



Services to domestic minor victims of sex trafficking: Opportunities for engagement and support



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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking of young people is a social problem of growing concern. This paper reports selected findings from an evaluation of three programs serving domestic minor victims of human trafficking. Participants in this study were funded to identify and serve male and female victims of sex or labor trafficking who were less than 18 years old and were U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. Programs provided case management and comprehensive services, either directly or through community collaboration. Evaluation data included data on client characteristics, service needs and services delivered; key informant interviews with program staff and partner agencies; and case narrative interviews in which program staff provided in-depth descriptions of clients' histories. All clients served were known or believed to be sex trafficked. The majority of clients needed crisis intervention, safety planning, educational support, mental health services, and employment services. Although they were diverse in terms of demographics and circumstances, two common patterns were of homeless young people exchanging sex to meet survival needs and young people were emotionally engaged with their trafficker. Key findings include the diversity of trafficked minors, the challenge of initial and continued engagement with service delivery, the structural and resource barriers to long-term support for young people, and the potential contribution of programs specifically addressing trafficked minors. A framework linking services to young people's circumstances and outcome areas is proposed.

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1. Introduction

Human trafficking of young people is a social problem of growing concern. Within the United States, the existence of trafficking is well established, yet not well understood (Schwartz, 2009). The authorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 firmly endorsed a victim-centered approach to young people who are trafficked (U.S. Department of State, 2013). The TVPA defines a person under the age of 18 who is involved in a commercial sex act as a victim of sex trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion is involved. A commercial sex act is further defined as one in which anything of value is given to or received by any person,¹ such that acts performed in exchange for shelter, food or protection are considered trafficking. Labor trafficking, as defined by the TVPA, is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Estimates of the number of sex trafficked minors vary widely, reflecting the data source, definitions and methodologies used. One review noted estimates ranging from 1400 to 2.4 million, but urged readers not to cite these numbers because “scientifically credible estimates do not exist” (Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008, p. 1). Young people trafficked for sex are not homogenous; all classes, races, genders, and sexualities are represented. Some research suggests that more boys than girls are involved (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004; Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Schaffner, 2006). Other studies indicate more girls than boys, and some assert that the numbers are equal (Estes & Weiner, 2005). The complexity lies in part in the diverse behaviors involved. The most frequently described scenarios include trading sex for basic needs (Adler, 2003); engaging in pimp-controlled sex trades (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Herrmann, 1987; Weisberg, 1984); performing in pornographic films (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Herrmann, 1987); and, among girls, servicing gang members and their affiliates (Estes & Weiner, 2005). A random sample of minor prostitution arrests found that most (57%) involved a third-party exploiter, 31% involved no third-party exploiter, and the remaining 12% involved familial exploitation (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010).

Sex trafficked minors are frequently involved in foster care and child welfare services, as well as the juvenile justice system. It has been estimated that 85% of girls involved in sex trades come from homes

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¹ 22.U.S.C. § 7102(3).

involved with the child welfare system (Kotrla, 2010). Within their families, these minors have frequently experienced physical and sexual abuse (Alvarez, 2010; Brawn & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Harris, Scott, & Skidmore, 2006; Kotrla, 2010; Schwartz, 2009; Unger et al., 1998; Weisberg, 1984). Also commonly reported are neglect and emotional abuse (Alvarez, 2010; Harris et al., 2006; The Skillman Foundation, 2002); parental alcohol and drug use problems (Harris et al., 2006; Unger et al., 1998); and chaotic, ineffective parenting (Brawn & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008; The Skillman Foundation, 2002). A survey of 97 New York agencies that encounter young people in the sex trade found that 48% of the young people identified as commercially sexually exploited had involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Gragg, Petta, Bernstein, Eisen, & Quinn, 2007). Additionally, young people are at particular risk for trafficking if they run away from home or reside in a child welfare placement (Badawy, 2010; Brawn & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008; Caplan, 1984; CdeBaca, 2010; Kotrla, 2010; Weisberg, 1984), or are pushed out of their homes ('throwaways') for reasons that may include sexual orientation or gender identity (Schaffner, 2006; Unger et al., 1998).

