

Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Report

Submitted to Mayor-Elect Ron Dellums
City of Oakland, California
December 2006

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I. Preface

This report is submitted by Mayor-Elect Ron Dellum's Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force and addresses current and future policies that would reduce incidences of youth involvement in prostitution. As the only community member who formally participated in the Mayor-elect's Advisory Task Force on child prostitution, Ms. Few sought to identify existing programs in Oakland and Alameda County. A preliminary report was submitted to the Mayor-elect in November, which clarified recommendations made by community stake-holders in previous years. She then met with and sought the insights of experts nationally and internationally who have extensive knowledge of this specific population. This report includes the recommendations of Oakland and Alameda County social workers, law enforcement and youth advocates whose work she previously enumerated in the November report, and expands upon those findings to discuss issues of empowerment, advocate for a comprehensive continuum of services and promote inter-agency communication.

This report then, includes recommendations from the Sexually Exploited Minors Network, (SEM) as well as feedback and recommendations from diverse community activists. The following report is based on the best practices models of harm reduction, youth development, and survivor empowerment, drawing from diverse local and international resources.

Contributors

Members of the Sexually Exploited Minors Network:

Jen Lee, Elizabeth Sy, Manith Thaing, Jacqueline Vu-Asian Health Service/Banteay Srei; Gloria Lockett, Lisa Ryan, Claudia Smith-CAL-PEP/G-SPOT; Vicki Gwiasda, Karen Meredith-CALICO; Nika St. Claire-DreamCatcher Youth Shelter; Richard de Juaregui, Nola Brantley, Adela Hernandez-George P. Scotlan Youth & Family Center; Charles Go, Michelle Irving-UC Cooperative Extension/4-H; Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker, Shawn Wilson, Sarah Wilson-Alameda County Board of Supervisors; Councilmember Jean Quan, Claudia Jimenez-City of Oakland; Lt. Kevin Wiley, Sgt. Tom Hogenmiller, Debbie Hoffman Oakland Police Department: Youth & Family Services Section/Child Exploitation Unit; Sharmin Eshraghi Bock Alameda County District Attorney's Office; Gary Thompson, Zandra Washington, Barbara Loza-Muriera Interagency Children's Policy Council. (Systems Partners) Valerie Patton, Program Manager for Placement Services Alameda County Social Services; Hamilton Holmes, Manager, Juvenile Hall Placement; Mark Johnson, Director Court Services, Criminal Investigation-Alameda County Probation Department.

Additional Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Consultants:

Raven Bowen, Regional Coordinator, B.C. Coalition of Experiential Women/Communities (British Columbia, Canada); Annie Chen, former outreach and work youth leadership advocate, served on the San Francisco Youth Commission; Cynthia Chandler, esq., Director of Justice Now (Oakland); Dr. Amy Donovan, UCSF, Division of Adolescent Medicine; Darby Hickey, Program Coordinator for Different Avenues (Washington DC); Robyn Few, founder of Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA; Kimberly Fardy, community activist, former Executive Director of Young Women United for Oakland; Dr. Avaren Ipsen, vice-chair of the Berkeley Commission

on the Status of Women; Natasha Sommers, Transgender Youth Advocate; and the Street Work Youth Project Report by Dr. Leslie MacGibbon and Ms. Ruth Greenway (New Zealand).

While the Task Force is named Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force, child prostitution was not the best term to describe youth engaged in prostitution. These individuals range widely in age. The term prostitution implies consensual work. To refine the language for the purposes of this report we primarily refer to sexual exploitation and youth engaged in survival sex. Within these contexts, both the terms minor and youth mean persons under 18, the age of consent.

II. Introduction

Youth become involved in survival sex for a multitude of reasons. Social policy and social services impacting youth who are engaged in survival sex and prostitution should look to prevention strategies including intervention in the schools, as well as non-coercive and nonjudgmental foundations for basic support such as housing options, continuing educational opportunities, alternative employment, and leadership and mentoring in our schools, churches and existing social service programs. Best practice models emphasize peer-based outreach and program development as effective strategies. In addition, there is a wide age range of age and maturity within the categories of child, youth and young person. Protocols should reflect these differences. In order for services and prevention to be effective, services must be culturally competent for youth who are diverse in race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, community, and class.

This study found that in contrast, options for youth involved in survival sex in Oakland and other parts of the Bay Area are limited in scope. The following report, based on past work of community members, nonprofit service agencies and city and county departments, provides a framework for a comprehensive continuum of services that prevent children from turning to sex for survival, minimize harm where survival sex does occur, and address larger issues that result in the exploitation of minors.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is a philosophy as well as a set of methods that inform service providers about how to work with communities and individuals engaged in behavior which poses potential risk to their health and/or safety. In Alameda County, harm reduction is considered the preferred and most effective method for dealing with these communities and individuals, and considered more effective and compassionate than the use of zero tolerance and abstinence-only approaches. Harm reduction principles are particularly useful when conducting outreach to target these populations.

Youth Development

Youth development principles define the needs of youth and also the strategies that adults and service providers can take to meet those needs and build the inherent strengths and assets youth need to survive the hostile environments in which they grow up. In many ways, the needs of youth in these contexts are no different than those of other youth, and public policy would do well to heed the enormous body of research that outlines what these needs are.

Youth development principles emphasize the importance of environments that foster safety, supportive relationships, sense of belonging, leadership, skill building, and community involvement. For example, funding for a range of youth-led projects and out-of-school activities has been shown to be an important aspect of youth support and development. Education programs in schools developed by young people are also valuable as methods of prevention and empowerment.

Survivor Empowerment

Many youth engaged in survival sex and prostitution experience a great amount of trauma related to their life on the street, interactions with the police, discrimination and interpersonal violence. In shifting the rhetoric away from one that is criminal we also help to remove stigmatization and improve the life options of these youth. Two terms that are often offered as alternatives are victim and survivor. The term “victim” is useful because it is well understood in legal contexts that a victim is a person who has had an offense committed against them and deserves an order of protection and/or compensation. This is a term that has been useful for judges, lawyers, and police. In contrast, advocates, researchers, activists, and “victims” themselves often prefer the term “survivor.” The term was coined to transform the status of “passive victims” experiencing pain, violence, and hardship to “active agents” who have the courage to resist and/or overcome their hardships.¹

Designating youth in these contexts as “survivors” rather than “victims” agrees with the youth development approach of first recognizing strength, agency, and skills. Starting from a point of strength increases the chances that youth will discover their internal worth, recover from trauma, and feel confident about new life options.

III. Discussion

The Sexually Exploited Minors Network

In May 2002 the Minors in Prostitution Task Force was formed to address both government response and multi-faceted societal issues that impact the lives of sexually exploited minors. Sexually exploited minors (SEM) refers to persons under the age of 18 who are in one way or another engaged in sexual activities for survival. The Interagency Children’s Policy Council of Alameda County (ICPC) under the direction of Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte and Commissioner Nancy Lonsdale initiated this network. To meet the goals of this Task Force, several Oakland Community Based Organizations (CBOs) joined with Alameda County ICPC to create the Sexually Exploited Minors (SEM) Network.

The (SEM) Network has been developing strategies to address the diverse circumstances that affect youth who are sexually exploited and who engage in survival sex or prostitution. One of the central principles of the SEM Network is the recognition that these young people are victims and survivors, not criminals and that society should provide genuine support for these populations. The following recommendations were the emphases of members of the

¹ *Community Speak: A Publication by Sakhi for South Asian Women*, June 2005

organizations and agencies in the SEM Network with whom we spoke, as well as summaries of broader goals expressed during SEM Network meetings.

A number of goals addressed prevention and the education of young people in general. It was recommended that interagency collaborative efforts should include outreach to school based health centers. Increased efforts to develop public/private partnerships for prevention, education and empowerment are also needed as well as elementary training, targeting parents and mentoring for peer educators in middle and high schools. CBOs (Community Based Organizations) should collaborate on peer-based trainings for prevention and should include information about STIs, self-defense, and self-esteem targeted specifically, at young women in Oakland. Another goal was that all-inclusive community classrooms would be offered to girls to counter stigma.

Several strategies addressed options of support systems for young people including housing and a range of programs including the support of Safe Place Alternative (SPA, an intake and assessment center), creation of a safe house outside of the immediate vicinity of Oakland, specialized placement options through the foster care system, out of area placement options offered to all “SEMs” in immediate danger.

Funding was often cited as sorely needed to support options such as evening on-call advocacy work, peer education and case managers (there is currently only one for the whole county). Youth empowerment options were also discussed, for example, recommending that an “SEM peer conference” should be planned to develop teen leaders through workshops.

Several recommendations addressed issues concerning rights for youth within the correctional system emphasizing the need for social services accessible to youth while in detention and the recommendation that youth should have the legal right to advocates, as adults have.

A number of recommendations also addressed juvenile and criminal justice interface with these youth including tracking, reporting and custody. Recommendations were made regarding methods to access this ‘hard to reach’ population in places they frequented. For example, it was stated that 90% of sexually exploited youth, aged 12-17, are staying in local hotels for extended periods of time. The SEM Network proposed a strategy that would initiate monitoring of the local hotel/motel businesses by Law Enforcement, Code Enforcement, Department of Public Health and Child Protective Services.

It was also recommended that centralized database system be established for “SEMs” in Oakland and throughout all Alameda County so that information would be communicated to facilitate interventions. Other recommendations in the area of reporting parameters were that Child Protective Services would include Sexually Exploited Minors and testimony of self-identified “SEMs” as part of their mandated reporting requirements. The category of “sexually exploited minors” would be added to the California Department of Children and Family Services as a type of reportable child abuse. In a similar effort it was recommended that youth picked up would be taken into custody and housed on a victim custody hold until the best placement options and services are identified and initiated.

Overview: Sexually Exploited Minors Network Legislative Goals

(From draft in-progress, December 2006)

- 1) That the category of sexual exploitation be added to the California Department of Children and Family Services as a type of reportable child abuse that a definition for “sexually exploited minors” (SEM) is established in order to facilitate data collection and tracking. This would distinguish a child involved in prostitution as a victim instead of a criminal; create a standardized method of data collection that doesn’t currently exist for this population.
- 2) That when law enforcement throughout the state identifies and picks up a SEM, the SEM is taken into victim custody and housed at Juvenile Hall on a victim custody hold for up to thirty days or until the best placement option and services are identified and initiated. Also if others identify a SEM (for ex: a school teacher, doctor) a CPS report is initiated under the sexual exploitation category as part of their mandated reporting requirements.
- 3) As adult sexual assault victims have the legal right to have an advocate, that SEMs have the legal right to have an advocate.

Measure Y

An important success for the county of Oakland was “Measure Y.” The citywide “Measure Y” created a funding mechanism, and established a process to delegate proceeds to a number of crucial needs. (See Appendix B, Section 1)

Through these funds, Oakland supports Sexually Abused And Commercially Exploited Youth/Safe Place Alternative (SACEY/SPA), which provides assessment, education and resource linkages in a 72-hour period. The SACEY/SPA Program was launched in August of 2005, and is now is staffed by one coordinator and three full-time advocates. SPA provides transportation and offers emergency (1-2 nights) shelter for these youth. The SPA-Safe Place Alternative component is planned to be officially running by December 2006. Funding for the start-up resources are being provided by the offices of City Council members Jean Quan and Patricia Kernighan. The SPA provides a drop-in center/service center, a resource for community members, professionals and parents, on-call services in which an advocate can come to the location and support the minor as a victim. Currently, this service is provided by volunteers and is not funded. The safe house has found and negotiated a location. A \$225,000 matching grant has been allocated, which has yet to be matched.

