

THE LINK

CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

Understanding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

By Lisa Goldblatt Grace

Heather's Story

Heather's mother married her stepfather when Heather was 10 years old. His abuse of Heather was constant: he beat, molested, and emotionally tortured her. Several times, Heather came home from school to find a suitcase had been packed with her belongings. Her stepfather would drive her to an unknown destination and leave her on a stranger's doorstep. Heather would find her way home and everyone would pretend like nothing had happened.

At age 14, after a particularly ferocious beating, Heather's teacher filed a report with child protective services. She was placed in a foster home. Heather felt lonely in her new community. One afternoon, she accepted a ride home from school from three teen girls and two men in their early 20s. They invited Heather to go to a party where Heather got drunk and high with the girls. One man, Chris, cornered her and told her that she owed him for giving her the ride. To work it off she would have to turn tricks with the other girls. He told Heather that if she refused, he and his friends would take what they wanted anyway. He said he'd go after her family next. When she tried to leave the room, he hit her in the face. Chris drove Heather and the other girls to the track in Boston. Scared for her life, Heather turned her first trick.

The police picked up Heather on a cold night when she was standing outside in very little clothing. They contacted child protective services who placed her in a different foster home. Heather quickly found that she felt worse—more alone—in the foster home than she did on the streets with the other girls and ran at the first chance she got. She was picked up by the police again and placed in the custody of the juvenile justice system. She entered lock up in an extremely withdrawn state.

Heather's story of commercial sexual exploitation is not unique. Adolescent girls are deceived, manipulated, forced, or coerced into prostitution every day. The average age of entry into prostitution nationally is 13 to 16 years old, though nationwide direct service providers report that they

are encountering younger and younger victims over the past decade (Silbert & Pines, 1981; Spangenberg, 2001; Lloyd, 2005). Most often these children are first seen as victims in the child protective services system as a result of familial abuse. They are later seen as delinquents in our juvenile justice system, criminalized for their exploitation.

To truly understand the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), one must look at this dichotomy and understand the continuum of abuse that begins in childhood. In order to best address this unique form of victimization, it is imperative to identify the antecedents to victimization, the realities of prostitution, and pathways to stability and safety for youth. It is important to note that boys are exploited through prostitution as well. The precursors and the response, however, are somewhat different. Therefore, the author will be focusing solely on girls.

Which Young Women Are Most Vulnerable to Commercial Sexual Exploitation?

Though all young women are at risk of recruitment solely by their age, a subpopulation of adolescents is the most vulnerable. The most common characteristic of commercially sexually exploited girls is a history of childhood sexual abuse. In 20 recent studies of adult women who were exploited through prostitution, the percentage of those who had been abused ranged from 33% to 84% (Raphael, 2004). For example, findings from a study of 106 adult women in Boston who were incarcerated for prostitution-related offenses or had ever been arrested for prostitution-related offenses, 68% reported having been sexual abused before the age of 10 and almost half reporting being raped before the age of 10 (Norton-Hawk, 2002). Smaller studies

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we begin 2009, we are filled with hope and renewed expectations of what we can do to improve outcomes for the children and youth we serve. With great excitement, CWLA will continue to advance its mission, "Together, Making Children and Families a National Priority." To bring in the New Year, CWLA Chief Executive Officer, Christine James-Brown, spoke recently on CWLA Radio about CWLA's briefing paper and recommendations to President Barack Obama, "Hope for America's Children, Youth, and Families." She also noted the opportunities for states to provide additional support to children and families with the recent passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. Her encouraging message can be heard at www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio and the briefing paper can be accessed on CWLA's website (www.cwla.org).

And, as always, the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division strives to highlight the youth and families in need of our attention and services. This issue of *The Link* focuses on two populations for which there are many unmet needs and reinforces our quest for improved coordination and integration across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Lisa Goldblatt Grace's article tells the story of Heather, a sexually exploited girl, whose experience illustrates the importance of multisystem collaboration. She, like many other young girls caught up in prostitution, has a history of sexual abuse but is treated as both a victim and a criminal. While Child Protective Services (CPS) is trying to aid them, in too many cases, girls in these circumstances are also treated as delinquents based on their behavior. Critical is the need for the many systems that come in contact with sexually exploited girls (CPS, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and medical and mental health treatment providers) to work in concert with one another to address the girls' victimization.

The article by Terry L. Cross and Kathleen A. Fox reports the startling condition, treatment, and needs of American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) youth in the juvenile justice system. A striking feature of this article is the identification of what is *not* known about this population. The authors set out the many unanswered questions that need to be answered for communities to better respond to AI/AN youth. These are framed as research questions that the National Indian Child Welfare Association, Preventing Child Abuse America, and Purdue University will address in the next two years.

Lastly, in this issue we continue to anticipate the full passage of S. 3155, which reauthorizes and improves the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The Act contains many provisions to strengthen the coordination between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including developing coordinated systems plans, compiling data on dually involved youth (youth served by both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems), and providing necessary services for the prevention and treatment of victims of child maltreatment who have entered the juvenile justice system. Tim Briceland-Betts chronicles those provisions along with the legislative history to date and reminds us that we need to be vigilant in our advocacy to get this bill passed in 2009.

Happy New Year!

Janet K. Wiig
Director, Juvenile Justice Division

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of prostituted girls affirm these figures. For example, the Huckleberry House Project in San Francisco reported that 90% of the girls who had been exploited through prostitution had been sexually molested (Harlan, Rodgers, & Slattery, 1981). Further, the childhood trauma history experienced by most prostituted girls includes abuse that is chronic in nature and took the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and multiple perpetrators of sexual abuse (Farley & Kelly, 2000).

Most notably, prostituted girls are likely to be victims of incest (Silbert & Pines, 1982). One researcher is quoted as saying, "Incest is boot camp [for prostitution]. Incest is where you send a girl to learn how to do it. So you don't obviously, have to send her anywhere, she's already there and she's got nowhere else to go. She's trained. And the training is specific and it is important: not to have any real boundaries to her own body; to know that she's valued only for sex; to learn about men what the offender, the sex offender, is teaching her" (Dworkin, 1997). Research has demonstrated that the younger a girl is when she first becomes exploited through prostitution, the greater the likelihood that she has a history of child sexual abuse and the greater the extent of the abuse (Council for Prostitution Alternatives, 1991).

