

**Understanding Community Needs and Priorities for Preventing  
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth:  
A Funder's Framework for Addressing Prevention**



**Developed for Daughters of Charity Foundation of St. Louis  
Submitted by Cindy Follman, Consultant**

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# **Understanding Community Needs and Priorities for Preventing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth: A Funder’s Framework for Addressing Prevention**

## **Introduction**

St. Louis has been identified as a hub for human trafficking by both local and national experts. In fact, the federal government found that St. Louis is one of the top 20 human trafficking regions in the country, largely due to its central location amidst an interlocking and cross-through interstate highway system, as well as its role as a host city for many large sporting and cultural events and conventions (Heil and Nichols, 2015).

While awareness of human trafficking has grown significantly in recent years, it has only more recently become an area of more significant public concern in the St. Louis region. In 2014, the Joseph H. and Florence A. Roblee Foundation published a research study to identify promising practices of youth prevention programs and curricula that address commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). At the time of the Roblee Foundation study, there was little in the way of CSEC youth prevention programs operating in the St. Louis region. While there has been some small growth in sex trafficking prevention programming for youth in the region, there remains a significant lack of programming to prevent our youth from falling prey to CSEC.

This gap in local prevention efforts is of great concern to the Daughters of Charity Foundation of St. Louis (DCFSL) staff, and they determined that it needed to be addressed with some immediacy. With this need in mind, DCFSL reviewed its funding focus areas, and decided to expand its Youth Empowerment area to include human trafficking, specifically CSEC. Yet, before determining further specificity or parameters for this additional funding area, DCFSL wanted to gain a greater understanding of the local efforts currently underway to address sex trafficking, as well as what the community stakeholders working in this service area think are the greatest prevention needs and priorities to address at this time. DCFSL wanted to find out if prevention is considered a critical need by local stakeholders, and if so, how should it best be addressed and achieved? Further, as a fragmented region, is there a need for a more coordinated or collaborative sex trafficking education and awareness prevention strategy across the St. Louis region?

The research questions posed by DCFSL included:

- What is the community’s current understanding of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) or sex trafficking in general?
- Is youth prevention education and awareness a key need locally in fighting CSEC and sex trafficking?
- What are the community’s priorities and critical needs for CSEC prevention education and awareness efforts?

To research these questions, DCFSL engaged local stakeholders in focus groups to gather information and input and to facilitate further connection between them.

The term “human trafficking” encompasses both sex and labor trafficking, and can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but the focus of this research report is on sex trafficking, and more specifically, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. This report provides a brief overview of sex trafficking at both the local and national levels, key findings based on data collection from focus groups and literature/website review, and recommendations of strategies for DCFSL and the broader funding community to support, develop and further build an active war chest to prevent CSEC, and to support all our children and youth in living safe, healthy, and productive lives.

## Definitions

- The term, “human trafficking” is often misunderstood as it can mean many different things and typically comprises both sex and labor trafficking. This report focuses on sex trafficking, specifically the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth (CSEC). “Sex trafficking,” as defined by the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), as reauthorized through 2013, is “a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (Heil and Nichols, 2015, p. 6).
- The latter part of the above TVPA definition is what is meant by CSEC, and can include child sex trafficking, child pornography, and child sex tourism, among others. CSEC can be “defined as the sexual abuse of a minor ‘entirely, or at least primarily, for financial or other economic reasons. The economic exchanges involved may be either monetary or non-monetary (i.e., for food, shelter, drugs, etc.)’” (Estes and Weiner, 2002 as cited by Walker, 2013, pp. 5-6).
- Children and youth in this paper are defined as those at or below the age of 21.
- Victim and survivor are used throughout the paper interchangeably to refer to an individual/youth who has been trafficked.

## Methodology

### Stakeholder identification and selection:

- The consultant worked with DCFSL staff to identify key stakeholders who either work to address trafficking directly in the St. Louis region, or who work with those youth who are most vulnerable to trafficking.
- In addition, the consultant spoke with Andrea Nichols, Lecturer and Anti-Trafficking Initiative Coordinator, Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis and Sociology Professor, St. Louis Community College; Amanda Colegrove, Director, Coalition Against Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE), Crime Victim Advocacy Center; and Amanda Mohl, Anti-Trafficking Community Coordinator, International Institute of St. Louis, to learn more about the current state of trafficking prevention in the St. Louis region, and to further identify individuals across sectors who are addressing trafficking through service provision, anti-trafficking coalition work, law and justice work, or those working with high-risk youth in the areas of foster care, homelessness, education, neighborhood services, etc.
- Based on a fully compiled, cross-sector stakeholder list, DCFSL staff sent email invitations to stakeholders to request their participation in one of four upcoming focus groups to address human trafficking in the St. Louis region. An accompanying link to an online Doodle Poll was also included for stakeholders to select among several date/time options. (See Appendix A for organizations represented.)

### Focus group preparation and facilitation:

- A focus group script including an introduction, overview of the focus group process, and 7 overarching questions was developed by the consultant, and was also reviewed prior to use by local human trafficking research expert, Andrea Nichols, for input. Once four of the focus group dates were filled, they were scheduled with the stakeholders available on those specific dates. (See Appendix B for focus group outline/script.)
- Focus group attendees were diverse in terms of sector, geographic location, race, and gender. The four focus groups were held on: Tuesday, August 9 from 2-4 PM with 7 attendees; Tuesday, August 16 from 9-11 AM with 9 attendees; Wednesday, August 17 from 2-4 PM with 9 attendees; and Thursday, August 18 from 9-11 AM with 8 attendees. All meetings were held at 231 S. Bemiston in Clayton, Missouri, which is the building in which DCFSL’s office is housed. All focus groups were held

in a main floor conference room, and were facilitated by the consultant. The facilitator took notes on flip chart paper throughout the focus group sessions, and a separate recorder took written notes throughout each session, which were then shared with the facilitator to use in conjunction with her flip chart notes.

- All focus group attendees were told that the information that they shared would be kept confidential and would not be identified by speaker in the report, unless specific permission was granted. In addition, attendees were told that they could leave or stop participating in the focus group at any time. With the exception of one individual who had to leave early for another meeting, all participants remained in the group for the full time. Focus group flip charts and written notes were transcribed by facilitator and recorder, respectively.

#### Literature and internet review:

- In addition to conducting the four focus groups, the consultant also reviewed relevant literature and websites to better understand the local prevention needs, what efforts are underway already, and how others view the issue of trafficking at this time. Local and national literature, information on local social service providers' websites, media, and government website information were all reviewed. The consultant also attended a couple of local programs on the issue, where further information about the issue locally was shared and addressed.

#### Data analysis:

- Using the key research questions as a guide, the consultant then analyzed all collected data. Common themes were identified from the data collected across the four focus groups, and then further supported by similar themes and evidence identified in reviewed literature and websites. From the data analysis, the consultant developed the key findings and recommendations that are included in this report.