Community Feedback: Emphasis on Community-Based Services

In the course of our investigation we received feedback from community activists (listed in our introduction) including youth and adults in Oakland as well as youth agencies in cities in countries with more developed harm-reduction services. These consultants submitted materials from reports about their projects, recommendations for Oakland youth, critique of the current system of services for youth and a discussion about the recommendations developed during the preceding year. We submit a general discussion of these issues.

One clear consensus that has emerged among parallel discussions about the future of public policy concerning minors who are engaged in survival sex is that treating them as criminals is not a viable, positive, or economically sustainable approach. This opinion was clear among our consultants as well as through the recommendations put forth by SEM Network. Accounts from law enforcement, youth service providers, outreach services, political advocacy organizations agree that we need alternatives to the criminal system.

The thrust of most feedback from providers who work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning (LGBTQIQ) youth engaged in survival sex, call for reexamination of all potentially punitive approaches, increased relevant culturally competent peer based services and interventions and emphasize more research prior to additional expenditures.

Feedback provided by consultants to this project noted the number of crucial recommendations developed by the SEM (Sexually Exploited Minors) Network to address the need to provide options for youth in custodial settings. These recommendations include giving young people the right to advocates, making social services available to youth while in detention, and increased funding for case managers. Giving youth access to legal and social advocates will reduce the incidences of youth engagement in the juvenile justice system and was considered by all to be an essential.

Over all, we received feedback that that their contact with the juvenile justice system has had adverse effects, reducing life options for youth and alienating them further into behaviors involving risk. The criminal system tends disproportionately to entrap youth of color in its throes and the punitive experiences undermine the inherent worth and value of young people's lives. Advocates who can derail a young person from the juvenile justice system provide a boon to the life options of these youth.

It was noted that, although it is crucial that social services and legal services be available to youth while in detention, the most effective and critical emphasis should be on long-term strategies to provide services to youth outside of the juvenile justice system. Services that offer life skill building, education, counseling, job training (including a program to develop salaried positions for youth advocates), and placement in diverse occupations should be available at any stage when youth are willing participants. Similarly, case management outside the juvenile justice system should be provided, as this vulnerable population has specific needs and concerns that an experienced and trained provider can best address.

Potential Harms of Correctional-Based Approaches

A number of consultants on this project offered specific expertise in the legal aspects of the experiences of youth in the juvenile justice system. They expressed that some recommended policies listed above, though well intentioned, have a likelihood of posing increased risk to young people in this context. Three recommendations that drew concerns were:

- 1) Enlisting law enforcement, CFS, and other authorities to monitor the hotel/motels where youth engaged in prostitution are known to hang out and

- 2) Creating a centralized database of sexually exploited minors in Oakland and Alameda County.
- 3) The implementation of mandatory custody holds and other coerced service and treatment.

Monitoring the hotels and motels where these youth are presumed to hang out by law enforcement and other authorities has been reported to have an adverse effect. In areas like Vancouver where similar monitoring and hard targeting of young people thought to be engaged in prostitution have had been implemented, local service providers held that this practice drove young people more underground, out of sight of outreach efforts, and lead to the imposing of more risks and harms to the young people who were living under these conditions. Raven Bowen who has worked with these populations in Vancouver declares that this type of targeting of youth increases their marginality because “[T]hey are moved to more remote areas at more remote times of day where they are prey to violent dates and no one sees them get into cars.” (See Appendix A, Section 4)

The second recommendation that was noted by a number of consultants is the mandate for a centralized database of young people involved in survival sex and prostitution in Oakland and Alameda County. Developmentally speaking, preteens, adolescents, and youth battle constantly with their identities, and it is also arguably the stage of life when identity is at its most fluid. It was put forth that it would not be wise to “tag” these young people as part of a permanent database that stigmatizes them as Sexually Exploited Minors forever. The idea of the database connotes both victim and criminal, and both have the potential of stifling the healing process. Instead, we recommend treating these individuals as survivors.

The question also arose as to who would have access to this database. Would law enforcement agencies be able to access these records to further incriminate these people for offenses committed later in life, driving them further into the criminal justice system? Would future employers have access to this database, again hindering the life options for these youth?

The third recommendation was the implementation of mandatory detentions and services. Many outreach experts that we have consulted are of the opinion that they would be extremely ineffective in the long run, and may even introduce an aspect of coercion that would push young people engaged in survival sex closer to their pimps for protection. To offer a look at the psychology of why this is Kimberly Fardy, former Executive Director of Young Women United for Oakland explains why women engaged in the economy often do not cooperate with authorities, “In many cases, a ‘Bonnie and Clyde’ mentality is created where it is just them against the world.” (See Appendix A, Section 5)

Young women are especially at risk of abusive relationships where the mutual protection from criminal sanctions creates a crucible that keeps both parties feeling loved and in control. From the work of Different Avenues, we note that transgendered youth and young MSM (men who have sex with men) may seek protection from detention retreating into relationships that seem to offer them support but may also expose them to risks. (See Appendix A, Section 3)

How can this dynamic be overcome in our vision of offering a society where young people can thrive rather than be engaged in sex for survival and other hardship? It was suggested that a plan for the long haul would recognize that actions to target “pimps” have not, in fact, targeted or prevented exploitation but rather allowed greater discriminatory policing of men of color. Mayor Dellums’ recent report “A Way Out: Creating Partners for Our Nation’s Prosperity by Expanding Life Paths of Young Men of Color,” emphasizes the need for alternatives provided to men who are from marginalized communities of color and turn to what they perceive as an economically viable lifestyle. From this perspective, Fardy states that “a public policy attitude which continues to target these men only benefits the prison industrial complex to the detriment of their families and communities.” (Appendix A, Section 5) It was recommended by a number of contributors that, for these youth, mandatory and court ordered detention, service and treatment be eliminated and instead, to implement services for youth who are involved in sex for survival that are optional, enticing, and extremely accessible.

Our review of the policy discourse concerning minors engaged in survival sex reveals many points of convergence. It is a refreshing that members of law enforcement, youth service providers, sex workers rights organizations, and the harm reduction community can agree on a basic framework for alleviating incidences in which minors engage in survival sex. In the next section, this report discusses positive directions and priorities, which draw from a range of experts who offer alternatives.

Cost and Impact

The works of the CBOs, the SEM Network and the media have called attention to the fact that this population has not necessarily been a funding priority beyond law enforcement. Measure Y offers a funding stream and general priorities that well represent the concerns in this report. Measure Y also provides a venue for assessment; however an assessment process should be developed in conjunction with research.

In addition to Measure Y, additional funding must be allocated to support research as well as youth and community participation as a basis for developing future strategies and determining future expenditures.

III. Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Recommendations

Priorities: Research and Representation

In considering the often-subtle issues surrounding youth engaged in survival sex and prostitution, it is hard to ignore the overwhelming lack of quantitative research and hard data on this population. The most important recommendation that this Task Force can offer is to first prioritize research. Research must be culturally competent, and responsive to the diverse populations who become sexually exploited minors. It merits noting that along with specific information about the community, it would be instructive to learn more about those who abuse them.

A culturally competent needs-assessment of this population must include the many voices from this community, both youth and adults who have left the lifestyle as well as those who are still

engaged in it. Also, research should probe the efficacy of using the juvenile justice system as a prevention model.

Peer outreach, as a core component of harm reduction, ought to occupy a more central role in the development of programs. Input should also be sought from actual members of the community and their families. In order to be effective, outreach workers should have backgrounds that allow them to identify with these populations, and it is particularly desirable if they have had experiences that reflect the population they are serving.

Priorities: Legal

It was recommended by all concerned that youth be afforded the same legal right to advocates that adults have. Increased legal support and access to representation and counsel within the current justice system is essential. Youth have very limited (or no) rights. A two pronged approach would ensure that legal support and due process be provided immediately. Health care standards within the juvenile justice system could also be addressed within the context. The CBO, Legal Services for Children in San Francisco, provides services to the Bay Area including representation in several aspects of juvenile law.

Overview

The Task Force recommends that the City focus on independent housing, job development and specific shelter alternatives for youth engaged in survival sex. Provision of services, not detention, should be the first priority for youth. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the City:

1) Empowerment

Development of and increased access to peer-run support groups for youth engaged in survival sex in various contexts. This would include prevention strategies, programs to minimize harm for youth involved, transitional services and programs to provide alternatives. Youth with life experience with prostitution or survival sex should be tapped as expert peer educators, salaried advocates, consultants and speakers to outreach to the community at large. The Oakland Youth Commission should enlist representation from these populations.

2) Employment & Emancipation

One obstacle to transitioning is alternative employment and access to affordable housing and health care. Alternative employment development and training must accompany efforts to educate youth about their rights and concurrently offer living wage employment options as well as educational options.

3) Services and Housing

The Task Force recommends enhanced community-based, nonjudgmental support services for youth (including at-risk youth) such as medical services, independent housing, long-term housing, emergency shelters specific to youth, and diverse drug treatment options. Education programs targeting youth in general and at-risk youth should be funded.

The Task Force recommends that when members of this population are arrested that they are prioritized as victims/survivors. Rather than be subjected to a mandatory 30-day detainment, these at-risk youth be granted immediate access to services.

Conclusion

The SEM Network has led the way with essential recommendations including increased funding for programs and case management, increased protection for youth while in the justice system, peer based outreach, youth empowerment efforts, youth leadership development and peer based community education.

The recommendations submitted by this Task Force focus on youth empowerment, peer based services in non-judgmental models, options for housing and work, and presents issues for further research and inquiry. The development of positive, compassionate, and evidence-based services that will help youth requires reducing a reliance on the juvenile justice system to improve the lives of young people engaged in survival sex. This shift may appear expensive in the short run, but it pales in comparison to the cost of maintaining the current system of incarceration and criminalization.

In addition to the operational costs of courts, youth detention, and monitoring, there are the costs that we as a society pay when the criminal process bears added psychological suffering on youth who come in contact with the system. These youth get trapped in the cycle of detention and criminal behavior, costing the loss of their productive potential. The current system is not cheap, and will only cost the public more as it grows. A public policy strategy that promotes positive youth development, effective outreach, and service provision for young people will save lives and money for the City in the long-run.

Measure Y provides financial support along with a roadmap to strategic funding priorities. Research and inclusionary input are needed as a foundation for devising future plans.

Appendix A

- A. Responses to Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Preliminary Report
1. Cynthia Chandler, Executive Director, Justice Now
 2. Dr. Amy Donovan, UCSF, Division of Adolescent Medicine
 3. Darby Hickey, Program Coordinator for Different Avenues, Washington DC
 4. Raven Bowen, BC Coalition of Experiential Women/Communities, Regional Coordinator
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December 6, 2006

Robyn Few
Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force
Dear Ms. Few,

I am the co-founder and co-director of Justice Now, an Oakland-based organization that challenges abuses of people of California's in women's prisons. The issue of the exploitation of children and youth in the sex industry is of particular concern to us because the vast majority of our clientele entered the criminal justice system through convictions for prostitution.

While we applaud you for your concerns for the exploitation of young people in our community, and for your advocacy for increased funds for services, I am regretfully concerned that some of the recommendations in your "Preliminary Summary: Proposal for the Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force" could potentially do more harm than good to children who are so vulnerable in our society.

Recommendations that concern me assume that police and correctional officials are appropriate outreach workers in the process of providing social services and that the correctional system should be employed as a means of assistance to these youth. This thrust is extremely worrisome to me when taken as a whole because many young people who are victimized through prostitution are also victimized by police. They come from communities and families that are targeted disproportionately for surveillance through policing and it does not make sense financially or socially to imagine using people that young people fear to approach them to provide social services. It would be much more efficient to have funding go through a stream to provide social services and outreach to people without involving the police particularly and correction officers who are trained to punish people specifically, not to provide them services.