In addition to a history of childhood abuse, commercially sexually exploited girls are likely to experience other forms of familial disruption. Multiple studies suggest that girls exploited through prostitution are likely to come from homes where addiction was present (Raphael, 2004). One study of 222 prostituted women in Chicago found 83% had grown up in a home where one or both parents were involved in substance abuse (Center for Impact Research, 2001). Further, prostituted girls are likely to have witnessed domestic violence in their home; specifically, girls are likely to have seen their mother beaten by an intimate partner (Raphael, 2004). For example, 62% of the respondents in the aforementioned Chicago study reported that they had viewed domestic violence in their childhood home; and 40% reported that these violent incidents were "serious", involving beatings, rapes, and threats with a weapon. Over half of these women identified their mother as the victim and 91% identified the perpetrator as their father, stepfather, or their mother's partner (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002).

Some literature has begun to recognize a correlation between school-related problems, most notably learning disabilities, and subsequent exploitation. This may be organic within the girl or a result of her trauma. Whichever way, the later the disability is diagnosed and an appropriate educational plan put in place, the greater the likelihood of the girl experiencing a sense of failure in school, making her vulnerable to exploitation (Harway & Liss, 1999).

Other factors emerge as similarities among exploited girls. Many girls experienced the loss of a parent, through death, divorce, or abandonment. In two separate studies of adolescent girls exploited through prostitution, a third of the

sample had a deceased mother (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002; Norton-Hawk, 2002). Often this familial disruption results in the child's involvement in the child welfare system, involving placement in foster care or group homes. One study in Canada of 47 women in prostitution found that 64% had been involved in the child welfare system, and of these 77.8% wound up in foster care or group homes (Nixon, Tutty, Downe, Gorkoff, & Ursel, 2002).

The themes of trauma, abandonment, and disruption are central to the narratives of adolescent girls in the commercial sex industry. Girls describe having had a profound sense of being alone without resources: "They [the women and girls] described their isolation, lack of connectedness, and feelings of separation as the single most important factor in making them vulnerable to prostitution to begin with..." (Rabinovitch, 2003). With childhoods such as these, girls are likely to run from their homes, group homes, foster homes, and treatment centers, placing them at the greatest risk of being targeted by a pimp and becoming exploited.

Research consistently confirms the correlation between running away and becoming involved in prostitution. Researchers have found that the majority of prostituted women had been runaways: 96% in San Francisco (Silbert & Pines, 1982), 72% in Boston (Norton-Hawk, 2002), and 56% in Chicago (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002). Among prostituted youth (both boys and girls), up to 77% report having run away at least once (Seng, 1989). Experts anecdotally state that within 48 hours of running away an adolescent will be approached to participate in prostitution or another form of commercial sexual exploitation (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [NCMEC], 2008).

As described, there is a documented link between early victimization in the home and subsequent victimization by pimps, johns, and other predators. A National Institute of Justice report states that children who were sexually abused are 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution at some point in their lives than children who were not sexually abused (as reported in Spangenberg, 2001). Yet we continue to call these same children delinquents when they are arrested for prostitution.

Buying and Selling: The Role of Perpetrators
Understanding the dynamics of pimps and recruitment is crucial for understanding how girls are targeted for prostitution and what keeps them trapped. Ninety percent of prostituted women interviewed by Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER) had pimps while in prostitution (Giobbe, 1993). As of mid-year 2008, there were approximately 90 pimps in the Boston area that had been identified by Boston police (K. O'Connell, personal communication, 2008).

Girls who have survived childhood trauma may demonstrate an overwhelming sense of shame, a profoundly low sense of self-worth, and an eagerness to find love and acceptance. Further, they have already been taught lessons about keeping secrets and seeing their bodies as a commodity. Pimps who target and trap teen girls prey on

these vulnerabilities, actively seeking girls in crisis who lack a stable support network (Flowers, 2001; Spangenberg, 2001; NCMEC, 2002; Raphael, 2004). Pimps actively seek girls in the child protective services system, trolling around group homes or residential treatment centers looking for girls walking to school or the bus stop. Pimps will also spend time in bus stations and train stations seeking girls on the run, knowing these girls do not know where they will spend the night. Further, with the popularity of social networking websites, pimps have taken their tactics online, looking for girls with seductive pictures or who otherwise appear vulnerable.

Pimps may use a variety of tactics to recruit young women including force and coercion. He may pretend to be a photographer who wants to build her modeling career, or a music executive interested in casting her in a music video. The most common tactic, however, that pimps use is seduction (Flowers, 2001; Spangenberg, 2001; NCMEC, 2002; Raphael, 2004; Lloyd, 2005). Pimps traditionally will spend time grooming a young woman, slowly isolating her and increasing her dependence on him for both material things and emotional sustenance. Within a year, he will begin the process of “turning her out.” This process, and the violence, degradation, and brainwashing that follows, renders adolescent girls similar to battered women; the girl is both terrified of her perpetrator and willing to lay down her life, and her body, for his needs (Flowers, 2001; Spangenberg, 2001; NCMEC, 2002; Raphael, 2004; Lloyd, 2005). Further, approximately 20% of youth—both girls and boys—are trafficked nationally by organized criminal networks, crossing the United States through well-established prostitution tracks (Estes & Weiner, 2001).

The Impact of Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Body, Mind, and Soul

Violence is a day-to-day reality in the lives of prostituted women and girls (Nixon et al., 2002). Girls are beaten or raped by pimps, johns, and, at times, law enforcement, per reports by the girls themselves or adult women reporting retrospectively (Norton-Hawk, 2002; Nixon et al., 2002; Raphael, 2004). One study of 800 women found that 85% had experienced rapes, 95% assaults, and 77% kidnapping by pimps (Council for Prostitution Alternatives, 1991). Another study found that almost 20% of the women interviewed had been assaulted, sexually assaulted, or propositioned by law enforcement (Nixon et al., 2002). One research study stated, “They are the most raped class of women in the history of our planet” (Hunter & Reed, 1990). Most of this violence goes unreported due to fear of retaliation or that law enforcement may arrest them or return them to their abusive homes (Flowers, 2001). In addition to violence, reproductive health issues including exposure to STDs such as HIV are an omnipresent hazard (Farley & Kelly, 2000).

