

A California Multidisciplinary Juvenile Court: Serving Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth

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Research suggests that 90% of youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced at least one traumatic event (Arroyo, 2001). One such traumatic event is the commercialized sexual exploitation of children and youth (CSEC). Over the past decade, governmental organizations and community agencies have recognized that the sexual exploitation of children is a significant problem in the United States. In California alone, human trafficking task forces have identified 1200 youth as victims of sexual exploitation from 2010 to 2012 (Walker, 2013). Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation often become involved in the juvenile justice system and present with unique challenges and needs. This article reviews recent public policy and community responses related to the needs of CSEC youth involved in the juvenile justice system. A case example from Sacramento, CA, is used to illustrate the key components, innovations, multidisciplinary collaborations, and challenges of creating a specialized court. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

OVERVIEW OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000). Child sexual exploitation is a type of abuse involving minors that includes sex trafficking, pornography, and prostitution. Oftentimes, children are also exposed to physical violence, forced or encouraged drug and alcohol use, and emotional abuse within the context of child sexual exploitation. The U.S. Department of Justice has identified three levels of sex trafficking. These levels include local exploitation by a few individuals, small regional networks involving multiple adults and children, and large national/international networks where children are traded or sold as commodities. Those at higher risk of sexual exploitation include youth of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth; also youth who have been exposed to abuse and neglect, and young females (California Department of Criminal Justice, 2010). Homelessness and running away behaviors can also be precursors to the sexual exploitation of youth (Hyatt, Spurr, & Sciupac, 2012). The FBI estimates that 100,000 children are sold for sex each year. The issue of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking is a pressing issue for California—with the state leading the nation in arrests for juvenile prostitution, making up 50% of all U.S. juvenile prostitution arrests (Schneider, 2009). The FBI has identified 13 nationwide high prostitution areas, including three areas in California: San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San

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Diego. Sacramento is also a city heavily affected by sexual exploitation. Sacramento ranked the second highest city for children recovered in a federal sweep (Operation Cross Country V) of child prostitution rings across the United States. In the last eight years, Innocence Lost, a task force involving Sacramento FBI and local law enforcement, has recovered over 2,000 victims of child sexual exploitation (Mertz, 2013).

Traditionally, the approach to addressing the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in the United States has been to arrest youth on charges of prostitution and/or ignore its existence. In the last 20 years, there has been a national movement in the implementation of more victim-centered approaches to the sexual exploitation of children and youth. The passing of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) specified that any child under the age of 18 years old who is used for “the purpose of exploitation through sexual servitude (prostitution), regardless of the absence of economic leverage, manipulation, fraud, coercion, threats, force or violence is considered a *commercially sexually exploited child and a victim of human trafficking*” (<http://go.usa.gov/3dqVH>). This federal law has led states to implement different approaches on how to best serve these youth. For example, some states (e.g., Illinois) have chosen to implement Safe Harbor laws, where youth involved in sex trafficking under the age of 18 are referred to the child welfare system rather than being criminally prosecuted. In California, recent legislation (2014; SB 738) clarifies that sexual exploitation/trafficking qualifies as a mandated child abuse report and should be treated as such regardless of the age of the youth (up to age 18). As Child Protective Services in California responds to the clarification in state statute, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in referrals for child sexual exploitation in the child welfare system and a concurrent decrease of delinquency court involvement.

Until this shift occurs, it is likely that CSEC youth will continue to have involvement in the juvenile justice system, and professionals should be knowledgeable and prepared for the types of mental health problem unique to this population. Research suggests that a majority of juvenile-justice-involved youth have been exposed to multiple traumatic events and also have significant trauma symptoms, including CSEC-involved youth. Specifically, research has demonstrated that juvenile-justice-involved youth have rates of a diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that are similar to the PTSD rates of war veterans (Wolpaw & Ford, 2004; Roehr, 2007). Additionally, it is estimated that most youth in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to six or more traumatic events in their childhood (Abram et al., 2004). The severity and scope of this experience of polyvictimization undermines many areas of youth functioning, including health (Felitti et al., 1998), emotion regulation (Boden et al., 2013; Ford & Blaustein, 2012), and psychophysiology (Watts-English, Fortson, Gibler, Hooper, & DeBellis, 2006; Ford, Chapman, Hawke, & Albert, 2007). This knowledge has resulted in the implementation of trauma-informed juvenile justice systems in various states with the goal of better serving these youth (Ford, Kerig, & Olafson, 2014). One major legal movement towards responding to CSEC victims has been the development of specialized court systems to navigate the intersection of legal, mental health, and social service systems.