Recommendations regarding reporting and increased surveillance, using police as a means of doing outreach will no doubt lead to the further surveillance and criminalization of those youth. That is specifically what those actors are trained to do. I fear that this would amount to "setting up" those children for being criminalized, having their lives destroyed through incarceration rather than getting them the help that they so desperately need.

The reporting system is rarely, if ever used, to help people in these circumstances. There can be stigma associated with being put on a list. In our society where there is so much stigma

associated with prostitution, to be put on a list and identified will inevitably lead to the social stigmatization of those children.

One recommendation regarding “victim custody” put forth the idea that one could create a custodial incarcerated setting that could be benevolent to people who are the survivors of abuse is not only a tragic misunderstanding of how juvenile hall works and the actual conditions within juvenile hall, but is also part of a very dangerous national trend covertly expands prisons and jails for adults and youth by claiming that it’s necessary to put more people into custodial sentences for their own benefit and this trend is being used nationwide to create prisons and jails for the elderly, the disabled, people who need skilled nursing facilities, for women and now this would be an expansion into a special kind of expanded custody for youth and while it is very clear some people proposing these custodial settings want to provide people the care the desperately need, this desire is being manipulated by people whose true goal is to expand our prison system. What we really need is services for children that they should not have to give up their liberty and be jail to receive services that adults in our society should be providing them.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Chandler, co-director

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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December 1, 2006

Dear Mayor Elect Ron Dellums,

As someone who works fulltime for an Alameda County based project aimed at increasing the health and longevity of young people of color, and who has worked closely with youth both in the social services and in street-based research, I feel compelled to offer a response to the Preliminary Summary: Proposal for Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force.

I began working with youth involved in street based economies in 1992 and continued documentary extralegal economies over the decade to follow. The culmination of this research is a book on homeless youth in the Bay Area, which is currently under review with Duke University Press.

In preparing this response – which is only preliminary – I consulted with two colleagues working in the law, E.Cristin O’Keeffe, J.D. and Cassie M. Rubald, Esq. and my response is informed by these two consultants. I want also to offer that I will make myself available if a panel or committee is to be convened to develop policy to assist young people working in the sex trade in Alameda County.

My first response to this preliminary proposal is that while undoubtedly well-intentioned it raises the specter of antiquated, and I suspect largely ineffective, social engineering projects. The day of the workhouse and the “home for little harlots” – the notion that isolation and removal is helpful to persons on the road to empowerment has long since been abandoned. Clearly the authors took much of their inspiration from the domestic violence model – the safe houses – which are located in secret locations – so that survivors can gain a measure of separation and peace from their attackers. While I too applaud this innovation of the second wave feminist movement, the situations are not parallel. Survivors of domestic abuse appeal for help and ask for assistance, and even then sometimes betray the whereabouts of the safe house to abusive partners, jeopardizing staff and inhabitants, alike. In this case, the young people are offered no such choice. The proposal is that they, “be taken into custody and housed on a victim custody hold.” This is far from voluntary, and I would argue is an unjustifiable and excessive use of force that will only incite in these highly mobile young people significant resistance. Young people

will inform their friends and associates of their whereabouts, and find other ways to go “AWOL”. Such a process of forcible removal will be ineffective for most young persons, and potentially dangerous for others as friends and pimps may be informed of the safe house location. The safe house model depends for its efficacy on the agency of those who elect to utilize it and is therefore not transferable in the model that has been established in this proposal.

Additionally, it is not sound, as a matter of policy, when status offender law already allows for minors to be transported. The proposal also assumes that there are no parents/guardians, to which accountability is owed, and while this may sometimes be the case, it is by no means always the case.

Of the proposals, the second recommendation, “that minors should have the right to legal advocates just as adults do.” is distinctly affirmative, and I would recommend that it be expressed as “right to counsel” or a “right to a court-appointed attorney” and be offered to youth from the moment that they are transported by law enforcement along with the ability to make a phone call and the provision of phone numbers ensuring access to legal services. It seems that that a committee would benefit from including advocates from an organization like Legal Services for Children, www.lsc.sf.org.

However this right to legal advocates begs the question of legal charges. In England, minors are no longer charged with juvenile prostitution, rather their clients are charged with child sexual abuse and the young people are brought to a location from which they can access a myriad of social services voluntarily.

This proposal recommends the creation of a special status – sexually exploited minors. Given the history of protective legislation, this strategy of creating special categories/populations has very often backfired – often reinventing the very stigma that the designation sought to undo. Existing criminal laws against child sexual abuse and laws governing age of consent are more than sufficient to hold perpetrators accountable. The creation of a special category is unnecessary, and arguably deleterious.

Particularly shortsighted is the proposal related to creating a special category for reporting (when sexual abuse already exists as a reportable category); and the requiring of mandated reporting. In my extensive experiences with the social services, the very fact of mandated reporting and the implication of youth in this process at a time that they are already under duress (having just been picked up by the police), results in acute mistrust of the services that are being offered. The result is that the reporting schema effectively results in a barrier to care at a time when the unencumbered offering of care is perhaps most crucial. Youth, especially those who have been living in residential hotels and who are largely on their own, have already largely rejected the group homes and foster care systems, so committing them to structures such as these has a rather bleak prognosis.

Methods such as the creation of a data base or fingerprinting (as was initiated in San Francisco) will only increase stigma. What is perhaps most important is that the young person not be marked in these “special ways”, through the mechanisms of tracking. To borrow the words of my colleague Cristin O’Keeffe, J.D., who commented on the problematic raised by the processes

related to mandatory reporting, “You interrogate suspects you do not interrogate victims, the utilization of testimony in mandatory reporting may engender mistrust and even more, open the door to coercion.”

As a social scientist and researcher, and former shelter, drop-in center, and group home worker, I know the efficacy of creating a truly safe space for youth, where they can move from being victims to plaintiffs and self advocates at a pace that is not imposed but coincident with their own growth.

In discussing this proposal with an attorney who is currently working in juvenile dependency, Cassie Rubald, I found that she presented the problem in a insightful way – “this set of proposals is attempting to move from delinquency law into the area of dependency law. What it needs is yet a third area, distinct from these other two.” In meeting the needs of these young people, male, female and transgender, who have exchanged sexual services for money or needed resources, it is imperative to look to solutions which will neither invent them as delinquents/criminals, nor impose on them the trappings of formal state-sanctioned dependency, which the majority of them have long since extricated themselves (even sometimes at the cost of significant danger to themselves).

The models for assistance must be rooted in an approach which is often called, “routes to independence”, drawing upon and cultivating strengths. Research conducted by Children’s Hospital in L.A. with youth on their own, found that young people involved in sex trade were also most likely to also have other jobs. What we see then, in this study, is an independence and industriousness among many of these young people that can be promoted rather than pathologized. As adults seeking to offer assistance and craft good policy, we can look at voluntary housing that is operating successfully in the Bay area. There are very successful group home models for pregnant young people, and supportive housing in group and apartment settings such as that made available by Larkin Street Youth Services and Guerrero House (a harm reduction based group home run by Catholic Charities). These offer young people assistance with jobs, school, and counseling in addition to legal services and do so in a way that does not segregate youth either by gender, sexuality, or by involvement with a specific illegal activity.

Mr. Dellums, I offer these as preliminary responses to the Summary Proposal, and look forward to increased dialogue as continued research and recommendations surface.

Please feel free to invite me to join any groups or meetings that are convened to do research on the needs of these young people, or to develop policy that will prove efficacious over time. I can be reached at (415) 902-9899, or by email at amydonovan@alum.wellesley.edu.

Yours Sincerely,

Amy A. Donovan

Amy A. Donovan, Ph.D.

December 4, 2006

Dear Ms. Robyn Few,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review the Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Report. Different Avenues cannot endorse your report in any way but we can provide some suggestions of what kinds of program are successful in working with certain groups of youth. I am writing this feedback as a person with direct personal experience in these issues as well as having worked with youth involved with sexual exchange for the past four years. I have multiple concerns about the proposals outline, based on my knowledge and experience working for the welfare and safety of youth involved with sexual exchange. I understand that the focus of your report is youth under the age of 18 years. My comments below are based on work we have done to support young people under the age of 18. We would like to note that Different Avenues has a variety of programs: some of our initiatives are specifically for working with teenagers, other initiatives are for youth 18 to 24 and other programs are for young adults up to the age of 30 years. It is very important to be very clear about age appropriate initiatives throughout your report.

The monitoring of businesses (like hotels, clubs and other venues) and the targeting of youth on the street, especially young trans-women, thought to be engaging in sexual exchange can increase risks to youth. This type of targeting pushes young people underground resulting in youth having less access to services and support. Additionally, if youth are involved in coercive relationships, or situations of domestic violence, a criminal approach may build on fears already instilled in the youth by his/her abuser. Gender discrimination means that young women who are homeless or surviving on the street are particularly vulnerable to exploitative interpersonal relationships. However, it is important to bring the lens of gender discrimination to the experience of other youth as well, and to consider how fears about hostile policing and actions by the authorities are augmented by widespread trans and homophobia within systems of “youth protection.” Trans youth under 18 deeply fear the humiliation they experience when detained and move with their peers from hotel room to hotel room or sleep in cars of older friends so that they can avoid the police. Many cannot attend school or access social services because of this mobility and turn instead to intensive drug use as part of their peer group relationships. A better alternative to expending funds on intensifying policing and criminalizing youth, would be to put money and resources toward implementing peer based outreach services in order to build relationships with youth and then determine how best to intervene.

The idea of placing apprehended youth in “safe custody” is highlighted in the report while this may help some, it is likely to further alienate many youth from “the system” rather than encourage them to engage. In DC most female minors who are detained for prostitution flee “safe custody” as soon as they can and it is almost impossible to locate them again. The problem is deeper than this for GLBT youth who have, as we mentioned above, learned to fear police and

service providers because of discrimination and, in some cases, abuse perpetrated by the very people who are supposed to be there to help them. Many programs do not know how to work with a young person who is gender non-conforming and may penalize the young person for “acting out” simply because he/she resists presenting as one gender or the other. Police may also react badly to a young person who they perceive as “dressing as a girl when he really is a boy” or vice versa. Service providers and the police need training in non-discrimination and understanding GLBTQ issues. Much work needs to be done to dispel myths about GLBTQ youth and how to connect them with appropriate resources to gain stability and independence. Support is needed for programs that already have a proven track record with hard to reach groups. This would include investing resources in outreach workers and safe spaces for youth, those that build relationships with youth can conduct the goal-planning, relationship building and ensure that when youth are ready to leave a there are places for them to go. Education, support (that is non judgmental) and outreach must come first. For example, many LGBT youth on the street who are using sexual exchange to meet their needs are not there because of pimps or an exploiter per se, but rather because they lack of support and do not have access to housing and other necessities critical to their survival. These youth are often very pragmatic in their world-view, and respond better to non-judgmental, respectful, concrete service provision.

Finally, we would like to give you some feedback on educational initiatives suggested. It may be that some prevention education could be helpful but we would caution that increasing simplistic efforts to educate young women and other youth about the “dangers of the street” that does not recognize the life challenges faced by GLBTQ youth would not be the most effective strategy. More generalized educational efforts might be more successful in providing all youth information on accessing services that meet their needs where they are at. One of the best methods for developing programs that will really speak to the experiences of these youth would be to include them in decision-making. The advisory board that is mentioned should not only exist, but also must be supported, by compensating the youth to participate, supporting them with skills development, and having their opinions and suggestions made into reality, not sidelined.

I hope that these brief points are useful to you and I wish you luck with working to implement programs that will truly meet the needs of youth. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me and I am glad to assist in any way I can.

