

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC)

THE ISSUE

Each year between 100,000 and 300,000 children are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation in the United States.⁵ Life for these children is often filled with violence, sexual harm, and emotional trauma. Children who run away from home or are homeless are at increased risk. Further studies have found that a runaway youth will most likely be approached to sell sex within 48 hours of being on the street.⁶ The majority of individuals in the sex trade enter as children and the consequences of sex trade involvement at a young age can be devastating. With the average age of entry into prostitution becoming increasingly younger, it is imperative that we work to end this harm.

DEMAND CHANGE

Everyday Actions

1. If you suspect someone is a victim of CSEC, contact the CyberTipline, which is a reporting mechanism for cases of child sexual exploitation including child pornography, online enticement of children for sex acts, molestation of children, sex tourism of children, child victims of prostitution, and unsolicited obscene material sent to a child. Reports may be made 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week online at www.cybertipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678.

Raise Awareness

2. Educate yourself about the National Public Awareness Campaign, Project Safe Childhood, and partner with this campaign to educate your communities (www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

Volunteer

3. Host clothing and supply drives for victims of child sexual exploitation in your community through agencies that serve them, such as The Dreamcatcher Foundation (www.thedreamcatcherfoundation.org).

4. Raise funds to help open a shelter for CSEC victims. If funds to open a shelter are not available, advocate to have specialized, gender-appropriate programs to provide care, recovery and rehabilitation for CSEC victims added to existing programs for homeless youth in shelters.

Advocate for Change

5. Contact your legislator and urge her or him to work towards the ratification of the Convention of Rights of the Child, including the optional Protocol on the Sale of Children. Download the advocacy kit at: <http://childrightscampaign.org/documents/Toolkit.pdf>

6. Encourage states to change their criminal laws so that child victims of prostitution are not arrested and treated as criminals. Lobby to have law enforcement re-focus the bulk of its activities on adult perpetrators of sex crimes against children: the pimps, traffickers and offenders who buy sex—not the children themselves. Meet with the community liaison of your local police department to strategize on how to make this happen.

7. Create coalitions of local small businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Better Business Bureaus, and political leadership to work together to develop solutions to the problem of sexual exploitation of youth, such as creating training and job programs.⁷

8. Lobby law enforcement and health care professionals for training on CSEC victim recognition and the protocols for connecting them with legal, medical, and social services.

9. Ensure that schools have curriculum that highlight the harms of CSEC, teach how to identify potential pimps and traffickers, and the role young men can play in ending sexual exploitation. Additionally, ensure teachers are trained on how to identify if a child might be a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Examples are the “Tell Your Friends” curriculum provided by Fair Fund (www.fairfund.org) or “My Life My Choice” by Home for Little Wanderers (www.thehome.org).

Keep Learning

- 10.** Keep learning about the issue and about ways to get involved:
- Child Rights Campaign: www.childrightscampaign.org
 - Dreamcatcher Foundation: www.thedreamcatcherfoundation.org
 - End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes: www.ecpat.net
 - Girls Educational Mentoring Services: www.gems-girls.org
 - International organization for Adolescents: www.iofa.org
 - National Runaway Switchboard: www.1800runaway.org/
 - Project Safe Childhood: www.projectsafechildhood.gov
 - PROMISE: www.sapromise.org

5. Estes, R. & Weiner, N.A. (2001). The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In The U.S., Canada and Mexico. University of Pennsylvania.

6. National Runaway Switchboard. www.1800runaway.org

7. Report of the Canada-United States Consultation In Preparation For World Congress III Against Sexual Exploitation of Children.