Specialized Courts

In addition to the implementation of trauma-informed juvenile justice systems, specialized courts that address the specific needs of juvenile justice youth have been developed (e.g., Substance Abuse Court, Mental Health Court; Castellano, 2011; Kaiser &

Holtfreter, 2016). Specialized courts are typically conceptualized to be more “problem solving” and less punitive. The courts function under the principles of “therapeutic jurisprudence,” which promotes a non-adversarial, treatment-oriented approach while still upholding due process rights of the offender (Porter, Rempel, & Mansky, 2010). The first juvenile specialized court was developed in 2001 in Santa Clara County, CA, and focused on youth who were experiencing mental health problems (Herman, 2005). Despite the spread of additional specialized court programs, little empirical research exists on the effectiveness of such courts.

More recently, specialized courts have focused on factors that lead to CSEC and at-risk youth being involved in situations that could lead to sexual exploitation. For instance, approximately 80–90% of these youth have a history of sexual abuse and 70–80% have had previous involvement in the child welfare system (Walker, 2013). The frequency of prior victimization and involvement in dependency points to greater emphasis on the problems and needs of transitional aged youth (Courtney, Charles, Okpych, Napolitano, & Halsted, 2014). It has been argued that better preparation for adulthood and increasing resources (e.g., basic needs, emergency/transitional housing, medical care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, education and vocational training, intensive case management, and mentoring) for these transitional youth may improve their functioning and result in less risk for a number of problems—including CESC (Goodman & Laurence n.d.). Specialized court systems may be one pathway for youth to be diverted toward a more positive and stable adulthood. Four such specialized courts (LA County STAR court, Alameda County Girls’ Court, San Diego Sexual Assault Court, and Sacramento CSEC court) currently exist in California that focus on the needs of the CSEC population. Although the programs differ in structure and procedures, they tend to all utilize similar principles, such as forming cohesive multidisciplinary teams. Goodman and Laurence (n.d.) provided six recommendations for CSEC specific courtrooms, including (1) training and capacity building, (2) use of multi-system approach and cross-system coordination, (3) screening and assessment, (4) trauma-informed programming, (5) meaningful engagement and relationship development, and (6) creation of specialized services and treatment options (pp. 86–87). The case example delineated below provides details of the Sacramento County Specialized CSEC court as one example of a multidisciplinary response to the complex needs of CSEC youth. All six of the recommendations made by Goodman and Laurence will be addressed.

CASE EXAMPLE: COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO SPECIALIZED CSEC COURT

Development of the Court

Since 2012, the community of Sacramento had been participating in statewide conversations about the issue of commercialized child sexual exploitation. One such example is the county’s participation in the Child Welfare Council. The Child Welfare Council was created by the California Legislature to serve as an advisory body to improve the collaboration and process of multiple agencies, programs, and courts that serve children and youth in California’s child welfare and foster care systems (Walker, 2013).

In response to statewide encouragement to appropriately identify and serve CSEC youth, a collaborative conversation among the Juvenile Presiding Judge, the Office of the District Attorney, and the Officer of the Public Defender occurred over time regarding the development of a specialized court to serve the vulnerable population of concern. Concurrently, mental health professionals and psychologists at the UC Davis Children's Hospital CAARE Center were conducting identification, screening, engagement, and intervention for CSEC and at-risk youth who were incarcerated at the Sacramento Youth Detention Center through state and federal grant programs. These efforts reinforced the notion that CSEC issues were prevalent among the Sacramento juvenile justice population. The county decided to take the opportunity to improve practices for CSEC youth, and the Presiding Juvenile Court Judge created a dedicated docket and specialized processes for Sacramento County. Of the approximately 192 youth served in the courtroom thus far, there have been three males and 189 females. The low incidence of males involved in the courtroom is likely due to a less intensive CSEC screening process for male youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, males tend to disclose sexual abuse at a lower rate than females (Ullman & Filipas, 2005). In the specialized court, there are over 100 active cases and the remaining are considered closed/inactive (i.e., they have been transferred out to other counties or probation has been terminated). The ages of the youth have ranged from 13 to 20 years; 28% are 15 and under, 51% are 16–17, and 21% are 18 and over, which is consistent with findings in Alameda County in 2012 (Walker, 2013). Approximately half of the youth identify as African American, 18% mixed race/other, 18% Caucasian, and 14% Hispanic. These statistics are consistent with studies that have confirmed the overrepresentation of minorities in the criminal justice system (Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002). After youth are identified and moved to the specialized court docket, they are required to have more frequent court appearances. They could be required to attend as soon as 2 weeks or up to 60 days after their last court appearance depending on their needs, behaviors, and length of time in the specialized court. The rationale for more frequent court appearances is to make sure the needs of the youth are being met, they are attending services regularly, and they are feeling safe. This is also used in hope of reducing runaway behavior.