Yours sincerely,

Darby Hickey
Program Coordinator

Responses to Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Report Preliminary Report
Raven Bowen- Regional Coordinator, BC Coalition of Experiential Women/Communities

(Note: The recommendation referred to in the Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Report are located at the end Ms. Bowen's submission.)

Monitoring of Hotels and Businesses/Outreach

The monitoring of businesses and the hard targeting of youth while they are working may increase risks to youth. They need to implement true outreach services done by inactive sex workers or those trained to do this work in order to build relationships with youth and then determine how best to intervene. I have seen this type of targeting and it pushes the industry further underground. Also, youth that are pimped can be the victims of violence if they are seen as a 'heat score' or if they do not bring in their quotas. They are moved to more remote areas at more remote times of day where they are prey to violent dates and no one sees them get into cars etc.

Section I a-Policy Recommendations/Requiring No Additional Funding

The report refers to failed education programs and failures in educating. Congress has failed. I have found that there is a need to support skill building for women and girls to increase their ability to negotiate condom use with intimate partners. Anecdotally, workers here can more easily negotiate with customers unless these are in survival modes where the offer of more money cannot be refused and they do not control their working conditions. The intimate partners- pimps, boyfriends, dealers they owe money to etc are among those that pose a STI risk for women and girls.

Section I b-Require Funding/ Long Term Recommendations

The funding/long term policy recommendations are similar to the Secure Care Act that was attempted here in British Columbia and in place in other parts of Canada. Youth could be apprehended and placed in 'safe custody'. Youth would walk in the front door of the facility and out the back. In more secured settings, like the group homes and temporary government care facilities that I have worked in and later worked with, crime families and pimps would send in other minors to find girls that were apprehended. Also, removing the youth is not the most effective measure as they will contact their pimps/boyfriends and disclose the location where they are staying. The work needs to be aimed at dispelling myths that guide youth decisions. I agree with funding and investment from the municipality, but if they had real outreach workers and safe spaces for youth to go to, those that build relationships with youth can conduct the goal-planning, relationship building and ensure that when a youth is ready to leave there are places for them to go. Education, support (that is non-judgmental) and outreach must come first. As for the members, I hope they are the front line workers with direct exposure and not necessarily the executive directors of partner organizations.

Section II- Additional Areas of Inquiry

I don't understand who the target of section 11b part one is. Are they talking about the social network of the youth or those that have known involvement with youth exploitation?

Point two is a good start- should be expanded to recognize the situational factors and committed to do the least harm while support the youth. I like the idea of the advisory council as long as youth there are supported by peers (adults who have outed themselves in the name of community education and development. They will need to be debriefed) and not constantly outed. They should be paid well and have power in decision-making not just token advisors or part of a huge dog and pony show that politicians can draw on to make themselves more relevant.

Overall it does appear to me that those who drafted this document have worked with sexually exploited youth. Only those who have been there would recommend that youth are enlisted to advise.

I must say that I do not believe that youth become involved in the sex industry through free and informed choices. I believe that poverty, family breakdown and buying into the fantasy that sexual exchange will bring them freedom, money and status are among the lures. Not to mention those that procure and actively recruit youth including their male and female friends. I think they should do some more information gathering/research paired with direct support to youth 'where they are at' and then collaborate for strategic development. I always say to find out what the youth are running FROM that makes involvement in the industry their best choice. Otherwise youth will pay the price and the industry will go underground into trick pads where the youth do not get to leave, but customers come through regularly and no outreach programs will ever find them.

Raven Bowen, Regional Coordinator, BC Coalition of Experiential Women/Communities Raven works with individuals involved in sex work and survival sex. With more than 12 years experience in this area, she has taken on various roles from peer to providing professional support services to project coordination and media spokesperson. She served for 5 years as Executive Director of PACE Society. Raven has worked toward the mobilization of sex workers and those addicted to substances by ensuring that the populations they are meant to serve design all projects and programs. These programs ranged from testing a social enterprise among sex workers, the development of direct services, to educational materials and presentations, policy development in areas of operations and research involving humans and other harm reduction strategies for sex working populations. Raven has also designed and supported community-based research, consultations and project evaluations. Raven served as a special consultant for PACE Society, is a founder and on the management team of the Mobile Access (Outreach Van) Project and is the Regional Coordinator for the BC Coalition of Experiential Women/Communities (BCCEW/C). The BCCEW/C are a consortium of sex worker activists working toward legislative and policy change for the betterment of those

involved in the sex industry. Raven is working on a degree in Sociology at Simon Fraser University.

from Child Prostitution Advisory Task Force Report

Key Policy Recommendations of Sexually Exploited Minors Network

Ia. Policy recommendations that can be implemented immediately and which do not require budget augmentations:

1. The category of 'sexually exploited minors' should be added to the California Department of Children and Family Services as a type of reportable child abuse.
2. Sexually Exploited Minors (SEM) should have the right to legal advocates just as adults do.
3. Child Protective Services can include Sexually Exploited Minors and testimony of self-identified SEM's as part of their mandated reporting requirements.
4. Local Law Enforcement in collaboration with Code Enforcement, Department of Public Health and Child Protective Services can initiate monitoring of the local hotel/motel businesses for SEMs. (90% of SEMs aged 12-17 are staying in local hotels for extended periods of time).
5. Interagency collaborative efforts can include in their efforts outreach with school based health centers. Elementary training, targeting parents, mentoring for peer educators in middle and high schools and CBO collaboration on peer-based trainings for prevention, including information about STI's, self-defense and self esteem targeted specifically, at young women in Oakland.
6. Social services should be accessible to youth while in detention.

Ib. Policy recommendations that require funding and/or need longer term implementation and/or funding:

1. The support of Safe Place Alternative (SPA), which is an intake and assessment center.
2. The creation of a safe house outside of the immediate vicinity of Oakland.
3. Children picked up as a SEM should be taken into custody and housed on a victim custody hold until the best placement options and services are identified and initiated.
4. The creation of a centralized database system for SEMs in Oakland and throughout all Alameda County.
5. Specialized SEM placement options should be developed through the foster care system.
6. Funding should be provided to support evening on-call SEM advocacy work.
7. Funding should be provided/increased for peer education.
8. Funding should be provided/increased to support SEM case managers (there is currently only one for the whole county).
8. Out of area placement options should be offered for all SEMs in immediate danger.
9. A SEM peer conference should be planned to develop teen leaders through workshops.
10. All-inclusive community classrooms should be offered to girls to counter stigma.

Kimberly Fardy
Community Activist, former Executive Director of Young Women United For Oakland*

To: Mayor Dellums Child Prostitution Task Force
Re: A discussion of some of the issues and needs of young women selling sex as a method of survival.
Date: December 5, 2006

To begin the discussion, it's very important that we are clear about how we are identifying young women involved in survival sex, more generally known as prostitution. Survival sex is one of three main street economies; the others being the drug trade, and organized theft. Of the three, survival sex not only has the highest rates of violence and young women involvement, but has the least amount of community support systems for those involved, and punitive measures for predators.

I am submitting this paper as a young woman who has worked with other young women from this targeted population for four years. I am an avid advocate of young women's rights and direct involvement in positive change within their youth community, so I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this Mayor-Elect Dellum's Task Force.

Basis for Advocacy

I think a local agency, or fully funded community based organization, that is gender-specific and targets these young women, would make a world of difference. It would be critical for this organization to be youth led, and adult supported. I think both youth and adults would have to have direct experience with survival sex either through personal experience, or through the experience of a family member. It would be a perfect place to create paid opportunities for young women who are transitioning out of this economy into a more stable and safe lifestyle. I think it would be most successful if it offered health education and care (specific to this population), overnight stay, peer and adult counseling, job referral, and fun. This needs to not only be a place where young women can be assessed and assisted, but a place where young women can be young women.

Developing Appropriate Language

Finding the appropriate language to describe the experience of young people should be done in conjunction with the population described. Some are sensitive to the term Sexually Exploited Minors, and part of the research that should be done is developing a terminology that respects the perspective of the young people.

The Vocabulary of Victim Status

Although there is unanimous agreement in our communities that young people in this context should not be treated as criminals, assigning 'victim status' may have some repercussions. The term "victim" is never really a clear term. Of course I understand the effort to create a "victim" status verses a "criminal" one, but again, to me it gets blurred with victimization. I just don't think it is that black and white - victim or criminal. Not all young women involved in this street economy would call themselves criminals or victims. I also think we tend to forget the

intersections of class, race, age, etc, which contribute to women having to or choosing to engage in survival sex. I think the word "victim" downplays these intersections, and downplays these women's humanity. They are people, not victims. I think it is important to personify at-risk youth rather than victimize them to obtain positive support. Changing that term would be changing a greater mentality around people in need of community support and assistance.

Approaches to Providing Services

Limited funds and top heavy bureaucracies get in the way of efforts to providing services, housing and support to young people.

Housing Options for Youth

What placement options currently exist for young people in our area? Providing alternative housing is one of the most crucial factors. This would consist of housing that is not policed, but is more secure than hotels/motels.

Programs away from the community: wilderness programs, boarding schools, and single mother programs

In my experience, young women who are taken out of their communities and placed on ranches, in wilderness programs, boarding schools, and single mother programs are rehabilitated through methods that don't necessarily transition into their lives once they return to their born communities. I've also experienced high rates of sexual assaults and abuse to these young women once they have left what is familiar to them, and moved into distant institutions. In these cases, it is even more difficult to stop these abuses, because these young women have no community or familiarity to turn to. Although, I can see how in some cases it could be productive for young women to have the option to stay outside of their community, with the flexibility to leave whenever they want, I also think this option must reflect the community, and culture they are leaving in terms of mentors, activities, and processes of healing.

I don't agree with distant housing because I believe it is mentally, emotionally, and spiritually damaging for both the individual leaving, and the community that has lost that person.

The idea of distant housing is also damaging to the community because many, if not all of the communities we are working with are low-income, communities of color. As low-income, communities of color, we are already crippled by the loss of so many community members due to the prison industrial complex, homicide, and disease (need a better word?), that I believe it would be a lot more powerful if we were able to build an "in-house" system, that would revive our youth through our customs, and our ability, making them more invested within our communities

“Out of town” placement options should be offered only in the appropriate circumstances. We should also address the fact that if you are in that grave of danger, the danger never really ends. How long will young women be able to stay outside of their immediate danger? What happens when they return?

1. Victim Custody/Mandatory Custody

Offering services to youth in these contexts is complicated as it is difficult to connect with them, and they may reject some forms of assistance. Mandatory forms of custody, such as victim custody within criminal justice system facilities will have repercussions.

Experiences in custody will only push them deeper into the life they are caught up in, not only physically but also psychologically. A victim of rape may have a family member, or advocate, take her to fill out reports, get tests, etc; survivors of the sex economy should be treated similarly.

Mandatory custody does not decriminalize her, despite being officially labeled a "victim." A term will never cure the experience. "Victim" and "custody hold" is an oxymoron. A victim of survival sex should not be treated in a way that would be experienced as incarceration. If I were truly a victim, I'd want to be escorted to a car that would take me to a place where I felt welcomed, comforted, and nurtured.

2. Re-unification with Families

Most young women are running away from these situations and finding the street life a "safer" environment.

Monitoring Options/ Reporting and Tracking

Due to the frustration and fear of outreaching to these young women, organizations which are funded to provide services to them may feel that a correctional-based approaches may be THE ONLY workable alternatives.

Efforts to which limit housing options by targeting those who provide housing and establishing extensive surveillance will push young women underground, even more than they already are.

CPS reporting is not necessarily always helpful and may be harmful. What is the purpose of these reports and what information will they provide, and to whom?

