

**Child Sexual Exploitation**  
From Prevention to Intervention

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**Myths About Child Sexual Exploitation**

- Child sexual exploitation is very rare and doesn't happen where we live
- Child sexual exploitation only happens to girls and young women
- Child sexual exploitation only happens to children who are in care, who come from a 'bad' family, or are of a particular race, religion or economic background
- Child sexual exploitation only happens to older children

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**Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child Sexual Exploitation means taking the advantage of sexuality of a minor to make a personal gain or profit.

- When people use the power they have over young people to sexually abuse them.
- Sexual exploitation includes involving children and youth in creating pornography and sexually explicit websites.
- Aiding, inviting, employing, authorizing, or causing a minor to engage in sexually explicit conduct.

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### National Statistics

- Children are most vulnerable between ages 7-13
- 15% of sexual assault and rape victims are under the age of 12
- One in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before the age of 18
- Many child sexual abuse victims never disclose their abuse to anyone. Less than 12% of child sexual abuse is reported to the police



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### Statewide Statistics

- One in 5 youth received a sexual approach or solicitation over the Internet in the past year
- The average age for first abuse is 9.9 years for boys and 9.6 years for girls
- Nearly 30% of child sexual assault victims identified by child protective service agencies were between 4 and 7 years of age

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### Four Most Prevalent Ways

- ◆ Inappropriate relationships
- ◆ Trafficking
- ◆ Gang and group exploitation
- ◆ Commercial exploitation

### How are people exploiting children?

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**How are people exploiting children?**  
**Inappropriate Sexual and Non-sexual Relationships**

- ◆ These relationships usually involve one perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a young person
- ◆ This can include familial abuse

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**How are people exploiting children?**  
**Trafficking**

- ◆ Trafficking involves the “buying and selling” of young people.
- ◆ Youth are passed by perpetrators through networks, between towns and cities, where they may be forced or coerced into sexual activity with multiple people.
- ◆ Young people are often used to recruit other young people.

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**How are people exploiting children?**  
**Gang and Group Sexual Exploitation of Children**

- ◆ Young people in gangs or groups may be sexually exploited as part of gang initiation or as punishment
- ◆ Young people may also be encouraged to recruit peers into the gang, exposing them to similar child sexual exploitation treatment and making it difficult to identify perpetrators who control the gang

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**How are people exploiting children?**  
**Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

- Commercial Sexual Exploitation includes child prostitution, child pornography and child sexual tourism
- Children are often victims of more than one of these forms of exploitation
- There is a cyclical nature to this victimization and multiple returns to their exploiters is not uncommon before achieving independence
- The 'system' often treats these children as criminals rather than victims

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**SOME NATURAL VULNERABILITIES**

- Feeling isolated
- Being bullied
- Unstable family/friend networks
- Previously experienced abuse
- Going missing
- Homelessness/sofa-surfing
- Learning disabilities

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**SOME NATURAL VULNERABILITIES**

- Difficult life experiences
- Taking risks
- Experimenting with alcohol, drugs and sexuality
- Rebellious against parents/careers/authority
- Staying out later
- Meeting new people
- Being vulnerable to flattery
- Being secretive

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**Most Effective Ways To Prevent These Crimes**

1. Increase awareness.
2. Strengthen the law's response to support young people as victims of abuse.
3. Strengthen the law's response to deter demand, including holding accountable those exploiting, trafficking, and soliciting the sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of youth.
4. Strengthen research to better understand, prevent, and intervene.
5. Support multisector and interagency collaboration.
6. Create a digital information sharing platform.

