

Final Project Report on
Addressing the Needs of Domestically
Trafficked Adolescents in New Jersey

Report Prepared for:
The New Jersey Department of Children and Families
Dr. Allison Blake, Commissioner

Project Conducted By:
Center on Violence Against Women and Children
Rutgers University School of Social Work

Dr. Judy L. Postmus, Director
Dr. Cassandra Simmel, VAWC Associate

Report Prepared By:
Laura Johnson, MSW
Judy L. Postmus, Ph.D., ACSW
Cassandra Simmel, MSW, Ph.D.
Beth Sapiro, LCSW
Catie Buttner, MSW

FALL 2015

We would like to begin by thanking Commissioner Allison Blake for her commitment to the identification of domestically trafficked youth and her efforts to strengthen trauma-informed services for victims. We applaud this effort and are very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this process. Moreover, dedication to this significant social issue is evident throughout the leadership at the New Jersey Department of Children & Families (DCF), many of whom manifested a significant contribution to this project: Beth Bowman (Former Assistant Commissioner at DCF's Office of Performance Management and Accountability); Claudine Chiarmonte (Director of the Office of Quality for DCF); and Elizabeth Manley (Director, Children's System of Care). In addition, Mary Carroll-Robertson was instrumental in facilitating the case record review.

At Rutgers University, we were fortunate to have the assistance of John Schafhauser and Jamie Arntson-Kynn who assisted in qualitative data collection and analysis and the literature review; Sarah Baig, who assisted with qualitative data collection; and Nicole Oceanak for her administrative support. We would also like to thank other staff and students from the Center on Violence Against Women and Children for their support and dedication to these issues.

Finally, we want to thank the key stakeholders who participated in this project. Their experiences and willingness to meet with the researchers allowed for rich information to be gathered and disseminated in order to improve services for survivors.

Executive Summary

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families has recognized human trafficking to be a significant social and legal problem and an issue of particular concern to governmental departments as well as non-governmental agencies within the State of New Jersey. As part of their efforts to strengthen their ability to identify and serve DMST-involved youth DCF has invested resources to train caseworkers and to develop services for survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST). However, DCF also recognized that there are gaps in the literature surrounding the needs of youth involved with DMST as well as limited evidence-based practices that have been identified for service providers working with this population. To that end, in 2014 DCF contracted with the Center on Violence Against Women and Children to conduct an exploratory study with the goal of further developing best practices for working with DMST survivors in New Jersey.

The overall goal of the current study was, therefore, to identify best practices for working with DMST survivors in New Jersey. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to identify best practices for working with youth involved with DMST through four approaches: 1) a literature and website review of existing research and best practices for working with youth involved in DMST; 2) interviews with key stakeholders regarding the needs and experiences of survivors of DMST in New Jersey; 3) a review of the case records of eight youth who have been identified as survivors of DMST; and 4) an analysis of child welfare data of youth suspected of being involved with DMST. The outcomes of this study are intended to inform best practices for serving youth involved with DMST and to recommend strategies that will guide practice, policy, and future research. This executive summary provides a snapshot view of the results; the final report delves further into the results, discussion, implications and limitations of this project.

Methods

Data collection for this study took place over the span of approximately one year from July 2014 to June 2015. A comprehensive literature review was conducted beginning July 2014 which informed the development of three research briefs related to service provisions for at-risk and DMST-involved youth. Key stakeholder interviews were conducted from August through December 2014 and the review of case records of eight DMST-involved youth was initiated in December 2014 and concluded in February 2015. Lastly, the quantitative analysis of child welfare data was completed in June 2015.

Literature Review. A comprehensive literature and website review focusing on research and program services developed for domestically trafficked youth. As part of the literature review, a number of primary databases were searched. After an initial list of articles were compiled, grey literature, websites, and reference lists from primary sources and reviews were utilized until the research team reached data saturation. The literature review was then used to guide the development of three research briefs, as well as guide the development of the key stakeholder interviews and the instruments developed as part of the qualitative analysis of case records.

