A Review of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth: 
Focus on British Columbia

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**Introduction**

This literature review focuses on services, resources, approaches to service delivery, and programming for commercially sexually exploited children and youth and for those at risk of sexual exploitation. In particular, literature and information on local and regional community-based approaches to prevention, intervention, exiting, and reintegration was sought in order to identify elements of best or promising practices for addressing this issue. In essence, this review examines the evidence base in order to provide insight into several key questions: What do we know about which approaches and practices work with this population? What are the needs of commercially sexually exploited children and youth (and according to whom)? How do we best respond to these needs? Where are the gaps in research, in the provision of services, and in knowledge? This review also outlines recommendations from various task forces, community action groups, service providers, researchers, and, importantly, from sexually exploited youth themselves.

**Literature Search Strategies**

Searches were made on a variety of databases to locate documented evidence regarding approaches to service delivery and related outcomes, program evaluation, prevention, intervention, exiting, and reintegration with sexually exploited children and youth. An extensive search of the literature was undertaken using the UBC library catalogue and online databases.

Searches were conducted on the following databases: PsycInfo, cinahl, PubMed, Social Work Abstracts, ERIC, Academic Elite - EBSCO, Sociological Abstracts, Social Sciences Index, Web of Science.

**Keyword search terms:**
sexually exploited, sexual exploitation, commercial sex, prostitution, sex trade, survival sex, homeless, high-risk AND youth, adolescent, child, also searched specifying AND Canada, British Columbia. However, given that this review is meant to focus on best and promising practice, models of service delivery, and programming and program evaluation around prevention, exiting, and reintegration specifically in British Columbia, the abstracts and sometimes full articles were screened to determine if they had relevance to the objectives. Many documents described sexually exploited youth, provided information on definitional issues, legislation and legal issues, prevalence and demographics, morbidities, mortalities, risk factors, and abuse and victimization experiences – in general, unless they also provided information that corresponded to stated objectives, these documents were not included in the review.

Other resources were used including the McCreary website and NTIAH catalogue, Health Canada, Ministry for Child and Family Development, Justice Canada, and National Crime Prevention Centre publications, municipal websites, and national and international websites related to children and youth at risk and/or to sexual exploitation. Internet Google searches were
also conducted using youth sexual exploitation in Canada / in B.C., youth prostitution, as keywords. Key bibliographies and reference lists were also used extensively.

**Key Contacts**

Service providers, researchers, police, and other informants were contacted, some of whom provided additional information, reports and other unpublished literature, and suggestions for resources.

**Academic research contacts included:**
- Dr. Susan McIntyre (Calgary)
- *Dr. John Lowman (SFU, Burnaby)
- *Dr.’s Cecilia Benoit, *Philip Cook, and *Mikael Jansson (UVic, Victoria)
- *Dr. Tullio Caputo (Carleton U., Ontario)
- Dr. Leslie Tutty (RESOLVE, Calgary), Kelly Gorkoff (RESOLVE Alberta/Ontario), Dr. Jocelyn Proulx (RESOLVE, Winnipeg)
- Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc (U of Minnesota).

* Did not respond or did not provide information

**Other community research contacts included:**
- Dalyce Dixon (Prevention and Early Intervention Project, CRD)
- Deirdre Goudriaan (STOP – Surrey CAT, evaluating Servants Anonymous programming, thesis research on demand factors)
- Tamara Rozeck-Allen (thesis research on exiting sex trade, Victoria)
- Jennifer Harrison (Save the Children, Western Office, Vanc.) – ON HOLIDAYS
- Renata Aebi (Alliance for the Rights of Children-ARC, Vanc.) – NO RESPONSE
- Natalie Clark (Justice Institute) – ON MATERNITY LEAVE
- The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children
- Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse, RESOLVE Calgary, RESOLVE Alberta, RESOLVE Saskatchewan

As another component of this project on sexual exploitation of children and youth in the province, questionnaires were sent out to services, agencies, and programs focusing on this population in order to compile contact and information lists. The returned questionnaires were used not only to develop lists but also to form impressions of issues, services, and resources, and to highlight useful documents. As well, individuals from active, well-established agencies and programs were contacted (by email or by phone) in order to request further information on special funded projects, to ascertain whether there were any unpublished or internal documents that would be useful in this review, to briefly discuss the needs of the community, and to provide an opportunity to share any recommendations they might have.

