

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WHO ARE LABOR TRAFFICKED BY FORCED CRIMINALITY IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA



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LABOR TRAFFICKING BY FORCED CRIMINALITY OF YOUTH

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The Issue

Labor trafficking by forced criminality (LTFC) of youth encompasses a range of illegal activities, including cultivation, transport, and sales of drugs as well as theft, and other criminal gang related activities orchestrated by traffickers who exploit children and adolescents for their labor. These young victims often remain unseen within the broader discourse on human trafficking, overshadowed by more recognized forms of trafficking, such as the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). In Los Angeles the current lack of awareness, training, and appropriate services for youth victims of LTFC significantly hampers the identification, protection, and service provision of these vulnerable children.

The Need for Action in Los Angeles

Los Angeles stands at a critical juncture in addressing the hidden epidemic of child LTFC. While commendable efforts have focused on combating CSEC, a glaring oversight exists in the support for victims of labor trafficking, especially young victims of LTFC.

Legislative Gaps

Legislative gaps underscore the complex interplay between socio-economic vulnerabilities and exploitation mechanisms that traffickers prey upon. This report highlights the challenges in identifying and supporting victims due to the criminal nature of their coerced activities, and outlines a comprehensive strategy to fill this gap, reflecting Los Angeles's commitment to the safety and well-being of all youth. Addressing this issue in a comprehensive and holistic manner is vital for breaking the cycle of exploitation and strengthening our community's fabric.



IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM SO WE CAN FIND THE SOLUTION

Existing laws and policies, both at the local and state levels, fail to fully recognize or address the unique circumstances surrounding youth who experience LTFC. These gaps include:

- Inadequate identification protocols
- Lack of specialized support services
- Criminalization of victims for actions committed while they are being trafficked.

“

“As a survivor of both child sex trafficking and child labor trafficking, the artificial hierarchy of trauma created by gaps in service and legislation is incredibly harmful. I was labor trafficked in the Sacramento region as a child, separately from when I was sex trafficked. One form of trafficking should not be considered more severe or in need of services than another. The current status of legislation that ignores the equally urgent needs of child labor trafficking survivors endorses cruelty and child abuse, and wholly disregards the egregious torture of children.”

- Sabra Boyd | consultant, survivor leader



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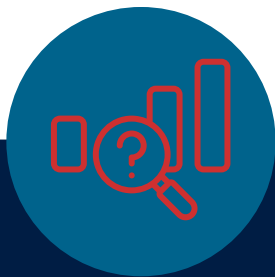
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GAPS

Critical legislative and systemic gaps hinder effective responses to this issue. Existing laws and policies fail to fully recognize or address the needs of youth who experience LTFC.



INVISIBILITY

These young victims often remain unseen within the broader discourse on human trafficking, overshadowed by more recognized forms of trafficking.



BARRIERS

The current lack of awareness, training, and appropriate services for youth victims of LTFC significantly hampers the identification, protection, and services for these vulnerable children.



**ADDRESS
LEGISLATIVE &
SYSTEMIC
GAPS**



**ENHANCE
SUPPORT
SERVICES**



**FOSTER
STAKEHOLDERS
COLLABORATION**



ROADMAPPING A PLAN OF ACTION

The battle against human trafficking and LTFC in Los Angeles requires a unified and robust response from all sectors of society. By addressing the legislative and systemic gaps, enhancing support services, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, it is possible to better identify, protect, and support victims of LTFC, ensuring a safer and more just environment for all youth. This effort not only aligns with Los Angeles's values of justice and compassion, but also reinforces its standing as a leader in the fight against human trafficking. Together, we can create a future where every child is free from exploitation and has the opportunity to thrive.

Key recommendations include:

1

Enhancing Policies and Legal Frameworks

Amend existing policies, laws, and legislation to explicitly include protections for LTFC victims, ensuring these individuals are treated as victims rather than perpetrators.

2

Taking a Public Health Approach

A public health and community organizing approach is needed to address the issue of identifying and serving youth experiencing LTFC instead of a carceral approach that often does not work for particularly vulnerable communities who are trafficked.

3

Increasing Awareness and Training

Provide targeted training for law enforcement, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and service providers to recognize signs of LTFC and respond appropriately.

4

Improving Identification

Develop and implement standardized protocols for identifying victims and referring them to specialized support services. Instead of arresting children who are victims of LTFC.

5

Providing Access to Services

Ensure LTFC victims have similar access to specialized CSEC services including mental health support, legal assistance, and housing opportunities.

6

Fostering Collaboration

Encourage collaboration between governmental agencies, law enforcement, defense attorneys, prosecutors, non-profits, and community organizations to share resources, information, and best practices.

7

Collecting Data

Require government agencies, including law enforcement, to collect and report data on youth who are LTFC in order to help policy makers and service providers better understand the prevalence and needs of LTFC victims.



OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION

Los Angeles stands at a critical juncture in addressing the hidden epidemic of child labor trafficking by forced criminality (LTFC)

Commendable efforts have focused on combating CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) but there is a glaring lack of support and services for victims of labor trafficking, especially young victims of LTFC (Labor Trafficking by Forced Criminality)



A close-up photograph of a dark fabric with intricate embroidery. The design features various flowers and leaves in shades of green, yellow, orange, and red. The embroidery is done with fine, visible stitches. A large red triangle is overlaid on the top right corner of the image.

PRIORITIZE THE WELL-BEING OF ALL TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

The goal is to foster a unified approach that recognizes the complexities of both sex and labor trafficking by forced criminality

**because all victims of trafficking
deserve equal access to equal services**

Thankfully Los Angeles can address this gap with its robust work to prevent the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)



INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles faces an imperative challenge: the pressing issue of child labor trafficking by forced criminality. Disturbingly, many of our youth in Los Angeles coerced into criminal activities, are often marginalized by our child welfare and criminal justice systems, perpetuating their victimization. As a remedy, it is paramount that all youth apprehended for criminal offenses in Los Angeles City and County undergo comprehensive screening for all forms of human trafficking, including labor trafficking by forced criminality. This is especially the case for youths ensnared in the web of drug-related crimes. The need for intervention cannot be overstated, as we must safeguard the futures of these vulnerable youth.

Thankfully, Los Angeles can address this issue based on its robust experience of working to prevent the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). Since 2012 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has created a framework to address the needs of this vulnerable population in Los Angeles.¹

The BOS work has supported increased training, education, and collaborative taskforces around this issue. Further, the BOS has provided additional support and specialized programs for CSEC youth through housing, safe youth zones, victim witness testimony, and parent services.²



LA County must take the same steps to help all youth forced to commit crimes by their traffickers



DEFINITIONS

What is Human Trafficking and Child Labor Trafficking?

The Trafficking Victims Prevention Act (TVPA) of 2000 defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as:

“(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or

(B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”³

The three-element framework focuses on the trafficker's

- 1) act
- 2) means
- 3) purpose⁴



LABOR TRAFFICKING

Labor trafficking can happen in any setting or type of industry. It can be in legal or illegal industries such as agricultural fields, factories, restaurants, hotels, private homes, retail stores, or drug trafficking or smuggling operations.⁵

All three elements (act, means, purpose) must be met to establish the crime of labor trafficking, regardless of the victim's age⁶

The **act** element is met when the trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services⁷

The **means** element includes the use of force, fraud, and coercion⁸

The **purpose** element focuses on the perpetrator's goal of exploiting a person's labor or services⁹

Force includes physical violence or physical restraint

Fraud can involve misrepresentation of work conditions, false promises of pay or opportunities for education or access to immigration status

Coercion can include threats of force, withholding of pay, psychological coercion, withholding of essential documents like passports/birth certificates/IDs, threats to other people, manipulation of the use of addictive substances, manipulation of legal process (i.e. threats that the child will be arrested and not believed) or other forms of coercion¹⁰



CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

Child labor trafficking is when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel a child to work¹¹

Although some forms of child labor are legal, forcing or coercing children to work is illegal.¹²

Like in child sex trafficking cases where the commercial sex is an illegal service and this is per se trafficking, children who work in other illegal services when a third-party receives some form of benefit is likely per se child labor trafficking.

