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About Human Trafficking – Newsletter #7

Who is at risk?

While human trafficking victims represent all demographic groups, an overwhelming percentage of children involved in the commercial sex trade have also been involved with the child welfare system:

- In Florida, the FBI found that 70% of identified victims were foster care youth
- In San Diego, 78% of youth with a history of running away (four or more times) were reportedly involved in commercial sex
- Covenant House found that 78% of those who engaged in commercial sexual activity reported childhood rape and molestation

Runaway and homeless youth are at high risk to fall victim to the commercial sex trade. Covenant House's May 2013 report found:

Shelter was the number one commodity traded in return for sexual activity. Of those who engaged in commercial sexual activity, almost half - 48% in total - said they did it because they did not have a place to stay.

How does a youth become involved in trafficking?

The literature indicates that youth living in shelters or other congregate care situations may be recruited by other youth, the shelter staff, or by traffickers loitering nearby.

Traffickers also seek locations

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where vulnerable youth are likely to be found, such as shopping malls and transportation centers. One detective described how traffickers use social media to identify at risk children who describe feeling "not wanted" and post where they hang out. Traffickers are also known to monitor school bus stops to see if any kids remain on the corner after the bus leaves. The trafficker may entice these children with food or a "place to stay".



Within 48 hours of running away, a young person is likely to be solicited for prostitution or another form of commercial sexual exploitation.

The FBI believes large high schools in economically depressed areas and large group homes are recruiting grounds for traffickers, according to Administration for Children and Families Assistant Secretary George Sheldon.

Children and youth are sometimes recruited into the commercial sex trade by their fellow students and family members. The Covenant House study found that:

The traffickers were often family members, friends of family, or boyfriends who at first pretended to love and care for the homeless youth, but later abused them and forced them into prostitution.

While we associate "perpetrator" with child abuse, many describe the trafficker as a "predator" who may lure, coerce, or kidnap his/her victims.

Previous About Human Trafficking newsletters are available [here](#).