### **Methodology Limitations**

There are several limitations to the data collected and analyzed for this report:

- The research data and literature on sex trafficking and CSEC is extremely limited regarding prevalence and evidence-based prevention practices. There are some curriculum-based approaches that have been in practice for longer periods of time that show promise, though most were not reviewed for this particular project. More information on these curricula were included in the 2014 Roblee Foundation report previously referenced. Intervention practices are slightly more researched, and can provide promising practices to survivor support and recovery.
- The focus groups were each comprised of 7-9 individuals from different sectors. The participants self-selected the focus groups that best fit their schedule, and then DCFSL staff determined final focus group dates and times based on majority attendance. Therefore, participants, including survivors, varied across focus groups in terms of knowledge of the issue, familiarity with co-participants, expertise, and biases depending on their own background and experience with the issue. The data is a reflection of all the different voices and experiences that came together in each focus group on the somewhat random basis of schedule/availability. A different combination of participants in any one group might have yielded different data.
- In some groups, there were participants who either spoke a great deal or who did not speak much at all. While the facilitator encouraged all participants to engage, some voices were not heard as much as others, which impacted the information and viewpoints reflected in the data.
- Because the facilitator and the recorder were both taking notes during the focus group sessions and are not as familiar with trafficking as those who work directly in it, there is a distinct possibility that

some of the notes taken or understanding of the information shared, may not have been as thoroughly captured or as reflective of the speaker's intent. In many cases, the facilitator or the recorder asked clarifying questions to ensure understanding, but this limitation still exists.

- Language use and terminology were repeatedly identified as barriers to trafficking prevention in the focus groups and literature. For example, googling "human trafficking" provided significantly less information than searching for "commercial sexual exploitation of children." Given the variety of ways trafficking is expressed, understood, and addressed, the information that surfaces can be distinct and not comprehensive.

### **Issue Overview**

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), passed into federal legislation in 2000, and reauthorized most recently in 2013, sex trafficking is defined as: "A commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age" (Heil and Nichols, 2015, p. 6). Missouri and Illinois state statutes generally follow the federal legislation, with slightly broader definitions of intent, which is important in terms of how the case is tried (2015, p. 7).

The FBI "estimates that 100,000 children are sold for sex each year in the United States, and as many as 300,000 children are at risk of becoming victims of CSE in the United States" (Walker, 2013, p. 9). These are estimates because there is very little data on the prevalence of sex trafficking in the United States. This lack of data is the result of many different definitions and interpretations of sex trafficking, the use of different measurement systems, and its hidden nature. The research that is available on prevalence "largely draws from cases reported to or uncovered by law enforcement, prosecuted cases, and reports from social service agencies" (Nichols, 2016, p. 11). In addition, it is difficult to determine the true prevalence of sex trafficking as data varies from report to report, and there is no central reporting mechanism at the national or local levels. The lack of clear and consistent data in this area is a significant gap in the research and understanding of the reach of sex trafficking in the United States (Colegrove, presentation, Sept. 15, 2016; Nichols, 2016, pp. 11-16). What is known is that the demand for survivor services, based on studies assessing those working closely with survivors (i.e., police officers, social service providers, and prosecutors), greatly exceeds the supply of needed services (Nichols, 2016, p. 15).

St. Louis has been identified as one of the top 20 human trafficking jurisdiction by the federal government. There are multiple reasons for this including its central location in the country amidst an interconnecting network of interstate highways, the location of a major convention center, many sports and entertainment venues that attract high tourism, and a significant adult entertainment presence just to the east, all which make it an environment in which sex trafficking can survive and thrive. The St. Louis region also has two significant populations that are extremely vulnerable to trafficking and traffickers: runaway and homeless youth, and a sizeable immigrant and refugee community (Heil and Nichols, 2015, p. 13).

In the St. Louis region, sex trafficking occurs in urban, suburban, and rural areas regardless of socio-economic status. Low-income, working class, middle class, and wealthy communities are all susceptible to trafficking (Heil and Nichols, 2015, pp. 52-53). Trafficking can happen to anyone across gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and race. However, the risk factors for some demographic groups are higher than those of others, which is reflected in the known data. As Heil and Nichols state, "It cannot be ignored that a disproportionate number of victims in the St. Louis area were female African American youth, at least as depicted in federally prosecuted cases" (Heil and Nichols, 2015, p.

54). This finding is also reflected in research studies of other major cities in the United States, and “is consistent with national federal data [2013, U.S. Department of Justice], finding that while African Americans make up roughly thirteen percent of the population, they compose forty percent of sex trafficking victims” (2015, p. 54).

It is common for CSEC to begin in early adolescence, often between the ages of 11 and 14 (Walker, 2013, p. 9). Risk factors for CSEC include: younger age; a history of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) or exposure to domestic violence; parental or youth alcohol and substance abuse; truancy; runaways and/or homeless youth; involvement with child welfare agencies, including child protective services or foster care placement; and a lack of basic necessities (2013, pp. 19-20). Youth who identify as LGBTQ, are disabled, or who are part of an immigrant or refugee population, are also more vulnerable to sex trafficking.

Traffickers can consist of pimps, family members, peers, and “boyfriends.” As many focus group participants stated and Heil and Nichols corroborate, “the primary aim of the trafficker is to make money, and to reduce the risk of getting caught” (2015, p. 88). Traffickers typically target those who are most vulnerable, and therefore easier to manipulate and deceive (Walker, 2013, p. 18). Traffickers often recruit youth by trying to fulfill their basic needs, whether the need is food and shelter, or a caring or loving presence in their lives. Once they have engaged the youth, they use different types of control by putting barriers in place to prevent the youth from leaving or running away. These barriers or sources of control may include taking away documentation or identification, physical or emotional abuse, deception and/or fear-mongering. Moving the youth from one city to another, or even from hotel to hotel, can also create a barrier to leaving as the youth become disoriented and do not know where they are. Both CSEC recruitment and the selling of sex have become even more widespread and elusive through traffickers’ increased use of the internet as a primary vehicle for sex trafficking recruitment and sales (Heil and Nichols, 2015, pp. 88-104).

The most common forms of CSEC identified in the St. Louis region are boyfriend-related and survival sex. Fraud and family-related trafficking also occurs in the St. Louis region (Heil and Nichols, 2015, pp. 103-104). These same forms of trafficking were also identified as most predominant in the St. Louis region by focus group participants. Heil and Nichols summarize trafficking in the St. Louis region as, “complex, multifaceted, and involved many shades of grey. Vulnerability as runaways, truants, poor home lives, disability, LGBTQ status, and poverty intersected to create an environment prime for traffickers and buyers to exploit youth and adults” (2015, p. 104).

### **Local Efforts**

The St. Louis region has many organizations providing strong prevention efforts, including legislation, advocacy, and programming. While some are specific to sex-trafficking prevention, others provide strong prevention programming that support sex-trafficking prevention through a focus on self-care and self-development that aim to keep youth healthy, productive, and safe.