Girls quickly learn to use substances to numb themselves in order to survive the daily trauma of “the Life.” One large study of homeless youth exploited through prostitution found that more than 75% of these youth abuse alcohol or drugs,

while virtually all admit to some level of use. These rates were notably higher than homeless youth not exploited through prostitution (Yates, Mackenzie, Pennbridge, & Swofford, 1991). It is important to note that a significant percentage of girls enter prostitution with no drug or alcohol abuse history (Farley & Kelly, 2000). Some studies suggest that girls who become exploited through prostitution, however, are likely to have begun using substances at an earlier age than their at-risk peers who do not become exploited in this way (Inciardi, Pottieger, Forney, Chitwood, & McBride, 1991; Nadon, Koverola, & Schludemann, 1998).

Adolescent girls suffer severe emotional and physical consequences as a result of being prostituted. Survivors of commercial sexual exploitation demonstrate a high rate of dissociative disorders, self-destructive behaviors (including cutting), suicide attempts, and clinical depression (Giobbe, 1993; Farley & Kelly, 2000; Nixon et al., 2002; Lloyd, 2005). One study found that almost 50% of women in the sample had attempted suicide and approximately 20% engaged in self-mutilation (i.e., cutting) (Parriott, 1994). One prostituted woman stated, “When I’m in pain, I like to hurt myself because the pain goes away” (Nixon et al., 2002).

As a result of the chronic trauma, prostituted girls often develop symptoms congruent with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One international study of prostituted people in five countries found that almost three-fourths met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Farley, Baral, Kiremire, & Sezgin, 1998). The powerlessness felt by girls in “the Life” is reinforced by social isolation, captivity, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, sexual assaults, and physical abuse—all of which are common practice for pimps (Silbert & Pines, 1981; Dworkin, 1997).

Some adolescent girls may display the symptoms of the Stockholm Syndrome, otherwise most frequently seen among prisoners of war (Graham & Wish, 1994). Here, as a means of emotional and physical survival, the captive (the girl) identifies with her captor (the pimp). She expresses extreme gratefulness over the smallest acts of kindness or mercy (i.e., he does not beat her today), denial over the

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The Juvenile Justice Policy Network Listserv (JJPOLNET) is a valuable tool for all Juvenile Justice stakeholders who are interested in or participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of youth and adolescents involved with the Juvenile Justice System. With JJPOLNET it is easy keep up with the latest Juvenile Justice news, information, and policy developments, as well as the events, publications, and work being done by the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division. To sign up for JJPOLNET, the CWLA Juvenile Justice Listserv, e-mail sconcodora@cwla.org.

extent of violence and injury, rooting for her pimp, hypervigilance regarding his needs, and the perception that anyone trying to persecute him or help her escape is the enemy. She may lash out at service providers or anyone else attempting to help her exit, and insist that she is fine and happy in her current situation.

Further, the manifestations of her trauma may make her reticent to trust anyone outside the Life who states they are trying to help her (Raphael, 2004; Friedman, 2005). Her self-esteem is so brutalized, she does not believe that she could ever warrant being cared for, respected in her community, or valued in her personal relationships (Farley et al., 1998). Like soldiers returning from a war zone, these girls are damaged mind, body, and soul by their experiences. And yet, they must return to that war zone every night.

The Role of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Responding to Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Given the level of trauma experienced by victims of prostitution, and their potential criminalization in our juvenile justice system, we must think proactively about how to best support girls so that they may escape the destructive path of exploitation. First and foremost, we as providers must challenge our assumptions and patterns of behavior around this crime. Who is the criminal in prostitution? If a 15-year-old girl has sex with her 17-year-old boyfriend, we name that statutory rape in municipalities across the country. We determine that she is too young to consent. If that same 15-year-old girl has sex with a 40-year-old man, however, and money is exchanged, in most municipalities we call this her “choice” and charge her with a crime. We must push our community law enforcement to recognize this and go after the real criminals—the pimps and johns who exploit adolescent girls. For example, in Suffolk County, Massachusetts (the county that includes Boston), the District Attorney stated in 2004 that he did not want to see prostituted juveniles in his courts anymore—he wanted police and prosecutors to focus on bringing the perpetrators to justice. This has resulted in an enormous shift in thinking and a sharp decrease in juveniles arrested for prostitution-related offenses.

Identification

It is a key that any effort to respond to the needs of commercially sexually exploited girls begin by increasing providers’ ability to identify victims. This can prove to be problematic for a variety of reasons. The stigma associated with prostitution increases the difficulty in identifying victims. Adolescents are less likely to disclose their involvement in prostitution to providers due to their own sense of shame and fear of the provider’s response (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002; Raphael, 2004; Lloyd, 2005). Further, the power of the pimp’s seduction and manipulation, as well as the manifestations of the Stockholm Syndrome, render these victims less likely to call themselves victims and more likely to protect their perpetrator at all costs (Raphael, 2004; Lloyd, 2005). It is also important to note that frequently pimps will assign girls a new

identity, including a new name, social security number, and birth certificate. This increases the difficulty of identifying and tracking these victims (MacInnes, 1998; Raphael, 2004; Lloyd, 2005).

The primary way to identify a victim is through their disclosure. In order to increase the likelihood of disclosure, all providers—whether they are in child protective services system, the juvenile justice system, community-based agencies, health care settings, schools, etc.—should include inquiry around exploitation as part of their regular forms of assessment. Providers simply need to include the question, “Have you ever had to exchange sex for money, food, or shelter?” Though most victims will not readily disclose their experiences, asking the question communicates to victims that the provider is someone who could handle the information without judgment. Most victims believe that adults would be unable to deal with the intensity of the trauma and therefore do not want to know. In addition, pimps tell their girls that adults will be repulsed by “what they’ve done.” It is important for providers to communicate their willingness to listen and help, simply beginning with asking the appropriate question.

