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Child Sex Trafficking: Not Just a Third World Problem

Melissa A. Menasco Ph.D.

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Fact from Fiction

**Fact**

* Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery.

An estimated 100,000-300,000* U.S. children are currently involved in sex trafficking
- 80% of identified victims are female
- Over 50% are children
- Average age of initial victimization: 13 years

Who is at risk for child sex trafficking?
- Runaway and homeless youth
- Children within the foster care system
- Children with histories of abuse
- Children with histories of substance abuse
- Children with disabilities
- Youth in the juvenile justice system
- LGBTQ youth
- Refugees, immigrants, and non-English-speaking persons

**Fiction**

* Human trafficking victims are only foreign nationals.
  Fact: Human trafficking victims may be U.S. citizens, foreign nationals, or undocumented persons.

* Trafficking victims must be kidnapped and/or physically restrained.
  Fact: Human trafficking victims may be threatened or manipulated into compliance,

* Smuggling is required for human trafficking.
  Fact: Smuggling is not required, but a person who is smuggled may also be a victim of human trafficking.

* According to New York state 2011, but other sources place child sex trafficking in the U.S. at much higher numbers.

Identifying Victims

- Victims rarely self-identify; they may present with other forms of abuse, neglect or maltreatment
- Victims have likely experienced extensive physical and mental trauma and may be fearful
- Obtaining information usually requires time and multiple interviews
- Observation of the dynamic between the victim and the “guardian/trafficker”
- Possible signs include:
  - Excess amounts of cash
  - Hotel keys
  - Chronic runaway/homelessness
  - Lying about age/false ID
  - Inconsistencies in story
  - Prostitution or commercial sex acts
  - Mention of a pimp/boyfriend
  - Inappropriately dressed for the weather or time of year

Protect & Support

National Strategies
Legislation should address prosecution of traffickers, dismantling of criminal networks, identification of exploiters and facilitators.

Key legislation passed by Congress in support of anti-trafficking efforts:
- Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000
- Prosecutorial Remedies and other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003
- William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014

Local and State Strategies
- Promote competence and resilience through education and life skills
- Development and implementation of effective strategies to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims
- Development of child protection system
- Enhance economic opportunities
- Promote gender equality
- Promote adequate training of law enforcement personnel and other front line staff
- Promote children’s participation

When a man, desperate for work, finds himself in a factory or on a fishing boat or in a field, working, toiling, for little or no pay, and beaten if he tries to escape—that is slavery. When a woman is locked in a sweatshop, or trapped in a home as a domestic servant, alone and abused and incapable of leaving—that’s slavery. When a little boy is kidnapped, turned into a child soldier, forced to kill or be killed—that’s slavery. When a little girl is sold by her impoverished family—girls my daughters’ age—runs away from home, or is lured by the false promises of a better life, and then imprisoned in a brothel and tortured is she resists—that’s slavery.

* Barack Obama, September 2012
* Speaking on human trafficking