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**PROGRAM TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING
OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

FINAL REPORT

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APPENDIX A: *YOUTH INTERVIEWERS PROCEDURES MANUAL*

APPENDIX B: *ADOLESCENT INTERVIEW GUIDE*

- telephone survey of law enforcement agencies and youth service providers in the nation's 50 largest cities

The results of Phase 1 tasks were documented in an *Assessment Report* submitted to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in April 1994. Phase 1 concluded with the selection of four cities that would be the subjects of field research to be conducted in Phase 2.

The Phase 2 field research involved three interrelated activities in each site: (1) qualitative interviews with justice, child protection, and social service system personnel; (2) analysis of case record data obtained through the criminal and juvenile justice systems; and (3) personal interviews with exploited youth served by runaway or juvenile prostitution programs. By the conclusion of this project, we hoped to answer the following questions:

- What are the antecedents to children's involvement in prostitution or pornography? What kinds of children and youth are involved in these forms of exploitation? What makes them vulnerable? Are they already known to the system?
- What are the systems' responses to these children once they are identified as victims of prostitution or pornography? Which agencies are involved? How do they coordinate their activities? What methods are used for investigation and prosecution? How can the systems be improved?

GUIDE TO THIS REPORT

This final report parallels the activities that were undertaken to complete the *Program to Increase Understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation*.

The remainder of *Chapter 1* reviews and summarizes the findings of Phase 1—the literature review, legal analysis, secondary analysis, and telephone survey—as an important introduction to the field research of Phase 2.

Chapter 2 presents case studies of the four sites that participated in the field research: Chicago, Dallas, Pittsburgh and San Diego. Material for the case studies was drawn from intensive site visits and documentation that was gathered at the time.

Chapter 3 reports on the findings of a study of case processing data from the files of law enforcement agencies in the four sites.

- Youth involved in prostitution are at high risk for violent victimization, substance abuse or addiction, and a host of serious medical conditions including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection.
- Little is known about the customers or pimps of juveniles engaged in prostitution.

Child pornography

- The largest consumers (and producers) of child pornography in the United States are pedophiles who take pictures, films, and videotapes of the children with whom they are involved and trade and sell this material.
- Children who appear in pornographic materials fall into two categories: (1) older children who are involved in prostitution and are photographed or filmed by their customers or become involved in commercial pornography; and (2) young (usually prepubescent) children who are coerced or manipulated into posing for pornographic videotapes or photographs by pedophiles, often in conjunction with actual molestation.
- Little is known about the long-term effects of involvement in pornography.

Sex rings

- Sex rings are secretive, apparently rare, and therefore very difficult to research.
- The bulk of professional literature on this topic is authored by a small group of researchers who collaborated on a single study.
- Virtually any discussion of sex rings also involves child pornography and pedophilia.

System response to child sexual exploitation

- There is little in the literature that systematically describes the law enforcement or social service response to child sexual exploitation.

Legal Analysis

Federal and state laws on child pornography

- Statutes are diverse as to the type of conduct, media and sexual content proscribed, the age limit of minors protected under the laws, and the criminal intent required.
- Application of the laws raises questions such as whether "mistake of age" must be permitted as an affirmative defense, when investigations may constitute entrapment or "outrageous government conduct," when search warrants are sufficiently specific, and when anticipatory search warrants are valid.

Telephone Survey of Law Enforcement and Youth-Serving Agencies

EDC and the ABA Center on Children and the Law conducted a national telephone survey to explore the dynamics of child sexual exploitation cases, gain an overview of the systems' response to these cases, and identify four sites for in-depth study.

The survey was conducted in the nation's 50 largest cities. The largest cities were the primary focus because they are more likely than small jurisdictions to have substantial experience with child sexual exploitation cases. In an effort to gain different perspectives on the nature and magnitude of the problem of child sexual exploitation, within each city we surveyed the major law enforcement agency and a local service provider for runaway and homeless youth.

Law enforcement findings

- Police departments in larger cities, and particularly those that had received specialized training, were more likely to make more arrests in sexual exploitation cases, and especially in child pornography cases.
- Police appeared to be more aggressive in pursuing juvenile prostitution in larger cities, especially where there were formal agreements between the police department and the youth-serving agency working with runaway and homeless youth.

Youth agency findings

- Sexually exploited children and youth have multiple, serious problems, including histories of sexual abuse and drug or alcohol involvement.
- Sexually exploited youth are more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system than with the child protection system, suggesting they are more often seen as offenders than as victims.

Taken together, the results of this national survey portrayed child sexual exploitation as an issue that was deemed important by most police departments and youth-serving agencies, yet given little attention due to lack of focus and shrinking resources. Only a handful of police departments allocated sufficient resources to these cases to support the proactive investigations that are needed to identify, apprehend, and successfully prosecute adults who exploit children and youth through prostitution and pornography. Similarly, in only a handful of communities were there youth-serving programs with a special emphasis on the specific needs of sexually exploited youth.

Only 14 cities ultimately exceeded our minimum threshold of five arrests of adults in the previous year for offenses involving child prostitution or pornography. To identify candidate sites for gathering quantitative and qualitative data about the characteristics of sexually exploited children and case processing, in each of the 14 cities project staff conducted telephone interviews with three additional respondents: (1) prosecutors

CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDIES OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN FOUR JURISDICTIONS

Our review of the published literature portrayed child sexual exploitation as a category of behavior that is not well understood. The research base is relatively narrow and has relied heavily on the work of a small number of researchers. More is known about juveniles who engage in prostitution than is known about the adults who prey on them; conversely, in the area of child pornography, more is known about the adults who collect and trade these materials than is known about the children who are depicted in them. There is very little in the literature to describe the response of the justice system, the child protection system, or other human service agencies to children and youth who are sexually exploited in these ways.

In Phase 1 of our research, we began to examine these issues of "system" response. Through telephone surveys with law enforcement and youth-serving agencies, and a secondary analysis of data gathered for studies of the prosecution of child sexual abuse cases, we learned that cases involving child prostitution or pornography are seldom seen in the justice system. Service providers told us that there are few programs to address the multiple needs of sexually exploited children and youth.

Neither the secondary analyses nor the telephone surveys could explore in depth the educational, attitudinal, or practical barriers to improving the systems' response to child sexual exploitation. In-depth case studies of four selected jurisdictions were designed to address these questions.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Each site was visited for three days in September 1995 (except Chicago, which was visited in December 1995). During each site visit, the project director conducted intensive individual interviews with law enforcement officers, juvenile and criminal prosecutors, juvenile probation officers, child protection workers, victim/witness assistants, and staff of runaway/prostitution programs or other service providers who work with youth involved in prostitution or pornography. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared for this purpose.

While every attempt was made to interview the same categories of respondents across the four jurisdictions, there was a certain amount of variation. There were several reasons:

- Certain program elements were unique to certain sites. For example, Chicago was the only site of the four to have a standing Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force.

- Challenges
- Recommended Solutions

The case studies are presented in alphabetical order by city: Chicago, Dallas, Pittsburgh, and San Diego. At the end of the case studies is a synopsis which highlights critical similarities and differences across the four sites.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

In 1988, one of the nation's first multijurisdictional child sexual exploitation teams was founded in Chicago, in the office of the US Postal Inspection Service, in an effort to coordinate the disparate investigative efforts of several law enforcement agencies. Since that time, the Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force in Chicago has been a model for the nation.

Legal Framework

In 1992, when the statutory analysis was conducted for this project, the legal framework for child sexual exploitation cases in Illinois included the following features:

Pornography. Illinois law makes possession of child pornography a class 4 felony. The maximum age of minors depicted is 18. Case law says that no evidence of children's age is required in child pornography prosecutions; the pictures speak for themselves. (*People v. Schubert*). By statute, a single copy of a pornographic material constitutes a *prima facie* case of intent to distribute. One unusual provision of Illinois law allows forfeiture of equipment, materials, or vehicles used in production of child pornography.

Prostitution. Juvenile prostitution statutes apply to minors under the age of 16, and there is a crime explicitly aimed at patrons of juvenile prostitutes. One unique provision of Illinois law states that not knowing the child's age is a valid defense. Under case law, a child's alleged involvement in prostitution can be used as a defense in cases charging statutory rape. (*Illinois v. Brown*, 1971) Case law also distinguishes between soliciting for a prostitute (a class 1 felony that applies to persons who direct patrons to a place for prostitution) and patronizing a prostitute (a misdemeanor). (*Illinois v. Anderson*, 1986)

Definitions. Illinois law uses the term "sexual exploitation" to refer to crimes involving juvenile prostitution.

Reforms. Although Illinois has a statute permitting certain children to testify via closed-circuit television, this statute appears to exclude child victims of prostitution and pornography. However, the statutory child hearsay exception may extend to statements made by child victims in prostitution and pornography cases.

By 1995, when we visited Chicago, Maryville no longer operated the group homes in Wisconsin and rarely saw youth who were actively engaged in prostitution or pornography. The Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force had only two full-time staff—a Postal Inspector and a detective from the Cook County Sheriff's Police—and the part-time support of an investigator from the Cook County State's Attorney's Police Department, but continued to draw on a cadre of committed investigators from other agencies. The Strike Force no longer conducted street operations but continued its undercover correspondence activities and assisted other agencies in multiple victim molestation cases and child pornography search warrants. The observed changes in Chicago are testament to changing priorities in many big cities, where problems of child sexual exploitation pale in comparison to more visible issues of gang violence and drug trafficking.

Community Resources

Although priorities had shifted over the years, much of the infrastructure that was initiated in the 1980's still existed at the time of our visit. As a result, there was a fairly straightforward response to cases of child sexual exploitation that became known to the criminal justice system.

Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force

As noted above, the Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force was still active, albeit on a much smaller scale. There were linkages to the Chicago Police Department, Illinois State Police, other surrounding police departments, and the FBI. These agencies were called upon when needed, depending on the nature of the investigation. The Strike Force estimated that 75-80 percent of its cases were self-generated.

Prosecution

The Cook County State's Attorney's Office had established a Child Exploitation Unit to allocate special expertise toward the most difficult cases. The Unit was staffed by four attorneys and a supervisor and had jurisdiction county-wide. The Unit's primary responsibility was handling investigations of sexual abuse occurring in custodial settings, although the written case acceptance policy included all cases involving child prostitution and pornography, cases generated by the Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force, and cases involving allegations of ritual abuse or multiple victims.³ Nearly 99 percent of the Unit's caseload involved perpetrators in positions of trust or authority over their victims. The Unit investigated about 5-10 cases of child pornography or prostitution each year.