Training and Capacity Building

County-wide training occurred to assist professionals in obtaining an increase in trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding serving CSEC youth. Trainings varied among professional roles, but tended to be approximately 3–6 h in duration. Typically, professionals were provided first with an overview of trauma, trauma-related symptoms, and trauma's effect on youth served in the juvenile justice system. Second, more specific training was offered to probation staff, law enforcement, and other professionals related to serving CSEC youth that included statistics, risk and vulnerability factors, recruitment strategies of perpetrators, trauma bonding, stages of change model of behavior, and effective treatment and interventions for complex trauma. Training was modified to include specific strategies to help each discipline to engage, interact, and intervene when working with CSEC youth. Last, professionals were trained on vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and self-care strategies. To date, training has occurred for probation/youth detention facility staff, court personnel, district attorney's office, public defender's office, community mental health

providers, social workers, and volunteers working with youth in the detention center. Training continues to occur to keep the team current on CSEC-related issues.

Capacity building occurred among all disciplines. First, the presiding juvenile judge created a specialized docket for CSEC youth. Selected staff from both the public defender's office and the district attorney's office adjusted their caseloads to create more capacity to serve CSEC-involved youth. Service providers dedicated specialized therapists and social workers who had extensive knowledge of working with adolescents with complex trauma histories. Last, at the court's conception, youth were being seen by a wide range of probation officers and would often be transferred between probation officers. In response to the team's demand, probation was able to create two staff positions with full-time caseloads dedicated to CSEC youth assigned to this specialized court. Sacramento Child Protective Services has begun to train social workers on CSEC issues so that they can best serve these youth. Additionally, currently there are dedicated social workers for emergency response investigations that will be specifically trained in CSEC issues.

Use of Multi-system Approach and Cross-system Coordination

To be effective, the specialized court process involves a significant amount of cross-system collaboration. Collaborators include Juvenile Court, Office of the Public Defender, Office of the District Attorney, Probation, Child Welfare, children's representation (for dependents), mental health providers, Office of Education, and other local advocacy centers. One such example of this multi-system collaborative approach is the pre-court multidisciplinary meetings. Approximately 2 days before each designated specialized court docket, the multidisciplinary team holds a meeting with the purpose of staffing cases in order to identify any needs and gather opinions regarding a plan for the youth in an efficient way. Required attendees to the specialized court are the public defender, district attorney, CPS social worker, youth's dependency attorney, court probation officer, and therapist/case manager for the youth. Optional attendees included law enforcement detectives, field probation officers, school personnel, and youth advocates. Collaborators each share their background and experience with the youth and provide recommendations related to physical, emotional, and behavioral needs, placement options, school attendance, and probation compliance. This multidisciplinary team approach allows the professionals to examine the youth's needs from a comprehensive strength-based approach. It also allows more knowledge and access to community resources for better planning related to placement, mental health needs, social service needs, and monitoring to fully meet the youth's needs. This team approach is hypothesized to increase a youth's ability to be successful in meeting probation requirements and reducing the risk of sexual exploitation. Essential to this coordinated approach is a careful screening and assessment of youth—to identify them and begin to identify their unique needs.

