

Chapter 1

Introduction

The following study of youth in the sex trade in the Dallas, Texas Area was conducted by the Center for Court Innovation and 2M Research Services, LLC. The Dallas study is part of a larger project, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and overseen by the Center for Court Innovation, to fill the current gap in scientific knowledge regarding the size, needs, and characteristics of youth in the sex trade. Based on original research in six sites, including Atlantic City (NJ), the Bay Area (CA), Chicago (IL), Las Vegas (NV), Miami (FL), and Dallas, the larger study aims to estimate the size of the population of youth in the sex trade; to describe their characteristics, experiences, and health and service needs; to explore what services are available; and to analyze arrest patterns and prosecution and recidivism outcomes when these youth encounter the juvenile or criminal justice systems.

The current report represents one of six site-specific reports that provide systematic, detailed findings drawn from the youth interviews in each site (see, also, Jones and Gamson 2016; Marcus, Riggs, Rivera, and Curtis 2016; Maurrasse and Jones 2016; Schaffner et al. 2016; Wagner, Whitmer, and Spivak 2016). A multi-site report describes the overall study methodology; differences in how that methodology was applied by site; findings from a national and multisite analysis of arrest, prosecution, and recidivism data; themes emerging from social service provider interviews; and multisite quantitative findings from the youth interviews in all six sites (Swaner et al. 2016).¹ Because the multisite report has a quantitative focus, this report and the other five site-specific reports endeavor to provide a rich qualitative account that reveals and gives voice to the experiences, perceptions, and needs of the relevant population of youth.

In states like Texas, the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) has been a growing concern for youth advocates and policymakers over the last decade. The State of Texas took major steps to fight human trafficking in 2003 by passing one of the first state-level anti-trafficking laws (Texas Penal Code, 2011). In addition, this issue has been covered

¹ For all reports produced by this project, see www.courtinnovation.org/youthstudy.