Law enforcement

Within its Youth Division, the Chicago Police Department had a Special Investigations Unit (SIU) responsible for all offenses against children except stranger abductions, which were handled by the detective division. For the two years prior to our visit, the SIU had been located in the Juvenile Center, which also housed the Juvenile Courts and Juvenile Division of the State's Attorney's Office.

³ Office of the State's Attorney. (Undated). *Case Acceptance Policy*. Chicago.

as a pimp. At the time of our visit in 1995, juvenile prostitution in Chicago was thought to be closely tied to the drug trade.

According to several respondents, the concerted police activity of the late 1980's succeeded in driving street youth from certain areas that were known as havens for juvenile prostitution. By 1995, this activity was largely invisible: transactions occurred via pagers, telephones, newspapers, and escort services. Many of the youth were known to police as both victims and offenders: "They know exactly what they're doing. They know where and how to exploit adults."

Interview respondents suggested that some of the dynamics of sexual exploitation differ for boys and girls. Boys, for example, were less likely to have pimps and were more likely to be aggressive in their behaviors. Some boys said they engaged in prostitution for sex, not money. Boys and girls tended to work in different settings, too. Many sexually exploited youth (boys and girls) were running from abusive homes or failures in school. Some were dating other street youth; some were involved in gangs. All had issues with self-esteem and survival; some were additionally confused with sexuality concerns.

Responses to Sexually Exploited Youth

Because of the activities of the Federal Child Exploitation Strike Force, authorities in the Chicago area worked with two types of child exploitation cases: reactive cases, in which a report is made to DCFS or police; and proactive cases, usually generated by the undercover work of the Strike Force. The major difference between the two is the possibility for some proactive cases to be prosecuted in the federal courts rather than (or in addition to) the state courts.

According to protocol, a typical "reactive" case which came to the attention of DCFS or police in Cook County was referred *immediately* to the State's Attorney's Child Exploitation Unit (CEU). The Unit investigated about 20-30 cases per month. (As noted above, a small fraction of the Unit's cases involved exploitation in the form of pornography or prostitution. In fact, a review of the Unit's cases since 1986 revealed only four cases of juvenile pimping. Thus, while the procedures described in the following paragraphs applied to cases involving prostitution or pornography, they were most commonly used in other types of cases brought to the CEU.)

Upon receiving a report of an appropriate case, a core investigative team, generally including, at a minimum, a law enforcement officer and prosecutor, met and made an appointment to interview the victim(s) and outcry witness(es). Decisions were made about where to conduct these interviews and who should take the lead. The latter choice depended heavily on matching the victim's needs to the interviewer's characteristics. Usually, the outcry witness was interviewed first to learn the circumstances surrounding disclosure.

Challenges

Interview respondents cited numerous challenges specific to cases involving child prostitution and pornography.

Challenges pertaining to the victims

Youth-serving personnel, whether from the justice system or from human services agencies, pointed to several issues that are unique to sexually exploited youth:

- Exploited children and youth are protective of the perpetrators and afraid to put them in jail.
- Exploited children and youth will deny their involvement in pornography even when there are pictures or videos in the investigators' possession. Their participation in the offense makes it much more painful, and they tend to assume much of the blame.
- Youth involved in prostitution do not report their victimization and tend to be poor witnesses.
- Sexually exploited youth have little trust in adults, which creates barriers for those who try to help them.

Challenges pertaining to the justice system

Investigators in the Chicago area encountered some unusual challenges raised by colleagues in state and federal agencies:

- Fearing critics' accusations of a "witch hunt" mentality, some investigators were reluctant to ask children directly about their involvement in pornography.
- Traditionally, federal search warrants did not always result in arrests because prosecutors preferred to complete their investigations first. Strike Force members believed this policy sent a mixed message to the suspect. Postal Inspectors in Chicago persuaded the US Attorney's Office to act more swiftly in child pornography cases, so that all Strike Force cases resulted in federal arrests.
- The Cook County State's Attorney's Office had been reluctant to prosecute some of the Strike Force's undercover cases. For example, some cases had been successfully prosecuted in Cook County until the Strike Force was told by the State's Attorney's Office that solicitation to commit aggravated sexual abuse was no longer a viable charge. To counter this challenge, the Strike Force wrote its own bill, which was signed into law in 1993. This law created a new class 1 felony: solicitation to provide a child for pornography. Another countermeasure involved locating undercover cases in an adjacent county where the State's Attorney was more amenable to prosecution. And these cases continued to be prosecuted federally when appropriate.

Resource issues

As in many other communities, the Chicago area had limited resources for sexually exploited youth. For example:

materials through personal inspection of the child or the materials, or by testimony of a witness or medical expert.

Prostitution. These laws apply to minors under the age of 17. Texas law does not address whether not knowing the child's age is a defense.

Definitions. Texas law defines sexual exploitation in connection with crimes involving child pornography.

Reforms. Texas law appears to allow children to testify via closed-circuit television in pornography prosecutions; however, provisions for videotaped depositions or testimony appear to apply only to crimes of solicitation and sexual performance of a child, but not to other prostitution and pornography crimes. Texas' child hearsay exception may apply only to statements made in cases involving sexual performance by a child; the statute appears to exclude child prostitution cases.

At the time of our visit in the fall of 1995, new legislation had been passed that was expected to have an important impact on youth involved in prostitution. Reflecting heightened public concern about juvenile crime, reforming the juvenile justice system was an important plank in the platform of then-gubernatorial candidate George Bush. The intent of the new legislation was to shift the emphasis away from a mental health model towards a correctional model.

Specifically, the new law altered the dispositional structure for juvenile offenses by instituting seven levels of sanctions. The ultimate effect was to diminish the degree of discretion available to judges.

Under the new structure, status offenses were considered CINS (Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision), which was a Level 1 offense. The available sanctions were counseling, information, parental involvement and responsibility, and referrals to social services and community intervention programs. This option applied to most runaway youth who had committed no additional criminal offense.⁴

Youth who were arrested for prostitution generally were charged with a misdemeanor offense, which was Level 2. Sanctions included probation for 3-6 months, community service and restitution, information, parental involvement and responsibility, referrals and required involvement in social services and community intervention programs.⁵

Sanction levels could be increased by one step if (a) the child "refuses to comply with restrictions and standards of behavior set by parent or guardian or court;" or (b) the child "subsequently commits delinquent conduct or CINS and the offense classification is the same as or greater than the classification of the previous conduct."⁶

⁴ House Bill 327: Progressive Sanctions.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sanction Level Chart for Dispo Hearing - 59.003.

Between January 1993 and August 1995, only 25 youth were referred on charges of prostitution.⁷

- The Organized Crime Division handled cases involving multiple victims and/or multiple perpetrators, commercial or computer pornography, and computer solicitation.

Letot Center

Letot Center was established in 1979 through a joint public-private initiative of the Dallas County Juvenile Department, Dallas Independent School District, Junior League of Dallas, and the Letot Capital Foundation. In 1990, private funds supported the construction of a new facility. Salaries and operational expenses were paid by the County.

At the time of our visit, Letot Center housed three emergency shelter programs for runaway youth. The facility maintained a total of 38 beds and offered short-term foster care, 24-hour crisis intake, after-care services, and various outpatient family counseling services. These services were available to Dallas County youth ages 10-16 and their families.

Between its inception and the fall of 1995, Letot Center had served more than 20,000 youth and families, at a rate of approximately 2,600 each year. There were 52 professional staff and more than 150 community volunteers. Between October 1994 and July 1995, the average daily population in the emergency shelter was 17.2, and the average length of stay was 18.7 days.⁸

Other shelters serving the runaway population in Dallas included Promise House and CASA (not to be confused with the Court-Appointed Special Advocate program).

Child protective services

The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services was the state agency mandated to receive and investigate reports of suspected child abuse. In 1994, the Dallas County office received 13,440 referrals and investigated 12,600 of them. About 20 percent of these reports were for sexual abuse; the remainder were evenly split between physical abuse and neglect.

The child protection agency in Dallas rarely saw cases involving child sexual exploitation. The agency only became aware of pornography if it was part of intrafamilial sexual abuse, and cases involving juvenile prostitution only came to the agency's attention if there was reason to believe a parent played an active role in the child's activities (i.e., "put the kid on the street").

⁷ Juvenile Department. Youths Referred on Charge of Prostitution, from Jan. 1993 to Aug. 1995. Special Statistical Report.

⁸ Juvenile Department. Monthly Activity Report, Letot Center.

affection which lures them to pimps. In contrast, others believed that “for girls it’s strictly economic,” whereas boys are dealing with sexuality issues.

Responses to Sexually Exploited Youth

Much of the work of the Police Department’s Child Exploitation Unit was self-generated. For example, the detectives routinely sent letters to photo processing labs reminding them of their mandate to report pornographic film. They carried out undercover activities on the streets where runaway youths tended to congregate, they conducted letter-writing campaigns, and they monitored adult entertainment establishments.

Dallas Police also took the initiative to investigate cases as thoroughly as possible. For example, in cases involving child pornography, they tried to follow up and identify every child who was depicted, and they charged each victim as a separate offense. The rationale was that pornography is evidence of child molestation, a more serious offense in the eyes of the law. Where appropriate, pornography charges would be included as a lesser offense after sexual assault.

The results of this approach were quite rewarding. In one case, for example, involving photographs that were taken at a nudist camp, Dallas Police ultimately identified 15 victims, and the perpetrator ultimately received 7 consecutive life sentences.

Similarly, when Dallas Police apprehended juveniles who were involved in prostitution, they worked with the juveniles (usually girls) to identify pimps and persuade the girls to testify against them and identify others who had been victimized. The goal was to charge the pimps with sexual assault. At the time of our site visit, Dallas Police and the District Attorney’s Office had created a Task Force to focus attention on juvenile prostitution. As a result, there had been three jury trials of pimps, all of whom were found guilty on charges including sexual performance by a child, compelling prostitution, and sexual assault.

Youth who were picked up as runaways or arrested for prostitution (or other misdemeanor offenses) were generally taken by police to the Letot Center. This is not a locked facility, and no court order is required to take youth there. Usually, the youth were referred to the Juvenile Department (Probation), which did a preliminary investigation and determined whether charges should be filed. Intake officers screened the youth and interviewed family members.

Ultimately, “very few” cases involving juveniles charged with prostitution or status offenses (i.e., runaways with no other, more serious charges) were brought to the District Attorney’s Office to be filed. At that time, the Juvenile Department conducted a psychological evaluation, involving risk and needs assessments and a review of the youth’s record and family background. Youth who were adjudicated only on status offenses were generally released to their parents or to the Letot Center, with referrals to nonresidential services. Youth who were adjudicated on prostitution charges were

Recommended Solutions

Many respondents in Dallas had given a great deal of thought to alternative approaches to the problem of child sexual exploitation. Their suggestions generally fell into three categories:

Prevention and early intervention

- Institute some form of psychological screening in the schools to identify children who are suffering from family problems.
- Educate youth about the risks of running away and life on the streets: AIDS, quality of life, "aging out."
- Enforce curfew and truancy laws.
- Work with parents to deal with their own issues: many exhibit immature behavior, addictive personalities, and other deficits that diminish their capacity as parents.

