



Ending the Business of **Human Trafficking in NYC** Sexually Exploited Youth

- **Every year, thousands of kids, 85% of which are girls and 67% of which are African American, end up as the victims of sexual exploitation in New York City.** A majority of these kids have already run away from abusive situations or homes and have a history of sexual abuse. But instead of finding a better place, they are trafficked by pimps and coerced and manipulated into a life of prostitution. Nationwide, estimates of the number of sexually exploited children range from *several hundred thousand to three million*.
- **Children are exploited for sex across New York**, although there are key distinctions between exploited kids in New York City versus other areas of the state. According to a report conducted by WESTAT for the New York State Office of Child and Family Services that examined NYC and seven upstate counties, it was found that most exploitation in NYC takes place in a hotel or outside (74%) while upstate 52% of abuse occurred in a child's home. In NYC, 75% of the "exploiters," while 58% of the cases upstate involved an adult friend or acquaintance, and 17% of the sex acts were used in films, photos, and pornography.
- **Selling sex is a harsh reality for girls as young as 13 and 14, which is the average age of entry into prostitution in the United States.** In New York City, the standard is that these girls are bought and sold by eight men per night. Advertised on Craigslist or in the back pages of local newspapers, sex with children is rampantly marketed and readily available in New York City and State. Although girls make up the majority of kids affected in New York City, the WESTAT report indicated that the city was the only place that included exploited kids identifying as being transgender and a majority of those who identified as gay.
- **In 2008, New York State Passed the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Act.** Under the new law, the family court system is forced to recognize underage girls and boys who are caught in prostitution as victims and to create specialized services and housing for them. Before the bill's passage, children caught in prostitution were arrested and could be prosecuted as criminals, rather than deemed children in need of services. Instead of providing adequate services, these girls were funneled into juvenile detention programs and youth prisons that failed to address their specialized needs. The new law creates short-term safe houses, long-term residential facilities, and a range of services, including crisis intervention. The Safe Harbor Act was scheduled to go into effect on April 1, 2010, but the state of the economy and the New York State budget crisis has put the funding necessary to make Safe Harbor a success at risk.

We Need to Address Demand

- **As long as the huge demand for commercial sex persists, children will continue to be used into the sex trade** and girls will be sold like commodities and forced into a harsh life where they face inexplicable violence, rape and abuse, disease, and drug abuse.
- **New York's newly enacted anti-human trafficking law stiffens penalties for johns** (from a B to an A misdemeanor), but it's not yet clear if this will have a substantial impact. Currently, the arrest ratio of prostitutes to johns is four to one in New York City.
- **Many men who buy sex are aware of the harms of prostitution.** A study of 113 men who solicited prostitution in Chicago reveals that 42% believed that prostitution causes psychological and physical damage to women and 57% believed that a majority of women in prostitution experienced some type of childhood abuse. However, only 22% reported feeling guilty or shameful about soliciting prostitution.
- **Deterrents to johns have the potential to work.** In this same study, 83% said jail time and 87% said that some form of public exposure would deter them from buying sex. In New York City, there are some "john schools" that men can attend in lieu of conviction. The Manhattan school focuses on personal risks and health of the john himself, and does not address the prevalence of child prostitution and trafficking.

Get Help

Report trafficking crimes or get help by calling the Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line at **1-888-428-7581** (voice and TTY). Live multi-lingual help available Mon.-Fri. 9am-5pm
Girls Educational & Mentoring Services: **212-926-8089**
New York County District Attorney's Office, Sex Crimes Unit: **212-335-9000**