



Child Sex Trafficking and the Child Welfare System

Elliott Gluck
Richa Mathur
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In the last few years, federal legislators have taken an increased interest in confronting the sex trafficking of domestic children and youth. In the 113th Congress, alone, legislators have introduced over 20 bills that tackle the issue of child trafficking. The surge in national attention towards the issue of human trafficking has created an opportunity for added awareness, dialogue, and the emergence of a best practices framework that service providers and advocates can use in serving children and youth who have been trafficked for sex. There is an opportunity to arm policymakers with knowledge and resources, so that they can work with law enforcement, the judiciary, health and human services and other agencies to ensure that sexually exploited children and youth gain access to the services and supports they need.

Victims of sex trafficking include a broad range of populations such as homeless children and youth, children and youth in the foster care system, refugees, and LGBTQ youth. To date, little effort has been made to collect comprehensive data on the scope of this problem, but it is estimated that 100,000 children and youth are sexually exploited in the United States each year.¹ What is clear is that many of the minors who are trafficked interact with the child welfare system at some point in their lives. Child welfare service providers are therefore uniquely situated to identify and address issues of children and youth who have been sexually exploited.

This brief will explore the vulnerabilities that make certain groups of children and youth particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. We will recommend policies and best practices that can help to provide these victims with the services they need and crack down on traffickers and their customers. Finally, the brief will detail current efforts from Congress and states to end child sex trafficking in the U.S. and support services for sexually exploited children and youth.

Existing Sex Trafficking Laws

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is currently the most comprehensive federal law dedicated to addressing human trafficking. Passed in 2000, the TVPA defines the two types of human trafficking as:

Sex trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion. Or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; and

Labor trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.²

The TVPA primarily focuses on foreign victims of trafficking in the United States and serves this group by granting temporary residency for these victims through the T Visa program. The TVPA has been reauthorized four times, most recently in 2013 as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).³ Through each reauthorization, Congress has expanded services to both foreign and domestic victims of trafficking as well as harshen the prosecution of traffickers across the country through the Mann Act and the Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act.⁴ Although the TVPA has established multiple grant programs and mandates to improve the coordination of services, tracking of victims, and prosecution of traffickers, there is still much more to be done to address the problem of human trafficking.

Mann Act: prosecutes individuals involved in the transport of individuals for the purpose of prostitution.

The Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act: prosecutes individuals involved in organized crime.

Prevalence of Trafficked Victims in the Child Welfare System

A high correlation exists between children and youth who are currently or formerly in foster care and victims of sex trafficking.⁵ National data on this topic is far from comprehensive, but studies at the local level show that there is a high incidence of trafficked children and youth being part of or previously involved with the child welfare system. A study by the Department of Children and Families in Connecticut found that out of the 88 children identified as sex trafficking victims, 86 had been involved with child welfare services prior to being trafficked. The Los Angeles Probation Department also found that sex trafficking disproportionately affects children and youth in foster care, with nearly 60 percent of minors arrested on prostitution-related charges coming from the foster care system.⁶ In northern California, Alameda County reported that 41 percent of 267 victims identified were at one time part of the foster care system. Finally, a New York state study showed that up to 85 percent of trafficking victims had prior child welfare involvement.⁷

One common characteristic of children and youth who have been sexually trafficked is a history of child abuse, which includes mental, physical, and sexual abuse.⁸ Often children and youth who are abused in the home suffer from psychological issues that draw them to, or make them susceptible to traffickers. According to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) report, 35 percent of the cases reported to child protective services were due to the physical or sexual abuse or emotional/psychological maltreatment of

children.⁹ Abused children and youth may experience feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, traumatic sexualization, and stigmatization.¹⁰ In addition, they may link the experience of receiving affection with performing sexual acts if a particular trafficker abused them over a significant period of time.¹¹ Childhood trauma related to abuse also makes this group more likely to be exploited for sex later on in life. A study found that victims of child abuse were 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution compared to their peers.¹²