At the time of our visit, Dallas Police and Letot Center personnel were planning to develop an early intervention program for runaways and their parents. Two new counselors would be assigned for this purpose to the Police Department's Missing Persons Unit.

Investigation and prosecution

- Provide specialized training in investigation of child sexual exploitation. Police need to know when and how to pursue leads that are apparently innocuous, how to interview children and alleged perpetrators, how to look for corroborating evidence. Above all, they need to keep their focus on the youth as victims and see the bigger picture of child sexual exploitation when investigating individual cases of prostitution or pornography.
- Accommodate multiple philosophies within the juvenile justice system: some youth may need to be incarcerated, others need social workers, still others need some combination.
- Apply more resources toward identifying the prostitution activities of youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system. Having identified these activities allows access to a wider range of services.

One respondent suggested that police focus their attention on youth who want help, while acknowledging that special expertise is necessary to identify these individuals.

Research and policy

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and particularly its restrictions on holding status offenders. Should the Act be changed so that states can pass legislation allowing the system to hold runaways?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of counseling vs. court outcomes for youth involved in prostitution.

About three years before our visit, gangs and crack cocaine began to surface in areas of the city, and much of the police and community attention turned to these issues and away from child sexual exploitation. Another emerging trend was an increase in serious juvenile sex offenders. Interestingly, at one time the Juvenile Probation Department supported a specialized Sex Offender Unit, but that unit had been disbanded. Instead, the emphasis was on other violent offenders.

Community Resources

Law enforcement

Within the Pittsburgh Police Department, cases involving child sexual exploitation were assigned to Investigations. (The Department's Vice Squad was largely inactive, since resources had shifted to issues of gangs and drugs.) A single commander was responsible for all investigations involving missing persons, domestic violence, child abuse, sex assault, hate crimes, and the youth squad. There were 12 officers in the Child Abuse Unit, and most devoted their time to sexual abuse cases.

In recent years, two victim/witness advocates from the Center for Victims of Violent Crime (a nonprofit organization providing victim support services) had been supported by the Children's Trust Fund to work with the Police Department in its efforts to place runaway youth in shelters.

Child protective services

The Department of Public Welfare is the state agency responsible for receiving and investigating reports of suspected child abuse under Pennsylvania law. Reportable child abuse must have three elements present:¹¹

- a victim under the age of 18
- serious physical, mental or sexual injury or serious physical neglect
- an alleged perpetrator who is a parent, paramour of the parent, person residing in the same home as the child, or person responsible for the child's welfare. As of July 1, 1995, this category includes school employees who commit serious bodily injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation of a student.

Thus, in order for a child sexual exploitation case to enter the child protection system, the alleged perpetrator must be a household member, a caretaker, or school employee.

In Pittsburgh/Allegheny County, reports received by the state hotline were referred to Allegheny County Children and Youth Services (CYS). Dependent children could continue to receive services until the age of 21 if they were already being served prior to the age of 18 and they requested a continuation.

The Whale's Tale

The Whale's Tale is a nonprofit youth and family counseling center founded in 1970. The agency provides a wide range of outclient, emergency shelter, residential, and

¹¹ Office of Children, Youth & Families, Department of Public Welfare, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. '94 Child Abuse Report.

The Office of Child Development has published a *Directory of Runaway and Homeless Youth Services*, including drug and alcohol resources in and around Allegheny County.

Treatment providers

Allegheny County is home to a wide range of treatment centers utilizing a variety of modalities:

- Shuman Juvenile Detention Center: “temporary” housing for male and female juveniles who are adjudicated delinquent and awaiting placements
- Persad: mental health counseling with a special emphasis on gay teens
- Family Resources: groups for victims, families, adult and adolescent perpetrators under contract to CYS
- Allegheny General Hospital: Center for Traumatic Stress
- Western Psychiatric Institute: child sexual abuse clinic for victims

Many mental health programs had lengthy waiting lists, and private providers could be selective in accepting certain clientele.

Characteristics of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth

In 1994, the Department of Public Welfare documented that, of 6,144 substantiated child abuse cases involving sexual injuries reported across the state,¹² 38 resulted from promoting prostitution and 131 resulted from pornography.¹³ Respondents cautioned that these figures represented only those children and youth who volunteered information about their involvement in prostitution and pornography; it is likely that most investigators do not ask specifically about these activities.

According to these data, 47 percent of the 38 children involved in prostitution were between the ages of 15 and 17; 45 percent were between 10 and 14; and 8 percent were between 5 and 9. Of the 131 children involved in pornography, 37 percent were between the ages of 10 and 14; 30 percent were between 5 and 9; 29 percent were between 15 and 17; and about 5 percent were between 1 and 4 years of age.

Perpetrators responsible for promoting prostitution were related to child victims in many ways: most common were mothers and paramours (8 cases each); following in descending order were fathers (6), other household members (5), uncles (4), stepfathers and babysitters (3 each), siblings (2), grandparents and cousins (1 each).

Perpetrators responsible for child pornography were most commonly babysitters (38 cases), followed by fathers (27), paramours (15), stepfathers (14), mothers (13), grandparents (12), siblings and other household members (6 cases each), uncles (4),

¹² See note 11.

¹³ Additional reports are made directly to the county-based agencies, so that the numbers reported by DPW underestimate actual reports of child abuse. One respondent suggested that actual reports are twice what is reported by the state.

reluctant to work with older youth under the dependency system, these kids remained in a "limbo" category.

At the time of our visit, the Pittsburgh Police Department had recently implemented a computerized missing persons/runaway database. Three detectives were assigned full-time to search for runaway youth and other missing persons.

Prosecutors in Allegheny County very rarely saw cases involving child sexual exploitation, perhaps in part because the age of consent in Pennsylvania is 13. As noted above, pornography offenses are charged under a statute entitled Sexual Abuse of a Child, but only a handful of cases were noted in recent years.

Very few of the youth known to the juvenile justice system (Juvenile Probation and the Shuman Juvenile Detention Center) were charged with prostitution. Between 1992 and 1994, only 17 youths were referred to Juvenile Probation with prostitution as the primary offense.¹⁵ (The annual figures were 5, 7, and 5, respectively, of referrals totaling 4,195, 4,496, and 4,178 in those years.) Several respondents observed that these figures misrepresented the true number of court-involved youths who were involved in prostitution, since many were referred for other offenses (e.g., drug offenses or assaults) and their involvement in prostitution may never have been revealed.

More often, a youth's involvement in prostitution would arise when taking a psychosocial history, or more commonly, after a number of counseling sessions. Unfortunately, youth seldom volunteer this information. As a result, many runaway or homeless youth were simply returned to their homes or placements by police; others, who entered the system for more serious offenses, would never receive treatment for sexual exploitation.

The Whale's Tale was by far the largest, most comprehensive program working with street youth in Pittsburgh. Referrals were received from CYS, police, and word-of-mouth—no one was turned away. The Whale's Tale offered a structured program to help teens move from life on the street to independent living. The downtown shelter served as many as 34 youth. On staff were a supervisor, two youth and family specialists, one senior counselor, and four teachers/other counselors. In general, staff took on case management responsibilities more frequently than clinical roles.

Upon entering The Whale's Tale, youth were required to sign an agreement that prohibited drugs or alcohol, weapons, assaults, and sexual activities at the shelter. Staff confronted them if they suspected illegal behavior, e.g., if a client suddenly had a large quantity of cash. Shelter clients were required to participate in at least four groups each week and to meet with a primary counselor to review their goals at least once each week. There was a curfew every night, and youth were expected to go to school and/or obtain employment. As noted by the program director, discipline is important in a community living arrangement, and the youth were held accountable for their actions. Some youth

¹⁵ Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, Family Division—Juvenile Section, Computer Services Department. Statistical Data Reports: 1992, 1993, and 1994.

- Many personnel in the human service and justice systems believed these youth are “too far gone” to benefit from interventions.
- Many CYS workers were reluctant to ask about sexual exploitation for fear of being accused of using leading questions to elicit information.
- Families are embarrassed to admit their children’s exploitation and seek counseling.
- The general public tends to downplay the harm attached to child sexual exploitation, especially if young boys are involved in relationships with older women (“Isn’t he lucky?”). Yet, as one respondent asserted, “The community should be outraged any time children are being exploited.”

Challenges related to limited resources

- Finding child sexual exploitation cases required more police manpower, particularly in the Vice and/or Sex Abuse squads.
- There were few, if any, viable placement options for sexually exploited youth, and particularly adolescent females. Most beds were reserved for violent offenders.
- The juvenile justice system lacked specific resources for sexually exploited youth.

Respondents also noted some systemic issues that complicated their efforts to work with sexually exploited youth.

Inability to hold runaway or homeless youth (i.e., status offenders) in some form of locked or supervised facility. Under current law, juveniles must either be arrested on a criminal offense or found to have serious mental health problems before they may be subject to involuntary confinement in a correctional program or hospital. Some sexually exploited kids fell through the cracks.

Responsibility for early identification of at-risk youth. Some respondents noted that prevention doesn’t work for older teens; it has to happen early on, but no one does this. The schools are the only common entry point for young children, and school personnel are in the best position to identify truancy problems or patterns of troubled behavior. But there is only a limited social service component in the educational system, and, as some have questioned, “Is this their job?”

Confidentiality of information pertaining to juveniles. Agencies often must deploy the court process to obtain information from one another. In the mental health system, the problem may be exacerbated because youth over the age of 14 are treated as adults and can control the flow of information.

Recommended Solutions

Respondents in Pittsburgh offered a number of suggestions for improving the community’s response to child sexual exploitation. These recommendations generally fell into three categories:

Prostitution. As with the pornography statutes, some of California's provisions regarding juvenile prostitution seem rather dated. The maximum age of protected minors is 16 for some prostitution crimes but 18 for abduction of a minor for purposes of prostitution. Some provisions apply only to females; others require a "chaste" victim.

Definitions. California statutorily defines child sexual exploitation in connection with crimes involving child pornography. Under the mandatory child abuse reporting law, sexual exploitation is defined to include both prostitution and pornography.

Reforms. California legislation appears to allow testimony via closed-circuit television in prosecutions for both child prostitution and pornography, however, its statutory exception for children's hearsay statements appears to exclude child prostitution and pornography cases.

