



CRIMINAL JUSTICE FAX



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Local Community Assessment Confirms that Homeless and Runaway Youth are Vulnerable to Prostitution

A recent community assessment completed by SANDAG, with funding from The California Endowment, shines light on an often unseen problem of prostituted youth in the San Diego Region. The assessment will inform the ACTION Network's (Against Child Trafficking and The Prostitution of Teens in Our Neighborhoods) strategic plan to address child and youth sexual exploitation in the San Diego region. To gain a comprehensive picture of the problem, the assessment included surveys with 200 homeless and runaway youth, as well as interviews with professionals and businesses in an area with high prostitution activity.

The results from the surveys revealed that one in three youth had been involved in acts of prostitution and another one in five had been approached in the past to engage in some type of prostitution but had refused. As Table 1 shows, prostituted youth in the sample have a myriad of challenges and traumas to overcome, from substance use to repeated incidents of victimization. When asked about their needs, youth reported wanting a safe and secret place to stay, as well as someone to talk to.

Table 1
SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH FACE MULTIPLE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH RISKS

Ever use alcohol	96%
Ever use drugs	91%
Ever visit the emergency room	81%
Ever abused by family or friend	84%
Ever a victim of a crime	63%
Ever receive prior mental health treatment	57%
Ever been pregnant	56%
Ever had an STD	29%
TOTAL	50 - 63

SOURCE: SANDAG; ACTION Network Community Assessment Youth Surveys, 2007

Information gained from the community assessment informed a series of recommendations. Included in these were the formation of a regionwide coordinated response to the issue, the creation of a data collection system to accurately document the scope of the problem, and the dedication of resources to develop services that could address the numerous needs of those children and youth who have been exploited. The next steps include a review of the report by the ACTION Network to decide which recommendation they would like to implement. A full copy of the report is available at the SANDAG Web site at www.sandag.org/cjc.