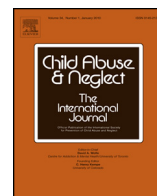




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Child Abuse & Neglect



Sex trafficking of minors in metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural communities[☆]

Jennifer Cole^{a,b,*}, Ginny Sprang^a^a Center on Trauma and Children, University of Kentucky, 3470 Blazer Parkway, Suite 100, Lexington, KY 40509, USA^b Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, University of Kentucky, 333 Waller Avenue, Suite 480, Lexington, KY 40504, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 May 2014

Received in revised form 22 July 2014

Accepted 30 July 2014

Available online 20 August 2014

Keywords:

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)

Child sex trafficking

Rural

System response

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine professionals' awareness, knowledge, and experiences working with youth victims of sex trafficking in metropolitan and non-metropolitan communities. Professionals who worked with at-risk youth and/or crime victims were recruited from all counties in a southern, rural state in the U.S. to complete a telephone survey. Surveys included closed and open-ended questions, which were theme coded. Professionals' ($n = 289$) were classified into one of four categories based on the counties in which they worked: metropolitan, micropolitan, rural, and all three community types. Although there were many similarities found in trafficking situations across the different types of communities, some expected differences were found. First, as expected, more professionals in metropolitan communities perceived CSEC as being a fairly or very serious problem in the state overall. Consistent with other studies, more professionals in metropolitan communities had received training on human trafficking and reported they were familiar with the state and federal laws on human trafficking (Newton et al., 2008). Significantly more professionals in metropolitan (54.7%) communities reported they had worked with a suspected or definite victim of STM compared to professionals in micropolitan communities (29.8%). There were few differences in victim characteristics, vulnerability factors, and trafficking situations (e.g., relationship to trafficker, traffickers' techniques for controlling victims, transportation, and Internet-facilitation of trafficking) across the community types. There is a continued need for awareness building of STM and training, particularly in non-metropolitan communities, as well as adoption of screening tools, integration of trauma-informed care, and identification of best practices.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Sex trafficking is defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 as: “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. . .” “. . .in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age” (18 U.S.C. § 1591). Sex trafficking of a minor (STM) refers to trafficking of a person under the age of 18 in commercial sex, which unlike sex trafficking of an adult (18 years and older), does not require the element of force, fraud, or coercion. The TVPA (2000) defines a commercial sex act broadly to include “any sexual act for which something of value

[☆] Funding for this study was provided by a Research Support Grant from the University of Kentucky Office of the Vice President for Research.

* Corresponding author.

is given or received.” In other words, commercial sex is sexual acts including sexual performances that are exchanged for money, drugs, food, clothing, or shelter. Common types of commercial sex include prostitution, production of pornography, strip dancing, and (sexual) massage parlors, as well as survival sex (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2013). STM overlaps in definition with commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), which was first defined in the 1996 Declaration and Agenda for Action for the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children as “sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons” (p. 1). There is considerable overlap between these terms and yet distinctions exist. For example, while the production of child pornography fits the definition of STM and CSEC, the possession and distribution of child pornography fits the definition of CSEC but not STM. Nonetheless, there is a lack of consensus about definitional overlap and distinctions between the terms and consequently the terms are often used interchangeably (IOM, 2013; Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2011; Small, Adams, Owens, & Roland, 2008).

Along with definitional ambiguity between CSEC and STM, estimates of the scope of CSEC/STM in the United States have considerable methodological problems because of the hidden nature of the crime. The estimates that are often cited are highly speculative and not based on sound research methods (for a discussion about the challenges related to estimates, see Stranksy & Finkelhor, 2012). Despite mandates in the TVPA, uniform data collection by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies of trafficking crimes and/or number of victims is not occurring (United States Department of State, 2010). What we can say is that about a 2 in 5 human trafficking offenses reported to federally funded human trafficking task forces from 2008 to 2010 in the United States involved the sex trafficking of minors (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011).

In addition to the lack of reliable prevalence estimates, little is known about public agency workers' awareness and capacity to properly identify human trafficking victims, in general, and specifically, minors who are trafficked in commercial sex activities (Irazola, Williamson, Chen, Garrett, & Clawson, 2008). Misidentification is a critical barrier to providing appropriate and effective intervention to minors who are trafficked in the commercial sex industry (Clawson & Grace, 2007; Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009). Many law enforcement and service providers lack knowledge about sex trafficking of minors (Smith et al., 2009) and many law enforcement officers identify youth exploited in prostitution as juvenile offenders (40.0%) rather than as crime victims (60.0%; Halter, 2010). An analysis of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for 1997–2000 found that police officers were more likely to identify youth as juvenile delinquents or offenders of other crimes than as victims of STM (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004).

Another barrier to providing appropriate intervention to victims is lack of collaboration between agencies that respond to STM cases. Because victims of STM typically have multiple needs, lack of communication and collaboration between agencies may prevent victims from receiving all the services they need (Bortel, Ellingen, Ellison, Phillips, & Thomas, 2008; Newton, Mulcahy, & Martin, 2008; Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, 2002). The more common forms of interagency collaboration for responding to STM include establishing task forces wherein multiple agencies can share information, develop protocols and policies; agencies developing memorandum of understanding; data sharing policies; and informal relationships between personnel from different agencies that facilitate coordination of efforts and referrals (IOM, 2013).

There are even greater gaps in the literature about how traffickers operate in non-metropolitan communities. The majority of research conducted on STM has focused on large urban communities, such as New York City, New Orleans, Dallas-Fort Worth, Las Vegas, and Portland, OR (Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan, 2008; Raphael & Ashley, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). It is true that larger metropolitan communities have more commercial sex venues than smaller communities and thus a greater likelihood for sex trafficking. Nonetheless, the exploitation of minors in commercial sex does occur in micropolitan communities and rural communities (Bletzer, 2005; Bortel et al., 2008; Brewster, 2003); therefore, it is important for research to examine STM in smaller communities.

Confronting social problems in smaller, rural communities poses particular challenges that are different from the obstacles facing larger, metropolitan communities. First, the idyllic view of rural, smaller community life that many people have may render many social problems invisible (Edwards, Torgerson, & Sattem, 2009). For example, surveys of service providers and law enforcement personnel in counties across the United States revealed that professionals in rural communities perceived that commercial sex and sex trafficking did not occur in their communities, citing the difficulty of hiding these activities in smaller communities and the advantage of greater anonymity in larger communities (Newton et al., 2008). Also, collection of data on emerging social problems is more limited in rural communities because individuals perceive the problem to be a metropolitan issue (Edwards et al., 2009). For example, service providers and law enforcement personnel in rural communities were less likely to receive training on human trafficking, and to utilize recordkeeping procedures to distinguish human trafficking victims from other clients they served, compared to professionals in metropolitan communities (Newton et al., 2008). Second, geographic dispersion in rural communities can make detection and service provision more difficult because transportation is more limited and residents may be more isolated (Castaneda, 2000; Friedman, 2003).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine professionals' awareness, knowledge, protocols, and experiences working with individuals who were trafficked as minors in commercial sex to better understand how trafficking of minors occurs and community agencies' responses. The secondary purpose of the study was to compare professionals' awareness, knowledge, and experiences by type of community in which they worked (i.e., metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural) to examine similarities and differences in how sex trafficking operates and community agencies' responses to victims in different types of communities.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/344703>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/344703>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)