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**KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS: SOME WARNING SIGNS THAT COULD SUGGEST THAT A CHILD IS BEING, OR IS AT RISK OF BEING, SEXUALLY EXPLOITED**

- Frequently going missing from home or school
- Going out late at night and not returning until morning
- Being picked up in cars by unknown adults
- A significantly older boyfriend, girlfriend or friend
- Unexplained money, possessions, mobile phone credit or a new mobile phone
- Changes in behavior, for example becoming secretive or aggressive
- Increased use of mobile phone and/or internet activity
- Involvement in criminal activity

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**Understanding And Improving Law Enforcement Response**

- Many of our law enforcement officers remain unaware of the changes or how to respond effectively when sexual exploitation is suspected.
- Law enforcement agencies should ensure that police officers receive training on the dynamics of child sex trafficking, indicators of trafficking, changes to mandatory reporting requirements, and their role in helping youth access services. By training officers we will equip our law enforcement partners with the knowledge and skills needed to protect sexually exploited children.

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### Primary and Secondary Prevention

- Preventative education should be provided to all early years, primary, and secondary age children at key stages, using age appropriate resources.
- Education should focus on preventing harmful sexual behavior and/or offending among children and young people
- Children and young people presenting with harmful sexual behavior should be referred to Children's Social Care to be considered for an assessment of their needs and status as both victim and perpetrator/ potential perpetrator.

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### Effective, Key Collaborative Strategies

ICE has also launched the Victim Identification Program to combine technological and investigative capabilities and resources to recover child victims of sexual exploitation.

Another critical program to help victims is "Project VIC," launched in August 2012, by law enforcement agencies, technology firms, and non-governmental organizations to create efficiencies, adopt innovative technological solutions, and promote a victim-focused methodology to reduce backlogs in forensic analysis of images of sexual exploitation of children.



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### Keys To Building Collaboration With Other Community Agencies

- ❖ Empower and raise awareness among at-risk youth
- ❖ Identify and assist those who are in need of services to escape exploitation
- ❖ Strengthen the community capacity to address the issue of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)
- ❖ Change systems that allow CSEC to continue. Make sure the community is aware of organizations who provides services and treatment instead of punishment for children who are victims of sex trafficking.

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**MULTI-AGENCY WORKING AND INFORMATION SHARING**

- Multi-agency working and information sharing is paramount to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded.
- There should be consistent and robust systems, policies and guidance to enable information sharing, multi-agency working, and a methodical approach to child sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behavior.
- All child sexual abuse and exploitation training should highlight the diversity of victims as well as the diversity of perpetrators

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**NATIONAL PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

- At a minimum, all child sexual abuse and exploitation, and harmful sexual behavior multi-agency responses should include contributions from police, local authority, health and education and, where possible, voluntary sector agencies.
- Create a process to feedback to those who have shared intelligence, acknowledging how it can or has helped, excluding sensitive details.
- Child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation must be processed through child protection procedures, adopting a contextual safeguarding and multiple vulnerabilities approach, to enable better information sharing and assessment of need

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**How Sexual Exploitation Impacts Victims**



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### How Sexual Exploitation Impacts Victims

- Exploited young people are at increased risk of rape, sexual assault, physical violence, sexually transmitted infections, trafficking and pressure to use drugs and alcohol.
- Child Sexual Exploitation can impact every aspect of a child's life, such as:
  - Physical and mental health
  - Education and training
  - Family relationships
  - Friends and social relationships
  - How they view others
  - Their relationships with their own children in the future

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### How Sexual Exploitation Impact Victims

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**
  - Anxiety, depression, addiction, low self-esteem, self-harm, eating disorders, PTSD, self-image, depression, nightmares, flashbacks, and attachment problems.
- **PHYSIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**
  - Physical injuries, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, weight loss, sickness, self-harm, general ill health, sexually transmitted infections, fertility problems, hair loss, poor diet, and addictions.
- **SOCIAL IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**
  - Isolation from friends and family, education, hobbies and interests, risky/dangerous situations and people, difficulty developing and maintaining relationships, avoiding certain places and people, moving areas, and social isolation.
- **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**
  - Drug/Alcohol 'debt', financial difficulty, stealing, unable to work, housing problems, trouble supporting children, benefit claims, and difficulty accessing mainstream education.

