Prevention Of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Foster Youth: A Grant Proposal

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Commercical Sexual Exploitation

- Prostitution has been an illegal trade in the United States for many years, with people who participate in this trade being treated as criminals by the justice system. More recently, people who participate in sexual trade acts are being seen as victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

- Children in foster care have an increased risk of suffering multiple acts of abuse, in particular sexual abuse; they are also 2-4 times more likely to engage in sexual acts compared to non-foster care children (Ahrens, Katon, McCarty, Richardson, & Courtney, 2012).

- The first federal law to address CSE was the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 (Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Reid, 2011). The TVPA states that all minors who engage in commercial sex acts should be classified as victims.

- The purpose of the grant is to develop a CSE prevention program for Los Angeles County foster youth by educating the youth on what CSE recruitment looks like, what to do if someone tries to recruit them, how to respond, and where to find help.
Social workers are mandated to abide by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (2008). The Code of Ethics has six core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence.

Service is the primary goal of a social worker; the goal is to help people in need and address social problems. Foster youth are in need of help due to their vulnerability; therefore, social workers must address the social problems of foster youth.

Further, under California penal code 11165.7, social workers are legally mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse. According to California penal code 11166 (c), failure to report as a mandated reporter will make one guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to 6 months in jail or by a $1,000 fine or by both a fine and imprisonment (The California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law, 2006).
In developing a program for Los Angeles, one must consider the various cultures and demographics of the population. There are 316,128,839 people residing in California with 10,017,068 people residing in Los Angeles County alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Los Angeles County is considered the largest and most diverse county in the United States. In 2013, there were 87,000 reports of child abuse and neglect investigated in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles County Annual Report, 2013). According to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (2014), Hispanics and African Americans are overrepresented in the Child Welfare System (CWS).
Methods

- **Target Population:** The intended target population for the proposed project is female foster youth in Los Angeles County ages 12-17 years of age, which is the age range when they are most vulnerable to become involved in CSE (Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Kalergis, 2009; Mir, 2013; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2010).

- **Strategies Used to Identify and Select a Funding Source:** Common search engines such as Yahoo and Google were used to identify potential sources. A variety of key terms were used to find grants that will aid victims of CSE, such as: “grants,” “at-risk youth,” “non-profit,” “prevention,” “foster youth,” and “sexual exploitation.”

- **Identify the Funding Source Selected:** Weingart Foundation was the best potential funding source for this grant. The Weingart Foundation funds grants to support and improve the capacity and sustainability of non-profit organizations across Southern California including Los Angeles. Also, this foundation’s goal is to provide effective services in the areas of health, human services, and education with the highest priority in providing access to people who are economically disadvantaged and underserved (Weingart Foundation, 2014).
Methods

- **Sources Used for Needs Assessment:** The grant writer reviewed scholarly literature on foster youth, child abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation to better understand why foster youth are more vulnerable to CSE compared to non-foster youth. Studies and research reviewed by this writer show that foster youth are at an increased risk of becoming CSE victims due to their history of abuse and vulnerability, and lack of resiliency. The more risk factors that exist in individual’s life, the higher their risk of CSE exposure. Risk factors vary from individual to community risk factors. Female foster youth are currently overrepresented in CSE crimes. Therefore, federal and state levels have attempted to address CSE with the implementation of legislation. In order to better serve foster youth, social workers must provide services that include education, awareness, intervention and prevention. The goal is to reduce the number of CSE victims and transform CSE victims into survivors.

- **Projected Budget Range and Categories:** The estimated budget for the proposed project is $169,060. The funding will include the salary of a Program Director, two Masters of Social Workers (MSW), and two CSE survivors. In order to begin the implementation of the program, a budget for a 12 month period is required for direct costs of salaries, material, equipment, allocated space, and staff training.
Grant Proposal

- **Program Summary and Description:** The purpose of the grant is to develop a CSE prevention program for Los Angeles County foster youth by educating the youth on what CSE recruitment looks like, what to do if someone tries to recruit them, how to respond, and where to find help. The services offered through this project will include workshops, educational materials, advocacy, and case management services.

- **Population Served:** The intended target population for the proposed project is female foster youth in Los Angeles County. The female foster youth will be between the ages 12-17 years of age, which is the age range when they are most vulnerable to become involved in CSE (Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Kalergis, 2009; Mir, 2013; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2010). The program and services will be tailored towards female foster youth in non-kinship care, in particular group homes.

- **Sustainability:** This program has been developed to be continually implemented, so long as funding is secured each year.
• **Program Objectives:**
  
  Objective 1 is to increase the knowledge of foster youth of how to avoid CSE. The reality is that youth in the child welfare system are more vulnerable to CSE compared to other youth.

  Objective 2 is to increase knowledge of available community resources for foster youth who are at-risk for CSE and current victims of CSE.

  Objective 3 is to increase the resiliency of foster youth. In order to increase resilience, the program will educate foster youth by providing workshops to promote self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of purpose.

• **Program Evaluation:** The effectiveness of this program will be assessed using different methods of evaluation, such as: pre- and post-test, resource brochure, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) developed by Rosenberg (1979).
Lessons Learned/ Implications for Social Work

- **Lessons Learned:** Grant search, selection and writing process
- **Implications for Social Work:** As a profession, social workers have made a commitment to abide by the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics (2008). The Code’s values include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. It is important for social workers to gain knowledge of the high risk of CSE among foster youth in order to comply with the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) and better assist the population. The NASW (2008) core values are essential in order to serve at-risk youth or CSE victims who have reduced awareness of their dignity and worth as a human being. To aid victims of CSE, social workers must use their skills to facilitate change and promote social justice by advocating for necessary services. Social workers can also promote and create awareness of CSE within the larger community through outreach efforts.
References


