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ABSTRACT

Georgia Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Resource and Protocol Guide

By

Sanon Kaija Williams

April 13, 2021

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a heinous and illegal act against children that negatively impacts youth across the world. It robs them of their innocence and increases their risk for psychological, developmental, and physical issues later in life. CSEC is a significant issue in the State of Georgia. Georgia has been identified as having one of the highest CSEC rates and economies in the United States. Many risk factors put youth at risk for commercial sexual exploitation. Child and family support agencies, law enforcement, schools, and the general public must be aware of them to combat CSEC. This paper aimed to create a comprehensive document to help those who work closely with children and families understand CSEC's complexities and address it in Georgia. This capstone paper provides an overview of what CSEC is, the prevalence of the issue, pathways to CSEC, recruiting tactics, information on Georgia's new CSEC response team, responses from professionals within the field, and policy recommendations for next steps as the state moves forward in addressing this issue.

**Georgia Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Resource and
Protocol Guide**

by

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B.S., Public Health

Furman University

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of Georgia State University in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**ATLANTA, GEORGIA
30303**

APPROVAL PAGE

**Georgia Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Resource and
Protocol Guide**

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Author's Statement Page

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Introduction

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is a lucrative underground industry that affects approximately two million children worldwide (Polaris Project, 2014). Estimates indicate that an additional 325,000 children are at risk of becoming commercially sexually exploited every year in the US (Walker & California Child Welfare Council, 2013). However, accurate CSEC estimates are likely to be higher, but the statistics are not readily available due to challenges identifying victims. Given the severity of the issue, policymakers, law enforcement, academic institutions, and other professionals that serve children and families must fully comprehend CSEC's root causes to address it effectively. This Capstone paper aims to emphasize the pathways through which children become commercially sexually exploited, highlight Georgia's new CSEC response team, bring awareness to the issue, and engage stakeholders to address CSEC collectively. Further, it will help Georgia's youth who have experienced CSEC and those currently being commercially sexually exploited in Georgia.

Background

CSEC is defined as “a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person” (OJJDP, 2019). CSEC and human trafficking often intersect because CSEC is a specific type of human trafficking involving minors aged 17 or younger who are commercially sexually exploited.

By definition, human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to attain any type of labor and or commercial sexual act (*What is human trafficking?* 2020). Human trafficking can involve women, men, and children.

CSEC and child sexual abuse overlap because child abuse can involve commercial sexual exploitation of youth (Senate Research Office, 2008). Child sexual abuse is a form of child maltreatment where a perpetrator engages in any kind of sexual activity with a minor (Barnert



Figure 1 Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States (2014)

et al., 2017; *Child Sexual Abuse* / RAINN., n.d.; *Child Trafficking in the US*, n.d.). According to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) § 19--7-5, the mandatory child abuse reporting statute requires teachers, doctors, law enforcement, and other child and family-serving organization to

report any suspected type of child abuse to the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)

(Senate Research Office, 2008; Human Trafficking Case Management Statewide Protocol, 2020).

By law-making CSEC a reportable offense to DFCS in Georgia. Reports can be made via phone, fax, email, or online.

The State of Georgia classifies CSEC as a sub-set of human trafficking, encompassing the term Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) (Human Trafficking Case Management Statewide Protocol, 2020). CSEC is used to identify youth of all nationalities, whereas DMST classifies American citizens under 18 years old who are commercially sexually exploited (Human

Trafficking Case Management Statewide Protocol, 2020). This classification makes identifying victims and reporting CSEC arduous.

The prevalence of CSEC

CSEC is a significant burden that impacts youth worldwide. Each year, thousands of children are lured, coerced, kidnapped, and tricked by traffickers or pimps into the sex trade. The FBI identified Atlanta, Georgia, as one of the 14 US cities with the highest CSEC rates (Finn et al., 2009). Out of 8 cities examined, an analysis ranked Atlanta, Georgia, as having the highest economy for commercial sex (Dank et al., 2014). The profit is estimated at \$290 million (Dank et al., 2014).

Due to underreporting, difficulties in identifying and measuring victims and perpetrators, local and national statistics on CSEC are scarce (*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, n.d.). Broader

estimates are available, but they are often mixed in with

data on human trafficking. Due to these factors, data related explicitly to CSEC are limited;

however, with new initiatives developing in Georgia, this could cultivate more accurate CSEC statistics.

Given that CSEC's act is generally an underground venture, quantifying its impact is complex. A study conducted by the Schapiro Group in 2009 shows findings that provide statistics on CSEC in Georgia. The researchers found that 7,200 men in Georgia exploited a female child every month in Georgia (The Schapiro Group, 2009). Further, the study showed



Figure 2 Georgia Cares (n.d.)

that, on average, 100 adolescent females were commercially sexually exploited per night in Georgia, each female being exploited on average three times that night (The Schapiro Group, 2009). This study specifically focused on young girls as victims and men as exploiters. In 2018 the Atlanta Youth Count Study surveyed 564 youth experiencing homelessness in the Metro Atlanta area. The youth were between the ages of 14 and 25. Nearly 20%, of the 564 homeless youth had experienced commercial sexual exploitation in their lifetime, and 16% experienced commercial sexual exploitation while homeless (Wright et al., 2019).

