

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

Carly B. Dierkhising, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Bo-Kyung Elizabeth Kim, PhD
University of Southern California

Mae Ackerman-Brimberg, JD, MSW
National Center for Youth Law

Jacquelyne R. Sandoval, MSW
California State University, Los Angeles

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Michelle Guymon, MSW, creator of the Los Angeles County Probation Department Child Trafficking Unit

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Erin French, JD, Attorney, National Center for Youth Law, Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative

Kate Walker Brown, JD, Attorney, Senior Director, National Center for Youth Law, Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative

Allison Newcombe, JD, Attorney, Former Associate Director, National Center for Youth Law, Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative



**WORKING TOGETHER
TO PROTECT
EXPLOITED CHILDREN**

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Kristine Chan, MSW,

Doctoral Candidate, School of Social Ecology, University of California, Irvine.

Michelle Talley, LCSW,

Field Education Consultant, Department of Social Welfare, Luskin School of Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the Project	1
2. The Policy and Practice Context of the Specialized Units	3
Federal Legislation	6
California State Legislation	7
Los Angeles County Motions by the Board of Supervisors	8
3. The Cultural, Historical, and Gender Context of Commercial Sexual Exploitation	15
4. Los Angeles County Probation Department’s Child Trafficking Unit	18
Roles and Responsibilities of Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit.....	19
Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model.....	20
Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model Legend.....	21
Description of Program Inputs and Activities.....	24
Inputs	24
Activities	25
Los Angeles County Probation Department Child Trafficking Unit (CTU): Referral and Assessment Process	26
Youth Engagement Tip Sheet.....	29
Self-Care Strategies	31
A Week in the Life of a Probation Officer in the Los Angeles County Department of Probation Child Trafficking Unit (CTU)	36
5. DCFS Specialized Unit for Child Trafficking	37
DCFS CSEC Units Logic Model.....	39
DCFS CSEC Units Logic Model Legend.....	40
Description of Program Inputs and Activities.....	43
Inputs	43
Activities	44
Detailed Description of the DCFS MDT Process.....	54
6. Implementation Fidelity: A Measurement Plan for the Los Angeles County Probation Department’s Child Trafficking Unit	57
Youth Survey	60
Development of a New Database for Probation.....	70
Leveraging the Database as a Case Management Tool.....	70
7. Supporting and Assessing the Research Capacity of the Specialized Units	76
Lessons Learned from Implementing a New Database in DCFS.....	77
Feedback on a New Database for Probation.....	78
Research Capacity of the Specialized Units: Summary of Findings and Recommendations.....	79
8. Conclusion and Lessons Learned.....	83
References.....	87
Appendix A: Anticipated Outcomes of the Specialized Units	91
Appendix B: Sample Job Posting for Specialized Probation Officers.....	94
Appendix C: Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Guidance	96
Appendix D: Organizational Leadership Scale - Adapted	109

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1. Introduction to the Project

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The overarching goal of this project was to conduct an evaluability assessment of the specialized units for children and youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) in Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation Department (Probation). Evaluability assessments ask whether programs are ready to be evaluated. Specifically, whether the model is specified clearly enough to identify the hypothesized mechanisms of change, whether program activities and outcomes are clearly defined, and whether there is capacity to collect such data within the agency. A secondary goal of this evaluation was to develop this guide for implementation and assessment with the intention to provide other jurisdictions guidance in developing similar specialized units for CSE. In doing so, we include an overview of the practice and policy context of these specialized units and detailed descriptions of the program activities of these units.

Three overarching research questions guided this project: (1) What are the program components of the specialized units in Probation and DCFS?; (2) What are the hypothesized short term and long term outcomes based on the program components?; and (3) How can the specialized units be assessed for implementation fidelity? In answering these questions, the specific objectives of the project were to:

1. Specify and describe the specialized units for children and youth who have experienced CSE in child welfare and juvenile justice (i.e., probation) settings.
2. Develop logic models that include the program components, mechanisms of change, and hypothesized outcomes of the specialized units.
3. Identify and/or develop measurement tools and a measurement plan to assess for implementation fidelity.
4. Evaluate the research capacity of the agencies providing the specialized services.

To complete these objectives the authors of this guide worked closely with several key stakeholders in Probation and DCFS, reviewed key documents associated with the specialized units, observed the work of Probation Officers and Social Workers, and conducted interviews with key stakeholders, Probation Officers, and Social Workers. For more detail on the methodology please see Dierkhising & Kim, forthcoming.

This implementation and assessment guide has several interrelated sections that are meant to describe the work of these specialized units in great enough detail that other jurisdictions could begin to implement these practices and/or the overall service delivery model. This includes logic models and descriptions of specific activities in each of these units. While we provide detailed practices and procedures separately for Probation and DCFS, there are overlapping areas in terms of program goals and practices, as this work cannot be done without deeply connected collaboration. These agencies, though separate, regularly work together to serve and support the holistic needs of children and youth. Specific recommendations and examples of how to best evaluate these units are included as well as a detailed overview of how data collection can drive both evaluation and casework. First, though, the next section describes the practice and policy context within which these units were developed and continue to thrive.

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2. The Policy and Practice Contexts of the Specialized Units

Primary Authors Erin French & Mae Ackerman-Brimberg

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A unique policy and practice landscape has created space for the growth of the specialized units for children and youth experiencing CSE in Los Angeles County's Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation Department (Probation). Federal and state law require all Social Workers and Probation Officers (including those within the specialized units) to fulfill certain obligations. Beyond those, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, through several board motions, has directed county agencies and funding to go further to improve identification of and responses to children and youth impacted by CSE. These have come from needs and challenges raised by the units themselves, as well as youth and adult survivors, community-based organizations and other advocates (e.g., National Center for Youth Law). The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has also pushed for legislative changes at the state level. Together, these efforts have galvanized the county's innovation in improving responses to children and youth impacted by CSE.

In 2011, the Los Angeles Juvenile Delinquency Court and the Probation Department jointly applied and were awarded a Title II Formula Block Grant to support the creation of the Child Trafficking Unit in Probation and a specialized docket for youth experiencing CSE, the Succeeding through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court. This was the start of several collaborative partnerships and responses to the issue of CSE across the county. Following this, several initiatives across the county came about such as county-wide training on CSE, the development of the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, the establishment of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Task Force by the Board of Supervisors (renamed the Los Angeles County CSEC Integrated Leadership Team), and several others (see Figure 1 for a timeline). This interagency response model to serve youth at-risk for or experiencing CSE was established as a comprehensive and coordinated strategy across the County of Los Angeles which brings together law enforcement, child welfare, probation, courts, attorneys, education, mental health, medical care and public health systems, as well as community-based organizations, such as nonprofit victim advocacy organizations, and policymakers.

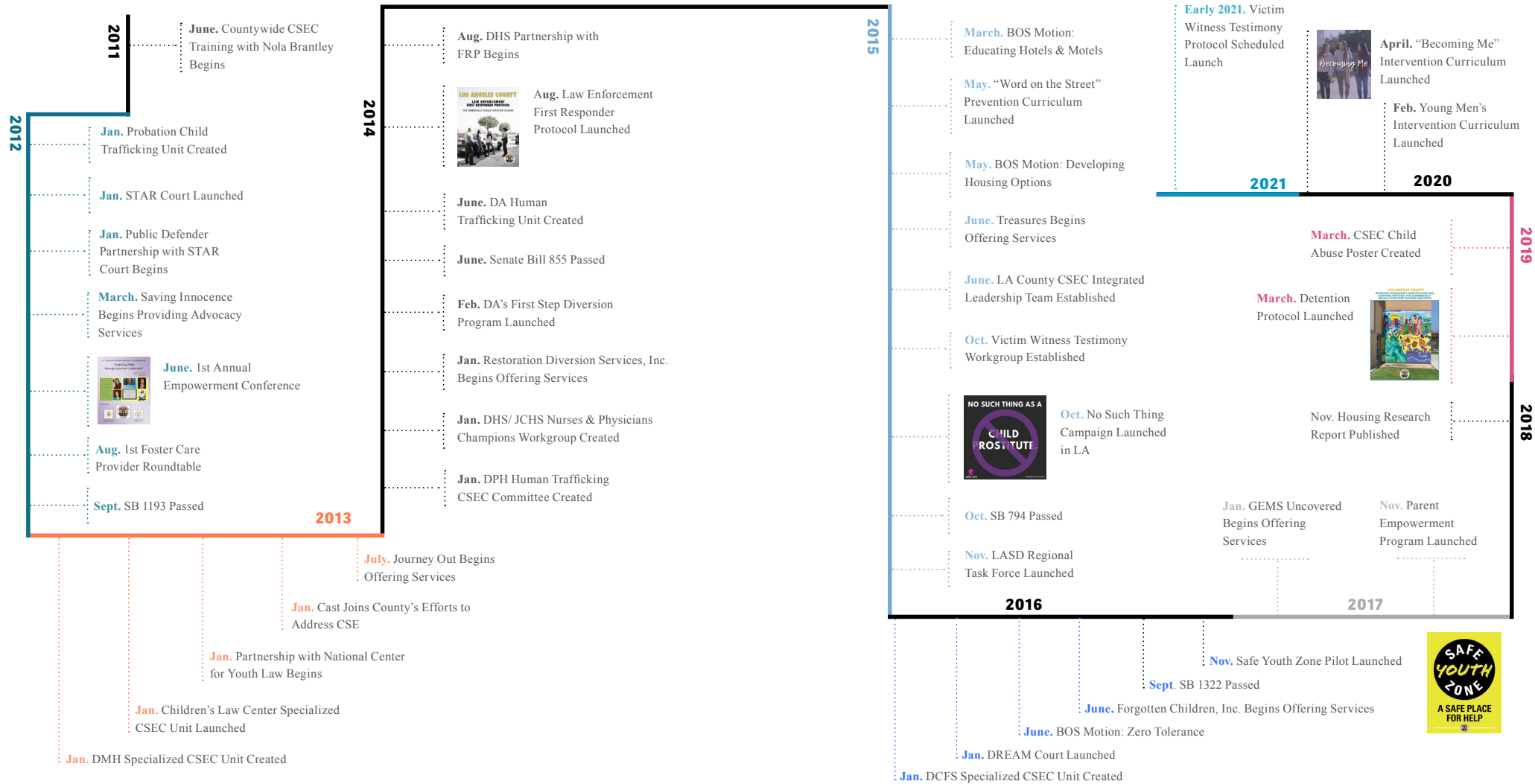
The history and development of this collaborative response has been outlined in other reports^{1 2}, therefore, this section focuses mainly on the legislation that has shaped the local practice context. Federal and state legislation have been critical to the creation and growth of the DCFS and Probation specialized units in Los Angeles County. Conversely, these specialized units and their efforts at the county level have also contributed to the development and implementation of laws and policies at the state-level. For example, partners in Los Angeles County worked to eliminate the arrest of youth experiencing CSE before California passed legislation that prohibited it (Walker & Quraishi, 2015: Senate Bill 1322). Collectively, this policy landscape alongside the work of the specialized units have established Los Angeles County as an innovative leader to improve responses to young people impacted by CSE.

1 Newcombe, A., French, E., Walker Brown, K., & Guymon, M. (2020). Building Bridges: How Los Angeles County Came Together to Support Children and Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Los Angeles County; National Center for Youth Law.

2 Newcombe, A., French, E., Walker Brown, K., & Guymon, M. (2020). All Hands on Deck: Identifying and Supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in the Juvenile Justice System. Los Angeles County Probation Department; National Center for Youth Law.

Figure 1.¹

LOS ANGELES COUNTY TIMELINE OF PROGRESS



¹ Reprinted with permission from Newcombe, A., French, E., Walker Brown, K., & Guymon, M. (2020). Building Bridges: How Los Angeles County Came Together to Support Children and Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Los Angeles County; National Center for Youth Law.

Federal Legislation

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

Adopted in 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (PL 106-386) became the first comprehensive piece of federal anti-trafficking legislation in the United States. The Act created a three-pronged approach to combat labor and sex trafficking that addresses prevention, protection, and prosecution. It was subsequently reauthorized through the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2017, and 2019. The Act defines sex trafficking as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age. Notably, this definition clarified that any child engaging in a commercial sex act is a victim of trafficking without any requirement to prove force, fraud or coercion.

Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014

In 2014, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (PL 113-183) was signed into law, aiming to reduce the prevalence of sex trafficking among youth involved in the child welfare system. The Act made several changes to the Title IV-E Foster Care Program and enacted new requirements regarding sex trafficking prevention, intervention, data collection, and reporting. It requires states to develop and implement policies and procedures to (a) screen, (b) identify, (c) document, and (d) determine appropriate services for children and youth in foster care who have experienced, or are at risk of, sex trafficking. The Act requires state child welfare systems to report children and youth identified as having experienced trafficking. It also requires state child welfare agencies to develop protocols to locate children who run away or are missing from foster care and inquire about their experiences while away.

Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015

In 2015, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (PL 144-22) was signed into law, strengthening protections and rights of victims of trafficking and increasing enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. Among other things, this Act created the Domestic Trafficking Victims' Fund, which provided funding to states and localities to combat trafficking and improve services for victims. The Act authorized funding for specialized training programs to assist in identification of trafficked youth, investigation of human trafficking offenses, and specialized courts. It also removed procedural barriers for U.S. citizens and permanent residents who seek benefits and services available to trafficking victims. In addition, the Act expanded the definition of "child abuse" under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to include human trafficking and enhanced state requirements related to missing children. Finally, the Act expanded efforts to enforce criminal penalties for human trafficking, such as amending the criminal code to include additional conduct and applying criminal sanctions to buyers of commercial sex.

California State Legislation

Assembly Bill 12. California Fostering Connections to Success Act (2010)

Passed in 2010, Assembly Bill 12 extended foster care benefits to youth between 18 and 21. The bill created California's Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program which allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster care until age 21. It also allows youth to leave extended foster care and later choose to re-enter the program up to age 21. This extension includes services provided through the child welfare system to youth impacted by CSE.

Proposition 35. Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act (2012)

California Proposition 35, a state measure proposing several changes to law related to human trafficking, was approved in 2012. These changes included expanding the definition of human trafficking to include additional types of conduct, increasing penalties for trafficking, imposing new fines to fund services for victims, changing how evidence can be used against human trafficking victims in court proceedings, and requiring additional training for law enforcement. This measure amended state law so that prosecutors no longer had to show force or coercion to prove sex trafficking involving a minor.

Senate Bill 1193. Human Trafficking: Public Posting Requirements (2012)

In 2012, California passed Senate Bill 1193, which requires specified businesses and other establishments, including airports, bus stations, and emergency rooms, to post a notice that contains information related to human trafficking, including information related to nonprofit organizations that can provide access to help and services. The bill requires that the notice is placed in a conspicuous location near the entrance of the establishment or in another location in clear view of the public and employees.

In 2017, Senate Bill 225. Human Trafficking: Notice added an additional requirement that the notice must also include a number that victims can text for services and support. In addition, Assembly Bill 260. Human Trafficking expanded the list of establishments required to post a notice to hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast inns.

Senate Bill 855. Human Services (2014)

Senate Bill 855 was passed in 2014, amending the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 300 to recognize that children who are commercially sexually exploited are victims of child abuse and neglect and may be served by the child welfare system.