Child labor traffickers can be a...

PARENT

GUARDIAN

3RD PARTY

(related or
unrelated)

If a child is being exploited for commercial purposes for the financial benefit of another, this child could be a victim of child labor trafficking.

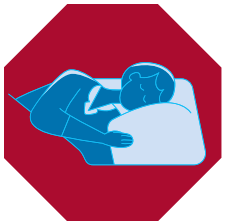
SIGNS OF

CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

The denial of...



food



rest



school

Working conditions that endanger a child's health, safety, and morale can be indicators of child labor trafficking¹³

The top five areas identified for child labor trafficking in the United States have been in domestic work, traveling sales crews, restaurants/food services, peddling/begging and construction.¹⁴

Child victims can be US citizens or foreign nationals.¹⁵

CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING CAN INCLUDE FORMAL AND INFORMAL INDUSTRIES AS DIVERSE AS...

Agriculture

Hair Braiding

Salons

Domestic Work

Traveling Sales Crews

Restaurants & Food Services

Peddling & Begging

Construction



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LABOR TRAFFICKING BY FORCED CRIMINALITY

Labor trafficking by forced criminality (LTFC) is “all labor trafficking where the labor or services the victim is being forced, coerced, or defrauded into performing are activities that could otherwise be classified as a crime.”¹⁶

LTFC is a form of child labor trafficking where children are used for illicit activities such as the production and trafficking of drugs.¹⁷

LTFC can manifest as singular instances of exploitation or multiple. Children can also be sex and labor trafficked at the same time.

It can also include shoplifting, theft, provision of false documents, smuggling, gang related activities, and other crimes.¹⁸

A child soldier can be a victim of human trafficking.

LTFC and sex trafficking commonly intersect, resulting in victims being coerced into committing crimes such as theft, drug/weapons dealing, or assault while also being subjected to sex trafficking.

In many cases, LTFC and sex trafficking intersect, and children are **both** labor and sex trafficking victims. Victims may be coerced into committing crimes such as theft, drug/weapons dealing, or assault while also being subjected to sex trafficking.¹⁹

CHILD SOLDIERS AND LTFC

A child soldier can be a victim of human trafficking. A child soldier is trafficked "when there is forced recruitment or no genuine voluntary recruitment; when the recruitment is done without the informed consent of the person's parent or legal guardians; and when such persons were not fully informed of the duties involved in the military service."²⁰

Further, "child soldiering is a form of child trafficking because the acts required of a child soldier are dangerous enough to interfere with a child's fundamental human right to education, health, and development."²¹

Children do not necessarily need to physically cross a border to become victims of trafficking. If they are transported within their own country and coerced into exploitative labor, such as participating in hazardous armed combat, it still qualifies as child trafficking.²² Children are recruited as child soldiers because they are "obedient, fast to indoctrinate and to control, physically vulnerable, and easily intimate, and teens feel like they are all powerful."²³

These same vulnerabilities apply to youth in the United States who are induced into the "street life" or to join gangs and are eventually initiated into the drug culture.

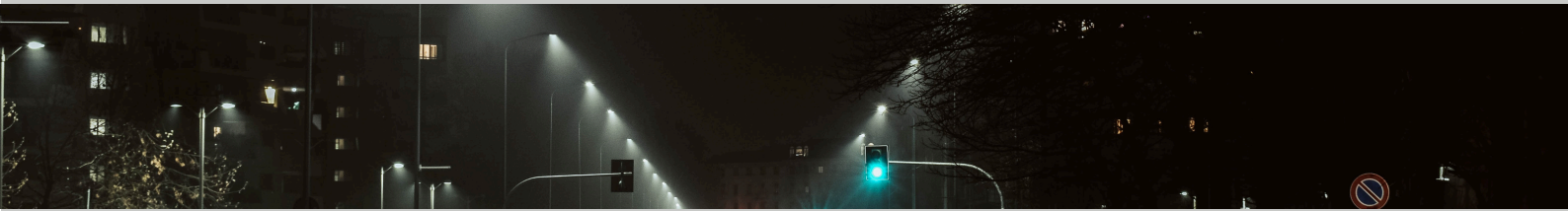
Child soldiers and juvenile gang members, typically originating from economically-depressed and violence-stricken areas, are often lured by the economic and "protective" benefits of joining armies or gangs.²⁴ They may have witnessed harm to loved ones and feel a strong urge to protect relatives or contribute financially.²⁵

Community and family bonds play a pivotal role in drawing children into both gangs and armed forces.²⁶ Traumatic histories are common among children in both groups, who may also suffer from perpetrator-trauma due to their involvement in conflicts.²⁷

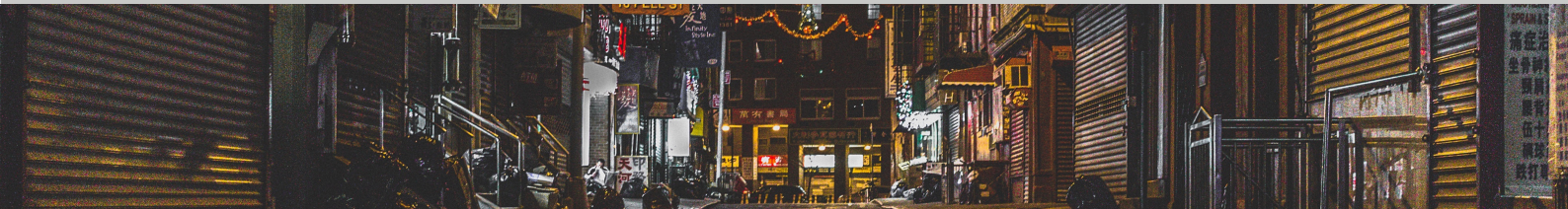


CHILD SOLDIERS AND LTFC

The International Labor Organization's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention ("Convention 182"), ratified by the United States, explicitly prohibit the exploitation of children for gang-related services.²⁸



The ILO defines the worst forms of child labor to include practices such as slavery, trafficking, forced labor, and involvement in armed conflict, as well as activities related to prostitution, pornography, illicit activities, and work likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.²⁹ Juvenile gang members' involvement in drug-related activities, crimes against persons, and weapons crimes aligns with these prohibited forms of child labor.³⁰



It is imperative to recognize that juvenile gang members, alongside other youths coerced into criminal activities must be screened to determine if their illegal acts or services are performed for the advantage of third parties to determine if they are victims labor trafficking by forced criminality (LTFC). These youth victims, warrant equal recognition under the law and access to the necessary protections and support services afforded to youths who have fallen victim to sex trafficking. It is crucial to acknowledge the vulnerability and exploitation faced by these young individuals and ensure that comprehensive measures are in place to address their needs and safeguard their rights.