Figure 2 represents data from the Georgia Cares website regarding CSEC. Georgia Cares is a non-profit organization that provides services and support for youth victims of exploitation and sex trafficking. As of December 2020, Georgia Cares merged with Street Grace, a faith-based organization determined to eradicate CSEC (Jones, 2020). Since 2009, Georgia Cares has received over 2,700 referrals of suspected youth victims of exploitation and or trafficking (Georgia Cares, n.d.). Furthermore, the referrals were collected from over 134 of Georgia's 159 counties (Georgia Cares, n.d.). More recently, youth who experienced commercial sexual exploitation were referred to the Statewide System of Care for 145 of Georgia's 159 counties (Personal communication, March 5, 2021, Kelly Kinnish). The statistics are alarming and show the abundance of factors that contribute to youth becoming commercially sexually exploited.

Pathways to CSEC

The trauma that accompanies being sexually exploited robs youth of their innocence and interferes with their cognitive, emotional, social, and psychological development. CSEC is a heinous ordeal, and children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation have high

rates of trauma exposure—sexual abuse, traumatic loss/separation, family violence—as well as trauma while being exploited (Basson et al., 2012; National Research Council et al., 2013; Cole et al., 2014). Overall, these traumas' can cause severe mental health diseases such as post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, and self-injury.

Pathways for youth being commercially sexually exploited must be made common knowledge. Recruiting and luring children into being commercially sexually exploited can happen anywhere and at any time. **Table 1** highlights how vast the interconnected forces of CSEC are. The presence of one or more pathways does not automatically result in the CSEC without the presence of an exploiter, trafficker, or consumer. While some risk factors may be present, there are protective factors that can prevent CSEC. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) stated that “many risk factors at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels increase youth’s vulnerability to CSEC” (2014). Therefore, breaking them into four ecological sublevels better illustrates the complexities of this issue. Certain circumstances and situations make youth extremely vulnerable to being commercially sexually exploited. Several factors increase a youth's susceptibility to CSEC. **Table 1** follows the World Health Organization's ecological framework and includes descriptions for each framework's sublevel (World Health Organization, 2011).

Table 1: A Social–Ecological View of CSEC vulnerabilities

Individual	Relationship	Community	Society
Average ages 12–16 (Greenbaum & Crawford–Jakubiak, 2015)	Domestic violence in the home (National Research Council et al., 2013)	Children who experience poverty (National Research Council et al., 2013)	Sexualization of children (National Research Council et al., 2013)
History of domestic abuse of children and neglect (Gragg et al., 2007)	Disorganized family structure (Ahrens et al., 2012; National Research Council et al., 2013)	Peer pressure as a recruit (National Research Council et al., 2013)	Lack of knowledge regarding CSEC (National Research Council et al., 2013)
Running away/Homelessness (Green et al., 1999)		Social norms (National Research Council et al., 2013)	Gender biases/discrimination (National Research Council et al., 2013)
Sexual orientation (Dank et al., 2015)		Social isolation (National Research Council et al., 2013)	Limited resources (National Research Council et al., 2013)
Substance abuse (Varma et al., 2015)		Gang involvement (National Research Council et al., 2013)	
History of being in the foster care system (Varma et al., 2015)		High–crime neighborhoods (National Research Council et al., 2013)	
Neurodevelopmental stage (Greenbaum & Crawford–Jakubiak, 2015)			

Early traumatic experiences are one notable pathway towards sexual exploitation. Reports estimate that 70 to 90% of commercially sexually exploited youth have had a history of child sexual abuse (*Trafficking, 2020*). Youth who have a record in the child welfare system or the foster care system are vulnerable to being commercially sexually exploited because they may have underlying histories of abuse or neglect (Gregg et al., 2007; Varna et al., 2015; Ijadi–Maghsoodi et al., 2016). A 2018 report found that children who experience sexual or physical abuse, neglect, and especially those in foster care may feel inclined to search for a sense of belonging outside of their current environment and are at greater risk for CSEC (O'Brien, 2018).

These early traumatic experiences can create a cascading effect, leading to additional risk factors for CSEC.

Moreover, foster youth may reside in environments where they are at increased risk of victimization or more accessible to potential traffickers or peers involved in trafficking (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2016). When youth experience multiple forms of child maltreatment, the likelihood of running away rises between 9–28%, increasing their odds of becoming commercially sexually exploited (Green et al., 1999). A recent study evaluating the importance of stable housing to prevent CSEC found that out of 121 girls who experienced homelessness, over half (60%) had experienced commercial sexual exploitation (Dierkhising et al., 2020). All participants of this study were involved in either the juvenile justice or child welfare system. CSEC does not only impact girls; both boys and transgender youth are at risk of experiencing commercial sexual exploitation. Research indicates that male minors and transgender youth are at risk for engagement in survival sex (Bastedo, 2013; Hampton & Lieggi, 2017). Male minors and transgender youth are equally vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation as female minors.