Effective January 1, 1993, a "right to shelter" law allows youth over the age of 12 to sign themselves into shelters without parental consent. This legislation responded to concerns raised by runaway and homeless shelters who were required to turn kids away due to lack of parental consent. Shelter personnel are still required to notify parents (if they can find them), and they must determine that the minor is (a) mature enough to make this decision, and (b) a danger to him/herself or others without shelter services, or (c) an alleged victim of incest or child abuse. The new law has been interpreted as an attempt by the legislature "to prevent adolescents from having to return to abusive home situations, or being left on the street with nowhere to live."¹⁷

History

San Diego has long recognized the problems facing runaway and homeless youth. Early initiatives began in 1967, the so-called "summer of love," when teens flocked to San Francisco, and many drifted to San Diego as well. Then, as now, San Diego was a military community and very conservative in many ways.

The first street program was known as the "In-Between." A project of the Ecumenical Council, this was a drop-in center that served mostly local youth. By 1969, a group from San Diego State University started a group working with county agencies to help youth, which resulted in the first runaway shelter, called The Bridge. One of the early supporters of programs for runaway and homeless youth was a juvenile court judge who was later appointed to the federal bench. At the time of our visit, this same judge cochaired a Task Force on Children, trying to mobilize the resources of the San Diego Bar Association to provide legal services for disenfranchised youth.

During the early 1970's there was increasing advocacy and coalition-building around programs for youth. A second runaway shelter was established at the YMCA, and there was a program to offer counseling to youth and families at police stations. Even at that

¹⁷ Kalemkiarian, S. (undated). A Handbook on California's "Right to Shelter Law." Sacramento, CA: California Child, Youth and Family Coalition.

However, in most counties in California, "CPS will not take action on an adolescent's case unless there is a danger of immediate physical harm."¹⁸ In fact, several respondents in San Diego reported little involvement of CPS in child sexual exploitation cases. The agency had few placement alternatives for adolescents and even fewer viable placements or intervention strategies for runaway youth or teen prostitutes. It was also reported that no one in CPS specializes in these cases, which differ in many ways from the intrafamilial child abuse cases that inundate the agency on a daily basis.

In fact, some proportion of runaway/homeless youth were known as "systems kids"—children who had been through the child protection system (foster homes, group homes) and other public agencies (e.g., drug treatment programs), and who still had nowhere to go. One respondent observed that it makes little sense to enhance the response of police and CPS to runaway/homeless youth, and particularly those involved in prostitution, if there is no place to house them.

The Storefront

The Storefront was founded in 1986 by METRO ministries of the United Methodist Church, San Diego Youth and Community Services, and Catholic Charities. At the time of our visit, it was funded through a combination of state and local sources and private foundations and donors. In addition to the shelter, The Storefront operated a transitional living program, a street outreach program, and the "Day Center," where teens could drop in during the daytime when The Storefront is closed.

Although The Storefront had a capacity for 20 youth (ages 12-17) a night, at the time of our visit in September 1995, the shelter was averaging 12-15 youth per night. About 5 or 6 youth used the facility on a consistent basis. Over the course of the preceding year, The Storefront shelter had served 250-300 teens.

Despite its physical proximity to Balboa Park, The Storefront did not serve *all* street kids. In fact, The Storefront estimated that perhaps 10 percent of street kids in San Diego utilized its services. The shelter, which received funding from the state Office of Criminal Justice Planning as an alternative to Juvenile Hall (which only takes youth who have committed crimes), only accepted police referrals *if* they were status offenders. Also, The Storefront maintained a fairly rigid set of rules (see below) that many teens could not follow because they differ dramatically from the rules on the street, or because they were perceived to be even more stringent and applied more consistently than the rules in their homes of origin.

One respondent observed that there may be more shelters per capita in San Diego than anywhere else in the country. In addition to The Storefront, there were shelters in South Bay, Oceanside, the Tucson Program (run by St. Vincent de Paul) and an apartment complex, managed by San Diego Youth and Community Services, which offered independent living. Many of these shelters were linked, so that every morning shelter directors could determine where beds were available and refer youth to vacancies.

¹⁸ Ibid.

- “throwaways,” whose parents had abandoned them or evicted them.
- “escapees,” who left a situation where they couldn’t survive. These were youth whose parents had subjected them to abuse, prostitution, or pornography. One respondent estimated that 90% of all gay kids on the streets were physically or sexually abused before leaving their homes.
- “systems kids,” as noted before—older teens who had “been there, done that” and were no longer appropriate for services offered by public agencies.

All these terms were used to characterize street youth as *victims* rather than perpetrators, a distinction that is important in structuring interventions and obtaining needed services. Nonetheless, one law enforcement respondent observed that an important reason to pay attention to youth involved in prostitution is to prevent other crimes: street youth may also commit serious offenses including robberies, burglaries, assaults, and drug-related offenses.

One respondent offered examples of a few current clients at The Storefront:

- a boy whose pimp/pedophile partner accused him of stealing. This case was brought for prosecution but dismissed at the last minute when the youth declined to testify.
- a Mexican national who wanted to go to school but had emotional problems.
- a United States citizen in the process of becoming an emancipated minor. This boy planned to get a job and move into transitional housing.
- a severe drug abuser who was trying to attend night school and stay in a drug treatment program.

While many of these youth sought consistency in their lives, they found it in drugs rather than the structure of school or even a shelter. Still, they did not envision being street people as adults, and they knew that school is important. Some could not abide by the shelter’s rules but nonetheless attended the alternative school.

Many respondents acknowledged that street youth are at a high risk for drugs, AIDS, and other health issues. One estimated that perhaps half the girls get pregnant, and CPS takes custody of the babies. These youth have little self-esteem, and pimps and pedophiles feed on their vulnerability. Therapeutic interventions are hampered when kids are “therapy-wise” and disenchanted because of prior perceived failures.

Responses to Sexually Exploited Youth

Law enforcement response to street youth

Law enforcement officers sometimes got reports of sexual exploitation from The Storefront or The P.L.A.C.E., based on stories from their clients. For example, there was a call that someone with a video camera was approaching young Mexican boys. Without an identified victim, however, a report like this was assigned a low priority.

There were occasionally sweeps of prostitutes in identified areas, and sometimes minors were involved. Other cases were generated through raids of escort, photography, or

Response to Mexican nationals

San Diego is perhaps unusual for its large population of Mexican nationals and undocumented immigrants. Several respondents reported that the kids in Balboa Park were mostly Mexicans, and police estimated there were usually four or five boys actively soliciting there. At one time, the Border Patrol would visit The Storefront periodically, searching for Mexican nationals, but this practice was curtailed once it became clear that The Storefront was *not* an “underground railroad” for undocumented immigrants.

When a Mexican national was arrested, legal matters would get complicated. If an adult was arrested, police were required to get special orders from federal court to hold the minor victim in protective custody as a witness. Alternatively, they would have to track down the youth in Mexico. There was an agreement with the Mexican Consul to help locate youth and obtain needed services in Mexico. In one case, the District Attorney arranged to hold a victim in juvenile hall in Tijuana pending the preliminary hearing.

Response to pornography cases

Pornography cases tended to emerge as part of a molestation offense, and prosecutors reported that the existence of pornography had little impact on their treatment of these cases. Perpetrators could be charged with possession or production, but these charges were often dropped in favor of the molestation charges, which carried more severe penalties including registration as a sex offender. Still, the pornography might be considered when negotiating pleas or when recommending a sentence, because it suggests the offender is a greater risk to the community.

Challenges

Respondents in San Diego identified numerous challenges that confront professionals when attempting to work with exploited children and youth and the adults who prey upon them.

Challenges related to the victims

Several respondents observed that sexually exploited youth are special challenges to the helping agencies.

- They are not sympathetic victims. Sometimes they are involved in other crimes.
- They have little credibility, especially when compared to the alleged perpetrators who may be successful members of the community.
- They are unwilling to testify against pimps or “boyfriends.” Boys are particularly reluctant to talk about homosexual acts.
- They don’t see themselves as victims.
- They are unreliable: they fail to show up for appointments; they give false information.

- County prosecutors were reluctant to commit resources to cases that originate outside their jurisdictions, such as computer cases or correspondence cases.

Finally, an important policy issue was raised around *confidentiality with street youth*. San Diego Police Department policy was to notify parents when runaway youth were apprehended. However, many teens (especially boys engaging in homosexual acts) did not disclose crucial information to police because they feared this information would be shared with their parents. Police respondents felt there was a need to respect some confidentiality with these youth, but that parents still have a right to know about the status of their children.

Recommended Solutions

Few respondents in San Diego offered specific recommendations for improving the community's response to child sexual exploitation, and particularly youth involved in prostitution. Suggestions tended to center on early intervention, the role of the juvenile court, and enhancing community involvement.

- Some law enforcement officers believed that resources presently allocated to the war on drugs would be more effective if applied to early intervention for children at risk. It is far too late to help children once they reach the age of 14.
- Other community institutions need to be more directly involved. Specifically mentioned were the schools, the clergy, and ethnic leaders.
- More resources should be available to parents to encourage greater involvement in their children's activities, in school and in the community.
- Cases involving juvenile prostitution ought to be handled strictly out of Juvenile Court. This would allow immediate intervention by CPS and access to prior dependency and police records. One caveat to this recommendation is the need for judges to be better educated in family law.

One respondent stated his recommendation as follows: What the community needs is "a giant coordinating hand" to pull together all the resources for kids. While there were, in fact, many services in San Diego for youth at risk, there was no systematic way to access them.

In summary, respondents expressed high levels of concern for sexually exploited children and youth. At the same time, they expressed high levels of frustration with the difficulties in reaching these adolescents and obtaining resources that are helpful for them. As one respondent said, "It's like mowing a lawn full of weeds."

Despite the formidable challenges, respondents remained optimistic and committed to combating child sexual exploitation: "It might be a lost cause, but you gotta try."

- **Child protection agencies have few, if any, resources for youth involved in prostitution.** Teens are notoriously difficult to place, and the problem is exacerbated for youth who have a history of running away.
- **The JJDP Act's mandate to deinstitutionalize status offenders is seen by some as a severe constraint on the system's ability to work with sexually exploited youth.** The inability to hold youth in a secure environment offers only a small window of opportunity to reach youth who frequently have multiple problems and little incentive to seek treatment voluntarily.

These observations raise a number of important and difficult issues that must be addressed if communities are serious about meeting the needs of sexually exploited children and youth. In subsequent chapters we will elaborate on these issues through the findings of the case records review and the interviews with sexually exploited youth.

