

## **The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

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Runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth are especially susceptible to a variety of threats to their safety. One such threat has garnered government, media, and agency attention within recent years: the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSEC). In 2000, the federal government established the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), thus recognizing the importance of public education surrounding issues of exploitation.

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) operates a 24/7 toll-free crisis line for youth and families across the United States, available at 1-800-RUNAWAY. Each call is guided by our philosophy of remaining non-judgmental, non-directive, and confidential. NRS liners respect the fact that our callers have sought assistance in dealing with a current crisis; together, liner and caller consider options most beneficial to resolving the crisis situation and work to ensure the caller feels empowered to make decisions affecting her own life.

As service providers, it is crucial to recognize and combat our own stereotypes regarding people engaged in the sex trade and those enduring exploitation. To this end, NRS staff completed a three-day intensive training conducted by the CSEC Community Intervention Project (CCIP) Train the Trainer Institute.

Through experiential activities, video, and discussion, this workshop will define the issue of CSEC and ask participants to analyze their own attitudes and beliefs about affected youth. Participants will consider the language used in conversations about CSEC and identify factors that may put some youth at risk. In addition, the reality of demand will be addressed as a crucial role in the existence of the sex trade. Finally, participants will learn about the programs that are addressing this issue nationwide.