Senate Bill 855 also created the "CSEC Program", a state-funded program that counties elect to participate in. With this, California became the first state in the country to have an ongoing, dedicated funding stream of \$20 million per year to support youth impacted by CSE. To opt into the CSEC Program, the bill specified two major requirements. First, the participating county must develop an interagency protocol to serve children impacted by CSE. Interagency protocols must be developed by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) led by a representative of the county human services department with representatives from child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, public health, and the juvenile court. Second, counties must use an MDT approach to case planning for youth at risk of or identified as commercially sexually exploited with participation from representatives of child welfare, probation, mental health, public health, and substance abuse. Los Angeles County opted into the program in 2015.

Senate Bill 794. Child Welfare Services (2015)

In 2015, California codified the Federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 through Senate Bill 794. Under Senate Bill 794, all county Social Workers and Probation Officers must: 1) identify children who are receiving child welfare services and who are, or are at risk of becoming, victims of CSE; 2) document these children in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System and any other agency record as determined by the county; 3) determine appropriate services; and 4) receive relevant training.

In addition, Senate Bill 794 requires county child welfare and probation agencies to develop and implement specific protocols to expeditiously locate any child/non-minor dependent missing from foster care. Protocols are required to include, but are not limited to, the timeframe for reporting the youth missing, the individuals or entities entitled to notification that the youth is missing, any required initial and ongoing efforts to locate the youth, and the plan to return the youth to placement. When a child/non-minor dependent is located, the Social Worker or Probation Officer must determine the primary factors that led to leaving care, respond to these factors in subsequent placements, and determine the child's experiences while absent from care, including whether the child experienced CSE.

Senate Bill 1322. Commercial Sex Acts: Minors (2016)

Passed in 2016, Senate Bill 1322 amended Penal Code sections 647(b) and 653.22(a) to prohibit the arrest or prosecution of a child under 18 years of age for solicitation, prostitution, or loitering with intent to commit prostitution. Together with Senate Bill 855, this bill confirmed that children experiencing CSE should not be criminalized or adjudicated through the juvenile justice system or detained, but instead be recognized as victims of abuse and offered supports and services through the child welfare system. In addition, Senate Bill 1322 specified that a child experiencing CSE may be taken into temporary custody pursuant to WIC section 305(a) under limited circumstances in which there is an immediate threat to the child's health or safety and pending the arrival of the child's parent, guardian, or county child welfare worker.

Assembly Bill 2992. Peace Officer Training: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2018)

Assembly Bill 2992 was passed in 2018, adding to Section 13516.5 of the Penal Code. It required the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to develop a course on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and victims of human trafficking, in consultation with survivors, agencies, and advocates. The course is to include topics including recognizing indicators of CSE, appropriate interviewing techniques, local and state resources available to first responders, and issues of stigma.

Los Angeles County Motions by the Board of Supervisors

Since 2012, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has been committed to addressing the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Board motions outlined below, it has created a unique landscape in the county that has supported the specialized units. These motions can be used as a template for other jurisdictions interested in creating a collaborative approach to the issue.

Table 1. Los Angeles County Board Motions Addressing Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Motion Title and Date	Brief Summary	Impact on the County
<i>Task Force Motions</i>		
<i>Establish a Sex Trafficking Task Force</i> 11/27/2012	Recognizing the vulnerability of foster care youth to trafficking, and the need for interagency collaboration to address this issue, the Board directed the Director of DCFS to convene a task force to address the issue of sex trafficking of minors within the foster care system. The task force was to include Los Angeles County’s Probation Department, DA’s Office, Sheriff’s Department, Police Chiefs Association, Department of Mental Health, along with the Los Angeles Police Department and others. The Board also directed for monthly task force meetings and a report back within six months.	Collectively, these task force motions created a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the issue of child sex trafficking in Los Angeles County, bringing together county agencies and community-based organizations to work collaboratively to better meet the needs of impacted youth. These efforts led to the creation of the CSEC Integrated Leadership
<i>Establish a Sex Trafficking Task Force - Amendment</i> 11/27/2012	This amendment recognized that many children experiencing CSE were being arrested for prostitution and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. It also acknowledged the efforts that the Probation Department had made in the prior two years to address this issue. As a result, the Board directed that the Chief Probation Officer be added as a co-chair of the Child Sex Trafficking Task Force.	Team (ILT), which, as of 2022, is the main body overseeing the county’s CSEC initiatives.
<i>Establish a County-Wide Multi-Agency Response Model to Combat the Sex Trafficking of Children in Los Angeles</i> 09/24/13	In 2013, the Child Sex Trafficking Task Force reported back to the Board with recommendations to address this issue, including to create a county-wide interagency response model to assist victims, collect data, and provide training to all agencies who serve victims. As a result, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer to coordinate with the Task Force and Probation Department, DCFS, DPSS, DMH, DPH, DHS, and Sheriff’s Department to create the Los Angeles County multi-agency response model and to report back in 90 days with a model and implementation plan.	
<i>Establish a New Model</i> 06/16/2015	This motion addressed SB 855, which called for counties to submit a plan for services for victims of child sex trafficking in order to qualify for funding that had been allocated for this purpose. The Board requested the Interim Chief Executive Officer work in collaboration with DCFS, DHS, DMH, Probation Department, and any other relevant county department to explore the feasibility for a new, unified operational model to administer programs and services exclusively for victims of child sex trafficking, and to report back in 45 days.	

Training Motions

Strengthening Safeguards for At-Risk Children in Foster Care and Group Homes to Prevent Sexual Exploitation by Human Traffickers
03/25/2014

This motion recognized that children in foster care and group homes are especially vulnerable to CSE. As a result, the Board directed DCFS and Probation to report back in 30 days on the feasibility of, a plan for, and any cost associated with entering into an agreement with local institutions of higher learning to develop and deliver training aimed at identifying youth experiencing CSE, understanding underlying needs, understanding the pattern of behavior, and identifying emergent best practices. The Board also directed DCFS and Probation to report back in 30 days with a feasibility plan to train foster family agencies, group homes, and certified foster parents on sex trafficking.

These board motions helped ensure that individuals across the county—including group home staff, certified foster parents, hotel/motel staff, and all county employees—received training on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation. Through this widespread training and education, Los Angeles County has fundamentally shifted its collective mindset and approach to this issue and equipped thousands across the county to identify youth experiencing CSE, effectively intervene, and connect the youth to appropriate services.

Mandating Sex Trafficking Training for Foster Parent and Group Home Providers
06/24/2014

In response to the March 25, 2014 Board motion, DCFS and Probation released a report which indicated that both Departments could immediately implement training for foster parents and group homes if and when directed by the Board. In this motion, the Board directed DCFS and Probation to develop a training curriculum on prevention and intervention strategies on child sex trafficking for foster care and group home providers; require that foster and group home providers be trained according to the curriculum; prepare an estimated budget for the cost required to implement this training county-wide; and report back within 60 days on the training curriculum and implementation plan.

Countywide CSEC Training Motion
-11/14/2017

This motion required all Los Angeles County employees to be trained with basic awareness and skills to identify and respond to youth who have experienced CSE. The Board directed the county Department of Human Resources to add the CSEC Online Training Module to their online offerings, require Los Angeles County employees to participate in this training as part of their orientation, and that Department heads report back within 60 days regarding any barriers to rolling out the training Department-wide to current employees.

Motel/Hotel Motions

Preventing Child Sex Trafficking at Motels/Hotels Receiving County Vouchers
03/03/2015

This motion required the county Department of Public Social Services and County Counsel to explore feasibility of implementing anti-trafficking contracting requirements for any motel/hotel seeking a contract through the General Relief (GR) Emergency Housing program. These requirements would include a commitment from that hotel/motel that they would not allow trafficking on the premises, would support law enforcement efforts, increase training, and post anti-trafficking materials.

Through these motions, the Board took steps to prevent trafficking from occurring at motels/hotels receiving county funding through the GR program and equip motel/hotel staff to identify victims and effectively intervene. Out of the 40 motels/hotels participating in the program before the new requirements were added, 33 of them signed the amended agreements in order to continue participating in the program.

Preventing Child Sex Trafficking at Motels/Hotels Receiving County Vouchers
Amendment 1,
Amendment 2
03/03/2015

These amendments specified that within the feasibility analysis, DPSS and County Counsel should identify potential options and provide a fiscal analysis if the County were to increase funding for the GR Emergency Housing Program, including the possible impact that it would have on the availability of and access to emergency shelter services.

<p><i>Recovery Solutions for Sexually Exploited Children - Revised</i> 03/10/2015</p>	<p>This motion emphasized the need to provide supportive housing, a range of services, and a continuum of care to youth impacted by CSE. The Board directed specified county agencies to report back on the feasibility of developing a facility for system-involved youth impacted by CSE. The Board also directed advocates in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to pursue legislation that would enhance the county’s ability to safely house and protect youth experiencing CSE.</p>	<p>Recognizing that safe and stable housing is crucial for both preventing the CSE of children and youth and supporting those who have experienced CSE, these board motions prioritized the housing needs of youth impacted by CSE. By directing research to better understand the impact of specialized services and out of home care options, which included youth surveys and interviews, the county sought to ensure that the housing options available could meet the unique needs and preferences of youth. The Board also made funding available to support the availability of housing for youth impacted by CSE.</p>
<p><i>Recovery Solutions for Sexually Exploited Children - Revised</i> 05/12/2015</p>	<p>This motion revised the prior motion to specify that in addition to reporting back on the feasibility of developing a facility, these agencies should also explore additional safe housing options that would specifically serve youth impacted by CSE. In addition, the Board directed exploration of broader plans that define appropriate treatment options, reduce the number of victims, and provide a plan to keep them safe by utilizing a portion of the \$6.7 million of Healthier Communities, Stronger Families, and Thriving Children (HST) funds.</p>	
<p><i>Establishing CSEC Protocols</i> 07/26/2016</p>	<p>This motion directed further research to better understand the impact of different housing options on outcomes for children and youth, including housing stability. The motion also directed researchers to examine whether access to specialized services and supports—including assignment to the specialized CSEC units through Probation and DCFS, referral to a specialized court, and connection to a community-based advocate—had an impact on a youth’s outcomes.³</p>	
<p><i>Housing Stability for Youth Identified as Commercially Sexually Exploited Children</i> 07/09/2019</p>	<p>This motion recognized the county’s HST housing allocation remained unspent despite a shortage of dedicated housing. The Board directed the CEO, DCFS, and Probation, in consultation with the Sheriff’s Department and the Office of Youth Diversion, to report back with a: 1) status on the current funding levels for HST and recent allocations, and recommendations for maximizing the housing allocation; 2) plan to create and support existing housing and Intensive Services Foster Care placements for youth identified or at risk of CSE by utilizing the maximum HST allocation dedicated to housing; and 3) long-term funding plan to ensure the continued operation of housing for youth impacted by CSE.</p>	
<p><i>Housing Stability for Youth Identified as Commercially Sexually Exploited Children - Amendment</i> 07/09/2019</p>	<p>This motion amended the prior motion to direct the ILT to submit updated funding recommendations and an implementation plan for housing, treatment, and services that address the spectrum of needs of children and youth impacted by CSE. It directed that, among other things, the report should include innovative housing placement pilots and utilize the findings of the 2018 research report commissioned by the ILT.</p>	

3 Dierkhising, C. B., Eastman, A. L., Walker Brown, K. (2022). Examining housing instability among youth who are system-involved: Comparing youth with and without histories of commercial sexual exploitation. *Child Maltreatment*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595211039463>

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Safe Youth Zone Motions

Safe Youth Zone Motion

06/16/2015

In 1997, the Board of Supervisors created the Safe House Program to ensure temporary haven at easily identifiable locations in the community for any child or adult facing a potentially threatening situation. This motion directed the Chief Executive Office to work with several county agencies to rebrand and expand the existing Safe House Program to additional county facilities and to serve children impacted by commercial sexual exploitation.

Safe Youth Zone Motion

05/10/2016

This motion directed the Los Angeles County Integrated Leadership Team (ILT) to engage several county agencies to rename and rebrand the Los Angeles County Safe House Program as the Los Angeles County Safe Youth Zone Program to meet the needs of children impacted by CSE. The motion directed agencies to develop a protocol for when children impacted by CSE seek help at a designated Safe Youth Zone location, an implementation plan, and a funding plan for implementation, training and other resources for the program.

Expanding the Existing Safe Youth Zone Program

06/09/2020

This motion directed the ILT to engage county agencies to develop a strategy to expand the Safe Youth Zone beyond the pilot areas. The Board directed agencies to report back with an implementation plan including strategies to expand the program to all existing First Responder Protocol locations, County Fire, County Medical operations and clinics, and other applicable County departments, a strategy to engage and partner with agencies outside of Los Angeles County, a training strategy, and any other necessary resources for the program expansion.

The Safe Youth Zone Program created a countywide network of safe spaces for any young person seeking help to find safety and be connected to immediate services. Through these motions, the Board expanded the existing Safe House Program to explicitly serve youth impacted by CSE, and to include a broader range of county and non-county facilities (such as fire stations and medical clinics).

***Establish a Sex
Trafficking Task Force
Motion & Amendment***
11/27/2012

Building on its early task force motions in 2012, in 2013, the Board of Supervisors charged a task force with developing a multi-agency response to combat CSE of children and youth. It charged key child-serving agencies with developing an approach that expeditiously meets the needs of children impacted by CSE. Led by Probation and DCFS, these efforts eventually resulted in the development and implementation of the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for CSEC.

***Establish a County-
Wide Multi-Agency
Response Model
to Combat the Sex
Trafficking of Children
in Los Angeles***
09/24/13

Together, these motions directed county agencies to work together to develop victim-centered, collaborative protocols to support young people impacted by CSE, including the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol (FRP) and the Victim Witness Testimony Protocol (VWTP). The Law Enforcement FRP provides youth with community-based services and supports while avoiding arrest and detention. The motions and eventually the VWTP also established processes for supporting youth testifying in human trafficking cases.

***Protect the Rights of
Human Trafficking
Victims Motion***
08/16/2016

This motion directed the Board of Supervisors to send a letter to the Governor and the County's State legislative delegation in support of Assembly Bill 1276 which, under certain conditions, would authorize a minor 15 years of age or younger to testify at trial out of the presence of the defendant and jury by way of closed-circuit television in human trafficking cases.

The Board has also supported evaluation of its innovative practices, including the Law Enforcement FRP.

***Evaluating the CSEC
First Responder
Protocol***
11/13/2018

This motion directed the CEO, in consultation with departments involved with the Law Enforcement FRP, to identify local research institution(s) to conduct an evaluation of the Law Enforcement FRP and a longitudinal study of those identified through the protocol using a public health framework. The evaluation can be found here⁴.

⁴ <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146437.pdf>

Parent Services Motions

Services for Parents with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

11/28/2017

Through this motion, the Board of Supervisors recognized the need to develop specialized services for parents of children impacted by CSE. The Board directed specified county agencies to report back on services provided by other jurisdictions, best practices or evidence based programs, for parents/caregivers, and possible funding streams available to develop and provide services to parents with children impacted by CSE.

Through these motions, the Board took steps to develop specialized and targeted services for parents and caregivers with youth impacted by CSE.

Additional Motions

Implementing Senate Bill 1193 (Steinberg)

02/11/2014

This motion directed the CEO, in coordination with all appropriate departments, to report back on the feasibility of implementing the mandates required under Senate Bill 1193 to post basic information about human trafficking, as well as information related to specified nonprofit organizations that provide services to victims. It also directed the CEO to report back on any previous action to comply with the mandates of Senate Bill 1193, as well as the District Attorney to work collaboratively with the CEO to implement and enforce Senate Bill 1193.

