



PLACER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Human Trafficking

June 26, 2015

Human Trafficking

Summary

The 2014-2015 Placer County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an investigation into the extent and pervasiveness of human trafficking in Placer County. The Grand Jury was most interested in the resources available to law enforcement to identify and assist victims and to ascertain whether law enforcement was able to successfully utilize existing county social service programs to best facilitate assistance to the victims of human trafficking.

The Grand Jury interviewed representatives of all entities and county officials tasked with the responsibility of identifying and assisting victims. Law enforcement agencies were interviewed as to the measures they take to identify a human trafficking situation and assist victims in obtaining the help they need. The Grand Jury found that Placer County recognizes the problem of human trafficking and continues to utilize programs which have been in place for years. Additionally, in 2014, Placer County Children's System of Care (CSOC) developed the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Task Force (CSEC). This task force is comprised of members of law enforcement at every level, as well as county social services entities, and has the potential to adequately assist victims. One short-coming that must be addressed is the lack of a state-wide tracking system for victims already identified by law enforcement.

Glossary

Human Trafficking:

According to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime¹, trafficking in persons is defined as follows:

“ Trafficking in Persons ’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. ”

¹ Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”, p.2, “http://www.no-trafficking.org/content/pdf/guide_to_the_new_un_trafficking_protocol.pdf”

Background

Human trafficking is an age-old problem. However, it was recently brought to the forefront of awareness in this country in February of this year when, as reported by the Los Angeles Times on February 2, 2015, law enforcement agencies in 17 states arrested nearly 600 people and rescued 68 victims of human trafficking during a sting prior to Super Bowl XLIX.

Although laws against human trafficking have been on the books for years, in 2005, California enacted AB 22, which provides for higher penalties for the crime of human trafficking. In 2011, California enacted a law entitled “Transparency in Supply Chains Act”, which requires certain retailers disclose their efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from their supply chains. Notwithstanding these efforts, however, a 2012, report by the Polaris Project², using data collected by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, confirmed that between 2007 and 2012, most potential reports of human trafficking came from California, Texas, Florida and New York. In an effort to bring California to the front in combatting human trafficking, on September 28, 2014, California Governor Jerry Brown signed seven bills into law aimed at improving prosecution of this pervasive crime.

Human Trafficking in our neighboring Sacramento County has been well-documented. During our investigation, we were made aware of a sex trafficking ring within a Sacramento County high school involving 16 students. This ring was in operation as early as 2008, and went on for years undetected until 2012, when the Sacramento Division of the FBI arrested the two ring-leaders.

Within recent years, human trafficking has become a known issue in Placer County. In July, 2014, Auburn and Nevada City police, in conjunction with the Placer Special Investigation Unit, arrested two adults who owned massage parlors in Auburn and Nevada City, for pimping, pandering, human trafficking, and conspiracy. And, as recently as this year, The Placer County Sheriff, California Highway Patrol and Auburn Police, in conjunction with The Department of Justice, Special Incident Unit, conducted a two-month investigation into a prostitution ring which led to the arrest of a perpetrator on April 8, 2015.

The Placer County Grand Jury was interested in determining the extent to which human trafficking is an issue in Placer County and the programs which are available to the county to provide victim assistance, access to services and law enforcement training. The Grand Jury also investigated the county’s compliance with California’s Human Trafficking laws.

² A non-profit, non-governmental organization that works with world governments to combat and prevent modern day slavery and human trafficking.

Investigation Methods

The 2014-2015 Placer County Grand Jury:

- Interviewed a representative from a local Non-Profit home for juvenile victims of human trafficking.
- Reviewed numerous statistics, State and County informational documents and Penal Codes.
- Reviewed Placer County CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Task Force) Protocol and Screening for Human Trafficking.
- Interviewed local Children Services' representatives.
- Interviewed local law enforcement and special task force units specializing in Human Trafficking.
- Interviewed County officials.

One member of the Grand Jury was recused to avoid any conflict of interest and the appearance of bias due to previous employment.