HOMELESS YOUTH WHO ARE TRAFFICKED HIGHLIGHT WHY LOS ANGELES OFFICIALS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS MUST RECOGNIZE THE PLIGHT OF YOUTH WHO ARE LABOR TRAFFICKED BY FORCED CRIMINALITY(LTFC)³¹

1 in 5 homeless youth in the U.S. identify as trafficking survivors³²

In Oakland, more youth identified as victims of labor trafficking than sex trafficking³³

In Los Angeles, an equal number of youth were identified as victims of labor or sex trafficking³⁴

At least 81% of child labor trafficking were instances of forced drug dealing (a form of LTFC)³⁵





DRUG TRADE AND LTFC

INTRODUCTION

Youth are initiated into drug culture in a variety of ways, such as the traffickers using love, community, health, and well-being as a way to keep the youth psychology captive in the drug trade.³⁶

IDENTIFICATION & DATA

Further complicating the identification of this crime, only 20% of youths in drug sales self-identified as individuals not actively choosing to pursue that line of work.³⁷

RECRUITER PROFILES & FAMILIAL LTFC TRAFFICKERS

Some youth reported that family members first introduced them to the drug trade and forced them to continue to stay in it even if they did not want to with threats of physical force³⁸ and threatening to kick them out of their home.³⁹

A youth in the study shared that his father tricked him into the drug trade in elementary school:

“My daddy, before he was locked up, he had me selling drugs.... Yeah, at first I didn’t know what I was doing. I would just come home from school, getting the book bag, taking it around the corner. Then they give me a paper bag, and I knew it was money in there, but I didn’t ever open it. I just bring it back to my daddy.”⁴⁰

Another young woman tried to avoid being forced to sell drugs and ended up homeless. At age 12 her grandmother told her that to reside in her home, she would need to deliver drugs. She revealed that she had chosen to be homeless to avoid the familial pressure to sell drugs.⁴¹

Other youth in the drug trade stated that drug suppliers preyed on them due to their youth and vulnerability.⁴² Half of the youth reported drug dealing on behalf of gangs as the reason for their involvement in this illegal activity.⁴³ The young age of initiation, the violence used to maintain power, and the violence threatened if a youth tried to exit a gang is comparable to the violence, coercion and threats that youth who are sex trafficked commonly report experiencing, and the study found they clearly met the force, fraud and coercion necessary to show a youth is a victim of labor trafficking.⁴⁴

SURVIVOR VOICES

"I got into a gang, and I got booted out of my parents' house because I was gay at 12, so I had to kind of like fend for my own to protect myself—a way of survival/protection/means of having a roof over my head. So in [this city], the only thing you have to worry about is making it past the age of 18, and in that case, around every corner you hit, there's a gang. I was around that for like six years, so that part of my life was just strictly sell drugs, jump into a gang—you pretty much were the gang's bitch, pretty much. I mean, you just had to do whatever they asked you to do."⁴⁵

"No, it wouldn't have been safe [to leave].⁴⁶ I could have been killed if I had stopped. 'Cause they said if I stopped working for them they'd find me and kill me. I mean it was gang-involved so I had to do what I had to do."⁴⁷

"It's like a job where you have a schedule and you have to meet a quota. You have to sell a certain amount in a certain amount of time or you get threatened and smacked around or whatever.... there's times where they freak out and spaz and they scare you and stuff, smack someone else around in front of you, show that they're powerful and stuff—mentally tell you you can't go anywhere.... I've seen it happen to other people where you can't get out, and if you get out, you end up in the hospital..."⁴⁸

"The whole drug trade is forced labor. A lot of people get into it thinking 'Easy money!' and 'Aww, this is gonna be fun.' Unless you get into it as an individual, as an entrepreneur [that is not true]. If you are under somebody else, it is automatically [forced labor].... Most people, most everyone I've ever known that joined a gang and started doing that just to start doing that wanted to get back out of it. As soon as they got into it they were like, 'How do I get out of this, man?' People just sitting there looking like they are having an anxiety attack. If they're not strong in the mind I have seen people just go crazy off it. I've seen people commit suicide. I've seen all sorts of stuff..."⁴⁹

A 2023 study by researchers from Covenant House New Jersey and Harvard Medical School found that...



83% of victims of labor trafficking by forced criminality faced arrest before turning twenty-two years old⁵⁰

67% experienced periods of unsheltered homelessness⁵¹

56% were under 18 during the trafficking, with the youngest victim being 7 years old⁵²

Many victims had direct connections to the child welfare system including over half having been in foster care, and 90% lacking caring adult relationships due to parental death or prolonged absence. Like in the context of child sex trafficking, this study showed a strong correlation between LTFC youth and the child welfare system⁵³

CASE STUDIES AND TESTIMONIALS

Case examples highlight the common dynamics of youth who are LTFC and their intersection with the child welfare system

Aiden was 12 years old when he took a job delivering food products, but later learned he was actually delivering cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana. He only received a portion of the money he earned from selling drugs. His trafficker told him that if he didn't do what he was told or told anybody he would be hurt.⁵⁵

Rob ran away from his foster home when he was ten years old, and became involved with a trafficker who began using him to move drugs. He needed money and was too young to work anywhere else. He'd seen other people who moved drugs hurt if they tried to leave, and he was afraid they would hurt his family if he tried to leave himself. He eventually fled the state to escape the situation.⁵⁴

Youth reported that in addition to being forced to sell drugs they were "forced to engage in other activities by gangs against their will, including driving escape vehicles or engaging in violence, theft, and robbery" and pimping.⁵⁶

WHAT THEY'RE UP AGAINST

WHY THEY CAN'T LEAVE

Youth forced or coerced to sell drugs, or commit other crimes for third parties' benefit are some of the most vulnerable victims of child labor trafficking.⁵⁷ These youth are forced to work against their will for another's benefit, cannot leave their traffickers, and often extreme violence is used to maintain power and control over them.⁵⁸ Further, they face arrest for the crimes they were forced to commit and have nowhere to turn for help as they often feel complicit in the crimes they are forced to commit.⁵⁹

The harrowing narratives and lived experiences of these youth underscore a compelling imperative for the Los Angeles area to take a more urgent and comprehensive approach to addressing the pressing needs of young individuals subjected to labor trafficking through forced criminality. The findings and stories in the 2016 and 2023 studies serve as a stark reminder that the current response in Los Angeles falls short, demanding a paradigm shift in how we prioritize the challenges faced by all vulnerable youth. It is incumbent upon the community to foster a more robust and targeted support system that actively addresses the nuanced circumstances surrounding labor trafficking by forced criminality to ensure the well-being and rehabilitation of these young survivors. A great place to start, given that more than 50% of youth who were victims of LTFC had been in foster care, is by ensuring our child welfare system and its approach to working with youth who are trafficked focuses on all trafficked children not just Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and youth (CSEC).

The experience of youth who are LTFC, often marked by coercion, manipulation, and fear, make them vulnerable and in urgent need of assistance. By being able to recognize and identify their exploitation and extending the necessary resources and services, Los Angeles City and County can play a crucial role in helping them rebuild their lives. Just as with any other form of exploitation, the rights and well-being of these youth should be paramount, and it is the responsibility of county officials to ensure their safety and provide various avenues for support.



HISTORICALLY, LAWS AND POLICIES PROTECTING YOUTH WHO ARE TRAFFICKED IN CALIFORNIA AND LOS ANGELES FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON CSEC YOUTH



This section offers an overview and timeline to examine California's legislative framework, highlighting the urgent need for a more inclusive approach to protect all exploited children, regardless of the form of their exploitation.

