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Executive Summary

Nancy E. Walker

How Many Teens Are Prostituted?

- The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that between 100,000 and 3 million teens are prostituted in the United States each year.
- Estimates for **Michigan** vary widely, from 112 juveniles arrested for prostitution according to 1998 Michigan State Police records to more than 2,000 juveniles who may have been involved in prostitution (given the fact that 3,484 youth were arrested for running away and one-half to two-thirds of runaways end up prostituting themselves).
- In **Grand Rapids**, 70 females (including both juveniles and adults) are known to police officers as persons who regularly engage in street prostitution.
- In the spring of 2001, the **Lansing** Police Department uncovered a prostitution ring that involved more than 20 girls between the ages of 13 and 17 years.

What is the "Profile" of a Prostituted Teen?

- Teens who are vulnerable are prostituted.
- No class of adolescents is immune from the reaches of prostitution. Prostituted adolescents come from all socioeconomic classes, races, and ethnic groups.
- Two out of three prostituted teens are runaways; 84% report current or past homelessness.
- Ninety percent are survivors of sexual violence such as incest and sexual assault.

What are the Risk Factors for Becoming a Prostituted Teen?

- Truancy
- Delinquency
- Running away

- Homelessness
- Abuse and neglect
- Family dysfunction
- Rebellion

What are the Costs to Prostituted Teens?

- More than 80% report being physically assaulted; about one-fourth of these have had broken bones.
- More than 85% have contracted sexually transmitted diseases.
- More than two-thirds have been raped, many on repeated occasions.
- Approximately one-half have been victims of sexual abuse and torture, and one-fourth have been mutilated.
- Nearly 50% have attempted suicide.
- Mortality rate is 40 times higher than the national average.
- More than 75% have drug and/or alcohol problems.
- More than two-thirds meet the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder.

What are the Costs to Society?

- Each prostitution-related arrest costs taxpayers approximately \$2,000.
- The average cost of controlling prostitution in U.S. cities is estimated to be nearly \$12 million. For cities the size of Detroit, estimates are as high as \$18 million.

What are the Laws Regarding Prostitution of Minors?

- The Mann Act prohibits transportation of minors in interstate or foreign commerce with the intent that they engage in sexual activity or prostitution.
- Title 18 of the U.S. Code also prohibits prostitution of children and transporting of minors for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity or prostitution.
- In **Michigan**, HB 5033 increases the penalty for second and subsequent offenses involving accosting children for immoral purposes to a Class D felony punishable by up to 10 years on prison.
- **Michigan's** HB 5032 (currently under consideration by the Senate) makes it a Class F felony—punishable by up to four years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine—to accost, entice, or solicit a child for immoral purposes.
- Generally speaking, **Michigan's** current and proposed laws regarding prostitution of minors are *less* comprehensive and carry *milder* punishments than the laws of other Midwestern states.

What are the Recommendations of the University of Pennsylvania/National Institutes of Justice Study of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children?

1. Efforts at protecting children from sexual exploitation must emphasize prevention as the first priority.
2. Target adult sexual exploiters of children for punishment, not the children.
3. Enforce more fully existing national and state laws relating to child sexual exploitation.
4. Increase the penalties associated with sexual crimes against children.
5. Support local communities in their efforts to strengthen local and state laws pertaining to child sexual exploitation.
6. Establish a national child sexual exploitation intelligence center.
7. Expand federally funded multi-jurisdictional task forces on child exploitation into all major federal and state jurisdictions.
8. Expand federally-funded internet crimes against child units into all major federal and state jurisdictions.
9. Enlarge the national pool of child sexual exploitation experts and specialists.
10. Promote effective public/private partnerships for combating child sexual exploitation.
11. Fund more specialized studies of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation and their victims.

What Successful Strategies Could Serve as Models for Michigan?

The Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) Project, Inc., organized by and for survivors of prostitution, has developed several successful intervention programs in conjunction with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and San Francisco Police Department. These programs include:

- Prevention Services for Girls
- The First Offenders Prostitution Program ("John School")
- The Sexual Exploitation and Violence Prevention and Treatment Program
- Juvenile Probation Training

Of the prostituted girls enrolled in SAGE's programs, 86% have avoided re-entry into the criminal justice system or re-victimization. From 1995 to 1997, the First Offenders Prostitution Program diverted more than 5,000 customers of prostitutes from criminal prosecution to an educational and rehabilitation experience. Of the men who had completed the program, 98% remained arrest free in 1997.

What Can Policymakers Do?

- Pass laws with stiffer penalties for johns, pimps, and others who profit from prostitution of children.

- Fund programs for intervening with prostituted teens.
- Fund programs for intervening with “johns,” such as “John Schools”.

What Can Families Do?

- Get to know your teen.
- Learn the early warning signs of prostitution.
- Improve your parenting skills.
- Establish and participate in support groups when a problem is identified.
- Seek counseling from professionals knowledgeable about prostitution.