Before the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, legislation to end human trafficking and provide assistance to victims, commercially sexually exploited youth were depicted and processed through the criminal justice system as juvenile delinquents instead of victims. They were arrested for prostitution or other related offenses instead of being provided with the necessary services. Studies have shown that sexual abuse is a strong predictor for girl's re-entry into the juvenile system (Sar et al., 2015). Without proper resources and services to

reacclimate commercially sexually exploited youth into society, they likely end up back in juvenile detention centers. Furthermore, girl's behavioral response to sexual abuse and trauma is criminalized, reinforcing the sexual abuse to prison pipeline (Saar et al., 2015). Those centers do little to address the underlying issues or traumas that cause youth to be there and exacerbate them later.

Other studies highlight youth who have experienced maltreatment, such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, are more susceptible to substance abuse (i.e., smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use) (National Research Council et al., 2013; Dank et al., 2015; Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2016). The Cook et al. (2018) study indicates that 70% of youth who experienced commercial sexual exploitation reported using substances. Substance use or abuse increases the risk of victims being coerced back into the trade. Reid and Piquero (2014) found that substance dependency correlated to involvement in commercial sexual exploitation. Victims became addicted to drugs, thus causing them to engage in sexual acts to receive their next fix (Cobbina & Oselin, 2011).

Furthermore, studies noted that exposure to violence, trauma, and other traumatic experiences during commercial sexual exploitation perpetuated substance use in victims (Tyler et al., 2012). Traffickers will forcibly expose their victims to drug and alcohol use to establish a dependence on the substances (Cook et al., 2018). Other youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation will rely on substance use to mitigate mental health symptoms or to "numb" themselves to the actions they are forced to perform (Cook et al., 2018).

The intersection of pathways associated with CSEC makes the prevalence of this issue difficult to quantify. Research studies focus on one or two casual pathways to find distinctions that contribute to the broader understanding of CSEC and prevent it. In Bounds et al. (2015), the researchers focused on youth involvement in the child welfare system and how it contributed to CSEC. Child welfare reports that involve child maltreatment correlate to the commercial sexual exploitation of youth. O'Brien (2018) highlighted how an adolescent's desire for nurture guides youth into the sex trade. If children are not receiving basic needs, they are subject to recruitment by traffickers to fulfill those needs.

Moreover, Reed et al.(2019) highlighted how relationships are a pathway for manipulating children into commercial sexual exploitation. These findings are in conjunction with other literature highlighting mechanisms for youth being commercial sexual exploitation. Given the complexities of CSEC, there are limits to how in-depth research can explore this issue, which adds to the difficulty of establishing a straightforward solution to eradicate CSEC.

Intersections between CSEC and Child Abuse

A growing body of research commonly highlights the intersections between child abuse and youth who experience commercial sexual exploitation. Figure 2 conceptualizes the influential role that child abuse plays in perpetuating CSEC. As previously mentioned, CSEC is a form of child abuse. Most children who are victimized by commercial sexual exploitation have experienced a form of child abuse. Research suggests that one does not typically exist without the other, emphasizing the cumulative trauma's pervasiveness (Barnert et al., 2017).

Understanding the causal pathways that make youth vulnerable to being commercially sexually exploited is crucial in figuring out ways to prevent it.

Recruiting Mechanisms of CSEC

Jimenez et al. (2015) analyzed 422 cases from the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. They found that in approximately 83% of cases, pimps—a trafficker who primarily profits from the sexual exploitation of others—recruit individuals. Thus, emphasizing the need to examine recruiting mechanisms used by the perpetrators of CSEC, the role location plays in CSEC, the Internet's involvement, and CSEC's demand side. Traffickers, commonly referred to as pimps, daddy, John's, etc., exploit youth through promises of support, love, money, shelter, and other false promises and fraud in general (Epstein and Edelman, 2013; *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, n.d.). Research suggests that traffickers seek out youth with vulnerabilities, including those with mental health conditions and substance use disorders (Cook et al., 2018). Becoming aware of the recruiting methods utilized by perpetrators of CSEC is imperative in understanding how to address it. **Table 2** displays the OJJDP findings from an Urban Institute report outlining the tactics used by pimps to recruit, manage and maintain control over their victims.