Numerous federal agencies and action groups have addressed the issue of minor victim trafficking. The *Federal Strategic Action Plan* describes actions planned by federal agencies to identify and serve trafficking victims (President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor & Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2013). Guidance from Administration for Children, Youth and Families summarizes priorities for screening, service coordination and intervention by youth-serving agencies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth & Families (ACYF), 2013), including organizations serving runaway and homeless youth and child welfare systems. Finally, an expert work group convened by the National Academy of Science advanced recommendations to increase awareness and understanding, strengthen legal response, develop prevention and intervention strategies, support collaboration and share information, based on an exhaustive review of research and best practice (Clayton, Krugman, & Simon, 2013).

Increased public awareness of trafficking during recent years has contributed to growing attention to the circumstances of minors engaged in commercial sex. However, the terminology of "trafficking" may create confusion for individuals who may interpret it as describing movement across national borders. With respect to minors, the term *sex trafficking* is equivalent to *commercial sexual exploitation of children* (CSEC) (Clayton et al., 2013). In this article, we use the former term, consistent with the TVPA legal definition, interchangeably with *sex trade engagement*, which more specifically describes the activity. We also use the term *facilitator*, as opposed to *pimp* or *trafficker*, to refer to an individual who arranges sex trades for another, with or without financial benefit. This term encompasses the diversity of relationships between facilitators and young people.

This paper reports selected findings from an evaluation of three programs funded by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to identify and serve domestic minor victims of human trafficking. We used qualitative interviews and program data to describe clients served, in terms of their characteristics and service needs. To summarize these data, we give particular attention to two subgroups of trafficked young people: homeless youth meeting survival needs, and those who are emotionally engaged by a facilitator. These youth represent distinct patterns of trafficking involvement and challenges of service delivery. From these diverse programs, we identify several lessons learned with respect to service delivery. In addition, we offer a framework that links young people's circumstances, service needs and outcome areas for consideration within future program development.

2. Methods

Participants in this study were three programs funded by OVC to identify and serve male and female victims of either sex or labor

trafficking, who were less than 18 years old and were U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. The programs were diverse in history, organization, referral sources and service delivery approach. The Standing Against Global Exploitation Everywhere (SAGE) Project, located in San Francisco, served adults and youth affected by sexual exploitation. Prior to the OVC grant, SAGE provided life skills programs, advocacy, counseling and case management for girls, including those in the juvenile justice systems. The Salvation Army Trafficking Outreach Program and Intervention Techniques (STOP-IT) program, located in Chicago, was founded by The Salvation Army and grew from that organization's engagement in local trafficking task forces. Under the OVC grant, STOP-IT expanded their services from foreign trafficking victims to domestic youth engaged in sex trades. The Streetwork Project at Safe Horizon, located in New York City, serves homeless and street-involved youth with drop-in centers, temporary housing, counseling, health care, legal advocacy and other services, offered by Streetwork staff and co-located providers. Trafficking victims thus represented the primary focus of SAGE and STOP-IT, but a very small proportion of the thousands of young people served annually at Streetwork.

Each program was required to provide intensive case management that included intake, needs assessment, development of individualized plans, referrals, documentation of service provision, and routine follow-up. Programs were also expected to offer a comprehensive service model, either directly or through partners. Required services included housing; physical, mental, and dental health care; criminal justice advocacy; specialized educational services; and transportation. SAGE served clients through a combination of individual case management and group programs in its downtown office. STOP-IT worked entirely through one-on-one case management meetings, held in clients' homes or neutral locations such as fast-food restaurants. Streetwork provided services through its drop-in centers and shelter. Although all programs offered referrals to services not provided by their own staff, Streetwork was able to offer many more services in-house, through a medical van, psychiatrist and legal advocate with scheduled hours at the drop in centers.

The evaluation of the OVC-funded programs was sponsored by the National Institutes of Justice (NIJ), also at DOJ. The evaluation was designed as a process evaluation because understanding of service delivery for this population is still at an early stage. Therefore, the evaluation focused on describing the characteristics of minor trafficking victims and their service needs, documenting services delivered, and understanding programs' experiences with service delivery. The evaluation was also structured to be participatory in order to build practice knowledge by rapidly channeling evaluation data back to programs in order to inform service delivery. The evaluation team collaborated with the three programs to develop data collection plans and instruments, using multiple data sources to document program operations between January 2011 and June 2013.