Through this motion, the Board helped ensure that efforts at the state level to increase awareness of the issue and identification of children impacted by CSE were implemented and enforced at the county level.

Zero Tolerance Human Trafficking Policy

10/04/2016

This motion directed the county to establish a zero tolerance policy explicitly prohibiting its employees and contractors from engaging in human trafficking. This motion directed the Department of Human Resources and Internal Service Department to enact and communicate several provisions to ensure that Los Angeles County employees and contractors are aware of the county's zero tolerance policy.

Through this motion, Los Angeles County acknowledged its responsibility as the largest employer in the region to set forth standards of behavior that are a model for other employers. It not only ensured that no employee or contractor who is convicted of buying a minor for sex, or any human trafficking related activity, would be allowed to serve the county, but it also effectively raised awareness of the issue across all employees and contractors working for the county.

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

3. The Cultural, Historical, and Gender Context of Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Suggested Citation

Dierkhising, C. B., Kim, B. K. E., Ackerman-Brimberg, M., & Sandoval, J. R. (2022). Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) disproportionately affects youth of color, in particular, Black and Native females and LGBTQ+ youth. The disproportionate impact of CSE on Native youth today can be traced directly to centuries of violence, genocide, and erasure through colonization, family separation, forced assimilation, and sexual violence against girls and women in Native American communities (Pierce, 2009; Farley, 2011; Valadez et al., 2023). The legacy of this historical oppression carries over into the present with higher rates of poverty among, and violence against, Native people. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) crisis (OVC, n.d.; Aqpiq Apok, C. et al., n.d.), negative stereotypes and invisibility of Native people in the media (EagleWoman, 2019), and the oversexualization and commodification of Native girls, women and LGBTQ+ youth, all contribute to disparities in exploitation (Deer, 2010; Amnesty International, 2022; Pierce, 2009).

In a seminal report on the impact of the sex trade on Native girls and women, of 105 Native women interviewed, 39% had been exploited before age 18 (Farley, 2011). That same report highlighted the ongoing role of discrimination against and fetishization of Native women and girls, noting that sex buyers regularly purchase women based on buyers' ethnic stereotypes, with 42% of women in the study having been racially insulted by a trafficker/buyer (Farley, 2011). Native youth also experience other risk factors for exploitation at higher rates than their non-Hispanic white peers, including child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement, homelessness, having run away from home or care, and having a caregiver or personal experience with substance use issues (Valadez et al., 2023).

Similarly, the link between slavery, anti-Black racism, and the ongoing objectification and exploitation of Black girls' and women's bodies is well documented. Ocen (2015) has clearly articulated how the historical roots of slavery contribute to a lack of protection for Black girls in the anti-trafficking movement, and how the intersection of race and gender make Black girls more susceptible to exploitation. In addition, research shows that Black youth experience an adultification bias, whereby they are viewed as older than they are, and older than similarly aged peers of other races/ethnicities (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Epstein et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2014). This bias leads to perceptions that they have more agency over decisions, especially as they relate to their bodies and sex, than their non-Black counterparts, and pushes them into the child welfare and justice systems at higher rates (Phillips, 2015).

National data highlight these disparities, with the most significant disparities seen in samples of youth that are involved in juvenile justice or child welfare systems (Rights for Girls, n.d.). These biases also lead to differential treatment of Black youth even when they are identified as having experienced exploitation: they are often treated more punitively, and even criminalized for their survival (Phillips, 2015; Davis, 2020; NBWJI, 2022). The National Black Women's Justice Institute (NBWJI) highlights the many ways that this criminalization plays out, noting that Black women are "criminalized and incarcerated for 'failing to protect' their children from their abuser[s]" and for "defending themselves against their abusers"; and Black girls are often "criminalized for their responses to abuse and trauma, including running away, substance use, and truancy" which are common strategies for escaping and coping with violence (NBWJI, 2022).

Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) also impact a youth's vulnerability to exploitation, as well as the likelihood that they will be identified as a victim and offered supportive services (French Nafekh, 2023). Pervasive homophobia and transphobia manifest in bullying, peer and family violence and rejection, discrimination in employment, education, and public benefits, and higher than average rates of homelessness and child welfare system involvement of LGBTQ+ youth, which are all risk factors for exploitation (Miller, 2021).

Multiple studies have indicated that LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented among those who are trafficked. For example, one study with youth (ages 13-24) involved in the sex trade in six cities across the U.S. found that: nearly half of all youth were LGBTQ+ and, of those youth, 70% were Black (Swaner, 2016). Another study of Native students found that LGBTQ+ youth were twice as likely to report having traded sex than cisgender heterosexual females, and more than three times as likely as cisgender heterosexual males (Minnesota Youth Sex Trading Project, 2022). These data highlight the intersectionality of anti-LGBTQ+ stigma, and individual and systemic racism, which creates heightened vulnerability

to trafficking (Miller, 2021). In addition, studies suggest that LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be engaged in survival sex or be recruited by friends or peers into the sex trade, rather than having a third-party exploiter, which, wrongly, goes unrecognized as trafficking (Dank, et al., 2015).

Additionally, much attention is paid in the anti-trafficking and victims' services space to cisgender girls, and increasingly LGBTQ+ youth, although, data suggest that cisgender males are also experiencing exploitation at high rates. For example, a national longitudinal study found that the prevalence and frequency of adolescent CSE exposure was higher among males than among females (Barnert, et al., 2022) and a second national study of youth involved in the sex trade found that 36% were cisgender male (Swaner, 2016).

Despite experiencing CSE at similar or greater rates and facing many of the same risk factors for exploitation, males tend to be under-identified and underserved due to enduring societal myths and gender stereotypes. These include that males cannot be victims of sexual assault or exploitation because they have more autonomy over their bodies and can leave if they want to; are sexual beings who desire sex and are "getting lucky"; that if they are engaging in survival sex, they are in control and are doing so in their role as providers for themselves or families; and that if they are having sex with men, they must be gay, even if they are not (French Nafekh, 2023; Jones, 2010; Youth Collaboratory, 2016; ACF, n.d.). Lack of representation in the media, educational and outreach materials, along with shame and stigma, often cause males to not self-identify as victims or disclose abuse; on the flip side, law enforcement and providers often interpret the same behaviors or risk factors differently among boys and girls, leading to missed identification and less access to services (French Nafekh, 2023; Perry, et al., 2022).

These disparities and dynamics play out in the specialized units in Los Angeles as well, and are an important context to consider in serving youth impacted by CSE more broadly. For example, a study in Los Angeles found Black females were disproportionately represented among those who were identified as experiencing CSE (Dierkhising et al., 2021). About two-thirds (62%) of the youth in the study, which included females in out of home care with either child welfare or juvenile justice involvement, were Black. This is about double the rate of Black youth in out of home care because of juvenile justice involvement (Herz & Chan, 2017) and double the rate of Black children and youth in the foster care population in Los Angeles (Webster et al., 2018). Even more stark, Black children only accounted for approximately 7% of the child population in Los Angeles County at the time of the research (KidsData, 2018). The same study found that Latinx youth were identified at CSE at lower rates - approximately 30% of the sample - than would be expected given they make up approximately 62% of the child population (KidsData, 2018).

The impact of race, gender, and cultural dynamics on both vulnerability to exploitation and responses to youth experiencing it requires policymakers, program developers, researchers, and practitioners alike to consider the inequities and inequalities resulting from historical and ongoing racism, homophobia and transphobia, and stereotypes of masculinity in today's society and how they manifest in the lives of young people. Furthermore, it is imperative to understand and explicitly confront the fact that the public systems (e.g., child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice) that are responsible for addressing the needs of youth and families impacted by CSE have historically been, and continue to be, sources of trauma for communities of color and other marginalized groups. These facts and historical context must be taken into consideration as other jurisdictions create and build specialized units within these systems. The specialized units in Los Angeles County strive to confront these issues as their services and the needs of their clients evolve over time.

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

4. Los Angeles County Probation Department's Child Trafficking Unit

Suggested Citation

Dierkhising, C. B., Kim, B. K. E., Ackerman-Brimberg, M., & Sandoval, J. R. (2022). Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

The Child Trafficking Unit in the Los Angeles County Probation Department^{1 2} is the first of its kind. It was established in 2012 through a multi-year federal Title II Formula Block Grant which was allocated to both the Juvenile Court and Probation for the “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Project”. This grant set the foundation for the creation of the unit and STAR Court, the specialized courtroom for youth experiencing CSE. The Child Trafficking Unit is a small unit of approximately ten people who are specially chosen, trained, and committed to working with youth who are experiencing CSE. This section includes a description of the roles of the individuals in the unit, the logic model and its legend, and a more detailed description of the activities of the officers in the unit. For descriptions of the program outcomes see Appendix A.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit

Director. The Director of the unit oversees the administration of the unit, regularly reports out to stakeholders and policymakers, leads several countywide committees related to CSE, trains on specialized protocols, raises awareness of the issue of CSE, and is a champion for youth.

Supervising Deputy Probation Officer (DPO). The Supervising DPO supports both the case carrying DPOs and the Director in ensuring all program activities and commitments are carried out. The Supervisor DPO has a clinical background, so that they can use clinical skills in supervision meetings, addressing secondary trauma of staff, and in consultation with DPOs on youth services when necessary.

Deputy Probation Officers (DPO). The DPOs are case carrying officers who supervise youth across a range of dispositions and living situations (e.g., detention, residential placement, home on probation, in an out of county placement, etc.). These officers are recruited and hired specifically for this unit. For an example of a job description/flyer that can be downloaded and adapted for other jurisdictions see Appendix B.

Staff Assistant. The Staff Assistant manages the daily administrative tasks of the unit under direct supervision of the Director.

Court Liaison/MDT Coordinator. This DPO appears in the specialized court on behalf of the case carrying DPOs in the unit and files the associated court reports. They are also a subject matter expert and the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting coordinator.

Assessment DPO/Transition Age Youth Coordinator. The Assessment DPO conducts all the assessments for youth who have been referred to the unit to determine whether they should be transferred to the unit and works with the transition-aged youth to support them as they transition to adulthood and out of system jurisdiction.

Locate Officer. The Locate DPO focuses on the monitoring and coordinating of referrals for any missing youth and assists law enforcement in locating and recovering youth, including reporting missing youth to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

¹ <https://probation.lacounty.gov/child-trafficking-unit/>

² See this prior report for more detail on the historical context of the unit and their collaborative partners. <https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03/ProbationV2-Final-Report-200427.2.pdf>

Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model: Los Angeles County Probation Department

INPUTS



ACTIVITIES



OUTPUTS

- # Referrals Made to Services
- # Youth Assessed and Served
- # Hours of Training
- # Self-care/STS Activities
- # MDTs Held
- # Agency Collaborators on Case
- # Case Plans including Goals and Harm Reduction Strategies
- # Family Meetings/Contact
- Frequency of Contact with Youth

PROXIMAL OUTCOMES

- Academic Improvement
- Accessing Employment Opportunities
- Safe and Stable Living Situation
- Removing Ties to Exploitation
- Social Support System in Place
- Accessing Services
- Progress Towards Goals
- Reductions in Traumatic Stress Symptoms

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Education, Vocational Training, and/or Employment
- Housing Security
- Youth Free of Exploitation
- Self-Sufficiency
- Improvements in Mental, Behavioral & Physical Health
- Healthy Relationships
- Community Engagement/Supports

Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model Legend

INPUTS

The resources needed to implement programmatic activities successfully.

Culture of Support | Institutional and organizational support for the specialized unit.

Specialized Recruitment of Probation Officers | Officers are specially trained and selected to work in the unit.

Leadership | Champions for the program within and outside of the Probation Department.

Legislation and Policy | Federal, State, and County legislation or policies that support and provide accountability for the work of the specialized unit and provides accountability.

Professional Development | Ongoing training and professional development opportunities.

ACTIVITIES

Specific activities that Probation Officers do as part of their regular work to achieve programmatic goals and outcomes.

Multidisciplinary Teaming | Collaborative, multidisciplinary teamwork.

- **Referral and Assessment Process:** Referral and assessment process to determine whether youth experiencing, or at risk for, CSE should be transferred to the unit for supervision by a specialized Probation Officer and/or referred to other services.
- **Regular Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDT):** MDTs are regularly scheduled, led by Probation, and generally include representatives from child welfare, mental health, public health, education, advocates, and attorneys.

Relationship-Informed Care | Activities that promote rapport, engagement, and relationship building among youth, families, Probation Officers, and collaborative partners.

- **Youth and Family Engagement:** Interactions and discussions are intentional and build a foundation of trust in order to promote engagement and strong positive relationships with youth and their family (broadly defined).
- **Collaboration:** Service providers, the Probation Officers, youth, family, and stakeholders work together to meet the youth’s needs and support their goals, with an emphasis on transparency and communication.
- **Staff Wellness and Organizational Support:** Regular and ongoing support for staff wellness and efforts to mitigate secondary or vicarious trauma are evident in the specialized unit’s practices and policies.
- **Youth Voice and Choice:** Youth are engaged in shared decision-making and goal setting.
- **Empowerment:** Strengths-based activities are identified that build on youth resilience and promote agency, connection, and recovery from trauma.
- **Recognition of Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues:** Service provision reflects a deep understanding of structural and systemic inequalities driving many of the issues youth encounter, which also affect the ways youth engage with programs and services. Attention is paid to gender and cultural issues including gender identity, and the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of the youth.

Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model Legend, cont.

ACTIVITIES, CONT.

Specific activities that Probation Officers do as part of their regular work to achieve programmatic goals and outcomes.

Trauma-Informed Case Management | Specific activities conducted by Probation Officers as part of ongoing case management.

- **Frequent Contact with Youth:** Frequent contact with youth (e.g., face to face contact 4x a month), including face to face, phone calls, and messaging.
- **Service Continuity:** When youth are assigned a specialized Probation Officer they work with that youth for the rest of the youth's time on Probation regardless of location, placement or disposition status.
- **Service Referrals:** Referrals are made to a wide range of services to address the identified needs of each youth.
- **Goal Setting:** Focus is on goal setting, rather than compliance, and is based on the youths' needs and strengths.
- **Safety Planning:** Proactive planning takes place to identify potential and imminent safety risks and identify resources to increase youth's safety.
- **Harm Reduction:** Harm reduction strategies are used to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the impact of risky behaviors and/or situations.

Specialized Protocols | CSE specific protocols that Officers in the Unit have a role in.

- **Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol¹:** This protocol created a collaborative, service-based response when youth are identified by law enforcement to avoid criminalization of youth for their victimization. It includes connection to an advocate, as well as medical and mental health care, as needed.
- **Detention Protocol²:** The Detention Interagency Identification and Response Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Youth (Detention Protocol) was created to identify and provide services to youth impacted by CSE who are in detention facilities.
- **Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol³:** This protocol was created to support the youth who are called upon to testify as witnesses in adult court for criminal prosecution of their exploiters.
- **Locate Protocol:** This protocol was created to establish roles and responsibilities of agencies in locating and recovering youth who are away from home or care (i.e., missing).

Specialized Programs | CSE specific programs that the Unit works directly and collaboratively with.

- **Community-Based Advocacy:** Partnering with advocacy organizations with specially trained advocates, including peer and survivor mentors, to provide additional support for youth who have experienced CSE.
- **Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court:** Specialized and collaborative court which specifically addresses the needs of youth who have experienced CSE.

