INTERDICTION

Instructions: Victims of sex trafficking often do not self-identify or disclose details of their victimization up front. There may be indicators of trafficking in their life, but these indicators exist on a wide spectrum and may seem incongruous at first. It's important that professionals evaluate social, psychological, behavioral and environmental factors to better recognize the risk or likelihood of exploitation. Within your small group, read and evaluate the case study below to determine possible indicators of exploitation, risk factors for future exploitation and the various ways you or your agency would respond in each phase of the story as it unfolds. While the narrative takes the perspective of a probation officer, each person should evaluate the details and respond according to their own profession. Read the first narrative out loud and answer the questions before moving ahead.

Read Narrative #1:

Jesse, a 15-year-old girl in 8th grade, is picked up by a female officer on patrol during school hours. The minor is found hanging out alone on a corner downtown. The officer notes that the teen initially lies about her age and gives a false name, but finally admits her actual age and legal name when pressed. The officer notices the minor is already on probation for truancy and arrests the child who is then taken to the local detention center. Detention staff are unable to reach her parents, but place a call to you, the probation counselor. You are meeting with the teen for the second time ever, after taking her case from a colleague who retired. The minor appears tired and her body language suggests she will be uncooperative. You notice a large bruise on her thigh, peeking out from under her shorts. A quick review of her file shows she has tested positive for marijuana use in the past and has a history of skipping school. While she has never officially been reported missing, her file mentions she leaves home often without her parents knowledge and had been picked up walking the streets after curfew. The previous probation officer alluded to possible neglect on the part of her semi-involved parents. Trying to get a feel for the situation, you ask Jesse if she "gets out" of her house often, even without telling her parents. She responds, "I leave sometimes, but I come back on my own." You say, "Tell me more about that." The teen states, "Sometimes I just need to get out. Like, I just go stay with my friends for a few days when me and my mom get into it." You ask, "How often does that happen?" The youth states, "I dunno, a lot."

Ask the Group:

1. Is this minor at risk of exploitation? What information provided raises flags?
2. What questions would you ask Jesse during this meeting?

Read Narrative #2:

You ask Jesse if she feels unsafe at home and she shrugs, saying, "I can take care of myself." You ask who she stays with when she leaves home and she responds, "My boyfriend sometimes, or his friends." You visit Jesse's school and speak with her teachers. They report she falls asleep in class sometimes and doesn't "apply herself" in her studies. The school resource officer on site knows Jesse because of an altercation that occurred earlier in the year. He mentions she was being made fun of and bullied by other students which led to a fight in school. He has never seen Jesse with a boyfriend or any close girlfriends.

Ask the Group:

1. How would you approach the statements with Jesse about her boyfriend?

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2. What, if any, additional information would you try to gather in your visit to school?
3. Would you do any additional research based on the information you have so far?

Read Narrative #3:

You head to Jesse's house to talk with her parents. Jesse's mom, Teresa, answers the door, says her husband is out and won't be back until "after the bars close." You ask if she knows where Jesse goes when she leaves the house or who she is spending time with. Teresa reports that she has no idea what her daughter is up to with her boyfriend, but that he must make good money because her daughter came home with a pair of Jordans and a new cell phone the other day. She complains that Jesse doesn't have a job or help with any expenses at the house, mentioning that she just shelled out $100 at the clinic because of some infection Jesse got "probably sleeping around." Teresa also mentions when she was trying to track down her daughter the other day, a neighbor told her she saw the teen get into some guy's car who appeared to be a little older, more specifically "not a kid." The mother does not know what kind of car the boyfriend drives or his name. She believes he is 18 or 19 years of age.

Ask the Group:

1. Are there additional flags in Jesse's case that cause you concern?
2. How would you approach the conversation with Jesse's mother?
3. What, if any, additional information would you try to gather in your visit to their house?

Read Narrative #4:

Two months go by before you receive another phone call from the detention center. Jesse was picked up by law enforcement during a traffic stop in a town three hours away. The patrol officer pulled over the vehicle for a broken tail light and gave a warning to the driver, 23-year-old Marcus White. He ran the driver and passenger identification, noting that Jesse was an unrelated minor who had not been reported missing. Since it was after curfew, the officer called her home and spoke to Teresa who stated that 15-year-old Jesse had left the house that afternoon and she did not know where she was. The officer took custody of Jesse, who was eventually returned home. At this point, Jesse will be spending 30 days in detention. When you arrive at the detention center, a staff person mentions that Jesse was wearing "club clothes" when they brought her in, and she noticed a tattoo of what appeared to be cherries on her lower stomach when Jesse was changing. You sit down with the teen again, who is in a bad mood and won't make eye contact. She refuses to answer your questions until you ask who she was traveling with. After she says it was her boyfriend, you ask, "What were you guys doing all the way over in that town?" She answers, "We just like to go places, but it's not like we went to another state!"

Ask the group:

1. Are there additional flags in Jesse's case that cause you concern? Is this a case of sex trafficking?
2. With this information, how would you approach the conversation with Jesse about her boyfriend?
3. How would you address the risky behaviors you are seeing? How would you engage Jesse in a concerned conversation about her situation?
4. What are your next steps? Do you report this to anyone?
5. Would you try to gather additional information through other avenues? If so, which ones?
6. What resources in the community would you connect with for Jesse's sake?
7. What resources or recommendations can you give to Jesse's parents?
8. How would things be different if Jesse was a male? How would this impact the situation and what steps would you take?

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