Program staff compiled data on clients and services using three forms. The Intake Status form collected information on each client's demographic characteristics, social service system involvement, sex trade experiences, living situation, health information, trauma history, and service needs. The Client Service Needs and Service Provision form described the services needed and provided to each client, and was completed monthly for each active client. The Closing Status form captured the reasons for closing the case on each client who explicitly left the program, or whose case was considered closed because of lack of contact with the program.

Program staff shipped completed forms to the evaluation team each month, after removing or recoding any identifying information. The evaluation team entered the data into an analysis file, prepared a summary of clients served and service provided for the program, and developed cross-site analysis files. Given the modest number of young people served, analyses consisted of straightforward descriptive statistics, with some tests of significance for differences among programs.

The evaluation team collected qualitative data during five site visits to each program. We conducted key informant interviews with program leaders and case managers, parent agency leaders, representatives of organizations that referred young people to the OVC-funded programs or who provided services to these young people, and other stakeholders in local efforts to address minor victim trafficking. The semi-structured interview, adapted to respondents' role and expertise, addressed organizational involvement with trafficked minors, perspectives on service needs and service delivery strategies, and assessment of the funded programs' experiences, challenges and perceived successes.

We elected not to interview program clients based on considerations of trust and re-traumatization. Instead, we compiled case narratives by interviewing program staff who knew young people well. Staff member used pseudonyms to refer to the young persons being described. The semi-structured case narrative interview compiled information on young peoples' family and social history, entry into trafficking, trafficking experiences and interaction with the service program. Program staff sampled selected young people to describe in these interviews, purposively selecting male and transgender clients and labor trafficked youth because of the paucity of information about their needs. Program staff also chose one case that was considered successful and one considered especially challenging in order to deepen insights about promising practices. Case narratives were compiled for 15 young people from each program (N = 45) and updated over the course of the evaluation. The resulting data, although rich, cannot be considered representative of all young people served by these programs or of the larger population of trafficked minors.

To analyze data from the key informant interviews, the evaluation team used notes from each interview (N = 113) to prepare summaries of each site visit (N = 15), which served as the unit of analysis. This strategy allowed examination of program development over time. Two evaluation team members reviewed each of the summaries before they were coded deductively, with interview guides serving as a template for the code list. For case narratives, analysis was based on inductive codes derived directly from the interview. One evaluation team member coded all of the transcripts and entered them into the qualitative analysis program. A comparison of 20% of all transcripts (n = 22) was conducted to assess coding reliability, with discrepancies or inconsistencies resolved through consensus discussions. NVIVO version 9 (QSR International, 2010) was used for analysis of both key informant interviews and case narrative interviews.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of young people served

The three programs collectively served 201 young people during the 2.5 year evaluation period. Overall, 55% of those served were confirmed as sex trafficked (range 29% to 94%), as shown in Table 1. Among those confirmed as sex trafficked, 5% (range 3% to 7%) were also confirmed as labor trafficked (data not shown). With one exception, labor trafficking consisted of coerced illicit activities such as drug sales, on behalf of a sex trafficking facilitator. Trafficking was not confirmed for 45% of young people. These were young people who did not explicitly acknowledge trafficking within three months of involvement in the program or before disengaging from the program. Program staff emphasized that many young people are reluctant to acknowledge engagement in sex trades, whether as a result of their own discomfort, a desire to maintain control of their situation, or lack of trust in service providers.

Approximately three-quarters of all young people served across the three programs were females, with a median age of 17 (range 12 to 18 years; data not shown). Race and ethnicity varied among programs; overall, 65% of young people were African American (range 54% to 86%), and 22% Hispanic (range 4% to 34%). Referral sources also varied, reflecting programs' outreach strategies and

Table 1
Characteristics of clients served by programs.