Table 2: Pimp Recruiting Tactics

Pimp tactics	Explanation	Citation
Promising material comfort	Providing money, clothes, home, food. It can be done by displaying wealth/status/business	Dank et al., 2014
Feigning romantic interest	They are pretending to be a boyfriend/girlfriend to potential victims. The tactic is frequently used to recruit individuals who have not engaged in sex work. Appeal to their emotional needs.	Dank et al., 2014
Establishing mutually dependent relationships	The trafficker will use this method to emphasize the benefits of the relationship; encourages the concept of shared, day-to-day sustenance/ helping to pay bills/go on vacation	Dank et al., 2014
Using physical violence	Beating victims if they disobey orders or try to run away. These beatings can cause cognitive and emotional manipulation promoting confusion regarding safety.	Dank et al., 2014
Emotional or sexual abuse	Traffickers will belittle and threaten their victims with demeaning language. Over time the trauma leaves an imprint on youth, forcing them to believe the things the trafficker says or does to them and misunderstands them as love, isolating their victims to establish dependency and perpetuating loss of individualism.	Dank et al., 2014
Manipulation to recruit other victims	Using threats to coerce victims to recruit others ex: "I'm going to turn out your sister" or "I'm going to kill your family."	Dank et al., 2014

Pimps' recruitment mechanisms center on children's vulnerabilities. Youth depend on adults for safety, nurture, and resources. Pimps exploit that fact by extending false promises. CSEC is pervasive, and it can occur anywhere, the home, the street, via the Internet, domestic and abroad. Therefore, our response must be far-reaching.

The Influence of Location and CSEC

In a report from the Department of Transportation (DOT), the organization recognized the role transportation and location play in contributing to CSEC. The DOT report highlighted how traffickers utilize state boundaries and municipalities to carry out CSEC (Department of Transportation, 2019). According to the OJJDP report, areas containing international airports, community violence, heavily involved street culture, and affluent economies contribute to high CSEC rates (*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, n.d.). These environmental risk factors can relate to areas domestically and abroad. Additionally, high population areas, high migration areas, and highways, ports, or borders are risk factors to CSEC (International Labour Organization, 2014). Traffickers rely on transportation for recruiting, moving, controlling, and delivering youth to be sexually exploited by buyers. The National Human Trafficking Hotline reported that approximately 30% of minors were trafficked using commercial driving services such as taxis, buses, bus stations, and airports (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2018).

The role of technology in perpetuating CSEC

The Internet and sites that offer an avenue for posting advertisements for escorts and other sexually driven work can be a vector for CSEC (National Research Council et al., pp.325). In 2019, over 9,500 individuals were arrested for carrying out CSEC through the use of technology (*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, n.d.). Traffickers use technology to advertise sexual services and interact with victims. One example of technology and CSEC is the growing industry of child pornography. *The Scourge of Child Pornography* indicated that every week in the US, a child pornographer is charged and sentenced for federal crimes related to the

sexual exploitation of children. As technological advancements continue to increase, the market for child pornography rises (*The Scourge of Child Pornography*, 2017).

Additionally, a study surveyed law enforcement officers who reported that cases they had investigated involved a variety of popular communication platforms from social networking sites (27%), instant messaging (14%), email (13%), text messaging (13%), or underground communication channels (17%) (Mitchell & Boyd. 2014). Technology enables perpetrators to have greater access to victims, it allows them to locate youth online, and it creates anonymity for traffickers, which contributes to the difficulties of preventing CSEC. As technology continues to advance and youth's access to online platforms becomes easier, these rates are likely to increase each year.

The demand side of sex purchasing in Georgia

Supply and demand are fundamental concepts of capitalist economies. CSEC is a billion-dollar industry where the consumers (people willing to exploit youth sexually) perpetuate the problem due to their willingness and desire to purchase a good or service. Children are a commodity in this market-based transaction (Hawkins, 2018). Estimates for perpetrators that facilitate CSEC are inconclusive. Studies estimate that the percentage of men who purchase sex ranges from 9 to 80 percent (Farley et al., 2011).

Additionally, Shively et al. found 10 to 20 percent of men admitted to purchasing sex (2012). These studies focused on men buying sex with women, not children. Widely available data on men who buy sex from minors is unavailable, increasing the difficulty of quantifying this issue's severity. The Schapiro Report emphasizes the accessibility of youth and how

consumers utilize geographic regions to carry out their crime. It is estimated that 65% of men who brought sex from a female child in Atlanta, Georgia, live in suburban areas outside of the I-285 perimeter (The Schapiro Group, 2010). Currently, this is the most updated data regarding CSEC in Georgia.

Georgia's Response

Initiatives are underway to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children and provide support to victims of CSEC. In Georgia, one such initiative is the Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia (CACGA) Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Response Team. The CSEC Response Team is a multi-year project administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) with funding from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Office for Victims of Crimes (OVC). It is the recognized collaborative response to child sex trafficking in Georgia. This response, which began on October 1, 2020, leverages a network of 52 child advocacy centers located across the state of Georgia to respond to reports of child sex trafficking. Georgia has 159 counties and 49 judicial circuits. A children's advocacy center represents each county and judicial circuit in Georgia. As a result, survivors of CSEC receive consistent services wherever they are in the state. The CSEC Response team is designed to improve the lives and outcomes for CSEC children and youth victims by providing comprehensive direct services. They are as follows:

- Case management services
- Formal assessments
- Advocate for victims

- Act as intermediaries with law enforcement partners, judicial partners, victim service partners statewide and regionally
- Support and improve the multi-disciplinary response to child and youth trafficking

The CSEC Response Team works intimately with its Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Partners to create a safety net of services for survivors and their families. MDTs, which incorporate the knowledge and resources of public systems in which victims of CSEC are involved, are a nationally recognized, evidence-based practice mandated in many states to address child abuse.