- *Criminal justice actions taken toward the adult* in the exploitation case (Did the prosecutor file the case? Was the adult convicted? What was the court outcome? What sentence was imposed?)
- *Characteristics of the juvenile* in the exploitation case (Was a juvenile involved? What was the juvenile's sex, race, and age? Was the juvenile living at home when the police responded?)
- *Police actions taken toward the juvenile* in the exploitation case (Which police unit responded? Why did the police become involved in the case? Was the juvenile arrested? Was the department of social services called? Did the police offer any services? Did the police call the juvenile's parents? Where did the police place the juvenile?)
- *Juvenile justice actions taken toward the juvenile* in the exploitation case (Did the juvenile prosecutor issue the case? Was the juvenile found delinquent?)

THE FINDINGS

Characteristics of the adult

The first important information was whether the case involved any adult. The most common type of case without an adult perpetrator involved a youth who was arrested for soliciting an undercover police officer, or who was observed soliciting for prostitution. Of the 167 cases in our sample, 30% did not include an adult offender. When an adult was involved, the adult was most often male and white (Table 2).

Some of the adults arrested for sexual exploitation (16%) had no identified child victim. These cases were most often undercover sting operations that yielded adults in possession of commercial child pornography in which the youth's identity was unknown.

When there was an identified youth in the exploitation case, the adult's relationship to that youth was most often an acquaintance, a stranger, the juvenile's pimp, or a parent. Fewer cases involved a paramour of the youth's parent, an extended family member, the youth's boyfriend, or an adult in some other relationship to the youth (Table 2).

Police actions taken toward the adult

In nearly all (98%) of the cases in which an adult was involved, the police arrested the adult (Table 3). Most often, 64% of the time, the adult did not confess the exploitation to the police, but 23% made a "full" confession and 13% a "partial" confession. (A "full" confession in a case means the adult admitted the full extent of the exploitation whereas a "partial" confession means the adult admitted only a part of child sexual exploitation, e.g., that he engaged in sex with a prostitute but believed the prostitute was an adult rather than a

Table 4 also reveals that a majority of cases (57%) were disposed by guilty plea; only 11% of the cases went to trial. In 14% of the cases the charges were dismissed by the court or at the prosecutor's request; and in 5% of the cases, the adult was not indicted. Of those convicted, most (63%) received jail/prison time while 31% were sentenced to probation and 6% received some other type of sentence (such as community service or a fine). Jail or prison sentences ranged from less than a year to life imprisonment. Probationary sentences ranged from two to ten years.

Characteristics of the juvenile

In 89% of the cases there was an identified juvenile (see Table 5). The remaining cases involved commercial pornography in which the depicted juvenile's identity was unknown.

When juveniles were involved, they were usually female and white. Their ages ranged from 2 years old to 17 years old, with over half being 15-17 years old. Most of the youth—62%—were not living at home with their parents when the police responded to the case. When information was available, it was most commonly noted that those not living at home were living "on the streets," with a friend (or a pimp), in a shelter, or in a juvenile facility.

Police actions taken toward the juvenile

In descending order of frequency, the police unit that most often responded to the exploitation case was the child abuse unit, followed by the vice unit, the patrol unit, and occasionally, another police unit (see Table 6). When a reason for the police response could be deduced from the file, we found that their response was most often reactive, rather than proactive. In over half of the cases, the police responded to a report made by either the victim or the victim's parent or to a "tip" they received from an informant. Routine surveillance accounted for their response in 12% of the cases and undercover or sting operations for their response in nearly one-third of the cases.

The police investigation resulted in the arrest of the juvenile in slightly over two-fifths of the cases. Police files reflected that the department of social services (child protection agency) was called in 21% of the cases. In 40% of the cases, the police offered some type of service to the juvenile. The police called the juvenile's parents in over half of the cases. Police most commonly placed the juveniles in their parents' homes, shelters, and juvenile halls. However, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting all but the arrest data for juveniles involved in exploitation cases. These data were obtained either from notations in the police files or from interviews with the officers who handled the cases. We were not always able to interview these officers, and even if we could, they did not always remember what actions they took in response to the juveniles. Because there was no requirement to record this information in the file, officers may have taken certain actions without ever mentioning them in the file. From our conversations with officers, we suspect that the police called

in over one-third of the cases; and juvenile hall in just over one-tenth of the cases. (These figures may be inaccurate, however, because police were not required to systematically record whether they called social services, the parents, or offered services.)

- The juvenile was arrested in slightly over two-fifths of the cases. In about half of the cases in which a juvenile was arrested, there was data on how the juvenile justice system responded. In nearly four-fifths of the cases in which a juvenile was arrested, the prosecutor did *not* issue the case. For the small number of cases which were known to have been issued, the juveniles were found delinquent in over three-quarters of the cases.

TABLE 2
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT IN EXPLOITATION CASES

Did Case Involve An Adult?

	(n=167)
Yes	70%
No	30%

Adult's Sex

	(n=118)
Male	87%
Female	13%

Adult's Race

	(n=114)
White	60%
Black	38%
Other	2%

Adult's Relationship to Juvenile in the Exploitation Case

	(n=114)
Acquaintance	22%
Stranger	18%
Juvenile's pimp	17%
Parent	10%
Paramour of juvenile's parent	7%
Extended family member	5%
Juvenile's boyfriend	2%
Other relationship	3%
None (no juvenile victim identified)	16%

TABLE 4

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTIONS TAKEN TOWARD THE ADULT
IN EXPLOITATION CASES**

Did the Prosecutor File/Issue the Case Against the Adult?

	(n=65)
Yes	94%
No	6%

Was a Conviction Obtained Against the Adult?

	(n=61)
Yes	72%
No	16%
Case Pending	12%

Was the Adult Convicted of the Original Charge?

	(n=42)
Yes	69%
No	31%

Outcome of Adult's Case

	(n=65)
Not Indicted	5%
Found Not Guilty at Trial	2%
Found Guilty at Trial	9%
Dismissed	14%
Pending	13%
Pled Guilty	57%

Adult's Sentence

	(n=49)
Probation	31%
Jail	63%
Other	6%

TABLE 5
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JUVENILE IN THE EXPLOITATION CASE

Was There A Juvenile Involved In The Case?

	(n=167)
Yes	89%
No	11%

Juvenile's Sex

	(n=146)
Male	30%
Female	70%

Juvenile's Race

	(n=138)
White	73%
Black	17%
Other racial group	10%

Juvenile's Age At Time of the Offense

	(n=122)
10 years or younger	12%
11-12 years old	5%
13-14 years old	25%
15-16 years old	47%
17 years old	11%

Range in age=2-17 years
Average age=15 years old
Modal age=16 years old

Juvenile Living At Home When Police Responded?

	(n=146)
Yes	38%
No	62%

TABLE 6 (cont'd)
POLICE ACTIONS TAKEN TOWARD THE JUVENILE
IN EXPLOITATION CASES

Did The Police Call The Juvenile's Parents?

(n=124)

Yes	58%
No	33%
Not applicable*	9%

*Parent was the perpetrator or it was the parent who called the police to report someone had exploited their child.

Where Did The Police Place The Juvenile?

(n=129)

Victim's home	45%
Shelter	37%
Juvenile hall	14%
"Other" place	4%

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

WITH SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH

A key component of the Program to Increase Understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation involved gathering information directly from sexually exploited youth about the nature of their experiences and their interactions with the justice and child protection systems.

Among the questions we hoped to answer through these interviews were the following:

- What are the antecedents to children's involvement in prostitution or pornography?
- What kinds of children and youth are involved in these forms of exploitation?
- What makes them vulnerable?
- Are they already known to the system?
- What is the system's response to these children once they are identified as victims of prostitution or pornography?

METHODOLOGY

We sought to interview as many as 50 youth in each of the four participating sites. To locate these youth, we negotiated with a major shelter or program serving runaway or homeless youth in these four communities, as follows:

Chicago:	The Maryville Academy
Dallas:	Letot Center
Pittsburgh:	The Whale's Tale
San Diego:	The Storefront

Ultimately, Maryville Academy declined to participate in the youth interview component of our research, citing commitments to other initiatives. Consequently, our goal was to interview 150 sexually exploited youth in the three remaining sites.

Sample

We relied on a convenience sample of youth who were utilizing the services of the participating youth-serving agency at the time of our study. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied:

Instrument

An *Adolescent Interview Guide* (see Appendix B) was developed to gather a wide range of information directly from the youth, with additional sections to record interviewer impressions and selected information from files that were routinely maintained by the agencies.

The *Adolescent Interview Guide* was developed by EDC with input from the ABA Center on Children and the Law and our project Advisory Board, especially Robert Deisher, MD, Division of Adolescent Medicine, University of Washington, and Ken Lanning, of the FBI. The *Adolescent Interview Guide* and *Youth Interviewers Procedures Manual* were reviewed by EDC's Institutional Review Board and resulting comments were incorporated as appropriate.

FINDINGS

We interviewed a total of 104 youth, of whom 83 admitted to being involved in some form of sexual exploitation, which we defined behaviorally to include trading sex for money, a place to stay, gifts, food, drugs, or other in-kind exchanges. The definition also included involvement in pornography or sex rings.

Of the 21 youth who were excluded, six were in Pittsburgh, six were in Dallas, and nine were in San Diego. These 21 youth were excluded for the following reasons:

- 11 youth simply denied any sexual exploitation experiences
- 5 youth described being propositioned to have sex in exchange for money, but they had refused
- 4 youth had experienced sexual abuse (e.g., by family members or acquaintances) but did not report any exploitative activities
- One young man began to cry when asked how long he had been away from home and his reasons for leaving

The following data represent responses given by the 83 youth who constituted the final sample, along with data collected from records maintained by the sponsoring agencies.

Youth were interviewed in three cities: Pittsburgh (26 youth, or 31% of the total), Dallas (43 youth, 52% of the total), and San Diego (14 youth, 17% of the total). Interviews occurred in at least two locations in each site. Sixteen percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Youth were also asked about things they do well. Below are the skills they mentioned:

Table 3: Skills Named by Responding Youth*
(n=83)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Physical abilities	32	39%
Social abilities	32	39%
Creative abilities	28	34%
Intellectual abilities	25	30%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Smaller proportions of youth mentioned having emotional strengths, physical strengths, and an aptitude for domestic chores. Three youth mentioned antisocial attributes (having sex, fighting, and lying). One youth failed to identify anything he or she did well.

A large majority of the youth (87%) said they'd been told they were really good at doing something.

Youth were asked about things they like to do. Their answers were as follows:

Table 4: Activities Youth Like to Do*
(n=83)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Social activities	46	55%
Physical activities	35	42%
Creative activities	22	27%
Intellectual activities	22	27%
Appearance-related	21	25%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Smaller proportions mentioned other activities, including helping others, entertainment, working, and being alone. Three youth mentioned antisocial behaviors: drugs, fighting, and stealing.