	Percent of clients served			
	SAGE (n = 55)	STOP-IT (n = 35)	Streetwork (n = 111)	Total (n = 201)
Trafficking				
% confirmed as trafficked	84	94	29	55
% not confirmed as trafficked	16	6	71	45
Sex				
% male	2	3	35	20
% female	96	94	60	76
% transgender	2	3	5	3
Race and ethnicity ^a				
Black or African American, not Hispanic	73	86	54	65
White	20	9	29	23
Hispanic/Latino(a)/Spanish	4	14	34	22
Other	14	0	12	13
System involvement				
% with child involvement	45%	34%	36%	38%
% with juvenile justice involvement	62%	23%	6%	24%

^a Multiple responses allowed.

organizational relationships. At SAGE, the most frequent referral sources were self-referral (18%), child protective services and juvenile justice (16% each) and shelters (15%). At STOP-IT, the largest referral source was law enforcement (37%), followed by hospitals (17%) and the State Attorney's Office (11%). At Streetwork, young people were typically identified as potential trafficking victims by drop-in center staff in the course of receiving other services. Young people typically came to Streetwork via self-referral or word of mouth referrals (61%). Referrals from formal agencies such as justice, child welfare or health care frequently meant that trafficking had been explicitly identified as an issue, in contrast to young people who self-referred to the Streetwork drop-in center. As will be discussed later, the acknowledgment of trafficking typically facilitated the process of client engagement.

Across all programs, young people reported high rates of service system involvement and prior maltreatment. More than one third (38%) of clients were reported to have a child welfare case worker at the time of program intake (range 34%–45%). Juvenile justice involvement was more varied across programs. At SAGE, 62% of clients reported involvement in this system. This was much less common at STOP-IT and Streetwork (23% and 6%, respectively). Young people reported high rates of current or past physical abuse (overall 48%, range 32%–71%), neglect (overall 58%, range 43%–65%), and sexual abuse unrelated to sex trades (overall 34%, range 14%–67%). High levels of missing data and variability among programs suggest caution regarding these figures. However, case narrative data corroborated the frequent presence of maltreatment.

3.2. Sex trade engagement

Young peoples' engagement in sex trades reflected their complex histories and choices made from among limited options open to them. Although each young person's story is unique, two patterns were particularly common within the case narrative data. These two groups differed substantially in terms of factors precipitating sex trade engagement and circumstances of ongoing engagement, with critical implications for service delivery. We describe these two admittedly simplified patterns below. Other routes of entry were described, including young people who were trafficked by a family member.

Young people served by SAGE and STOP-IT were most often engaged in sex trades through someone they considered to be a sexual or romantic partner. Numerous case narratives described this entry to trafficking in terms such as: "this guy came in like a Prince Charming on a horse and promised her all these things, and let her believe that he loved her, and asked her to do this just once, and it continued to happen all

the time, turning dates.” Across those two programs, 96% of clients were females and 44% reported multiple living situations during the past month. Although many had previously run away from home, they were more likely to have lived with a family member (49%–80%) or in a foster or group home (20%–33%) during the month prior to intake.

By contrast, young people served at Streetwork were most often runaway or throwaway youth. They engaged in sex trades as a way of obtaining money for shelter and food, or strategically connected with someone who provided housing in exchange for sex. Among Streetwork clients, 60% were females, 35% males and 5% transgenders. Two-thirds reported multiple living situations during the month prior to program intake, including precarious arrangements such as living on the street or in the subway (54%), couch-surfing (32%) or in a shelter (20%). These young people were described as having left home as a result of abuse or neglect or having been ejected by parents unwilling to care for them, unable to deal with their behavior, or unable to accept their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Among those confirmed as trafficked, most young people reported someone who arranged commercial sex acts and received financial benefit. For nearly half of the young people served, intake data described the facilitator as a pimp, although it is not always clear whether this term was also used by the young person or only by program staff. As described in case narratives, these facilitators varied greatly in their relationship to the young person. At one extreme was the so-called “gorilla pimp,” who used violence to control the young person. Others were relatively benign, even while maintaining control of young people. One program staff member reported that the young person had described her facilitator and his mother as a surrogate family. “He would give us protection while we was on the street, make sure it was safe... Oh, the mom was a good church lady, she would keep people’s babies if they needed to, she made, we had nice, hot meals and she would be kind to us.”² As noted earlier, many young people described facilitators as romantic or sexual partners, although these relationships were generally perceived by program staff as exploitive. One case narrative described a young person in this situation as having been, “led to believe that she was going out there to prostitute in order to build an establishment for them, a home, cars, possible marriage and kids at the end.”