Since its implementation in October of 2020, the CSEC Response Team has received 147 hotline calls, 251 web referrals, and over 190 active cases (Personal communication, March 17, 2020, CACGA). In addition to service coordination, the CSEC Response Team facilitates training and outreach initiatives that help build infrastructure and community capacity around CSEC. The response team serves as a focal point of contact for agencies and victims to coordinate and effectively respond to crimes against youth. There is a new 24/7 hotline number to report suspected or disclosed sex trafficking. **Call at 1-866-END-HTGA (363-4842).**

The CSEC Response Team is administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). The Georgia General Assembly established the CJCC in 1981 to build consensus and unity among the State's diverse and interdependent criminal justice system components. This organization is tasked with twelve areas of criminal justice coordination, including, but not limited to, Human Trafficking and CSEC. CJCC upholds its efforts to eradicate all forms of trafficking within the state of Georgia by coordinating the Statewide Human Trafficking

Taskforce and the Coalition to End Human Trafficking. Both workgroups work closely to address all elements of human trafficking.

In 2017, the Statewide Human Trafficking Taskforce released a Technical Resource Guide (TARG) on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention. The TARG guides schools and youth-serving organizations to build their understanding of child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention. This protocol guide is more applicable to state agencies and organizations that work with children and families, not just school-related personnel. Furthermore, in 2019, the Human Trafficking Unit at the CJCC was awarded \$800,000 in funding from the United States Department of Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance to create the Georgia Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking. This law enforcement-based, statewide task force addresses all forms of human trafficking: domestic minor sex trafficking, adult sex trafficking, and labor trafficking (*ENDHTGA*, n.d.). The Georgia Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking provides leadership, direction, and best practices for all types of human trafficking in Georgia, including CSEC (Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, 2021).

The CACGA provides services for Georgia's children and families affected by child abuse and sex trafficking. They work to eradicate all forms of child maltreatment which research shows is a causal pathway into CSEC. The majority of the work completed by CACGA is to provide direct services to other Children Advocacy Center's (CAC) across the state. They also offer direct services and support to Georgia communities that seek to establish a CAC in their judicial circuit by working with the stakeholders that later become active multi-disciplinary team members. Besides providing direct service support, the CACGA also offers technical assistance

with case tracking situations and training opportunities for local CAC's, their Board Members, their MDT members, and other interested parties. Their guiding principle is that by having access to local child advocacy centers, child victims and their non-offending family members have services tailored to their needs to help them begin their journey toward healing and justice.

Next Steps for the State (How do we keep moving forward/ Building Awareness, Capacity, Eradicating CSEC)

Atlanta, Georgia, has one of the highest CSEC case rates (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.). To understand the best response for action going forward, the CJCC's Human Trafficking Task Force and partners came together to determine what is needed in Georgia. A qualitative survey was designed to assess the opinions and perspectives of professionals involved in eradicating CSEC. Experts in the field who volunteered to participate in the survey were emailed a link to complete the online assessment. CSEC agencies and other child and family-serving organizations could access the survey. This specific group needed access to the questionnaire because they understood the issue's pervasiveness and worked directly with youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary. They were aware that their responses would be utilized to design a comprehensive resource and protocol guide for Georgia. The answers are included and summarized in this Capstone paper. The survey was developed using Georgia State University's Qualtrics Survey generator. Qualtrics is an online survey program and was used to administer the assessment electronically. A total of six qualitative questions were asked, and seven experts

responded. **Table 3** in the Appendix showcases the survey's open-ended questions, and responses from the participants are documented in the table. The recommendations are summarized here.

I. How can our state better serve and/or support children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation?

Respondents felt that there is a need for additional resources for boys and transgender youth. This response commensurates with the available scientific literature documenting demographics of youth who have experienced sexual exploitation. CSEC's victims include young boys, girls, and transgender youth, but boys and transgender youth receive less awareness (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). Additionally, leaders felt that more funding was necessary for all agencies that provide direct services to victims and their non-offending caregivers. Moreover, they suggested that government entities could offer support to non-offending caregivers of youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. There was a consensus that there needs to be an additional increase of awareness, public knowledge of the harms of child abuse and neglect, and other advocacy for agencies that support and advocate for CSEC victims.

II. How can our state increase awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children?

Human trafficking awareness has grown in the state of Georgia. Frequently, CSEC gets grouped into the umbrella of human trafficking, which limits visibility, data/statistics, and awareness for CSEC specifically. To best support victims and their non-offending caregivers of CSEC, more understanding of the problem is necessary. The leaders suggested that consistent messaging among providers about CSEC is essential in handling it. Proposed suggestions

included local community outreach, identifying leaders who can be trained in addressing CSEC concerns, connecting with local school boards, and increasing support for local initiatives.