The best strategy may be to add a category reflecting this issue, however I recommend further research as to the potential repercussions. Although I understand the necessity of obtaining numbers through tracking and reporting, it tends to become a thin line between obtaining research to better the situation, and obtaining research to "police" the situation. It would be offensive if this tracking and reporting became a metaphorical "house arrest cuff" for young women. Also, who would have access to these reports and tracking system? Would future employees be able to get a hold of these at some point, hindering a young woman's chance of becoming successful after hardship? Do these reports/tracking become a record, or are they expunged? Specifically, what are they for, and what will they provide to better the young women's situation?

Once teachers, doctors, etc. are notified of this new option, will they be trained on "identifying a

SEM" or will there just be a frenzy of authorities identifying every poor, black girl that is having difficulties in their classes. Who will train these authorities, and who will create the training curriculum? How often will these trainings occur? Would they be mandatory?

More local research should be done to understand how the system of reporting currently affects youth and our communities.

Providing Advocates

Young women need advocates, as do adults. This includes social services as well as attorneys. These services should be provided on the basis of request as well as to young people in detention. These advocates should be community-based, and preferably other young women. If they are adults, they should be adults who have some direct connection to the lifestyle, to the community, to the culture, etc. Advocacy isn't just about knowledge of the system; it's also about knowledge of the community you're dealing with.

Funding

Funding should be provided for:

support 24 hour services; supportive environment for assessment and referrals; increased peer education, with a curriculum developed in conjunction with youth diverse experiences and backgrounds; case management.

All education efforts addressing these issues should be reviewed by a youth policy committee experienced in this issue. Funding positions should be centered on peer-based approaches including creating more opportunities for these young women to gain money outside of the streets, such as a program, which trained these young women to take these positions, receiving full-time funding for being employed as evening on-call advocacy workers, peer educators.

*Young Women United For Oakland closed their doors due to a lack of funding. YWUFO was an organization run by and for young women of color between the ages of 14-20 who are involved in the street economy, and living in low-income communities of Oakland, California. At YWUFO, these young women take on the responsibility of providing street outreach to their peers. They are hired and receive many hours of training. With their peers, they create projects to improve the lives of young women like themselves, seek funding for these projects, hire personnel, and evaluate their work. YWUFO staff work with adult advisors (consultants) and peers as trainers to learn the skills necessary to take on roles such as community leader, social activist, researcher, web designer or wherever their passions lead them. YWUFO was a project of The Tides Center.

VII. Youth Issues and Policy

Youth are involved in prostitution for a wide variety of reasons, similar to adults. These reasons are compounded because of legal restrictions based on age, especially in employment and housing. Because of labor laws, established to "protect" those under the age of eighteen, most youth are not legally able to work more than part time. For young people who are living on their own and can legally work only part time at a job that pays minimum wage and offers little in terms of skill development and advancement, there are few opportunities for survival other than working in the underground economy, which includes sex work.

Many young people are forced to survive on their own to escape violent and abusive family situations. The dangers they face on the streets may be less than the dangers they face at home. While on their own, there is a total lack of affordable housing options for those under the age of eighteen, unless they are emancipated. In order to become emancipated, however, it is necessary to prove a legal means of supporting oneself. Recommendations below emphasize strategies to reduce the harm done by legal restrictions and an arcane system of "child care." 75

While we realize that our society has a long way to go to adequately address civil and human rights for young people, and young women in particular because of the disparity in social services for youth, 76 and that limited financial resources compete for the most effective interventions, the Task Force submits the following recommendations:

The Task Force recommends that the City focus on independent housing, job development and specific shelter alternatives for incarcerated young women. 77 Provision of services, not detention, should be the first priority for youth. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the City:

I. Establish a mandate to preserve and expand youth employment. Young people need to be paid a living wage (\$8.00 - \$10.00 an hour, minimum) and have opportunities to develop job skills beyond the service economy. Equal opportunity programs should also include youth.

II. Ensure that services available for adults are also available for youth. 78 These should include housing, health care including pre-natal care and abortions, rape and abuse counseling, drug treatment and detox programs, methadone programs, needle exchange, and self-defense training . Accessibility of services should not be dependent on parental consent.

III. Increase the number of Public Defenders available to people under the age of eighteen.

IV. Increase services available to young women in order to end the gender disparity in social services for youth .79

V. Increase the number of shelter beds for young women in the juvenile court system who cannot be released to parents or guardians. 80

VI. Increase funding for peer-run support groups for youth in the sex industry, including transitional services and programs to provide alternatives.

VII. Youth with experience in prostitution or survival sex should be employed as peer educators, consultants and speakers.

VIII. The San Francisco Youth Commission should investigate the efficacy of child labor laws, age of consent laws, and emancipation. Youth with experience in sex work should be included in the Commission. City departments need to be responsive to the recommendations of this board.

Notes

77 Although an increase in services is needed for young people in general, there are significantly less services and resources available to young women.

78 Currently there are a range of programs and services that specifically exclude youth.

79 Velasco states that currently, services for girls, including girls who have engaged in survival sex or worked in the sex industry, are woefully underfunded.

80 According to an interview with Patricia Lee, Public Defender at Youth Guidance Center, there are two shelter beds for girl and six for boys.

Position Paper regarding the issues related to young people working in the sex trades
by Nelly Velasco, Street Survival Project

December, 1994

Framework: There is not one universal youth sex worker experience, not a monolithic experience. There are a wide variety of ways which young women and men are involved in sex work. Just like adults..... Adults must stop pathologizing risks- which are part of life. Just because youth are young, risks are viewed as a lack of knowledge, a death wish, incompetent decision making. This is a fallacy. Similar to competent adults, youth use a variety of decision-making skills to determine which risks they will enter into. However, similar to many oppressed communities, internalizing oppression is a serious situation which must be addressed by offering young people negotiating skills to do harm reduction in order to increase the potential to make competent decisions.

Definitions: survival sex : Trading sex for a place to stay or drugs or money, or smog certificates, or parking tickets. It is generally not a choice; young people who are poor enter into this economy to cope with our day to day financial and survival needs. Women in general who have had less economic opportunities throughout time have used survival sex so their children will have a home, to send their them to college, to pay their bills. If the economy is not doing well, sexual and racially oppressive policies are a greater force in the institutional policies which determine who enters the documented labor force. With few outlets, women and in particular younger women will enter sex work and specifically survival sex.

Geographies of Risk: Contrary to popular mythology: young women do not come to SF and think that they will arrive in paradise. However they are on their own for the first time and it is harder then expected because the labor laws are so restrictive, there is no affordable housing, adults are so violent and negative towards young people. As a result young women do whatever they can to survive in San Francisco on their own.

Define pimping: Perhaps we need to define and refine what a pimp is. Are we dealing with someone's boyfriend or someone who is actually forcing someone? Pimping: two kinds: someone who is nice enough to hire someone seventeen; or, someone who actively recruits young people.

Youth Prostitution: We need to develop a protocol for different ages? A policy-type thing that is decided by youth as well as adults (perhaps 50%). Decriminalization applies to youth as well. Money should be allocated to legal defense for youth to watchdog the implementation of new protocols developed to evaluate the outcomes and process.

We need: housing, jobs, hang out place, job training, health care. support services. the dog jumped over the big log. the dog jumped over the big log. the dog jumped over the big log.

Young people should be thoroughly educated at a young age concerning laws that affect everyone and minors in general: learning at a young age how laws are fucked up could promote more voting. The way prop 187 has brought a lot of youth activism. Learn your rights and what needs to be changed.

Public Education Campaign reinforcing intelligence, competency among young people advertised on buses and in kiosks on the street. Campaigns in the greyhound bus station- places to go--anti- incest info in the bus campaigns- "you are not alone" messages- "there is someone you can talk to and it won't be reported."

Stop using police and assistance for young people who are changing location. Currently, police wait at the Greyhound Bus station to catch youth who are "relocating" or "running away" to send them back to their "families" There is a special Greyhound bus program which pays for the RETURN ticket. We strongly suggest that police leave this post and let young people relocate.

The reason that young people don't access organizations and youth services is because of parental notification and paternalistic service providers. An advisory board run by a majority of youth must evaluate current services (and be paid to do this job).

Develop an analysis of the "Child savers" Who are they? What is their agenda? Who benefits from this agenda and who is hurt?

Media representation: How are young people portrayed? Do we ever hear their side of the "story"? Is there a story or, is it opinion pieces laced heavily with morality embedded in right wing fundamentalism/ family values. Which institutions thrive due to the way media portrays young women.

Economics: What real jobs are available? How much do they pay? How much are youth jobs valued? Given the recent firing of 1000 paper carriers (youth carriers) and though the Delinquency Prevention Commission fought for those jobs for over a year, the supervisors ended their support of that campaign during this past labor fight. Youth on their own cannot survive on minimum wage. The Mayor's Office of Children Youth and Families which funds youth employment programs will not allow agencies to offer more than \$4.25 per hour.

Education projects which incorporate a youth speakers program and educational videos produced by young people should be developed to be used the schools, to educate health care workers, and other service providers and present the issues and develop a dialogue of respect.

Housing: Currently there are 4 count them 4 emergency shelter beds for young women under 18 in San Francisco. There are no affordable independent housing programs for

young people. Would survival sex be less of an option if people had places to live? SF needs independent housing.

More community centers. Places for young people to hang out without questions or demands. Young people should not have to enter a system of care in order to hang-out anywhere.

An advisory board with majority youth could consider the issues mentioned above and the following:

Should we have an 'age of consent'? What would it be? What about making the laws which go along with emancipation? How do you decide what consent is? The criteria for emancipation is that you have a place to live and that you can pay rent and food and clothing... A judge wouldn't grant emancipation if you were having sex for money. Over 14 and in 'some kind of status' (?) then it isn't statutory rape. Can we consider sex work a means of earning a living for a young person who could then afford to take care of herself and so a judge would allow her to emancipate?

Appendix B.

1. Measure Y: Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004
2. An Evaluation of the Youth and Cultural Development: Street Youth Work Project by Ms. Ruth Greenaway; Dr. Lesley MacGibbon, December 2005

City of Oakland Measure Y: Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004

I. Text of Ballot Measure

A Proposed Ordinance (1) Creating A Special parcel Tax And (2) Increasing The Parking Tax In Order To Fund Violence And Crime Prevention Programs: Yes/No.

“To reduce violent crime and increase public safety, shall the city of Oakland increase successful after school, counseling, truancy, and job training programs, early intervention programs for children who witness violence, and increase community police efforts, paramedics and emergency fire personnel in each neighborhood by authorizing a surcharge on parking in commercial parking lots and parcel tax subject to annual performance and financial audits by a citizen’s oversight committee?”

II. Funding Priorities

Below are excerpts from Measure Y describing funding parameters. For review of complete text of Measure Y see <http://www.oaklandnet.com/violenceprevention/default.html>

Part I. General

B. For preventive social services, including youth out-reach counselors, after-school and in-school pro-grams for at-risk adolescents and children, domestic violence and child abuse counselors, and ex-offender employment training,

c. To hire 63 new sworn police officers, including at least one officer for each existing community policing beat, for combating truancy, for a crime reduction team, for domestic violence and child abuse intervention, and for community policing training and equipment.)

