

Uniform Response Protocol

for the commercial sexual exploitation of children

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a growing problem in Rhode Island and New England. It is, in a sense, a form of modern-day slavery involving the sexual abuse and exploitation of children for financial gain. In response, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies have partnered with Day One, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), the Aubin Center at Hasbro Children's Hospital, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office (RIAG), the United States Attorney's Office (USAO), and other social service organizations in an effort to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to the problem.

Definition of 'Victim'

A victim is a child or teenager, under age 18 (or up to age 21 with developmental disabilities who is in the care of DCYF) who is forced, coerced, enticed or persuaded to exchange sex for food, money, shelter, drugs, clothing, or anything of value to the child.

According to studies cited by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the average age of entry into CSEC is 14 and the median age of involved teens is 15-16 years old. These numbers are consistent with the trends seen in Rhode Island. Sexually exploited children are quite diverse, representing a range of life circumstances and socioeconomic backgrounds (Estes, R. & Weiner, N., 2001). It cannot be overstated that there is no such person as a child prostitute; these children and youth are victims of sexual abuse. These individuals are manipulated, coerced and controlled by pimps and johns, and they

require interventions that empower the child to acknowledge and attempt to address their victimization.

Risk Factors

The following conditions and life circumstances do not predict youth involvement in prostitution. However, their presence and influence create a climate of risk in which children and teens are more susceptible to exploiters:

- Homelessness
- Substance Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Trouble in school
- Involvement in the child
- Welfare system
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- History of missing from care

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