**The following individuals and agencies were contacted for in more in-depth communications:**
- Lauren Casey (Executive Director, PEERS Victoria) and *Karen Dennis (Public Education, PEERS Victoria)
- Shar Lafontaine (Youth Outreach Worker, PACE) and *Bonita Ho (Journeys Program, PACE)
Shelley Woodman (Director, PEERS Vancouver) and Amanda Bonella (Director of Communications, PEERS Vancouver)
Jennifer Campbell (Boys and Girls Club of Delta, Delta Youth Services, Delta CAT)
Greg McDonnell (Youth Outreach Worker, Whistler Community Services)
Randy Shrofel (Choices Alternative Program, Winnipeg School District)
Raymond Payette (Vice, Vancouver Police Department)
Jim Latham (MCFD Regional Planning, Fraser Health Region CAT)
Merlyn Horton (Safe Online Outreach-SOLO, Fraser Health Region CAT)
Judy McGuire and Allan Roscoe (DEYAS)
*Lynda Gray (Urban Native Youth Association)
Michelle Fortin (Executive Director, Watari Research Association)
Deena Franks (Youth Services Coordinator, Family Services of Greater Vancouver)
*Linda Cunliffe (Executive Director, Servants Anonymous, Surrey)
*Diane Sowden (Children of the Street, Coquitlam)
Joe Woodworth (Next Step Program, Options: Services to Communities Society)

* Did not respond to messages
ARTICLES AND REPORTS – BRITISH COLUMBIA


This report outlines the issues related to the sexual exploitation of children and youth British Columbia, and more specifically in New Westminster. The report uses findings from a key CRD report to discuss the violence and victimization experiences of those in the commercial sex trade as well as their safety practices. Recommendations for increasing understanding of exploitation and for approaching the problem at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels are offered.

Availability: in-house; Joan Selby, Social Planning Dept., Burnaby


This article examines child trafficking for the purposes of prostitution in British Columbia and identifies four areas of concern: Aboriginal girls trafficked from home communities to urban areas, children from other countries trafficked into BC, children from BC trafficked to the US, and children trafficked or lured through the internet.

Availability: in-house; on web at http://www.childrightsweb.ca/


This report was completed under the direction of the interministry working group of the Assistant Deputy Minister’s Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth. This comprehensive report provides an overview of the issues, a jurisdictional scan (information from interviews with service providers in 9 BC communities including who, where, how, service delivery, exiting, and prevention), a review of the literature (demographics, antecedents, characteristics, legal issues, policy, and programmatic response), and results from consultation with Aboriginal agencies. The report outlines recommendations for a plan of action.

*excellent overview of the situation in BC and issues specific to this population, includes recommendations and limitations


Examining the sex trade from a work perspective rather than from a social problem perspective, this research captures the experiences of 201 current and former sex trade workers (primarily female) in the Capital Regional District and their views of their work, health status, access to services, and exiting process. Recommendations focus on educating the public, police, justice, and professionals about the reality of sex work and the needs of sex workers, accessing quality services that are sensitive and respectful to sex workers, developing networks of social support, and providing safe housing and experiential outreach services.


This descriptive study examines the experiences and opinions of men and women in the sex trade and provides insight into the ways in which gender influences experience. Findings are based on focus groups with 20 women and 21 men in the Capital Regional District.

Availability: in-house; PEERS Victoria or PEERS Vancouver


For this document, both youth aged 12 to 19 and service providers were surveyed in order to identify gaps in service for Vancouver’s street-involved youth. High priority recommendations presented include safe housing, substance abuse programming, mental health services, flexible and accessible 24-hour services, integrated case management and integration of services, increased services and service coordination across the province, and increased enforcement and charges against sexual predators (customers).

Availability: in-house


This report provides an overview of the scope of the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Burnaby, the legal context, the service context, the characteristics of youth in the sex trade, and suggests plans for action.

Availability: in-house; Joan Selby, Social Planning Dept., Burnaby

This document provides an overview of best practice approaches for service delivery and programming for youth across a variety of areas, including sexually exploited youth (see section 2, #14, pp. 64-72, and annotated bibliography pp. 168-179). The review identifies important elements and provides empirical basis for recommendations using eight research studies (primarily Canadian, but also U.S.) deemed to be empirically rigorous as to meet scientific standards described in report.

*one of few reviews explaining the importance of empirical basis for recommendations and identifying best and promising practices*


This is the final report on a three-year National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) funded developmental project that involved several community partners in the Capital Regional District. The primary objective of the project was to prevent recruitment into the sex trade and to intervene early with sexually exploited youth and those at-risk of exploitation. This report details the challenges and successes of the project across a framework of seven areas including: project personnel, housing, day program and court support, regional coordination and cooperation issues, seamless service delivery, tracking through data base systems, and working with an independent evaluation team. The report also offers recommended strategies and actions for community-based initiatives addressing sexually exploited youth.

[Note: independent evaluation report available Summer 2003, contact Mikael Jansson – mjansson@uvic.ca – for details]

*interesting report – it’s one of very few available program evaluations and is comprehensive in scope, the independent evaluation should be interesting and well worth reading when it is released*

Availability: in-house

The author provides background information on Kamloops’ sex trade and outlines the outcome indicators used in her research, including outreach contact, violence, health, social support, advocacy and community understanding, education, and legal issues. Her findings are based on interviews conducted with 51 sexually exploited individuals, primarily females. Elliott makes recommendations and suggests plans to evaluate (this is interim report only).

Availability: in-house


This document outlines the information collected by the Vancouver Police Department’s high-risk youth cars, Yankee 177 and Car 278, for the 6-week period of May 18, 2000, to July 5, 2000. Demographic characteristics of the youth intervened with on Vancouver’s downtown eastside as well as details of the types of intervention provided by the police are presented.

