Identifying Minors and Young People Exploited Through Sex Trafficking: A Resource for Child Welfare Agencies

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to child sex trafficking and to the lack of comprehensive and accurate data collection on the prevalence, characteristics, and service needs of trafficked victims. Despite the difficulties in compiling national data, studies at the local level have shown that many of the minors and young people who are trafficked have contact with the multiple systems, including child welfare and/or juvenile justice, at some point in their lives. Thus, child welfare agencies and service providers are well positioned to identify, collect information on, and provide services to trafficked minors and young people. Furthermore, it's important that child welfare agencies look for opportunities to strengthen collaboration with juvenile justice and other community partners to develop their capacity to comprehensively and compassionately address the specific and unique needs presented by this population.

In 2014, Federal law (the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, Public Law (P.L.) 113–183) began requiring public child welfare agencies to identify and serve minors (with the option to serve young people up to age 26) who are being trafficked or are at risk of being exploited through sex trafficking. This provides an opportunity to begin collecting accurate data on the prevalence of sex trafficking among children, youth, and young people in the care of, or known to, child welfare agencies. However, there is no standard tool or protocol for agencies to identify, or screen for, sex trafficking among those they serve. Child welfare agencies might review several different screening tools, risk assessments, and victim identification guidance resources when determining how these existing resources could be used, adapted, or expanded to fit their specific needs. Furthermore, the development and implementation of any child sex trafficking risk assessment and/or identification screening must be accompanied with a service system built to provide comprehensive and tailored trauma-informed placement and services. While identification that a child has been exploited through child sex trafficking is a crucial first step, it is only one component of a holistic and comprehensive approach for survivors.

To help child welfare agencies understand the different types of available tools, the Capacity Building Center for States developed this resource. It describes the background of sex trafficking—summarizing particular risk factors for children and youth, presenting steps to take before implementing a particular tool, and listing ground rules for identifying trafficking victims. Three tables (accurate as of August 2015) present detailed information about a number of resources. Table 1 focuses on currently available risk assessments and screening tools directly relevant to child welfare. To assist child welfare agencies, each resource was reviewed and additional information was included in the table: contact information for each tool; type of tool; type of human trafficking; any trafficking subpopulation, philosophy, and theme; and a link to the tool, where available. Table 2 describes sex and labor trafficking screening assessments relevant to child welfare, and table 3 lists resources for non-child welfare professionals (e.g., educators and nurses) that may be of interest to child welfare professionals. The supplemental resources included are not an exhaustive list nor is their inclusion an endorsement of those resources specifically.

Sex Trafficking

The Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 (TVPA) defines sex trafficking as follows:

> The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, advertising, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.

Child sex trafficking includes individuals who are exploited through the commercial sex industry and who

are under 18 years of age at the time of victimization. For young people 18 years of age and older, dynamics of force, fraud, or coercion must be present for the crime of sex trafficking to be identified, as outlined in the Federal TVPA. Most State laws have been drafted to align with the Federal TVPA, although individuals should review their State human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation-related laws to determine any definition variations. The dynamics of exploitation through sex trafficking are complex. Exploiters manipulate the needs that vulnerable young people have for love, stability, food, clothing, money, and shelter. They use coercive tactics to bond their victims to them, often positioning themselves as romantic partners or caregivers. According to the Federal TVPA (and most State laws), any minors exploited through commercial sex, regardless of their perceived knowledge of or agreement to such acts, are victims of sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking survivors often receive varying labels, such as sexual abuse victims, rape victims, substance abusers, chronic runaways, child prostitutes, delinquents, etc. As a consequence, victims often are misidentified and referred for various types of services that do not specifically or comprehensively address their unique needs. Alternately, sex trafficking victims can be labeled as delinquents, arrested for the crimes committed against them (e.g., prostitution) or crimes they commit as a result of their exploitation (e.g., assault, theft, or narcotics possession), and referred to the juvenile justice system. To further complicate matters, survivors of sex trafficking often do not self-identify as victims for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, pimp control, manipulation, shame, stigmatization, fear, and/or trauma bonds with their abuser. The end result of the multitude of labels and lack of disclosure is the high probability that practitioners and service providers will interact with a sex trafficking victim without identifying this particular form of exploitation. As mentioned previously, the existing data suggest that many children exploited through sex trafficking already are involved in the child welfare system, presenting opportunities for agencies to collaborate and standardize a response to vulnerable youth. One common risk factor cited by research is a history of sexual abuse often resulting in care provided by child welfare. Additionally, these youth can have a heighted set of both basic and emotional needs, such as a desire for family, belonging, love, and stability. While any young person is considered vulnerable simply because of the young person's age, children and youth in foster care are at an increased risk due to these factors. As a result, recognition of youth at increased risk for sex trafficking allows for early intervention and prevention opportunities at all stages of interaction with child welfare.