2014

California passes SB 855, which clarified that a child falls under the authority of the juvenile court and may be considered a dependent child of the court if the child experiences sexual trafficking or engages in specific sexual acts in exchange for food, shelter, or payment due to the parent or guardian's failure or inability to protect the child.⁶⁰ The same year the governor vetoed a similar bill that would have protected both labor and sex trafficked children by clarifying that the definition of child abuse included both sex and labor trafficking of children.⁶¹

2015

California passes SB 794, which mandated county child welfare agencies and probation departments to establish policies and procedures to recognize, document, and provide suitable services for children and youth under federal child welfare services who are currently or at risk of being victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Again, child labor trafficking was excluded from protection in these measures.⁶²

Despite legislative efforts aimed at addressing exploitation of children, the bills enacted only focused on sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

The specific needs of youth subjected to labor trafficking were not comprehensively addressed, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation without adequate protective measures. A 2019 report by the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking documents this failure and provides additional background.⁶³ In 2024, 10 years later, the state legislative framework still needs to be updated to protect all children including labor trafficking by forced criminality.



2016

In 2016, California passed a safe harbor law protecting commercially sex trafficked children, SB 1322.⁶⁴ A safe harbor provision grants protection from liability or penalty if certain conditions are met, such as the person being a minor.⁶⁵ The “Safe Harbor Law” within the trafficking context adopted in California prohibited minors from being prosecuted for loitering and commercial sex crimes.⁶⁶ It also provided minors who are sex trafficked with non-punitive specialized services.⁶⁷

At the same time SB 1322 was introduced, California had the opportunity to protect all child trafficking victims – including labor and sex trafficking victims – from other crimes their traffickers forced them to commit by requiring law enforcement before arresting a child to screen them to determine if a third-party was benefiting from their criminal activity and requiring if they made that determination referral to child dependency services instead of juvenile delinquency. This measure known as AB 1760⁶⁸ failed in committee while SB 1322 was signed into law by the Governor that same year. Therefore, once again, instead of protecting all children victims from being criminalized, California prioritized only protecting CSEC victims. Additionally, since SB 1322 intended to create “a model for services provided to CSEC⁶⁹ through the juvenile dependency and treatment process, rather than reliance on the juvenile delinquency system,” it explicitly ensured that only a portion of child trafficking victims received access to specialized services.⁷⁰ This approach failed both sex and labor trafficking victims forced to commit other crimes.

These children continued to be arrested for crimes their traffickers forced them to commit in California.⁷¹

Los Angeles County



In the evolving landscape of addressing child trafficking, Los Angeles County has embarked on various initiatives to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) from 2012–2023. This section reviews the Board of Supervisors (BOS) actions starting in 2012 that took pivotal step to tackling the intricate issue of child trafficking, but only focused on the needs of CSEC youth. These motions led to the necessary creation of specialized teams and county-wide responses, engaged key partners from various departments, and mandated extensive trainings. However, the motions by focusing almost exclusively on CSEC only mean today many government agencies and staff in Los Angeles County understand trafficking of child to only include sex trafficking. This section explores the county's approach to combating child trafficking, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive strategy that encompasses all forms of exploitation, thus ensuring comprehensive protection and support for all trafficked children in Los Angeles County.





2012

The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors passed the first motion to address child trafficking, specifically focusing only on the commercial sexual exploitation of children.⁷² The motion created a specialized team to tackle the issue of sex trafficking within the foster care system. This collaborative effort engaged key county partners including the Los Angeles County Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Department, the Police Chiefs Association, the Police Department, the Department of Mental Health, and various other stakeholders.⁷³

2013

The BOS put forth an additional motion directing the Chief Executive Officer to coordinate with the Sex Trafficking Task Force and its members to create a county wide multi-agency response model, again focused only on sex trafficking.⁷⁴

2015

Following the enactment of Senate Bill 855, which mandated counties present a comprehensive plan for assisting victims of child sex trafficking to be eligible for funding, the Board of Supervisors initiated a motion to assess the viability of implementing a new, unified operational model dedicated to administering programs and services exclusively for victims of child sex trafficking.⁷⁵ Nothing in SB 855 would have prohibited creating a plan to serve and identify all trafficked children including both sex and labor trafficked children.

This motion requested the Interim Chief Executive Officer to collaborate with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Health Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Probation Department, and any other pertinent County department. Their goal was to assess the viability of implementing a new, unified operational model dedicated to administering programs and services exclusively for victims of child sex trafficking.⁷⁶

The three motions establishing protocols for county coordination solely focusing on sex trafficking of minors represent a missed opportunity to comprehensively address the broader issue of all trafficked children in Los Angeles County. By narrowly concentrating on commercial sexual exploitation, these motions inadvertently perpetuated a public and institutional misconception that combating CSEC equates to addressing all forms of human trafficking. This limited perspective hinders the development of a more holistic and effective strategy to protect and support all trafficked children, irrespective of the specific nature of their exploitation.



2014 (March)

County efforts continued to reinforce this framework of training and education of CSEC issues and prevention only. In March of 2014, The BOS put forth a motion with two key components. First, they requested written reports within 30 days from the DCFS and Probation on the feasibility, plan, and costs of collaborating with local higher education institutions. The purpose was to develop training programs addressing the identification and understanding of victims of CSEC, along with best practices. Second, the BOS requested that the Directors assess the feasibility of requiring annual CSEC training for state-licensed foster parents, foster family agencies, and group homes caring for DCFS-placed or Probation-placed children.⁷⁷

2014 (June)

Three months later, in June of 2014, the BOS further asked the directors of DCFS and Probation to develop training curriculum focused on prevention and intervention strategies for child sex trafficking only, specifically tailored for foster care and group home providers. Subsequently, after the curriculum was developed, DCFS and Probation were to amend their agreements with service providers, so it was mandatory for them to undergo training based on the developed curriculum. Additionally, the directors were required to prepare an estimated budget for the implementation of this mandatory training countywide.⁷⁸

2015

Further training supported by the County that focused on sex trafficking only was included in a March of 2015, motion by the BOS that looked at the feasibility of requiring mandatory training sessions on sex trafficking for hotels and motels receiving County vouchers.^{79, 80, 81, 82} This training did not explore training on all forms of trafficking even though labor trafficking for sales crews also utilizes hotel-based services. Further labor trafficking has been identified as connected to hotels both by those forced to work in hotels as well as domestic servants staying at the hotels.⁸³

2017

Finally, in November of 2017, the BOS mandated that the Department of Human Resources incorporate the CSEC only training module into their online training programs for all new county employees. This meant that all new county employees received information on sex but not labor trafficking. Additionally, department heads were required to implement CSEC training department-wide for current employees.⁸⁴

The motions creating county-wide training curricula for service providers and agency staff missed an opportunity to provide comprehensive training on all forms of trafficking. The narrow emphasis reinforced the misconception that children can only be sex trafficked, neglecting the critical aspect of labor trafficking and LTFC. Strengthening these training programs to encompass all forms of trafficking is essential for a more informed and effective response to protect and support all exploited children.