The St. Louis region consists of multiple anti-trafficking coalitions that work together and individually to raise education and awareness about human trafficking (including labor trafficking). These groups include: Coalition Against Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE), Rescue and Restore Coalition of the International Institute, and the St. Charles Coalition Against Human Trafficking, among others. A small cadre of social service organizations specifically serve sex trafficking survivors in a residential setting, and engage them in critical, trauma-informed intervention and recovery efforts. Some of these organizations include: The Covering House, Magdalene House, and Healing Action. These groups work

to prevent survivor re-entry into trafficking, and a couple also provide regular informational presentations to the community on trafficking. Crisis Aid International, which also operates a local, CSE-survivor safe house, and The Covering House have also developed curricula to be used in schools and with other youth to prevent first-time trafficking.

Many social service agencies that work with youth who are at-risk and very vulnerable to trafficking provide prevention programming that addresses healthy relationships and sexuality, healthy decision-making, youth leadership, job skills training and internship programming, and violence prevention and safety. Many such programs were mentioned by focus group participants, including those provided by organizations such as Girls, Inc., St. Louis Internship Program, Safe Connections, Wyman, The SPOT, Alive and Well St. Louis, Chaffee program (Epworth), Planned Parenthood, and more. In addition, a specific national curriculum, the I AM Empowerment project, was brought to the St. Louis region by a group of local funders, including DCFSL, that is now being piloted by CATE in partnership with Hoyleton Youth and Family Services, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition, Youth in Need, and Epworth.

Local legislators and advocacy groups have fought for and been successful with the passing of important legislation criminalizing sex trafficking and protecting victims. Most recently, Missouri HB 1562 was passed and enacted, which allowed for the criminalization of advertising the availability of a minor or nonconsenting adult for prostitution or pornography, and strengthened the Safe At Home program by providing for increased victim safety (Office of Missouri Governor, Jay Nixon, June 22, 2016). The National Council of Jewish Women has been active in legislative advocacy, and successful in producing and posting human trafficking education and awareness information across the region at truck stops, Lambert St. Louis Airport, emergency rooms, and other critical locations.

Other examples of forward movement in the St. Louis region to more effectively address sex trafficking prevention and intervention include: a relatively new research-driven undertaking by Washington University in St. Louis; the development and dissemination of questionnaires or checklists by the St. Louis Police Department to be used to identify trafficking victims during youth intake processes by law enforcement officials, juvenile court officers, health care workers, and social service providers; a desire for deeper-level, customized professional trainings within specific sectors or organizations, provided by agencies such as The Covering House and CATE; and the integration of evidence-based practices in the social service organizations that work specifically with the survivor population to increase the effectiveness of intervention and recovery efforts. In the travel and tourism industry, local efforts are creating a national and international impact via the efforts of Nix Conference and Meeting Management and the Exchange Initiative. The Exchange Initiative initiated and signed the first code of conduct for meeting planners and developed, in partnership with Washington University, a new, free app available on most handheld devices called TraffickCam. TraffickCam allows tourists visiting hotels to take pictures of their hotel rooms and upload them to a national database that is then able to help law enforcement find victims and pimps trafficking out of hotels (ECPAT-USA, 6/20/2016). Maritz Global Events has also signed The Code and partnered with ECPAT-USA to actively promote sex trafficking awareness and education across the global tourism industry (Brewer, September 15, 2016). Finally, the funding community has taken notice of the human trafficking problem in the St. Louis region, and has begun to direct resources toward victim prevention, intervention, and recovery.

### **Key Findings**

Based on the consultant's analysis of focus group data, literature and website review, information collected through telephone interviews, and attendance of programming on the topic, key findings are provided below.

**1. There is a clear and immediate need for expanded CSEC education and awareness prevention efforts. However, prevention needs to be approached holistically and comprehensively, and include prevention of first-time sex trafficking, re-entry to sex trafficking, and by addressing the key risk factors that create greater youth vulnerability to sex trafficking.**

- Sex trafficking prevention cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Due to the very complicated, layered, and nuanced nature of CSEC, prevention efforts must be approached holistically. It might best be viewed across a spectrum of first-time prevention, intervention and survivor services to prevent re-entry, and a systems-based approach to tackling CSEC risk factors. While both high-risk and lower-risk youth will benefit from prevention and awareness efforts, a focus on prevention for those youth at higher risk of CSE should be a priority. Focus group participants emphasized the critical importance of also addressing the risk factors that lead to trafficking in the first place, such as poverty, homelessness, family instability, racism, etc. Education and awareness efforts would need to not only target susceptible children and youth, but also front-line to senior level employees in law enforcement, social services, public education, juvenile courts, faith institutions, parent education, the tourism industry, and more.
- Focus group participants also felt that prevention of first-time trafficking was too limited a scope in terms of the current needs related to sex trafficking. Many spoke about identification and intervention strategies and efforts that need to be expanded, enhanced, or have a broader reach. CSEC prevention is a critical need, yet the day-to-day supply of services cannot keep up with the demand. There are many barriers to identifying and assisting victims to leave “the life,” and helping them to get and stay on the road to recovery must also be addressed. As a representative of The Covering House noted, a key goal of the organization is to help youth become healthy individuals that thrive in the community—which may look different for each individual young person. This is an important goal for all CSEC prevention, be it primary, secondary, or tertiary.
- Nichols underscores the critical importance of addressing the risk factors based on her research. As she states, “Known risk factors for sex trafficking and sexual exploitation include homelessness, inequality in schools, poverty, racial/ethnic marginalization, sexism, heterosexism, lack of services for substance abuse assistance, lack of assistance with day care expenses, background of child abuse and domestic violence in the home, and a low minimum wage. Addressing these risk factors involves supporting the funding and political pressure that works to ameliorate them. Weak social safety nets combined with weak social institutions creates a situation rife for sex trafficking and exploitation.” Thus, she advocates that “increased funding for and the availability of shelter, housing, resources, prevention, and outreach for trafficked and exploited people to address weak social institutions and provide expanded education and training to individuals in the criminal justice system, health care systems, and various social services are necessary to address the problem” (2016, p. 274).

**2. While there is more information and awareness about sex trafficking in the St. Louis region today than in the past, broader community awareness remains low. Sex trafficking is often a misunderstood issue, largely due to the stereotypes and sensationalism portrayed through media reporting and imagery.**

- Those professionals whose work touches or involves trafficking have begun to build stronger prevention awareness and education efforts within their fields of work and the broader community, however, most focus group participants still described the broader community’s awareness of the issue as relatively minimal. Awareness about sex trafficking has increased over the years as the issue has moved more to the forefront, both nationally and locally. Yet,

according to the focus group data, the larger community's understanding or knowledge remains at a surface level, largely based on media portrayals, misperceptions, and stereotypes, and in some cases, not wanting to believe that it can happen in their own neighborhoods.