III. What can our state do to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children?

One recommendation was to continue prevention training statewide. The more the community is knowledgeable about CSEC, the better community members will be in identifying it. Moreover, some leaders thought it would be beneficial to bolster community engagement around CSEC and identify additional leaders to cast a "wide net" of services and resources to help prevent it. Furthermore, having community leaders that can disseminate information to underserved and susceptible populations could address CSEC at a grassroots level.

The responses provide a general scope of how Georgia can further work to address CSEC.

Recurring themes called for an increase in support-related services for youth who have experienced CSEC and advocacy for agencies who address CSEC. Additionally, an increase in community outreach and an increase in awareness and education services to prevent CSEC and provide resources specific to male and transgender youth are necessary. While the survey did not receive a large number of responses, the answers collected did represent diverse and knowledgeable individuals and organizations.

Policy recommendations and best practices

CSEC is an increasing problem worldwide. Interventions and prevention mechanisms are crucial to eradicate CSEC but challenging to synthesize due to the complexities of tracking and identifying CSEC cases. Based on the literature and answers from survey participants, recommendations to address CSEC are as follows:

1. Separate CSEC from Human Trafficking
2. View children as victims instead of offenders
3. Identify community leaders and agencies who will elicit a statewide response to commercial sexual exploitation of children
4. Increase direct services for youth (boys and transgender youth) who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation
5. Increase awareness and education through training and prevention programs
6. Address demand side of CSEC by enforcing severer punishments for perpetrators

Recommendation 1: Separating CSEC classification from Human Trafficking

CSEC and Human trafficking are separate crimes. Not viewing CSEC as a stand-alone issue perpetuates difficulties for data collection, statistics, and developing effective prevention strategies to combat it. CSEC's available data usually includes information on Human trafficking, and it becomes nearly impossible to determine the impact or response needed for CSEC. Recognizing the differences can be pivotal in ensuring that CSEC victims receive the proper resources and help they need. CSEC is the sexual abuse of a child for some type of gain, whether monetary or non-monetary. Trafficking uses force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some kind of labor or commercial sex act that includes millions of men, women, and children worldwide. First Lady Marty Kemp and Governor Brian Kemp have taken strides to address Human Trafficking within Georgia and provide child victims support as outlined in their initiative. First Lady Marty Kemp has participated in the Grace Commission and is in support of anti-human trafficking legislation. Governor Kemp has passed legislation that serves as a civil

remedy for Victims of Human Trafficking. An additional step in this enterprise would be to isolate CSEC from human trafficking and work with experts in the field to develop tracking systems similar to human trafficking.

Recommendation 2: View children as victims instead of offenders

Sar et al. (2015) found that childhood trauma (sexual abuse, substance abuse, etc.) is associated with the juvenile justice system's involvement. Treating youth as offenders and placing them in juvenile centers for minor offenses is an ineffective tactic. Research links child maltreatment as a pathway to commercial sexual exploitation for adolescents (Green et al., 1999). Therefore, arresting adolescents for their trauma-induced response and not granting them access to mental health services does not correct the behavior or give them the support they need. It potentially exacerbates the issue once they are released.

CSEC efforts need to encourage law enforcement agencies to treat youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation and other traumas as victims rather than offenders to get them the much-needed services they require (Mitchel et al., 2010). The State of Georgia is beginning to apply this concept to address the needs of children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. In June 2020, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed the Survivors First Act into law which removes convictions given to survivors of trafficking, legally shifting to decriminalize their experiences (Office of Attorney General of Georgia & Carr, 2020). This law eliminates barriers to opportunities like employment and housing. Lastly, it makes survivors eligible for victim compensation for the mental and emotional trauma they endured. This recent legislation reflects a shift in perception to viewing survivors as victims instead of

criminals. The legislation offers more supportive services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Law enforcement agencies must understand these issues that commercially sexually exploited youth are dealing with and partner with agencies, for example, Georgia's CSEC Response Team, to ensure that adolescents are seen as victims and treated accordingly.

An additional avenue to perceiving youth as victims rather than offenders or violators is to educate child welfare and juvenile justice professionals about the impact of trauma on youth development and behavior within those systems. The research states that involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice system makes youth more susceptible to commercial sexual exploitation (Gregg et al., 2007; Varna et al., 2015; Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2016). Given the intersections between CSEC, trauma, and the child welfare and juvenile justice system, the importance of having professionals within these fields knowledgeable about trauma-informed care tactics is paramount. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) designed training that provides an overview on how to train juvenile justice staff to create trauma-informed agencies (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2020). It creates a setting for trauma-informed care and creates a cultural and organizational shift to recognize the impact of traumatic stress on those who have been in contact with the juvenile justice system (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2020).

Recommendation 3: Identify community leaders and agencies who will elicit a statewide response to commercial sexual exploitation of children

Each community has its own needs and an influential person in it who could champion CSEC. Key players in combatting CSEC are federal and local law enforcement, state legislators,

churches, non-profit organizations, businesses such as hotels and clubs. However, they may not coordinate with one another, which becomes challenging when addressing CSEC.

Community leaders could lay the groundwork for MDT interaction between these organizations and agencies to liaise with them to organize training, advocacy work, or fundraisers to build rehabilitation centers for CSEC victims.

