

### Spotlight on Alameda County: Services for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children



Alameda County, through a blend of public and private partners, adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). While the range of services and responses is extensive, collaborators recognize that gaps remain, and current services could be further developed to improve outcomes for exploited children.

#### **MISSEY (Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth)**

MISSEY is a survivor-informed and survivor-lead empowerment model that provides direct services for CSEC and youth at high risk of commercial sexual exploitation between the ages of 11-18 who identify as female. Services include a drop-in center, case management, foster care youth advocacy, mentorship for at-risk youth, and an employment and training program for transition-age youth. Many members of MISSEY's staff are program alumni. MISSEY also provides both local and national training on this issue.

#### **WestCoast Children's Clinic (WCC)**

WCC created the C-Change Program to address the complex mental health needs of CSEC. C-Change clinicians provide intensive community-based therapy, crisis intervention, and case management. Services are responsive to the unique needs of sexually exploited youth and those at-risk of exploitation. Additionally, WCC developed an assessment tool, the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths – Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CANS-CSE), in order to better understand the needs and strengths of exploited youth and the interventions that help them. WCC also engages in legislative advocacy and provides clinical training and technical assistance throughout the state.

#### **Human Exploitation & Trafficking (H.E.A.T.) Watch Program**

H.E.A.T. Watch, led by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, provides community outreach, law enforcement training, effective prosecution of human trafficking cases, and quarterly best practices trainings and networking opportunities through the Bay Area H.E.A.T. Coalition. H.E.A.T. Watch developed Safety Net, a weekly multi-disciplinary team meeting to address the needs of CSEC youth and create a comprehensive safety plan with county partners. Partners include Probation, Social Services, medical providers, the district attorney and public defender, Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR), Child Abuse Listening, Interviewing and Coordination Center (CALICO), MISSEY, and WCC. Moreover, Safety Net works with the H.E.A.T. Unit, a prosecution and investigation unit in the DA's office, to ensure the safety of CSEC youth who are planning to testify against their traffickers. H.E.A.T. Watch has also partnered with BAWAR and JPG Consultants to develop the Young Women's Saturday



Program (YWSP), a 12-week educational program for at-risk and CSEC youth who are referred from ACGC. YWSP offers case management, advocacy and life-skills trainings.

### **The Alameda County Girl's Court (ACGC)**

ACGC is a collaborative effort that combines multiple agencies and organizations to provide a consistent, thoughtful, and empowering court environment for girls who have been identified as CSEC, at-risk for CSEC, or at-risk for ongoing or escalating criminal activity. Community providers such as MISSEY, BAWAR, and WCC frequently attend hearings in the ACGC to provide additional information about the youth's progress and needs, and are viewed by the court as valued and necessary partners in the judicial process. Additionally, the ACGC holds discussion roundtables twice a month with the collaborating agencies to review troubling trends, successes and failures, and ways to improve the services and supports it provides through the court.

### **Alameda County Assessment Center (ACAC)**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) operates the ACAC, a facility where most children are taken when they are first removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. In addition to the mental health and medical assessments, DCFS developed a strategy to better engage suspected victims of CSE by collaborating with advocates from a local organization dedicated to serving CSEC, Motivating Inspiring Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY), in the ACAC. MISSEY advocates are on site each day to talk with any child who comes into the center in order to provide internal referrals to MISSEY and link youth to other providers. MISSEY advocates also train placement staff at the Assessment Center as well as foster parents and group home workers. MISSEY advocates who engage with exploited children at the ACAC frequently follow up with caregivers and child welfare workers for up to 120 days after placement.

### **Asian Health Services (AHS)**

AHS, a community health center in Oakland, California, identifies CSEC and links them to services and supports to keep them out of the juvenile justice system. AHS has partnered with Banteay Srei (see below) to develop a protocol for identifying and engaging CSEC through trauma-informed practices. AHS approaches trafficking through a public health lens and screens every youth who comes to its Teen Clinic for exploitation risk factors. If a medical professional suspects that a youth is a victim of exploitation, she will make a child protective services report as required by California's mandated reporter guidelines, treat the child's medical, mental health, and social issues, and work to build rapport with the child to ensure follow-up visits.

### **Banteay Srei**

Banteay Srei empowers Southeast Asian women across generations to build community, achieve political power, and embrace the freedom to thrive. Banteay Srei seeks to further advance economic security and reproductive justice for young Southeast Asian women in Oakland, as well as their families and communities. Its culturally appropriate programming includes innovative leadership development and youth advocacy for Southeast Asian CSEC and young women at risk of sexual exploitation. It runs Self-Reliant and Empowered Individuals (SREI), a weekly program that provides participants with a safe space to identify, learn, and explore reproductive justice through a self-empowerment lens. Southeast Asian Unity through Cultural Exploration (SAUCE) is a traditional Southeast Asian cooking class, where guest cooks share stories and recipes with the Banteay Srei's clients. Bong Srei (Older Sister in Cambodian) is an intensive leadership training program that empowers young Southeast Asian women to lead activities and serve as mentors.



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