Many young people arranged their own sex trades, which might include exchanging sex for a place to stay, rather than for money. This was far more likely to be reported at Streetwork (78% of clients) than SAGE or STOP-IT (30% and 9% of clients). Others identified peers who acted as facilitators (range 13% to 21%). In such arrangements, friends and acquaintances helped to arrange dates and provided protection in exchange for a share of the proceeds. One such narrative noted, “he was helping her arrange, you know, ‘dates,’ and getting a cut and then he would like take her and be security outside while the sex acts were being exchanged.” By legal definitions, however, these peers could be classified and prosecuted as traffickers.

Under terms of the TVPA, force is not required to establish sex trafficking of minors. However, a significant number of young people were reported to have been physically harmed or restrained (37%–78% of clients) or threatened with harm (19%–44% of clients). Case narrative data indicate that violence occurred frequently during young people’s sex trade experiences. Perpetrators of violence included both facilitators and sex trade clients. Some facilitators used violence to control young people by either threatening or physically assaulting them. Violence and control tactics often became more explicit over time: increasing physical assaults, tattooing young people with the facilitator’s name (branding), or shaving the young person’s head. A few case narratives described serious injury inflicted by sex trade clients.

² Note that these quotes are from staff members providing case narratives, not directly from clients.

3.3 . Service needs and service delivery

Programs used several common strategies to engage young people. Staff focused on establishing an atmosphere of trust and respect, and on eliciting information through conversation rather than completing intake forms. This was true even in situations where sex trade engagement was explicitly identified at the young person’s first contact with the program, e.g., a referral from law enforcement following a prostitution-related arrest. In situations where sex trade engagement was suspected but not acknowledged, disclosure of trafficking frequently required multiple conversations over a period of time. This approach was particularly important for young people who came to Streetwork in order to address needs such as shelter, food or help with benefits, rather than trafficking. For all programs, strategies to maintain engagement included focusing on services that clients wanted, respecting clients’ boundaries, and maintaining an open-door policy in which clients felt able to disengage and re-engage. Tangible resources, such as meals and transit passes, supported both initial and ongoing engagement.

Case management was a core component of each program. This function included assessing needs, setting goals and tracking progress, planning for safety, locating resources, and navigating systems. Case managers also served as counselors, mentors, and advocates, often investing substantial amounts time to build relationships with young people. For services not provided directly by the programs, staff collaborated with other agencies in their communities to identify additional resources and build capacity to respond to trafficked youth.

Many service needs at intake were similar across the three programs, as shown in Table 2. Note that these data represent needs reported by staff and/or clients. Although our intent was to identify perceived needs from each perspective, this distinction was not reported consistently. Each program reported that the majority of young people needed support and crisis intervention, safety planning, educational support, mental health services, and employment services. Sizeable numbers of young people at each program were also reported to need sexual health services, and transitional and long-term housing. These needs, as well as emergency housing, were particularly high at Streetwork. Streetwork and STOP-IT data show high proportions of young people needing food and clothing. In addition, Streetwork and SAGE reported that many young people needed victim assistance and legal advocacy services as well as assistance with benefits. SAGE was particularly likely to report that young people needed substance or alcohol abuse services. SAGE and STOP-IT also reported high numbers of young people needing family reunification or family counseling.

Table 2
Client needs identified at intake.

Area of need	Percentage of clients with this need at intake ^a (identified by client, program, or both)			
	SAGE (N = 55)	STOP-IT (N = 35)	Streetwork (N = 111)	Total (N = 201)
Support/crisis intervention	84 ^a	77 ^a	98 ^a	91 ^a
Safety planning	66 ^a	69 ^a	98 ^a	84 ^a
Sexual health	62	46	97 ^a	79 ^a
Food or clothing	33	80 ^a	93 ^a	74 ^a
Educational support	86 ^a	74 ^a	58	68 ^a
Mental health services	87 ^a	57	62	68 ^a
Housing – long-term	53	40	73 ^a	62
Employment/vocational support	73 ^a	51	60	62
Assistance with benefits	47	17	78 ^a	59
Housing – emergency	11	31	80 ^a	53
Family reunification or counseling	73	54	29	45
Victim assistance or legal services	62	17	37	40
Housing – transitional	27	31	39	34
Medical care	31	14	30	27
Substance/alcohol abuse services	46	9	21	25
Dental care	15	14	2	8

^a Indicates area of need reported at intake for more than 67% of clients.