Table 6: Ethnicity of Responding Youth
(n=82)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Black, not Hispanic	35	43%
Hispanic	28	34%
White, not Hispanic	17	21%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	2%

Age. A majority (62%) were between the ages of 14 and 17; about one-fourth (26%) were 18 or over (including one respondent who was 25 years old); and 12 percent were ages 10-13.²⁰

Table 7: Age at Interview
(n=81)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
10-13	10	12%
14-17	50	62%
≥18	21	26%

Marital and Parenting Status. All but three of the youth were single, never married, and on their own. The other three were single and living with partners.

Nine, or 14 percent of the girls were pregnant at the time of agency intake. Fourteen youth (19%) had children: ten youth had one child each, two had two children, and two had three children.

Educational Status. Nearly half of the youth (44%) were attending school, although some attended on an irregular basis. Fourteen (17%) had completed high school. The remaining youth (39%) had dropped out or had been suspended or expelled.

Among the 69 youth who had *not* completed high school, four had completed grade 5 or less. Almost half (46%) had completed grades 6, 7, or 8; and one third had completed at least one year of high school.

Table 8: Educational Status of Responding Youth
(n=82)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Attending School	27	33%
Dropped Out	27	33%
Graduated High School/G.E.D	14	17%
Attending School Irregularly	9	11%
Expelled	4	5%
Suspended	1	1%

²⁰ Given the difficulty of recruiting youth who were willing and able to speak about their involvement in sexual exploitation, we opted not to exclude a small number of respondents whose ages lay outside our original parameters.

Table 12: Distance from Home
(n=82)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 1 mile	5	6%
1-10 miles	15	18%
11-20 miles	19	23%
21-50 miles	25	31%
51-100 miles	4	5%
>100 miles	14	17%

Referral Sources. About half (52%) of the youth had been referred to the shelter by law enforcement or juvenile justice personnel, compared to 12 percent who were referred by a social service agency. More than one-fourth (27%) were referred by informal sources (i.e., self, friends, or family). Other referral sources included hotlines, foster parents, and youth-serving agencies or other organizations.

Table 13: Referral Sources to Agency
(n=83)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Police/Courts	43	52%
Social Services	10	12%
Friend	9	11%
Self	9	11%
Family	4	5%
Shelter	4	5%
Other	4	5%

Reported Problems

History. Agency records identified a range of problems experienced by the youth at the time of intake. "Household dynamics" and emotional abuse were identified for a majority of the youth. Nearly 40 percent had experienced physical or sexual abuse. Other problems recorded with similar frequency included psychological issues, household issues, AOD abuse, and school issues.

Despite the relatively high proportions of youth with histories of physical and sexual abuse (according to agency records), only 21 percent of the youth we interviewed had left home due to physical abuse, and only one of 10 left due to sexual abuse. More commonly, the youth cited non-physical abuse (emotional abuse, conflicts, or neglect) as the reason for leaving home (mentioned by nearly half of the responding youth). The youth may have been reluctant to acknowledge their histories of physical or sexual abuse; alternatively, they may have interpreted the question to refer specifically to a single precipitating incident.

Interpersonal Experiences

First Experience of Sexual Exploitation

More than four out of five youth (87%) who completed the interview admitted they had exchanged sex with an adult for money or other consideration.

A majority of responding youth were between the ages of 14-17 at the time of their first experience. Nearly one-third (30%) were 13 or younger. Four were younger than 10 years old at the time of their first experience. (Seven youth had been at least 18 at their first experience and thus had not been juveniles when they engaged in sexually exploitative activities with an adult partner.)

Table 16: Youth Age at the Time of First Experience
(n=71)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Under 10 yrs.	4	6%
11-13 yrs.	17	24%
14-17 yrs.	43	61%
18 yrs. or older	7	10%

Nearly three-fourths of the first adult sexual partners were between the ages of 18 and 30; all but one of the remaining youth described their partners as between the ages of 31 and 50. Nine out of 10 of the adult partners were male.

Table 17: Age of the Partner
(n=70)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
18-30 yrs.	52	74%
31-50 yrs.	17	24%
Older than 50 yrs.	1	1%

Nearly one-third of the youth had their first experience of sex in exchange for something of value with a "friend of a friend." About one-fourth described their first partners as johns or strangers. Other first partners included lovers and friends. Two youth had their first experiences with stepfathers.

More than half of the responding youth (57%) were living at home with their parents or other family members at the time of their first experience. Almost one-fourth of the respondents were living on the street or in a shelter. Others were living with friends, in foster care, or in group homes.

in 10 received nothing. A few youth received alcohol or other drugs or transportation in return for sexual activities. One girl was given troll dolls for her collection.

Table 21: What was Received*

	<i>(n=71)</i> <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Money	28	39%
Housing	23	32%
Food	23	32%
Nothing	13	18%
Jewelry	12	17%
Attention/Love	8	10%
Clothes	8	10%
AOD	5	7%
Other	5	7%
Transportation	3	4%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Force or threats accompanied the first experience with sexual exploitation for about one-fourth of responding youth; about one in ten suffered actual force.

Table 22: Use of Force*

	<i>(n=71)</i> <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
No Force/Threat	54	76%
Other Threat	10	14%
Force Used	8	11%
Threat of Force	4	6%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Thirty percent of the responding youth described this first experience as a single encounter, but for half of the youth, the first exploitative relationship lasted more than one month.

Table 23: Duration of Relationship

	<i>(n=70)</i> <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
One Time	21	30%
About 1 week	7	10%
About 1 month	7	10%
> 1 month	35	50%

Table 27: Most Recent Adult Partner vs. First Adult Partner
(n=40)

	<i>Most Recent</i>	<i>First</i>
Friend of a Friend	30%	45%
Johns/Strangers	41%	32%

More than half of the youth were living with their parents or families at the time of their most recent experience. About 30 percent were living on the streets or in a shelter; others were staying with friends or in another unspecified arrangement.

Table 28: Where Youth was Living at Time
(n=39)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
With Family	21	54%
On the Street	8	21%
With Friends	4	10%
In a Shelter	4	10%
Other	2	5%

All but one of these encounters involved sexual intercourse. Other activities included sexual performance, oral sex, and anal sex. Only one youth reported that videos were made.

Table 29: Nature of Sexual Acts*
(n=40)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sexual Intercourse	39	98%
Performance	5	13%
Oral Sex	2	5%
Anal Sex	2	2%
Photos/Videos Taken	1	3%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Half of the youth received money in exchange for their most recent sexual activity with an adult partner, ranging in amounts from \$20 to \$70. Youth also commonly reported receiving housing or food. Nearly one in five received nothing in exchange for their sexual interaction, and two youth received love. These proportions are quite similar to those that were reported for the youths' first sexually exploitative experience.

Sexual Exploitation Among Peers

Nearly one-fourth of responding youth had exchanged sex with a peer in return for money, housing, food, or other item of value.

Just over half of the youth said this activity happened when they were between the ages of 14 and 17 and about one-fourth were between the ages of 11 and 13. One was younger than 10 at the time of this experience, and the rest were over 18. About four-fifths of the peer partners were under the age of 18, and 83 percent were male. One youth said the peer experience involved both males and females.

Table 33: Youth Age at the Time
(n=19)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Under 10 yrs.	1	5%
11-13 yrs.	5	26%
14-17 yrs.	10	53%
older than or 18 yrs.	3	16%

Table 34: Age of the Partner
(n=19)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
< 18 yrs.	15	79%
18-30 yrs.	4	21%

Only one youth described the peer partner as a john. Nearly half of the youth described the peer partner as a friend; a few were friends of a friend, lovers, or other relationships.

Table 35: Relationship to Partner
(n=19)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Friend	9	47%
Other	5	26%
Friend of a Friend	2	11%
Lover	2	11%
John	1	5%

Forty-four percent of the youth were living with parents or family at the time of their sexual exploitation by a peer; nearly 40 percent were living on the street or in a shelter. As shown below, youth were somewhat *less* likely to be living at home and *more* likely to be on the street or in a shelter at the time of their experiences with peers than they were during their sexual experiences with adult partners.

About one-fourth of the youth reported that force or other threats were involved in their experiences with peers.

Table 40: Use of Force*
(n=19)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
No Force/Threat	15	79%
Other Threat	3	16%
Force Used	2	11%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

Seven youth described their relationship with the peer as a single experience, but six said their relationships had endured more than one month.

Table 41: Duration of Relationship
(n=19)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
One Time	7	37%
About 1 week	3	16%
About 1 month	3	16%
> 1 month	6	32%

The Role of Pimps

In the interview instrument, questions regarding the role of pimps did not use the term explicitly to avoid the pejorative connotations or the label. Rather, youth were asked about individuals who arranged their sexual experiences.

As shown below, about one-fourth of the youth said someone else had arranged their first experience with an adult partner. In half of these cases, the individual making the arrangement was *another youth*—not an adult—and a majority were female. Half were friends of the respondent; one-third were relatives. Only two were described as lovers or johns.

Table 42: Who Arranged the Youths' Sexual Activities

	<i>First Experience With an Adult</i>	<i>Most Recent With an Adult</i>	<i>Experience With Peers</i>
Youth	52 (72%)	31 (78%)	16 (84%)
Someone Else	20 (28%)	9 (23%)	3 (16%)

Table 43: Involvement in Other Forms of Exploitation*
(n=83)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Pornography by Adults	12	15%
Pornography by Peers	8	10%
Sex Rings	7	8%
Interstate Travel	6	7%
Solicitation by Police	4	5%
Solicitation by Social Worker	1	1%
Computer Exploitation	1	1%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

The pornography mostly involved photographs (83%); three youth reported videos. Two-thirds of the youth were posed in sexual or erotic situations; one-fourth were engaged in heterosexual activities. Single youth were involved in autoerotica, group sex, homosexual activities, or sadomasochistic behaviors.

Five of the 12 youth were offered money in exchange for their participation in pornography; amounts ranged from \$25 to \$500. Other promises involved alcohol or other drugs, material goods, and housing. Three youth were offered nothing.

The adults who produced the pornography were evenly divided between those in the 18-30 age range and those between 31-50 years of age. All but one were male. These adults had a variety of relationships to the youth, but only one was described as a relative. Half of the youth were engaged in a sexual relationship with the adult who made pornography.

A majority of these incidents involved neither force nor threat. Two youth introduced the adult to other youth who later became involved in pornography.

Eight youth had been depicted in pornography made by peers. All but one were between the ages of 14 and 17 at the time. These youth were more likely to be living on the street (3) or with friends (2) than in a shelter (1) or with their families (1). All of the pornographic situations involved photographs. All but one of the youth had been posed; single youth were photographed while involved in autoerotica or heterosexual activity. None were involved in group sex, homosexual activity, or S&M.