The MDT collaboration in California is a prime example highlighting the importance of developing a comprehensive and collaborative response for CSEC victims. A statewide reaction ensures that the youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation receive the necessary services to heal from the trauma they endured and live better lives. For Georgia, a response to address CSEC victim's complex needs should include safety planning for the staff and clients, MDT collaboration, cultural competency, trauma-informed programming, the inclusion of CSEC survivors, and trust amongst entities involved. Fortunately, with the establishment of Georgia's CSEC Response Team, change is underway in having this agency become a focal point of contact for CSEC cases. Their approach to combating CSEC makes it more feasible for child victims, encourages collaboration with law enforcement, public officials, non-profit organizations, state agencies, and other child and family-serving organizations. Having a central agency to partner with other agencies and organizations helps address CSEC's complex needs.

Recommendation 4: Increase direct services for youth (boys and transgender youth) who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation

Based on the questionnaire responses, CSEC leaders noticed gaps in youth services—especially boys and transgender youth. Boys and transgender youth are not immune to commercial sexual exploitation and require direct assistance to address their trauma. Direct services help provide support to victims and commercial sexual exploitation survivors (National Research Council et al., 2013). With Georgia's CSEC Response team implementation, the state is making strides in providing these services to at-risk youth and children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. They offer case management services, formal assessments, advocacy for victims, and liaise with law enforcement, judicial, and victim partners statewide and regionally.

The OJJDP report documented that specialized services and mentoring for children and youth victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation exist. The programs enhance organizational efforts to develop or boost mentoring capacity, facilitate outreach efforts, and increase the availability of direct services for child and youth victims of commercial sexual exploitation (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2019). The response team incorporates these initiatives by facilitating training to recognize CSEC and outreach initiatives to bolster community support and capacity.

Frequently, children who experience commercial sexual exploitation do not view themselves as victims, thus increasing the difficulty in leaving their exploitive relationship, making the need for direct services all the more critical. By classifying youth as victims, they

can receive the proper mental health treatment and medical treatment they need rather than being placed in detention centers. Children who experienced commercial sexual exploitation need access to these direct services to reacclimate themselves into society and not relapse. Their experience of commercial sexual exploitation may have curated a sense of resiliency to help them move forward in their recovery, especially in the presence of comprehensive resources (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2016). Literature suggests that essential elements to providing effective direct services to CSEC include MDT collaboration, survivor-led change, ongoing case management, and specialized courts to ensure maximum support to the child (American Bar Association, 2015).

Recommendation 5: Increase awareness and education through training

Programs and preventive services are available to keep youth safe and mitigate their chances of becoming commercially sexually exploited. The literature shows that CSEC training can increase knowledge and understanding of how to identify CSEC (Kenny et al., 2019). Love 146 is an international human rights organization that works to end child trafficking and exploitation through survivor care and prevention. This organization has developed programs, such as the *Not A #Number*, to reach at-risk youth in schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice agencies, as well as other youth-serving organizations, to mitigate CSEC (Love146, 2017). Their programs also help adults and law enforcement agencies. Love 146 has a Certificate Training Program in Aftercare that empowers caregivers with the knowledge and skills they need to provide survivors with the care they need (*Grassroots Aftercare Workers*, 2015).

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF) Child Safety Matters program is a comprehensive research-based primary prevention program designed to educate and empower students and personnel with information centered around preventing all forms of child abuse (Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force, 2017). MBF's program targets youth in grades K-12. The MBF has programs for children safety, teen safety, after-school safety, and athlete safety. Child Safety Matters program is for elementary school students (grades K-5) (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). It teaches children strategies to prevent, recognize, and respond to bullying, cyberbullying, all types of abuse, and digital abuse dangers (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). The Teen Safety Matters program is for middle and high school students (grades 6-12) (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). This program contains the same educational empowerment as the Child Safety program but adds additional information regarding relationship abuse, sex trafficking, and online dangers (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). MBF's after-school program, which is for youth in grades K-8 in after-school programs and other youth-serving organizations, teaches the youth about all four types of child abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, and online dangers (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). The last program is for youth athletes in all grade levels to help them recognize, prevent, and respond to bullying, cyberbullying, and all types of abuse and online dangers (*Monique Burr Foundation, 2021*). All of the programs address child sexual abuse and equip youth with knowledge and skills to handle it where necessary.

McMahon-Howard and Reimers evaluated the effectiveness of a CSEC webinar training for child protective service (CPS) employees in a randomized control group design (2013). The

study found that by completing this training, CPS employees yielded positive results in increasing awareness and improving attitudes towards child victims who experienced CSEC. Thus, emphasizing the benefit of awareness programs and trainings. As awareness grows, states have implemented harsher punishments for perpetrators (traffickers and exploiters), and victim assistance programs exist to assist CSEC victims and survivors (Todres, 2010).