Key Stakeholder Interviews. Twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders whose work provides them with a unique vantage point on the needs and

experiences of survivors of DMST in New Jersey. These interviews provided the research team with insights into best practices for working with youth involved in DMST. The face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders were semi-structured, following an interview guide with several domains of questions, while allowing enough flexibility for stakeholders to speak to their own areas of expertise. The interview guide included questions about the person's role, their involvement with the program designed to support youth involved in DMST, and their beliefs about valuable outcome measures for program evaluation. Thematic analyses were conducted on the qualitative data collected from key stakeholder interviews using ATLAS.ti. Codes were grounded in the data, but also derived from interview questions and existing research on human trafficking. Once consensus was reached on the codes, research team members grouped them based on underlying similarities into categories, followed by subthemes, and eventually into several themes.

Quantitative Analysis of Child Welfare Data. To provide an expansive picture of the statewide trends in reports to DCF's Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) for youth where domestic trafficking (both labor and sexual exploitation) is alleged, data was analyzed from DCF's child welfare database (their statewide case management data system). The data we analyzed pertained to two different sources of data: (a) Initial reports or referrals to DCF where domestic trafficking is alleged (CPS = 73 cases; CWS = 102 cases) and (b) All reports, which were the intake records on youth, including those from the set of initial reports, in which domestic trafficking is alleged. The analyses are descriptive in nature and depict broad comparisons between CPS and CWS youth concerning report and case information for alleged domestic trafficking. Information about statewide patterns of these reports, case record information (i.e., demographics of youth), and outcomes of the allegations of the reports are presented. All analyses were done in SPSS, version 22.

Qualitative Analysis of Case Records. The purpose of the qualitative analysis of case records was to identify risk and protective factors that make youth more vulnerable to involvement in DMST. This component of the research project was completed through the review of case records of eight youth who were referred to a residential treatment program for domestically trafficked adolescents. Three sources of data were reviewed: 1) Electronic records within the child welfare database for each of the eight youth identified; 2) Paper files with collateral information from the youths' child welfare cases; 3) Electronic records within the Children's System of Care (CSOC) Electronic Youth Record Database for each of the eight youth. Three tools were initially developed to capture the data found in the case records. These were developed based on key risk factors for domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) that were identified in the literature, and included tools on: 1) child maltreatment, 2) service provisions, and 3) individual and family-level risk and protective factors. Given the expansive amounts of information presented in each case record, the forms were used as a guide when recording notes from the case records.

Thematic analyses were conducted on the qualitative data collected from the case record review using ATLAS.ti. After the data was collected, a coding guide was created to assist the research team with identifying recurring concepts within the timelines, such as: 1) key themes, 2) significant life events, and 3) the actions and behaviors of the youth, their families, and the service providers involved with the youth. The notes compiled during this process were then

utilized to generate a codebook representing codes and major themes (merging of codes) and a working codebook was developed. Codes and themes generated from the analysis emerged from the research team's interpretation of the notes recorded as part of data collection.

Results

Literature Review. The literature review produced three research briefs including:

- From Research to Practice: Identification and Assessment of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Available online at:
https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/Libraries/VAWC/DTA_Identification_Research_Brief_Final_1.sflb.ashx
- From Research to Practice: Secondary Trauma & Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) - Available online at:
http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/Libraries/VAWC/DTA_Research_Brief_2.sflb.ashx
- From Research to Practice: Interventions for Youth Involved in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (Available online at: TBD)

Key Stakeholder Interviews. The three major themes to emerge from the interview data include: 1) Understanding Youth Involved in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST); 2) Best Practices for Service Provision and 3) Organizational Best Practices.

Understanding youth involved in domestic minor sex trafficking. Several subthemes emerged under the first theme: a) importance of understanding the unique experiences of youth involved with DMST; b) population specific-challenges; and c) adult beliefs and attitudes about youth involved in DMST.

Best practices for service provision. Results from key stakeholder interviews highlighted beliefs about best practices for providing services to youth involved with DMST. These results are grouped into the following subthemes: a) identification and assessment; b) best practices for serving youth involved in DMST; and c) models for service provision, and d) therapeutic modalities.

Organizational best practices. Key stakeholders identified best practices for the organizations that offer programs serving youth involved with DMST. These best practices were: a) staffing and hiring, b) program administration, c) multi-agency collaboration and coordination, d) outcome measures

Quantitative Analysis of Child Welfare Data. The patterns uncovered in the SPIRIT data reveal some noteworthy trends, primarily around the nature of the referrals and the demographics of the youth. Three counties had relatively higher number of refers associated with domestic trafficking: Hudson, Essex, and Atlantic counties. For referrals to CPS regarding domestic trafficking, there were increasing number of referrals in the spring and summer of 2014; for the CWS referrals, there was an initial peak in this same time period of spring 2014, though the number of referrals quickly declined in the late spring.