In addition to trauma due to sexual abuse, trafficked children and youth will often form emotional bonds with their trafficker, making it difficult to realize when they are being exploited. Victims may make progress in rehabilitating their lives, only to leave their support system to go back to their abuser. Researchers have identified this positive feeling by a victim towards an abuser as Stockholm syndrome and have found that trafficked children and youth often display its characteristics.¹³ This behavior serves as a coping measure for those who cannot mentally process the trauma they are experiencing.¹⁴ As a result, children and youth may feel compelled to return to their trafficker and can be a flight risk when placed in shelters or group homes, because they feel a sense of belonging and attachment to their abuser.¹⁵

Traffickers often referred to as pimps, recognize that children and youth in or transitioning out of foster care have vulnerabilities that make them easy prey. Reports indicate that pimps will recruit children and youth near group homes, at bus stops, malls, and other places that young people frequent.¹⁶ Remarkably, some young trafficked girls are sent into shelters to recruit other girls for a pimp.¹⁷ They will take advantage of a young person's low self-esteem and history of abuse, neglect, and rejection to make trafficking seem appealing and stable. Pimps also recruit children and youth at a young age, so that they can groom them to become prostitutes and create a relationship in which the child feels indebted to the pimp. Given that pimps do target highly vulnerable children and youth, foster parents and service providers should be made aware of the dangers of trafficking and work on closing the avenues available to pimps in recruiting children and youth for sexual exploitation.

Other populations who have a high incidence of being trafficked and who may come into contact with the foster care system include homeless or runaway children and youth and LGBTQ youth.¹⁸ LGBTQ youth represent 25 percent of homeless youth and have an incidence of being trafficked nearly five times greater than their peers. One explanation for the high rate of overlap between LGBTQ youth and homelessness is that youth who come out to their families are often rejected from their homes. On the streets, traffickers may target these youth, because they are less likely to get caught, as no one is looking out for their protection and best interest. In addition, traffickers may also appeal to homeless or runaway children and youth, because they know they are desperate to have their basic needs met including housing and food. The exchange of sex for services, known as survival-sex, can be difficult to account for because on the surface it can appear to be a consensual relationship.

Overrepresentation of American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth in Foster Care

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and youth are three times as likely to be reported to Child Protective Services and twice as likely to remain in foster care for more than two years than their peers.¹⁹ This overrepresentation in foster care can be attributed to a history of child protective services classifying certain cultural practices as neglect or abuse, as well as continued bias in the system. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) addresses some of these concerns by recognizing the role of tribes in removal and placement decisions, providing protections to keep AI/AN families safely together, and keeping AI/AN children and youth connected to their communities and cultures. However, widespread non-compliance with ICWA and a lack of resources for AI/AN families continue to put high numbers of AI/AN children and youth in the foster care system.²⁰

AI/AN children and youth are five times more likely than their peers to be victims of sex trafficking. In 2009, 32.4 percent of AI/AN children and youth lived in poverty.²¹ As a result, this group is particularly susceptible to trafficking.²² One factor that distinguishes AI/AN children and youth is the high propensity of sexual violence on tribal lands. AI/AN women are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexually violent crimes than other races.²³ This is in part because, until recently, tribal courts lacked jurisdiction to prosecute non-Indian perpetrators and had to rely on federal authorities such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to prosecute.²⁴ According to a report examining AI/AN trafficking in Oregon:

Traffickers were most frequently identified as non-Native “intimate partners” or men with whom young women are engaged in a sexual relationship, who initially gain the victim’s trust and dependence by providing emotional and economic security, only to pimp them out to friends and other acquaintances.²⁵

The most recent passage of the VAWA allows tribal courts to prosecute non-Natives for domestic and sex abuse occurring on tribal lands where the victim is a tribal member. This is expected to reduce the incidence of trafficking on tribal lands as perpetrators realize that they cannot get away with such acts.

Effective Screening/Identification Practices

Understanding and recognizing that several different factors lead to children and youth becoming victims of sex trafficking and ending up in the child welfare system can inform policymakers on what resources service providers need to identify victims. It can also inform what tools should be used to evaluate the services they may need. Often it is difficult for trafficked children and youth to articulate that they have been exploited because of fear of retaliation from abusers or law enforcement and the stigma associated with being labeled as a victim of trafficking.

