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About Human Trafficking – Newsletter #12

The sexual trafficking of boys does not always involve the typical victim-trafficker-john triad.

Sometimes it doesn't even involve a pimp or third-party.

In these situations, some may see the boy as an offender. However, the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act views anyone under 18 who engages in a commercial sex act to be a trafficking victim. The absence of a pimp or third-party doesn't matter.

The literature contains references to boys trying to avoid the stigma of commercial sexual exploitation. Boys may portray their actions as a choice and similar to self-employment or entrepreneurship. Holding this perspective helps them maintain the appearance of self-control and avoid association or self-identification as a victim.

Steven Procopio, ACSW, LICSW, with the Brookline, MA-based *The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute* identifies several ways that boys involved in sexual trafficking define "the life":

Escorts are "on call" to usually five to 12 male clients. Encounters often occur at a hotel booked by the escort. Clients typically pay escorts by credit card after the encounter.

A **Street Worker** is on a "track" where boys hang out and potential buyers drive-by. Cash payment occurs up front. The boy and buyer typically drive to an isolated area for the encounter. This is common in Houston and on the West Coast.

Internet "dating" involves buyers visiting websites for

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straight, gay or transgendered youth. The “hook-up” cost and location is negotiated online. About 45-50% of encounters are brokered online.

Technology enables a variety of commercial sex transactions, including “Skype Sex”. By using a webcam, the youth and buyer can see each other while in different locations. Arrangements are made online and payments may involve a third party payment website to conceal identities.

Club boys are often transported from club to club. Corridors include Washington State–Mexico, Minnesota—Houston, and along the East Coast. Club owners are often aware of the encounters involving “go-go boys” and may receive a portion of the transaction. While “Escorts” are viewed as holding the highest status, “club boys” hold the lowest status.

There is also:

A Drive-by Pimp is where boys are at a location and a buyer drives-by asking if a youth would like to make money that evening. The youth is then driven around the area by the pimp to find clients on the street for encounters. The drive-by pimp gets a portion of the money. This can be a one-time event, with the pimp and youth never seeing each other again.

Apartment sharing involves a man “aged out” of “the life” who has a home with several bedrooms. A youth may live and perform sex work there, paying “rent” to the owner from sex work earnings.

If a youth opens up to you, do not allow your body language to communicate shock or negative feelings. Speak to them in their language. Avoid judgmental terms. Don’t dispute the facts.
Don’t blame or shame.