INTERDICTION LEADER'S GUIDE

Instructions: Have attendees split into groups of five, joining with at least two people they don't know. Remind your audience 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 their small group, attendees should read and evaluate the case study to determine possible indicators of exploitation, risk factors for future exploitation and the various ways they or their agency would respond in each phase of the story as it unfolds. They should read the first narrative out loud and answer the questions together before moving ahead. While the narrative takes the perspective of a probation officer, each attendee should evaluate the details and respond according to their own profession. Allow 10-20 minutes for this exercise.

What to expect: Attendees will be challenged to consider how they would handle Jesse's case as they continue to gather information. As the trainer, be prepared to offer insight once the exercise is complete on each phase of the narrative's development. Following are some suggested points and questions to discuss with the group:

Narrative #1:

Jesse's file indicates a variety of risk factors or red flags for exploitation, though none of them confirm trafficking, especially to an untrained eye. She has a history of drug use, skipping school, leaving home. She seems "checked out" when speaking to adults in authority, shows possible signs of physical abuse, stays out late and her parents do not seem involved in "parenting" their child. It would be helpful to know what areas of town Jesse has been picked up in by police and if those are areas known for prostitution. If you search her cell phone number online, what would you find? Who is she hanging out with? What do her social media platforms reveal? Has she ever used a fake ID?

Narrative #2:

Jesse's attitude and response indicate she feels safer with her boyfriend and other friends than at home. If Jesse is staying with her "boyfriend's friends," it may present an exploitive situation, especially if those friends are older males. Jesse's school attendance, performance and ability to stay awake in class are alarming. The information about the boyfriend should now raise flags. If the guy isn't enrolled in her school, how did she meet him and how old is he? If Jesse has been bulled at school, she may be looking for someone older to make her feel protected. She doesn't seem to have a strong social circle or a safety net at all. Find out what is driving her relationship with him and what needs he is meeting. Social media platforms should be researched to gather more information. Personnel should be questioned about who picks Jesse up after school, what attire she wears and if she has shown up with material possessions that would typically be beyond her family's income.

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Narrative #3:

Jesse's dad may have a drinking problem and her mom doesn't seem too concerned about her daughter's whereabouts, boyfriend, etc. It appears the boyfriend is a few years older and that Jesse may have had an STI recently. It may be helpful to consult with law enforcement who patrol that area to see if they've spotted her hanging out with anyone, or seen someone in a particular vehicle parked at their house often. It could be helpful to question neighbors and get a description of the male, see if it matches any photos she has posted online recently. Collect more specific information from the mother about the teen's medical and mental health history. Work to build concern with Jesse's parents about the obvious risk factors of exploitation, prepare to offer them resources in the community.

Narrative #4:

The boyfriend is now confirmed to be eight years older than Jesse, and is taking her on road trips to other cities. She minimizes the concerns expressed for her wellbeing and her behavior indicates she is hiding information. She has a tattoo and was wearing attire that could indicate commercial sex. Trauma-informed and strengths-based questioning, or motivational interviewing, would be the best course of action. Rapport is critical at this stage. Now that the youth is in detention, she likely feels criminalized, judged and isolated. Staff, case workers, law enforcement or other related professionals should use every opportunity to build rapport and attempt to get a disclosure of exploitation. Every avenue should be utilized to gain additional insight. She should have therapeutic support as well as family counseling. If possible, incorporate survivors or other skilled volunteer mentors to help build rapport. If a disclosure is made, a victim-centered investigation should ensue.

Note the following for training attendees: Individuals with any capacity to recognize indicators do not have to have "proof" that the youth is a DMST victim to report it or request further investigation, but should consult with a supervisor when risk factors are present to develop a plan for next steps. It is not uncommon for youth to provide limited information during questioning, and then for the child's guardian to either alleviate concerns about the youth's risk or provide information that leads to increased concerns. There are few "textbook" cases, so attempts at speaking directly with a guardian should be made, along with probation counselors, educators, law enforcement or other individuals in a capacity to provide additional information. Professionals should consider implementing resources such as Shared Hope's Intervene Intake Tool which provides assessment questions designed to reveal key indicators without retraumatizing the youth.

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