- Images of young white girls who have been kidnapped and held against their will, restrained in chains or with a gun to their head, remain the stereotype or perceived "face" of the trafficking victim. While this may be the actual experience of some, it is not the way most sex trafficking occurs. Many also perceive trafficking to be an international issue, rather than a domestic one. Maintaining these distorted depictions of trafficking in education and awareness materials, as well as in the media, keeps those youth, who do not look like or share the same experience as those portrayed in the stereotyped imagery, from accurately identifying themselves as victims of trafficking. Similarly, community members or others who could help to identify trafficking victims or suspicious activity if provided with accurate representations, are instead presented with a skewed view of what trafficking looks like, and therefore unable to properly recognize important warning signs.
- There does still remain unconscious bias about the idea of what a trafficking victim *should* look like, based largely on media imagery. If a victim does not fit the presumed stereotype, they are often blamed for engaging in the behavior. For example, if a victim is an adult or does not fit the stereotypical image, they may be treated as a criminal rather than as a victim, because of a false assumption that they "should have known better," or "chose to prostitute themselves."
- Counter to the belief that sex trafficking is primarily an international issue, domestic trafficking is occurring in the United States, and is a significant problem. In fact, "U.S. citizens compose the majority of sex trafficked people in the United States" (Nichols, 2016, p. 8). Focus group participants described working with and seeing all types of sex trafficking cases, from St. Louis County to St. Louis City and across the river in East St. Louis and other parts of Southeastern Illinois. The most common forms of sex trafficking in the St. Louis region, as discussed by focus group participants are pimp- or boyfriend-related trafficking, survival sex, and family-based trafficking. Focus group members stated that the spectrum of victims is wide, and the way in which the youth become involved in trafficking is just as varied. The need for basic necessities, such as food and shelter, puts homeless and runaway youth at high risk of survival sex. Family problems such as domestic violence, abuse, and family instability can create a strong need for love and a sense of belonging, making youth more vulnerable to being recruited into trafficking by a pimp or "boyfriend." Some are trafficked by a family member in need of drug money or to help put food on the table, or by a peer who wants to make money for status and appearance purposes.
- Focus group participants described sex trafficking in local, low-income communities as a "social norm." Whether the exploiter is a family member, "boyfriend," classmate, neighbor, or stranger, the driving force for traffickers is the prospect of making money quickly. Regardless of the need or desire for fast money, be it drugs, food, a bed to sleep on, or simply social status, sex trafficking has become a social norm in many low-income communities as a means to income and survival. Many focus group participants also noted the intergenerational nature of abuse and trauma, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, that include sexual exploitation and trafficking. When these behaviors are part of the culture of the family or neighborhood over generations, they do become a social norm. The question is how can this cycle of abuse be broken? Prevention programming for low-income youth is clearly needed in these low-income communities.

### **3. Language regarding human trafficking serves as a barrier to prevention and intervention efforts.**

- In the broad use of the term, “human trafficking” encompasses both labor and sex trafficking. So, it does not clearly convey the type of trafficking being addressed or investigated; though it is more often interpreted as sex trafficking. Further confusing the use of this term is the fact that in some cases, sex trafficking and labor trafficking overlap.
- The commonly referenced, legal definition of sex trafficking, according to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), is: a) “Any commercial sex act induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (Heil and Nichols, 2015, p. 6). Yet, for many stakeholders, including focus group participants, the use of the term “sex trafficking” is too restrictive and carries a significant stigma. Many prefer the use of the term “sexual exploitation,” which they view as more inclusive, while also allowing for a broader understanding and awareness of how trafficking occurs and can perhaps be addressed.
- Heil and Nichols found that their interview respondents also had difficulty with the terminology, as they “struggled with the compartmentalization of ‘sex trafficking,’ ‘sexual exploitation,’ and ‘sex work.’ Many social service providers described these characterizations, and the difficulty in labeling them, as ‘shades of gray’” (2015, p. 67). DCFSL focus group participants seemed to feel more comfortable overall with the use of the term “sexual exploitation,” rather than “sex trafficking.” Many also explained that they listen to the language used by the youth to describe their experiences, and then refer to the experience in the same terminology used by the youth.
- Focus group participants shared that youth victims and traffickers do not use the term “sex trafficking” to describe their own activity, nor do they necessarily understand what is meant by “human trafficking.” When the professionals they come in contact with talk to them about “sex trafficking” or “human trafficking,” it often creates a greater disconnect between them. The young people understand their engagement in sexual activity through the lens of the sociocultural environment in which they live, and these more formal terms do not translate to the streets or the language they speak. This language gap then creates a significant barrier to engaging youth and families in information, education, and services, as they do not identify themselves with the word “trafficking.” According to focus group participants, many youth who have been sexually exploited do not even recognize that they are engaged in trafficking and/or exploitation. When social service providers, law enforcement officials, and others work to build trust and rapport with victims, potential victims, or traffickers, they are most effective at engaging the youth when they mirror the terminology used by the youth themselves.

**4. Trafficking is by its very nature a hidden and often misunderstood crime, resulting in a significant lack of research data, particularly regarding prevalence, which can inhibit targeted prevention and intervention activities.**

- According to Heil and Nichols, “Estimating prevalence is problematized primarily due to definitional issues, as well as the way such issues are interpreted and implemented by various actors in the justice system. These key issues profoundly impact successful prosecutions, misidentification as another type of crime, and the mobility and hidden nature of human trafficking” (2015, p. 10).
- One of the impacts of not having a common language, as expressed by focus group participants, is the lack of accurate data on sex trafficking prevalence in the St. Louis region as well as nationally. While language is not the only reason for the lack of data on domestic sex trafficking, it has a significant bearing. In addition, trafficking is a crime that its perpetrators go to great lengths to hide. Sex trafficking can also be hard to discover due to the trauma bond developed

by a victim to his or her trafficker, as well as the fear that disclosure will result in their arrest and criminal prosecution.

- Trafficking often occurs in conjunction with other crimes that are more overt and can be more clearly identified, such as drug possession. Often an arrest is made for the drug crime (or other co-occurring crime), and no further investigation is done, completely missing the opportunity to determine if trafficking is hidden behind it. Many arrested for drug violations, stealing, etc. are in fact, trafficking victims or perpetrators. Arrests and illegal activity must be investigated thoroughly to find out if trafficking is a co-occurring crime. As the human trafficking awareness and education information campaign of Rescue and Restore states, “Look Beneath the Surface” (“Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking,” October 2016).
- The proliferation of social media has made sex trafficking even more difficult to track and apprehend as it occurs. In more recent years, sex trafficking has increasingly become a crime where recruitment and the sale of sex occurs online. As a result, traffickers and victims are much harder to track down as their online posts do not match their true identities or locations. As traffickers move from city to city and locale to locale trying to stay hidden and tap into demand, they remain elusive and difficult to apprehend. This also makes any clear indication of prevalence challenging as it is difficult to ascertain how many distinct sex trafficking situations are occurring in an area, or if they are the same traffickers moving from place to place or posting information under different false identities.

