

HUMAN TRAFFICKING and HOMELESS YOUTH

The following facts about human or sex trafficking are from different sources. Some of the facts are repeated in each source. We feel that these are facts that should be repeated, and often, until they are addressed and are no longer true.

Oregons Against Trafficking Humans (OATH)

- **THE MAJORITY OF VICTIMS BEING TRAFFICKED IN THE SEX TRADE ARE MINORS.** Anyone under age 18 involved in commercial sex acts is automatically recognized by federal law as a victim of sex trafficking.
- **AGE 12** is the average age of entry into pornography and prostitution in the U.S. **RUNAWAYS** are particularly vulnerable for being drawn into prostitution. One out of three of children who run away from home each year in the U.S. will be lured into or forced into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.
- **ESCAPING ABUSE** is the number one reason given by 40% of the girls and 30% of the boys who run away from home.
- **INTERNET USE** in minor sex trafficking is **SIGNIFICANT**. The simple decision to locate the computer in a heavily trafficked area in the home where your child's internet use can be more easily monitored can be a key step toward protecting your child.
- **3-6PM** weekdays are shown by studies to be the hours when young people are most vulnerable to sex, drug, and crime-related activities. Providing after school adult supervision is a simple, yet fundamental, safeguard to help keep youth safe.
- **SCHOOLS** are a primary recruiting area for sex traffickers. Pimps often frequent school parking lots or surrounding streets in search of vulnerable-looking teens. Girls already caught up in sex trafficking are often used by their pimps to recruit their fellow students. Talk to your kids about the risks they may encounter at school. **BE PROACTIVE.** If you believe your child is at risk of becoming a runaway, contact the adults in your child's life, such as teachers, coaches, school
- **Affection** is the most common tool used by sex traffickers to lure victims into bondage. Once pimps have a girl's devotion their affection turns to violence and they force their victims to start prostituting.
- **Labor Trafficking** is not a crime restricted to illegal industries such as selling drugs or panhandling. Victims are often put to work at legitimate business establishments such as domestic, agricultural, construction, janitorial, food service, and factory sites.

A Human Rights Report on Ending Human Trafficking in Oregon

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**Prepared by the International Human Rights Clinic at Willamette
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- **Oregon has become a magnet for human trafficking** due to its particular mix of lax trafficking laws, relatively permissive interpretations of the state Constitution's free speech protections for commercial sex enterprises, high percentages of youth living in foster care and on the streets (including runaway and homeless children), difficult-to-monitor rural farming and forestry operations, and dependence on seasonal, migrant workers.
- Officials in rural areas are also besieged by the challenges and dangers of patrolling remote regions of the state which are under the control of traffickers growing marijuana and running other illegal drugs, operations which go hand-in-hand with trafficking in persons.
- Additionally, while neighboring states Washington and California passed anti-trafficking statutes in 2003 and 2005, respectively, Oregon did not criminalize trafficking until 2007.
- Involuntary servitude and trafficking in persons in Oregon are designated as only Class C or B felonies, while adjacent states designate human trafficking crimes as Class A felonies with higher sentences and penalties.
- **The metropolitan Portland area has emerged in recent years as a main hub for sex trafficking.**
- In the last two years, Portland ranked second for the greatest number of children found in forced prostitution among all U.S. cities participating in a nationwide federal law enforcement sting.
- Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies identifies **Portland's commercial sex industry as the largest per capita in the nation.**
- The intersection of two interstate freeways, I-5 and I-84, situates Portland at the crossroads of major sex trafficking routes between Seattle, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas. The port city's proximity to two shipping waterways as well as to the Canadian border provides relatively convenient access for international and domestic traffickers.
- The vulnerability of potential victims, especially minors, to sex trafficking in southern Oregon and rural towns is increasing, with sex crimes involving prostituted children and "survival sex" incidents among runaway and homeless youth on the rise.
- Oregon ranks 47th out of 50 states for youth in foster care placements. There is a high correlation between foster care and youth homelessness. Many youth living on the streets have come from, or run from, foster care. It's not surprising then that 20,000 to 24,000 of Oregon children experience homelessness each year.

US Department of Justice

<http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos/prostitution.html>

- It is estimated that about 293,000 American youth are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S, Canada and Mexico*, University of Pennsylvania, Executive Summary at 11-12 (2001). **The majority of American victims of commercial sexual exploitation tend to be runaway or thrown away youth who live on the streets who become victims of prostitution.** *Id.* at 11-12.
- These children generally come from homes where they have been abused, or from families that have abandoned them, Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S, Canada and Mexico*, University of Pennsylvania, at 3 (2001) [hereinafter Estes Report], and often become involved in prostitution as a way to support themselves financially or to get the things they want or need
- Among children and teens living on the streets in the United States, involvement in commercial sex activity is a problem of epidemic proportion. **Approximately 55% of street girls engage in formal prostitution.**
- **The average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution is 12-14.** (Estes Report at 92). It is not only the girls on the streets that are affected -- for boys and transgender youth; the average age of entry into prostitution is 11-13.
- A 2001 report by the University of Pennsylvania estimated that about 293,000 American youth are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. **Most of these children are either runaways or have been abandoned by their families and live on the streets.**
- **The majority of minors who become involved in prostitution are runaway or thrown away children from abusive or otherwise dysfunctional homes.** They are often lured into prostitution by sophisticated criminals who convince them not only that they will earn money to survive but also that they will be taken care of and have the secure loving environment that they lacked at home. These promises are often honored only in the breach - pimps take the money a child earns on the streets and pimps engage in severe physical abuse to build a relationship of dependency.

