Children’s Bureau Express

January 2002

Study finds Child Sexual Exploitation

“Epidemic “ in U.S.

Richard Estes and Neil Weiner September 2001

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the United
States and Mexico

“The Silent Emergency”

US Department of Health and Human Services (2013)

- ACYF: Domestic human trafficking is a growing concern
- Sex trafficking and labor trafficking are identified
- Child sex trafficking connected to runaways, homeless youth, prostitution, gangs, intimate partner relationships, institutional recruitment within programs

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Guidelines to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States

Child welfare services tend to...

✦ focus on

- child welfare child abuse and neglect
- runaway and homeless youth

✦ overlook

- sex trafficking, though many victims have been in the child welfare system as sex abuse cases.

✦ be trauma-focused and victim-centered

Problems

- ✦ Limited amount of aggregate data
- ✦ Insufficient evidence-based interventions and practices
- ✦ Under-identification of boys in sex trafficking
- ✦ Possible vulnerable populations: LBGTQ youth,
Native American youth



Problems

- ✦ Health concerns
- ✦ Mental health concerns
- ✦ Trauma
 - trauma-informed
 - culturally appropriate
 - individualized care

ACYF Goals

- ✧ timely, effective, appropriate, trauma-informed services
- ✧ services to promote social-emotional well being
- ✧ child abuse and neglect prevention
 - prevent runaways
 - ensure effective services
 - decrease vulnerability to trafficking
- ✧ equip systems and services for early identification and intervention



ACYF Suggestions

- ✦ Coordination
- ✦ Screening and Assessment
- ✦ Intervening to Meet Needs
- ✦ Emerging Shelter and Services to Victims
 - training, meaningful engagement, education and outreach, cross systems coordination



Coordination

- ✧ Preventing, identifying, and serving victims of trafficking requires a multi-system, coordinated approach within and across local, state, and federal levels



Coordination

- ✧ Local level: runaway and homeless youth service providers and child welfare providers, law enforcement, juvenile justice system, schools, medical and mental health providers, legal service providers, and crime victim service providers



Coordination

- ✧ To help inform targeted intervention strategies:
 - Need better local data collection on prevalence and needs of victims
 - Collaborative collection and sharing of data between street outreach workers, law enforcement, and programs and shelters



Screening and Assessment

- ✦ Identify victims of trafficking and help to understand their experiences and comprehensive service needs
- ✦ Inform appropriate case planning and service delivery
- ✦ Monitor progress toward recovery and adjust intervention strategies as needed



Screening and Assessment

- ✧ Measures should be universal, valid, and reliable in order to screen for trauma history, symptoms, and social-emotional functioning



Trauma Screening Tools

- ✧ Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
Trauma Version (CANS)
- ✧ The Child PTSD Symptom Scale
- ✧ The Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC)



Functional Assessment Tools

- ✦ Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS-2)
- ✦ The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- ✦ Emotional Quotient-Inventory
- ✦ Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)
- ✦ Strengths Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Screening and Assessment

- ✦ Important to screen for physical health problems (e.g. STIs)
- ✦ Additional indicators of victimization
- ✦ 2011 Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act
 - States must include in health care plans a description of how screening and treatment of emotional trauma, in relation to maltreatment and removal of children in foster care



Intervening to Meet Trafficking Victims' Needs

- ✧ Evidence-based interventions
- ✧ Multi-systemic Therapy (MST)
- ✧ Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)



Child Welfare Responses

✧ Develop and implement service plans with child victims of human trafficking:

- Strengths-based engagement
- Promote and support long-term improved conditions
- Specialized and individualized services
- Reunify or foster new family systems to provide permanency

Child victims of trafficking often present with unique and complex needs that require additional attention and support



Child Welfare Response

- ✦ To best address and serve child victims of human trafficking, child welfare agencies are encouraged to
 - receive specialized training
 - incorporate appropriate screening and assessment practices
 - collaborate with other providers who work with child victims of trafficking



Child Welfare Response

- ✦ Policy directives to improve meeting needs:
 - Multidisciplinary case staffing and referrals
 - Placement options for both citizen and non-citizen victims
 - Specialized training for those who work with child victims of trafficking, such as child welfare providers, courts, attorneys, shelters, child victim advocates
 - Ensure legal counsel, advocacy, prevention and education



Connecticut Policy

- ✧ Provides a “human trafficking” option for child abuse hotline reports
- ✧ Includes CPS investigator responsibilities for follow-up on human trafficking reports
- ✧ Requires consultation with specialist in child trafficking if allegation involves a child who’s a non-U.S. citizen
- ✧ Requires an investigation to verify if a child has been reported missing
- ✧ Identifies appropriate placement options for children who have been trafficked



Florida Policy

- ✦ Safe Harbor Act helps ensure safety for children trafficked for sex and allows children forced into prostitution to get help from child welfare professionals instead of being sent to juvenile delinquency centers
- ✦ Florida Abuse Hotline must generate an intake for all cases where a child is an alleged victim of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation
- ✦ CPI must initiate a multidisciplinary staffing (e.g., the community-based care lead agency, Children's Legal Services) to discuss options for services and placement