**5. Law enforcement and juvenile court officers are often one of the first points of contact for sex trafficking victims or potential victims, and can serve as a critical connecting point for victims to access necessary services. However, training and education are critical to ensure that trafficking cases are properly identified and managed, so that chances for a victim to receive necessary help and for a trafficker to be properly prosecuted are increased.**

- Focus group participants, particularly those working in the St. Louis City human trafficking legal arena, shared that they have made an important shift from treating a trafficked individual as a criminal to recognizing them as a victim. This is very important in how sex trafficking victims are engaged at this point of contact. The stakes are high, and connecting in a negative or more positive way with law enforcement or deputy juvenile officers can impact whether a victim is assisted and connected to services or returns to the life of trafficking he or she now knows. While there is still significant training, education, and awareness work to be done within local law enforcement and the courts system, this is a critical first step, as those victims who have already been through trauma are not further victimized or blamed for their involvement in sex trafficking.
- Other focus group participants noted that law enforcement officers need to work on how to better interact and engage with young people. For example, some social service providers explained that law enforcement officers have had to become de facto human service providers, yet they are not trained in this way. Because law enforcement officers are often the first line of defense for sex trafficking victims and a connecting point for these youth to get help, they need to be able to approach youth ideally from a trauma-informed perspective and develop some trust or rapport with the youth. The trust between low-income youth, particularly those youth of color, and law enforcement has become increasingly fraught over the last several years as a result of Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson, and ongoing police hostility toward African American and other youth of color. Focus group members suggested strategies that could be employed to help law enforcement officers engage with youth more effectively, such as developing partnerships between social workers or human service providers and the police, or for law enforcement officers to receive additional training toward this end.

- In addition, when youth are picked up by the police, they are often arrested for a drug or other violation. Rather than investigating further to determine if trafficking is co-occurring with the arresting violation, the crime of trafficking remains undetected and hidden behind the other juvenile offenses. As Heil and Nichols report, “actors in the legal arena may be misidentifying sex trafficking as prostitution, and may also fail to identify its co-occurrence with other related offences, such as rape, domestic violence, and various drug offenses often associated with sex trafficking victimizations, thereby criminalizing the victim” (2015, p. 11).
- According to Nichols, “education and training are necessary to facilitate appropriate responses of officers in order to avoid criminalizing survivors or misreporting as another crime and to increase identification. Moreover, a survivor-centered/victim-centered approach in both policing and the prosecution process is also called for. To best meet the needs of survivors and to support the successful prosecution of traffickers, it is imperative to build trust and rapport and provide the services sex trafficked people need” (2016, p. 270).
- As such steps are taken to further the knowledge and understanding of those stakeholders in law enforcement who engage with youth on the streets daily, it is critical to also be aware of the governmental resources and funds that are directed toward human trafficking work. For example, at this time, the number of St. Louis police officers on the street directly addressing sex trafficking is exactly one. While the number of officers working in the human trafficking area in St. Louis County is larger, training and awareness is critical for all law enforcement, as well as those working in the juvenile courts, in order to appropriately identify and respond to the insipid hidden crime of sex trafficking.

**6. While anti-trafficking efforts and survivor support services in the St. Louis region work collaboratively within pockets of the community, the overarching view of efforts across the region is that they remain fragmented and disconnected.**

- There are some strong examples of collaboration underway in pockets of trafficking prevention and intervention work. For example, the St. Louis Police Department and the St. Louis Juvenile Courts work collaboratively on case management and identification of trafficking victims, and rely on several city service providers who they can turn to when immediate service provision is needed for victims. These entities have created an informal, cross-sector partnership between law enforcement, social services and the juvenile courts that helps them address trafficking victims and cases more effectively and efficiently. There is also a larger, formal St. Louis Human Trafficking Task Force of the U.S. Attorney General’s office comprised of many local stakeholders to collaboratively share information, seek resources, and address trafficking prevention. In addition, the anti-trafficking coalitions, CATE and Rescue and Restore of the International Institute, communicate frequently, refer clients and resources to one another, and work collaboratively. The same is also true for a few of the residential survivor-specific service providers who communicate with each other to share strategies, lessons learned, and best practices.
- Yet, overall, anti-trafficking, prevention, and intervention efforts are fragmented across the St. Louis region and across state lines. While there is some collaborating and partnering across organizations and sectors, there is not a region-wide, formal network in place to facilitate comprehensive and vetted resource and service referral, shared learning, and collaborative strategies for effective trafficking prevention or intervention. In many cases, stakeholders are not aware of each other’s efforts or have not met. As one focus group participant summarized, there are many well-intentioned groups working in this area, but efforts are staggered with each doing their own thing. The greatest disconnect is between those organizations that serve higher-risk youth who are at higher risk of trafficking, but whose staff are not aware or educated

about the danger of trafficking for the population that they serve. In one focus group, a service provider who works with higher-risk youth shared that she had not known about the agencies and trainings available to educate and inform her staff and clients about the issue. However, through the focus group discussions, she learned more about a specific provider's services and realized she needed to engage this provider to work with her staff and clientele. This happened numerous times during focus group sessions, where service providers connected with other individuals or organizations that were previously not on their radar screens. In another instance, two agencies working within the same part of the region were not aware of the other's efforts to address human trafficking locally. The need for greater connections and partnerships across agencies and sectors is critical to CSEC prevention and intervention.

**7. While funding, both public and private, is absolutely necessary to doing the critical work of trafficking prevention, victim identification, and survivor recovery, it was also found to be a significant barrier to stakeholder collaboration and program effectiveness.**

- Philanthropy was noted across all focus groups as a critical need and strength, but also as a significant barrier to stakeholders' work. Some expressed frustration with the quantitative outcomes that most funders require in terms of clients served. Given that much of the initial work with survivors is typically based on one-on-one engagement and trust and relationship building, quantity of clients served as an expected outcome is not congruent with early intervention and recovery practices. For example, some focus group participants who work with survivors noted the desire to be able to have the time to conduct intensive, relational case management and outreach so that depth and quality replace breadth and quantity. Also expressed was the desire for flexibility in funding to research innovative or new promising practices and to reflect on their work and consider lessons learned, but many find that the constraints of the funding they receive does not allow for time spent on research and reflection, despite the positive impact this could have on victim services in the long term. Staffing is another area where funding has not been sufficient, as leadership cannot hire at the level they would like based on budget restrictions.
- A few focus group participants noted that dollars tend to go to larger, long-standing organizations, rather than the newer, smaller organizations regardless of effectiveness or expertise. Further, there was some concern that dollars have been given to organizations that work with at-risk youth, but that have little expertise in human trafficking work. They questioned why those with this specific experience and knowledge have not been engaged in funded anti-trafficking work, or included as partners in such efforts. In addition, many noted that funding often serves as a barrier to collaboration. Individual organizations must seek funding to support their own programs and services, but this creates a competitive funding environment, rather than one that encourages and support collaboration.
- The overarching issue is that there is not enough funding targeted to anti-trafficking efforts and social service organizations that work with survivors. Many also noted that the constantly shifting nature of funders' priorities makes ongoing programming and services challenging, and what is really needed is a longer term funding commitment that is aligned with overall strategy to have the greatest impact in addressing sex trafficking prevention and intervention.