1 https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03/Los-Angeles-County-Law-Enforcement-First-Responder-Protocol_0.pdf

2 https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-02/LACDetentionProtocol_Final.pdf

3 <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/98488.pdf>

Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model Legend, cont.

OUTPUT MEASURES

Measures of the program’s process or implementation.

- Number of referrals made to services
- Number of youth assessed and served
- Number of hours of training
- Number of self-care or secondary traumatic stress (STS) activities
- Number of MDT’s held
- Number of agency collaborators
- Number of case plans including goals and harm reduction strategies
- Number of family meetings/contacts
- Frequency of contact with youth

PROXIMAL OUTCOMES

More immediate results of the program’s activities. These outcomes are expected to be achieved while the youth is still on Probation.

- **Academic Engagement:** Youth is showing improvement in attending school and working towards their personalized academic goal.
- **Accessing Employment Opportunities:** Youth is provided with professional development opportunities, mentoring and skills building that will assist them in meeting their desired employment goals.
- **Safe and Stable Living Situation:** Youth has a place to live that is safe and appropriate to their needs.
- **Removing Ties to Exploitation:** Youth has the ability to access resources and take positive steps which assist them in distancing themselves from exploitation.
- **Social Support Systems in Place:** Youth has prosocial and supportive relationships with peers and adults.
- **Accessing Services:** Youth is connected with and engaged in services that meets their needs and interests.
- **Reduction in Traumatic Stress Symptoms:** Youth is working toward recovery and healing from trauma, as evidenced by a reduction in traumatic stress reactions and improvements in social and emotional functioning.
- **Progress Towards Goals:** Youth is making progress towards individualized goals.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Ultimate changes expected to see in program participants.

- **Education, Vocational Training, and/or Employment:** Youth is academically engaged, in traditional or vocational school, and/or has stable employment.
- **Housing Security:** Youth has secured safe and permanent housing
- **Youth Free of Exploitation:** Youth is no longer experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Self-Sufficiency:** Youth has the agency, life skills, and developmentally appropriate supports to meet their daily needs.
- **Improvements in Mental, Behavioral, & Physical Health:** Youth is mentally and physically healthy, and has the resources needed to address future health needs.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Youth develop healthy interpersonal relationships.
- **Community Engagement/Support:** Youth is connected with, and has support from, family, peers, and/or community members or organizations.

For more detail on activities see below.
 For more detail on outcomes see Appendix A. ↗

Description of Program Inputs and Activities

Inputs

For a program to be successful there are several foundational resources that should be in place. These are referred to as the inputs into the program. Inputs can be somewhat abstract because they are often contextual in nature. In other words, they are often resources that come from the ecosystem within which the program resides, which the program does not necessarily have control over. For example, the Child Trafficking Unit benefits greatly from local legislation and policy (see Section 2 of this guide). Not all jurisdictions have the same policies in place, though that does not mean a program in a different jurisdiction will not be successful, rather, they may lean more heavily on another input to ensure success.

For the current program, there were five inputs that were identified as foundational resources. These inputs are described below.

Culture of Support. The culture of support signifies both institutional and organizational support for the specialized unit. There is support for the Child Trafficking Unit in the Probation Department broadly. In addition, there is county-wide support for the unit, particularly from the Board of Supervisors. For example, the Board has pushed for additional funding for programming when needed, ensured collaboration among county agencies, and Deputies from the Board of Supervisors have frequently attended events (e.g., Empowerment Conference).

Specialized Recruitment of Probation Officers. Officers are specially trained and selected to work in the unit. Hiring within the Probation Department is typically based on seniority rather than specific qualifications for a particular unit or position. However, the Child Trafficking Unit is unique in its hiring process so that it only hires those who would be best suited to handle cases of CSE (see Appendix B for a sample job description). Part of the process includes the applicant submitting a letter to the Department's Human Relations Office for review on why they are interested and detailing the necessary skills they have to serve in the unit. Additionally, they go through several rounds of interviews with the Director, the Supervising DPO, and, when possible, a survivor of CSE. The Director of the unit encourages applicants to also reach out to case carrying DPOs in the Child Trafficking Unit to ask questions and get a feel for the unit. The unit prides itself on carefully selecting the right individuals who are committed to the issue and can develop lasting relationships with youth.

Leadership. The specialized unit has support within and outside of the Probation Department but is highlighted by its internal leader. The dedicated leadership by the Director of the Child Trafficking Unit includes a commitment to innovation and youth-centered practice, ensuring that the team has the support they need to serve youth, celebrating the team and youth's successes, and providing training and resources for staff that may be facing any secondary or primary trauma.

Legislation and Policy. Changes in legislation have been a huge factor in identifying and supporting youth who have experienced CSE in Los Angeles County (see section 2 of this guide) as well as strengthening the foundation of the Child Trafficking Unit.

Professional Development. The Child Trafficking Unit, similar to other units, requires personnel to complete the required 40 hours of annual training. In the Child Trafficking Unit, DPOs are also encouraged and supported to engage regularly in additional trainings, professional development opportunities, or speaking engagements (e.g., trainings and/or presentations) to deepen their understanding of CSE and learn concrete skills for serving youth. All Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit are required to take CSEC 101 and 102 trainings, along with trainings on specialized topics, such as working with LGTBQ+ youth, safe internet and social media use, CSE among Native youth, and others.

Activities

The activities are the nuts and bolts of the program model; they are what the Probation Officers do as part of their regular work to achieve the program's goals and outcomes. These activities fall into five domains, which are described below with examples from the field.

Multidisciplinary Teaming. The specialized unit participates in regular collaborative, multidisciplinary teamwork. Collaboration is at the heart of the work given the diverse needs of youth impacted by CSE. Collaboration across agencies allows the specialized unit to capitalize on the various resources that are available to each agency. Frequent collaborating agencies include, but are not limited to, child welfare, mental health, community-based organizations, attorneys, education, and public health.

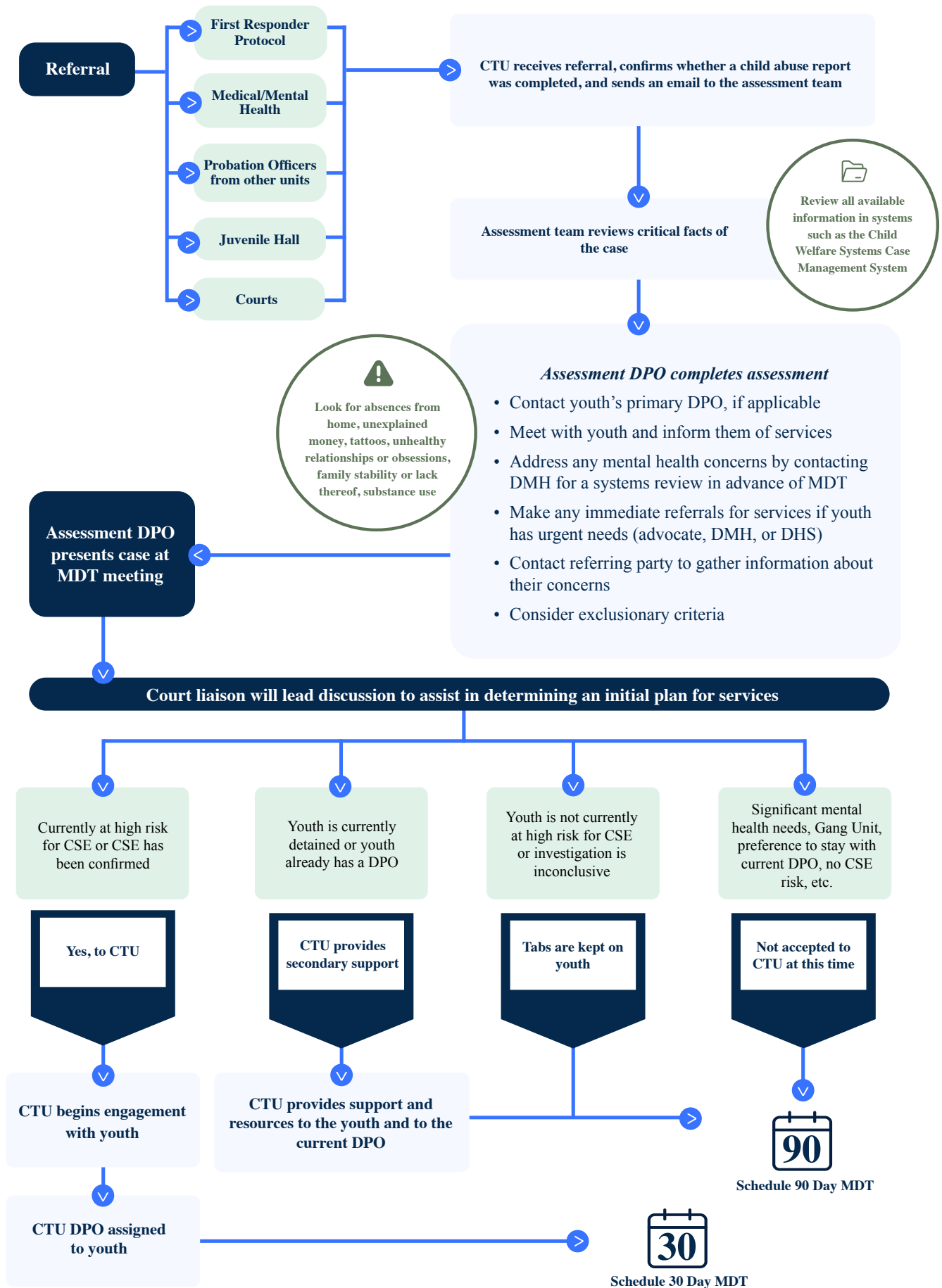
Referral and Assessment Process. This process determines which youth will be served by the specialized unit. A streamlined referral and assessment process is integral to ensuring youth at risk for or experiencing CSE are identified and offered the most appropriate services and resources. Referrals to the unit come from various sources, such as the child protection hotline or Probation Officers in other units. The Assessment DPO assesses the youth to determine the appropriateness of transfer to the specialized unit, which includes the youth's preferences, then brings a recommendation to the MDT for a decision about whether a youth should be transferred to the unit. See Figure 2 for an overview of the referral and assessment process for the Child Trafficking Unit.

A unique feature of the Child Trafficking Unit is that even when the MDT determines that a youth is not going to be transferred to the unit resources are often still provided to the youth or their primary DPO (i.e., secondary support), referrals can still be made to advocacy services, and the unit will follow up with the youth for possible support later on (i.e., "keeping tabs" on the youth).

REFERRAL & ASSESSMENT - IN ACTION

A 15-year-old female was identified through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol at a motel with guns and drugs present along with a 30-year-old male. Her mother wouldn't take her home because she was worried about her drug use. Her family had a dependency court hearing coming up and there was an expectation that she was going to be removed from the home due to a history of abuse by her brother who was still in the home. When the Assessment DPO interviewed the young person, she denied experiencing CSE, but the man found at the hotel with her was a known trafficker and she reportedly went to this motel often. There were mental health issues and developmental delays present. She was also already on Probation. Therefore, the assessment recommendation was to reach out to the youth's current DPO to discuss transferring the case to the Child Trafficking Unit based on the concerns related to CSE. In the meantime, the MDT decided to provide her secondary support and refer her to an advocate. Thus, the Child Trafficking Unit was able to engage in service referrals and offer support even though she was not yet in the unit.

Figure 2. Los Angeles County Probation Department Child Trafficking Unit (CTU): Referral and Assessment Process



Regular Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDT). MDTs are held weekly, are led by Probation’s MDT Coordinator/Court Liaison, and generally include representatives from child welfare, mental health, public health, education, advocates, and attorneys. During the MDT, all providers discuss the strengths and needs of the youth they are working with, share resources, discuss the youth’s progress toward their goals, identify necessary service referrals, and work through any barriers the youth may be facing. Because of Senate Bill 855, there are specific protocols in place related to the function and makeup of these MDTs. See Appendix C for additional guidance on the MDT process for the Child Trafficking Unit.

Each week, the MDT Coordinator/Court Liaison sends an agenda for the meeting with a list of the youth to be discussed. MDTs often begin with the newly referred youth. The Assessment DPO provides the summaries of the assessments that have occurred in the last week and provides the recommendations on what actions should be taken. Then individual cases are discussed, which includes youth who have upcoming court dates, youth who are experiencing crises or upcoming transitions, ongoing case reviews, and youth that the Child Trafficking Unit is monitoring for future services or support. The MDT may make recommendations to the court to support the youth’s progress.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMING - IN ACTION

A youth was engaging with services but reported that there were too many providers and too many appointments to keep up with. The MDT discussed which services and providers the youth was most connected with, and which could be eliminated or streamlined. The MDT selected one member to reach out to the youth to discuss streamlining her services.

A youth was getting ready to have her probation terminated and was moving to another state. The MDT recognized that the youth had formed a powerful relationship with their advocate and the youth had voiced that they were interested in continuing that type of service. The advocate researched and identified similar services in the youth’s new location, reached out, and set up meetings so the youth could connect with a new advocate ahead of time. This helped to ensure a smooth transition off probation while still being connected to supports in their new living situation.

The MDT was monitoring the progress (i.e., “keeping tabs”) of a youth who was 17 years old and was referred from juvenile hall through the Detention Protocol. The girl denied experiencing CSE to the Assessment DPO and had no interest in coming to the STAR Court or having an advocate. She had referrals to DCFS for a history of domestic violence in the home. She reportedly left home frequently and was gone for eight months at one time during which she said she was staying with her boyfriend. Even though there was no confirmation of CSE, because of the frequent and long periods of going missing, the MDT determined the youth was at high risk for CSE. The youth was in the process of moving from home to out of home care. The MDT decided that the Child Trafficking Unit would review the case in 30 days once she was in her new living situation to determine whether additional services or transfer to the unit were appropriate or desired by the young person.

Relationship-Informed Care. The activities in this domain are intended to promote rapport and relationship building between youth, families, Probation Officers, and collaborative partners. Establishing and maintaining meaningful and healthy relationships, particularly among youth and families, is at the crux of the work and are the catalysts for successful outcomes. All activities in this domain are carried out in a trauma-informed manner, in that the specialized Probation Officers recognize the impact of trauma on the youth they work with, can identify trauma responses and trauma reminders, and respond to youth in a supportive and healing-centered manner (Dierkhising & Marsh, 2015; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2015).

Youth and Family Engagement. Probation Officers engage with the youth and family in ways that build a foundation of trust and consistency. Engagement can evolve across the life of a case, and often requires a Probation Officer to meet the youth where they are at. Rather than formal meetings at the Probation Department office, for example, DPOs may pick up a youth at school, take them to a café for a snack, and do their check-in while walking in a local park. Youth often describe one of the most important characteristics of their DPO is that they “show up.” For example, Child Trafficking Unit Probation Officers frequently drive several hours just to drop off a resource (e.g., clothes for a job interview) for a youth. They maintain more frequent contact, calling and visiting multiple times per month, which also shows their commitment and reminds the youth they are an ally. As one DPO stated, “I want them to see we are here.” Because of the strong relationships formed between youth and their specialized Probation Officers, youth often stay in close contact with their Probation Officers after their case closes. DPOs are often invited to baby showers, graduations, and other significant life events.