Availability: in-house


This report focuses on the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Prince George. Within this document, the problems facing these youth are outlined, key issues are identified, the service provider response is described, and recommendations to address the problem are provided.

Availability: in-house


This research report examines the mental and physical health, background characteristics, and needs of 44 sexually exploited and 35 at-risk youth (aged 13-19) in Kamloops, Nanaimo, Kelowna, and Prince George. Findings from the modified Adolescent Health Survey are presented and are compared to McCreary’s data on street youth and youth in school. Further, results are compared with findings from the CRD study of 75 sexually exploited youth. The youth highlighted the need for and importance of safe housing, education, employment opportunities, and substance abuse/misuse services.

Availability: in-house

This resource binder includes videos, facilitator’s guidelines, and an information guide for parents, counsellors, youth agencies, teachers, and police. The material is geared toward raising community awareness and understanding of the sexual exploitation of children and youth in order to prevent recruitment and to intervene early in the process.

Availability: manual (not full binder) in-house; Community Programs, Attorney General


This document summarizes findings from discussion with nine communities across British Columbia as well as interviews conducted with 75 sexually exploited youth and adults, 16 parents of sexually exploited youth, and several customers.

Availability: in-house


The STEAM manuals are designed to educate and raise awareness of child and youth sexual exploitation in the community, among professionals, parents and teachers, doctors and nurses, and youth (four different versions or components available). The manuals can be used in conjunction with workshops delivered by experiential youth as part of PEERS’ public education programming.

Availability: youth component manual in-house; PEERS Victoria or PEERS Vancouver


Rozeck’s report reviews prevalence data, age of entry into sex trade, ethnocultural identity (Aboriginal), and risk factors, and also discusses prevention, intervention, and implications for counselling sexually exploited youth.

Availability: in-house

This exploratory study focuses on perceptions and attitudes regarding benefits and risks of involvement in the sex trade from 14 sexually exploited youth on Vancouver’s downtown eastside. The authors state that insights gained from listening to the youths’ voices have implications for policies and services. In order to be effective, intervention efforts must be grounded in the lived experience of sexually exploited children and youth.

Availability: in-house


This document includes background information on the Capital Regional District (CRD) Community Action Team (CAT), key findings from a study of 75 sexually exploited youth in the CRD, and a summary of CAT action plans based on these findings.

Availability: in-house


This document presents findings from a study with 75 sexually exploited youth, aged 14 - 25, in the CRD. The results provide insight into the demographics and details of sex trade work for these youth, including victimization, safety practices, health, substance use, living situation, justice system experience, education, skills, and training, housing needs, and barriers to exiting the trade. Also included in the appendices are recommendations from public consultations and from CAT task force subcommittees.

Availability: in-house

This is a comprehensive manual that presents a provincial framework for understanding and working with sexually exploited youth. Guiding principles for effective program design and delivery for this population are presented along with information on currently available BC programs/services that are recognized as meeting these principles (and therefore considered to be exemplary and promising practices). In Appendix C, the NCPC (National Crime Prevention Centre) reporting template for sexually exploited youth prevention projects is reproduced.

*probably the best overview of issues and in-depth information on programming in BC, highly recommended by all service providers*


This manual is based on a project in which interviews were conducted with over 100 service providers and two youth focus groups. The manual was designed to help prevent Aboriginal children and youth from recruitment and sexual exploitation and to identify resources to help those at risk as well as those involved in the child sex trade. Using a community development perspective, the authors suggest that a continuum of care model of service delivery that addresses prevention through follow-up be used to empower Aboriginal youth.

Availability: in-house


Full conference proceedings for local conference on the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Local, national and international perspectives are presented by a range of speakers including researchers, government workers, advocates, service providers, and experiential youth.

Availability: in-house
OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS – BRITISH COLUMBIA

Draft Summary of Presentations, Community Safety/Street Youth Forum. (June 4, 2003). Held at West End Community Centre and sponsored by Lorne Mayencourt, MLA (Vancouver – Burrard).

Presents an overview of the youth forum presentations organized by Lorne Mayencourt, MLA, and representatives from various contingents including Youth Search, Covenant House, general community, Street Youth Job Action, business owner/community police board member/gay community, Gordon Neighbourhood House, Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, West End Seniors Network, Lord Roberts Elementary Parents Advisory Committee, Vancouver Police Department, Tenant Assistance Program – City of Vancouver, Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services, and Family Services of Greater Vancouver.

Availability: in-house

Jansson, M. & Benoit, C. (May 2002). Some benefits and challenges in conducting community-academic research on youth involved in the sex trade. Conference presentation at Making the Connection: Sexually Exploited Youth, the Challenges and Opportunities, Victoria, BC.

This presentation is based on a CIHR-funded research project currently being conducted by the authors entitled, Risky Business?: Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade. They discuss some of the practical, ethical, and methodological difficulties encountered as well as potential benefits in conducting community-academic collaborative research. Jansson and Benoit provide a rationale for their research and describe the methods being used to carry out the project.