In lieu of a disclosure, providers should be in tune to common red flags that indicate a young woman may be exploited. These may be noted in changes in appearance (expensive, new, or sexually suggestive clothing; tattoos/branding), sleep habits (sleeps during the day, stay awakes at night), loss of interest in age-appropriate activities, and truancy from school. Also, an exploited youth may distance herself from caregivers, friends, and family—but increase her time spent with new (often older) friends. Though any one indicator is not enough to identify a victim, it is the confluence of many factors that is most telling.

Direct Intervention

Once an exploited youth is identified, she will need an immediate, supportive response from providers. Specifically, it is paramount that providers are nonjudgmental, willing to listen to a young woman as she discloses her experiences. It is important that agencies have a protocol for handling disclosures and that all staff are trained in both understanding victims and responding appropriately.*

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

The process of supporting commercially sexually exploited girls must involve a multidisciplinary response. A youth’s recovery from prostitution is multifaceted and complicated, and as such must include more than one service provider (MacInness, 1998). Effective programs engage multidisciplinary allies in order to develop efficacious partnerships on behalf of these victims (NCMEC, 2002; A. Adams, personal communication, March 2006; N. Hotaling, personal communication, June 2006; K. Seitz, personal communication, October 2006).

In addition to basic needs such as stable housing and food, a victim will likely have a complex array of other

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Native American Juvenile Rights: Who Cares?

By Terry L. Cross and Kathleen A. Fox

In the United States in the year 2008, there were 565 federally recognized American Indian tribes/nations comprising an American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population of approximately 4.1 million. Half this population lives on reservations and the other half lives off-reservation, primarily in urban communities. The American Indian and Alaska Native population is young: the median age of the Indian population is 28.0 years compared with 35.3 years for all races in the United States (Indian Health Service, 2008).

According to national and regional reports AI/AN children and youth are locked in a spiral of violence and delinquency that is astonishing. Statistics reported by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) show that the rate of violent victimization among AI/AN youth is almost double that of all races; rates of abuse/neglect are significantly higher (15.9 per 1,000) compared to white youth (10.7 per 1000); and the rate of suicide for AI/AN males aged 15 to 24 is much as three times higher than that found in the overall U.S. population (Arya & Rolnick, 2008; Snyder & Swahn, 2004; U.S. DOJ, 2004). Seventy-nine percent of the youth in custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons are AI/AN (Federal Bureau of Prisons [BOP], 2008). The proportion of AI/AN youth arrested for violent offenses is less than 1%, but the percentage of referrals for the same offenses is 1.4%; and AI/AN youth are 50% more likely than whites to receive the most punitive measures (National Center for Crime and Delinquency [NCDD], 2008).

Although these figures are astounding, they are seldom scrutinized, questioned, or explained. Various reports have indicated a more complicated picture. For example, although AI/AN per capita rates of violence are more than twice that of other races, the great majority of offenses against native people are committed by persons who are not native (U.S. DOJ, 1999; NCDD, 2008) This disparity is not found among other races, where the victim and perpetrator are usually of the same race.

Rates of abuse/neglect reflect only those data collected by state or county investigators who are involved in investigations, or 61% of all cases—which suggests true rates are higher for the AI/AN population (Earle & Cross, 2001). A disproportionate percentage of AI/AN cases are neglect rather than abuse and the finding of neglect by mainstream state and county workers may be partly due to a more negative interpretation of cultural norms (specifically the undocumented sharing of child care by extended family members) in Indian Country—which suggests true figures are lower for the AI/AN population (Fox, 2004).

Since first contact, there have been various attempts by the European immigrants and then the U.S. government to assimilate, relocate, or adopt AI/AN citizens into mainstream society. A checkerboard of federal laws gave rights, took rights away, modified them—leading to a confusing array of policies and practices that few understand (Cross, Earle, & Simmons, 2000).

Due to their unique jurisdiction over Indian Country, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) refers AI/AN youth to federal court and consequently, as stated above, 79% of all youth in federal forensic custody are AI/AN (BOP, 2008). Most of the crimes committed by AI/AN youth are related to liquor violations, running away, or other relatively minor offenses (Arya & Rolnick, 2008); older AI/AN youth in federal prison are typically guilty of sex-related offenses (BOP, 2008), which fall within the 16 major federal crimes on Indian lands with exclusive federal jurisdiction.

There is no question that AI/AN youth receive the most punitive sanctions, are subjected to the harshest treatment, and are placed in the most restrictive settings when they are incarcerated (NCDD, 2008). In 2003 litigation over conditions in a South Dakota state training school revealed severe abuses in the use of restraints and isolation, yet little in the way of education or mental health services. Findings also showed that AI/AN youth were significantly over-represented in the lockdown unit.

A young girl from the Pine Ridge Reservation had been held in a secure unit within the facility for almost two years during which time she was placed in four-point restraints while spread-eagled on a cement slab for hours at a time, kept in isolation for days and even weeks, and pepper-sprayed numerous times. This young girl, like many of the females confined at the facility, suffered from significant mental health and substance abuse issues. Due to the lack of appropriate mental health treatment and the harsh conditions in the facility she resorted to self-harming behavior as a way to draw attention to herself. Like many of the other girls, she now has numerous scars on her arms from cutting herself. Reminiscent of the notorious boarding schools for AI/AN people during the last century, this facility also penalized AI/AN youth for speaking in their native language; several were placed on lockdown status as punishment (Youth Law Center, 2003).

Little information is available to explain the causes behind violence, suicide, drug and alcohol use among youth in Indian Country, and their subsequent harsh treatment. Anecdotal news from Indian Country is that, once identified as problematic, youth have few protections and even fewer advocates. Their parents and caretakers feel powerless. Tribes who might be sources for positive change are without resources or the right to intervene (in many cases, such incidents fall within the purview of the FBI).

Beginning in 2002 the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) conducted exploratory research to identify and highlight the issues of American Indian

children and youth with regard to juvenile rights and justice. Focus groups of youth, providers, and board members were held at the annual NICWA conferences in 2002 and 2003 (Cross 2002, 2003). What we have learned can be best summarized in the words of some of the focus group participants.

