



COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION and SEX TRAFFICKING of MINORS

Adapted from www.iom.edu/sextraffickingminors and other sources:

October 30, 2015- The Morning Call- An Easton man accused last spring of pimping is now charged with human trafficking and witness intimidation for allegedly threatening to kill a woman if she testified against him.

October 30, 2015- The Morning Call-An Allentown man (Corderro Cody) who forced women to work in a prostitution ring he called "the program" pleaded guilty in federal court Friday to sex trafficking charges. Cody pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion, 12 counts of sex trafficking, conspiracy to transport individuals across state lines for the purpose of prostitution and one count of sex trafficking of a minor. The charges carry a minimum sentence of 15 years in prison and a maximum of life. Cody could also be ordered to pay a fine of up to \$3.75 million. October 30, 2015- The Morning Call

Commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs when individuals buy, trade, or sell sexual acts with a child. Children who are involved in the commercial sex industry are viewed as victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons--sex trafficking, which, according to federal law, is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, which is any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.”

Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking occur every day in the United States. (Sex trafficking need not involve actual movement of the victim.) Its victims—both male and female—live in cities and small towns across America. Victims could be anyone – your sister, neighbor, or nephew. One study estimates as many as 325,000 children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are at risk each year for becoming victims of sexual exploitation. Knowledge and awareness are key in keeping your loved ones safe.

How does a child become a victim?

- ✓ Pimps prey on victims as young as 12 to 14 years old.
- ✓ Pimps may earn hundreds of thousands of dollars every year from selling minors.
- ✓ 75% of child victims engaged in prostitution are under the control of a pimp.

Pimps, also known as traffickers, can be anyone, including family members, friends, trusted adults, or “boyfriends,” who profits from the exchange of the sexual use of a minor by another. Often traffickers/pimps will create a seemingly loving and caring relationship with their victim-- promising to meet the child’s emotional and physical needs in order to establish trust and allegiance. This manipulative relationship tries to ensure the youth will remain loyal to the exploiter even in the face of severe victimization.

Pimps are predators who seek out vulnerable victims, particularly runaways or children experiencing trouble at home. Pimps find victims at a variety of venues such as in social-networking websites, shopping malls, and schools; on local streets; or at bus stations. They know these children have emotional and physical needs they perceive are not being met and use this to their advantage. Pimps are willing to invest a great deal of time and effort in their victim to break down a victim’s natural resistance and suspicion – buying them gifts, providing a place to stay, promising a loving relationship – before revealing their true intent. Frequently victims do not realize the deceptive nature of their trafficker’s interest in them, viewing their pimp as a caretaker and/or boyfriend.

Pimps may use force, fraud, or coercion to virtually enslave their victims. Juvenile victims have been controlled by threats of violence to their family; pornographic images taken and used for blackmail or stigmatization; physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. Child victims may be gang-raped to desensitize them to sexual activity prior to victimizing them in prostitution. Victims are taught to not trust law enforcement and

may have experienced negative encounters with law-enforcement officers. A pimp's use of psychological manipulation (causing the child to truly believe the pimp loves and cares for his or her well-being) coupled with physical control (threats, violence, or drug addiction) can make a victim feel trapped and powerless. This "trauma bond" is difficult to break and long-term treatment and counseling for victims is required.

Trauma Bonding is common among child victims exploited for commercial sex. The child experiences a strong link to the pimp/exploiter based in what the child perceives as an incredibly intense or important relationship, but one in which there has been an exploitation of trust or power. Advocacy groups working directly with this population note reframing the trauma bond with a pimp/exploiter can take months of therapy and/or residential treatment for the child. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is very common among children exposed to commercial sexual exploitation and may be characterized by such symptoms as anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing, and hyper-alertness. Victims of commercial child sexual exploitation often have unique needs given the frequent nature of multiple acts of sexual exploitation or violence, by multiple offenders, over potentially a sustained period of time.

What are the potential signs and vulnerabilities?

- History of emotional, sexual, or other physical abuse
- Signs of current physical abuse and/or sexually transmitted diseases
- History of running away or current status as a runaway: One study estimates 30% of shelter youth and 70% of street youth are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Each time a child runs away his or her chance of being targeted increases.
- Inexplicable appearance of expensive gifts, clothing, or other costly items: Traffickers often buy gifts for their victims as a way to build a relationship and earn trust.
- Presence of an older boy or girlfriend
- Drug addiction: Pimps frequently use drugs to lure and control their victims.
- Withdrawal or lack of interest in previous activities: Due to depression or being forced to spend time with their pimp, victims lose control of their personal lives.
- Gang involvement especially among girls: Girls who are involved in gang activity can be forced into prostitution.

How can I keep a child safe?

One of the most important things you can do is to create an environment in which a child feels comfortable talking with you. Open communication is key. Share the dangers of sex trafficking with your children and encourage them to alert you when they feel uncomfortable in any situation. Also, youth being controlled by a trafficker frequently do not reveal their victimization because of the severe control their trafficker has over them, both physically and psychologically. If something does not seem right, ask questions! Establishing an ongoing dialogue with children is critical to protecting them

Often trafficking victims have experienced victimization in the past, and many times this has been inflicted by individuals close to the victim. Do you trust the people with whom your child interacts? Knowing whom your children are with at all times is crucial to protecting their safety.

When your daughter or son is online, do you know which sites they are visiting and with whom they are communicating? Taking the time to monitor what your children do on the Internet is an important step in keeping your child safer.

If you suspect a case of commercial child sexual exploitation or sex trafficking of children, contact National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® at 1-800-843-5678 or visit www.cybertipline.com

or

National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) at 1-888-373-7888.

For additional information and resources about Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Human Trafficking, please visit the Innocence Lost National Initiative at <http://www.fbi.gov/innolost/innolost.htm>.