2015

In March of 2015, the BOS put forth a motion directing several key departments and offices, including the DCFS, the Probation Department, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Chief Probation Officer, the Public Defender, the Alternate Public Defender, in consultation with various other entities, to investigate the feasibility of establishing a secure facility dedicated to serving CSEC youth under the jurisdiction of the Probation Department and DCFS. This facility was to offer a secure environment with “appropriate security features” to discourage runaways and prevent access by exploiters, providing specialized interventions and care to address the unique trauma and behavioral issues faced by these victims. Additionally, the motion instructed advocates in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to pursue legislation that would enhance the County's capacity to safely house and protect CSEC youth.⁸⁵

2019

In July 2019, the BOS put forth two motions addressing the housing needs of CSEC youth. The first motion instructed the Chief Executive Office, DCFS, and the Probation Department, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department and the Office of Youth Diversion and Development, to present a report that covered the current funding levels for Home Safe Transition, its allocation over the past and present fiscal years, and suggestions for optimizing the allocation specifically for housing. Additionally, the motion included a plan for establishing and supporting housing, as well as Intensive Services Foster Care placements for CSEC identified youth or youth at risk of being CSEC.⁸⁶

The second motion, instructed CSEC Integrated Leadership Team to submit written, updated funding recommendations and an implementation plan, specifically targeting housing, treatment, and services for CSEC victims and their families. The report was to encompass diverse recommendations, including housing and services for CSE individuals without prior involvement in the dependency or delinquency system, workforce development programs for those aged 18 and older, and innovative housing placement initiatives. Additionally, the report was required to incorporate input from CSE individuals, service providers, and other relevant stakeholders.⁸⁷

The motions introduced regarding specialized housing for minors affected by sex trafficking failed to address the broader scope of trafficking faced by youth. Despite the publication of the 2016 study revealing the prevalence of labor trafficking alongside sex trafficking in homeless youth in Los Angeles and Oakland, the focus remained solely on CSEC youth. This overlooked opportunity by the Board of Supervisors highlights a critical failure to prioritize housing and services for all victims of trafficking, regardless of the form of exploitation they endure. By neglecting to allocate funding for housing and services supporting both sex trafficking victims and victims of labor trafficking, including victims of LTFC, the Board missed a crucial chance to ensure the stability and recovery of all exploited youth.

Again, this oversight underscores the urgent need now for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to supporting trafficking victims in accessing the resources they need, especially housing, to stabilize their lives and move towards a path of healing



2015

The BOS put forth a motion asking the Chief Executive Office to collaborate with various County departments, including the Fire Department, Probation Department, DCFS, DHS, Sheriff's Department, Public Health Department, DPSS, DMH, and Libraries, to evaluate options for revitalizing, rebranding, and extending the Safe House Program to additional County facilities, incorporating CSEC youth. The Chief Executive Office was asked with presenting a plan and timeframe that included outreach to the public using culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, training employees to recognize signs of CSEC youth and follow proper protocols, and expanding the Safe House Program to encompass various County facilities such as Sheriff's stations, hospitals, community health clinics, DPSS offices, DCFS offices, County libraries, and others across the region, with a commitment to monitoring and reporting on program results.⁸⁸

2016

In May of 2016, the BOS put forth a motion directing the Los Angeles County CSEC Integrated Leadership Team to collaborate with various County departments, including the Office of Child Protection, DPSS, DMH, Department of Public Health, DPS, DCFS, Probation Department, Sheriff's Department, and County Fire Department, in order to report back on the renaming and rebranding of the Los Angeles County Safe House Program to the Los Angeles County Safe Youth Zone Program, developing a protocol for assisting child sex trafficking victims at designated Safe Youth Zones, outlining an implementation plan involving County departments and public safety agencies, and presenting a funding plan for the program's implementation, training, and other essential resources. This initiative aimed to enhance support and resources for victims while educating the public on the Safe Youth Zone Program.⁸⁹

2016

In June of 2020, the BOS put forth a motion directing the Los Angeles County CSEC-Integrated Leadership Team (ILT) to collaborate with multiple County departments, including DPSS, DMH, Public Health, DHS, DCFS, Probation, Sheriff's Department, and County Fire Department to report back an implementation plan to expand the Safe Youth Zone to all existing First Responder Protocol locations, engage and partner with agencies outside of Los Angeles County, devise a training strategy for agency participants, and identify any additional necessary resources for the expansion of the Los Angeles County Safe Youth Zone program.⁹⁰

Despite the series of motions by the Board of Supervisors to extend and enhance the Safe House Program, including renaming it to the Safe Youth Zone Program, a critical flaw persists. Each motion, in June 2015, May 2016, and June 2020, exclusively focuses on addressing sex trafficking of minors, thereby overlooking the imperative to comprehensively tackle all forms of child trafficking. This limitation undermines the potential impact of these initiatives, necessitating a broader approach to encompass the complexities of labor trafficking and ensure a more robust and inclusive support system for all exploited youth in Los Angeles County.



2015 - 2016

In October 2015 and August 2016, the BOS put forth two motions to ensure that victims of CSEC are treated as victims rather than facing punitive measures and protected as victim-witnesses. The motion discouraged the arrest of child sex trafficking victims for prostitution-related offenses. Provisions in these motions also directed the County to look into safeguarding minor victim witnesses in CSEC prosecutions by allowing them to testify via closed-circuit television, as well as ensuring each minor victim witness has access to a victim advocate for support, benefits, and the creation of a safety plan during prosecution.^{91, 92}

While the BOS took commendable steps in October 2015 and August 2016 to protect CSEC minors by discouraging their arrest and ensuring support during prosecution, a significant oversight exists in these motions.

These motions exclusively focus on CSEC minors, neglecting to extend similar protections to minors who are labor trafficked or subjected to forced criminality. By not addressing the broader spectrum of exploited youth, these motions miss the opportunity to establish a more inclusive and equitable framework that recognizes and safeguards all victims, regardless of the specific nature of their exploitation.





2017

In November of 2017, the BOS put forth a motion to address the need for specialized and targeted services for parents of CSEC survivors in Los Angeles County. The motion highlighted the challenges faced by parents in traditional parenting programs, which often do not address the unique needs of families affected by CSEC. The motion proposes that the DCFS and Probation, in collaboration with various stakeholders, report back on services provided by other jurisdictions, best practices or evidence-based programs for parents with children involved in CSEC, and potential funding streams for developing and providing such services, including the role of Parent Partners or Wrap-Around programs.^{93, 94}

2018

In November of 2018, the BOS put forth a motion emphasizing the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of the CSEC First Responder Protocol (FRP) in Los Angeles County. The FRP, initiated in 2013, aimed to provide a victim-centered and strengths-based response to incidents involving CSEC, diverting them from detention and connecting them to comprehensive services. The proposal called for an external evaluation and longitudinal study of the FRP, conducted by local research institutions using a public health framework, to analyze data, improve outcomes, and address critical questions related to CSEC prevention and support.⁹⁵

These motions exclusively focus on CSEC minors, disregarding the urgent and parallel needs of minors subjected to labor trafficking or forced criminality. The recurrent neglect of minors involved in labor trafficking and LTFC underscores a systemic failure that leaves a substantial portion of exploited youth without the specialized support and attention they critically require from county officials and departments.