Florida Policy (2)

- ✧ Department of Children and Families developed and implemented training for Florida Abuse Hotline workers and implemented a training track for child protection workers through the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice
- ✧ Child protective investigators (CPIs) must contact local law enforcement, federal authorities, and the Office of Refugee Services (if child is non-US citizen)



New York Policy

- ✦ Local child welfare agencies and social services are required to serve referred child human trafficking victims, regardless of whether these minors have been confirmed victims
- ✦ If a child welfare worker suspects a child they're working with has been trafficked, contact local law enforcement
- ✦ If a child's parent/guardian is involved in the trafficking, child welfare staff must call the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR)

Illinois Policy

- ✧ Department of Children and Family Services has partnered with a local NGO trafficking expert to conduct training and amend policies and procedures to include child trafficking
- ✧ In the process of creating a new child trafficking allegation category for hotline and investigative staff
- ✧ The Illinois Trafficking of Persons and Involuntary Servitude Act (2005) provides mandatory restitution for victims, increases access to services for victims by stating victims may be eligible for emergency services and assistance from Illinois Department of Human Services



Illinois Policy (2)

- ✧ In the process of developing a “child trafficking” option for the Statewide Automated Child Welfare System
 - (comprehensive automated intake and case management tool that also stores all incoming reports of abuse, abandonment, and neglect)
- ✧ Illinois Safe Children Act (2010): all children under age 18 have immunity from prosecution for prostitution under any circumstances
 - Law enforcement who encounter a child engaging in prostitution may take them into temporary protective custody, and the Department of Children and Family Services must initiate an investigation within 24 hours

Texas Policy

- ✦ Compelling prostitution is a second degree felony punishable up to 2-20 years imprisonment and up to \$10,000 fine.
- ✦ In 2012, 82nd Legislative session expanded CPS mandate to include case of domestic minor sex trafficking reported to hotline be investigated, regardless whether trafficker is within the home.
- ✦ Effective in 2009, House Bill 4009 mandates law enforcement training on domestic and international trafficking of persons.

Building a Child Welfare Response

Center for Human Rights for Children,

Loyola University Chicago (2011)

Desired Outcomes:

- 1) State child welfare staff can screen and identify child victims of all forms of human trafficking, recognizing that both U.S. citizens and foreign national children can be trafficked into the United States

Building a Child Welfare Response

- 2) State child welfare staff understand the unique needs of children of human trafficking
- 3) Child-centered services and protections for trafficked children are successfully coordinated between service providers and law enforcement
- 4) State child welfare staff are knowledgeable about state and federal laws, benefits, protections, and resources available to child victims of both sex and labor trafficking

Building a Child Welfare Response

- ✧ 5) The child protective system caring for child victims of trafficking in Illinois is based upon best practices in support of victims as they recover and rebuild their lives

Bridging the Systems

National Center for Victims of Crime (2012)

Child Welfare, Trafficking, and Law Enforcement

Policy Recommendations

Legislative Recommendations

Research Recommendations

Training Recommendations

Resource Recommendations

Legal Representation Recommendations

Confronting Commercial Sex Exploitation

✧ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2013)

Recommendations:

- 1) Increase awareness and understanding
- 2) Strengthening the law's responses
- 3) Strengthening research to develop prevention and intervention strategies
- 4) Support multi-sector and interagency collaborations
- 5) Create digital information sharing platforms

Raising the Bar: Child Welfare's Shift Toward Well-Being

- ✦ Center for the Study of Social Policy (2013)
- ✦ Well-being agenda:
 - Responding to the needs of trauma-exposed children
 - Promoting expectations and opportunities for positive development for children and youth in foster care
 - Adopting strategies to integrate knowledge of and approaches to build protective and promotive factors into services and supports
 - For children and families



Children's Bureau (2013)

Mission Statement: The Children's Bureau partners with state, tribal, and local agencies to improve

Safety

Permanency

Well-being

Social Issues: Infant and maternal health, Child Labor, Orphanages, Child health and recreation,

Children's Bureau (2023)

Mission Statement: The Children's Bureau partners with state, tribal, and local agencies to improve the overall health, mental health, and well-being on our nation's children and families with a focus on Trauma, Safety, Social and Emotional Well-being, and Permanency.

.



Children's Bureau (2023)

- ✧ Public child welfare systems will work in coordination with juvenile justice, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and mental health systems to deliver culturally competent services to children and families



Children's Bureau (2023)

- ✧ Social Issues: Infant and maternal health, Child labor, Orphanages, Child health and recreation, Delinquency and juvenile courts, Family economic security, Physically and sexually abused and Physically and emotionally neglected children, Foster Care, Sex trafficking, Labor trafficking

Commercial Sexual Exploitation “Epidemic Eliminated”

Children’s Bureau Express

January 2022

Study found Child Sexual Exploitation being alleviated by child welfare, juvenile justice, education, health, and mental health system’s efforts to eliminate the problem of sex and labor trafficking in the United States.