Families are seen as critical to a youth’s healing journey. Importantly, families are broadly defined and can include a range of supportive adults that provide care and support for the youth. Probation Officers are in regular contact with the family, providing resources to the family, and collaborating with them on case management and service referral/provision. This engagement occurs regardless of whether the youth is in the home of the caregiver, in out-of-home care or detention, or whether the youth is missing from home or care. For example, Specialized Probation Officers regularly call family members to provide updates when youth are away from home. Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit also ensure that the family is safe and stable by providing resources such as access to housing resources, childcare, referrals to family therapy, and/or other resources as needed. DPOs often report that families are reluctant for their child to complete their terms of probation simply because they want the ongoing support of the Child Trafficking Unit. This is a testament to their ability to effectively engage with and support families. On page 29, we have included some top tips for engaging with youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.

Collaboration. Service providers, the Probation Officer, family, and community-based agencies work together to support the youth in making progress toward their goals and make collaborative decisions with transparency. This collaborative model is highlighted through the MDT approach and the collaborative problem solving that can occur when partners come together with a shared mission. As one stakeholder noted, the benefit of the teaming is not only communication among the team members and team decision-making but also modeling for youth how to work together. If youth sense conflict among the adults around them, it can increase anxiety and reduce engagement. Collaboration is also reflected in the several protocols that multiple agencies are involved in (e.g., Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol). Overall, collaboration is a hallmark of the unit and is seen as a problem-solving tool. The collaboration seen in the specialized unit is reflective of true partnerships with individuals and agencies that the Probation Officers can rely on to aid in supporting youth’s progress towards their goals.

YOUTH VOICE MATTERS!

Youth Engagement Tip Sheet

TOP TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH YOUTH EXPERIENCING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Adapted from the Los Angeles County Probation Department Child Trafficking Unit's Probation Officer Engagement Guide, developed by the National Center for Youth Law, 2022

Build relationships



Genuinely check in and be curious about who the young person is as a whole person. Take time to build trust. Be there to celebrate the good and be a shoulder to lean on when things are tough. Do not only focus on case plans or upcoming court dates.

TRY QUESTION 1

Always ask youth their perspective first



Give youth the chance to weigh in on all major decisions in their lives. This ensures that what happens will be feasible and that the youth will buy into the plan for their care. It also builds confidence, decision-making and communication skills. Follow the youth's lead on whether and how they want to talk about difficult experiences, such as exploitation - asking about details can be re-traumatizing and is usually not necessary for you to support the youth.

Offer communication options



People like to communicate in different ways and at different paces. **Ask how the youth prefers to express themselves** and be open to changing the way you engage over time as you get to know each other and based on what's going on in their lives.

TRY QUESTION 3

Be consistent



Show up, and build these conversations into your regular check-ins. **Remind the youth that you'll talk about these things regularly**, so they know what to expect.

Be transparent



Talk openly about when a decision is made that does not align with the youth's preferences. Be clear that while you may not always agree or be able to do exactly what the youth wants, **you will work together to figure out a path forward.**

FIVE CONVERSATION STARTERS

- 1 What is **going on in your life that feels most important** to you right now?

- 2 I know you have an upcoming court date/team meeting.
 - Is there **anything you want the court or the rest of your team to know** - good or bad?
 - **How do you want to share that?** Ex: Say it out loud yourself, write a letter to the judge, have me say it, etc?
 - **Do you have any questions** about what will happen at court/that meeting?_____
- 3 It is important to me that you have a chance to express your opinions, feelings, wants and needs.
 - How do you like to express yourself?
 - **How can I help you feel comfortable** expressing yourself?
 - **What tools can I provide** for you to make it easier for you when we talk? Ex: Paper and pen, music, drawing pad, including a friend or other support person, etc?_____
- 4 Do you know **who is on your team and how to reach out to them** if you need something? Who do you reach out to if you want to share something good that happened?

- 5 As we're getting to know each other, **what is a sign that something could be wrong** and that I should check in with you? Ex. You're usually chatty but you tend to get really quiet when something is bothering you, etc?

Staff Wellness and Organizational Support. Given the intense nature of this work, staff wellness and organizational support are critical for success. As part of supervision, Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit report out on their individual wellness activities and goals on a monthly basis which emphasizes to staff that wellness is a priority in the unit. While wellness activities are personal in nature and vary for everyone, examples of activities can be found on page 31.

Staff wellness, including the mitigation of secondary traumatic stress and burnout, is not solely an individual's responsibility. The organization must also provide support and opportunities for wellness. For example, the Child Trafficking Unit hosts regular staff retreats where they make time to check in with each other, have fun, and engage in team building activities. All members of the unit get to vote on retreat activities, emphasizing shared decision making. This bonding and self-care also take place during monthly and annual empowerment events, where youth and other MDT partners are present.

In addition, the Probation Officers in the specialized unit know that they can rely on each other as well as their supervisors for support when needed. Both the Director and Supervising DPO are trained as Social Workers and have clinical backgrounds. Crises often occur in this line of work making peer to peer emotional and professional support critical. For example, when a youth in the Child Trafficking Unit died the Director of the unit and her counterpart in the advocacy program covered all on call duties for the DPO and advocate who were most impacted by the youth's passing to allow them time to process and grieve the loss.

Youth Voice and Choice. Youth need to be heard and feel valued in their relationships with their Probation Officers. This means that they are provided opportunities for input on decisions (e.g., housing, services, etc.), offered options when possible, and feel that their input is respected. Because exploitation strips youth of choice and control over their lives and bodies, this restoration of power is an essential component of healing. Self-advocacy is a tangible skill youth can practice with their DPOs, advocates, and other MDT partners. The Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit celebrate youths' achievements and strengths, and support youth-defined goals.

Empowerment. To support empowerment, the unit identifies and integrates strengths-based activities into youth's case plans and into their ongoing engagement with youth. These activities are intended to build on youth resilience and promote agency and recovery from trauma. Since 2012, the Child Trafficking Unit, and now the DCFS CSEC Unit, has coordinated and supported an Annual Empowerment Conference for youth. The three-day Empowerment Conference provides youth with a space to have fun and be creative, connect with and be inspired by peers, survivor leaders, allies, and trusted adults, and process their experiences in a safe space. The conference includes a survivor-led panel, creative workshops, and keynote speakers. Previous conferences have included facilitators who are recognized subject matter experts – Rachel Lloyd (GEMS), Nola Brantley (Nola Brantley Speaks), and Maheen Kaleem (Grantmakers for Girls of Color). In recent years, at youth's requests, youth have been involved in the planning of the events, including leading some of the sessions.

In addition, the Child Trafficking Unit and DCFS CSEC Unit coordinate monthly empowerment events that are closer to home, to provide more frequent opportunities for youth to come together with trusted adults (e.g., DPOs, advocates, mentors, the STAR Court judge, etc.) and experience something new. Empowerment activities can vary; for example, the CTU has organized opportunities for youth to do cooking classes, go horseback riding, attend a painting class, go to the beach, or other activities. Ensuring youth have a safe, accessible way to get to and from the events is an important consideration. The Probation Officers may pick the youth up and bring them to the event, participate in the event together, and take them home.

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES



GET PHYSICAL

Exercise
Go for a bike ride
Yoga
Take a walk
Stretch



CREATE SOMETHING

Prepare a meal
Make art
Do a craft project
Garden
Journal



BE STILL

Meditate
Deep breathing
Take a nap
Practice mindfulness
Pray



SELF CARE @ WORK

Set boundaries with youth and colleagues
Make time to eat lunch
Take exercise breaks
Take real breaks
Take time off work



GET INSPIRED

Read something on a topic you wouldn't normally
Watch a standup comedian special
Read poetry or inspiring quotes
Listen to music that motivates you
Watch movies



TRY SOMETHING NEW

Try a new activity
Take up hobbies
Create end-of-day rituals
Participate in a book club



TAKE TIME OUT

Play/walk with pets
Detox from social media
Take a break from your phone



PUT YOURSELF FIRST

Get more sleep
Set personal goals
Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth promoting, and rewarding



CONNECT

Stay in contact with important people in your life
Call a friend
Spend time with those whose company you enjoy
Build a support system outside of work work



NURTURE YOURSELF

Burn a scented candle
Pamper yourself
Take a warm bath or hot shower
Get a massage

Tips for Team Leaders / Organizations



Regularly celebrate your staff/ coworkers' successes



Recognize employees for their work and accomplishments



Encourage use of health insurance wellness benefits



Offer stress and time management courses



Order a team lunch



Take meetings outside or in a different location



Host activities for employees' families at work



Start group or 1:1 feedback sessions



Plan a team retreat



Facilitate mental health awareness discussions



Host a potluck

Additional Resources

[Resources on Secondary Traumatic Stress from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
[Pause – Reset – Nourish \(PRN\)* to Promote Wellbeing Use as Needed to Care for Your Wellness!](#)
[More Examples of Self-Care Strategies – Taking Care of Yourself](#)
[Using the Secondary Traumatic Stress Core Competencies in Trauma-Informed Supervision](#)
[Secondary Traumatic Stress Core Competencies in Trauma-Informed Supervision Self-Rating Tool](#)
[The Secondary Traumatic Stress Informed Organization Assessment Tool \(STSI-OA\)](#)

Recognition of Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues. Specialized recruitment of DPOs into the unit takes into account the cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds of the youth served in the unit to support deeper connection and representation (see Section 3). The Child Trafficking Unit serves primarily cisgender females, but is increasingly also serving transgender youth and cisgender males, and has made adjustments to practice, such as outreach to staff in male units at juvenile halls, increased training on serving male and LGBTQ+ youth, making a commitment to using the name and pronouns that match the youth's gender identity, getting clothing the young person feels comfortable in, and ensuring that when youth are detained, they are housed in the unit that aligns with their gender identity. In addition, DPOs are experienced at leveraging nontraditional therapeutic resources to be inclusive of culturally relevant services.

Trauma-Informed Case Management. Case management in the Child Trafficking Unit is not focused on compliance with probation conditions, but rather connecting the youth with services and supports they may need to heal and succeed. Both the type of activities and the way DPOs engage with them differs from traditional probation supervision. For example, some of the activities that DPOs in the Child Trafficking Unit do are not unique to the unit (e.g., service referrals) but how they go about them might look different. There are also activities that are not always part of Probation practices (e.g., safety planning, harm reduction strategies) that are critical to the unit's work.

Frequent Contact with Youth. Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit meet with youth at a higher frequency compared to other units. Specifically, they make face to face contact at least four times a month. In addition, they frequently message and call youth. Because of this increased engagement, they also have lower caseloads than in traditional Probation units. This contact might be taking the youth out for coffee or taking them out of a facility or group home for a break. As one youth stated regarding the frequent contact the Probation Officers make with youth, "They are really showing up". Often these visits are used to discuss youth's interests, listen to music, or talk about other things than the youth's exploitation. This shows an investment in the youth and allows the Probation Officer to understand youth's feelings and experiences more holistically. In addition, they are also in frequent contact (e.g., multiple times a week) through phone or messaging. For example, one Probation Officer stated, "A lot of girls call over the weekend or they just text. They just want to know... even after hours, they want to know that you're there for them. They need that."

Service Continuity. When youth are assigned to the Child Trafficking Unit, they will work with the same DPO for the rest of their time on Probation regardless of location, living situation or disposition status. This supports development of a strong relationship and establishes a sense of stability. This practice is unique to the Child Trafficking Unit. Typically, in Los Angeles County, when youth transition between living situations (e.g., community to group home, detention to home, etc.) their Probation Officer changes. This can lead to fragmented relationships and distrust, a disconnect in services, and re-traumatization by having to retell one's story and experience over and over to each new provider. Consistency and healthy relationships are critical to disrupting the pattern of exploitation and supporting healing, so this service continuity can be transformative.

Service Referrals. DPOs and the MDT partners make referrals to a wide range of services to address the identified needs and goals of each youth. Services may include physical health care, reproductive health care, transitional living services, substance abuse treatment, education, mental health care, advocacy, housing, LGBTQ+-specific services, wraparound and more. Caregivers may also be referred to supportive services such as housing, parent empowerment support groups or prevention training, childcare, mental health care, and so on. Service needs are often discussed in the MDTs so that all partners can strategize on how to maximize resources across agencies and allow for problem-solving when challenges finding specific services arise.

Goal Setting. The focus of case management is on goal setting, rather than compliance, and is based on the youths' self-identified priorities, needs and strengths. These goals often fall into the following categories; alcohol and substance use, education, mental health, physical health, prosocial activities/hobbies, relationships and community, and employment. Goals are written in the SMART goal format (i.e., they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound: Doran, 1981) and have specific action items that are assigned to a specific individual, typically a member of the MDT. For example, if the youth has identified that they hope to improve their relationship with their caregiver, then a SMART goal could be for the youth and their caregiver to participate in family counseling once a week for six months. Based on this goal, an action item may be assigned to the Department of Mental Health liaison to connect the family to a local family counseling program and another action item may be assigned to the Probation Officer to check in with the therapist once a month to assess progress. Progress towards these goals is tracked and updated regularly, often during MDT meetings.

Safety Planning. Proactive planning takes place with the youth to identify potential and imminent safety risks and identify resources to increase youth's safety. Safety plans can address a wide range of issues, such as identifying a safe place for a youth to stay anonymously when there is a threat of violence from a trafficker, practicing alternative coping skills with a youth who engages in self-harm when they experience a trauma reminder, and making sure youth have trusted adults to contact if they find themselves in an unsafe situation. Safety planning must be driven by the youth's perspective on what makes them feel safe and is often done in collaboration with the community-based advocates.

Harm Reduction. Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit are trained in harm reduction strategies and use them throughout their work with young people. Harm reduction focuses on strategies aimed at reducing the impact of high-risk behaviors and situations, including exploitation itself as well as related circumstances and activities, such as violence from exploiters or buyers, substance use, and leaving home or care, while meeting the youth where they are at (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Examples of strategies include being mindful of body language when engaging and interacting with youth, utilizing a meet in the middle mindset, and ensuring transparency and decision making while establishing non-negotiables with the youth. In practice this might look like, ensuring youth have access to condoms and reproductive health care even if they are not engaging in other services, permitting a youth to sleep on a friend's couch rather than forcing them to stay in a group home while awaiting licensing approval of a foster home, or celebrating the incremental success of attending school twice per week, rather than requiring full attendance. Using these strategies allows for youth to establish a sense of agency and voice in decision making, establishes an incremental path towards safety, and supports youth with independence and opportunity. The California Department of Social Services in collaboration with the National Center for Youth Law have developed a series of briefs on harm reduction¹, including for Probation Officers².

Specialized Protocols. The Child Trafficking Unit and its Director have been instrumental in the development and implementation of several specialized, collaborative protocols in Los Angeles County to address specific issues related to the CSE of children. Overall, these protocols are meant to identify youth who are experiencing CSE, reduce retraumatization, and increase coordination and access to appropriate and supportive services. Los Angeles County has led the nation in development of these protocols, and similar practices have now been developed in other jurisdictions³.

Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol. The Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol outlines a quick, coordinated, service-based response for identifying and responding to youth who may be victims of CSE in order to avoid the criminalization of youth's victimization. Agencies that are involved include: Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Advocacy Agencies, the Department of

1 <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/BTB25-3E-01.pdf>

2 https://www.cpsc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/harm_reduction_probation_1.pdf?1593193213

3 <https://www.cwda.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/santa-clara-law-enforcement-protocol.pdf?1455665472>

Health Services, and Department of Mental Health. If a youth is identified by law enforcement that has an open Probation case, an on-call DPO from the Child Trafficking Unit responds (if the youth is not on Probation a Social Worker responds), along with a community-based advocate, within 90 minutes to conduct a crisis MDT, ensure the youth's needs are met, and that they are connected to ongoing services.