Screening and Assessment

Screening for involvement in specialized court. Youth were identified for the specialized docket through case review examining previous "prostitution" charges and/or any known history of sexual exploitation. However, cases were also examined for known risk factors related to CSEC, including multiple runaway behaviors, multiple

placements, and arrests near known solicitation areas. It should be noted that most youth identified for the docket presented with other crimes, in addition to charges of solicitation or prostitution. Screening and identification of commercially exploited youth also occurs by completion of an assessment screening tool. Most youth are screened with the Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT; WestCoast Children's Clinic, unpublished instrument). The CSE-IT was developed to help child-serving systems more quickly identify whether the child and youth they serve are experiencing some type of commercial sexual exploitation. The screening protocol was created for youth ages 10 and older, and is a checklist of indicators that determine the likelihood of risk of sexual exploitation (WestCoast Children's Clinic, unpublished instrument). Although not empirically tested, the CSE-IT lists many of the recognized risk factors associated with commercial sexual exploitation (e.g., instability in life functioning, involvement in coercive relationships, trauma history/exposure, and sexually related health problems). Currently in Sacramento, the CSE-IT is being piloted by the UCD Children's Hospital CAARE Center, Sacramento City Unified School District, Sacramento Children's Law Center, Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento, Sacramento County Probation Department, and Sacramento Department of Child and Family Services.

Trauma assessment. Youth are typically referred to services upon their first court date in the specialized court docket. This typically includes a trauma-informed assessment by a trauma-informed mental health service provider. Providers were chosen based on their previous work with sexually exploited youth and their specialization in implementing empirically based treatments for trauma. Although most youth in the courtroom have experienced trauma, a comprehensive assessment is the best option to prioritize their mental health and social service needs. Trauma assessments include a clinical and psychosocial interview to determine a client's basic needs, family history, background of system involvement, trauma history, and strengths. Additionally, the evaluator will administer standardized measures to determine mental health needs and trauma-related symptoms. Currently, the standardized measures that are utilized to screen for the presence and severity of trauma symptoms includes the UCLA PTSD Index (Steinberg, Brymer, Decker, & Pynoos, 2004), the Trauma Symptom Inventory (Briere, 1996), and the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991).

Trauma-Informed Programming

If trauma treatment is warranted, youth are referred to a mental health provider to receive empirically based treatment. These treatments, such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2006), Seeking Safety (Najavits, Gallop, & Weiss, 2006), or Integrated Treatment for Complex Trauma (Briere & Langtree, 2011), are recognized for their effectiveness in reducing trauma symptoms and promoting emotional regulation. Trauma-informed cognitive behavioral group therapy is also available for youth who may not be ready to engage in therapy on an individual basis or who would benefit from learning with peers. If trauma treatment is not warranted at the time of assessment, recommendations and referrals are made based on needs. Examples of referrals include drug and alcohol counseling for addictions, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Berk, Shelby, Avina, & Tangeman, 2014) for high risk behaviors, or Multisystemic Therapy (Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 2009) for oppositional- or delinquent-type

behaviors. Youth are court mandated to treatment; however, their opinions regarding what service would be most helpful are considered when developing case plans and making referrals.

In addition to trauma-informed counseling, the Sacramento juvenile court system made changes to become more trauma informed. A trauma-informed approach “acknowledges the prevalence and impact of trauma and attempts to create a sense of safety” (SAMHSA, 2013, p. 1). To be considered trauma informed, specific practices are recommended, such as being educated about the effects of trauma on functioning, making specific inquiries about trauma-related symptoms, using trauma-informed language, viewing maladaptive behavior as once being needed for survival, recognizing potential trauma triggers and responses that may occur in the courtroom, and treating youth with dignity and respect (SAMHSA, 2013). All professionals involved in the CSEC specialized court work diligently to understand a youth’s behavior in the context of trauma and sexual exploitation. Additionally, mutual dignity and respect are communicated to the youth frequently. Once the youth is present in court, the presiding judge will typically interact directly with the youth, and inquire about how they are doing or ask about an upcoming event. Additionally, the judge provides positive verbalizations (i.e., praise) and support for even small efforts or improvements. Notably, the district attorney will often turn and face the youth to offer a verbalization of praise before concerns are stated. All professionals regularly communicate to the youth that the court is concerned about their well-being and safety.

An additional aspect of the trauma-informed approach includes having service providers, and both legal and informal advocates, present during the court. This approach gives youth the opportunity to utilize the providers as a source of coping should a youth be anxious or intimidated in response in the courtroom or court personnel. Additionally, directly addressing significant issues within a courtroom setting can lead to difficult and very emotional responses from the youth—which may impair their ability to acquire and retain information. For youth who are new to the court process, it allows a chance to physically meet someone from the agency that will be providing their trauma screening and assessment. Last, service providers will assist the court by providing more general recommendations or guidelines on utilizing a trauma-informed approach.

