

DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

SALT LAKE CITY



Shared Hope International conducted an assessment in the Salt Lake City 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 Salt Lake City Assessment is intended serve as a springboard to action for the Utah Human Trafficking Task Force and the community in order to prioritize the identification and response of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims in the Salt Lake City area.

the COALITION

In 2006, Utah was selected to receive a grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs to construct a localized human trafficking task force that would comprise entities from both law enforcement and social services in order to effectively combat human trafficking in Salt Lake City and surrounding regions. The goal of the Utah Human Trafficking Task Force is to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking, while arresting and prosecuting the perpetrators.

the FINDINGS

- Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking is the prostitution of American children. Data provided by the Utah Juvenile Courts indicated the arrest of 42 minors for prostitution from 1996 – 2007. In Salt Lake City, these exploited children are directly identified as victims of prostitution but are still arrested in an effort to keep them safe.
- The Salt Lake City Police Department Vice Unit reports that 80% of the prostituted juveniles are identified through street arrests and undercover operations. The remaining 20% are identified through citizen complaints. The average age of the Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victim they encounter is 16 years old.
- The Salt Lake City Vice Unit displays an advanced understanding of the dynamics of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and has a victim-centered approach. However, the absence of a protective shelter - a facility that can prevent a high-risk victim from fleeing and facing capture and revictimization by her trafficker/pimp - compels law enforcement to utilize the juvenile justice system in order to protect children exploited through prostitution. As a result, these child victims are detained with offenders in the juvenile detention facility.
- Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims have the dual status of both victim and criminal. In order to secure a conviction of her trafficker/pimp the victim must be available for the preliminary hearing to give her testimony. Due to the lack of protective shelter, the victim is held in a juvenile detention facility for 30-90 days awaiting the criminal hearing against her trafficker/pimp.
- The Juvenile detention facility provides no services beyond immediate medical care for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims in custody. Although free counseling services are available through the Department of Youth Services and many social service providers in the community, Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victims are not given access to these services while in the detention facility.

- When Salt Lake City Police Department Vice Unit and local prosecutors interact with a Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking victim they utilize methodologies that address the victim's psychological and physical attachment and allegiance to her trafficker/pimp. Understanding these unique dynamics and developing strategies to gain the trust of the victim has resulted in successful investigations and prosecutions of traffickers/pimps, as well as the sustained rescue of several prostituted children.
- Since 1996, a local prosecutor reported successful investigations that resulted in charges against 25-30 traffickers/pimps of children. This aggressive action on behalf of children exploited through prostitution sends a clear message that Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking will not be tolerated in Salt Lake City.
- The mandate for Child Protective Services in Utah is broad enough to cover the investigation into most alleged situations of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. However, one interviewee was not able to report a single case of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking substantiated by Child Protective Services. Proper identification and categorization is required to align proper services and placement appropriate for the nature of the victimization.
- Buyers of prostituted children in Salt Lake City often exploit without punishment. The anonymity of the internet creates barriers for law enforcement in the effort to investigate and arrest buyers of children for sexual exploitation. As a result, only one successful investigation of a buyer resulting in a conviction was reported for this research. Successful prosecutions of buyers of commercial sex from children are critical to deterring demand, which would aid the comprehensive effort to decrease Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking.
- The recent passage of a Utah state human trafficking law is a positive and necessary step in achieving justice for victims of human trafficking in Utah. However, the inclusion of "force" in the basic definition of human trafficking places the Utah human trafficking law in conflict with the federal Trafficking Victim's Protection Act, which eliminates the requirement of proving force, fraud, or coercion if the victim is under the age of 18. This high evidentiary burden of proving "force" can make prosecution difficult, and the law also falls short of outlining victims' rights or funding allocations for services.

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 Salt Lake City assessment visit www.sharedhope.org