

DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

INDEPENDENCE



Shared Hope International conducted an assessment in Independence/Kansas City, MO area to examine the practices and procedures used to identify and deliver services to victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking - American children who are exploited for commercial sex. The Independence Assessment may serve as a springboard to action for the Human Trafficking Rescue Project and the community in order to prioritize the identification and protection of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims in the Independence/Kansas City area.

the COALITION

In the face of many challenges a diverse coalition of groups and individuals in the Independence/Kansas City area are aggressively tackling the issue of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. These professionals are engaging in remarkable levels of cooperation to address the numbers of prostituted children who are involved in prostitution, pornography, and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

the FINDINGS

- Since 2000, Child Protective Services in Kansas City, MO estimates that at least one victim of commercial sexual exploitation is identified each month through substantiated sexual abuse and neglect allegations, totaling a minimum of 84 Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims that have been identified by a single agency in Jackson County, MO alone.
- There is a severe lack of protective shelter for prostituted children- victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking- in the Independence/Kansas City area. Most of the available placements do not serve victims who are under the control of a trafficker/pimp because they are short term and lack the necessary protection.
- The lack of protective shelter has caused inappropriate placement of prostituted children- Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims- in juvenile detention facilities. Of the 214 beds available throughout the juvenile court system only 25 of those beds are available for girls.
- Only one nongovernmental organization in the Independence/Kansas City area, Veronica's Voice, offers restorative services specifically designed to address Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and the exploitation experienced by trafficked American children. This survivor-led organization is a unique asset and should be utilized more frequently to aid in victim identification and services.
- In Missouri, a buyer of sex with a 16- or 17-year-old child can assert an affirmative defense that he reasonably believed the child to be 18 years of age or older and that the minor consented.

- If someone is arrested for prostitution acts, once her minor status is discovered she is considered a victim. However, the youth may be charged with other offenses (e.g. drug possession) that occurred as a result of her enslavement in prostitution. Therefore, even though she is viewed as a victim, she is still labeled a criminal, which can affect her access to services.
- In an unprecedented application of the federal law, the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Middle District of Missouri utilized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to prosecute a trafficker for the intrastate pimping of American children in Kansas City, MO. Because of the work of the U.S. Attorney's Office and Kansas City Police Department three innocent lives were rescued.
- To testify against her trafficker/pimp, a child victim is required to be physically present at trial. This can result in revictimization and recanting of her statement.
- The Missouri state anti-human trafficking law is comprehensive and aligns with the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act in the recognition of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims- American children exploited in the commercial sex market. However, the state statute has not yet been used. Few professionals interviewed were aware of the state statutes that could apply to victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking.

research METHODOLOGY

This report is based on qualitative and quantitative information provided during interviews with the wide range of professionals who interact with Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims at various stages of the minors' exploitation, apprehension, legal disposition and rehabilitation. Specific questions were created for seven different populations: Law Enforcement, Judiciary, Prosecution, Public Defenders, Juvenile Detention, Child Protective Services, and Non-Governmental Service Providers. The protocol for this research was approved by the Western Institution Review Board (Protocol #20070540). Funding was provided by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Award number 2006-DD-BX-K294.

about SHARED HOPE

Shared Hope International rescues and restores women and children in crisis. Over the past decade, we have worked diligently around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery. Shared Hope International is bringing hope to women and children everywhere.

For more information about the Independence Assessment visit www.sharedhope.org