Programs were typically able to meet needs in three of the four highest areas of need, including support or crisis intervention, food or clothing, and safety planning. Fig. 1 shows the extent of need and the extent to which needs were met across all months during which each client was served. Because both service needs and the extent to which service needs were met could vary across time, these data are presented in terms of client-months, with one client-month equal to one client served in one month. The three programs provided 649 client-months of services to 201 clients. Notably, the needs most likely to be met those that could be addressed directly by program staff using OVC grant funds, e.g., safety planning or food and clothing. Significant service gaps remained, particularly in long-term housing and employment or vocational assistance. Service gaps also existed for education, mental health, family reunification or counseling, and assistance with benefits.

Reasons for needs not being met included lack of availability of services and young people's reluctance to use services. Even when services were available, young people were often wary of using them for fear of being reported to child protective services based on prior maltreatment or their current trafficking engagement. Child welfare agencies could potentially offer immediate resources for residential placement and services to eligible young people. However, young people were frequently described in case narratives as having previous negative experiences in foster care and going to great lengths to avoid subsequent engagement. Similarly, many young people avoided applying for cash assistance or food support out of reluctance to attract attention to their unauthorized independent status, or to the family members who might have been collecting benefits on the young person's behalf.

Although strategies varied across programs, the single most successful approach to encouraging service utilization was in-house or co-located services. Examples included having a clinician on the program staff (SAGE), or a community health center's medical van parked outside the drop-in center (Streetwork). Staff also spent significant amounts of time locating services, accompanying clients to services and coaching clients on advocating for themselves with service providers (STOP-IT).

The evaluation's focus was on describing clients served and services delivered, rather than assessing client outcomes. However, basic descriptions of exit status were compiled. At SAGE, the median length of engagement in services after intake was 65 days (range 0 to 529 days) and the most common reasons for exiting services were client relocation (36% of clients), client discontinuation (26%), or loss of contact with client (15%). At STOP-IT, the median length of engagement was 117 days (range 0 to 678 days), and the most common reasons for exit were lost contact (45%), aged out of program eligibility (23%), and no longer in need of services of relocation (19% each). For Streetwork,

the median length of engagement was 15 days (range 0 to 924 days) and the most common reasons were lost of contact (51%) and aging out of eligibility (32%).

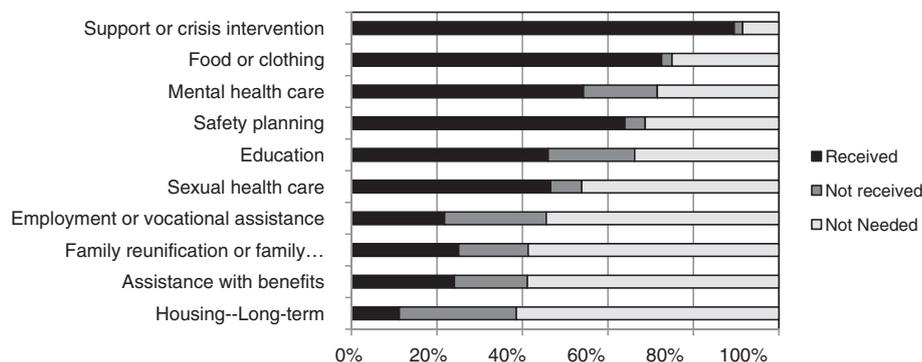
Program staff noted that reasons for clients' discontinuing services included the absence of other means than trafficking to meet survival needs, emotional engagement with facilitators, and reluctance to leave a familiar situation. All programs reported maintaining an "open door" and welcoming clients back if they chose to return. Although exits due to clients no longer needing services were less common, case narrative data described some such successes. Access to safe living situations and supportive family connections were common themes among young people known to have exited sex trade engagement.