Risk Factors

A trafficker can target any minor or young person, but research reveals common characteristics that place a person at an increased risk for commercial sexual exploitation:

1. Environmental and individual vulnerabilities:
   a. Addiction to substances (includes addicted parent/guardians)
   b. Childhood sexual abuse/sexual assault
   c. Unstable home life
   d. Chronic running away with increased frequency and duration
   e. Poor or disjointed family connections
   f. Family homelessness
   g. Financially poor
   h. Sexual minority and gender minority youth (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) and genderqueer)
2. System involvement:
   a. With the juvenile justice system
   b. In Child Protective Services (CPS) or foster care

3. Intangible needs:

   a. Low self-esteem/self-worth

   b. Lack of identity or poor self-concept

   c. Lack of understanding of, or experience with, healthy relationships

   d. Desire for belonging, love, and affection

   e. Desire for family or community support

   f. Desire or perceived need for protection

   g. Desire for material possessions

Prior to implementing a risk assessment or screening tool, providers need an understanding of certain responses, dynamics, and behaviors commonly associated with child and youth survivors of sex trafficking. Child welfare staff should receive additional training on the following topics in preparation for working with children and youth victimized through sex trafficking:

► Post-traumatic stress disorder

► Complex trauma

► Stockholm syndrome/trauma bonds

The dynamics of exploitation through sex trafficking coupled with the often experienced history of sexual abuse renders most survivors of child sex trafficking reluctant or unable to self-identify as victims. Based on this knowledge, it becomes imperative to provide the proper training and resources to professionals who have the potential to identify and assist a survivor of child sex trafficking during the course of their work. Furthermore, prior to implementing a screening tool, agencies and organizations should take steps to ensure comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to facilitate informed/appropriate response, as well as access to resources following disclosure.

Preparing to Implement a Risk Assessment or Identification Tool

Due to the increased likelihood that a survivor of trafficking is not prepared or able to self-identify as a victim or disclose abuse, risk assessments and screening tools should be implemented in holistic ways that do not rely on disclosure for a survivor to access necessary services. Practitioners should consider behavioral, environmental, and other indicators as reliable concerns for suspicion of exploitation through sex trafficking. Therefore, agencies, facilities, and organizations should consider the following steps before implementing a risk assessment or screening tool:

► Provide comprehensive, trauma-informed response training to ALL staff who interact with children, youth, and young people to ensure a sensitized and informed environment for survivors.

► Provide indepth training on how to identify and respond to survivors of sex trafficking, including training on trauma bonds and associated behavior responses to trauma.

► Thoroughly assess the culture in which the risk assessment or screening tool will be administered. The significant misunderstanding and stigma surrounding commercial sex must be discussed and unpacked before a culture can shift the way it views and responds to survivors. Training and awareness can assist in establishing a more sensitized, compassionate, and informed response.

► Thoroughly assess the environment in which the risk assessment or screening tool will be administered. Develop or adapt the environment to include adolescent-friendly, sensitized, and culturally appropriate surroundings and processes to increase effectiveness and reduce potential for retraumatizing victims.

► Determine the gaps in processes, procedures, services, and partners necessary to properly identify and respond to victims. Develop the necessary internal and external processes, partnerships, and relationships necessary to fill those gaps.

► Train staff on steps for informed consent, confidentiality, and mandated reporting.

► Develop an informed multidisciplinary response team. Meet in advance with identified team members to coordinate training and discuss reporting and response process.

► Develop a resource and service plan. Resource plans should include continuum of care resources, such as 24/7 emergency and crisis response, various placement options, community-based programming, and long-term services and support.