Section 3. Use of proceeds

The tax proceeds raised by this ordinance may only be used as part of the following integrated program of violence prevention and public safety intervention, in accordance with the following specific purposes:

2. Violence Prevention Services With an Emphasis on Youth and Children: Expand preventive social ser- vices provided by the City of Oakland, or by adding capacity to community-based nonprofit programs with demonstrated past success for the following objectives:

- a. Youth outreach counselors: hire and train personnel who will reach out, counsel and mentor at-risk adolescents and young adults by providing services and presenting employment opportunities;
- b. After and in school program for youth and children: expand existing City programs and City supported programs that provide recreational, academic tutoring and mentoring opportunities for at-risk adolescents and children during after school hours; expand truancy enforcement programs to keep kids in school.
- c. Domestic violence and child abuse counselors: make available counselors who will team with police and the criminal justice system to assist victims of domestic violence or child prostitution and to find services that help to avoid repeat abuse situations; expand early childhood intervention programs for children exposed to violence in the home at an early age.
- d. Offender/parolee employment training: provide parolee pre-release employment skills training and provide employers with wage incentives to hire and train young

offenders or parolees;

Part 2. Oversight. Minimum Staffing and Term of Tax Imposition

Section 3 Established "Violence Prevention and Public Safety Oversight Committee" ...to review the annual audits, evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council regarding regulations.

**AN EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH AND CULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

STREET YOUTH WORK PROJECT

DECEMBER 2005

**DR LESLEY MACGIBBON
MS RUTH GREENAWAY**

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Executive Summary

Young people who work on the streets of Christchurch as sex workers are among the most vulnerable groups in our community. The Street Youth Work project run by the Youth and Cultural Development is one of the few interventions working to keep these young people safe. One of the major issues for this project is to find funding to ensure that the project continues. It is successfully operating an essential service, but struggles year by year to find the funding to continue the work.

The project has been operating under the management of the Youth and Cultural Development (YCD) for two years, and an evaluation into the project is timely. This evaluation seeks to document the development of the project over the past two years, identify outcomes achieved, and identify aspects of the service that could result in improved delivery and enhanced outcomes. The Christchurch Safer Community Council requested and funded this evaluation.

The YCD Street Youth Work project employs two workers who work with young people on the streets three nights a week, run the Drop-In centre one night a week, and work on an individual case-work basis with young people who are willing to accept their assistance. The target group of young people under the age of 18, is affected by multiple issues including lack of financial resources, solvent, alcohol, an drug abuse/addictions, lack of support, mental health problems, family abuse histories, sexual identity confusion, and attraction to crime. Many of this group were not using safe sex practices consistently or taking precautions to maintain their sexual, physical and/or mental health. They are a particularly 'at risk' group.

The project is achieving its goals of minimising harm to the young people by providing information and education on safe sex, improving access to health services, encouraging support and safety practices, and broadening the young people's lifestyle choices. Although it has not recorded the number of young sex workers on the street, during the past year the project has had 538² contacts with young people working on the street. One hundred and twenty-two of these contacts have been with young workers new to the streets. Thirty-three of these young people were worked with on an ongoing one-to-one case-work basis.

The project has excellent relationships with other projects working on the streets, and referral agencies for additional assistance for the young people. If the project received more funding, workers could be on the streets more nights, and work on a one-to-one basis with more young people. The relationship between street work and the counselling is essential – it is through contact on the streets that the relationships of trust are established.

The development of the Drop-In centre sessions on a Thursday night are proving successful and provide an opportunity for issues to be discussed in a non-threatening environment. If the YCD created a dedicated clinic space at the Drop-In centre it would enable the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist to complete physical examinations.

² This statistic refers to the number of contacts, not the number of young people. Each time a young person is contacted on the streets it counts as one contact,

The project appears to have a huge impact on the young sex workers in Christchurch. Although the numbers of young people engaging in this work is not known, the YCD Street Youth Work Project can demonstrate that it has assisted 12 young people to leave the streets permanently the past twelve months.

Recommendations

1. That YCD seeks funding to keep this programme running, and if possible expand the Street Outreach services to more days of the week.
2. That YCD develop a system for recording the **number** of young sex workers as well as the number of **contacts**.
3. That YCD continues to endeavour to recruit suitable back-up staff for the Street Outreach work.
4. That YCD investigates setting aside a dedicated space at the Drop-In centre to enable the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist to complete physical examinations.

Introduction

Background to this evaluation

In August 2003 an evaluation was completed on the Youth Street Worker project that had been a partnership between the 198 Youth Health Centre and the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC). At that time the project had wound up, and a new project was beginning under the management of Youth and Cultural Development (YCD). The 2003 evaluation report identified successful key features it recommended be incorporated into the YCD project. Those features included utilising a harm minimisation model, having clear goals and measures of success, having clear boundaries, employing credible workers, having a backup system for street outreach patrols, providing continuity for the clients, and sourcing ongoing funding.

The project has been operating under the management of YCD for two years, and an evaluation into the project is timely. The evaluation was requested and funded by the Christchurch Safer Community Council.

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is both formative and outcomes based. The evaluation seeks to document the development of the project over the past two years, identify outcomes achieved, and identify aspects of the service that could result in improved delivery and enhanced outcomes.

Essential Questions

This evaluation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the project achieving its goals?
2. What difference has the project made on the lives of young sex workers operating on the streets of Christchurch?
3. What difference has the project made for the families of young sex workers operating on the streets of Christchurch?
4. Is the 'harm minimisation' model an effective basis for this work?
5. What impact has the project had on key stakeholders?
6. What are the wider issues of youth prostitution in Christchurch?
7. How could the project be improved?

Evaluation method

This evaluation utilised a number of different strategies to collect information. These included a review of YCD reports and documents, an analysis of YCD statistics, interviews with key stakeholders, and an analysis of New Zealand and Overseas papers and articles on youth prostitution.

Document and statistical analysis

All documentation from the project was made available for this evaluation. This included policy documents, project funding applications, funding accountability reports, and workers' monthly reports.

Daily statistics are kept on the number of contacts with young street workers, and these were made available to this evaluation. An analysis of the statistics for the past year is included in the findings of the report.

Limitations

The way that the statistical information is collected is for the number of **contacts** with the clients. This is different to the number of young people worked with. The outreach workers argue that it is too difficult to keep statistics for the number of young people, because they do not record names, and the target group is very fluid and constantly changing. The method of recording statistics is taken up in this evaluation (p 46).

Key Stakeholder interviews

Interviews were carried out with the following key stakeholders:

- ∞ Two YCD outreach workers
- ∞ Backup outreach worker
- ∞ Manager of YCD
- ∞ YCD Advisory Group
- ∞ 198 Youth Health Centre social worker
- ∞ Child Youth and Family social worker
- ∞ Regional Co-ordinator and community worker of the NZ Prostitutes Collective
- ∞ Director of the Salvation Army Outreach Service
- ∞ Christchurch City Council Youth Worker
- ∞ Police Youth Services Coordinator
- ∞ Sexual Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist
- ∞ Young street workers

Interviews were completed with six young street workers. These interviews were conducted by the YCD Outreach workers using an interview schedule prepared by the researchers. These interviews were taped, transcribed, and tapes were destroyed. Anonymity was guaranteed at the time of interview and all identifying information has been removed in the presentation of their feedback in this report.

History of the project

In 1997 a joint project between the 198 Youth Health Centre and the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC) was established out of a community concern about the number of young people who appeared to be taking part in street-based prostitution on the Christchurch inner city area. The project was funded by the Dept of Internal Affairs and ran until 2003. At that time, because of difficulty gaining ongoing funding the 198 Centre ceased to manage the project, and YCD took on this role.

YCD has managed the project since July 2003, with the outreach workers operating from the YCD base in Cashel Street. The project has been funded initially by Safer Christchurch, and currently by the Christchurch City Council and the Child Youth and Family Service (CYFS). An advisory group consisting of members from the NZPC, CYFS, NZ Police, 198 Youth Health Centre and the Christchurch City Council. The advisory group meets monthly to share information, identify trends, identify gaps in service provision, and discuss funding options.

Need for the project

The project focusses on an ‘at risk’ group of young people engaging in opportunistic sex work or regular prostitution. Compensation is not limited to money and may include other forms of payment including for example, food, alcohol, drugs and accommodation. The target group for support from this project is the under 18 age group.

The Prostitution Reform Act 2003 created a number of offences relating to those under 18 being involved in prostitution. These included making it an offence for any person to pay for sexual services to be provided by any person under the age of 18 years, or for any person to employ those under 18 years in the sex industry³ At the time of writing this report only one prosecution had been taken against a person paying for sex with an underage prostitute.

Description of the project

The overall goal of the project is to reduce the number of young people working as sex workers on the streets by assisting the young people to leave this type of work, or reducing the number of nights that any one young person is on the streets. The project workers operate from a ‘harm minimisation’ model rather than as ‘sex police’.

Any small change to reduce their harm is a success for us, so that’s our goal. [YCD Outreach Worker].

³ (Prostitution Law Review Committee. 2005. *The nature and extent of the sex industry in New Zealand: An estimation*. Ministry of Justice.

Harm minimisation

The harm minimisation approach focuses on reducing the harm associated with potentially risky activities. It is a pragmatic approach that recognises the reality that certain activities that may be illegal or potentially harmful to health and/or personal safety do take place. Harm minimisation provides people with the capacity and resources to make informed decisions about their activities. This is considered more effective than attempting to eliminate the behaviour itself. The approach can be used with a range of behaviours, for example, unsafe sex, unsafe sex work, alcohol and drug use and self-harming behaviours.

With a lot of these young people you try and say "you can't do this, it is not only against the law but unsafe", but you need to give them alternative choices. This is where the YCD Outreach workers fit into the picture. They can offer alternatives, life skills and have the ability to assist them to either immediately, or over a period of time, stop working. When I worked on the CCC/Police project I worked very closely with the NZPC Social Worker who worked this way and over a period of three years out of 10 young girls only one was still working. (Police member of the Advisory Group)

The key objectives of the project are to:

- ∞ Empower young people to make informed choices through the provision of information and education on safe sex.
- ∞ Improve access to physical and mental health checks and primary health care.
- ∞ Improve the co-ordination of access to other agencies where appropriate.
- ∞ Broaden young people's lifestyle choices.
- ∞ Encourage a culture of support and safety amongst the young people.
- ∞ Reduce the numbers of young people in the target group who are involved in related activities such as crime, alcohol and drug use.

The target group

The target group of young people is affected by multiple issues including lack of financial resources, solvent, alcohol, and drug abuse/addictions, lack of support, mental health problems, family abuse histories, sexual identity confusion, and attraction to crime. Many of this group were not using safe sex practices consistently or taking precautions to maintain their sexual, physical and/or mental health.

There are no baseline statistics available to indicate the size of this group in Christchurch, and the YCD project keeps statistics on the **number of contacts (538)** not the **number of clients** contacted on the streets. However, 33 young people are involved in ongoing case work with the outreach workers. This is an incredibly time-intensive group to work with as they present with multiple issues. As the social worker from the 198 Youth Health Centre stated:

This is a client group that can take up huge amounts of resources and time, as they are very high need. If left, things will get worse and become even more high need, so the earlier the intervention the better.

Young people engaging in prostitution have the potential not only to cause harm to themselves, but also considerable risk to public health through the spread of sexually transmitted infections, HIV and Hepatitis C. The health of sex workers is therefore also a public health issue.

Although the focus of the work is primarily on the young sex workers, the outreach workers also work with their friends and boyfriends who may be acting as their ‘minders’. They provide information to the ‘minders’ about practical strategies like taking down car number plates, and ensuring that the sex workers have access to a cell phone when working. The way that these young people congregate, may give a false impression of the number of young sex workers. As a member of the ZNPC stated:

Young people like to hang out in groups and we have to address that with the media because to the untrained eye it looks like a lot of people are hanging out on the street, but not a lot of them are actually doing ‘the business’. It’s a bit of a support network.

However, one of the ways that young people begin to work as sex workers is through their association as ‘minders’ or ‘looking after’ friends who are already working. Honey’s story demonstrates this path into the industry.

