

# DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

## LAS VEGAS



**Shared Hope International** (SHI) conducted a field assessment in Las Vegas to examine the practices and procedures used to identify and deliver services to victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Las Vegas Assessment may serve as a springboard to action for the Anti-Trafficking League Against Slavery (the Las Vegas Human Trafficking Task Force) and the community in order to prioritize the identification and protection of DMST victims in Nevada.

## the COALITION

In the face of many challenges a diverse coalition of groups and individuals in Las Vegas has aggressively tackled the issue of DMST. These amazing professionals are engaging in remarkable levels of cooperation and communication as they address the hundreds of prostituted children who pass through the system on a yearly basis- they are ATLAS- the Anti-Trafficking League Against Slavery.

## the PROBLEM

- Nevada is a major destination for DMST victims in the U.S.: over 400 prostituted children were identified on the streets of Las Vegas in May 2007 alone
- 1,496 DMST victims from 40 states were identified in Las Vegas between January 1994 and July 2007
- The high-risk conditions of Las Vegas - easy access to alcohol and drugs, 24/7 gaming, the hyper-sexualized entertainment industry - combined with the large, growing juvenile population contribute to the occurrence of DMST in the area
- Many professionals in Las Vegas interacting with trafficked minors can identify DMST victims but because of a lack of alternative secure shelter facilities prostituted children are still arrested and placed in detention
- The absence of secured shelters specific to DMST is the single greatest impediment for all protection, prevention and prosecution efforts
- Clark County has the highest juvenile caseload in the U.S.

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- Once arrested a pimp is often released on bail while the DMST victim, who is expected to act as a witness, may be held longer than 15 days to ensure her testimony against her trafficker - usually, pimps are released and back on the streets long before their victims
- As much as 30% of DMST victims served by WestCare in Las Vegas are pimped by a family member
- The systemic limitations on Child Protective Services impede actions to remove DMST victims from trafficking situations
- Out of all juveniles suspected of being involved in prostitution between January 2004 and 2006 nearly 41% had been victims of sexual assault and 21% were victims of familial molestation

## research METHODOLOGY

This report is based on qualitative and quantitative information provided during interviews with the diverse actors who interact with DMST victims at various stages of the minors' exploitation, apprehension and legal disposition. Specific questions were created for six different populations: Law Enforcement, Judiciary, Prosecution, Detention, Child Protective Services, and Non-Governmental Service Providers. The protocol for this research was approved by the Western Institution Review Board (Protocol #20070540).

## about SHARED HOPE

Shared Hope International (SHI) rescues and restores women and children in crisis. For almost a decade, SHI has worked diligently around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery. SHI is bringing hope to women and children everywhere.

For more information about the Las Vegas Assessment visit [www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)