Two of the youth were offered money; one was reportedly offered \$300. One was promised alcohol or other drugs; another was promised material goods. But most of these youth (5) were offered nothing in return for their participation in pornography.

Three-quarters of the peers who made the pornography were under 18; half were female. Half were described as the youths' lovers; two were friends. Force was used or threatened in half of the peer pornography incidents.

Table 44: Prior Involvement with CPS or Justice System*

	(n=83) <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Youth with Prior CPS Contacts	45	54%
Youth Stopped by Police	9	11%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

The most common police response was releasing the youth. One youth was taken to jail and another was taken to a shelter.

Three of the youth who had been stopped for sexual activity had been before a judge or probation officer, and for all three it had only happened once. None of the youth was placed in detention or foster care; rather, one youth was released, another was returned to the family, and the third was referred to a shelter.

Two youth were referred for services directly by law enforcement officers. One was referred to a shelter and the other to psychological counseling.

Four youth had been asked by police to help in investigating sexual exploitation. One identified a pimp and another gave a statement. The youth reported it would be easier to help police if there were "less hassling."

More youth found police contact *not* to be helpful (5) than helpful (3). Again, the youth cited "hassling" as the major obstacle to their interaction with police, and their main suggestion for improving police response was to eliminate this behavior.

Child Protection Agencies. As shown above, more than half of the 83 youth reported having contact with a child protection agency. Of those, nearly half had been in custody at least once. For a majority of these 24 youth (62%), their time in custody had been at least three years before or in their early childhood, but 21 percent had been in custody less than one month before. Placements included foster care, other residential care, and group homes, and a variety of other alternatives.

Table 45: Types of Custodial Placements*

	(n=27) <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Foster Care	8	30%
Residential	7	26%
Group Home	7	26%
Other	13	48%

*The distribution may sum to more than 100% as respondents were free to indicate more than one category in response to the interview question.

below. The services most frequently received were counseling, education, pregnancy testing, and medical care. The most useful services were those pertaining to pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), and medical and dental care. While counseling was received at least once by the largest majority of youth (84%), the smallest, yet large, fraction of youth (70%) thought that counseling was useful.

Table 48: Services – Received?*

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Once</i>	<i>A few times</i>	<i>Many times</i>
Counseling	16%	15%	27%	43%
Education	26%	8%	14%	53%
Training	70%	15%	11%	5%
Medical	39%	18%	23%	21%
Dental	46%	13%	27%	15%
AOD	78%	8%	8%	8%
Pregnancy	36%	20%	34%	9%
Abortion	90%	4%	4%	2%
Pre-natal	67%	11%	9%	13%
HIV/AIDS	47%	31%	17%	5%
STD	46%	24%	22%	9%
Other	73%	18%	9%	0%

*Indicated percentages are row percentages.

Table 49: Services - Useful?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Counseling	48(<i>n</i> =69)	70%
Education	48(<i>n</i> =58)	83%
Training	18(<i>n</i> =23)	78%
Medical	41(<i>n</i> =45)	91%
Dental	40(<i>n</i> =43)	93%
AOD	11(<i>n</i> =14)	79%
Pregnancy	38(<i>n</i> =41)	93%
Abortion	5(<i>n</i> =5)	100%
Pre-natal	15(<i>n</i> =15)	100%
HIV/AIDS	38(<i>n</i> =38)	100%
STD	42(<i>n</i> =44)	96%
Other ²²	1(<i>n</i> =3)	33%

²² Other services mentioned were food provision and treatment within a mental institution.

**Table 50: Respondent Characteristics—Differences by Site
(Interviewer Observations)**

	Pittsburgh		Dallas		San Diego		Significance
	#	%	#	%	#	%	P value
Male youth	6 (n=26)	23%	2 (n=43)	5%	12 (n=14)	86%	.00
Youth ≤ 15 yrs. Old	2 (n=26)	8%	33 (n=43)	77%	5 (n=14)	36%	.00
Youth post-pubescent	23 (n=26)	89%	18 (n=43)	42%	5 (n=14)	36%	.00
English as 1st language	26 (n=26)	100%	38 (n=43)	88%	2 (n=14)	14%	.00

**Table 51: Respondent Histories—Differences by Site
(Agency Records)**

	Pittsburgh		Dallas		San Diego		Significance
	#	%	#	%	#	%	P value
Black, not Hispanic	19 (n=26)	73%	15 (n=43)	37%	0 (n=13)	0%	.00
Have at least one child	11 (n=25)	44%	3 (n=37)	8%	0 (n=13)	0%	.01
Graduated high school	13 (n=26)	50%	0 (n=43)	0%	1 (n=13)	8%	.00
Classified runaways	2 (n=26)	8%	37 (n=43)	86%	4 (n=11)	36%	.00
>100 miles away	3 (n=26)	12%	3 (n=43)	7%	8 (n=13)	62%	.00
≥10 prior runs	9 (n=24)	38%	5 (n=43)	12%	0 (n=11)	0%	.05
Considered suicide	13 (n=25)	52%	17 (n=41)	57%	0 (n=6)	0%	.07

Table 53 shows differences across sites in the youths' first experiences of sexual exploitation by an adult.

Table 53: First Exploitation Experience—Differences by Site

	Pittsburgh (n=26)		Dallas (n=43)		San Diego (n=14)		Significance
	#	%	#	%	#	%	P value
Living with family	8 (n=19)	42%	31 (n=38)	82%	0 (n=11)	0%	.00
With stranger/John	5 (n=19)	26%	4 (n=40)	10%	9 (n=12)	75%	.00
Partner 31-50 yrs.	8 (n=18)	44%	3 (n=40)	8%	7 (n=12)	58%	.00
Received housing	8 (n=19)	41%	7 (n=40)	18%	8 (n=12)	67%	.00
Received love/attention	0 (n=26)	0%	7 (n=43)	16%	1 (n=14)	7%	.08
Not forced	9 (n=19)	47%	35 (n=40)	88%	10 (n=12)	83%	.00
Duration < 1 month	9 (n=19)	47%	10 (n=39)	26%	9 (n=12)	75%	.01
Youth arranged	13 (n=19)	68%	27 (n=41)	66%	12 (n=12)	100%	.06

Youth in San Diego were significantly more likely than youth in the other sites to have first experienced sexual exploitation:

- with a stranger or a John
- in return for housing
- in a relationship lasting less than one month
- in a self-arranged encounter

These youth were also significantly less likely to have been living with their families the first time they were sexually exploited.

Youth in Dallas were significantly more likely than youth in the other sites to have first experienced sexual exploitation:

- while living with their families
- in return for love or attention

Youth in Dallas were also significantly *less* likely to have experienced their first sexual exploitation with a stranger or John, with a partner between the ages of 31 and 50, in exchange for housing, or in a relationship lasting less than one month.

Table 55: Involvement with Helping Agencies—Differences by Site

	Pittsburgh		Dallas		San Diego		Significance
	#	%	#	%	#	%	P value
Contact with child protection agency	21 (n=26)	81%	22 (n=43)	52%	2 (n=14)	14%	.00
Ever in custody?	14 (n=21)	67%	7 (n=22)	32%	0 (n=2)	0%	.03
Referred to counseling	5 (n=10)	50%	11 (n=12)	92%	0 (n=0)	0%	.03
STD services never received	8 (n=25)	32%	18 (n=42)	43%	11 (n=14)	79%	.00
HIV/AIDS services never received	9 (n=26)	35%	21 (n=35)	60%	5 (n=14)	36%	.00

In Dallas, responding youth were young females who were sexually exploited by adults while still living at home. They engaged in sex with adult partners in exchange for love or attention, in relationships lasting more than one month. They had received counseling services and arrived at the shelter upon referral by justice system personnel.

Responding youth in Pittsburgh tended to be older, chronic runaways. They were more likely to be high school graduates, parents, and black (not Hispanic). They had prior involvement with child protection and justice agencies and prior stays at the shelter. They characterized their first experience of sexual exploitation with an adult as involving some threat or use of force.

Gender Differences

We interviewed a total of 63 females (76% of the total) and 20 males (24%).

Table 56 displays significant gender differences that emerged in certain respondent characteristics.

Girls were significantly more likely than boys to be:

- less than 50 miles away from their homes
- referred to the shelter by justice system personnel

Boys were significantly more likely than girls to be:

- Spanish-speaking
- on their own for more than one year
- on their own for the first time more than one year ago
- away from home due to abuse
- referred to the shelter by friends

Boys were significantly more likely than girls to:

- have engaged in sexual activity in exchange for housing
- be involved with the adult sexual partner for less than one month
- have arranged their own encounter

Table 58 displays significant gender differences in the nature of the most recent exploitation experience. These differences were the same as those for the first experience, with the following exceptions:

- Girls tended to be more likely than boys to have received nothing in exchange for sexual activity
- Differences with regard to age and gender of the adult sexual partner did not emerge for the most recent sexual experience

Table 58: Most Recent Exploitation Experience—Differences by Gender

	Female		Male		Significance
	#	%	#	%	P value
Living with family	19 (n=30)	63%	2 (n=9)	22%	.03
Known partner	23 (n=30)	77%	1 (n=10)	10%	.00
Received nothing	7 (n=30)	23%	0 (n=10)	0%	.09
< 1 month duration	15 (n=30)	50%	10 (n=10)	100%	.00
Youth arranged	22 (n=30)	73%	10 (n=10)	100%	.07

Table 59 reveals significant gender differences in the youths' involvement with helping agencies. Specifically, girls were significantly more likely than boys to have had contact with the child protection agency, to have been referred for counseling, and to have received treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. Boys, however, were significantly more likely to have received treatment or services for alcohol or other drugs, or for HIV.

To summarize, the data reveal several important gender differences in the characteristics of girls and boys who are involved in sexual exploitation and in the nature of their experiences with adult partners.

Overall, girls stayed closer to home and became involved in sexual exploitation with someone they knew while still living at home. They were more likely to be involved with the justice system (which referred them to the shelters), the child protection system, and counseling services.

behavior. Alternatively, the youth may have been reluctant to talk about physical or sexual abuse in the context of our interview. Either explanation is plausible, given the nature of the interview and the natural reticence of teens (or anyone) to disclose painful memories.

2. Only nine of the 83 youth reported having been stopped by police because of their sexual activities. However, according to shelter data, 52 percent of youth were referred to the shelters by law enforcement agencies. Most likely many youth had been approached by law enforcement for a variety of reasons (e.g., curfew violations, loitering, etc.) and perhaps even transported to the shelter by police at some point.

It is probable these two inconsistencies represent the youths' tendency to interpret our questions very literally rather than deliberate attempts to mislead the interviewers.