Organizations in Illinois and California have conducted comprehensive studies on the sexual exploitation of children and youth and how the child welfare system can effectively screen and identify them as trafficking victims in their own programs. Some key indicators that a minor may be trafficked include the following:

- Shows evidence of mental, physical, or sexual abuse
- Is being controlled by another person
- Threats have been made against the family members of the minor

- The young person has an excess amount of cash
- Possession of hotel keys
- Inability or fear to make eye contact
- Not enrolled in school
- Homeless/runaway youth
- Sleeping or living separately from family²⁶

Child welfare agencies should disseminate this information to providers to ensure that these factors are taken into account when children and youth are screened into their programs. This will enable providers to identify trafficked children and youth and direct them to services they may need.

What Services Do Victims Need?

Once identified, the services that a trafficked child or youth needs varies based on that individual's unique set of circumstances. This is where coordination and resource distribution between agencies and service providers is critical. Each agency should have a single entry point identified for specific services and should enter into Memorandums of Understanding with one another to ensure that providers and agencies are aware of what services will be provided. In an ideal system, service providers would have connections and phone numbers at their fingertips to address any issues faced by trafficked children and youth instead of navigating through a maze of agency offices.

Housing:

One urgent need of victims of child sex trafficking is housing. Currently, there are limited shelters and homes for victims of trafficking and what is available is focused on housing females. However, evidence suggests boys and transgender youth also need these services.²⁷ A New York City study found that 45% of exploited children and youth were male and 8% were transgender, highlighting that solutions cannot only be framed around females.²⁸ Service providers continue to face challenges in safely housing children and youth in gender and age appropriate settings. There is also the need for facilities to provide housing capacities for an extended period of time, so that caseworkers can provide consistent services and can build a relationship with victims to provide the necessary therapy for rehabilitation. Gaining the trust of the victims and seeing positive outcomes from treatment can take several months and should be taken into account when service providers and agency workers make plans to address the needs of trafficked victims.²⁹ Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS) and The SAGE Project (Standing Against Global Exploitation) have adopted a peer support model that focuses on building the trust of the girls and ensuring that staff are sensitive and well-trained in aspects of sex-trafficking. These organizations often prioritize hiring former victims of trafficking as staff members.³⁰

Medical and Mental Health Treatment:

Another key component in providing the necessary services for sexually trafficked children and youth is access to medical care and mental health treatment. Medical services include treatment for physical trauma, including fractures, bruises, contusions and burns; and reproductive issues, such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and abortion-related complications, and vaginal and cervical infections.³¹ Victims may also require mental health treatments if they suffer from anxiety, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress

disorder, major depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders.³² Currently, there are large gaps in access to services. Even when a child is reported or placed by child protective services in a foster home, mental health services may not be provided if someone other than the parent of the child committed the abuse.³³ There is not a clear path to mental health services that providers can go to when assisting trafficked victims.

Legal Assistance:

A common point of entry for trafficked children and youth is through the juvenile justice system. Victims of sexual exploitation often find themselves prosecuted for prostitution, substance abuse and possession, and other criminal actions. While states are slowly recognizing that children and youth who are sexually exploited should not be treated as criminals, minors in juvenile court may not be properly screened and identified as victims of sex trafficking. Collaboration between the legal system and child welfare can increase awareness and resources for service providers. Legal professionals who work with juveniles should be trained to identify trafficked children and youth and given training and information on housing, medical treatments, transportation, and employment opportunities that are available for victims.³⁴

Trauma-Informed Rehabilitation:

While housing, medical coverage, and legal assistance may require significant resources and inter-agency collaboration, there are a number of ways service providers can assist trafficked children and youth that would put them on a path towards a promising future. Sex trafficking victims often run away from their abusers and need basic amenities such as clothing, toiletries, and other necessities. Best practices in the field also indicate that consistent case management leads to successful outcomes, as it takes time for exploited children and youth to trust case managers and benefit from therapy. In addition, providers can engage victims in therapy program activities focused on building self-esteem and empowering victims with educational and work opportunities. These therapies can involve art, journaling, music, yoga, outdoor activities, and other self-soothing methods.³⁵ Service providers could also provide life skills training such as financial management and interview techniques. These initiatives can help children and youth gain self-confidence in their skills, promote normalcy, and ultimately lay a foundation for self-sufficiency.

