



West Virginia State Facts

Criminalization of DMST

1. West Virginia has not enacted a human trafficking or sex trafficking law.

Criminal Provisions Addressing Demand

2. West Virginia laws do not make buying sex with a minor a distinct crime; therefore, a buyer of sex acts would likely be prosecuted under the general solicitation of prostitution law requiring offenders to serve just 60 days to 6 months in county jail and pay a fine of \$50–\$100 regardless of whether the prostituted person is a minor or an adult. Use of a computer to solicit a child for prostitution would greatly increase this to 2–10 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$5,000.
3. In May 2011, Steven Cogar, 30, of Harrison County pled guilty to soliciting a minor for sexual conduct on the Internet in May 2011. Police say Cogar believed he was talking to a young girl when he made the sexual solicitation.¹

Criminal Provisions for Traffickers

4. Sex trafficking has been prosecuted federally. In September 2008, Bridgette Baugh and William Green were arrested by the FBI in Huntington, West Virginia, for transporting seven girls for prostitution from Ohio to West Virginia. The women were 18 to 35 years old, but several told investigators they were instructed to pretend they were 14 or 15.²
5. A West Virginia assistant public defender, Steven Conifer, was arrested in July 2011 for offering a child for sex acts in a chat room to a New Jersey man. A police raid of his apartment in Charleston led to computers, hard drives and other electronics on which conversations and an image of a child being offered for sexual services were found.³

Criminal Justice Tools for Investigation and Prosecution

6. In 2010, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center received a total of eight calls from West Virginia, including two tips from individuals who were reporting information related to potential trafficking victims, suspicious behaviors, and/or locations where trafficking was suspected to be occurring.

¹ <http://www.wdtv.com/index.php/home/local-news/6531-man-admits-to-attempting-to-solicit-minor>.

² <http://timeswv.com/westvirginia/x681681965/Sex-ring-case-to-be-tried-in-Ohio?keyword=topstory>.

³ <http://www.dailymail.com/News/Kanawha/201107200969>.