Ground Rules for Identifying Trafficked Minors and Young People

The following "Ground Rules for Interaction" can be found in the resource *Intervene: Identifying and Responding to America's Prostituted Youth*.

1. *Be Nonjudgmental and Kind.* This is the building block for all future interactions.

2. *Address Emergency and Basic Needs First.* Survivors cannot engage in a substantive dialogue if these primary needs are not addressed.

3. *Check Your Environment.* Interview space should be youth-friendly, comfortable, and confidential.

4. *Time.* Allow for plenty of time and space to develop rapport and engage with a survivor prior to the interview.

5. *Be Flexible.* While you want to achieve certain goals with the survivor during this time, it is important to begin the empowerment process from the start of the conversation. Allowing a survivor to guide or prioritize the conversation can ultimately help you achieve your goals at a later time.

6. *Be Upfront.* Tell the survivor in the beginning who you are, your mandated reporting requirements, and your goals for the conversation.

7. *Ask for Permission.* If you must use a form or take notes during the interview, make sure that you ask permission first so that the survivor knows what you are writing and why you are writing down information about them. Also, clarify for what the information will be used and whether it is confidential.

8. *Language.* Use youth-friendly language[1] and mirror (appropriate language) used by youth when asking questions about events in the youth's story.

9. *Body Language.* Ensure that your body language is open and communicates a desire to hear all, including unpleasant or uncomfortable details.

10. *Limited Personal References.* Balance the amount of personal information shared. While it is important to participate in the conversation so it does not feel one-sided, sharing significant or extremely personal stories in an effort to connect can place an inappropriate burden on the survivor to counsel the practitioner.

11. *Minimal Interjections.* Limit interruptions when the survivor begins to share information, as a continuous line of questions from the practitioner can feel invasive rather than relational. However, if during the course of disclosure the survivor's behavior changes or the practitioner notices distress, the practitioner should "check in" with the survivor and ask what is happening for that person right now—"What are you feeling right now?" could be a good prompting

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[1] For example, not noted in the above publication, but important to keep in mind, is to avoid using the word "prostitution" when talking to a young person about the young person's exploitation.

question. Then, the practitioner should listen to the survivor's response and respect it. Taking short breaks throughout the disclosure process ensures proper respect and balance in the nervous system before reengaging in the disclosure or narrative. The practitioner should never be so focused on hearing the "whole" story or completing the intake process that the survivor feels revictimized.

12. *Meet the Survivors Where They Are.* Respect where the survivors are psychologically and emotionally in understanding their situation. Survivors may not acknowledge the situation as exploitative and may even have to or "want to" return to the abusive situation. Working first to understand and define the survivor's immediate and long-term goals, it is then the practitioner's role to guide the survivor (over time) into defining and understanding the situation, not to assign a label.

13. *Set Boundaries for the Survivor.* Practitioners should respect personal boundaries set by the survivor, especially regarding touching the survivor. While touch (e.g., hugging) may seem like a comforting gesture, for exploited minors and young people touching may feel invasive and uncomfortable. Practitioners should not touch a survivor without permission. Additionally, if the survivor gives permission to hug, the survivor should lead the interaction. Lots of warmth can be communicated through smiling, nodding, and otherwise affirming and empowering the survivor.

14. *Set Boundaries for Practitioners.* Practitioners need to set realistic goals and expectations for survivors regarding the services with which they can assist. Practitioners should never make promises unless it is certain that they can be achieved. Additionally, unless other protocols have been established within an agency/organization, shared personal information (home address, cell phone number, etc.) should be limited, too.

15. *Professionalism.* A multidisciplinary team approach is vitally important to holistically caring for the survivor. It should be expected that the survivor will bond more closely with certain practitioners. Practitioners should resist taking this personally and recognize that this is human nature. Additionally, practitioners should refrain from colluding or talking disrespectfully with the survivor about other practitioners on the team.

16. *Be Transparent.* Survivors of sex trafficking have been abused and hurt by most adults in their life. Trust should not be expected—it is earned. The more a practitioner can involve the survivor in recommended actions and conversations to achieve the survivor's goals, the more quickly trust can be built.