Meaningful Engagement and Relationship

Within a psychotherapeutic setting, engagement has been recognized as an essential element in developing a relationship that can result in a positive and meaningful outcome (McKay *et al.*, 2004). While the concepts surrounding the development of engagement are complex, the focus lies in developing a personal relationship in which the professional elicits information about the concerns of the client, as well as known barriers and strengths. Similarly, engagement within a judicial setting is a vital component of working with CSEC youth and can help facilitate the change process. When youth on the specialized docket are incarcerated, efforts are made to meet with the youth before their designated court date to help inform them of the process and allow them to see a familiar face when they arrive at court. This usually involves participation in a pre-hearing conference, discussions with their legal advocate, and review by their assigned mental health provider. Additionally, UC Davis mental health providers created a 3 week engagement and psychoeducation group for CSEC and at-risk youth

incarcerated in Juvenile Hall. This group provides psychoeducation about sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and trauma. Additionally, coping skills are taught in order to help the youth manage their symptoms while they are incarcerated and/or in situations when they may be asked to participate in the courtroom. Although not all youth in the specialized court have the opportunity to attend the 3 week group, a majority of the youth have at least attended one group session. A survivor advocate attends group sessions on a weekly basis to discuss personal aspects of surviving sexual exploitation and provides the youth with hope of leaving a CSEC environment after they are released from the detention center. Youth then see this same advocate and/or mental health provider present at their court hearing, which allows the youth to continue to build relationships with these professionals. Although youth may not be particularly happy to be involved in the juvenile justice system, youth have anecdotally reported that they come to realize that the members of the specialized court are concerned about them, which increases their engagement in services.

Creation of Specialized Services and Treatment Options

Specialized CSEC services and advocacy are provided for youth, including individual therapy, group therapy, and peer/advocate mentorship. One such example of specialized services is the creation of a survivor advocates group at UC Davis CAARE Center—led by a survivor advocate. The conceptualization of this group is to engage youth who may still be involved in exploitation or who may be only beginning to consider leaving their exploiters. The group is 8 weeks in length and focuses on safety planning, psychoeducation about sexual exploitation and trauma bonding, and skills to develop healthy relationships.

QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF SPECIALIZED COURT

With the multidisciplinary nature of the specialized court, it is important to understand perspectives from other members of the team and demonstrate the impact of the specialized court. Therefore, primary collaborators/team members were asked to respond to four questions regarding the specialized court system. Questions were as follows. (1) What is your role in the specialized court? (2) How is it different from your traditional role? (3) What is working in the specialized court? (4) What are the needs and challenges to enhance effectiveness? Each collaborator's response was reviewed and summarized by the authors. Respondents included the Presiding Juvenile Court Judge for Sacramento County, Assistant Public Defender of Sacramento County, Children's Law Center (legal advocate for dependent children) of California firm director, Probation Department, and Social Worker/Clinician of UCD Children's Hospital CAARE Center. Roles in the specialized court will be defined and a qualitative review of responses will be described.

The presiding judge of Juvenile Court is responsible for overseeing how the juvenile justice and child welfare systems are serving the youth within Sacramento County. The presiding judge spearheaded the conversation regarding the development of a specialized court and currently oversees the specialized CSEC docket. The primary role of the public defender is to represent the legal rights of the youth. Additionally, the public defender can serve as an advocate in determining the need for services and the barriers

to receiving them. The role of probation is multi-faceted in that they manage youth in the field or when on home supervision, and also youth incarcerated at the youth detention center. Responsibilities include screening the youth, making detention recommendations, preparing investigation reports, and supervising youth in the community. In Sacramento County, youth in the dependency system who have been affected by abuse and neglect are also provided legal representation through the Children's Law Center. Roles of these attorneys are to represent and advocate for their client's safety and best interests. Children's Law Center attorney's also have case managers who can facilitate connections with required services. Last, responses were received by the UCD CAARE Center social worker, who conducts the trauma assessment/screening and refers youth to trauma-informed services. The social worker is also present in court each week.

Regarding what has changed from their traditional roles, all respondents spoke of better *collaboration* among professionals, including the pre-court multidisciplinary team meeting. "With diverse disciplines represented, the pre-court meeting provides a forum for the attorneys and advocates to frankly discuss the youth's pending case, what services and supports are necessary to provide safety and stability, as well as assessing how to establish and maintain contacts with caring, committed, and trusted adults" (S. Boulware-Eurie, personal communication, October 17, 2015). One respondent spoke of increased trust that has developed as it became clear that all of the professionals involved in cases were looking out for the best interest of the child. "We are all in this together for the benefit of the child" (K. Kutz, personal communication, October 22, 2015). Last, one respondent mentioned the helpfulness of the training for professionals in better understanding the dynamics of commercial sexual exploitation.