Recommendation 6: Severe punishments for perpetrators/traffickers/pimps

While efforts to prevent and eradicate CSEC across the continental United States are in motion, the threat of child sexual exploitation is rampant. In 2011, the Georgia House Bill (HB) 200 went into effect, increasing punishments for those convicted of human trafficking. This law was significant for CSEC, as it removed the age of consent/lack of knowledge of the victim's age to be used as a defense strategy (Office of Attorney General of Georgia & Carr, 2020). Suppose minors are commercially sexually exploited by coercion or deception. In that case, violators face up to 25 years to life in prison, and they can be fined up to \$100,000 (Office of Attorney General of Georgia & Carr, 2020).

Furthermore, it increased the punishment for "pimping, pandering, and keeping a house of prostitution, when the victim is under 16 years of age from five to twenty years to ten to thirty years" (Office of Attorney General of Georgia & Carr, 2020). The perpetrators of CSEC should be indicted for every crime that they commit while enacting commercial sexual exploitation. This includes charging them with child prostitution, kidnapping, substance distribution, providing minors with substances, and any other law they violate in conjunction with commercial sexual

exploitation. More severe punishments are an effective tool in deterring behaviors and could reduce the demand side of CSEC.

Conclusion

CSEC is a complicated issue to address because a varying degree of factors are involved in it. Individual, relationship, community, and societal factors all play a significant role in CSEC's pervasiveness. Children aged twelve to sixteen, homeless youth, transgender youth, youth who have experienced violence, and who have been in the welfare system are at high risk of commercial sexual exploitation (Green et al., 1999; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Varma et al., 2015). Furthermore, a person's environment, access to technology, and other social norms can influence if they succumb to commercial sexual exploitation (National Research Council et al., 2013). The eradication of CSEC requires multi-disciplinary collaboration with various organizations to understand youth's complex needs who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. There is no "one size fits all" option to eliminate CSEC because each state, each community, and each case is different. However, studies are consistent in emphasizing that the best approach to addressing CSEC is a multi-disciplinary collaboration. Georgia's CSEC Response Team and the CJCC's Human Trafficking Task Force have already received hundreds of calls from the new hotline number, and they have been handling CSEC cases across the State of Georgia. The implementation of this organization will likely be influential in how CSEC cases are handled in Georgia going forward.

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Appendix A

Table 3: Survey Questions and Responses

Question 1: How can our state better serve and/or support children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation?
Additional resources are needed for male and transgender youth
Acknowledging that trafficking is an issue in our state
Providing more funding to agencies (not just some) that provide the direct services to victims and their non-offending caregivers
Advocating the agencies that support victims
Increase awareness, increase public knowledge of child abuse, increase the number of beds for CSEC survivors in CSEC designated facilities
Question 2: How can our state increase awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children?
Consistent messaging among providers about what constitutes commercial sexual exploitation
An understanding amongst providers (especially DFCS) that non-offending caregivers of CSEC youth still need supportive services even if there is no evidence of maltreatment by the caregiver
Local community outreach, identifying community leaders who are able to be trained in addressing CSEC concerns, train local clergy, connect with local school boards
Increase the support for local initiatives

Question 3: What can our state do to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children?

Continue prevention training statewide

Work at the local level to bring community engagement, identify people within local communities who would be able to cast a wide net

Communities need to trust the person who is giving them information about trafficking, and utilizing local community leaders to assist in disseminating information to underserved populations could begin addressing these issues at a grassroots level

Question 4: What organization do you represent/work for?

Children's Advocacy Center in Athens, GA; The Cottage

Georgia Center for Child Advocacy

Southern Crescent Sexual Assault and Child Advocacy Center (SCSAC-CAC) and The Bright House (TBH)

The Cottage, Sexual Assault Center, and Children's Advocacy Center

Question 5: What geographic location does your organization provide services to?

Western Judicial Circuit, Clarke and Oconee County

Fulton and DeKalb County

Henry, Coweta, Heard, Fayette, Spalding, Pike, Butts, Lamar, Upson, Baldwin, Hancock, Jones, Putnam, and Wilkinson counties

Clark, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Madison Counties

Question 6: Please briefly describe how your organization provides services to support children who have experienced sexual exploitation? (If your organization does not provide any type of service/support put N/A)

We provide advocacy, forensic interviews, forensic medical exam services, therapy, and follow-up services. We also coordinate with the MDT to make sure that all facets of the child's life that has needs are covered

TF-CBT, specialized programming, intensive case management

SCSAC-CAC and TBH provides forensic medical examinations, forensic interviewing, counseling, and prevention education services to child victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, witness to a violent crime, victims of human trafficking, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and the community, at large

We are a children's advocacy center that provides trauma-informed therapy to children who have experienced abuse and/or have witnessed violence in the home. We provide forensic interviews and work with an MDT to address children's needs on our caseload. We also provide therapy to the children who have experienced abuse, other children in the home, and non-offending caregivers. This way, we can help promote healing for the entire family. In addition to providing direct service to children, we also provide the statewide CSEC hotline to address the immediate needs of children who have experienced Commercial Sexual Exploitation throughout the state