Availability: in-house


This document consists of the STOP Committee’s feedback form for the Community Grants Fund, Community Programs Division, Ministry of Attorney General, Assistant Deputy Minister’s Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Youth and Prostitution. Information is provided on a project that aimed to identify, develop, and share “best practices” for addressing sexual exploitation of children and youth.

Availability: in-house
CANADIAN LEGISLATION


The author describes the shift in public and policy frameworks and discourse from viewing prostitution as criminal activity requiring punishment to viewing it as a form of victimization requiring protection. Bittle offers a critical analysis of the protectionist strategies and calls for the power relations underlying these policies to be challenged.

Availability: in-house


Early in this book chapter, Busby suggests that there exists a gender bias in legislative practices and sentencing and she connects this to the fact that commercially sexually exploited girls occupy a “curious and contradictory place in criminal law because they are treated as both perpetrators and victims.” The author outlines the main features of specialized protective confinement strategies (vs. general child protection strategies) and offers a critical review of this type of legislation that primarily affects girls. Busby questions whether this legislation is merely an attempt to regulate girls’ sexual / survival behaviour and whether it is connected to larger themes of social control.

* a good new Canadian book by RESOLVE researchers and advocates about the commercial sexual exploitation of girls, with chapters on the vulnerability to and the experience of exploitation, violence, health, social identity, protective confinement, and programming.

Availability: chapter in-house; book available through McNally Robinson (Victoria, on internet) or Fernwood Publishing
ARTICLES AND REPORTS – CANADA


This article describes the two major reports on prostitution that were initiated by the government in the 1980’s, the Badgley Report and the Fraser Report, and discusses the legislation that was enacted in response to these documents. According to Bagley et al., legislative initiatives have not taken social science or research findings into account and instead have criminalized sexually exploited youth. Strategies conceived of as helpful in this article include support for independent living in consideration of the fact that many youths come from intolerable living situations, opportunities for alternative education, and individual and group counselling services that promote youths’ decision-making power.

Availability: in-house


This report provides a critical overview of the legislative history and policy responses to sexual exploitation of children and youth in Canada and highlights the main findings and debates from selected social science literature on this issue. Limitations of the social sciences literature are described, along with recommendations for future research.

*presents a comprehensive overview of Canadian legislation and policy responses


This report is based on Out From the Shadows, International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth, a project that provided a forum for experiential youth to give voice to their experiences and needs as well as to make recommendations for change that would be heard by individuals and organizations committed to eliminating the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Phase One, Into the Shadows, involved Canadian and international consultations; Phase Two, Out From the Shadows, was the international summit with various different forums; and, Phase Three concerned the development of visions and action plans for change.

Availability: in-house; Save the Children Canada

Interviewed 45 adult women from across the three prairie provinces who were involved in the sex trade prior to age 18 as well as service providers who work with sexually exploited youth. Descriptive study focusing on patterns of involvement, identity, health issues, and violence. Reviews and describes implications of protective confinement legislation and programming and policies. Identifies major sources of service delivery and offers recommendations for policy and programming.


This report details the context of the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Canada and the characteristics of these youth. The recommendations address problems of sexual exploitation in terms of legislation, policing, and justice issues, programming and service delivery, and acquisition of the basic necessities such as safe housing, and food. The Working Group calls for an interagency, multidisciplinary approach to services.


The authors address some of the challenges and debates involved in providing services to sexually exploited youth (versus generic services for all street youth). Three different approaches to service delivery in Canada are presented and discussed: state-mandated, special legislated initiatives (i.e., apprehension models), and non-governmental programming. The discussion of these approaches and their efficacy is based on consultation across Canada with service providers across the prairie provinces with sexually exploited girls and women. Based on conversations with girls and women who had successfully exited the sex trade, the authors report three main effective components for programming: (1) support in dealing with issues of personal history, such as abuse; (2) a focus on secure, consistent, respectful, relationship-building with the service provider; and (3) empowerment approach that gives control and power to the girls/women. The authors discuss funding and policy implications for the three service models and advocate for an approach that also addresses systemic inequalities that give rise to sexual exploitation.

Availability: in-house, available through McNally Robinson Booksellers (Victoria)

This article provides a background on online victimization and internet safety and reviews relevant Canadian and international legislation. Given the anonymity of the internet, the rapid advancement of technology, and the inherent difficulties in regulating its use, sexual exploitation of children and youth through the internet is increasing. The internet can be used as a vehicle for recruitment, pornography, online sexual assault, promotion of sex tourism, and the development of virtual pedophilia communities. The author calls for informed policy development at the community level regarding this type of sexual exploitation.

Availability: in-house; on web, [http://www.childrightsweb.ca/](http://www.childrightsweb.ca/)


This report examines the sexual exploitation of girls and young women primarily within an international context. The authors discuss the international trafficking of girls and women and suggest that there are many factors that contribute to sexual exploitation both internationally and within Canada. The Canadian situation is briefly discussed.