The gender of the youth associated with both CPS and CWS-related domestic trafficking referrals is predominately female. From these data we can see that most of the reports were for either African American or White youth, for both CPS and CWS referrals.

The source of the reports, form of trafficking reported, and service needs identified vary according to CPS or CWS referrals. For the former, the most frequent sources were Anonymous, Friends/Neighbors, and Other, which do not provide much specificity about how these youth are coming to the attention of DCF. For CWS referrals, Police accounted for the most frequent referral source, followed by community individuals and Other. Our data further indicate that Labor-related trafficking is more likely associated with CWS referrals than CPS referrals. For CPS cases, sexual abuse and neglect were the most frequent identified types of alleged maltreatment; moreover, biological parents were the most frequently identified alleged perpetrator. For cases referred to Child Welfare Services, services for youth and children were the most frequently identified need.

Qualitative Analysis of Case Records. Three major themes of risk and protective factors emerged from the case record review data and were framed using an ecological framework. Hence, the themes included risk and protective factors found at: 1) the Structural Level; 2) the Family Level; and 3) the Individual Level.

Structural level risk and protective factors. These structural barriers were not identified as perpetrated by any one entity but were noted generally as factors contributing to the youth's inability to navigate away from trafficking and other risky situations. This theme included five codes: a) lack of permanency; b) poverty/economic stress; c) poor responses to mental health; d) poor medication regulation; and e) lack of providing emotional outlets for youth.

There were several times throughout the cases in which the systems involved responded in positive ways. These promising responses and protective factors make up the second theme under structural level factors. This theme consists of three codes: a) utilization of assessments; b) utilization of system interventions; and c) utilization of therapeutic interventions.

Family level risk and protective factors. In each of the cases that were reviewed, there were some family level factors that were viewed as hindering desired outcomes. This theme consists of three codes: a) drug environment; b) family factors that hinder healthy youth development; and c) perpetration of interpersonal violence.

Many family factors within the youths' case records supported healthy youth development. This theme consists of five codes: a) shows concern; b) attempts at compliance; c) attempts to show support; d) strong family bonds despite problems; and e) attempts to remove youth from situation.

Individual level risk and protective factors. In each of the cases that were reviewed, there were a multitude of individual factors that were viewed as hindering desired outcomes. This theme consists of six codes: a) avoidance strategies; b) perceived antisocial

behaviors; c) aggression; d) school-related challenges; e) hypersexuality; and f) internal challenges with gender or sexual identity.

There were also several individual factors that were viewed as positive. The primary codes under this theme were: a) coping strategies; b) willingness of youth to receive services; 3) school-related improvements.

Recommendations

The overall goal of this exploratory study was to identify best practices for working with survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking in NJ. The recommendations presented below emerged based on an analysis collected from four data sources: 1) a comprehensive review of the literature, 2) interviews with 20 key stakeholders whose work provides them with a unique vantage point on the needs and experiences of survivors of DMST in New Jersey, 3) a quantitative analysis of child welfare data for youth where domestic trafficking (both labor and sexual exploitation) is alleged, and 4) a review of the case records of eight youth selected by the New Jersey Department of Children & Families (DCF) based on their participation in a residential treatment program for domestically trafficked adolescents. These recommendations emerged from the results of analysis from all four data sources collectively. The recommendations suggested are for all personnel tasked with working with youth vulnerable to or survivors of DMST, including staff from DCP&P, CSOC, and all DCF affiliates, as well as individuals from the fields of law enforcement, criminal justice, mental health, and education and are as follows:

1. Continue to build on becoming trauma-informed by utilizing a strengths-based, empowerment approach.
2. Foster a work environment that supports the professional development and self-care of staff working with youth involved with DMST.
3. Recognize and respond to the heterogeneity of the population.
4. Strengthen protective factors for youth.
5. Develop a continuum of services for all youth vulnerable to DMST.
6. Ensure collaborations between providers are comprehensive and have established policies and protocols to be successful in working with survivors of DMST.
7. Pursue more research to fully recognize the challenges youth involved with DMST face.
8. Utilize two risk assessment tools for DMST, with one designed to assess for initial vulnerability and a second for identifying indicators of trafficking.