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### Why Victims Refuse Help

- Intimidation: There are threats of violence against the victim's family and loved ones
- The victim may be rejected by the perpetrator and ostracized by their family
- The victim may be "punished" by placement in foster care or an institution
- The victims family may be torn apart, and they may see themselves as responsible for its demise
- Both the shame and guilt for having been involved in the sexual abuse, and the feeling of being responsible for any negative consequences to the family may inhibit victims from telling

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**Victim Service Provider Intake & Needs Assessment**



The safety and well-being of the victim should always be the primary concern of all victim service providers, law enforcement officers, legal and immigration representatives.

**WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO RE-VICTIMIZE THE CHILD**

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**Conducting an Intake With a Potential Victim**

**Show Victims They Are Not Alone**

- ❖ What we have noticed is that many victims are unaware of the prevalence of human trafficking as a crime, leading to a deeper sense of isolation and shame.
- ❖ It is critically important to set an appropriate tone during the first meeting with a potential victim

**What Some Providers Do**  
 Upon arrival, and during the explanation of services, each victim was shown a map of the world displayed in the office and asked to place a small sticker on their country or city of birth. **The multitude of stickers serves as a powerful visual that the client is not alone in their suffering,** and gives the service provider an opportunity to offer hope by sharing some general information about healing and **SUCCESS STORIES.**

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**Child Sexual Exploitation**

**Intervention**

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**TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACHES**

**All interventions and services engaging with children and young people should be trauma-informed, taking into account direct trauma to the victim, as well as secondary or vicarious trauma to parents and professionals.**

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**Child Sexual Exploitation Intervention**

- Therapeutic support for victims and perpetrators/ potential perpetrators should be readily available, and waiting lists for accessing services should be addressed.
- Child sexual exploitation training should provide an increased awareness of trauma responses, trauma bonds and appropriate ways of responding to victims.
- Parent and Cartakers: Therapeutic support should be available for families of victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

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**Child Sexual Exploitation Intervention**

There is a lack of services for young people over 18 years old, or for those transitioning to adult services. This is paired with a lack of awareness of exploitation within 16-18 year olds.

There must be an increased awareness that sexual exploitation does not end when a child becomes an adult, and that perpetrators will target vulnerable adults as well as children and young people.

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**Child Sexual Exploitation**  
**Intervention**

Services (particularly mental health or therapeutic services) for children and young people affected by, or at risk of, child sexual abuse and exploitation, must be able to provide support through the transition period into adulthood, and help young people engage with child sexual exploitation services by commissioning work to over 18s who continue to be affected by child sexual exploitation.

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**Child Sexual Exploitation**  
**Intervention**

Local authorities should review the use of unregistered placement providers for 16–18+ year olds, unless satisfied that they have appropriate training and safeguarding processes in place to support children and young people affected by child sexual abuse and exploitation.

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**Child Sexual Exploitation**  
**Florida's Resource**

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**Florida's Response**

Florida's landmark Safe Harbor legislation was enacted in 2012 and work has continued each subsequent legislative session to strengthen and expand laws impacting victims of trafficking. These laws recognize that commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) are victims – not criminals – and encourage understanding and therapeutic treatment rather than prosecution, court sanctions or jail.

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**Safe Harbor Act**

- Implementations was effective January 1, 2013
- The legislative intent of this bill is that children who have been sexually exploited should be treated as victims
- This bill allows the Department of Children and Families and its community partners to use facilities designated as safe houses to provide services to this population

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**Safe Harbor Act Continued**

- Amends the definition of a child who is found to be dependent to include a child who has been sexually exploited and has no parent/relative to provide supervision and care
- Amends the definition of sexual abuse of a child to include participation in sex trafficking
- Allows law enforcement discretion to deliver children identified as sexually exploited to the Department rather than arresting them

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**A Final Word...**  
An important quote

“ You don’t really see the effect that grooming has on people, but by seeing it in front of you, you get to realize how it works”



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