I’ve been working on the street for 3 weeks. I was looking after some people for two or three months. I don’t like the term ‘minding’; I use ‘looking after’. I started working when I got kicked out of my place. Instead of getting a job and being there all day, and seeing the cash I thought it this would be easier. But everything about it is bad. Like standing out there is bad, standing out there alone, and going in cars with strangers is bad. It isn’t something I’d promote. There is nothing at all about it that is good. I do it so I can get the money to survive – live, eat, sleep. [Lilly aged 15]

Project: Street Outreach

The Outreach work is carried out three nights a week, Tuesday, Thursday and a Friday or Saturday night, anywhere from 8 pm – 5 am (5 hours a night is the goal, but not always feasible.) During this time the workers walk around the inner city area, particularly Latimer Square and Manchester Street, and give out free packs of condoms and lube to street sex workers. The NZ Prostitutes Collective provides the condoms and lube, and this is distributed to any workers irrespective of age. Although the YCD project focusses on under 18 year old workers, it is necessary to make contact with all ages, so that the younger ones will not feel threatened by being singled out. Initially many of the sex workers are not aware that Jo and Toni are outreach youth workers, and simply refer to them as the “condom ladies”

Sometimes they might not even be the sex workers but other young people and they say “Oh you’re Jo and Toni, the condom ladies, you’re real choice chicks.” [YCD Outreach Worker]

The issues faced on street outreach, are many and varied. In the year to 31 July 2005, these included, attacks on the client group, increasing concern about a house in the area used by workers, rape, murder, drugs moving around the area, and effects of herbal highs.

Building trust

The goal of the outreach work is to make contacts with the young workers and build relationships of trust. Jo and Toni take a low key approach, give out condoms, and where possible engage the young workers in conversation. As the young workers get to know and trust Jo and Toni, they are encouraged to visit the Drop-in centre on Thursday nights, or to meet with Toni for individual sessions during the week.

If we can get to the point where the young ones want to sit down with us and talk about everyday things than that's our goal, even to talk about their dreams. [YCD Outreach Worker]

Building trust, giving the young people the tools and information to keep themselves safe on the streets, and eventually to have options to leave the streets, can be a very slow process. One of the YCD Outreach workers explained:

The other day someone on the street said to us that she couldn't do this anymore, she'd been doing it since she was 14 and [now she's 21yrs] so now we have that foothold to look at other options. [YCD Outreach Worker]

All the young street sex workers interviewed talked about they way that they trusted Toni and Jo, and by association, other people at the YCD Drop-in including the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist

No one else knows what we're going through. They help us because they understand. Toni is helping me look at courses and for a place to live. There is no one else around that we can trust. [Kowhai]

Once a week I come to the Drop-in and I see them on the street, and come to talk to them about stuff I couldn't tell anyone else. [Poppy]

Whenever I ask for help they always do it, even when I'm wasted. They are cool. [Ngaio]

Practical assistance

In addition to providing condoms and lube, the YCD Outreach workers offer safety and sexual health advice. They try not to intervene directly, but will do so on occasions where they identify that the young person is intoxicated or doesn't have somewhere safe to stay. At times they accompany a young person to the Accident and Emergency Dept at the Christchurch Hospital, or to Court, or the police station.

On my own I wouldn't have turned up at Court and I would have been screwed. When we go to court and know that you [Jo and Toni] are coming to give support, we turn up. Otherwise we wouldn't go. [Rata]

Finding accommodation

The lack of emergency accommodation is a major problem. Jo and Toni argue that one of the prime reasons why young people enter sex work is because they have run away from home or from foster care and have no place to stay. They can no longer 'dos' at a friends place and will often do sex work to make some money to then have somewhere to stay the night. If they do not make enough money, they have nowhere to stay. Existing emergency housing (shelters) does not

always cater for youth under 18 and do not allow for late night emergency calls. There have been some times when Jo and Toni have not been able to find accommodation late at night:

It's heartbreaking for us sometimes to just leave them there. Last week we left someone just distraught in tears on the street, but our hands were tied. If only we had some money to put them up in a motel.

Support and referrals

The YCD Outreach workers have excellent networks of agencies and services that they can assist the young people to access. However, sometimes because of a sense of shame, it is difficult to get them to appointments. For this reason, the YCD outreach workers often try to do some work with the clients first and also accompany them to appointments.

You've got to run with it when it happens, because they could change their minds so quickly. If they change their mind we say 'sweet as'. I remember one girl who didn't come and she felt really bad that she'd let me down, but it was like no, if 'there's another time that's good but if there's not that's okay too.' [YCD Outreach Worker]

Street Outreach Statistics

YCD has a very well maintained system for recording statistics. The statistics that the workers collect as part of their night outreach work records the number of street workers they interact with on that night. The statistics therefore indicate the **numbers of contacts, not numbers of people**. The way that the statistics are recorded makes it impossible to know the actual number of young people working on the streets in Christchurch, the length of time they remain working on the streets, or the size of the problem.

Figure 1 Number of street contacts 11 Aug 2004 - 10 August 2005

Age	Under 14	14	15	16	17
Male	0	0	0	7	7
Female	5	14	32	143	330
Age total	<u>5</u>	14	32	150	337

Total number of contacts for the year was 538

Although it is not possible to establish the number of young sex workers on the street during the year, the Outreach Workers do record new contacts, when they meet a worker on the streets for the first time. The numbers working at any one time changes constantly depending on many factors such as, weather, time of year, and school holidays. The Outreach Workers report that the under 14 yr olds don't stay long, as the older ones who find out how old they are 'kick' them off the streets.

The street is very funny everything is very changeable, it goes on the weather, it goes on the time of year, it goes on whether there's a rugby game, and there are so many elements to change the stats. [YCD Outreach Worker].

The majority of young sex workers (56%) were Maori, 44.5% were Pakeha, and 1.5% Pasifika. The large representation of young Maori is a problem, given that the Maori population of Christchurch is only 13%

In the past two years that the project has been operating, the YCD Outreach Workers have assisted twelve young people who were regularly working on the streets, to leave sex work permanently.

Backup staff

One of the issues identified in the previous report (MacGibbon 2003) was the need for backup staff for night outreach work. At that time the project had only two workers, with no backup staff, which meant that if one person was sick or unavailable for any reason, the street outreach work was abandoned.

Despite the best efforts of YCD, the situation with backup staff is still vulnerable. The agency has one ex-youth worker of YCD who provides backup on a regular basis, which is excellent, but a pool of relievers would be the best possible outcome. It is however, very difficult to recruit people with the specialised knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed for the job.

You need someone who knows that it's a rough job, it's terrible hours, it's unpredictable, you don't know when you're going to be staying out 5 hours, or more because you need to go to hospital or whatever...you've got to be prepared to be cold, to get rained on, to have eggs thrown at you. You have to have a thick skin because people are horrible to you and I think that's why I say if someone knows the industry...has a real personal understanding of it, you can understand that. [YCD Outreach Worker]

Relationships with other agencies

There is a co-operative working arrangement between the agencies working in the Christchurch streets at night – YCD Outreach programme, the Salvation Army Outreach, CCC and Police Youth Project, the NZ Prostitutes Collective.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army has an outreach that works with people on the street. They have a mobile canteen that circuits the inner city streets, Thursday to Sunday. They cater specifically for sex workers by providing a safe space, the Oakland Centre, which is a drop in centre at 209A Manchester St open from Monday-Wednesday nights 10-1am. This is seen as a supplement to the canteen as part of the outreach work. Oaklands is open to female and transgender sex workers.

The approach, or ministry, of the Salvation Army is different to YCD yet complimentary. The Salvation Army does not intervene, and view their assistance in different ways to YCD. They are there to build relationships in a non-judgemental, non-threatening way, and to provide immediate support through the provision of food and drink and a safe space.

The YCD girls do something that we don't like to do, they will talk to the girls about being under age, and they will tell them that they are not legally allowed on the streets, being under age, but they'll also assist them. We offer them assistance but knowing that the YCD girls are looking after the age problem, we don't disbar them from coming into our centre and we don't say "You girls shouldn't be out on the street"... We're glad that the YCD workers are there because they will actually front up with some of those hard questions and they are there to protect them and do all they can to assist them and that's a different role to us. The two are necessary.
[Salvation Army Outreach Worker]

Christchurch City Council Police Youth Project

The Christchurch City Council joint project with the NZ Police has similar goals in wanting to reduce the violence and harm to young people on the streets. This project also patrols the streets on Friday nights, with a particular focus on the under 16 age group. If young people are identified as aged 16 and under, they are taken home to parents or caregivers.

The CCC Police Youth project youth worker was very familiar with the outreach work being done by YCD, and stated that they did not usually approach the young sex workers because they know that YCD has an established relationship with this group.

I know as a youth worker myself, that trust and confidence and that bond between you and a young person is hard to build. It is far harder with young sex workers because obviously they are more cagey and standoffish. It wouldn't be easy to build rapport and I think they have done that really well. I heard from some young people that Toni had taken some food around to them and they were like "Oh choice!"
[CCC Youth Worker].

Police Youth Services Co-ordinator

The Police Youth Services Coordinator is a part of the YCD Advisory group and has a close working relationship with the project. Her role, like the other members of the Advisory group is to offer advise and assist the project as required. She was the initial Police representative on the Police/ Christchurch City Council Youth Work Project. Therefore having had experience working with young sex workers in all capacities. She recognises that there are a number of issues youth face, and their sex work is but one of these.

Sadly, once these young girls decide to work it is no easy task for them to stop. But ultimately we all are working together to stop them. We are not saying it is okay for them to work the streets because it is not okay and it is not a safe environment. These girls know they can trust Toni and Jo and be shown an alternative life style.

The Police Youth Services Co-ordinator stated that the streets of Christchurch are a safe place to live, work and socialise but that the activities of the sex workers is not safe. The Police have a role in working to keep the city safe, and part of that role is to assist by uplifting the young sex workers and either taking them home, or to a CYFS placement.

New Zealand Prostitutes Collective

The NZPC has a close working relationship with the project. They see the main focus of the project being to ensure that young sex workers are safe, sexually and physically. A key part of the Outreach Workers role is to improve knowledge about ways to stay safe in doing sex work.

NZPC outreach is once a month, where they hand out condoms and lube, but do not tend to talk to many young people. They have found that the young people have built up a huge respect and rapport with Jo and Toni, which they do not have. However they are known to the young workers as the women from NZPC who also hand out condoms and lube.

The staff at NZPC acknowledge that Jo and Toni will go out at odd hours at night and will go out of their way – having once gone to Kaiapoi to find a young sex worker who was working beside the motorway. They praise them for their commitment to working with as many young people as they can, and their commitment to always making connections with new sex workers.

Project: Drop In Centre

The Drop-in on Thursday nights from 7pm – 12pm has been steadily developing over the past year.

Figure 2 Attendances at the Drop-in Thursday nights

Sept 04	22
Oct/Nov	46
Dec/Jan	53
Feb/March	19
April	8
May	9
June	34
July	26
August 05	16
TOTAL	233

The Drop-in has allowed young people to spend time at YCD talking about general issues that concern them or affect them when working the street, or in everyday life. Both Outreach Workers are present at the Drop-in during this time, and they describe it as a “great tool” because it provides a safe space for the young sex workers to meet, where they are treated with respect.

A lot of them they have constantly heard all the time “You’re worthless, you’re useless, you can’t do anything, you’re best laying on your back if you’re going to do anything”, and they get into this mindset, that okay it must be true, I’ve been doing it

for a while now so this must be all that I can do...It's usually over playing cards or something like that that we'll start the conversation, and then you might find at the next Drop in they come in and they say "Right I've really thought about it and I really want to do that nursing course. Can a prostitute do a nursing course?" They honestly think that they can't. [YCD Outreach Worker]

The young workers often visit the Drop-in Centre before going on the streets. They have the opportunity to use the facilities, sit and talk, and have something to eat. All six young women interviews had positive comments to make about the Drop-in.