While we cannot say that the findings of the youth interviews are generalizable to the total population of sexually exploited youth in the United States, or even in the cities where we conducted the study, there are some intriguing findings that appear to contradict the conventional wisdom about street youth and their involvement in sexual exploitation.

- *The terms "street youth" and "youth involved in sexual exploitation" are not synonymous.* Many of the youth we interviewed were introduced to sexual activities in exchange for something of value while they were still living with their parents or legal guardians. Even a sizable proportion of youth who admitted to engaging in such behavior more than once were living "at home" at the time. While the popular notion of "survival sex" may explain the behaviors of some youth, it does not explain all.
- *School settings may be an effective avenue to reach youth at risk for sexual exploitation.* A sizable minority of the youth we interviewed (44%) were still involved in school, albeit not always full-time and perhaps not always in traditional school environments. Nonetheless, many youth still maintain some attachment to an educational institution and may benefit from interventions that are offered through this venue.
- *Peers may be a more common link to sexual exploitation than formerly realized.* Many of the youth we interviewed were introduced to sexual exploitation by peers who effectively functioned as "pimps" by arranging sexual encounters with adult partners. More attention should focus on the interpersonal dynamics among street youth as a common pathway to child sexual exploitation.
- *Not all youth engage in sexual exploitation for the same reasons, and these may vary by site and gender, among other characteristics.* Our research identified several distinct "types" of youth who were involved in sexual exploitation. The Mexican boys in San Diego perhaps exemplified the

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Education Development Center, Inc., and the American Bar Association Center for Children and the Law conducted a multifaceted study to increase understanding of child sexual exploitation. The components of this study were as follows:

Phase 1:

- literature review
- statutory review
- secondary analysis of case-level data gathered for two large-scale studies of criminal justice processing of child sexual abuse cases
- telephone survey of law enforcement agencies and youth-serving agencies in the nation's 50 largest cities

Phase 2:

- site visits to four jurisdictions that promised large caseloads to study
- analysis of case-level data from police files on child sexual exploitation cases in those four jurisdictions
- interviews with sexually exploited youth in three of the four jurisdictions

This final chapter incorporates what we have learned from all these activities. It elucidates a number of key issues that help us understand the nature of the problem as well as the nature of our society's response to victims and perpetrators. We also put forth several recommendations to help clarify our thinking about child sexual exploitation and perhaps to structure a more effective response.

CONCLUSIONS

What Have We Learned about Child Sexual Exploitation?

At the most global level, we found that **sexual exploitation of children is an exceedingly difficult category of offenses to study**. For purposes of this project, we defined child sexual exploitation to include child pornography, child prostitution, and children involved in sex rings. Child pornography and prostitution have legal definitions upon which we relied to identify "cases" and "victims" for our research with criminal justice agencies. For purposes of our interviews with youth and with representatives of criminal justice and social services agencies, we relied on behavioral definitions, e.g., "prostitution" became "exchanging sex for something of value."

pornography cases even in the absence of an identifiable victim. The challenge for the justice system is to determine that the individual depicted in the pornography is, in fact, a child; an expert pediatrician or pathologist typically makes this determination. Of course, even if victims are not essential to bring a prosecution, it is still critical to identify them wherever possible so that services can be offered.

In contrast, child prostitution cases are notoriously difficult to pursue in the criminal justice system. Victims are usually essential for prosecution, yet, at the same time, they are seldom cooperative. Most of the youth we interviewed denied being involved with pimps. Some children harbor protective feelings toward pimps (whom they perceive as lovers); some are dependent on them for food, shelter, drugs, etc.; others fear violent retribution. Law enforcement officers who intervene with the intent of helping the young victims may also be stymied by the youths' apparent disdain for services or the dearth of providers who are able or willing to treat this especially elusive population.

Furthermore, under most circumstances, the juvenile justice system cannot hold status offenders in secure placements. Youth involved in prostitution may have frequent interactions with police for status offenses (e.g., because they are runaways, or because they commit curfew or other minor violations), but police often have little recourse but to release them to parents or shelters. Any referrals for services are dependent on the youths' voluntary compliance.

Whether because youth involved in prostitution conduct their business in closed venues, or because law enforcement officers have learned to treat these children as victims rather than perpetrators, very few youth are arrested for prostitution offenses. The National Center on Juvenile Justice estimates that in 1995, approximately 1,300 juveniles were arrested for prostitution or other commercialized vice offenses.²³ Some of the agency professionals we interviewed endorsed the notion that youth involved in prostitution need to be arrested and adjudicated delinquent so that they can be held in secure facilities and required to participate in treatment programs. We will return to this important policy issue later in this chapter.

3. *The justice system fails to identify sexual exploitation in the histories of juveniles in its custody.*

Many agency professionals observed that sexual exploitation might be far more prevalent than we know among youth who are adjudicated delinquent on charges other than prostitution. Because so many youth in the juvenile justice system have prior histories with child protection agencies, they have extensive records that commonly reveal physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect in their backgrounds. However, child protection agencies may not inquire directly about a child's involvement in sexual exploitation. Also, because child sexual exploitation offenses are more often committed by individuals who are not parents or caregivers, they lie outside the purview of most child protection agencies. In some locations, the child protection agency's mandate does

²³ Jeffrey A. Butts and Howard N. Snyder (1997). *The Youngest Delinquents: Offenders Under Age 15*. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings from the field research, including our interviews with sexually exploited youth and the professionals who work with them, we recommend **greater investments in prevention, education, and treatment**. Efforts must be made to

- deter children from becoming involved in sexual exploitation
- deter adults from preying on vulnerable children
- educate professionals in the fields of criminal justice, child protection, youth services, health, and mental health about the nature and challenges of child sexual exploitation
- enhance specialized treatment capabilities for sexually exploited children
- expand opportunities to redirect sexually exploited youth toward a less destructive lifestyle

While our specific recommendations focus on the areas of prevention, education, and treatment, we also consider the needs for additional research and renewed attention to the policy challenges of status offenders.

Focus on Prevention

There are a few examples of prevention programming specifically designed to deter young people from adopting the street life. "Paul and Lisa," a program located in Westbrook, Connecticut, goes into junior and senior high schools in the New York metropolitan area to warn children about the perils of street life. In the Canadian province of British Columbia, "TCO²" (Taking Care of Ourselves, Taking Care of Others) is an acting troupe of young adults who perform skits for children in elementary and middle schools to depict the nature of exploitative relationships. Neither of these programs has been evaluated, nor have they been widely adopted in their respective areas.

It is probably safe to surmise that most American citizens would not consider their children to be at special risk for sexual exploitation. On the other hand, some observers might argue that *all* children are at risk for sexual exploitation, by virtue of the young child's innocence and the adolescent's propensity for taking risks. While there may not be a large demand for programming specific to prevention of child sexual exploitation, it may be appropriate to include messages about sexual exploitation among larger public health initiatives that target other risky behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, and unprotected sex. Similarly, messages addressing young girls' attraction to older men may best be handled as part of "healthy sexuality" curricula now offered in many school systems.

There may also be a need to focus attention on deterring adults from exploiting children and youth through prostitution and pornography. Apart from threats of criminal prosecution and incarceration, there are few concerted efforts to educate people that sexual relations between adults and minors is wrong. This, too, is a message that may be

Focus on Treatment

Our field research revealed very little in the way of treatment programs specific to the needs of sexually exploited children and youth. Rather, we learned much about the challenges of treating this population: their reluctance or inability to comply with treatment plans, their adolescent sense of invincibility, their propensity to run from any residential setting having any semblance of adult oversight or rules. Indeed, there were many youth who were not even able to comply with the basic restrictions imposed in certain shelters for runaway or homeless youth, such as the Whale's Tale in Pittsburgh or The Storefront in San Diego.

There are also subsets of sexually exploited youth whose problems are even more intractable. Youth who are actively prostituting were specifically named. In Dallas, police and shelter workers preferred not to mix girls who were actively prostituting for pimps with the general shelter population because they would attempt to recruit the other girls. Boys who were actively prostituting were equally difficult to place, albeit for different reasons. These boys' life experiences set them apart from their age-mates in most juvenile facilities, and in some cases their sexual orientation may place them in danger of assault.

We identified very few treatment programs specializing in sexually exploited children and youth. Perhaps the best known is "Children of the Night," in the Los Angeles area, which offers shelter and a range of educational and counseling services for boys and girls who are involved in prostitution. Importantly, this program is totally voluntary; the youth can leave at any time. Ultimately, then, the youth who enter and stay with this program are those who are highly motivated to change their lives.

As noted above, for many children, sexual exploitation is subsumed by many other problems, such as hunger and homelessness, health conditions, mental illness, substance abuse or addiction—in other words, basic survival. Many are negotiating troubled families and the demands of various systems that are trying to help them. For these children, interventions focusing exclusively on sexual exploitation seem misguided.

Unfortunately, our review of the literature revealed not a single long-term study of outcomes for sexually exploited youth, or even for the more inclusive category of runaway or homeless youth. Structured shelter programs, such as those of the Whale's Tale in Pittsburgh, The Storefront in San Diego, or Children of the Night in Los Angeles, have not been evaluated. As a result, there is little to offer by way of guidance, education, or training for professionals who work with sexually exploited children and youth.

Families (US Department of Health and Human Services) funds many such programs across the country.

The movement to deinstitutionalize status offenders, a mainstay of modern juvenile justice, unfortunately allows these multiply troubled youth to slip through an enormous crack where services are few and nearly inaccessible. While some recommend citing chronic status offenders for violating a valid court order (VCO), which enables the court to confine youth in secure facilities for a limited period of time and is permissible under the JJDP Act, few states use this avenue.²⁶ But in our field research, we interviewed judges, police, probation officers, and other juvenile justice personnel who believed strongly that youth who are engaged in dangerous behaviors—such as active prostitution—must be held as a means of preventing them from hurting themselves or others.

Yet, keeping sexually exploited youth in locked facilities is only a partial answer. These youth require a variety of services to address their many problems, and some of these problems—most notably those in the mental health arena—are not easily treated. In fact, in some respects the situation of youth who are actively involved in prostitution, and especially those who work for pimps, resembles a cult phenomenon—suggesting that “de-programming” techniques may apply. Whether the state should invoke its powers of *parens patriae* to extricate these youth from pimps who control them is an interesting question of philosophy and social policy.

In sum, we recommend that juvenile justice experts, adolescent treatment experts, legislators and policy makers turn their attention to the unique situation of chronic status offenders who are engaged in sexual exploitation. These youth are at extreme risk for serious victimization, whether by crime or disease, and yet our options for intervention are limited and our knowledge base is small. Through research, close examination of existing policies, and an open mind to new approaches, we must try to construct a better safety net to catch these children before they fall through the cracks irretrievably.

²⁶ Ibid.