American Indian "... youth are ending up in adult facilities because there are no separate facilities for young people in some communities, despite laws forbidding contact between minors and adults in correction facilities;" "... sometimes even parents are not notified when young people are taken into custody." (2002 NICWA leader focus group)

"Indian status offenders are often treated as if they were violent offenders;" "... a young woman (under 16 years of age) was charged with fourth degree assault for spitting on a nurse." (2002 NICWA provider focus group)

"Children are often placed in correctional facilities for inappropriate reasons (truancy, parents, behavior and overdoses)." (2003 NICWA provider focus group)

"Children are often taken out of the community and offered nonculturally specific/relevant services as individuals (not services in conjunction with their family) even when tribal services are available." (2003 NICWA youth focus group)

Participants felt that the children that most needed help, the children who made bad choices already, were likely to be left out. One participant succinctly captured the essence of this concern, "Yeah, half the people have problems from the life they chose, but what challenges you to change if no one gives you a chance?" (2003 NICWA youth focus group).

What We Do Not Know: Key Elements

There is much that is unknown and unexplored related to AI/AN children and youth and the juvenile justice system. Without reliable knowledge, attempts at mobilizing advocacy efforts have gone without funding and have failed to gain traction. Research can raise awareness of the issues and justify the need for funding to address these issues. Specific areas of focus include the following questions.

About the Youth

- * What is the true nature and character of AI/AN youth in the juvenile justice system (demographics, nature of offences, victims of abuse or neglect, drug and alcohol involvement, gang membership, emotional problems, risk of suicide, educational attainment and special needs, degree to which youth experienced detention, etc.)?
- * How many AI/AN youth are held in (a) adult jails, (b) juvenile detention facilities, (c) juvenile commitment facilities or training schools, and (d) adult prisons? Are these youth over-represented at each stage of the justice system: arrest, detention,

transfer to adult court, adjudication, disposition, and incarceration in juvenile or adult facilities?

- * What is the experience of AI/AN youth in the juvenile justice system? Are their special needs being met? Are they treated differently than other youth?
- * What is the experience of the parents of AI/AN youth in the juvenile justice system? In what ways are they involved?

About the Systems

- * What is the nature and character of current juvenile justice systems and services that serve AI/AN youth and families? Are there culturally authentic support, treatment, and rehabilitation? What are the current recidivism rates of native youth?
- * To what degree are juvenile justice interventions being used in lieu of mental health, child welfare, and educational services that are unavailable?
- * Are tribal religious leaders and native healers gaining frequent access to juvenile correctional facilities to work with and counsel native youth? Are tribal religions and ceremonial practices included in these facilities?
- * What is the nature and character of current tribal juvenile justice systems and services? In what ways are they involved with tribal youth in the custody of the state or the Federal Bureau of Prisons?

Conclusion

Without accurate data, focused interventions to prevent violence and its consequences are not possible. NICWA and two partners, Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA) and Purdue University are developing a system to identify the scope of the problem and possible solutions, as reported by the youth, their families, tribal elders, and their communities. NICWA's research approach is based on the principle of community ownership and participation. In this model, the best way to find answers to these questions is to ask the people who experience high levels of violence in AI/AN communities. Over the next two years, NICWA and its partners PCA and Purdue University will be asking youth,

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elders, parents, and community leaders for their input about violence among their young people. It is anticipated that this first-hand information will provide the voice that is needed to address this issue.

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Strong Juvenile Justice Legislation Passes Senate Committee: Includes Expanded Coordination of JJ and Child Welfare

By Tim Briceland-Betts

This past summer the Senate Judiciary Committee approved legislation to reauthorize and improve the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The legislation, S. 3155, represents the most significant reform of federal juvenile justice law in decades. The Chair of the Committee Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and ranking Republican Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), together with Senator Herbert Kohl (D-WI), introduced the bill. These senators have taken the lead in gaining strong, bipartisan support within the committee.

The bill has been described as representing the most far-reaching reform of juvenile justice since JJDP was originally enacted in 1974. Most significantly for the field of child welfare, it expands efforts to coordinate and integrate juvenile justice with the child welfare system. Other major reforms include (1) enhancing prevention strategies to reduce recidivism and prevent youth from engaging in delinquent and criminal acts, (2) strengthening the core protections in the law when youths are involved with law enforcement, and (3) overhauling the federal, state, and local partnerships in administering and managing juvenile justice.

Although the evidence does not suggest that any single factor accounts for the development of criminal behavior, the importance of childhood victimization as a risk factor for subsequent delinquency and violence has become increasingly recognized. Victims of childhood maltreatment often enter the juvenile justice system and become tomorrow's serious and violent offenders. Children who are abused and neglected are not only more likely than other children to commit delinquent acts as adolescents and crimes as adults, but they are also more likely to experience a range of mental health, substance abuse, occupational, and educational deficiencies during adolescence and adulthood.

To improve the well-being of our nation's most disadvantaged and traumatized children and youth and see sustained reductions in child maltreatment and delinquency, S. 3155 improves the coordination and integration of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Improvements include developing coordinated systems plans, compiling data on dual jurisdiction youth (youth served by both the juvenile

Title V

The Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Program, commonly known as the Community Prevention Grants Program, is a federal grant program to fund collaborative, community-based delinquency prevention efforts to reach youth in high-risk situations before they make poor choices.

Funds have been used for a broad array of prevention programs and activities, including:

- Pre/postnatal strategies like home visitation by nurses;
- Parent training programs;
- Youth development initiatives involving the use of mentoring, after-school activities, tutoring, truancy and drop out reduction;
- Early education and preschool programs; and
- Family-based therapy for young offenders.

Additionally, the program provides local jurisdictions with the resources needed to implement a comprehensive delinquency prevention strategy that is best suited to that community.

justice and child welfare systems), and providing necessary services for the prevention and treatment for victims of child maltreatment who have entered the juvenile justice system and their families. With the implementation of the new law and when these factors are in place, improved outcomes for the children, youth, and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems can be achieved.

In particular the legislation calls on states to provide training and technical assistance to, and consultation with, juvenile justice and child welfare agencies of states and units of local government to develop coordinated plans for early intervention and treatment of youth who have a history of abuse and juveniles who have prior involvement with the juvenile justice system; to compile data reflecting information on juveniles entering the juvenile justice system with a prior reported history as victims of child abuse or neglect through arrest, court intake, probation and parole, juvenile detention, and corrections; and to develop a plan to use the data to provide necessary services for the treatment of victims of child abuse and neglect who have entered, or are at risk of entering, the juvenile justice system.

