

DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING RAPID ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET ARIZONA

Shared Hope International conducted an assessment in Arizona to examine the practices and procedures used in identifying and delivering services to victims of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) – U.S. children who are exploited through commercial sex. The Arizona Assessment can serve as a springboard for the existing task forces and working groups, as well as the community, to prioritize the identification and protection of children in sexual slavery in Arizona.

The Coalition:

In the face of many challenges, coalitions in Arizona have aggressively tackled the issue of child sex trafficking. These dedicated professionals are engaging in remarkable levels of cooperation and communication as they move forward to address the many prostituted children who pass through the system on a yearly basis.

- Children are being arrested for prostitution in Arizona. From 2005-2009, law enforcement reported 136 juvenile arrests for prostitution with at least one arrest in the following counties: Maricopa, Pima, Navajo, Yuma and Yavapi.
- The reported average age for a juvenile to enter prostitution in Phoenix is 14.83 years old – nearly two years older than the national average.
- The Maricopa County Attorney's Office secured convictions for 82 traffickers/pimps and 5 buyers for sex with children since 2006.
- Two Phoenix-area shelters have the ability to offer at least 38 beds specifically to DMST victims. Financial and licensing factors have delayed the opening of both facilities.
- For a child sex trafficking victim, safe and secure shelter is critical. For most sex trafficking victims, a runaway shelter or detention facility is not appropriate as these children require specialized services due to the complication of their exploitation.
- A majority of organizations that come into contact with victims identified Child Protective Services (CPS) as the primary source to report DMST. CPS staff reported never receiving training on the issue, lacking access to a system code that would track DMST, and were generally unaware of appropriate shelter or services for this specific victim population.
- A buyer has never been prosecuted under the sex trafficking statute. The offense of child prostitution for a buyer commands one of the lightest sentences of the sexual offense laws if the state is unable to prove that the buyer knew or had reason to know the age of the child. With a Class 6 felony, the buyer of sex with a minor 15- 17 years old can have their sentence reduced by the court to probation with 180 days in county jail; this can be further reduced to a mere 90 days on the first offense of child prostitution if the offender completes an education or treatment program.

Shared Hope International rescues and restores women and children in crisis. Over the past decade, Shared Hope has worked around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery.