2010

Los Angeles County has a specialized juvenile delinquency court dedicated to minor sex trafficking victims. The name of the court is "Succeed through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court and it was established in January 2010.⁹⁶ This specialized court program's goal is primarily rehabilitative.⁹⁷ It aims to provide "enhanced services and supervision through a partnership with a multi-disciplinary team composed of the youth's lawyer, the assistant district attorney, a probation officer...", and advocates from several community-based organizations who worked with sex trafficking youth.⁹⁸

2016

A similar specialized courtroom for child welfare system-involved youth called the Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Court was established in the Edelman's Children Court, the Los Angeles County's dependency court.⁹⁹ It first began to hear cases in January of 2016.¹⁰⁰ This specialized courtroom was also established to serve CSEC only despite the evidence based data available in 2016 highlighting that LTFC was equally prevalent among homeless and runaway youth.¹⁰¹ DREAM court also uses a multi-disciplinary team approach involving the child's attorney, social worker, probation officer, assigned child advocate, and other support people as needed.¹⁰²



Los Angeles County

STAR Court and Dream Court



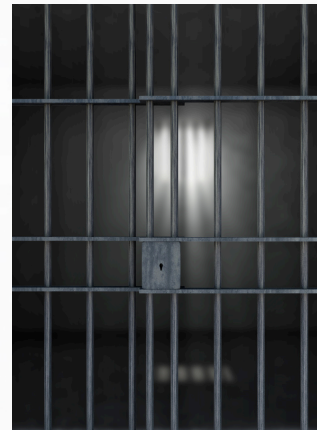
Fifteen years after the launch of STAR court, no specialized courts or programs currently exist in Los Angeles County for labor trafficked youth forced to commit crimes for their trafficker. The absence of specialized courts or programs tailored to address the unique circumstances of labor trafficked youth coerced into committing crimes in Los Angeles County represents a critical gap in the support system for these vulnerable youth. Without dedicated protocols and systems to recognize the force, coercion and manipulation they face; these youth remain at risk of being unfairly prosecuted for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. This lack of specialized attention not only undermines their rights as victims but also provides traffickers with another means of control over them.

The absence of specialized courts or programs perpetuates a cycle of victimization and criminalization for labor trafficked youth. By failing to recognize their victimhood and instead subjecting them to the criminal justice system, society further marginalizes and stigmatizes these individuals, hindering their ability to seek help and reintegrate into society.

Considering these challenges, it is imperative for Los Angeles County to expand its current specialized courts and programs to include labor trafficked youth coerced into criminal activities. These initiatives should prioritize victim-centered public health approaches that prioritize their safety, well-being, and rights. By doing so, Los Angeles County can take significant steps towards protecting and supporting all youth affected by trafficking and breaking the cycle of exploitation and victimization.

LAWS AND POLICIES INTENDED TO PROTECT YOUTH WHO ARE TRAFFICKED BY FORCED CRIMINALITY

No safe harbor laws exist to protect minors who have been labor trafficked by forced criminality



No safe harbor laws exist to protect minors who have been labor trafficked by forced criminality. Currently in California only an affirmative defense¹⁰³ and vacatur¹⁰⁴ provisions are available to protect adult and minor trafficking victims from the consequences of being arrested for a crime they were forced to commit. However, these protections only deal with the aftermath of the criminal arrest and do not ensure our child are identified and protected before arrest.¹⁰⁵

To prevent victims from being ensnared in the criminal justice system, various other states besides California have laws offering immunity from prosecution or diversion to rehabilitation services for a broader range of crimes than commercial sex. Typically, these protections are extended primarily to trafficked youth, recognized as an especially vulnerable demographic. Notably, Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, and Oklahoma provide immunity for a broader range of crime. For example, North Dakota extended immunity to additional offenses like misdemeanor forgery, theft, credit offenses, and controlled substances crimes. Kentucky goes further by granting immunity for all status offenses committed by trafficked youth. Nebraska and Wyoming have taken the broadest approach, both states offer immunity from prosecution for both trafficked children and adults for all crimes committed as a result of the trafficking.¹⁰⁶

Why and How We Need to Screen all Youth Arrested in Los Angeles for Drug Related Offenses for LTFC



California Juvenile Justice Data

Over the last few decades, California has made great strides to reform the juvenile justice system. However, no work has been done to ensure that youth who are labor trafficked by forced criminality are not arrested. This means that in Los Angeles and across our state there are likely thousands of children who are being arrested due to their own victimization. Although no specific data set can show how many of those arrested are victims of labor trafficking by forced criminality, estimates can be provided taking the data from the Murphy study on runaway and homeless youth. The study reported that 81% of the youth who were labor trafficked, were for instances of forced drug dealing.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, one could argue that comparable percentages may be applied to youth arrested for drug dealing offenses to illustrate the occurrences of youth who are victims of labor trafficking by forced criminality.

26,000 youth were arrested in California in 2022.¹⁰⁸ Of those 26,000 arrests, 11,902 were arrested for violent felonies, 12,958 youth were arrested for misdemeanors, and 1,140 youth were arrested for status offenses.¹⁰⁹ ¹¹⁰ 276¹¹¹ of the felony offense arrests were for drug-related crimes and 1,876¹¹² misdemeanor arrests were for drug and alcohol related crimes.¹¹³ Thus, in total, 2,152 youth were arrested for drug related crimes.

Given the finding of the high percentage of youth who evidence based studies show are forced to sell drugs in California, the chart below demonstrates that as many as 1,744 youth who were arrested in 2022 for drug related crimes could have been labor trafficking victims by forced criminality.

Type of Crime		Potential LTFC Youth
Overall Statewide Youth Arrests in 2022	26,000	1,744 youth ¹¹⁴
Statewide Youth Felony Drug Related Arrests	276	224 youth ¹¹⁵
Statewide Youth Misdemeanor Drug and Alcohol Related arrests	1,876	1,520 youth ¹¹⁶

Why and How We Need to Screen all Youth Arrested in Los Angeles for Drug Related Offenses for LTFC



Los Angeles Juvenile Justice Data

Out of the 26,000 youth arrests recorded in California in 2022, 4,099 youths, constituting 15.58% of the total arrests were in Los Angeles County.¹¹⁷ Out of those youth arrests, 2,458 individuals were arrested for felonies, 1,588 were arrested for misdemeanors, and 53 were arrested for status offenses.¹¹⁸ As for drug related felony offenses, 28 youth were arrested for felony drug offenses.¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, data breaking down the misdemeanor arrests for Los Angeles County for drug related charges is unavailable. However, if we utilize the statewide data that shows that 8.3% of all arrests were for either felony or misdemeanor drug charges, we can estimate that likely 340 youth were arrested for felony and misdemeanor drug related offenses in Los Angeles. Thus, given that 81% of youth who are labor trafficked have been found to be forced into drug dealing,¹²⁰ we can estimate that up to 275 of the estimated 340 youth who were arrested for drug related offenses in Los Angeles County in 2022 could be victims of labor trafficking by forced criminality. Although this analysis creates an estimate of youth in Los Angeles who may have been arrested due to forced drug sales, it is important to keep in mind, that the total number of youth who are victims of LTFC is likely much higher as the estimates provided are only for drug related arrests and are only based on those youth who came into contact with our system through arrest.