4. Discussions and conclusions

Strengths of this evaluation include its multiple data sources and methods, the diversity of programs and young people served, and the insights contributed by program staff. Young people served by these programs were similar to those described within existing literature on sex trafficking in terms of involvement with child welfare and juvenile justice systems, experience of maltreatment, and runaway and thruway status. However, they do not represent any larger population of trafficked minors, due to the small number of organizations involved in this study, and the modest number of clients served. Other limitations of the evaluation include the possibility of bias introduced by selective disclosure of information by key informants, limited disclosure of information by young people to program staff, or selection of young people for case narrative interviews by program staff. As such, findings represent incremental contributions to our nascent understanding of the characteristics and needs of trafficked youth, rather than a firm basis for policies and programs.

In the context of these strengths and limitations, we can point to several key findings from this evaluation. First, even this small group of programs confirms the diversity of trafficked minors. Trafficked minors served through the OVC demonstration project included youth as young as twelve, and were diverse with respect to race and ethnicity. They were housed with family or street-homeless, had law enforcement experience or had never been arrested, and had grown up in child welfare care or had never come to the attention of authorities despite histories of maltreatment.

Second, the challenge of initial and continued engagement of young people was a constant theme for service providers. Young people engaged in sex trades as the least-bad solution to meeting fundamental needs for shelter, safety, social connection, and love. Sex trafficking was never the only problem, and often not the most critical problem,



Percent of Client-months (n=649) in which Services were Needed and Received, Needed but Not Received, or Not Needed

Fig. 1. Services needed and received. Percent of client-months (n = 649) in which services were needed and received, needed but not received, or not needed.

in young people's lives. Meeting fundamental needs frequently took precedence over addressing trafficking, and creative and persistent efforts were required to engage clients and sustain their involvement in trafficking-related services. The high rates of case closings due to lost contact suggest that initial and sustained engagement must be identified as a priority for future program design and a primary outcome in future evaluations. In the OVC-funded programs, strategies used to support engagement included using grant funds to address immediate survival needs, prioritizing youth-identified service needs, addressing service barriers by providing services onsite or accompanying youth to services, prioritizing relationship-building, and maintaining flexibility on the part of organizations and staff members. Case management was likely an essential component of this continued relationship, although the content and process of case management deserves more in-depth examination than could be provided in this evaluation.

Third, the challenges encountered by these experienced providers suggest the absence of a "quick fix" for trafficked minors. Factors precipitating trafficking engagement were rarely remediable within short-term service engagement. Service delivery was sometimes complicated by state or funding agency requirements, such as parental notification when minors stay at youth shelters, or parental permission for minors to receive mental health services. Many housing and benefit programs are restricted to adults, and youth may avoid other service resources out of fear of child welfare involvement. Although intended to protect minors, these provisions frequently represented structural barriers to services for youth whose families do not protect or provide for them. In addition to resources addressing their immediate circumstances, young people will need extensive and extended support in order to launch successfully into young adulthood, as discussed below.

Finally, the experience of the OVC-funded programs indicates the potential contribution of programs specifically addressing trafficked

young people. Although a substantial minority of young people served had current involvement in child welfare or juvenile justice systems, direct referrals from these agencies were relatively few. Youth-serving systems had often had not recognized trafficking among their clients, or not considered it as their responsibility to address. The OVC-funded programs offered expertise in trauma and resiliency, understanding of street economies, and staff who were able to align themselves with young people. The programs provided technical assistance and training related to trafficking to other organizations, and case management to knit needed services together.

Despite daunting challenges, the OVC-funded programs developed tailored approaches to working with trafficked young people in a range of situations, including those emotionally engaged with facilitators, those involved with the justice system, and street-homeless youth. The experience of these three programs suggests that no single program model will exist. Instead, responses to trafficked youth will need to reflect diversity of young people involved and their needs, as well as community resources and relevant state law. Each of the three OVC-funded programs developed strategies and relationships that were particularly effective for specific groups of trafficked minors: SAGE with young people in juvenile justice and child welfare intake centers, STOP-IT with young people who had encountered police through their own arrest or that of their facilitator; and Streetwork with street-homeless youth.

