

Florida Department of Children and Families

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
Children's Cabinet Meeting
Thursday, July 26, 2012



Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

What we know about child victims of human trafficking:

- In general, they are identified at around 15 years of age but they self-report that entry into the sex trade is between the ages of 12-13
- Have a history of sexual abuse and ongoing substance abuse, habitual runaway behavior
- Suffer from "traumatic bonding" - perpetrators instill a combined sense of fear and gratitude as a form of coercive control
- Physical harm can include drug and alcohol addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, sterility, physical injury
- Fear, distrust, shame, self-hatred, suicidal thoughts are among the possible psychological impacts
- As of 07-25-12, there are 100 victims under Department supervision

Passage of Florida Safe Harbor Act

- Effective January 2013, DCF is authorized to license and place dependent children in specialized "Safe Houses"
- The definition of a sexually exploited child is expanded to include a child involved in prostitution activities who is not under arrest or being prosecuted for prostitution
- DJJ and law enforcement can release a child for emergency shelter or short-term safe house placement
- Child victims of sexual exploitation will be assessed through review of law enforcement reports, psychological testing or evaluations, current or historical information from therapists or teachers who know the child and other information that helps determine the suitability of a safe house placement

Safe Houses Initiative in Miami-Dade

- A local task force has been established in Miami with representation from law enforcement, state attorney, child advocates, school officials, DJJ, Our Kids, and Refugee Services and community treatment providers
- Kristi House has received \$1 million in funding from combined private contributions and a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop short term treatment services
- His House is in the process of obtaining local private contributions to develop a long-term treatment program for victims
- Other work products under development:
 - establish criteria for legal issues including judicial reviews, case plans and attorney representation of child
 - develop and implement training requirements for law enforcement, child protective investigators and case managers

Additional DCF activities surrounding child victims of sexual exploitation

- Youth who are known to the department who may be involved in prostitution are now tracked in our FSFN Missing Children Program
- Florida's placement practices for children in group homes is under review to determine what specialized services and program models can offer the most successful therapeutic approach for the needs of victims
- Planning is under way to identify statewide implementation of short and long-term Safe Houses in other jurisdictions

Upcoming training opportunity

The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and the Florida State University Center for the Advancement of Human Rights
HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUMMIT
Monday, September 24, 2012
1:00 – 6:00 p.m. E.S.T.
Turnbull Center • 555 W Pensacola Street • Tallahassee, FL 32306
Participation available through interactive webinar