Availability: FREDA at SFU Harbour Centre


This report does not focus exclusively on children and youth in the sex trade, but it highlights antecedents, risk factors and effects associated with sexual exploitation, and also discusses legislative and legal issues and alternatives to criminalization. A brief overview of Edmonton services and programs geared toward individuals in the sex trade is presented.

Availability: in-house

The authors report findings from consultation with over 150 commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth across 22 different communities in Canada (the National Aboriginal Project). The youth were given the opportunity to discuss exploitation and provide recommendations across several themes: abuse and exploitation, prevention, crisis intervention/harm reduction, exiting and healing, public attitudes/advocacy, and youth participation. Individual and systemic factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth in the commercial sex trade are presented. Taking a community development perspective, the authors advocate for the importance of youth involvement and collective responsibility in order to create social change.

* excellent overview of Aboriginal youth experience as described from a youth perspective, many recommendations are provided

Availability: in-house, Save the Children Canada

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. (2001). *Special Committee to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade, Final Report*. SK: Author.**

This report presents recommendations and rationales for eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in Saskatchewan through deterring offenders, providing protective services, understanding antecedents and risk factors, and through prevention and early intervention efforts.


The author, former head of Calgary Police Vice Unit and current Executive Director of Calgary’s Street Teams, wrote this booklet to increase understanding of the dynamics of child exploitation. MacInnes’ interviews with over 300 sexually exploited children and numerous pimps inform his presentation of the psychological profile of both pimp and child as he traces the recruitment techniques and the exiting process. Elements identified as being crucial to a successful exit include a team approach, with parents in the lead whenever possible, along with other appropriate support systems ongoing. He also cautions that the environmental circumstances that may have contributed to the child’s move onto the street must also have been addressed.

Availability: in-house

MacInnes recounts the individual stories of commercially sexually exploited girls in order to provide insight into their lives. He describes the stages in the intervention process as well as those involved in reintegration, provides timelines, and describes realistic expectations regarding child behaviour throughout these processes. The author raises important points about living, financial, and educational arrangements, and about social skills following an exit. He advocates a team approach that involves relationship-building over time, but that also may involve manipulation to aid in the decision to leave the sex trade and to speed the exiting process.

Availability: in-house


A follow-up report to the 1991-92 research, *The Youngest Profession – The Oldest Oppression*, in which 50 sexually exploited young people were interviewed in Calgary. For this project, in 2000-2001, retrospective interviews with 28 of the original participants along with 10 others were conducted, with a focus on time in the trade as well as on exiting, reintegration, and services.

*although retrospective, one of the few Canadian studies that focuses on exiting and reintegration*


Save the Children Canada. (1998). *Speaking out together: Declaration and agenda for action of sexually exploited children and youth*. Toronto, ON: Save the Children Canada, Out From the Shadows, the Sexually Exploited Youth Project.

This booklet, based on findings and actions determined at the First International Summit for Sexually Exploited Youth held in Victoria in March 1998, is designed to increase awareness and educate readers about the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Through a process of extensive youth consultation, a Declaration and Agenda for Action of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth was developed and presented at the International Summit. The booklet gives voice to recommendations from delegates, both international and national, experiential and nonexperiential, and suggests plans for action to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children and youth.

Availability: in-house; Save the Children Canada

This report examines the associations between childhood abuse and personal and educational successes, and involvement in the sex trade in a sample of 400 young offenders from Saskatoon and Regina. The effects of working in the sex trade are also discussed in terms of psychological, physical, and emotional safety.

Availability: in-house
**ARTICLES AND REPORTS – UNITED STATES AND EUROPE**


This article provides information on the scope of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, both internationally and in the United States and briefly reviews world responses to this problem. The author highlights a few current efforts in the United States that address exploitation, including participation in Johns’ School as a form of prevention, the Youth Advocate Program that provides public education and advocacy, and other programs that are modelled on the youth participation and peers counselling approaches. The importance of youth involvement and opportunity for engagement is emphasized.

Availability: in-house


This best practice training guide was compiled to inform “carers” about how to appropriately support the rehabilitation and care for children who have been exploited in the commercial sex trade and to bring about awareness of the issues involved. The twelve units are organized according to core areas and include both information and group or individual exercises. Units are presented in the form of a with a session plan and purpose, a list of resources needed, instructions and notes for the trainer, and anticipated length of lesson.

Availability: in-house; on web, [http://www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)


A critical review of the literature on prostitution (1980-84 and 1992-96) that suggests that social science research has focused largely on STD’s while giving insufficient attention to issues of the harm of prostitution (i.e., violence and victimization).

Availability: in-house; on web, [http://www.prostitutionresearch.com](http://www.prostitutionresearch.com)

The author describes this innovative peer-based alternative sentencing program for adult and youth prostitution “offenders” and “non-offenders”. The stated program objectives are to help individuals exit the trade by addressing barriers to leaving and offering support in the construction of alternatives. More specific aims include: breaking dependency on pimps, increasing awareness of available resources and opportunities, assisting with personal development, supporting and coordinating with judicial and law enforcement and with other organizations through a network of community collaborations. The program is a minimum of 18 weeks long, with three 6-week components. This document provides an overview of sexual exploitation in Hawaii and issues related to being sexually exploited, describes the ideas underlying the PIP and the program itself, and the challenges involved in its facilitation.

