



Human Trafficking and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Population

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS SEX TRAFFICKING AND LABOR TRAFFICKING

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines victims of Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons both as victims of labor trafficking and minor victims of sex trafficking.¹ According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center between 2007 and 2012, 74% of reported child trafficking cases involved sex trafficking. Additionally, they found that children make up 72% of labor trafficking cases involving peddling rings and 25% of cases of traveling sales crews.²

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ARE VULNERABLE TO BOTH FORMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Many factors contribute to the overall number of homeless youth each year, but common reasons are family dysfunction, exiting the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and sexual abuse. Research has shown that 21-42% of runaway and homeless youth were sexually abused before they left their homes.³ These young people often flee abuse and violence at home, but are exposed to further sexual victimization and human trafficking once on the street.

Less than 4% of all adolescents exchange sex for money,⁴ however 28% of youth living on the street and 10% of those in shelters engage in ‘survival sex’ in exchange for food, shelter or money.⁵ If a youth has already been a victim of abuse, it increases the odds that he or she will exchange sex for shelter, food or other basic needs (often called “survival sex”).⁶ A Las Vegas shelter for youth found that 71% of domestic minor sex trafficking survivors

1 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, PL 106–386, October 28, 2000, 114 Stat 1464.

2 Human Trafficking Trends in the United States: National Human Trafficking Resource Center (2007-2012), The Polaris Project, accessed June 23, 2014 at <http://www.polarisproject.org/resources/hotline-statistics/human-trafficking-trends-in-the-united-states>

3 Jody M. Greene et al., U.S. Dep’t of Health and Human Services Admin. on Children, Youth and Families, HHS-100-99-0006, Sexual Abuse Among Homeless Adolescents: Prevalence, Correlates, and Sequelae 2-9 (2002), available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/sex_abuse_hmless.pdf.

4 J.M. Edwards, B.J. Iritani, & D.D. Hallfors, Prevalence and Correlates of Exchanging Sex for Drugs and Money Among Adolescents in the United States, 82 Sexual Transmitted Infections 354, 355 (2006), available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2563846/pdf/354.pdf>.

5 Jody M. Greene, Susan T. Ennett, & Christopher L. Ringwalt, Prevalence and Correlates of Survival Sex Among Runaway and Homeless Youth, 89 Am. J. Pub. Health 1406, 1408 (1999), available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1508758/pdf/amjph00009-0102.pdf>. See also

6 Kristen Finklea, Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, & Alison Siskin, Congressional Research Serv., R41878, Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States 6 (2014).

had been sexually abused.⁷ A New York City provider of services to homeless youth found that approximately one in four youth had been a victim of sex trafficking or had engaged in survival sex, and that 48% of those who engaged in a commercial sex activity did so because they didn't have a safe place to stay.⁸

Homeless youth are also vulnerable to labor trafficking because the traffickers promise them what they don't have, food, housing and employment. In a survey conducted with ATEST, of the homeless youth providers that screened for child labor trafficking, each program had identified at least one labor trafficked youth.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS PROVIDE PREVENTION AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) funded programs have experience providing youth at risk of being trafficked with a safe place to stay and offer services to survivors of trafficking to help them heal from the trauma they have faced. Street Outreach

Programs (SOP) were first funded to provide services to “runaway, homeless, and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse.”⁹ Each year, 25,000 youth find shelter with the support of Street Outreach Program staff¹⁰ and are able to escape further victimization on the streets.

Basic Center Programs (BCP) provide emergency shelter (currently up to 21 days) to homeless youth who are at risk of human trafficking. These programs work with the youth and, when appropriate, their family to help them find secure and stable housing. In 2013, 94% of young people who stayed in BCP programs had safe and appropriate exits, and 72% were reunited with their families. Transitional Living Programs (TLP) provide longer-term housing (up to 21 months) and supportive services to older youth so that they can achieve self-sufficiency into adulthood. In 2013, 88% of youth in Transitional Living Programs (TLP) exited into safe environments.¹¹

⁷ Linda A. Smith, Samantha Healy Vardaman & Melissa A. Snow, Shared Hope International, The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children 31-32 (2009) available at http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, PL 103-322, September 13, 1994, 108 Stat 1796.

¹⁰ National Clearing House on Families & Youth, Safeguarding the Future for Those Most At Risk 8 (2013), available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/rhy_outcomes.pdf.

¹¹ USDHHS, TLP – Safe and Appropriate Exits: Standards Report, National Extranet Optimized Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (NEO-RHYMIS) (July 2, 2014, 5:47 PM)

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Provides:

Street Outreach Programs
Outreach to runaway, homeless and human trafficked youth to build relationships and refer youth to vital services at street locations and drop-in centers

Basic Center Programs

Temporary housing with crisis intervention services to minors including counseling, family reunification and aftercare.

Transitional Living Programs

Longer-term housing with supportive services for homeless 16 to 21 year olds, including education, job preparation, health care—funds Maternity Group Homes.

National Study of the Prevalence, Needs and Characteristics of Homeless Youth in America

Collects data about the runaway and homeless youth population in the United States in order to scale-to-need the prevention and crisis intervention services homeless youth need to thrive.