Informed prevention, identification, response, and services allow for opportunities that can engage and empower survivors in their steps toward healing. Finally, it is important to note that researchers have identified some special issues of concern for professionals, such as child welfare workers, who work directly with traumatized children and families. Sometimes, the recounting of trauma by a trauma survivor causes trauma reactions in the person who is helping. The professional is exposed indirectly to trauma through hearing about the firsthand trauma experiences of others. This is referred to as secondary traumatic stress, which sometimes also is called "compassion fatigue," "vicarious trauma," or "indirect trauma." Work with trauma survivors can be immensely rewarding. Professionals who are diligent about taking care of themselves and who receive consistent support from their supervisors and others often find that working with trauma victims enables them to grow personally and professionally.

The descriptions of the resources below are intended to assist child welfare agencies as they develop comprehensive strategies that work best for their populations, structures, and needs. Please note that the resources may need to be revised or fine-tuned before being appropriate to or consistent with an agency's philosophy or approach. Also, the descriptions are based on how the author of that resource characterized the material; the categories of "risk assessment," "screening tool," and "identification tool" are subjective and based on the view of the person or program that developed the original resource.

If you have developed or adapted a risk assessment or screening tool and would like to submit it for inclusion in this matrix, please email: capacityinfo@icfi.com.

Table 1. Sex Trafficking Screening and Risk Assessments for Child Welfare Professionals

Tool Name	Tool Type	Type of Human Trafficking	Subpopulation of Human Trafficking	Tool Philosophy	Tool Themes	Organization and Contact Information	Tool
Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Commercially Sexually Exploited Assessment (Florida version)	Screening assessment	Sex trafficking	Created intentionally without subpopulation restrictions so it could be used universally	Provide child welfare professionals with a tool that has language that is easy for youth and families to understand during an interview, and help child welfare professionals create individualized plans for victims of human trafficking based on their score on the assessment	Introduction to the tool and identifiers for human trafficking	Praed Foundation - edith@praedfoundation.org	This resource is unavailable via hyperlink, please contact the organization listed to request a copy.
Commercially Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) - Pilot Version	Risk assessment	Sex trafficking	Created intentionally without subpopulation restrictions so it could be used universally	With the aim of becoming the standard tool used to identify victims of human trafficking, this flexible tool is full of questions that could be asked of children in different situations to identify if they are potential victims of human trafficking.	Questions and a scoring sheet to measure the child's risk level for being a victim of human trafficking	West Coast Children's Clinic Danna Basson 510.485.7401	WestCoast Children's Clinic Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT)
HTIAM-14 Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure	Screening assessment and interview	Sex trafficking	Individuals exhibiting signs of pimp control	Provide interviewers with definitions and questions to identify child victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking	Executive summary of research findings; questions about child's immigration to the United States, psychological status, control (from pimp), and sexual exploitation	Covenant House New York - 212.613.0300	Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York
INTERVENE	Screening assessment and training	Sex trafficking	Individuals who were part of a gang	Designed by a committee of experts in the human trafficking field, this tool focuses on providing training and tools to identify pimps and victims of sex trafficking.	Two training videos and a resource guide	Shared Hope International - 866.437.5433	Tool can be purchased by visiting Shared Hope International's website
Runaway, Missing, or Kidnapped Child Assessment	Screening assessment	Sex trafficking	Runaway, missing, or kidnapped children	Provide caseworkers with a screening tool to help identify victims of human trafficking, as well as describe why each question is being asked to help them during an interview	Screening questions, background information on questions, and an explanation of the tool's purpose	Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services - 888.524.3578	Runaway, Missing, or Kidnapped Child Assessment (Document is available, but needs security certificate approval)

Table 2. Sex Trafficking and Labor Trafficking Screening Assessments for Child Welfare Professionals