Child welfare providers can also take preventative measures to protect children and youth currently in the system from becoming sexually trafficked. Workshops and trainings can be helpful in teaching children and youth about how pimps recruit, the dangers of sex trafficking, and the types of places where children and youth may be especially vulnerable.

Policy Action Items

There are a number of ways that federal and state governments can implement policies that would address the needs of trafficked victims, as well as prevent trafficking from occurring in the first place. A certain level of flexibility is required in providing services, but these measures can provide a great deal of clarity and additional resources for providers who come across trafficked children and youth.

1. **Decriminalize prostitution by minors:** Minors who are sexually exploited should not be brought up on criminal charges. They are not of legal age to consent to sexual behavior and should be provided with services instead of faced with criminal prosecution and detention.

2. **Increase penalties against traffickers and customers:** Minors will continue to be trafficked as long as a demand exists for sexual exploitation. Increased efforts to enforce trafficking provisions as well as harsher penalties against traffickers who sell the children and youth and the customers who engage in such behavior must be imposed.
3. **Increase coordination and communication between agencies:** Clear contacts should be dedicated within agencies to answer questions about what services are available to trafficked victims. In addition, Memorandums of Understandings between agencies should be created, so that there is clear accountability of which agency handles a specific service.
4. **Allocate more funding resources to provide services for victims including housing, mental health, legal services, rehabilitation etc.:** Trafficked victims go through a great deal of trauma and may require specialized services. Flexible funds for specific services should be available based on the needs of the individual. It should be recognized that trafficked victims' service needs may be more complex than that of their peers in foster care and may require longer periods of treatment than would otherwise be the case. Also, funding streams should be dedicated tribes to ensure services for AI/AN trafficked victims.
5. **Incentivize trainings and reporting of trafficking:** Federal and state governments can give grants to ensure that providers and agencies are disseminating best practices for working with trafficked victims. In addition, incentives can be given to create better systems that effectively track a child's placement history so more data-driven research can be used to allocate resources.

Current Federal Legislative Activity

The need to expand upon the provisions of the TVPA continues to be a major topic of discussion on Capitol Hill, with numerous members of Congress stepping up to champion the cause of combatting child sex trafficking. In order to gather information from experts in the field of trafficking, the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee hosted a hearing titled *Innocence for Sale: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking*.³⁶ The subcommittee was provided testimony from federal and state law enforcement, a representative from the juvenile justice system, as well as a victim of domestic sex trafficking. Each witness detailed the discrepancies in state and federal trafficking legislation that has led to the criminalization of many children and youth victims of sex trafficking. Ms. Withelma "T" Ortiz Walker Pettigrew of the Human Rights Project for Girls gave an account of the lack of specialized services provided to her and other victims of domestic sex trafficking. The testimony provided at the hearing continues to be utilized by the members of the subcommittee as they review and recommend new legislation to help prevent child sex trafficking in the United States.

Other Committees in both chambers of Congress have also held hearings on related aspects of addressing the sexual exploitation of children. Topics have included: specific efforts by groups in Washington state, balancing safety with opportunity for youth in foster care, how schools can play a role in combatting trafficking, and prevention and intervention efforts.

Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2014 (H.R. 3530)

The recent surge in federal activity includes the introduction of over 20 bills in the House and Senate to track and combat trafficking. This includes Congressman Ted Poe's (R-TX) Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act

of 2014 (H.R. 3530), which passed through the House with unanimous support. The legislation introduced by Poe would give the Attorney General power to award grants to programs helping to fight trafficking and provide services to the victims. The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act not only increases the funds available through the Victims of Crime Act, but also reauthorizes the Victims of Child Abuse Act in order to expand the services provided under the 1990 law to include victims of trafficking and child pornography.³⁷

Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care (H.R. 4058)

