

Frequently Asked Questions: Advocating for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)

- 1. Q: There was a comment made earlier that the high numbers in California and Texas are because of a proximity to the border... what does this mean exactly? That kids are coming in from Mexico?**

A: Not necessarily that the kids are coming in from Mexico—the states rank so high due to the proximity to the border, large population, and the sheer fact that traffickers are drawn to large states with booming economies, as well as states close to the border. See this article for more in-depth information to this particular question: <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/top-3-states-for-human-trafficking/>

- 2. Q: Regarding the statement that our culture crates demand-How does our culture create/or cultivate a demand for sex trafficking?**

A: This question could be answered in a full webinar of its own! Great question. There are lots of answers to this question. Most theorists explain that the nature of the global market itself creates the situation for exploitation for labor and sex trafficking--i.e. cheap labor in order to maximize profits, as well as the unequal distribution of wealth in our country which creates an unequal balance of power, thus also creating an opportunity for exploitation. Another area which fuels the demand come from things such as the notion of normalized “purchasing” of sex through the operations of strip clubs, as well as pornography. And, more to the “cultural” points, exploitation is normalized through movies, music, and other mediums.

- 3. Q: I'm interested in knowing why the US has such a high demand for this trafficking? Do you have any idea or is there data as to this?**

A: The US is a wealthy country with many citizens who have a great deal of purchasing power and disposable income. Our society’s culture plays a big role in how we tolerate commercial sex and glamorize the sex trade industry.

Here is a great article about demand in the US:

http://www.state.in.us/attorneygeneral/files/Demand_Reduction_Critical_Next_Step_in_Fight_Against_Sex_Trafficking.pdf

- 4. Q: When does trafficking turn into prostitution? After 18?**

A: Trafficking by definition requires that there be *force, fraud, and/or coercion*; however, when looking at a child victim, the burden to show force, fraud or coercion is not needed, so any child victim will automatically be a victim of trafficking. This would still be true after the age of 18 if they are engaging in commercial sex acts through force, fraud, or coercion. This could be

argued because most victims will report that they are doing these things by choice, because they have been told by their trafficker that this is their choice, or they have such a strong trauma bond (i.e Stockholm Syndrome) that they are protecting their trafficker and putting the onus on themselves.

Prostitution involves a choice—there is no force, fraud, or coercion—however, there is much debate around this idea as well: how did they come to make this choice? Was it a lack of options? Desperation? Was it from trauma? Poverty? And, the newly coined term “sex worker” to describe “prostitute” has created another dimension to this debate. This could also be another webinar.

5. Q: Is the LGBTQ+ a risk factor not because they identify, but because of the response by others (rebuff, etc.) and thus they are oppressed and alienated?

A: Yes, because of the added isolation and marginalization that this group (and others) are victims to. Being marginalized, and not having a strong support system creates another vulnerability. Youth who identify with being LGBTQ+ are often alienated by their own families, by systems such as school, by their peers, etc. so they are at an increased risk for running away, and seeking solace with people who may appear to be safe and comforting.

6. Q: How do you get law enforcement to charge parents with trafficking when they know of exploitation and look the other way because the abuser is providing shelter, food etc.?

A: Great question! It will really depend on the case, on the District Attorneys in your area, the amount of training that law enforcement has in trafficking, the community response systems set-up in your community...lots of moving pieces are at play with legal cases and prosecution. The best piece of advice we can give on this particular matter is to get involved in any way that you can in a trafficking coalition within your community. You can learn a lot about the systems at work, as well as resources galore which will ultimately help the youth you are assigned to.

7. Q: How do predators find out where foster children live?

A: Unfortunately, traffickers know about various placement locations from foster children themselves. One recruitment method is for the trafficker to “plant” one of his girls in a placement facility in order to recruit more girls for his operation. This information is also spread via word of mouth.

8. Q: What does NCMEC stand for?

A: NCMEC stands for National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.missingkids.org): Their mission statement from the website: they are the “nations clearinghouse and

comprehensive reporting center for all issues related to the prevention of and recovery from child victimization, NCMEC leads the fight against abduction, abuse, and exploitation...”

We have also referred to them in on our Resource page for more training in internet safety, etc.

9. Q: What is RTC?

A: RTC stands for Residential Treatment Center. This may be a term used more often in Texas, but essentially describes a live-in, out-of-home care placement in which staff are trained to work with children and youth whose specific needs are best addressed in a highly structured environment. Residential programs may be operated by public or private agencies and often provide an array of services, including therapeutic and educational services.

10. Q: Are you addressing the legal issue of Destiny being 16 and getting pregnant from a 22 year old?

A: Destiny is a fictional young lady, but yes, if she were on our caseload, we would certainly ensure that reports on Tony were made to law enforcement.

11. Q. What to do with a youth who has no interest in improving his/her situation. protecting him/her from him or herself is the real problem?

A: This is a very common concern. As heartbreaking as it can be to watch while a young person we’re working with makes unhealthy decisions and rejects our support, it is important to recognize her/his ability to make her/his own decisions. We should continue to remain in contact, offer resources and support, understand relapse is a part of recovery and celebrate small wins.

12. Q: We are not allowed to transport the child, or be alone with them. Suggestions?

A: Even given these safety measures, you can still build rapport and trust. With time and consistently showing up for your child, she/he will recognize you as a support.

13. Q: As a CASA volunteer how do we make sure not to overstep our boundaries when dealing with Case Worker and GAL?

A: The culture of each child welfare system and court seems to vary by region/courthouse/CPS unit. We encourage our CASA volunteers to offer their help when possible. We are often asking for information from CPS and attorneys, so it is important to also frequently provide updates and information of our own.

14. Q: Are traffickers not arrested or dealt with by police?

A: Absolutely. In 2007, the Civil Rights Division created the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) within the Criminal Section to consolidate the expertise of some of the nation's top human trafficking prosecutors. HTPU prosecutors work closely with Assistant United States Attorneys (AUSAs) and law enforcement agencies to streamline fast-moving trafficking investigations, ensure consistent application of trafficking statutes, and identify multijurisdictional trafficking networks. Early notification of any case with potential human trafficking angles allows the HTPU to provide victim assistance resources, legal guidance, and coordination between districts prosecuting overlapping criminal networks on a timely basis.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance has also funded 42 Human Trafficking Task Forces to bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities, government agencies, and nongovernmental victim-service providers in a multidisciplinary approach to identify human trafficking crimes, assist human trafficking victims, and prosecute human trafficking cases.

15. Q: Based on your research, is RAD (Reactive Attachment Disorder) common with this population?

A: Yes – it would make sense that a young person who lacked attachment to a caregiver would consequently feel unlovable and while searching elsewhere for love, become vulnerable to trafficking.