Tool Name	Tool Type	Type of Human Trafficking	Subpopulation of Human Trafficking	Tool Philosophy	Tool Themes	Organization and Contact Information	Tool
Building Child Welfare Response to Child Trafficking	Handbook	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Covers a myriad of types of human trafficking	Provide agencies with proper response mechanisms (tools and training) to help child victims of trafficking	Identification tools, case management resources, legal information, and definitions related to child victims of trafficking	Loyola's Center for the Human Rights of Children - Katherine Kaufka 312.915.6350	Building Child Welfare Response to Child Trafficking Handbook (2011)
Human Trafficking Assessment for Runaway & Homeless Youth	Screening assessment	Sex Trafficking and labor trafficking	Runaway and homeless youth	Provide definitions and indicators of human trafficking (in general) as well as specific human trafficking indicators for runaway and homeless youth	Sex/labor trafficking indicators and questions specific to runaway and homeless youth	Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center - 888.373.7888	Human Trafficking Assessment for Runaway and Homeless Youth
Human Trafficking of Children Indicator Tool	Screening tool and interview guide	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	None applicable	Provide CPS investigators with signs and definitions of human trafficking so they can assist in the identification of child victims	Definitions, questions to consider (living conditions, psychological state, school/work environment, and other), interviewing tips, process for reporting child trafficking, and signs of trafficking	Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) - 866.762.2237	*Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Foster Parent Training* available for download on Florida's Center for Child Welfare website
Human Trafficking Screening Tool	Screening guide	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Intentionally not specified; tailor questions to victim's specific needs	Enhance Ohio's Statewide efforts to identify and aid child victims of human trafficking in compliance with Executive Order 2012-06K from Governor John R. Kasich	Interviewing style tips, body language signifiers, information for frontline responders, screening questions, process for reporting suspected child trafficking, and definitions of key human trafficking terms	Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force - Governor John Kasich 614.466.3555	Human Trafficking Screening Tool (June 2013)
Screening for Human Trafficking: Guidelines for Administering the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT)	Screening assessment and training	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Foreign and U.S.-born victims, individuals with disabilities and LGBTQ	Highlight a screening tool that identifies child victims of human trafficking and provides other helpful resources to professionals in the field	Tips for interviewing victims, FAQs, training on use of the tool, long and short versions of the tool, training/resources, definitions, and laws	Vera Institute of Justice - 212.941.9407	Screening for Human Trafficking: Guidelines for Administering the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT) - June 2014)

Table 3. Resources for Related Professions

Tool Name	Tool Type	Type of Human Trafficking	Subpopulation of Human Trafficking	Tool Philosophy	Tool Themes	Organization and Contact Information	Tool
Educators and Human Trafficking: In-Depth Review	Guide	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Students	Provide definitions and examples of identifiers for signs of human trafficking in the school system to help educators better understand how they can identify and help trafficking victims	Definitions, vignettes, risk factors, dangers of the Internet, and safety check protocols	Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center - 888.373.7888	Educators and Human Trafficking: In-Depth-Review, also a direct link to Polaris website
Tools for Educators	Factsheet	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Students	Help educators identify risk factors of human trafficking	Red flags in the classroom and proper response to identifying trafficking indicators	Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center - 888.373.7888	Tools for Educators, also a direct link to Polaris website
Human Trafficking Assessment for Domestic Workers	Guide	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Intentionally not specified; tailor questions to victim's specific needs	Provide information on identifying signs of human trafficking, as well as provide assistance in safety procedures and assessment tips if trafficking is suspected	Definitions and safety check procedure; identifiers and red flags	Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center - 888.373.7888	Human Trafficking Assessment for Domestic Workers
DCF Human Trafficking Nursing Toolkit	Risk assessment	Sex trafficking	Medical patients; domestic human trafficking	Provide nurses with information to screen for human trafficking and sex trafficking victims	Definitions related to child victims of trafficking, human trafficking screening tool, sex trafficking screening tool, diagnosis guide, and STI follow-up	Connecticut DCF - Ann Kiwanuka 860.560.5092	DCF Human Trafficking Nursing Toolkit (aka Human Trafficking-Renewal Forum)
Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting	Guide	Sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and organ trafficking	Medical patients	This informative guidebook provides health care professionals with knowledge of indicators of human trafficking.	Overview of human trafficking, relationship between human trafficking and health care, how to assess and evaluate at-risk individuals, how to service at-risk individuals, how to report to law enforcement and CPS, legal issues that may arise, and resources	Massachusetts General Hospital - 781.487.6020 Massachusetts Medical Society - 781.893.4610	Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting
Medical Assessment Tool	Factsheet	Sex trafficking and labor trafficking	Medical patients	Help medical professionals identify signs of human trafficking in their patients, and outline a consistent protocol to follow if they suspect human trafficking	Identifiers of human trafficking for medical professionals and protocol to follow if they suspect trafficking	Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center - 888.373.7888	Framework for a Human Trafficking Protocol in Healthcare Settings

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