**8. Youth must be included in the dialogue and development of trafficking prevention efforts, as well as in the intervention.**

- Across all four focus groups, participants expressed the critical importance of engaging youth and listening to their voices to inform both the work DCFSL is undertaking as funders and the development and implementation of prevention efforts. Engaging youth, particularly youth sex

trafficking survivors and at-risk youth, who are willing to share their experiences and insights was strongly encouraged by focus group participants to be included in DCFSL's information gathering process. The youth most affected by sex trafficking are the ones who hold much of the story, and adults need to listen to and respect their voices to guide and inform prevention practices.

**9. Moving from "Human Trafficking 101" presentations to deeper, more engaged training is critical to prevention, identification and intervention efforts across stakeholder sectors, including law enforcement, youth services, health care, K-12 education, tourism, foster care and homeless services, juvenile courts, and many others.**

- Focus group participants representing anti-trafficking coalitions and service providers expressed a sense of frustration about the type of human trafficking information and education that they are providing to the broader community. The majority of requests that they continue to receive regarding anti-trafficking "training" are what several described as "Human Trafficking 101" presentations. While this type of presentation is clearly important to provide, it is often a starting point, and much deeper level training is needed, particularly to those who are most likely to come into contact with trafficking victims. Those working in the sex trafficking arena would like to be engaging community groups or organizations in deeper level trainings that could lead to more effective prevention and intervention.
- Some deeper levels of training have occurred in pockets of the community, such as some law enforcement, health care, and social service professionals. But all agreed that deeper level training is needed throughout the region to increase victim and trafficker identification, reporting, and appropriate protocol.
- In addition, sex trafficking victims undergo significant trauma and victimization, so social service and health care providers as well as law and order professionals need training on how to best engage them at the ground level. Engagement upon initial contact is extremely important in order to keep the victim from running away, and to allow providers to appropriately assist the victim and apprehend the perpetrator.
- As focus group participants shared, there is no one-size-fits-all training model. Ideally, training should be relational in nature and customized to the specific group being trained. Furthermore, training that is co-led in partnership with a top member of the organization or group being trained can have a greater impact on the organization through a train-the-trainer model. This type of tiered-training was noted as a preferred training method, as it allows for greater breadth and depth of training. Thus, training can reach those on the front lines as well as administrative staff, and training is made more relevant to the employees as it is conducted by a colleague within the same sector or organization. This type of training has already occurred in several organizational departments within the health care and law enforcement sectors, but it needs to continue with stakeholder groups across the region in a consistent and ongoing manner.

**10. There is a critical gap in trafficking prevention and intervention efforts and services specifically for LGBTQ and male trafficking victims.**

- The lack of services for LGBTQ sex trafficking victims was noted across focus groups as a key gap in the current array of trafficking prevention and intervention services. Thus, a priority need to be addressed is the development of services specifically targeting male and LGBTQ trafficking victims. A significant gap in services is a safe place for male and LGBTQ victims to find shelter as well as feel understood. The majority of shelters and services in the field are geared toward girls and women. Heil and Nichols also found that "a significant problem identified in the St. Louis

area was not only lack of shelter for LGBTQ youth, but the lack of culturally competent services more generally” (2015, p. 188).

- Because LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population, they are more vulnerable to sex trafficking. This also demonstrates the need to specifically address and include these youth in prevention education and awareness work (Walker, Feb. 2013, p. 21). To this end, “trafficking prevention programming needs to provide an inclusive and safe community for at-risk LGBTQ youth to learn about CSEC so that they can avoid being exploited and instead learn how to be resilient, aware, and make healthy choices” (Follman, 2014, p. 9).

**11. The demand for services for high risk youth and sex trafficking survivors is significantly greater than the supply. This is true in both locally and nationally.**

- One of the most critical services for both high risk youth and sex trafficking survivors is bed space that is safe and accessible immediately for the youth. Bed space is in short supply for girls, but even more so for LGBTQ individuals and males. According to focus group participants, the few local residential programs available for sex trafficking survivors typically have waiting lists. Focus group participants also noted significant challenges in securing mental health and psychiatric care for victims, particularly those with substance abuse issues, which have to be treated first. In the case of substance abuse services for trafficking survivors, again the demand exceeds the supply.
- As Heil and Nichols found, “progress [in the St. Louis region] was made in the development of transitional housing and shelter for sex-trafficked adults and minor girls, but shelter space was still not nearly enough to meet the demand from these groups, and available shelter explicitly for sex-trafficked boys and LGBTQ youth was found to be absent” (2015, p. 157). Further, the respondents in Heil and Nichols research study “made it clear that it is important to offer sex trafficking-specific services because of survivors’ distinct experiences and outcomes....[Yet] to get into one of the few programs exclusively for sex trafficking survivors is difficult because there are few of them, space is limited, and the waiting lists are long. Simply put, the demands for such services far exceeds the availability” (p. 158).
- Without available bed space or safe shelter, the youth are often quickly back on the streets. Many will return to what is familiar to them, or they will need food and shelter, ultimately taking them back to the environment in which they were previously trafficked. The same is true for youth aging out of foster care; if these youth are not able to access services or placement in a timely manner, they often return to the streets, where the risk of being sexually exploited or trafficked again is high.
- Homeless shelters are often not safe spaces for youth. Traffickers look for vulnerable youth at and around shelters, and recruiting does occur within homeless shelters. In addition, some homeless shelter policies work against youth safety (such as youth are unable to return to the shelter after school until their parents have returned at the end of the day). This often leaves youth the only option of being out on the street until late in the day, also making them more vulnerable to trafficking.
- The supply of local survivor service providers cannot currently meet the demand for their services. In addition, services that incorporate promising practices for survivor intervention and recovery are few and far between. Based on the literature, promising practices for survivor services include: survivor led, developed and/or informed programming, trauma-informed care, culturally competent services and providers, survivor-specific services, a community of survivors, and survivor-centered practices. Residential programming that includes many of the above promising practices has also shown greater success with survivor recovery than

outpatient care (Heil and Nichols, 2015, pp. 198-201; Nichols, 2016, p 271). Focus group participants who work with survivors shared the promising practices they use and see success with, which include: one-on-one interaction and relationship-building between provider and youth; peer-to-peer support; creating an environment of normalcy for youth survivors, particularly those in residential settings; meeting the youth where they are; listening to youth voices, and engaging with them genuinely, respectfully, and honestly. While more research is needed to support the efficacy of these practices, they seem to be critical to survivor recovery in the here and now. Expanding services inclusive of these practices to better meet the local need is important to assisting and supporting sex trafficking survivors toward ultimately leading healthy and productive lives.