Available: in-house


These authors report findings from a Swedish study of 23 women exiting the street sex trade. The article outlines the challenges involved in leaving the sex trade and presents a model of exiting that combines structural, situational, interpersonal, and individual factors to explain how and why women exit. In recognition that leaving the sex trade is a process rather than an event, the authors attempt to describe and analyze the women’s narratives from a salutogenic perspective.

Availability: in-house


This report is a combined effort of the NCMEC, the Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Office for Victims of Crime (U.S. Dept. of Justice), the Paul and Lisa Program, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, and the WHISPER Program. It provides case histories of sexually exploited female youth who have successfully exited the trade, studies of male pimps, information on establishing community programming for sexually exploited youth, and a case study of the Paul and Lisa Program (New York, Connecticut, New Jersey).


This document reviews the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. For all three countries, information presented includes profiles of children involved and their exploiters, information on trafficking, pornography, legislation, law enforcement, role and involvement of the private sector, and programming for prevention, protection, and recovery.

Availability: in-house


An overview of issues related to the sexual exploitation of children and youth covering pornography, sexual abuse, trafficking, and prostitution/sex trade in the United States.

Availability: in-house


These authors suggest that the provision of specialized services for sexually exploited youth ignores the similarities of these youth to other high-risk youth in terms of the structural factors that provide a context for these experiences. Instead, they call for flexible, reflective, strategic, integrated responses that incorporate harm reduction, youth participation and empowerment strategies, and adequate staff support. Shaw and Butler suggest that the way that commercial sexual exploitation is viewed and the understanding of how it affects an individual has direct impact on the kinds of services provided. Because of the variety of ways in which it has been viewed, there are a multitude of models but no model has been specifically singled out as being best practice.

Availability: in-house

The authors of this pre-post quasi-experimental multigroup design study evaluated the impact of a drop-in, open enrolment, alternative street school experience on sexually exploited youth. 114 self-referred youth of both genders comprised three groups of participants: (1) youth involved in the school program for at least 30/50 days, (2) youth who refused to participate in the program, and (3) youth who were unable to attend the program. Results revealed significant differences among the groups along several dimensions including involvement in the sex trade, level of psychological distress, and attitude toward school, that suggest the potential benefits of this type of programming that focuses on skills acquisition and competency. These findings have implications for the delivery of services to sexually exploited youth, however it should be noted that this intervention was only examined short-term and longer term follow-up is needed.

Availability: in-house
NOTES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following principles were recognized by the Justice Institute (JI) of British Columbia (Social Services and Community Safety Division, 2002) as essential to effective programming for sexually exploited youth:

1. youth participation / youth positive development approach
2. equity of access
3. relational perspective
4. collective responsibility
5. cultural specificity (also gender, age/developmental)

These principles, derived from consultation with youth and with practitioners, are helpful to keep in mind when thinking about research, programming, policy, strategies, and service delivery for this population. In their 2002 manual, the JI provides examples of innovative programs and describes the ways in which they are aligned to these best practice principles. [And service providers, who tend to highly recommend this manual, have taken notice. For instance, Michelle Fortin at Watari mentioned during our phone conversation that Watari appears in the manual as innovative programming that exemplifies the relational perspective].

Fundamentals

- Language use – use of term sexual exploitation rather than prostitution for children and youth because if underage there’s no question that it’s sexual abuse; be aware that language use is affected by perspective and can function to further marginalize these youth.
- Use resiliency framework, youth positive development approach.
- Be aware that perspective informs practice and that this has implications for policy (i.e., if sexually exploited youth are viewed as criminals, punishment seems like a solution; if viewed as victims, protection / confinement is the answer; if immorality is the focus, they need “saving” and may be stigmatized further, etc.).
- Need developmental approaches that recognize that development does not match age – developmental arrest with entry into sex trade (and with addictions). As one service provider told me, “It’s hard for people to understand, even in social services, that she’s 26 going on 14 and we need to remember that.”
- All research, services, programming, policy development must listen to youths’ voices, create space for youth involvement, youth needs, and youth-derived recommendations.

Research and policy

- Some researchers (e.g., see Bittle, 2001) suggest that the approaches adopted through policy initiatives are not necessarily in line with the realities of sexually exploited youth and that we
need to do a better job of using research findings to inform policy directions (i.e., debate on protection and enforcement).

**Need Evaluation & Tools**
- Very limited research and information in literature about effective services, models of service delivery, best practice, whether current models and programs are effective.
- Growing recognition that program evaluation is necessary and very useful, however few systematic evaluations have been undertaken. Evaluation of practice and programming is needed.
- Few studies have examined service model effectiveness in term of impact on youth especially those who exit the sex trade, this type of information would be very useful.
- As resources tend to be very limited, funding has typically been used to provide service rather than to evaluate, more funding is needed in order to evaluate. Service providers typically have some sense of what works, but do not have formalized way of sharing this information.
- Funds are needed to develop best practices, what worked, lessons learned, and share findings and experiences with other service providers, to provide and disseminate tools (i.e., booklet, guide) and to raise awareness.
- Several reports caution about sustainability issues with project-based funding.