These improvements will greatly enhance the efforts in many jurisdictions to integrate the two systems. Strengthening the coordination and integration of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems will result in safer communities and better outcomes for children, youth, and families.

see S. 3155, page 12

RECOMMENDED READING

Rethinking Juvenile Justice

By Elizabeth S. Scott and Laurence Steinberg
Published by Harvard University Press (2008, September).
Available for order online at: www.amazon.com/Rethinking-Juvenile-Justice-Elizabeth-Scott/dp/0674030869.

Scott and Steinberg, the two leading scholars in law and adolescent development, offer in their new book a comprehensive way to answer the questions “What should we do with teenagers who commit crimes?” and “Are they children whose offenses are the result of immaturity and circumstances, or are they in fact criminals?”

The authors argue that juvenile justice should be grounded in the best available psychological science, which shows that adolescence is a distinctive state of cognitive and emotional development. Although adolescents are not children, they are also not fully responsible adults.

The book outlines a new developmental model of juvenile justice that recognizes adolescents’ immaturity but also holds them accountable. Developmentally based laws and policies would make it possible for young people who have committed crimes to grow into responsible adults, rather than career criminals, and would lighten the present burden on the legal and prison systems. In the end, this model would better serve the interests of justice, and it would also be less wasteful of money and lives than the harsh and ineffective policies of the last generation.

From Trauma to Tragedy:

CT Girls in Adult Prison

Published by the Office of the Child Advocate (2008, July).
Available online at www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/From_Tauma_to_Tragedy_CT_-_Girls_in_Adult_Prison_7-08.pdf.

Over the past two years, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) conducted weekly site visits, monitored case conferences, and met extensively with DCF and DOC leadership to examine the conditions at York Correctional Institution (YCI), Connecticut’s only prison for adult women. During this time, nearly 250 girls ages 15 - 18 who were tried in the adult criminal system spent time at YCI, which is a maximum security prison. OCA found that YCI cannot meet the unique needs of adolescent girls and that girls in Connecticut require an alternative to YCI.

A Sensible Model for Juvenile Justice

By Jeffery A. Butts
Published by the Youth Transition Funders Group as part of its *Beyond the Tunnel Problem: Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues that Impact Vulnerable Youth Series* (2008, Summer).
Available online at www.ytfg.org/documents/ASensibleModelforJuvenileJusticeSummer2008.pdf.

This paper provides an overview of the current juvenile justice system and offers suggestions for a new model using a

positive youth development approach. To be effective, juvenile justice must be theoretically oriented. The juvenile justice system should focus on reducing the causes of juvenile crime to reduce the effects of juvenile crime, and this requires program models that go beyond mental health services and substance abuse treatment. The majority of youth referred to the juvenile justice system do not have mental health disorders or substance abuse problems. Practitioners need a sensible model of intervention, one that can address the full range of delinquent offenders coming to the attention of law enforcement and the courts. A growing evidence base suggests that one way to build a new model for juvenile justice for all youth would be to draw upon the principles of positive youth development.

The Declining Number of Youth in Custody in the Juvenile Justice System

Research by Antoinette Davis, Chris Tsukida, Susan Marchionna, & Barry Krisberg
Published by The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2008, August).
Available online at www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2008_focus_JJS_custody_decline.pdf.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency’s (NCCD) review of data from OJJDP shows that overall numbers and rates of custody for youth have declined nationwide in the decade since 1997. NCCD examines custody trends by individual states, gender, race/ethnicity, and offense type.

Behaviors of Youth Involved in the Child Welfare System

By Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, Mary C. Ruffolo, Robert M. Ortega, & Jenell Clarke
Published in *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(1), 35–49 (2008, January).
Available to order online at www.sciencedirect.com.

This study examines the predictors of delinquency in a sample of youth involved with the child welfare system.

Results found that the current child welfare delivery system emphasized a change to services to youth experiencing more serious problems and less on preventive services. The findings suggest that preventive services concentrate on enhancing caregiver skills in building positive relationships with youth and that increasing the monitoring of youth’s activity may change the pathway to delinquent behavior for the youth. Data were used from the first national longitudinal study of children in the child welfare system, the National Survey on Child and Adolescent Wellbeing (NSCAW). Findings indicate that older youth were more likely engage in delinquent behaviors than younger youth. Girls were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than boys. Race or ethnicity did not play a significant relationship with engaging in delinquent behaviors. Physically abused youth were more likely to engage

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

On Tuesday, October 7, 2008, President Bush signed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, P.L. 110-351 (Fostering Connections Act) into law. The complete text is available online at www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-6893. Under this new law, families will be eligible to receive significantly expanded federal support, more children in tribal communities will be covered by federal foster care, kinship care, and adoption funding, and many of the 24,000 youth aging out of foster care each year will be eligible for considerably increased benefits. In addition, the new health and education planning requirements will ensure that the health care and education needs of children in care are met. The Fostering Connections Act also expands training to private agencies and allows certain court personnel to now be covered under Title IV-E training.

On December 24, 2008 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued some initial critical instructions (ACYF-CB-PI-08-007) to help states implement the kinship section of the new Fostering Connections Act (P.L. 110-351). The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the department also issued a preprinted plan that states may utilize to amend their plan. The two documents can be obtained by going directly to the Children's Bureau website at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/index.htm. Under the guidance of ACF a state may submit a plan to operate the new kinship program as of the effective date of the law October 7, 2008 but actual claiming starts on the "first day of the quarter in which an approvable plan has been submitted to ACF." Tribes are eligible for the kinship provisions on October 1, 2009 when the overall tribal provisions commence. Any allowable claim for a state means that the child and the relative guardian must meet the eligibility requirements. This includes placement of a child for six consecutive months with a prospective relative guardian who is licensed or approved as meeting the licensing requirements as a foster family home. The Program Instruction (PI) also clarifies that kinship placements may, under certain conditions, be extended up to age 21; however these options will not be available until October 1, 2010 when the new option to extend foster care up to age 21 is implemented.