The multidisciplinary approach was also mentioned by 85% of the responders when asked to describe what was working well within the specialized court system. One respondent discussed the benefit of having service providers in the courtroom. "The therapists get a chance to explain their services and ease any anxiety a child may have over going to counseling. The representatives are also there to inform the court participants when a child is not participating in therapy" (K. Kutz, personal communication, October 22, 2015). Three of the seven responders mentioned that having a consistent judge, public defender, and district attorney allowed for building relationships with youth and increasing their trust in the system. Additional comments on what is working included better identification of CSEC youth, more diversion options, and advancing county initiatives: "The use of a common language and victim-centered approach has allowed for improved identification, communication, and increased trust among multidisciplinary team members. In turn this has reduced shame and enhanced safety, trust, and communication with the youth being served in the court and community" (J. Landini, personal communication, October 30, 2015).

Respondents were asked about the challenges or needs of the specialized court. Approximately 70% of the respondents would like to see more safe, stable, and positive placement options for CSEC youth. "There needs to be a comprehensive systems response to treat these youth as victims and place them in the least restrictive placement that promotes safety, health, and wellbeing that isn't detention" (B. Lee, personal communication, October 20, 2015). "Unless there are ways to meet the very basic needs of the youth in our own county, there are limited options available to the [team]" (R. Raymond, personal communication, October 16, 2015). Approximately half of the respondents would like to see more funding for a full-time case manager for the court ("A case manager who is able to serve as bridge between the court

and the service providers, provide assistance in navigating systems and serve as a trusted and caring adult would enhance our collaboration"; S. Boulware-Eurie, personal communication, October 17, 2015). One respondent also encouraged better access to inpatient drug treatment programs for CSEC youth struggling with addiction. "There is such complexity to each case involving substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, high risk behaviors, and unstable or nonexistent support systems. By the time many are motivated and ready for treatment, they are no longer eligible for the programs that can address their needs" (J. Landini, personal communication, October 30, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

Limitations and Future Directions

The qualitative data gathered is a small anecdotal review of the opinions of professionals involved in a CSEC specialized court. Currently, there is limited data describing the effectiveness of the specialized court; and no data to indicate that these efforts help youth in disconnecting from sexually exploitive environments/relationships and promote a healthier lifestyle. Developers of the CSEC specialize court are interested in a number of variables to determine the effectiveness of the approach, including both short-term and long-term outcomes. Short-term outcomes include reduction in run-away behaviors, more stable or permanent placements, engagement and sustainment in mental health services, and lower engagement in exploitation related behaviors. Long-term outcomes include termination of probation, reduction of trauma symptoms, completion of mental health services, school graduation, and consistent employment. Another limitation of the present review is that the participating youths' reaction to the specialized court is unknown. Due to confidentiality issues, youth responses were not included in this review. It will be important to eventually conduct qualitative and quantitative reviews of youths' reactions to the specialized court and multidisciplinary system.

Regarding serving CSEC youth in Sacramento, there was consensus that the biggest limitation was lack of specialized placements, including specially trained trauma-informed group homes and/or foster homes. Although conversations regarding the development of specialized placements are occurring, there is no current specialized placement for CSEC youth within Sacramento County. Despite this limitation, the court and county appear to be progressively moving to better meet the needs of CSEC youth.

There is more work to be done regarding effectively serving CSEC youth. Grounded in a fundamental shift in philosophy about trauma and victimization, state and nationwide initiatives are beginning to change court and social systems regarding the incarceration of victims of sexual exploitation. Nationally and in California, there is a widespread consensus that CSEC youth should not be incarcerated and instead be served solely by the child welfare system. Since early 2015, Sacramento County has engaged in an interagency steering committee to develop protocols for serving CSEC youth primarily through the child welfare system. As the protocols are developed and implemented in the future, it is unknown how this will impact the CSEC specialized court system. However, sexually exploited children and youth for now will still be

filtered through the juvenile justice system—warranting the continuation of a specialized, multidisciplinary, and trauma-informed courtroom to best serve the comprehensive needs of CSEC youth.

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