**Need Increased Understanding**
- Need better understanding of motivational factors in terms of exiting (who exits, how, why, what helps, what hinders); we know that leaving the street / sex trade is a not an event but is a process so we must have long-term follow-up, need to differentiate between leaving and not returning versus the back-and-forth movement; *Strolling away* (MacIntyre, 2002) suggests that there has to be a purpose in the process of leaving the street, role of hope and vision.
- Need longitudinal studies.
- Research on sexually exploited boys. Are there gender differences in terms of effective approaches, services, and practice? How to support boys and young men? What works?
- Numerous researchers, youth, and service providers call for more research on commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal youth are overrepresented but under-researched so we do not have a clear enough understanding of unique circumstances.
- A few service providers mentioned the need to understand the impact of working with police, with justice – implications of partnerships? Current models have police working with community groups and service providers but there is little information on what the effects of this are. We know that sexually exploited youth may have had negative experiences with law enforcement and that this creates additional barriers to accessing services and resources.
- Questions are raised with respect to the location of housing and programming – should they be located in the youth’s community or elsewhere? If located elsewhere, how to deal with reintegration and re-entry into community? Near the stroll or not? If nearby, how to deal with proximity? Need to conduct research to answer these questions.
- More research on sexual exploitation of children and youth in rural and suburban areas will provide insight into the implications of geography on approaches, services, and programming.
Answer to the question of whether it is better to have targeted services for sexually exploited youth specifically or whether they should be covered under the umbrella of homeless/street services. It is thought that there is more stigma attached to being in the sex trade, but debate about whether service needs can be integrated. Do sexually exploited youth feel welcome at non-specific services?

There is a need for research that considers the broader social and political context (i.e., the power relations) that make the sex trade a viable option for some youth.

Increased research and understanding of the impact of protective confinement or apprehension as a strategy.

**Models of service delivery, programming**

- Develop service delivery models that address the needs of this population, must determine needs by asking youth and those who work with youth. Mould services to fit the youth, not vice versa and therefore require openness and flexibility.
- Need comprehensive, integrated, multidimensional service delivery model. Service partnerships, collaboration, coordination, with continuum of care provided and improved communication across services (police, justice, substance, crisis, counselling, mental health, outreach/street, schools, parks and recreation, mall). Need coordinated effort with clear communication strategies to effectively address child and youth sexual exploitation. Case management model is recommended.
- Services needed across the continuum from prevention (universal and targeted) through intervention (harm reduction, crisis intervention) and exiting, to healing and reintegration.
- We need programs with a “diversity of service philosophies and delivery” (Busby et al., 1999), range of service perspectives and approaches from protective confinement (no rights, no control) to harm reduction (some control) to advocacy (legalize, full control, etc.) – it’s important to have program variety rather than just one model because those using services have different needs and different life philosophies.
- Services need to address the broader matrix of problems of these youth.
- Police and justice need to be able to follow/track youth, but sexually exploited youth can be very mobile or transient so need to coordinate regionally otherwise more likely to fall through the cracks (i.e., the Prevention and Early Intervention Project in CRD found it helpful to have a regional police officer position that could work with kids across municipalities).
- Some service providers mentioned that it is helpful to collaborate with police (e.g. Victoria Regional Officer and Yankee 177 – MCFD social worker and VPD patrol for high-risk youth on DTES).
- Need gender specific and multicultural/culturally-specific programming, also age sometimes need to be specific in terms of younger vs. older (for safety).
- Acknowledge and address barriers, create a situation in which there are: fewer restrictions to access services; no strings attached (often conditional assistance, i.e., only help if leaving trade, rules about substance use, time limitations, curfews); a range of hours or increased hours of operation; accessible location; eliminate discriminatory policies or provide specific services (i.e., gender, age, SES, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, spirituality/religion, disability); reduced and eliminated other barriers such as waitlists, requirements for identification, lack of child-care and/or transportation.
Characteristics

- Important for programming to be non-judgemental, non-moralistic, not imposing middle-class mainstream values and goals on the youth. Demonstrate acceptance of youth.
- Important to have experiential staff (e.g., PEERS, PACE, Boys R Us) – this is referred to repeatedly in reports, by service providers and by youth.
- Services should be responsive to youths’ needs and must seek youth feedback.
- Programming should incorporate choice and involvement – in accordance with youth development principles.
- Respect rights and autonomy while promoting protection and safety.
- Programming and services should operate from a resiliency relationship-building model to develop trust, demonstrate consistency, follow-through.
- Highlight the abilities and strengths of these youth with youth positive development (strength-based) approach, encourage sense of connection and mastery, foster positive, safe, supportive relationships and environments.