Type of Crime		Potential LTFC Youth
Overall LA County Youth Arrests in 2022	4,099	275 ¹²¹
LA County Youth Felony Drug Related Arrests	28	23 ¹²²
LA County Youth Misdemeanor Drug and Alcohol Related arrests	311 ¹²³	252 ¹²⁴

Why and How We Need to Screen all Youth Arrested in Los Angeles for Drug Related Offenses for LTFC



The Framework for Screening Youth Arrested in Los Angeles County for Drug Related Offenses for Labor Trafficking by Forced Criminality Already Exists

The lack of training to identify youth who are labor trafficked by forced criminality, is highlighted by “A survey of Child Welfare and Labor Trafficking in California.”¹²⁵ In this study the author surveyed 186 participants primarily within the child welfare system, and probation officers/juvenile justice system, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) between September 23, 2019, and November 30, 2019. The findings indicate that child welfare workers, probation officers, and NGOs are actively involved with children who have experienced labor trafficking. Participants were asked specific questions related to human trafficking indicators, focusing on experiences with children subjected to labor exploitation, coercion, fraudulent employment terms, debt bondage, forced involvement in drug-related activities, and compelled engagement in theft, weapon sales, or transportation of stolen goods.¹²⁶ The survey results revealed that approximately 63% of welfare workers, 65% of community-based workers, and around 44% of probation or justice system workers expressed a likelihood of working with children who had been coerced or controlled by another person for their labor.¹²⁷ These findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to enhance the screening, identification, and service provision of youth who are labor trafficked by forced criminality.

To effectively combat child labor trafficking by forced criminality, it is imperative that we extend screening protocols akin to those used for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) cases. A groundbreaking ten-county statewide 2020 study, conducted by the Child Family Policy Institute of California and its partners, advocates for the integration of labor trafficking into existing County CSEC child welfare specialized programs.¹²⁸ This report highlights that due to the overlap in warning signs and the frequent occurrence of both sex and labor trafficking, counties can seamlessly include labor trafficking within their established CSEC protocol processes.¹²⁹ The study further stated that the current CSEC systems already in place offer a robust groundwork for creating a responsive framework for labor trafficking¹³⁰ and showcases that the 10 jurisdictions studied can leverage their existing expertise in developing strategies against child sex trafficking a to seamlessly incorporate anti-labor trafficking strategies into established policies and collaborations.¹³¹ The 10 jurisdiction study also found that CSEC trainings could be integrated to include training on all forms of trafficking to ensure all trafficked children are identified by stakeholders.¹³²

Prior to changes in California law making the crime of prostitution and related crimes inapplicable to minors, between 2009 and 2016, there were over 1,500 arrests of youth under 18 for prostitution-related offenses in Los Angeles County. However, after the adoption of a new approach by the LA Board of Supervisors, between 2013-2018, there were almost 3,000 child welfare referrals made related to potential victims of CSE in the County.¹³³ Significantly, these referrals were made after the County held its first CSEC-focused two-day training in February 2012.¹³⁴ Thus, there is no reason why Los Angeles City and County cannot act now to ensure LTFC youth receive similar types of referrals and are not arrested for crimes their traffickers forced them to commit. By leveraging current systems and policies, Los Angeles City and County can seamlessly incorporate anti-labor trafficking strategies into established CSEC frameworks.

Recommendations for Enhancing Support for Youth Victims of Labor Trafficking by Forced Criminality by Los Angeles City and County Government Entities, Departments, Agencies, and Service Providers

Los Angeles must correct the unequal treatment of child sex and labor trafficking victims in the County. In the past it has spent resources and capacity to ensure the County understood the complex dynamics of CSEC instead of focusing on the complex dynamics of all forms of trafficking. For example, a report issued in 2018 documented that Probation facilitated CSEC trainings, with the support of the Board of Supervisors and DCFS, to over 18,000 people, including county employees.¹³⁵ This means that over 5 years 18,000 people were trained in Los Angeles County to identify just one population of youth forced to commit commercial sex crimes, but not other types of crimes.

1

Ensure that the Department of Children and Family Services can Adequately Support all Trafficked Youth

2

Ensure that Probation and Juvenile Justice And Detention Facilities Identify all Trafficked Youth by Forced Criminality

3

Recommendations for Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

4

Los Angeles Public Defender's Office and Childrens Law Center

5

Los Angeles City and County Government Officials and Legislature Should Fund More Preventive and Supportive Programs

6

California State Government Officials and Legislature

7

Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Should Implement the Non-Punishment Principle to Youth Labor Trafficking Victims by Forced Criminality

Recommendations



Ensure that the Department of Children and Family Services Can Adequately Support All Trafficked Youth

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has a specialized unit that helps youth sex trafficking survivors called the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) unit.¹³⁶ The CSEC unit aims to connect youth who are sexually exploited with supportive services, specialized advocates, and temporary housing if needed.¹³⁷ In 2023 DCFS has taken momentous steps to change its approach. However, it was not until October of 2023 that a specialized Labor Trafficking Subcommittee was formed by DCFS and DCFS changed the CSEC Units name to more broadly encompasses the needs of labor trafficked youth.¹³⁸

It is recommended that DCFS take the following steps to support youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. The five-year strategic plan and contract with the County currently underway to address CSEC services only must be updated to present a 5-year strategy to assist all trafficked youth.
 - *This includes DCFS agreeing to make modifications with the agency contracted to carry out the development of the five-year strategic plan in order to address the needs of all trafficked youth, including youth who are LTFC. Otherwise, this strategic plan which is due to be presented to the BOS in October of 2024 will propose a strategic plan for the county through 2029 that focuses on CSEC only.*
2. DCFS must stop training on CSEC only and update all training materials and mandatory trainings to include information on all forms of trafficking. DCFS must train all their staff, especially their front-line social workers and hotline staff, on all forms of trafficking and include specialized information on identifying youth who are victims of LTFC and other forms of labor trafficking.
3. Due to lack of training on this issue DCFS must screen all youth currently in their system to identify current cases of labor trafficking and/or forced criminality on their caseload to provide specialized services.
4. Once identified, DCFS uses CSEC protocols currently in place to provide the same specialized services to labor trafficking victims.
5. DCFS provides information, early intervention, and preventive services to all minors in their system about lawful and unlawful employment practices and coercion into forced criminality so they can better understand their risk for exploitation.
6. DCFS refers cases of youth who are labor trafficked by forced criminality to specialized courtrooms in dependency court. DCFS advocates that no trafficking victim forced to commit a crime by their trafficker and arrested for this crime are in juvenile delinquency courts, such as the STAR a court.
 - *Courts like STAR court should only be for children who have committed crimes unrelated to their trafficking.*
7. DCFS ensures that any child trafficking victim in their care is represented by Victim's Counsel if they must testify against their trafficker in a criminal case similar to the model set up in Arizona.
 - *The CSEC victim protocol guide launched in 2023 does not provide this protection currently to CSEC or labor trafficking youth. No NGO with experience as a victim's rights attorney was consulted in the protocol process and the protocol should be revised to better protect child victims testifying in trafficking cases. A Victim Advocate and A Victim-Witness Support Team are not the same as a victim having their own counsel.*¹³⁹
8. DCFS ensures that all service providers awarded future DCFS contracts are trained on identifying and supporting all trafficked youth including youth who are LTFC.
9. DCFS ensures specialized home placements for youth who are LTFC.
10. DCFS reports the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies.

Recommendations

Ensure that Probation and Juvenile Justice And Detention Facilities Identify All Trafficked Youth by Forced Criminality



The Los Angeles County Probation Department (LA Probation), which oversees the Juvenile detention centers,¹⁴⁰ has a specialized unit “to support youth on probation who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁴¹ While the name of the unit is “Child Trafficking Unit” there is no mention on their website about the support they provide to youth who are LTFC. LA Probation has also created a handbook titled “All Hands-on Deck: Identifying and Supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.”¹⁴² However, they do not have a similar handbook for youth who have experienced LTFC.