**12. The sector that can make significant impact in the provision of CSEC prevention to a broad range of youth, families and educators is public education, particularly at the middle and high school levels. However, the education sector lags behind many others in addressing sex trafficking prevention.**

- Education as a whole was noted as the sector that is the farthest behind in addressing the issue of sex trafficking within schools, yet the schools provide one of the greatest access points to youth, and can be a critical component in CSEC prevention and identification. Focus group participants noted that working with schools to prevent sex trafficking and sexual exploitation is challenging. There is often push back on the content as well as concern that community members will believe that trafficking is a problem at the school.
- Inroads have been made in a few schools throughout the region that have implemented prevention programming. There have also been some efforts to address trafficking prevention in the St. Louis Public Schools, largely due to a positive relationship and partnership with the St. Louis Police Department human trafficking officer.
- Many respondents suggested that district superintendents and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education need to be encouraged to get on board to mandate CSEC prevention education and awareness programming for both educators and youth.
- In addition, the extreme usage of social media by youth increases their vulnerability to online recruitment through dating websites, group chats, different social media platforms, and more. While social media has become a breeding ground for CSEC and sex trafficking, it needs to be a critical piece of prevention programming. Parents, educators and students need to know how to use social media safely, how to identify and be aware of recruiters and scams, and how to ensure youth safety online. Schools are an ideal venue for internet and social media safety programming for these target audiences.

## **Recommendations**

The decision of DCFSL to expand their Youth Empowerment funding area to include sex trafficking prevention, particularly the prevention of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, was made to address what the Foundation saw as a critical and important need in a region that has become a hub for these devastating crimes against children and youth. In order to make their role as a funder as effective as possible in this area, DCFSL staff reached out to those across multiple sectors who are on the front lines, and engaged them in focus groups with the goal of listening to and learning from their knowledge and expertise to determine what the most critical needs and priorities are to prevent CSEC in our region.

The recommendations that follow were developed largely from the focus group research data, as well as from literature and website review. Ultimately, they create a set of strategies for DCFSL to use to

address CSEC through additional information gathering, broadening the scope of prevention, encouraging and supporting greater community connections and collaboration, funding the most critical prevention needs and priorities in the region at this time, and helping to forge a path to identify evidence-based practices and new innovations to empower youth to live healthier and safer lives and ultimately prevent CSEC victimization.

### **Gather Additional Information**

- Engage willing youth, including those who may have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking, are in foster care, and others who are at-risk of trafficking, to share their experiences and insights regarding CSEC and its prevention. What would be of greatest help to them regarding sex trafficking prevention? How can youth be involved in prevention?
- Engage in further research regarding immigrant and refugee populations and human trafficking, both labor and sex trafficking.
- Consider ultimately expanding the DCFSL focus area to include labor trafficking as well.

### **Take A Holistic Approach to Prevention**

- Address prevention from a holistic, all-inclusive perspective, which should include primary, secondary and tertiary prevention with a more targeted focus on the highest-risk youth populations—African American girls, LGBTQ youth, homeless youth, Latina youth, low-income youth, immigrant and refugee youth, youth aging out of foster care and in foster care, etc.
- Address the prevention of both first-time trafficking and re-entry.
- Address the systemic risk factors of sex trafficking as an important part of the prevention ecology (i.e., poverty, racism, homelessness, poor performing schools, among others).

### **Fund Prevention and Intervention Priority Strategies**

- Provide funding for community and nonprofit organizational efforts to address CSEC prevention that are in alignment with the recommended priority areas outlined below. Multi-year funding for CSEC-related efforts is highly encouraged, as is the use of a grantee, self-developed, logic model approach for funding and programming outcomes.

#### **Collaboration:**

- Consider supporting a multi-sector collaborative approach to addressing sex trafficking prevention, including law enforcement, juvenile courts, social services (anti-trafficking, prevention, intervention, residential, support services, at-risk youth services), healthcare (physical and mental health), educators, and youth to collectively work to develop a coordinated and connected prevention strategy to include programming, training, education and awareness. Additional components of such a collaboration might include:
  - Engaging local organizational partners to help at-risk youth navigate support services to address their basic needs.
  - Supporting the development of a living, online resource for the region to track sex trafficking prevention and intervention efforts and resources.
  - Convening stakeholder gatherings bi-annually for topical presentations, networking, and updating opportunities to maintain stakeholder connectedness and awareness of what each other is doing in the field.

### Training:

- Support customized, in-depth training for law-enforcement officers, deputy juvenile officers, educators, tourist industry workers (hotels, airports, etc.), faith leaders, social service providers, health care workers (emergency room, clinics, etc.), and more. Training models should be relational in nature, and include co-training with previously trained sector professionals that can ultimately lead to a tiered-training approach across a, department, organization or organizational system.

### Awareness and Outreach:

- Support prevention and outreach efforts in low-income neighborhoods and places frequented by high-risk youth and their families, such as churches, emergency rooms, local shelters, WIC offices, corner markets, health clinics, etc. Include social media education and awareness campaigns that reach youth, parents, and other target audiences through different social media platforms in this funding area. Ensure that appropriate language and imagery are utilized in all prevention and identification materials.

### Prevention Programming:

- Build upon strong, local prevention programming, and engage experts in the field, as well as youth, to expand and enhance the development of CSEC prevention curriculum and programming.
- Develop and include social media-related prevention education modules in all sex trafficking prevention programming.
- Advocate for and work to actively engage schools and school districts in CSEC and sex trafficking prevention efforts.

### Youth Voice:

- Support youth engagement and voice in the development and implementation of prevention and intervention efforts. Listening to youth share their experiences and stories is an important learning opportunity for professionals and experts. For example, high school youth are involved with prevention and intervention work through The Covering House. They receive training and work with other youth to provide peer support and engage in youth activities with victims and non-victims to help establish a sense of normalcy for survivors. Peer support (teen-to-teen) has shown great promise in increasing education and awareness among youth and helping survivors with their recovery, based on focus group participant reports.

### Identification Awareness:

- Support the development and dissemination of sex trafficking victim identification materials and screening tools, such as intake checklists/questionnaires for use by all stakeholders and others with whom victims might come into contact.

### Survivor Services:

- Support residential survivor services as well as other support services for survivors, particularly those that engage promising practices, such as sex-trafficking specific services; a relational, trauma-informed approach and peer-to-peer support models; as well as survivor-informed and survivor-centered, culturally competent prevention and intervention services.

#### Critical Needs:

- Address gaps in critical social and health care services for sex trafficking survivors and high-risk youth, such as safe shelter and bed space; substance abuse treatment; and comprehensive, trauma-informed, mental health care for survivors.

#### Youth Activities:

- Support constructive youth activities, particularly for high-risk youth, such as after-school programs, job training or youth employment opportunities, coding and other technology training programs, to engage youth productively and help set them up for success. Youth job opportunities will provide the youth with some earnings, which may also deter them from the lure of making fast money by engaging in trafficking.

#### Adding to the Field:

- Support research to document promising practices in prevention, intervention and recovery, and prevalence.
- Support innovation in the field, particularly within the field of technology. Many agencies are now looking to use social media in prevention through the development and dissemination of new apps that provide assistance to victims or potential victims of sex trafficking. Apps such as Safe Trek and TraffickCam have been developed and are being utilized locally and nationally to help trafficking victims. Undertaking innovation online to prevent or identify trafficking is an important new frontier in addressing and eliminating trafficking.