Detention Protocol. The Detention Protocol defines the roles and responsibilities of agencies to identify children in detention facilities who may be experiencing CSE, and creates a coordinated response for meeting youth's needs both within detention and as they transition back to the community. The Detention Protocol was established after proactive training on the identification of CSE among juvenile hall staff led to increased identification of youth impacted by CSE within the juvenile halls. When youth are identified as part of this Protocol, they are referred to the Child Trafficking Unit for assessment and are supported through the MDT process.

Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol. The Victim Witness Testimony Protocol provides support to youth who are called to testify as witnesses in criminal cases against their exploiters/traffickers to reduce re-traumatization (Newcombe, French, Walker Brown, & Guymon, 2020, pg. 121). It creates a notification process when the District Attorney's Office plans to call a youth witness and establishes a Victim Witness Support Team that is individualized to the youth's needs and is led by a member of Probation or DCFS. The protocol includes participation of DCFS, the Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender, Independent Juvenile Defender Panel, Children's Law Center, and specialized advocacy agencies.

Locate Protocol. This protocol was created to establish roles and responsibilities of agencies in locating and recovering youth who are away or missing from home or care. In 2015, Senate Bill 794 was enacted, which requires Probation and DCFS to report any missing youth to law enforcement and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, attempt to locate the youth immediately, and upon locating the youth, gather information about the experiences of the youth while they were absent.

The Locate DPO in the Child Trafficking Unit consistently checks to see when youth leave foster care or home without permission. They then check in with the home they left from (e.g., group home, family home, etc.) to see if anyone has heard from the youth or knows of their whereabouts. They also network through social media or through other contacts of the youth to identify their location and work to ensure they are safe. The Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit often go themselves to find the youth via a custody car. They must act quickly, looking anywhere and everywhere. For instance, they once had a missing youth in another state, the Locate DPO investigated the youth online and found the exploiter she was thought to be with through Google. The DPO called the local Child Crime Unit in the other state who was able to do a welfare check and found the missing youth.

Specialized Programs. Similar to the specialized protocols, there are also CSE specific programs with whom the Child Trafficking Unit works directly and collaboratively. Youth feedback, from prior research, has shown that youth have highly favorable views of these programs (Dierkhising, Walker Brown, Ackerman-Brimberg, & Newcombe, 2018).

Community-Based Advocacy. Early on, the Child Trafficking Unit developed partnerships with community-based youth advocacy organizations that included survivor mentors to provide one-on-one support to youth. These partnerships are critical because of the mistrust and negative experiences that many youth have experienced with systems.

In 2012, the first partnership with Saving Innocence was established and in 2019 Los Angeles County expanded its advocacy partnership with the addition of ZOE International. These agencies provide case management, permanency planning, resource referrals, and emergency services. Advocates provide youth with a trusting relationship with an adult outside of Probation. Advocates are also critical in various county protocols such as the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, where they assist law enforcement in providing support and crisis management to the youth upon initial contact. Additionally, they work closely with the Probation Officers and participate in the weekly MDTs.

STAR Court. The Succeeding through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court was established in 2012 through the vision of the Child Trafficking Unit Director, Michelle Guymon, and the Honorable Catherine J. Pratt. The goal of STAR Court is to use a collaborative and non-adversarial approach to addressing the needs of youth experiencing CSE who are on probation. The STAR Court's approach is centered on services, support, and relationship building. The STAR Court sees each youth every 4-6 weeks, which is more frequent than other courts, in an effort to build rapport and trust among the youth, judge and MDT partners. Each youth is assessed for their needs and supported by the Probation MDT team. A process and outcome study (Bath et al., 2020) found that youth involved in STAR Court had significant decreases in reported runaway episodes, criminal involvement, and housing changes. Additionally, it showed an increase in linkages to substance use and mental health treatments during the youths' involvement in STAR Court. For youth to be a part of STAR Court, there must first be a referral made, then a determination to bring it to the court is made through the Probation MDT, led by the Child Trafficking Unit. Probation considers various factors such as service needs, age, status of the youth's case, and youth preference.

A Week in the Life of a Probation Officer in the Los Angeles County Department of Probation Child Trafficking Unit (CTU)

Every day looks different for a CTU DPO. Here is a sampling of one DPO's weekly schedule.

<p>MONDAY <i>Field Day</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management: Complete referral to community-based advocacy services; set up meeting for youth to meet new advocate next week; Consult w/ public health nurse about youth's health needs and request nurse to do outreach and provide psychoeducation • Check-in with 3 youth via phone and text • Visit youth in pending resource family SEE SPOTLIGHT
<p>TUESDAY <i>Field Day</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete court reports and case plans for youth with upcoming court dates • Take youth to buy clothing for job interview and provide her with clothes that DPO no longer wears • Pick up youth from school, get drive thru, and have a walking check-in at a local park • Respond to First Responder Protocol call SEE SPOTLIGHT
<p>WEDNESDAY <i>Office Day</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-in with 4 youth via phone and text • Help youth to obtain birth certificate • Prepare to facilitate upcoming law enforcement training on CSE • Attend weekly multidisciplinary team meeting SEE SPOTLIGHT
<p>THURSDAY <i>Field Day</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Empowerment Conference planning committee meeting for upcoming Disneyland visit • Attend supervision meeting • Check-in with 3 youth via phone and text • Attend court to advocate for a youth to be released from juvenile hall • Visit youth in juvenile hall; discuss transition plan; conduct home assessment SEE SPOTLIGHT
<p>FRIDAY <i>Office Day</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with community-based organization to obtain hair care products, diapers, clothing for youth in STRTP/ foster homes • Attend virtual high school graduation for youth • Check in with 4 youth via phone and text • Assist with locating youth who is missing from care SEE SPOTLIGHT
<p>SATURDAY <i>Monthly Activity</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend monthly empowerment event - cooking class SEE SPOTLIGHT

SPOTLIGHT
First Responder Protocol

At 11pm, a call comes into the Child Trafficking Unit that a 15 year old youth who is on probation was identified in an area known for exploitation by law enforcement. DPO arrives at the station at 11:55pm, and meets the community-based advocate who brings a backpack with snacks, clean clothing and a blanket. The DPO and advocate meet with Gloria in a "soft room," and ask if she needs anything. They hold a crisis MDT meeting to discuss where Gloria will go tonight, and any emergent needs. They make a plan for the DPO to take the youth home, and for the advocate to pick her up in the morning to get a medical exam.

SPOTLIGHT
Youth Visit & Transition Plan

DPO meets with Amani in juvenile hall. Amani will be released soon, so the DPO is helping Amani to create a transition plan. They discuss what Amani is excited about, who they are planning to see when they get out, and some of their fears, like being around friends who are in the life. The DPO knows Amani loves school, so she plans to follow up with the education liaison to ensure all of Amani's credits transfer, and to enroll them in boxing classes after school. They also review the safety plan; Amani shares their concern about not having transportation to get to school.

DPO will work on getting a bus pass before Amani is released. DPO also conducts a home assessment.

SPOTLIGHT
Empowerment Event

DPO picks up Erika at home, and drives to cooking class, where they meet 15 other youth, community-based advocates, DPOs, other MDT partners, and the STAR Court judge. Erika is excited to see the Judge to tell them about her grades from her latest report card. Both the DPO and Erika are excited to get to spend time together and with the group, learning to cook a new recipe and eating together.

SPOTLIGHT
Youth Visit

DPO drives 1.5 hours to Lancaster to visit Tyler at a possible new resource family home. DPO has been working closely with Tyler's Social Worker to identify a family with experience with teenagers. This is the second of two extended visits, which the DPO advocated for so Tyler and family could get to know each other and Tyler could explore the neighborhood. Tyler shares with his DPO he was excited he was able to invite a friend over because he has not been able to do that in other homes. He is also happy that he will have his own room and the family took him shopping to pick out posters for the walls. The DPO and Tyler talk about strategies for handling conflict if it comes up with the new family or if he feels like leaving.

SPOTLIGHT
MDT Meeting

DPO attends MDT meeting for two youth who have upcoming STAR Court dates. Before the meeting, the DPO met with the youth to talk about their progress towards their goals, and ask what they needed help with. In the MDT DPO updates the partners on one of the youth: the youth is very organized, punctual, and is attending all of her prenatal appointments, but that she is feeling overwhelmed with how many providers are on her team and how many appointments she has. The MDT discusses how to scale back duplicative services and focus on the ones the youth has developed relationships with. After the meeting, the DPO will share this information with her.

DPO also brings a cake to celebrate Annie's birthday, one of the attorneys in STAR Court.

SPOTLIGHT
Missing Youth

DPO works with the DCFS Runaway Outreach Unit worker and Locate DPO to locate Sheree who is missing from home. DPO calls Sheree's mother to see if she has heard from her, and notes an additional phone number for where the youth might be that the mother provides. DPO reaches out to other young people that Sheree is friends with to see if they have heard from her. The DPO searches online for leads on where Sheree might be or people she could be with; the DPO emails law enforcement in the town where youth might be and works with the Locate DPO to coordinate with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to post a profile of Sheree.

DPO checks in with her supervisor on her way home to debrief about the missing youth. Her supervisor is supportive and reminds her to practice self-care tonight and lets her know if she needs time off to take it. When DPO gets home she decides to unplug (e.g., leave her phone at home) and take her dog on a long walk to reduce her stress level.

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

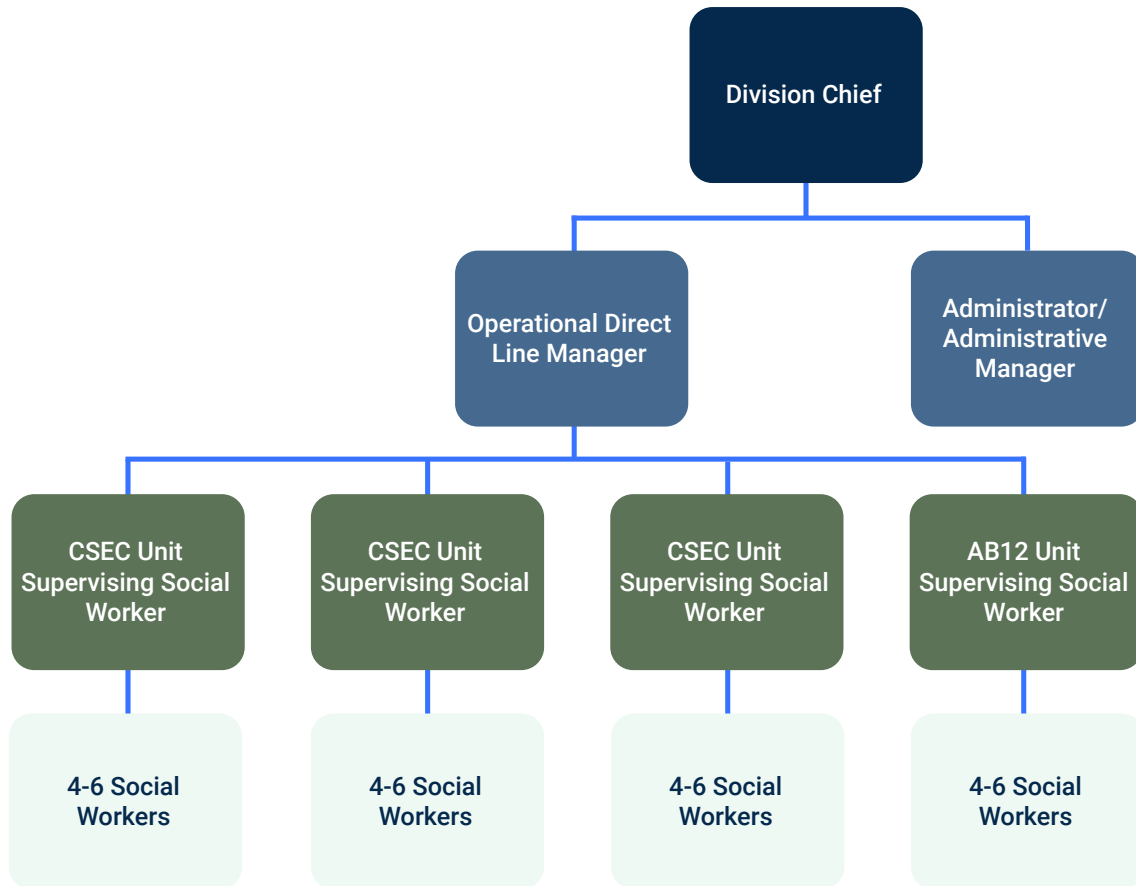
5. DCFS Specialized Unit for Child Trafficking

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To support the needs of youth who have been impacted by CSE, DCFS created four CSEC Continuous Services Units. Each unit is made up of four to six Children’s Social Workers and one Supervising Children’s Social Worker. The AB12 Unit exclusively serves transitional age youth (18 years – 21 years) by providing appropriate and relevant services needed for this age group. Many youth served by the CSEC Units transition to the AB12 Unit to continue with services and supports helpful for their successful transition into adulthood.

Figure 3. Organizational Chart of the DCFS CSEC Units



Social Workers in these units are trained to provide youth who have experienced CSE with client-centered and trauma-informed intervention services. These units connect youth with support services such as referrals to advocacy services, mental health services, and other interventions that the youth may require. The Social Workers in these units are required to visit youth multiple times each week to provide the youth with stability and support. To accomplish this, Social Workers carry a reduced caseload compared to a typical caseload, to facilitate a deeper sense of connection and engagement.

The DCFS CSEC Units work in collaboration with placement providers, advocates, Department of Mental Health (DMH), Public Health Nurse, youth’s Attorney, Probation, Department of Health Services, education liaisons, law enforcement and many more agencies. There is ongoing communication between all these collaborators, the youth, and their families to further that the critical needs of the youth are met. This section includes a description of the logic model for the DCFS CSEC Units and its legend, and detailed descriptions of the activities of the Social Workers in the units. For descriptions of the program outcomes see Appendix A.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Unit Logic Model: Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

INPUTS



ACTIVITIES



OUTPUTS



PROXIMAL OUTCOMES



LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



DCFS CSEC Units Logic Model Legend

INPUTS

The resources needed to implement programmatic activities successfully.

- Culture of Support** | Institutional and organizational support for the specialized units.
- Specialized Recruitment for CSEC and AB12 Units** | Selection and training of Social Workers with specific experience and expertise pertinent to the units.
- Leadership** | Local champions for the program within and outside of DCFS.
- Legislation and Policy** | Federal, State, and County legislation or policies that support and provide accountability for the work of the specialized units.
- Professional Development** | Ongoing training and professional development opportunities.

ACTIVITIES

Specific activities that Social Workers do as part of their regular work to achieve programmatic goals and outcomes.