Facts

- Placer County Children's System of Care (CSOC) falls under the Placer County Health and Human Services Agency.
- Placer County CSOC operates a 24-hour emergency shelter. The shelter houses and cares for children who are victims of neglect, abuse and/or abandonment in Placer County on an emergency basis while more permanent care is being arranged.
- In 2014, Placer County CSOC developed the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Task Force (CSEC).
- The CSEC task force is comprised of representative's from :
 1. Placer Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)
 2. District Attorneys office
 3. County Counsel
 4. Lincoln and Roseville Police Department
 5. Placer County Sherriff's Office
 6. Stand up Placer
 7. Family and Children Services
 8. Placer County Office of Education (PCOE)

- The CSEC task force was established to enable agencies that work directly with commercially sexually-exploited youth, to strategically partner to identify and respond to the specific needs of these youth, and to hold their traffickers accountable.
- The CSEC task force joined forces with Placer County Special Investigation Unit (SIU). SIU is comprised of fifteen members of the various Placer County law enforcement agencies who have taken part in a three-day course on Human Trafficking. SIU will be contacting victims from Placer County Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) and independently operated shelters. An important goal of SIU is to implicate pimps and other exploiters.
- CSEC Task Force has begun regular screening for possible CSEC activity in the shelter, in the JDF, and with ongoing child welfare workers.
- Another Placer County agency, System Management Advocacy and Resource Team (SMART), is comprised of four members: Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court, Chief Probation Officer, County Superintendent of Education and Director of Health & Human Services.
- Courage House, My Sister's House, and Stand Up Placer are organizations that offer a wide range of services including safe shelter, therapy, and legal help to human trafficking victims.
- In mid-2014 Roseville Police Department's entire staff completed P.O.S.T (Police Officers Standards and Training) program "Human Trafficking: Identify & Respond". This training fulfills requirement PC§13519.14 and Proposition 35 the "Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act" Initiative, approved by voters on November 6, 2012.
- Foster care children are more at risk to become victims of human trafficking.

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

- F1. Long-term placement for child victims of sex trafficking in Placer County is problematic.
- F2. An advocate, who has worked with victims for 15 years, uses stringent software to test for boundaries and sexual propensities (Diana Screening) in potential safe houses for victims. This advocate says that the use of this more extensive software could improve the probability of human trafficking victims to find a safe home.

- F3. In ten months, and as of the time of this interview, one facility had turned away 79 victims due to lack of beds.
- F4. Child victims are usually sent out of their local area for their own safety.
- F5. Law enforcement commented that monetary fines on massage parlors are not severe enough to stop the rotation of female victims. When law enforcement questions these females, they frequently have scripted answers (“just visiting from out of town, staying with a friend”, etc.) When law enforcement conducts follow-up investigations on the same businesses within a short period of time, those employees have moved on to new locations. New female employees have the same scripted responses to questions.
- F6. Law enforcement has much less control or power to protect adult victims since they are over 18, and unless charged with a crime, they can’t hold them.
- F7. Establishment of state-wide tracking systems for victims already identified by law enforcement is necessary.

Conclusion

Although Placer County does have instances of human trafficking, it is not on the scale of larger areas within California. The Grand Jury would like to commend Placer County Children’s System of Care and its partners in developing the CSEC task force. Although CSEC is a new task force, their research, services, and partnerships with other county services appear promising. Continued training for all County officials working with families is crucial for CSEC to fully realize its potential to identify risky situations, enforce the extensive laws already in place and to best assess and fulfill the needs of the victims.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. Health and Human Services continues to seek up to date information and state-of-the-art programs for human trafficking victim assistance.
- R2. The CSEC continue “active” coordination of all agencies involved in identifying and tracking human trafficking incidents in Placer County.
- R3. The CSEC develop human trafficking awareness programs to educate parents and children, with a special emphasis on foster parents and foster children.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Mr. Jeff Brown Director, Health and Human Services 3091 County Center Drive #290 Auburn, CA 95603	R1-R3	August 24, 2015

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