Prevention, intervention, and reintegration

- Need to raise awareness in communities (families, youth, the general public) and among professionals, break down myths about youth in the sex trade, need to develop a strong community commitment to ending exploitation and advocating for social change.
- Important to offer sensitivity training for police officers.
- Develop and provide appropriate training for staff in addressing the needs and reality of sexually exploited youth.
- Advocate for structural change (legal change, early intervention, identification of high-risk families, ongoing involvement and connectedness, keep youth in schools, define outcomes/success, address poverty, racism, and other systemic factors).
- Prevention strategies: healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, birth control, love, communication skills, coping, problem-solving and decision-making skills – recommend this early in schooling (rather than in high-school as is current practice) or with community groups because most high-risk youth drop-out early.
- Service providers suggested that it’s important to be aware of what makes youth high-risk, identify factors, identify youth, and intervene immediately (especially important as drug use patterns change and substance dependency complicates).
- Increase knowledge among sexually exploited youth of available services and resources and how to access them. Remember that their developmental age is probably not on par with their chronological age and they may not have many basic lifeskills. Peer support through mentoring and peer counselling has been identified as being helpful in terms of acquiring basic lifeskills, getting reacquainted with the community, resources, services, social assistance, health care. This support should be ongoing long-term through reintegration.
- Work with cultural connections (i.e., inclusion of Aboriginal outreach workers and service providers, consider other marginalized groups – GLBT, immigrant youth).
- Mobile services recommended, with outreach available 24 hours, 7 days per week.
- For outreach and programming, need to go to where the youth are, be proactive and establish relationships. Consider venues other than the street (as a much larger proportion of sexually exploited youth are not on the street).
Safe, affordable, and available housing is recommended repeatedly – transition housing, 2nd stage housing, range of housing from independent to supported independent to long-term accommodation with host families.

Need for mental health services, addiction services, alternative education – a range of programming that is sensitive to meeting the needs of sexually exploited children and youth.

Provide legal support and witness protection.

Identify helpful youth employment strategies for sexually exploited youth, economic incentives to exit street/sex trade. Provide job training for economic viability.

Provide individual, group, family counselling (especially for at-risk youth), support for psychological/mental health problems (i.e., eating disorders, depression, anxiety, PTSD) and for disabilities (i.e., ADHD, FAS, LD).

There’s a need for a long-term approach with long-term strategies and follow-up.
CONCLUSIONS

- This search of the literature found minimal information on evidence-based best practice as there has been almost no systematic evaluation of existing programs and services. If they have been examined at all, it typically has not been an independent and systematic evaluation.

- Within the academic published literature, only one study was found that involved pre and post measures and comparison groups (Wurzbacher et al., 1991). Discussion with existing service providers determined that there are a couple of programs that are currently undergoing systematic and independent evaluation (PACE’s Journeys Prevention Program for girls and young women that are incarcerated, The Prevention and Early Intervention Project in the CRD). A few other programs/services provided information on internal evaluations and best practice discussion.


- There is some recognition in the literature and among service providers that with evaluation useful services and practices can be duplicated. There is a need to create a forum to share and disseminate effective practices, strategies, models, resources, etc. Service delivery and programming should be informed by results of systematic evaluation of current practice. Evaluation can help to determine the mechanisms by which certain elements of practice or programming are effective or not.

- Knowledge has been accumulating with respect to entry into the sex trade and factors that operate to keep an individual in that situation, however relatively little is known about the process of exiting or leaving, and the stabilization and reintegration that follows. This is an important gap in the knowledge base (and in research) that needs to be addressed.

- Over the past decade, numerous recommendations have emerged from community consultation processes and community action teams across the province (and the nation). There is a great deal of repetition in these recommendations – across cultures, across other types of specialized youth services, across genders – there is some sense of important principles and strategies and these are consistent.

- Comprehensive, flexible, long-term strategies are needed to support sexually exploited youth. There is a need to move beyond the crisis intervention model to be able to support youth along a continuum of care from prevention through stabilization and reintegration. A multipronged, integrated approach involving collaborative partnerships and coordination is necessary. A range of services need to be provided over long-term on an ongoing basis, including safe housing, addiction and mental health services, counselling options, alternative
education, job training and skill development, responsive and respectful healthcare, lifeskills development, economic assistance, outreach and social support, and childcare and parenting support.

- There is consensus that any approach must give voice to youth through youth involvement and consultation, it must be strength and resiliency-based, and it must foster and maintain a sense of hope but also be based in reality. Voices of experiential youth need to inform research, policy, and practice.

- Approaches need to be youth-oriented and youth-friendly. Must take age, gender, ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation into account in order to create and promote safety and to address specific needs.

- Research, policy, service delivery, and programming must attend to issues of marginalization and stigma. There is an urgent need to address the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth and recommendations from community consultations include Aboriginal service providers, options for traditionally-based services, and emphasis on cultural connection and renewal.

- There is a need for education and awareness-raising across at the school and community levels, and among practitioners and people involved with youth. Negative attitudes, judgments, and misinformation further stigmatize sexually exploited youth and create a culture in which recruitment can thrive.
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