- Multidisciplinary Teaming** | Collaborative work with multidisciplinary teams.
 - **Referral and Assessment Process:** Streamlined process to determine the level of risk for CSE and referral process for youth to the DCFS CSEC Unit. Social Workers ensure when assessing exploitation of children that youth's needs and strengths are identified and appropriate services are provided.
 - **Regular Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDT):** Regularly scheduled meetings, led by DCFS, that generally include representatives from mental health, public health, education, advocates, attorneys, and Probation (if the youth is dually involved).
 - **Regular Child and Family Team Meetings (CFT):** Regularly scheduled meetings that include the youth, parent/caregivers, and others that the youth/family has identified as supportive to develop a case plan that is youth centered.
- Relationship-Informed Care** | Activities that promote rapport, engagement, and relationship building among youth, families, Social Workers, and collaborative partners.
 - **Youth and Family Engagement:** Ongoing contact, interactions, support, and decision-making with youth and families that build a foundation of trust and strengthen positive relationships with families.
 - **Rapport/Trust Building:** Initial and ongoing interactions between youth and providers that provide the foundation for all other programmatic activities.
 - **Collaboration:** Transparent process of collaborative decision making that engages service providers, youth, family, and stakeholders.
 - **Staff Wellness and Organizational Support:** Organizational practices and policies that provide ongoing support and resources for staff wellness and secondary or vicarious trauma.
 - **Youth Voice and Choice:** Youth are engaged in shared decision-making and goal setting.
 - **Empowerment:** Strengths-based approach to programming that recognizes and promotes youth resilience, recovery, and agency.
 - **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues:** Service provision that reflect a deep understanding of structural and systemic inequalities driving many of the issues youth encounter, which also affect the ways youth engage with programs and services.

DCFS CSEC Units Logic Model Legend, cont.

ACTIVITIES, CONT.

Specific activities that Social Workers do as part of their regular work to achieve programmatic goals and outcomes.

Case Management | Specific activities conducted by Social Workers as part of ongoing case management.

- **Trauma-informed Practice:** An intentional recognition of the role of trauma in youth's lives and proactive support for recovery from trauma.
- **Frequent Contact with Youth:** Higher frequency of contact with youth compared to other units.
- **Service Continuity:** Ideally, a consistent Social Worker is assigned to the youth for the duration of the life of the case.
- **Service Referrals:** Referrals for a wide range of services that address the identified needs of each youth.
- **Goal Setting:** Measurable and achievable goals based on the youths' needs and strengths that guide services and casework and, when possible, plan for family reunification.
- **Safety Planning:** Immediate and ongoing plan to reduce the risk of current and future harm.
- **Harm Reduction:** Harm reduction strategies to reduce the impact of risky behaviors.
- **Out-of-Home Care:** Ensuring adequate and timely housing/placement options.

Specialized Protocols | CSE specific protocols that Social Workers in the Unit participate in.

- **Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol:** This protocol created a collaborative, service-based response when youth are identified by law enforcement to avoid criminalization of youth for their victimization. It includes connection to an advocate, as well as medical and mental health care, as needed.
- **Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol:** This protocol was created to support the youth who are called upon to testify as witnesses in adult court for criminal prosecution of their exploiters.
- **Locate Protocol:** This protocol was created to establish roles and responsibilities of agencies in locating and recovering youth who are away from home or care (i.e., missing).

Specialized Programs | CSE specific programs that the Unit works directly and collaboratively with.

- **Community-Based Advocacy:** Partnering with advocacy organizations with specially trained advocates, including peer and survivor mentors, to provide additional support for youth who have experienced CSE.
- **Restoration Funds:** Funds available to plan and implement special programs and case management activities
- **Parent Empowerment Program:** A 10-week parent empowerment program that provides awareness, knowledge, and support to help parents engage with their children.
- **Runaway Outreach Unit:** A team of Children's Social Workers whose focus is on locating, placing, and stabilizing missing youth who are dependents of the court.
- **Child Protection Hotline:** The integration of a liaison with specialized training on CSE to coordinate cases when CSE is suspected or reported to DCFS' 24/7 hotline, which serves as the county's intake line for reporting of any suspected or known child abuse and/or neglect.
- **Multi-Agency Response Team:** The DCFS Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) is a specialized unit that works in collaboration with law enforcement and Emergency Response Children Social Workers to provide emergency protective services to youth impacted by CSE.
- **Dedicated to Restoration Through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Court:** Specialized and collaborative court which specifically addresses the needs of youth who have been impacted by CSE.

1 https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03/Los-Angeles-County-Law-Enforcement-First-Responder-Protocol_0.pdf

2 https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-02/LACDetentionProtocol_Final.pdf

DCFS CSEC Units Logic Model Legend, cont.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Service and program outputs necessary for intermediate and long-term outcomes.

- Number of referrals made to services
- Number of youth assessed and served
- Number of hours of training
- Number of self-care or secondary traumatic stress (STS) activities
- Number of MDT's held
- Number of agency collaborators
- Number of case plans including goals and harm reduction strategies
- Number of family meetings/contacts
- Frequency of contact with youth

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

More immediate results of the program's activities. These outcomes are expected to be achieved while the youth is still on the caseload.

- **Academic Engagement:** Youth is showing improvement in attending school and working towards their personalized academic goal.
- **Accessing Employment Opportunities:** Youth is provided with professional development opportunities, mentoring and skills building that will assist them in meeting their desired employment goals.
- **Safe and Stable Living Situation:** Youth has a place to live that is safe and appropriate to their needs.
- **Removing Ties to Exploitation:** Youth has the ability to access resources and take positive steps which assist them in distancing themselves from exploitation.
- **Social Support Systems in Place:** Youth has prosocial and supportive relationships with peers and adults.
- **Accessing Services:** Youth is connected with and engaged in services that meets their needs and interests.
- **Progress Towards Goals:** Youth is making progress towards individualized goals.
- **Reduction in Traumatic Stress Symptoms:** Youth is working toward recovery and healing from trauma, as evidenced by a reduction in traumatic stress reactions and improvements in social and emotional functioning.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Ultimate changes expected to see in program participants.

- **Education, Vocational Training, and/or Employment:** Youth is academically engaged, in traditional or vocational school, and/or has stable employment.
- **Housing Security:** Youth has secured safe and permanent housing
- **Youth Free of Exploitation:** Youth is no longer experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Self-Sufficiency:** Youth has the agency, life skills, and developmentally appropriate supports to meet their daily needs.
- **Improvements in Mental, Behavioral, & Physical Health:** Youth is mentally and physically healthy, and has the resources needed to address future health needs.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Youth develop healthy interpersonal relationships.
- **Community Engagement/Support:** Youth is connected with, and has support from, family, peers, and/or community members or organizations.

For more detail on activities see below.

For more detail on outcomes see [Appendix A.](#) 

Description of Program Inputs and Activities

Inputs

For a program to be successful there are several foundational resources that should be in place. These are referred to as the inputs into the program. Inputs can be somewhat abstract because they are often contextual in nature. In other words, they are often resources that come from the ecosystem within which the program resides, which the program does not necessarily have control over. For example, the DCFS CSEC Unit(s) benefits greatly from local legislation and policy (see Section 2 of this guide). Not all jurisdictions have the same policies in place, though that does not mean a program in a different jurisdiction will not be successful, rather, they may lean more heavily on another input to ensure success.

Five inputs play an essential role for the program. These inputs are described in detail below with concrete examples.

Culture of Support. The culture of support signifies both institutional and organizational support for the specialized unit and it helps maintain positive relationships and morale within the unit. Given the nature of the work, support within and outside of the organization should be more intentionally and systematically planned and provided for staff working with youth who have experienced CSE. In the specialized units under DCFS, there are monthly reflection circles for staff to share and reflect as a team and work on providing support as a team.

Specialized Recruitment of Social Workers. The recruitment and selection of Social Workers to work in the specialized units require much attention. Social Workers in DCFS regional units with specific skills and experience apply to the specialized units indicating why and how they are well-qualified to work with youth impacted by CSE. Workers in the unit are selectively picked after a thorough assessment of fit for the unit.

Leadership. Champions within and outside of DCFS have helped establish and maintain the CSEC units. Outside of DCFS, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors consistently advocates for support and resources for youth who have experienced CSE. The Board of Supervisors have contributed to various policy and practice changes that have been implemented (see section 2). Leaders within the unit, have worked tirelessly to develop a streamlined process for identifying and serving young people who are exploited. For example, the Program Administrator developed an online resource hub for her team to have easy access to policy, information, practice guides, and training. She has also dedicated her effort to implement a new data tracking system to hold service providers accountable for quality and timely care needed for young people.

Legislation and Policy. Changes in legislation have been a huge factor in identifying and supporting youth who have experienced CSE in Los Angeles County as well as an impetus for the emergent role of DCFS in supporting these youth. In 2012, DCFS became involved in the County's CSE-related efforts, when the Board of Supervisors approved a motion to create the CSEC Task Force led by the Chief Probation Officer and the Director of DCFS. In 2013, the Task Force recommended that the Board of Supervisors establish an interagency response model to CSE, which included DCFS. Legal changes beginning in 2014 set the stage for DCFS to play a larger role in identifying CSE as child abuse and serving youth and families impacted by CSE through the child welfare system.

Professional Development. The DCFS CSEC Unit oversees both external and internal CSEC training and professional development for Los Angeles County. Every January, the CSEC Unit observes Human Trafficking Awareness Month and coordinates trainings and workshops for community partners, parents, and youth to enhance the public's understanding about the prevalence and impact of CSE and human trafficking. Furthermore, based on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' CSEC training mandate for all county employees, the CSEC Unit regularly provides CSEC 101 training, which covers risk factors, pathways to victimization, identification of youth experiencing or at risk of CSE, and needs and appropriate services for youth impacted by CSE. Based on the need, the DCFS CSEC Unit also organizes additional CSEC trainings in collaboration with other county agencies. For example, the CSEC Unit team

provides training to law enforcement officers, who play a critical role as first responders to help identify youth who are impacted by CSE. Internally, to prepare the CSEC Unit team for the challenges of the work (e.g., secondary trauma, availability to client 24/7), Social Workers receive extended trauma-informed care training. Recent programs have also focused on health issues and communication techniques. In addition to the CSEC 101 training, Social Workers are required to attend an in-person CSEC 102 training, which covers the impact of trauma, engagement strategies, the Stages of Change model, vicarious trauma, and self-care.

Activities

The activities are the nuts and bolts of the program model. The activities are what the Social Workers do as part of their regular work to achieve the program's goals and outcomes. These activities fall into five domains, which are described below with examples from the field.

Multidisciplinary Teaming. The CSEC teams engage in a multi-disciplinary approach to promote recovery and wellbeing of youth by providing services (or linkages to services) that address youth's medical, social, and emotional needs in addition to basic necessities. Collaboration is at the heart of the work given the diverse needs of youth impacted by CSE. Collaboration across agencies allows the specialized unit to capitalize on the various resources that are available to each agency. Frequent collaborating agencies include, but are not limited to, probation, mental health, community-based organizations, youth's attorneys, education, and public health. CSEC Unit staff also regularly participate in work groups outside of DCFS to maintain contact with other providers and ensure best practices and service options for youth.

Referral and Assessment Process. A streamlined referral and assessment process is integral to ensuring youth at risk for or experiencing CSE are identified and offered the most appropriate services and resources. Referrals are made from various sources, such as transfer from DCFS regional units, the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, and the Child Protection Hotline. Each regional office has a CSEC regional liaison, who oversees all eligible cases coming from their regional units and assess whether the youth meet all transfer criteria for the specialized unit (e.g., transfer must be in the best interest of the child, current placement must be active in the database, a confirmed allegation of CSE). Before transferring the case to the DCFS CSEC Unit, youth and family are notified and they must agree to the transfer.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMING - IN ACTION

A non-minor dependent (NMD) youth (generally ages 18-21) in the CSEC Unit was picked up by law enforcement. Given their age, the youth would fall under the adult criminal court jurisdiction and not juvenile court. The local police, seeing that the youth was being served by the DCFS CSEC Unit youth, contacted the Social Worker on the youth's case. The Social Worker then contacted County Counsel for advice on how to proceed with possible criminal charges against the youth. County Counsel, the Social Worker, and the youth's attorney were able to convene a meeting to strategize how best to advocate for the youth. With these multiple agencies working together they were able to ensure the youth avoided criminal charges and ongoing justice involvement.

Youth who do not have a current DCFS case and are identified through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for a substantiated allegation of exploitation are usually directly transferred into the DCFS CSEC Unit.

Youth with open cases in the regional unit who are then identified as experiencing CSE through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol undergo a case transfer review, which may include assessing for additional information about the youth's behaviors and activities associated with risk for CSE (e.g., sexually explicit images/text posted on social media, spending time in areas associated with commercial sex work, inappropriate/unhealthy intimate relationship with adults).

For youth identified as "At-Risk" for CSE, rather than having a confirmed allegation of CSE, several services such as the Multidisciplinary Team, advocacy services, and the Runaway Outreach Unit secondary support, are available.

Regular Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDT). The purpose of the MDT is to assist with the identification of needs and services for the youth, family, and caregiver and to support the Child and Family Team in addressing any barriers to achieving case plan goals and positive outcomes in the child's safety, stability, permanency, and well-being. Members of the MDT include Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, Department of Public Health, substance abuse counselor, Probation Department, Los Angeles County Office of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District, Children's Law Center, County Counsel, and a community-based advocate.

In each MDT meeting, 10-12 youth are reviewed where all participating parties help provide a comprehensive assessment of the youth. Each case presentation takes about 15-30 minutes and is generally facilitated/presented by the child's attorney, Social Worker, and/or, clinician most familiar with the youth in question. The assessment focuses on the current needs and treatment goals of the youth, including current living arrangements (and/or placement planning) and safety plans, educational status and updates, mental health assessments and/or treatment regimens, relevant substance abuse history, court recommendations and status, the level of supervision needed, the child's probation status, any observable behavioral and/or developmental concerns, and all other case-related referrals. After each meeting, an MDT summary is developed that includes youth's current service plan along with action steps and responsible team member. The MDT summary is shared with all relevant MDT team members, so that youth's services, treatments, and case progress are streamlined.

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFT). Child and Family Teams comprise of individuals the youth or family members identify as important to youth and family's success. These individuals may be relatives, professionals, or community members who are invested in the youth. As the needs of youth change, the team members can also change; however, the team always includes the youth and their family member, Social Worker or DCFS representative, the current caregiver, other individuals identified by youth, and when applicable, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Foster Family Agency Social Worker, Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program representative, behavioral health staff, and representative from youth's tribe.

The CFT process uses a family-centered approach to identify family's strengths and needs in collaborative case planning as well as decision making, in consideration of long-term family success. CFT meetings are a major component of the CFT process and required for youth in out-of-home care. For special situations, like involving youth impacted by CSE, the Social Worker/Facilitator must evaluate the case and take extra precautions when including CFT members to prevent youth from being exposed to any additional harm or risk (e.g., disclosing private or sensitive information outside of the meeting, use of stigmatizing language, etc.). CFT meetings can be held as frequently as needed, but subsequent meetings should be held no later than within 90 days of the initial meeting.

Case Management. While case management is the most central part of case-carrying Social Workers' work in DCFS, those in the CSEC Unit work with youth and families with complex needs and experiences that require careful coordination across different sectors and teams. Social Workers in the DCFS CSEC Unit carry a smaller caseload compared to Social Workers in the DCFS Regional Unit. In serving their clients, Social Workers should stay flexible, creative and driven by the youth's perspectives to best address their needs. Although the activities of case management might not look very different from traditional practice, the practice approach might include more flexible and creative options.

Trauma-Informed Practice. Trauma-informed practice focuses on screening, assessing, serving, and treating individuals with intentional recognition of and adequate responses to the effects of trauma and traumatic stress (Oral et al., 2016). This includes close attention to secondary trauma that may affect youth, families, and the Social Workers. Outside of the case, trauma-informed practice should recognize the potential trauma incurred historically by child serving systems (i.e., Department of Children and Family Services, Probation) on vulnerable communities and help change policy and organizational culture to prevent re-traumatization (Kim et al., 2021). Given high levels of trauma experienced by youth served by the DCFS CSEC Unit, Social Workers take a trauma-informed approach for every contact, engagement, and interaction. There is also heightened awareness for potential traumatic stress reactions Social Workers might experience themselves through secondary or vicarious trauma.

