

ISSUE BRIEF

6.5

PREVENTION AND TRAINING

POLICY GOAL: State law mandates child sex trafficking training for school personnel.

School personnel, including teachers, school counselors, bus drivers, school resource officers, and administrators, are well positioned to identify child sex trafficking victims, report the suspected abuse to child welfare and/or law enforcement agencies, and support a connection to services. With an average of 180 school days in a year averaging 6.64 hours per day, students can spend nearly 1200 hours in school each year.¹ This does not include additional time that may be spent in school-based extracurricular activities or traveling to and from school on a school bus. As a result, school personnel are interacting with youth on a regular basis over a long period of time. Therefore, it is imperative that school personnel understand the dynamics of child sex trafficking so they can identify trafficking and provide a victim-centered response.

Additionally, school personnel are particularly well positioned to identify and respond to child sex trafficking victimization because child sex trafficking victims often continue attending school during the period in which they are being exploited, and that may be a time when they are away from their trafficker.² During interviews, survivors have outlined instances in which educators were unable to identify their exploitation or properly intervene and noted the importance of training for educators on sex trafficking and available resources.³ Further, schools may serve as a place of recruitment for traffickers, which further outlines the importance of school personnel's ability to recognize and report suspected trafficking.⁴ Finally, in addition to being a key point of intervention, school personnel can

also play an important role in engaging in direct prevention work or implementing prevention education with students,⁵ equipping students with an understanding of risk factors, recruitment tactics, and avenues for help.

While some schools do this voluntarily, codifying these training requirements in state law is important for many reasons. Mandating this effort through state law recognizes and emphasizes the important role that school personnel have in identifying and supporting child sex trafficking victims. Mandated training can equip school personnel with the ability to actively participate in multidisciplinary team responses to child sex trafficking victims aimed at addressing the holistic needs of survivors. Moreover, it ensures that these efforts will continue as priorities as needs change. Training of school personnel on child sex trafficking is also a key prerequisite to mandating trafficking prevention education for students. Therefore, it is important to mandate training of school personnel on child sex trafficking within state law and to ensure that training is provided on an on-going basis utilizing up-to-date information from the anti-trafficking field.

To guide the implementation, states should consider including additional language on training requirements within the law. For example, state law should ensure that the training content is survivor-informed by a group of survivors with a diverse set of experiences. Survivors of sex trafficking can provide valuable first-hand knowledge related to traffickers, buyers, grooming and recruitment tactics, and victim vulnerabilities as

well as successful methods for identifying, engaging, and serving this population.⁶ State law may also provide direction related to content such as requiring that the training address definitions, recruitment tactics, common venues, vulnerabilities, trauma associated with

victimization, and how to report suspected trafficking involving minors and adults. With the breadth of survivor-informed training resources available, schools could utilize existing resources to fulfill training requirements.

DRAFTING CONSIDERATIONS:

To accomplish this policy goal, state law should...

- ▶ Mandate child sex trafficking training for school personnel.

RELATED ISSUES:

- 6.6** State law mandates child sex trafficking prevention education in schools.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES:

- ▶ Chosen

1 *School and Staffing Survey*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (2008) https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_035_s1s.asp (last visited Nov. 16, 2020).

2 Nat'l Human Trafficking Res. Ctr, *Educators and Human Trafficking: In-Depth-Review*, POLARIS PROJECT (2011) <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/In%20Depth%20Review%20for%20Educators.pdf> (last visited Nov. 16, 2020).

3 Tamara E. Hurst, *Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation: Insights from Adult Survivors*, J. Interpersonal Violence 1 (2019) <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.wcl.american.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0886260519825881> (last visited Oct. 16, 2020).

4 *Introduction to Human Trafficking: A Guide for Texas Education Professionals*, Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force (2014) <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Intro%20to%20HT%20for%20Educational%20Professionals%20-%20TX%20Dept%20of%20Ed.pdf> (last visited Nov. 16, 2020).

5 Nat'l Human Trafficking Res. Ctr, *supra* note 2.

6 MARISSA CASTELLANOS, M.S.W., GRETCHEN HUNT, J.D., BETHANY GILOT, M.S., AMY NACE-DEGONDA, B.A., MELODY WRAY, THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING ADVISORY GROUP, *GUIDING PRINCIPLES: FOR AGENCIES SERVING SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING* (2018).