Another piece of legislation that could have a positive impact on particularly vulnerable children and youth in the foster care system is the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act (H.R. 4058), introduced by Representatives Dave Reichert (R-WA) and Lloyd Doggett (D-TX). The bill not only includes provisions that would streamline data tracking of children and youth who are victims or at-risk of sex trafficking, but also takes steps to prevent trafficking by empowering children and youth in the foster care system. In addition, the bill promotes stability and normalcy for children and youth who are frequently targeted by traffickers by establishing the reasonable and prudent parent standards for foster parents and engaging youth over the age of 14 in their own case plans. The bill also eliminates Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement as a permanency option for children and youth under the age of 16 in a step to connect children and youth in foster care with permanent families. H.R. 4058 has the potential to dramatically improve coordination between law enforcement, schools, juvenile justice agencies, and social services in the fight against the sex trafficking of minors.³⁸

In a recent markup by the U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, Representative Dave Camp (R-MI) introduced an amendment in the form of a substitute for H.R. 4058. While Camp's amendment kept the majority of the original bill's provisions to fight trafficking and support at-risk children and youth in the foster care system in place, the substitute removed Section 204 that would have required children and youth exiting foster care to be provided with a birth certificate, Social Security card, health insurance information, and medical records. Fortunately, Camp and the other members of the committee worked to include the identification provision for these children and youth in the final bill that passed through the House on a voice vote.

Many of the same provisions from H.R. 4058 are included in the bipartisan, bicameral bill introduced by Camp and Representative Sandy Levin (D-MI), and Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Orin Hatch (R-UT), both of whom have introduced legislation on the subject in the past year, on June 25, 2014. The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (H.R. 4980), focuses on improving protections for children and youth at risk of sex trafficking, adoption incentives, and international child support recovery.³⁹ Representative Karen Bass (D-CA), a co-sponsor of HR 4980, has helped to lead the charge on identifying areas for improvement in the child welfare system in regard to child sex trafficking by introducing the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2014 (H.R. 5081). Bass's bill would amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to ensure that proper training is provided to state child protective services systems, so that children and youth who are victims of sex trafficking will be properly identified and served accordingly.⁴⁰

Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2014 (H.R. 3610)

While H.R. 4058 includes important provisions to improve data tracking of child sex trafficking and provides children and youth in the foster care system with the support they need to minimize their risk of being trafficked, the Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2014 (H.R. 3610) sponsored by Representative Erik Paulsen (R-MN) focuses in on setting legislative standards for trafficking at the state level. The bill attempts to fix a major problem facing law enforcement and service providers in their attempt to combat the trafficking of minors: inconsistent state trafficking laws. Passed by voice vote in the House, Paulsen's bill will help ensure that all states pass legislation that treats minors involved in sex trafficking as victims, moves children and youth victims under the supervision of child protection services, and discourages charging children and youth victims with prostitution. The bill also calls for the attorney general to put forth a National Strategy for Combatting Human Trafficking that will improve coordination between agencies at the state and federal level. A markup in the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee amended the bill to give states with safe harbor legislation preference in the U.S. Department of Justice's community policing grants application process.⁴¹ This incentive approach to safe harbor legislation is also found in Senator Amy Klobuchar's (D-MN) Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2014 (S. 2599).⁴²

State Efforts

Although the Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2014 would be a positive step towards ensuring that child and youth victims of trafficking are no longer treated as criminals, the Polaris Project's 2013 *State Ratings on Human Trafficking Laws* shows that many states are already making progress on wide range of trafficking issues.

The Polaris Project's four-tiered ranking system tracks state legislation for ten different trafficking categories:

1. Sex trafficking
2. Labor trafficking
3. Asset forfeiture for human trafficking and investigative tools for law enforcement
4. Training on human trafficking for law enforcement and human trafficking commission or task force
5. Posting a human trafficking hotline
6. Safe harbor – protecting sexually exploited minors
7. Lower burden of proof for sex trafficking of minors
8. Victim assistance
9. Access to civil damages
10. Vacating convictions for sex trafficking

The report showed marked improvement from 2012, as 39 states passed anti-trafficking legislation bringing the total of Tier 1 states up to 32. The list of Tier 1 states includes New Jersey and Washington, which became the first two states to pass legislation covering all ten of the Polaris Project's trafficking categories.

The 2013 report also highlighted the efforts of Tier 1 states like Arkansas and Mississippi, jumping from Tiers 4 and 3 respectively, to bring the issue of trafficking to the forefront.