The PI does not answer all the outstanding issues with regard to the new law or the kinship provisions, including issues around notifying relatives when a child comes into care, but it does provide some much needed first steps for states seeking to expand their kinship programs or seeking to draw down Title IV-E funds to support kinship care in a crisis-budget atmosphere that many states now face. The kinship care program is optional so it is difficult to determine which states may take the option. In the past, many states have relied on other funding sources such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance programs as a way to at least partially fund kinship programs. Enactment of such a major initiative now means that CWLA's focus in the new Congress and next Administration will involve advancing the rest of child welfare finance reform.

in delinquent behaviors than neglected youth. Youth at greatest risk received more child welfare services than youth not at risk. The children were selected from 97 counties in 8 states, N=6,231, ages birth to 14, who had contact with the child welfare system within a 15-month period beginning in October 1999.

Transitions and Turning Points: Examining the Links between Child Maltreatment and Juvenile Offending

By Anna Stewart, Michael Livingston, & Susan Dennison
Published in *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(1), 51-66 (2008, January).

Available to order online at www.sciencedirect.com.

This study examines the impact that timing and chronicity of child maltreatment have on juvenile offending.

The study found that when children moved from primary to secondary school was when they were likely to experience maltreatment. Four of six identified maltreatment trajectories peaked around the children's school transitions. The study

also found that maltreatment trajectories were a significant predictor of juvenile offending. The findings support previous research findings from Smith et al., 2005; Thornberry et al., 2001.* The study provided new insights to assist in unraveling the relationship between timing and frequency of the maltreatment and subsequent offending as a juvenile. Understanding the relationship between maltreatment and school transitions provides an opportunity to target intervention programs to help the children. Strategies should include family support and education around school transitions to help parents support and manage their children through these critical times. Specific programs should be used to target the needs of indigenous young people and adolescent girls. Data were obtained on all children born in Queensland, Australia in 1983 or 1984 and had contact with child protective services for at least one child protection matter (N=5,849). Information was obtained until the child reached the age of 17. The data was analyzed using the Semi-Parametric Group-Based trajectory analysis (Nagin & Land, 1993). The children's gender and indigenous status and the nature of maltreatment were examined.

* For reference citations, see full article.

from S. 3155, page 9

S. 3155 significantly expands federal support for delinquency prevention, perhaps the single most effective way of turning youth away from crime and problematic behavior and towards successful adulthood. The legislation expands the use of proven effective prevention programs. Research studies show that when youth are provided safe, structured, supervised, and healthy activities in which to participate, they are less likely to become involved in the high-risk, unhealthy behaviors that can derail positive development.

The legislation enhances federal support for evidence-based, effective prevention strategies to be employed by juvenile justice agencies. S. 3155 provides guidance about specific research, technical assistance, and training efforts to be conducted in a manner that benefits states and communities, nationwide.

The bill increases authorized federal funding of prevention, intervention, and treatment programs designed to reduce the incidence of juvenile crime. It increases funding for critical Title V prevention programs to discourage juvenile contact with the justice system, such as mentoring and aftercare. In addition, it increases federal authorizations to assist states in achieving and maintaining compliance with the JJDPA's goals and particularly its core requirements.

Federal funding has been woefully inadequate to sufficiently support the JJDPA and youth in turning their lives away from problematic behavior. In fact, between FY 2002 and FY 2007, federal funds were cut by more than 40%. Funding was partly restored in FY 2008 by a 12% increase. Juvenile justice programs such as the Title V Delinquency Prevention Grant program and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant program have experienced similar drastic cuts in funding.

Significant increases are necessary to better meet the service and program needs of vulnerable youth. Increased funding is also required for crime prevention, rehabilitation, and alternatives to incarceration as effective strategies to reduce youth crime. While congressional decisions on appropriations do not necessarily track closely with authorized spending, S. 3155 makes a clear and convincing case to substantially boost funding.

The JJDPA includes four core protections for youth who come in contact with law enforcement. These protections include (1) the deinstitutionalization of status offenders, (2) jail removal, (3) sight and sound separation from adults in those instances when juveniles are incarcerated in adult facilities, and (4) addressing disproportionate minority contact. These core protections should be strengthened to ensure fair and proper treatment of youth.

Language in the bill gradually phases out the practice of incarcerating status offenders. The bill includes greater emphasis on removing juveniles from detention facilities, especially adult jails and lockups, and in particular while youths are awaiting trial. It allows states to continue to

place youth convicted in adult court in juvenile facilities without jeopardizing federal funding. S. 3155 would permit many states to continue allowing youth convicted in adult court to serve their sentence in juvenile facilities until they reach the extended juvenile jurisdiction age. Under current law, states can be penalized for utilizing these more appropriate and humane placements for youth. In addition, language is strengthened regarding sight and sound separation from adults for those youth who are in facilities with adults.

The provision on disproportionate minority contact (DMC), in particular, is strengthened under S. 3155, which calls for specific and intentional strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. S. 3155 gives clear direction to states and localities to plan and implement data-driven approaches to ensure fairness and to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, to set measurable objectives for DMC reduction, and to publicly report on progress.

The legislation places significant new emphasis on the crucial issues of mental health and substance abuse, including expanding the allowable uses of grant funds for mental health and substance abuse training and treatment, encouraging states to focus more on these needs, and providing new incentive grants for these purposes.

S. 3155 calls for the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to report annually on state data regarding the uses of isolation and restraints in juvenile detention and corrections facilities, and encourages training of facility staff to eliminate dangerous practices. S. 3155 also requires states to develop policies, procedures, and training on effective behavior management designed to eliminate dangerous practices, unreasonable restraints, and isolation.

Reentry efforts are significantly expanded. Provisions in the bill call on communities to describe the living arrangement to which the juvenile is to be discharged and establish a plan for the enrollment of the juvenile in postrelease health care; behavioral health care; educational and vocational training; family support; public assistance; and legal services programs, as appropriate.

The legislation overhauls and strengthens the relationship between the federal OJJDP and state and local agencies. Language in the bill regarding accountability is reinforced. New requirements are included whereby OJJDP and the states will make reports public and timely, and increase accountability and transparency at the federal level regarding all aspects of JJDPA implementation. Priority is given to OJJDP's research and technical assistance (TA) functions to supporting states' efforts to comply with the core protections in the JJDPA.

