

Serving Young Adults Involved with Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and/or Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) are serious social and public health problems that are not limited to adolescents. However, TAY involved with child welfare are at an increased risk for involvement. The Human Trafficking of Children DCF Practice Guide is a thorough resource with detailed information, definitions, and resources including:

Children Exploitation - the act of using a minor child for profit, labor, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage

Child Sex Trafficking - under the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) any child under age 18 that is exploited through commercial sex where something of value - such as money, drugs, items, or a place to stay is given for sexual activity, is a victim of child sex trafficking. Note: Evidence of force, fraud, or coercion is not required for minors under the age of 18.

Trafficking in Persons - the TVPA defines "severe forms of trafficking in persons "as:

Sex Trafficking - the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provisions, obtaining, patronizing or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to performs such an act has not attained 18 years of age; and

Labor Trafficking - the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provisions or obtaining a person for labor or services, using force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Who are the survivors of DMST/CSEC?

DMST/CSEC is one of the most prevalent yet hidden forms of child abuse in the United States. Survivors are diverse in age, race, and socioeconomic status. Many DMST/CSEC victims are involved in state-level systems including the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system.

Children are vulnerable because their brains are still developing, because they depend on adults for safety and resources, and because they lack many basic legal rights. There are certain risk factors that place a child at risk of being approached by traffickers and being trafficked:

- Homelessness or frequently running away - this includes youth in group homes and the foster care system
- youth who are LGBTQI+
- undocumented youth

- those with a history of complex traumatic stress—resulting from continuous exposure to family dysfunction, trauma, sexual abuse, and other forms of abuse or harassment (i.e. bullying)
- youth with developing abilities
- in the United States, youth of color are 4 times more likely to be trafficked than white children

The after-effects of DMST/CSEC faced by children include long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease drug addiction, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, social ostracism, and even death.

What is DCF doing to address and prevent DMST/CSEC?

DCF has coordinated this important work under the Office of Human Trafficking Services - Clinical & Community Services Division. DCF has crafted a DMST/CSEC response and put forth tremendous efforts to address this at the state and national level. Since 2008, over 800 children have been referred to DCF as possible victims of DMST/CSEC. In October 2014 DCF received a \$1 million federal grant to improve Connecticut's response to child victims of domestic sex trafficking. The five-year grant supported DCF's efforts to coordinate the response by local and state agencies, including law enforcement and the medical community, so that victims of sex trafficking receive effective and comprehensive treatment and legal services.

The Department's response to and handling of these cases continues to be modified to ensure better outcomes for those who have been victimized or are at risk of victimization. The Department established the Human Antitrafficking Response Team (HART) to provide an improved statewide focus on the issue, specifically; (1) identification and response, (2) awareness and education and (3) restoration and recovery.

All team members working with adolescents should be aware of the risks and warning signs of DMST/CSEC and take advantage of the training opportunities available in the Department.

Resources:

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| Special Populations | Human Trafficking Policy | 21-14 |
| Human Trafficking of Children Practice Guide | | November 2020 |
| Approved curricula on the Training of Child Trafficking in CT | | |
| Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team | | DCFHART@ct.gov |