New Jersey Legislation: Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection and Treatment Act (A3352)

New Jersey was recognized as both a Tier 1 State and Most Improved State by the Polaris Project in 2013. This progress is due in large part to the comprehensive Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection and Treatment Act (A3352) passed into law by Governor Chris Christie in May 2013. The new law is a prime example of a state legislature making human trafficking a priority and acting decisively in order to provide services to victims, inform the public, and prosecute those that carry out the crime. The Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection and Treatment Act expanded the definition of human trafficking in New Jersey and significantly increased the penalties for those involved in trafficking. With these new penalties, New Jersey established the Human Trafficking Survivor's Assistance Fund that will help to provide a range of services to victims. Victims of trafficking will also have prior convictions that coincided with their abuse removed from their records as well as new protections that will prevent re-traumatization during the prosecution of their traffickers. In order to ensure that the public is aware of the signs of human trafficking and that both private and public agencies provide a coordinated response to this crime, the act created a Commission on Human Trafficking to track New Jersey's progress in the fight against trafficking.

Washington Programs

Washington was the first state to pass human trafficking legislation and continues to have some of the most comprehensive laws dedicated to fighting this crime and providing services to its victims. These strong laws combined with the coordinated effort of both public and private groups have earned Washington a Tier 1 rating from the Polaris Project since the report began in 2011. Washington's Task Force against Trafficking of Persons has helped legislators gain a better understanding of the prevalence of human trafficking in Washington and has highlighted both the demographics of victims as well as the geographic factors that contribute to the high levels of trafficking across the state. The Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network has brought together non-governmental groups in an effort to provide both immediate and long-term services to victims of trafficking. The coalition collaborates with both law enforcement and service providers to improve identification of victims and provide an immediate response to incidences of trafficking. YouthCare is specifically dedicated to providing specialized services to sexually exploited children and youth through its Bridge Continuum program. The Bridge Continuum provides dedicated housing and counseling to child and youth victims of sex trafficking and trains the public, law enforcement, and service providers on how to identify and respond to these victims.

While the 2013 state ratings show an increased focus on human trafficking, there is still much to be done at the state level in order to protect victims and prevent this terrible crime. At the time of the report, only 12 states had passed full safe harbor legislation that protects child and youth victims of trafficking from criminalization and diverts them from the juvenile justice system in order to receive proper services. Although the 2013 report showed a record number of Tier 1 states, the Mountain West region continues to lag behind. South Dakota now stands as the only Tier 4 state with legislation covering just two of the ten categories. The

lack of attention paid to trafficking carries over to other states in the region as Arizona, Colorado, North Dakota, and Utah have all failed to pass legislation covering more than four of the Polaris categories, earning them Tier 3 labels for 2013.⁴³

Conclusion

The common misconception that human trafficking only happens outside of America's borders or amongst its foreign residents is slowly being addressed at the state and federal level. Unfortunately, the reality is that over 100,000 American children and youth are at risk of being sexually exploited through human trafficking in the United States every year. Although there is a lack of data on the issue, it is clear that human traffickers disproportionately target the vulnerable children and youth of the foster care system. Without nationwide training and specialized services provided for these children and youth, human traffickers are able to successfully recruit children and youth right outside the doors of many foster care facilities despite the best efforts of caring foster and group home parents. Fortunately, these problems have been brought to the attention of Congress leading to several pieces of legislation that will help in the fight against human trafficking. However, the legislation detailed in this brief cannot solve this crisis alone. Continued coordination is needed to implement the types of programs that can effectively identify victims of trafficking, provide these children and youth with the specialized services they desperately need, and prosecute the criminals involved in human trafficking to the full extent of the law.



The First Focus State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center (SPARC), an initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Walter S. Johnson Foundations, aims to improve outcomes for children and families involved with the child welfare system by building the capacity of and connections between state child welfare advocates. You can visit us online at www.childwelfaresparc.org or on Twitter at [@ChildWelfareHub](https://twitter.com/ChildWelfareHub).

Contact the Author

Elliott Gluck
Director, Policy and Research
First Focus
elliottg@firstfocus.net

Richa Mathur
Policy Research Associate and Program Manager
First Focus
rricham@firstfocus.net

Notes

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Resources

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[Blueprint: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Domestic Sex Trafficking of Girls](#), Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality

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[Shared Hope International](#)