Given that there are in effect hundreds of different juvenile justice systems throughout the United States and its territories, it is critical that juvenile justice have a dedicated focus and a home within the federal government for purposes of developing national policies, objectives, priorities

and plans, and for providing guidance, support and oversight to states/territories in implementing the JJDP.

OJJDP is the agency charged with responsibility for juvenile justice at the U.S. Department of Justice and is statutorily tasked with carrying out its purposes through research, policies, and grants to states and localities to assist them in planning, establishing, operating, coordinating, and evaluating projects for the development of more effective education, training, research, prevention, diversion, treatment, and rehabilitation in the areas of juvenile delinquency prevention and systems improvements.

The JJDP was first enacted in 1974 and was long overdue for major overhaul. The legislation passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee will make many significant improvements and needs to be passed into law and fully implemented. Our children, youth, and communities deserve no less.

Sources for this article include the Campaign for Youth Justice (cfyj.org) and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (cjj.org).

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from *Commercial*, page 5

needs, including medical, emotional, mental health, and legal. Therefore, a variety of systems must be engaged to provide a safety net around the victim, including law enforcement, child protective services, legal advocacy, and the juvenile justice system. As described by MacInness (1998), "[t]he members of the team work in concert and they operate from knowledge based on understanding 'the game'." To ensure that this partnership is grounded in a mutual understanding of the needs of prostituted girls, focused training on commercial sexual exploitation for all service providers (including law enforcement) is paramount (Raphael, 2004).

Only through coordinated service provision will you reduce the likelihood that a victim will fall through the cracks. Any response must be predicated on the fundamental belief that victims of commercial sexual exploitation are victims of a particularly insidious form of child sexual abuse. Switching between responding to a young woman as if she were a victim and responding to her as if she were a perpetrator will not result in the trust or service provision necessary to help her exit and recover.

Examples of such collaborations exist throughout the United States, including the SEEN Coalition (Support to End Exploitation Now) in the Boston area. With a collective

CJJR Certificate Program Website Posting

The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute is launching its 2009 Certificate Programs designed to advance cross-systems work to improve outcomes for youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Through the generous support of Casey Family Programs and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, participants will be able to benefit from expert guidance and professional resources to support their work across the juvenile justice and related systems of care. Individuals and jurisdictions will also receive financial support to help subsidize the travel, lodging, and tuition for the Certificate Program.

Public agency leaders and senior level management at the state, local, and tribal levels within the juvenile justice, child welfare, and related systems of care who are interested in and committed to cross-systems efforts are encouraged to apply. In particular, directors and senior staff from juvenile probation and corrections, child welfare, education, substance abuse and mental health agencies; juvenile, family, and tribal court judges; prosecutors or public defenders; as well as political leaders, senior staff and representatives from governor's offices, state legislatures, tribes, county commissions, and city councils, would benefit from this program.

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goal of increasing awareness of, identification of, and service provision to commercially sexually exploited adolescents, project partners developed Multidisciplinary Team Guidelines launched in October 2006. These guidelines ensure that within 48 hours of any agency identifying a girl or boy being exploited through prostitution, representatives from all relevant agencies (including law enforcement, child protective services, medical providers, district attorneys, etc.) convene to work in collaboration with the victim to develop an immediate service plan aimed at ensuring her safety and planning for her recovery. It is important to note that though the model is predicated on a victim's choice about exit and planning, the team will convene to exchange information and provide support, whether the victim is ready to receive these services or not. If the victim is not yet ready to receive services, the collaboration ensures that she does not fall through the cracks of the system (SEEN, 2008).

Principles of Successful Programming for CSEC Victims

Ideally, once identified and offered services, prostituted girls may begin the process of recovery. It is imperative that services for this population are tailored and specific, though they may be developed within existing programs and systems. Adolescent females in the process of exiting the commercial sex industry need a service provision that emphasizes four main treatment themes: safety, trauma recovery, relationship development/consistency, and survivors involved in service development and provision.

Prevention

Literature focused on treatment of victims of commercial sexual exploitation consistently points to the importance of prevention education (NCMEC, 2002; Priebe & Suhr, 2005; GEMS, 2006). Best practices related to the prevention of sexual exploitation of girls through prostitution are an area of research that is undocumented to date. The Paul & Lisa Program, Fair Fund, and GEMS use a well-constructed training program for youth in public schools as well as group homes and juvenile justice facilities. Nationwide, few agencies are engaging in primary prevention that has a demonstrated effectiveness, and those engaged in secondary and tertiary prevention lack an evidence-based curriculum to utilize in order to meet their goals.

An example of a project aimed at offering primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention to a population of particularly vulnerable girls (including those in group care settings) is the *My Life, My Choice* Project in Massachusetts. Co-written by a clinician and a survivor, the group work component of the *My Life, My Choice* Project utilizes a 10-session curriculum presented in weekly 1 1/4-hour modules. The sessions include material on dispelling myths and stereotypes about commercial sexual exploitation, awareness of recruitment tactics by pimps, information on sexual health, resource lists, strategies for exit, and an overarching emphasis on improving self-esteem. In addition, the participants hear throughout the 10 weeks both written and live testimony by women who have been in the Life. The sessions include

engaging interactive activities (e.g., games, role-plays), art, music, reading, and journaling. Evaluations of the *My Life, My Choice* group work component have shown a positive impact on the young women involved.

Victims or Perpetrators?

While prostitution is considered a criminal activity in the United States, the young women who find themselves manipulated, beaten, and raped into submitting to multiple tricks each night of the week are not criminals. On any given day, you will find these victims in our lock up facilities, our group homes, our foster homes, or lost in our communities. Until we recognize this degrading form of victimization for what it is, and pledge to provide better care and better understanding, girls like Heather will be alone in our systems of care. Until we reach out and name the prostitution of children as victimization, this trauma will not end.

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* To learn more about identifying youth who are at-risk for commercialized sexual exploitation—or if you would like additional information about training for prevention, direct intervention, and successful programming—please visit www.thehome.org or contact the author at lgoldblattgrace@thehome.org.