

Nebraska Sex Trafficking Background Summary



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➤ **What is sex trafficking**

- A modern form of **Slavery**
- Providing or benefiting financially from an individual engaging in *commercial* sex acts, compelled to do so by force, fraud or coercion; or if the victim is under 18 years of age
- Under Nebraska state law may include producing pornography or a sexually explicit performance.

➤ **Significance of sex trafficking**

- Sex trafficking is slavery, which is unconstitutional, illegal, and unconscionable
- Serious and long-term consequences to victims
- Local experience in Nebraska and Iowa
- Beginnings of *valid* empirical research
- Relationship to other "social evils"

➤ **Consequences to Victims [Isolation, Shame, Trauma]¹**

- 92% physical injury or illness
 - Strangulation
 - Knife or gun wound
 - STD or STI
- 92% neurological damage
- 98% psychological damage
 - 55% post-traumatic stress disorder
 - 42% at least 1 suicide attempt
- 84% substance abuse
- 55% at least 1 abortion

➤ **Survey of Nebraska service providers regarding services to victims/survivors of human trafficking²**

- Over 33% of surveyed service providers encountered one or more victims in the last year;

¹ "The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities," Laura J. Lederer and Christopher A. Wetzel, *Annals of Health Law*, Vol. 23, Issue 1, Winter 2014, Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy, Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

² "Human Trafficking in Nebraska," the Women's Fund of Omaha (2015), www.OmahaWomensFund.org, survey conducted in cooperation with the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force.

- 76% of surveyed service providers provide services to human trafficking victims/survivors;
- 70% do not screen for human trafficking;
- 78% do not track the human trafficking victims they identify;
- 84% believe they are not able to meet the needs of survivors of human trafficking;
- 75% want training to identify and assist victims of human trafficking;
- 35 % lack funding/resources;
- The top three victim needs are perceived to be mental health services, emergency shelter, and crisis intervention.

➤ **Local Experience**

- **From January of 2010, through 2015, the FBI-led Omaha Child Exploitation Task Force has dealt with an estimated 200-250 *primary and secondary* victims of sex trafficking³**
 - Almost all victims have been female and domestic to the United States.
 - Primary victims range in age from 12 to 40 years of age.
 - Estimated average age of primary victims: 16-22 years of age
 - Trend in last year regarding primary victims has been younger victims (including more 14-17 years of age), and increasing number of victims.
 - Case involving 14 year old taken from middle school to “appointments”; 16 year old taken from high school to “appointments”
 - Youngest secondary victim: 9 weeks old
 - While some sex traffickers operate strictly locally, some operate in national or regional circuits, or deliver “services” to areas remote from the metro area out of which they operate.
 - Cases involving services delivered within 2 hours of the metro area
 - Case involving 14-20 states, from New Jersey, to Colorado
 - Vulnerabilities making victims more susceptible to human trafficking, including: under 18 years of age, with history of abuse and/or runaway; mental and developmental disabilities; addictions, including, among others, chemical substance dependency; poverty, including homelessness and other deprivation; institutionalization, especially in juvenile or adult “corrections,” and foster care; [isolating factors, such as cultural and language differences]
 - Extensive use of internet/social media and area hotels-motels
- There is a noted spike in sex trafficking during major events, such as the College World Series. These spikes affect not only the Omaha Metro Area, but tend to have a “ripple effect,” especially along I-80 and I-29.
- **2015 UNL study: 47-100 or more minor *Nebraska* female sex trafficking victims⁴**

³ Estimates by Stephen Patrick O’Meara, Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Coordinator, former member of the Omaha Child Exploitation Task Force.

⁴ “On the Estimation of Sex Trafficking Victims in Nebraska,” Drs. Ron Hampton and Dwayne Ball (May 2015), University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

- **Anecdotal reports to the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force of human trafficking victims throughout Nebraska, including, among others, in Omaha Metro Area, Lincoln, Lexington, Columbus, Hastings, Grand Island, Auburn**
- Federal sex trafficking conviction in Iowa town of 550 population for sex trafficking by Milwaukee adult male of 15 and 17 year old females from Milwaukee.

➤ **General Statistics**

- Human trafficking is believed to be the second “largest” crime in the world (worth at least \$32 billion), second only to drug trafficking, but rapidly closing on drug trafficking.
- Estimated 80-85% of victims of human trafficking, are victims of sex trafficking
- Most victims of sex trafficking are female; some are male, especially under 18 years old
- National average age of entry into sex trafficking is estimated to be 12-14 years of age
- 1 in 3 minor runaways/throwaways is approached for prostitution within 48 hours
 - 75% of these end up victims of sex trafficking

➤ **Sex Traffickers⁵**

- Findings suggest that the cases of pimping and sex trafficking investigated in the United States represent only a small fraction of the [underground commercial sex economy]. (Dank, et al, at 3, “Main Finding # 10.)
- “Multiple offenders expressed the sentiment that ‘no one actually gets locked up for pimping.’” (Dank, et al, at 3, “Main Findings # 7 and 10.)
- “Despite the risks, some pimps still felt it was possible to work within the underground sex market with impunity.” “For respondents who admitted to pimping or sex trafficking, the perceived benefits presumably outweighed the understood risks.” (Dank, et al, at 149.)
- The same study reports that about 25% of the responding “pimps” transitioned from drug dealing to “pimping,” and that in part they did so because of the threat of high sentences for drug dealing [ostensibly in comparison to the lack of threat of high sentences for “pimping”]. (Dank, et al, at 137, 142.)
- Buyers of sex acts can be sex traffickers. U. S. v. Jungers, 702 F.3d 1066 (8th Cir.2013)
- “No buyers = No sex trafficking”

➤ **Relationship to Other “Social Evils”**

- Child abuse/sexual exploitation
- Domestic violence
- Pornography
- Illicit use and distribution of drugs
- Illegal gang activity
- Assault, robbery, extortion

^{5 5} Dank, Merredith, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchel Downey, Cybele Kotonias, Deborah Mayer, Colleen Owens, Laura Pacifici, and Lilly Yu (2014), “Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities,” The Urban Institute.

- [Report & Recommendations Regarding Establishment of The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force](#)