A good thing about the Thursday night Drop-in is that we can come up here and we will be so hungry. Some nights we won't get work until some ungodly hour. We come here, have a hot drink and have a feed. We can have a shower, and sometimes wash and dry our clothes. This place is very important to us. It is good having the nurse starting to be here too. If she is here next Thursday I will be up to talk to her. It helps to have people like her around. If you sell your body, people don't think that you are human. [Holly]

Health clinic

Many of the needs of this target group fall into the health categories – physical, mental, sexual health, nutrition and hygiene. At the first session with the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist

One of the girls said to a boy there "You should have gone to school you would have learnt all about that". "Well it doesn't matter" he said "because I can come up here and learn everything about sexual health". So I could see how people could think it's just a chit chat, it's not, its specialist information. In a situation like that where one person is asking a question and ten are listening then I'm actually reaching ten people because you can bet your bottom dollar that they are all listening. [Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist]

The Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist argued that the emphasis on health with this target group is important because if they are not specifically targeted for health care they are unlikely to access it.

Project: Individual casework

One of the priorities of the YCD Street Worker Project is to offer individual casework. Once the young people ask for help, they are invited to visit YCD and talk to Jo or Toni about their problems. Jo and Toni may accompany them to the hospital, to court, or to WINZ.

It is case work but it is also about knowing the nature of the work and if you put that pressure on them to leave or to follow through on something that they wanted to do the other day, you do have to challenge them. But if you pressure them, you lose them. They haven't got much support to be really honest about what they are doing, so you don't want to lose them. So it's like we've planted a seed, let's leave it and continue on and more likely than not it will come up again. [YCD Outreach Worker]

Jo and Toni said that they must make a judgement call as to when to involve other agencies such as Women's Refuge, 198 Youth Health Centre, and drug and alcohol related services.

The most common issues for young people being case managed include: sexual/physical-general/mental health issues; pregnancy and suspected pregnancy; motherhood; housing, clothing; benefits; rehab for drug and alcohol addiction; sexual abuse; relationship issues, court appearances, and personal hygiene.

Mental Health Issues

Many of the young street workers have serious mental health problem, many of which are undiagnosed and untreated. For example, the YCD Street Outreach workers worked intensively with one young woman for two years as her mental health deteriorated. Following an extreme psychotic episode Toni took her to psych emergency where she was hospitalised for several months. Prior to that time, she was not known to the mental health services.

One young woman they have been working with on a one-to-one basis has a severe intellectual disability, has a boyfriend in prison, and has recently become pregnant. The Outreach workers spent a lot of time with this client working on the basics of sexual safety and how to use a condom. Another young worker has a history of suicide attempts, has no home, and is victimised by other workers and minders.

Accessing financial support

There are many barriers to change for the young street workers, but one of the most common is accessing a benefit. Although they are technically eligible for an emergency or independent youth benefit, most of the young street workers do not have a bank account, any form of ID or access to their birth certificate to get ID, or any permanent address. Because of this they are often unable to access a WINZ benefit, accommodation, or to begin to pursue options of further education or employment.

WINZ also require young people to attend a course, which most find very difficult following a night of working on the streets. If there is the possibility of a family reconciliation, WINZ may require the young person to see a psychologist, and for a variety of reasons, many young people do not want to do this.

Limited options

Once immediate needs are taken care of, the next step in case management is to work with young people on creative ways of presenting themselves to employers or for further education. However this in itself is very challenging for a young person who is unlikely to say what they have been doing, feels shame and finds the process overwhelming and extremely daunting without a lot of support from the YCD Outreach Workers. Several of the young women have left school early and have limited literacy or numeracy.

For some of these young women, it is not a black and white situation of making the choice or not to do sex work; in some cases for the young people they do not have any other option right now, unless they get help from many sources. [YCD Outreach Worker]

Pattern for Individual casework support

The YCD Outreach workers have a case list of 33 clients, but are not seeing all of these all the time. The following table (fig 3) illustrates patterns of support, with some clients needing continual support, others dropping off, and new clients beginning.

Figure 3 Patterns of one-to-one counselling & support

Note each * represents one visit

Client	July 04	Aug	Sept	Oct & Nov	Dec & Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
101	*	*	*	**								
102	*****	**	*	**		**	***	***	**	**	***	**
103	**					*		***		*	*	
104	*											
105	****											
106	*					*	*	**				
107	*****	*****	****	*****	***	**	****	***	**	*	*	**
108		*****		*****								
		*		*								
109		****	*****	****								
			*									
110		*		*	***	*	*	*				
111		*		*								
112		*	*****	***	**	***	*			***	*****	**
			*****			*						
113					***	***		**	**	**	***	***
114						**	*	**	**	***	**	**
115							****	**			**	****
116											**	
117							**	*	*		**	*
118						*			*			**
119							***	***	***	***	*	*
120								*****	**			
121								**				
122									*****			
123									*		****	*
124										***	*	*
125										***		**
126										*		
127										**	****	**
128										**		*
129											***	*
130											*	***
131												**
132												***
133												***

The Manager of YCD summed up some of the barriers faced by the Outreach Workers as they work on a one-to-one basis with the clients.

A lot of barriers the young people create themselves, and I acknowledge that they don't think through things. But then a lot of them don't have the skills to do so either. I think everybody assumes that young people have been brought up with natural sociable skills and the ability to make decisions. When you haven't had the role modelling or had a parent sit beside you saying this is what you need to do and this is why you need to do it, because if you don't these are the consequences. But if you haven't had this, there is that big gap in their development. You add marijuana or alcohol to it, then it has an affect on the decisions a young person is going to be able to make. So it's not just while they are stoned or while they are drinking, it's because they have been stoned and because they have been drinking. [YCD Manager]

Support for Families

The focus of the YCD Street Youth Work project is the young people themselves, and the workers take direction from the young people if they want contact to be made with their families. Usually the family will approach NZPC or the Police first, and they will refer them to YCD. The Outreach Workers will pass on messages from family members to the young street workers. If they do want to reconnect with their family, Jo and Toni will support them to do so and may go along with them to a family group conference.

Sometimes parents ask the Street Outreach workers to 'mind out' for their children, if they are unable to do so themselves. As one mother wrote to her daughter:

You know that I can't support you any more. There are people out there that want to help you and Toni seems to be a really loving person who understands where we all are, so please keep her number which she gave you. If you really want help please trust Toni.

A young person's story

One of the young sex workers agreed to have her story presented as part of this evaluation. The name is a pseudonym, and some details have been omitted or changed to protect her identity. One of the problems of including first hand accounts of life as a sex worker in Christchurch is that the media has taken quotes out of context, sensationalised issues and invaded the privacy of the young people involved. This narrative is included to give the reader an understanding of what it is like for these young people working as sex workers, and the importance of their relationship with the YCD Outreach Workers.

Holly's story

I started work on the streets when I was seventeen. I'd seen my younger sister working out there and saw how much money she made. She said "You should come out one night and try it out", and so I did. I went home with quite a bit of money, so I got into it. I've met lots of other

working women that I've become friends with. When I talk of friends that's Toni and Jo from the YCD too. Those are the good things, but there are a lot of bad things too.

When bad stuff happens you just don't know how to react, because you don't know what you are in for. When we are hopping into a car, we don't know what these people are like. I've had bad shit happen and it was really hard to get through. Recently I had to deal with a really bad situation, and without Toni and Jo I wouldn't have been able to get through any of it. It was getting to the point where I didn't want to be in this world any more, I just wanted to give up. The only reason I'm still here is because of Toni and Jo. I feel safe with them; I can tell them anything and it won't go any further, unless it is something really serious that they feel they have to say something. It is nice to have people on your side that you can talk to about anything.

I think without the Outreach all the girls would be stuffed. We've got support out there, with these ladies [Toni & Jo] coming up and down the street a few nights a week to make sure that we are all right. It is really good to know that there are people who don't look at us like prostitutes; they look at us as normal human beings. Other people don't look at us like that.

I don't feel safe at all when the Outreach workers aren't out. A lot of bad things happen. Just the other night I got jumped from behind, and I came into Manchester St and I saw Toni and Jo. I was in my worst state, and I couldn't stop crying, but when I saw them, it was like everything was going to be OK. I've spoken to many of the other girls and they feel the same. We'd like Toni and Jo to be out every night.

Sometimes I think it would be really good to have somewhere safe to go. I don't have a place to live, and with the trouble I have been having, I need to go from one house to another. I've been told to go to the Women's Refuge, but I know that is the first place they would look for me and I wouldn't be safe there.

I do feel safe with Toni and Jo, and at the Drop-in. A good thing about the Thursday night Drop-in is that we can come up here and we will be so hungry. Some nights we won't get work until some ungodly hour. We come here, have a hot drink and have a feed. We can have a shower, and sometimes wash and dry our clothes. This place is very important to us. It is good having the nurse starting to be here too. If she is here next Thursday I will be up to talk to her. It helps to have people like her around. If you sell your body, people don't think that you are human. When I go to a normal doctor they look down on me. "She might have to get an AIDS test because she is a prostitute and she won't use protection". We always use protection; we get condoms from the Outreach programme.

I don't want to stay in sex work, and the Outreach workers are helping me make changes. I want to be able to get another job – probably in childcare. If someone came up to me and talked about getting into sex work, really honestly I'd say it would be the worst thing they could do. Some people think that it is easy money, but it isn't. The papers say things like earning \$500 a night, but that is absolute bullshit. We are on the street for hours and hours and hours and some night we don't get anything. You might get lucky and earn \$100 or \$200 a night. Then you pay \$90 for a motel, and you have to spend some money on minders – give them a feed or if any minders have a car, you pay for petrol. So all the money is gone and you have to go out the next night.

Conclusion

Young people who work on the streets of Christchurch as sex workers are among the most vulnerable groups in our community. The Street Youth Work project run by the Youth and Cultural Development is one of the few agencies working to keep these young people safe. One of the major issues for this project is to find funding to ensure that the project continues. It is successfully operating an essential service, but struggles year by year to find the funding to continue the work.

The project is achieving its goals of minimising harm to the young people by providing information and education on safe sex, improving access to health services, encouraging support and safety practices, and broadening the young people's lifestyle choices. Although it has not recorded the number of young sex workers on the street, during the past year the project has had 538⁴ contacts with young people working on the street. Thirty-three of these young people were worked with on an ongoing one-to-one case-work basis.

The project has excellent relationships with other projects working on the streets, and referral agencies for additional assistance for the young people. If the project received more funding, workers could be on the streets more nights, and work on a one-to-one basis with more young people. The relationship between street work and the counselling is essential – it is through contact on the streets that the relationships of trust are established.

The development of the Drop-In centre sessions on a Thursday night are proving successful and provide an opportunity for issues to be discussed in a non-threatening environment. If the YCD created a dedicated clinic space at the Drop-In centre it would enable the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist to complete physical examinations.

The project appears to have a huge impact on the young sex workers in Christchurch. Although the numbers of young people engaging in this work is not known, the YCD Street Youth Work Project can demonstrate that it has assisted 12 young people to leave the streets permanently the past twelve months.

Recommendations

1. That YCD seeks funding to keep this programme running, and if possible expand the Street Outreach services to more days of the week.
2. That YCD develop a system for recording the **number** of young sex workers as well as the number of **contacts**.
3. That YCD continues to endeavour to recruit suitable back-up staff for the Street Outreach work.

⁴ This statistic refers to the number of contacts, not the number of young people. Each time a young person is contacted on the streets it counts as one contact,

4. That YCD investigates setting aside a dedicated space at the Drop-In centre to enable the Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Specialist to complete physical examinations.