Health Needs of Trafficked Youth

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Numbers

- Estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness each year
- 1/3 Adolescents living on the street are recruited for sexual exploitation within 48 hours of becoming homeless
  - Foster care youth
  - Youth involved in Juvenile Justice
  - LGBTQ youth
  - Unaccompanied minors
Predisposing Factors

- History of substance abuse
- History of mental health problems
- Complex Trauma
  - Trauma on top of trauma
- Increased stress->changes in the brain

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with an average of 3.7 ACEs.

- 60.5% Parents Separated/Divorced
- 46.9% Emotional Neglect
- 42% Substance Abuse in the Household
- 40.7% Emotional Abuse
- 37% Physical Abuse
- 32.1% Mental Illness in the Household
- 32.1% Incarcerated Household Member
- 25.9% Physical Neglect
- 21% Sexual Abuse
- 18.5% Witness Domestic Violence

Reported more than 1 ACE
Reported 4 or more ACEs

YES Survey 2020, ASU
Predisposing Factors

- Biologic factors
  - Limited life experiences
  - Immature brain development
    - Affects decision making
    - Inhibition
    - Planning and Reasoning
Where are they seen?

- 88% of victims have come into contact with a medical professional while involved in trafficking
  - Very few are reported
    - Lack of education and training of providers and staff
    - Patients not self-identifying
- Emergency Departments
- Clinics
- Urgent Cares
- School Health Clinics
Traumatic experiences impact their life and behavior

- Hypervigilance
- Mistrust of health care providers
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Withdrawal
- Fearful of procedures
Medical Concerns

- Sexual assault
- Infections
- Physical Injury
- Exacerbation of chronic conditions
- Issues related to substance abuse

- YES Survey, 2020
  - Vision concerns
  - Asthma
  - Dental problems
  - Chronic pain
Medical Concerns

- Chronic Pain
  - Headaches
  - Chronic Abdominal Pain
  - Fibromyalgia
  - Can be somatic presentations of emotional pain/abuse
Mental Health Concerns

- Mental Health
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - PTSD
  - Mood Disorders
Physical Exam Findings

- Drug related health issues
- Bite marks
- Evidence of sexual trauma
- Cigarette burns
- Bruising, fractures
- Tattoos
Physical Exam Findings

- Malnutrition
- Bladder damage
- TMJ problems
- Hearing loss
- Bald patches
- Recurrent STIs, PID, HIV
Needs of Trafficked Youth

- Trained medical professionals and staff
  - Learn how to identify
  - Learn how to provide trauma-informed care
  - Training for those that provide acute care as well as those who provide ongoing care
- Increased access and availability of mental health resources
References

- **Child Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Health Care Needs of Victims** Jordan Greenbaum, James E. Crawford-Jakubiak and COMMITTEE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT. Pediatrics March 2015, 135 (3) 566-574; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2014-4138

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- **2020 Youth Experiences Survey.** October 2020. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, PHD. Kristen Bracy, MA, MSW. Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research