The experience of the OVC-funded programs suggests that young people's circumstances and service needs will necessarily shape their progress toward outcomes. We can depict service needs across varying situations by adapting a framework of core outcomes (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.), shown in Fig. 2. The framework illustrates how young people's service needs may vary depending on the immediacy of survival needs and crisis levels, relationships and resources available to them, and the degree to which they

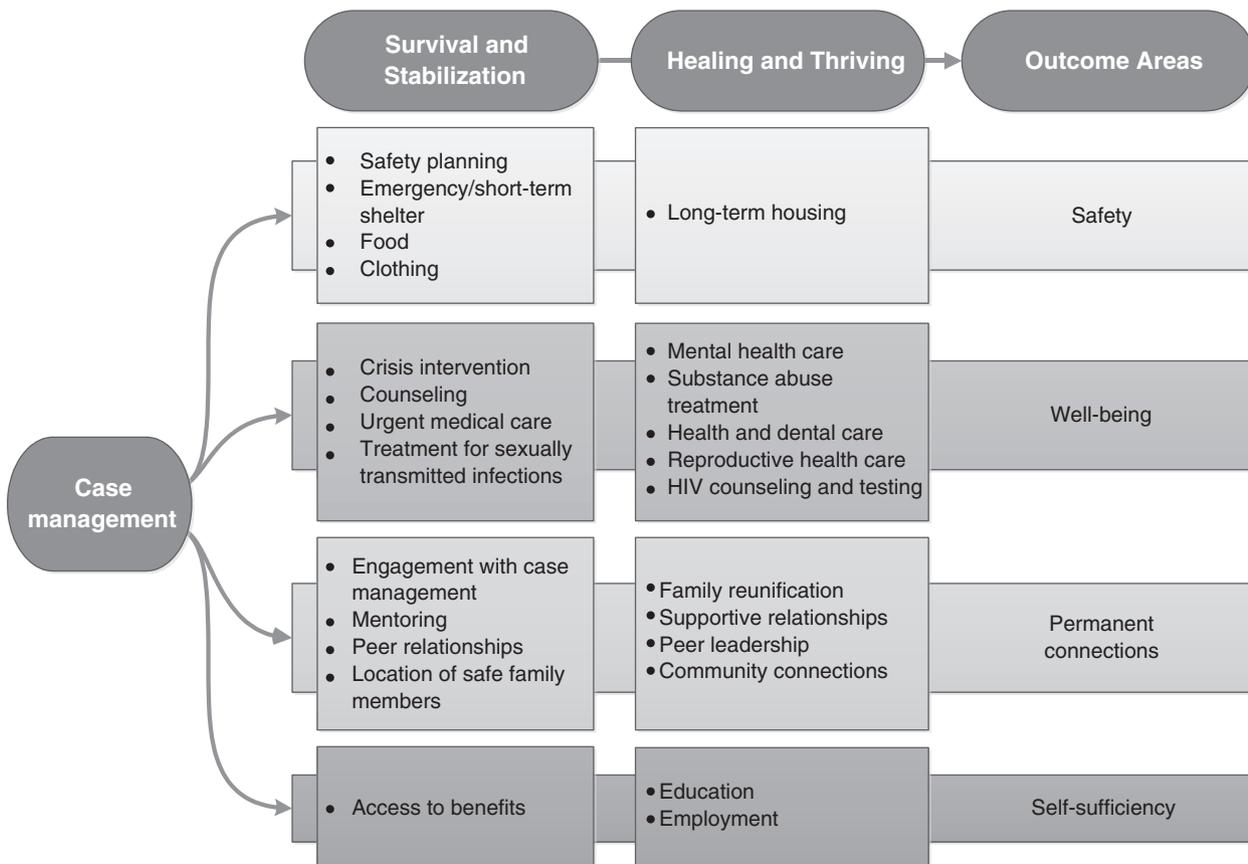


Fig. 2. Human trafficking service needs by outcome areas.

are enmeshed in sex trades. As suggested by this evaluation, young people still engaged with facilitators needed safety planning and crisis management, and runaway youth needed emergency shelter services and access to financial resources, before other long-term needs could be addressed. Case management services by programs attuned to the complexity of trafficking engagement can ensure that young people are connected to acceptable services that are appropriate to their needs.

The framework demonstrates that services are needed to ensure that young people are not only removed from trafficking situations but given the resources for long-term sustainability. In addition, the four dimensions of the framework underscore the range of resources that may be needed if trafficked young people are to build functional adult lives. These include services and supports for safety; physical and emotional well-being; connections to services, peers, family and community; and resources for self-sufficiency. Measures of progress toward these goals represent possible outcome areas to be defined within future programming and evaluation.

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