Therefore, is it recommended that the LA Probation take the following steps to support all youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. LA Probation update all training materials and mandatory trainings to include information on all forms of trafficking. LA Probation must train all their staff on all forms of trafficking and include specialized information on identifying youth who are victims of LTFC and other forms of labor trafficking.
2. LA Probation screen all youth in their detention centers, regardless of gender, for labor trafficking, including LTFC.
3. LA Probation update the handbook and their website for their department developed for identifying and supporting CSEC youth in the juvenile justice system to include all forms of labor trafficking, especially LTFC.
4. LA Probation ensure protocols are in place to refer youth with LTFC experience to DCFS.
5. LA Probation reports the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies.



Recommendations

Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Should Implement the Non-Punishment Principle to Youth Labor Trafficking Victims by Forced Criminality



It is recommended that Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (LA City and County prosecution agencies) should take the following steps to support all youth and adults who have LTFC:

1. LA City and County prosecution agencies update all training materials and mandatory trainings to include information on all forms of trafficking. LA City and County prosecution agencies must train all their staff on all forms of trafficking and include specialized information on youth who are victims of LTFC and other forms of labor trafficking.
2. LA City and County prosecution agencies implement the non-punishment principle recommended by the "Working Group on Trafficking in Persons of the UN Transnational Organized Crime Convention."¹⁴³ This working Group recommended that:
 - *Survivors should not be criminalized for crimes they committed as a direct result of trafficking, and if they are criminalized for those crimes, remedies to address this issue need to be provided to them;*^{144, 145}
 - *Training on the non-punishment principle should be provided to prosecutors, law enforcement, social service providers, and other appropriate individuals;*¹⁴⁶
 - *LA City and County prosecution agencies review its policies and procedures and issue a Special Directive to eliminate any practices that might contribute to the revictimization of a trafficking victim;*¹⁴⁷
 - *LA City and County prosecution agencies should develop a written protocol to ensure a victim-centered approach is taken to proactive and timely identify all trafficking victims.*¹⁴⁸
3. LA City and County prosecution agencies to report the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies.



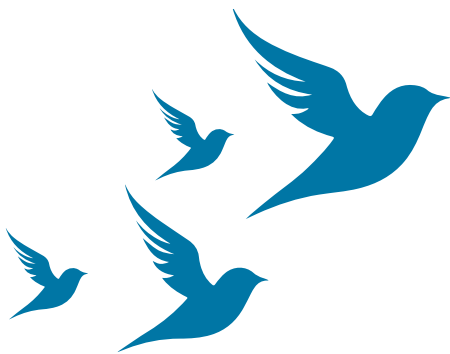
Recommendations

Los Angeles Police Department and
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department



While the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) are already taking steps to address the needs of CSEC victims, they still fall short of addressing the needs of youth victims of labor trafficking by forced criminality. It is recommended that the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department take the following steps to support youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. LAPD and LASD update all training materials and mandatory trainings to include information on all forms of trafficking. LAPD and LASD must train all their staff on all forms of trafficking and included specialized information on identifying youth who are victims of LTFC and other forms of labor trafficking.
2. LAPD and LASD to implement screening protocols to identify youth who are LTFC.
3. If LAPD and LASD identify a labor trafficking youth, they follow the same protocols currently in place for CSEC victims.
4. LAPD and LASD to employ trauma-informed practices when assessing potential exploitative situations and facilitate the connection of survivors with both health and social resources.¹⁴⁹
5. LAPD and LASD to report the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies



Recommendations

Los Angeles Public Defender's Office and
Childrens Law Center



Public Defenders (PD) in criminal proceedings and attorneys from the Children Law Center (CLC) handling dependency cases may often be the first individuals to recognize youth as victims of labor trafficking through forced criminality, given their roles in advocating for these children's rights in their respective courts. Therefore, the PDs and CLC attorneys should take the following steps to support youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. PD and CLC to update all training materials and mandatory trainings to include information on all forms of trafficking. PD and CLC must train all their staff on all forms of trafficking and included specialized information on identifying youth who are victims of LTFC and other forms of labor trafficking.
2. PD and CLC to implement protocols to screen all youth to identify youth who are LTFC.
3. PD and CLC attorneys proactively screen past cases to assess for LTFC and have staffing in place to assist in sealing and or vacating convictions under P.C. 236.14 and applying for crime victim benefits for lost income through the California Victims Compensation program.
4. PD and CLC to advocate and provide appropriate programs and services to youth who have experienced LTFC.
5. PD and CLC to report the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies.



Recommendations

Los Angeles City and County Government Officials and Legislature Should Fund More Preventive and Supportive Programs



It is recommended that the Los Angeles City and County government officials and legislature (LA Government) take the following steps to support youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. LA Government fund additional specialized services DCFS needs to support youth who experienced LTFC.
2. LA Government fund more preventive programs such as gang prevention programs and workforce programs and ensure these programs include training on human trafficking for forced criminality for their participants.
3. LA Government fund trauma-informed counseling services aimed at helping youth address the trauma they have experienced in their lives before, during, and after they were trafficked.¹⁵⁰
4. LA Government fund comprehensive services outside of DCFS systems that will assist youth in escaping traffickers and starting a new life free of coercive labor.¹⁵¹
5. LA Government address the housing insecurity crisis experienced by youth, especially youth aging out of foster care to prevent trafficking.¹⁵²
6. LA Government require LA Government funded drop-in programs for youth to screen for an educate youth on all forms of exploitation, provide counseling services, job skills training programs and any other services deemed appropriate by experts for youth who at risk for or are experiencing LTFC.¹⁵³
7. LA Government take a public health and community organizing approach to tackling this issue of identifying youth experiencing LTFC instead of a carceral approach that often does not work for particularly vulnerable communities who are trafficked.
6. LA Government to provide the funding and infrastructure necessary to facilitate the reporting by their departments and agencies of the number of cases of CSEC, labor trafficking cases by industry, LTFC cases, cases that involve both CSEC and labor trafficking, and at risk CSEC/labor trafficking/LTFC identified cases yearly to the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and other appropriate government agencies.

Recommendations

California State Government Officials and Legislature



California State Government Officials and Legislature (CA Government) should follow all the recommendations listed above for Los Angeles City and County as well as take the following steps to support youth who have experienced LTFC:

1. CA Government pass legislation that addresses the needs of all survivors of trafficking including labor trafficking survivors by force criminality by ensuring a Safe Harbor Law for Youth Victims of LTFC, like 2016's AB 1760¹⁵⁴ and 2024's SB 998,¹⁵⁵ is signed into law.
2. CA Government allocate funding for prevention efforts and services for all survivors of trafficking from the California general fund that do not preclude individuals with criminal histories from applying for such services.



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CONCLUSION

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The time has come for Los Angeles City and County to embrace a resolute and proactive stance in the relentless pursuit of identifying and safeguarding our youth ensnared in the clutches of forced criminal labor.

Far too frequently, these vulnerable young people are unjustly branded as criminals when they are the very victims of a sinister web of trafficking. It is our moral imperative to catalyze change and ensure that Los Angeles City and County step up to the plate, decisively implementing the above recommendations.

Failure to do so would mean a grievous disservice to the youth entrapped in the obscurity of forced criminality



**ADDRESS
LEGISLATIVE &
SYSTEMIC
GAPS**



**ENHANCE
SUPPORT
SERVICES**



**FOSTER
STAKEHOLDERS
COLLABORATION**



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Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative



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