

Prostitution

Offense: Sexual solicitation

1/3 to 1/2 prostitutes are juveniles - multiple motivations

A third of the street-level prostitutes in the U.S. are less than 18 years old; half of off-street prostitutes are under 18. A few may be acting on their own initiative, or in the company of friends, for money or for adventure. A few may be fulfilling a gang initiation requirement. Many more are runaway and homeless youth who engage in “survival sex.” Many are - or become - drug addicts who prostitute themselves to get drugs, and use drugs to numb the effects of prostitution in a vicious feed back loop. Often a shared correlating factor is previous sexual abuse as children – the reason they run away in the first place.

Growing proportion of males

Data from OJJDP shows a trend toward a growing proportion of male prostitution. The boys tend to be older and operate outside, so they may be more likely to be arrested. Boys may also be less likely than girls to elicit sympathy as “victims” and get a pass from arrest, perhaps because of stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation.

Enforcement complex - most have mental health issues

The involvement of juveniles in prostitution is a complex issue. On the one hand, they are breaking the law. On the other hand, they are being illegally victimized by adults. They are in considerable physical danger of STD's (especially HIV/AIDS) as well as physical assault. They are also at risk of grave emotional harm. Almost all have mental health issues, with high incidences of depression and substance abuse.

Recognize dual status

Ripple Effects approach to intervention is to recognize these juveniles' dual status of offender and victim, build a stronger sense of self, and encourage them to seek help for whatever underlying issue precipitated their entrance into prostitution.

Software training cannot replace comprehensive services

This software-based training is not intended to replace comprehensive services for a hard to reach population. Rather it is designed to empower young people to realize that they have constructive options, even in the face of adversity, and to increase their ability to access the community services that can help them take advantage of those options.

Goals of intervention

Youth will:

- Develop a stronger sense of self
- Increase self-respect
- Identify personal strengths
- Set attainable goals
- Understand their personal risk factors
- Internalize norms against sexual assault and exploitation
- Identify alternatives to both abuse and prostitution
- Understand the connection between abuse, prostitution and drug use
- Learn skills for dealing with feeling of fear, guilt and shame
- Learn who and how to ask for help

A suggested scope and sequence

SKILL TOPICS

Knowing yourself

Strengths
Risk factors
Goals
Beliefs
Norms
Self respect
Self esteem

Decision-making

Problem solving
Brainstorming Options
Evaluating alternatives

Managing feelings

Connecting to community

Job
Asking for help

CHALLENGE TOPICS

Prostitution

Sexual abuse

Anger
Beatings
Birth control
Depression
Domestic violence
Fear
Mistakes
Running away
Sexuality
Shame
STDs
Substance abuse