### **Conclusion**

With the recommendation of a holistic and inclusive approach to CSEC and sex trafficking prevention, the level of impact that DCFSL can have at the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention levels is significant. There is much work to be done at all levels to keep youth out of harm's way. Preventing first-time sex trafficking in and of itself is a tremendous undertaking, though absolutely critical, particularly for those youth most vulnerable to CSEC. Yet, our youth who have been trafficking victims are also in need of the appropriate services and supports to recover from the trauma of their horrific experiences and to find their way to healthier and more fulfilling lives. In addition, a critical component to sex trafficking prevention is to address the risk factors that create vulnerability to it in the first place. All these aspects of prevention are important and necessary to both empower our youth, but also to end trafficking.

The work ahead must continue to include stakeholders across sectors and experiences, including experts in this area, survivors, and youth. Partnership, connection and collaboration are critical to developing a more cohesive and effective network of prevention, intervention, and support services across all levels.

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## **Appendix A—Stakeholder Organizations Represented in Focus Groups**

ALIVE

Annie Malone Children and Family Services Center

Children’s Home and Aid Society of Illinois

Coalition Against Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE)

Crisis Aid International

Epworth

Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition

Girls, Inc.

Healing Action

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri

Magdalene House

Marygrove

Missouri House of Representatives

National Council of Jewish Women

Redevelopment Opportunities for Women

Rescue and Restore Coalition/International Institute of St. Louis

Safe Connections

St. Charles Outreach Coalition Against Human Trafficking

St. Louis Family Courts, Juvenile Division

St. Louis Internship Program

St. Louis Police Department

St. Louis Public Schools

The Covering House

The SPOT

Washington University of St. Louis

Youth in Need

Survivors were also represented in the focus groups.

## Appendix B—Focus Group Agenda/Script Outline

### FOCUS GROUP AGENDA/SCRIPT OUTLINE

#### I. Welcome

##### A. Facilitator/Recorder Introduction

##### B. Purpose of Focus Group

1. DCFSL findings and expansion of focus area re: Youth Empowerment with particular interest in human trafficking, specifically Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) prevention education/awareness.
  - The Daughters of Charity Foundation of St. Louis (DCFSL) is concerned with the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young adults occurring in our region. The victimization created by this crime of human trafficking is often misunderstood by the broader community and as a result, the lack of public awareness on this issue will likely perpetuate a continuation of this “silent” crime against the innocent.
  - Although awareness of this issue in the St. Louis region has grown considerably in recent years, the problem of human trafficking as a regional public concern remains a relatively new concept.
2. Gather info re: current community understanding of trafficking and priorities for prevention awareness/education efforts for vulnerable youth before becoming victimized
  - It is not uniformly clear to what extent the broader community understands the problem, nor is it clear what resources have been developed to educate the public about where to go for help. Currently, the region has little in the way of coordinated or system-wide trafficking education and awareness prevention programming. Prevention work is occurring at several local agencies, but the Foundation is interested to learn from you – the local stakeholders working with vulnerable youth, what can we do as a community, to create a more coordinated human trafficking educational awareness and prevention effort?
3. Final DCFSL report will be shared with the community later this fall
4. Definitions:
  - Human Trafficking that DCFSL is focusing on at this time is sex trafficking children/youth (CSEC—commercial sexual exploitation of children)
  - Children/Youth Focus: those who are most vulnerable to being trafficked

#### II. Protocol for Focus Group

##### A. Consent and Confidentiality

1. Data will be reported in the aggregate and not attributed, unless consent has been obtained
2. Assumption that your attendance is your consent, but you can choose not to participate or to stop at any time
3. Participant Recruitment
  - Cross-Sector recruitment based on those engaged in HT in their roles currently and those who work with those most vulnerable to trafficking

- B. Ground Rules
  - 1. Respect for all viewpoints expressed
  - 2. Opportunity for all to participate and be heard.
  - 3. Not a platform for debate, but rather discussion as this is an information gathering effort
  - 4. Comments and information discussed need to stay in the room; kept confidential. Want to allow people to speak comfortably.
  - 5. Discussion will be recorded in writing by the recorder, and will be captured to the best of our abilities by our recorder, but please also feel free let us know if clarification or misunderstanding in notes has occurred.
- C. Next Steps post-focus groups
  - 1. Four focus groups being convened
  - 2. Data collected will be analyzed and report written to include key findings and recommendations to guide planning, development and implementation of CSEC prevention awareness/education efforts.
  - 3. Focus group participants will receive a copy of the final report from DCFSL

### III. **Agenda Overview**

- A. Thank You to Participants
- B. Participant Introductions/Icebreaker
  - o Name/Professional Role
- C. Facilitated discussion in response to a number of questions developed to gather information related to prevention education and awareness possibilities to address CSEC

### IV. **Questions**

- A. What is the broader St. Louis community's awareness/understanding of the problem of human trafficking (i.e., social services, health/mental health care, law enforcement, families, youth, educators, etc.)?
- B. SWOT
  - 1. What prevention education/awareness efforts are currently in place to prevent, educate, inform and assist those most vulnerable to trafficking and those who are closest to these populations?
    - o Who are their target populations?
    - o What does the curriculum include?
    - o What additional local assets/resources are in place at this time to address human trafficking prevention efforts?
  - 2. What are the most critical gaps/needs in the region related to CSEC prevention?
  - 3. What opportunities do the noted prevention resources/assets afford the St. Louis region in terms of prevention education and awareness? And what are the potential challenges/barriers to these opportunities?
- C. Who are the priority primary and secondary audiences for prevention awareness and education efforts?

- D. What is absolutely critical to incorporate into the planning, development and implementation of CSEC prevention education and awareness work with these audiences to have the greatest accessibility and impact? Of these, what are the highest priorities to address or incorporate?
- E. What would an effective sex trafficking prevention education or awareness effort look like more specifically in terms of messaging, distribution, location/setting, delivery, etc. based on the priorities you have identified?.
- F. How could the community stakeholders impacted or working in this area create greater connection or collaboration to maximize efforts, knowledge and impact?
- G. Are there any final comments, concerns or issues that you would like to note before we conclude the focus group?

**V. Wrap Up**

- A. Thank you
- B. Next Steps—report will be developed and submitted to DCFSL; Report findings/recs will be shared with the community upon report completion
- C. For questions, please contact Claire Hundelt or Sister Joan Kuester, DCFSL

## **Appendix C--Resources**

### **Local Organizations**

Coalition Against Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE), CATE on FB, @emocatestl on Twitter

Healing Action, [www.healingaction.org](http://www.healingaction.org)

Magdalene House St. Louis, [www.magdalenestl.org](http://www.magdalenestl.org)

St. Charles Outreach Coalition Against Human Trafficking, <http://stcharlescoalition.com/>

St. Louis Rescue and Restore Coalition, @RescueRestore on Twitter

The Covering House, [www.thecoveringhouse.org](http://www.thecoveringhouse.org)

Stop Trafficking Eastern Missouri-Southern Illinois Network, [www.stoptraffickingmo-il.org](http://www.stoptraffickingmo-il.org)

### **National Organizations**

ECPAT-USA, <http://www.ecpatusa.org/>

National Human Trafficking Resource Center, [www.traffickingresourcecenter.org](http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org)

Polaris Project, [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)