Frequent Contact with Youth. Social Workers in the specialized unit meet with their youth at a higher frequency compared to other units. This is made possible by maintaining lower caseloads in the CSEC Units. The specialized Social Worker might take the youth out for coffee to hang out or to engage in skill building activities together (e.g., go to a bank together to open an account, make a phone call together to request an appointment). This shows an investment in the youth as an individual, their personal growth and autonomy, and allows the Social Workers to understand and support youth's experiences more holistically.

Service Continuity. Ideally, a consistent Social Worker is assigned to the youth for the duration of the life of the case. While service continuity is essential for rapport building and positive client engagement, the DCFS CSEC Unit has faced many challenges to keep the same Social Worker across the life of a case. First, staff turnover, given the emotional work involving youth in child welfare systems, is not new nor specific to LA County. Second, division of cases across different social workers depending on the stage or type of placement make it difficult for one Social Worker to continuously oversee the entire case from beginning to end. For example, Emergency Response Social Workers are known as "Front end worker," who completes the initial investigation of child maltreatment; Continuing Services Social Worker are known as "Back end worker," continue throughout the case; and Adoptions Social Worker can be assigned at any point when adoption is identified as part of permanency planning. In the LA County's DCFS CSEC Unit, however, youth primarily work with the Back end worker to ensure added service continuity. Finally, logistical issues, such as the size of Los Angeles County pose significant difficulties with visiting and maintaining relationships with youth and families across the county. This may be a challenge in many jurisdictions but given the vulnerability and instability many of the youth impacted by CSE experience, ensuring service continuity should be a priority.

Service Referrals. Social Workers and MDT partners make referrals to a wide range of services to address the identified needs of each youth. Services may include physical health, reproductive health, transitional services, substance abuse, education, mental health, advocacy, housing, LGBTQ+, wraparound and more. Services are specific to the youth and family's needs. Given the role of DCFS, depending on the goals for the families (e.g., family reunification), some services may be mandated. Caregivers may also be referred to supportive services such as housing, parent empowerment, childcare, mental health, and so on. Service needs are often discussed in the MDTs so that collaborative strategy sessions can take place to maximize resources across agencies and allow for problem-solving when challenges finding specific services arise.

Goal Setting. While the ultimate goal for all youth served by DCFS is family reunification, given the amount of trauma some youth have experienced in and out of their homes, family reunification is not always possible. As part of working towards ensuring safe and stable environments for youth, MDT partners works with the youth to collectively set goals, and guide services and casework based on the youths' needs and strengths. These goals often fall into the following categories; alcohol and substance use, education, mental health, physical health, prosocial activities/hobbies, relationships and community, and work. Goals have specific action items that are assigned to a specific individual, typically a member of the MDT. Progress towards these goals are tracked and updated regularly, often during MDT meetings.

Safety Planning. A plan is developed to reduce the risk of future harm. Safety plans can be wide ranging and can include planning for future crisis using harm reduction strategies or identifying a safe adult to contact when youth are feeling overwhelmed. Safety plans should be informed by a safety assessment with a clear description of safety threats using terms that the family understands. Safety interventions should have a direct and immediate impact on the identified safety threats and achievable by family members. A safety plan must include at least one adult or caregiver not responsible for the threat (i.e., alleged perpetrator), caregivers, informal/formal support system of the caregiver, and the youth. Ensuring safe and stable environments for youth is a priority for DCFS, and therefore, ongoing safety assessment is conducted throughout.

Harm Reduction. Harm reduction focuses on strategies aimed at reducing risky behaviors and circumstances, with an emphasis on incremental progress as a means to longer term safety. In some instances, the harm reduction approach might seemingly conflict with the rest of the DCFS regional units' approach when compared to the DCFS CSEC Unit.

Harm reduction has been included in the curriculum for trainings provided to professionals who serve and support youth who have experienced CSE. Using these strategies allows ample flexibility in case management for youth to establish a sense of agency and voice in decision making, ensures a path towards safety, and supports youth with independence and opportunity.

HARM REDUCTION - IN ACTION

For example, a youth from the DCFS CSEC Unit is ordered not to stay with her mother. The youth, however, leaves placement to stay with her mom. In regional units, the youth would be involuntarily moved back to placement. In the DCFS CSEC Unit, the Social Worker might recognize that the risk of a youth returning to her mother's care is lower than the risk of her regularly leaving placement and possibly experiencing CSE. Instead of forcing the youth into the situation the Social Worker views as the safest (i.e., the placement), the Social Worker could allow the youth to stay with her mother on the condition that the youth and her mother stay in touch to report on their safety and wellbeing. As a second example, if a youth does not attend school, then beginning to attend twice a week demonstrates incremental progress; a harm reduction approach addresses the root causes of why the youth cannot get to school every day and celebrates the youth for the improvement rather than criticizing the youth for failing to attend every day.

Out-of-Home Care. Ensuring adequate and timely housing or placement options is an important component in the DCFS CSEC Unit. Housing options have been extremely limited. Given the complex needs of youth who have experienced CSE and stigma, many placement options reject youth identified as experiencing CSE. In addition, existing providers may not have the appropriate training, support, or staffing to adequately meet youth's needs and support their growth and healing. Ultimately, keeping youth close to their homes and communities should be the *default*.

Relationship-Informed Care. Establishing and maintaining meaningful and healthy relationships, particularly among youth and families and the Social Worker, is the core foundation of all activities that take place in each case. To make relationship-informed care possible, Social Workers in the DCFS CSEC unit, typically carry a much smaller caseload than the regional units. With a smaller caseload, Social Workers can take the time to get to know the youth outside of case management and engage in relationship-building activities, such as going for walks or having lunch together. A youth who left a group home without permission calling the Social Worker about her safety and whereabouts is a testament to the strong relationships developed between the Social Worker and youth.

Youth and Family Engagement. In building a strong relationship with youth, Social Workers engage with the youth and family in ways that build a foundation of trust. While families are an important part of youth's journey to healing and recovery, the function of DCFS has also been a tension for families, as they feel scrutinized for their child's exploitation. Courts have, thus, recognized that families should not carry sole responsibility over their children's CSE, unless family members are the exploiters. Social Workers coordinate and arrange family visitations to foster familial bonding that can help youth reunify with families and achieve permanency, stability, and well-being. While fostering trust with families is important, given the role of DCFS, Social Workers must continually assess for any safety issues for youth as part of family engagement.

Rapport/Trust Building. Rapport building is important for any social worker, but particularly important for Social Workers working with youth who have experienced CSE. One Social Worker explained: "a good rapport with them is very, very important, especially when dealing with youth, who will basically have been brainwashed into believing something that's not true about themselves." The DCFS CSEC Unit Social Workers perceive rapport building as the essential first step for youth to engage in other programmatic activities. When the Social Worker meets youth for the first time, they put aside documents and paperwork and get to know the youth outside of the report on their desk.

RAPPORT/TRUST BUILDING - IN ACTION

One Social Worker shared: "I've even done things like do my girls hair like just as a way to talk to them ... So, you know, I would comb their hair braid it ... things like that just want to make a personal connection." This willingness to set aside time to actually get to know the youth - who they are and what they envision their life to be - and not simply through papers, documents, and reports, fosters trust in the Social Worker.

Collaboration. Service providers, the Social Worker, family, and stakeholders work together to support the youth in making progress toward their goals and make collaborative decisions with transparency. This entails close collaborations across multiple agencies and programs, including law enforcement agencies, Probation, the Department of Health Services, the Department of Mental Health, Education Specialists, Regional Center Liaison, Independent Living Programs, Transitional Housing Programs, the Department of Public Health, and Specialized CSEC Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs.

Staff Wellness and Organizational Support. Given the intense nature of this work staff wellness and organizational support are critical for success. Staff wellness, including the mitigation of secondary traumatic stress and burnout, is not solely an individual's responsibility, the organization within which the individual works must also provide support for wellness. The DCFS CSEC Unit holds quarterly retreat meetings with all staff in order to connect with each other and address topics such as self-care and building team resiliency. Staff engage in fun activities in these gatherings, such as yoga and doing team building activities on the beach. During regular meetings, recognition and support is provided by talking about what is working well and what areas need to be improved, and communicating any new policies or procedures. In-service trainings are provided as needed. In addition, a safety work group is in place to address safety issues that staff face while in the field. Finally, unit leaders and supervisors make sure to be available to staff, by being responsive to them and their needs.

Youth Voice and Choice. Elevating youth voice and choice in what happens in their lives, including the next steps and outcomes of their DCFS cases, is critical, even when the court, social worker or other stakeholders may not agree with the youth's perspective on upcoming decisions (e.g., housing, school, services). It is apparent in the MDT meetings that Social Workers, youth advocates, attorneys, and other collaborators value the self-determination of youth. Youth advocates work hard to ensure that youth voice is heard and their input receives priority consideration for case planning. For example, one youth refused to engage in any type of therapy that required her to talk about herself. During the MDT meeting, the team collaboratively identified equestrian therapy as an option, in which the youth ultimately agreed to participate.

STAFF WELLNESS - IN ACTION

One supervisor shared that, for her team, she sought to provide both formal and informal support. Not too long after she started her job as a supervisor, a youth who had been away from placement died. It was traumatic for the Social Worker who had worked with the youth but also for the team. The supervisor hired someone who specializes in death do a session with the workers as well as other agencies that worked with the youth to process it as a whole team. They also went to the place where the youth was found to put down flowers. She also mentioned the importance of keeping open communication with her staff – to take constructive feedback – as a way to support the work they do. She did feel, however, that this type of support is dependent on the supervisor, and therefore, a more systematic support through the division would be helpful.

Empowerment. To support empowerment, strengths-based activities are identified and integrated into youth's case plans. These activities are intended to build on youth resilience and promote agency and recovery from trauma. While empowerment activities can vary, the Los Angeles County, Probation Child Trafficking Unit, and now the DCFS Specialized Unit for CSE, has coordinated and supported an Annual Empowerment Conference since 2012. The purpose of the Empowerment Conference is to provide youth impacted by CSE with the opportunity to be inspired, motivated, and supported to engage in creative forms of expression in a safe, trauma-informed environment. They learn from and connect with stories and discussions led by Survivor Leaders/Advocates who provide hope. The Conference also provides various activities and workshops that help equip youth with information and skills to promote their sense of confidence, self-esteem, and increase self-sufficiency and well-being. Ultimately, the conference builds a sense of community and provides pathways to healing/recovery. In preparation for the conference, the DCFS CSEC Unit recruits youth leaders who will build leadership skills by leading and planning various activities for the conference.

In addition to the Annual Empowerment Conference, there are monthly Empowerment events that provide youth and their adult allies with the opportunity to learn socialization skills and community integration. They gather around a pro-social activity to build connections that provides youth with a sense of belonging. The events expose youth to educational, recreational, and cultural programs and activities that they may not have experienced before.

Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues. Service provisions and providers should reflect a deep understanding of structural and systemic inequalities driving many of the issues youth encounter, which also affect the ways youth engage with programs and services. Recognition for these issues do not remain an abstract goal of reducing racial/ethnic and gender disproportionality across the population of youth who experience CSE, but is reflected in every part of case progress. For example, the DCFS CSEC Unit staff reflect the backgrounds of youth being served in the unit. The staff are also aware of how narratives and rhetoric around victimhood, consent, and blame for exploitation can vary depending on a youth's or family's racial/ethnic background.

The intersection of race, gender and cultural issues are critical to understanding both who is identified as a victim of trafficking and what the system responses are (see Section 3). Below, we provide specific examples we have observed that demonstrate this differential treatment, particularly for youth of color, who have experienced exploitation, even as they receive services.

The interplay between CSE, culture, race, gender, and historical context are critical to recognize when working with youth experiencing CSE. In developing specialized units and other policies and practices for CSE in child welfare and probation, professionals must be responsive to these issues, given they are working within the very systems that have contributed to the trauma and marginalization of the people they are meant to serve.

<i>Micro</i>	
Differential treatment and views of victimhood	<p>When the court encounters white girls they are / may be viewed as the victim, and the perspective is: “How did this terrible thing happen to you?” When the victim is Black, the question is framed as: “What did you do to get yourself in this situation?” or there is a belief that the young person made a choice.</p> <hr/> <p>Observed a Police Officer saying to white girl in an area known for exploitation: “You shouldn’t be out here.”</p> <hr/> <p>Sentiment regarding boys and trans youth is “they need to fend for themselves” or “we see them out on the streets, but we don’t pick them up because they’re not victims of trafficking; they’re out there on their own.”</p>
<i>Meso</i>	
Marginalized communities and their interactions with systems	<p>Communities with concentrated areas of CSE have high poverty rates, less resourced schools with lower than average graduation rates, low employment rates, and high crime rates – making youth living in these communities much more vulnerable to CSE</p> <hr/> <p>Over policing (or hot spot policing) of communities of color leads to increased law enforcement contact with youth impacted by CSE in these areas</p> <hr/> <p>Young people and adults are criminalized for their exploitation and their survival resulting in significant and long-lasting harm through incarceration; criminal records which disrupt education, employment, and housing; and familial and community separation</p>
<i>Macro</i>	
Unintended consequences of policy	<p>Laws recognizing CSE as a form of child abuse allowing children to be serviced by child welfare – unintentionally stigmatizes and punishes families of color who are viewed as unable or unwilling to keep their children safe from exploitation</p> <hr/> <p>Indian Child Welfare Act is not uniformly followed so Native youth go unidentified, tribes are not notified of their child welfare involvement and given the opportunity to support native youth, and youth are not connected to culturally responsive services</p> <hr/> <p>Ongoing impact of colonization, genocide, forced removal, racism, and family separation contribute to intergenerational trauma and disproportionate involvement in child welfare and others systems for Native and Black families and youth</p>

Specialized Protocols. There are several specialized protocols that have been developed in Los Angeles County to address specific issues related to the CSE of children. Overall, these protocols are meant to reduce traumatization, increase access to appropriate and supportive services, and identify youth who are experiencing CSE. While these protocols were developed in Los Angeles County, similar practices likely exist in other jurisdictions. Conversely, other jurisdictions may not have the capacity to develop protocols such as these. While a specialized unit for child trafficking can exist without these protocols, they have become an important component to the work of the specialized Social Workers in Los Angeles County and are important to highlight.

Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol. The Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol outlines a quick, coordinated, service-based response, from identifying youth who may be victims of commercial sexual exploitation to the first 72 hours after identification. Agencies that are involved include: Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Advocacy Agencies, and the Department of Health Services. The goal of the protocol is to establish the use of a victim centered, trauma-informed approach. If a law enforcement officer reports a suspected victim of CSE or human trafficking, the DCFS Child Protection Hotline worker must initiate a CSEC Expedited Response, which includes creating an expedited form, identifying youth through the child welfare database, and contacting probation if unable to locate in the DCFS database. If it is determined that DCFS is the lead agency, the Hotline worker notifies MART. When Child Protection Hotline notifies MART of a suspected CSE, the DCFS MART Emergency Responder responds within 90 minutes and, with the community-based advocates and parent/caregiver, leads a crisis MDT meeting. Once the Mental Health Screening Tool is administered, the Responder takes the youth to the Department of Health Services Medical Hub for further physical and psychological evaluation. The MDT, then, develops a safety plan for youth.

Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol. The Victim Witness Testimony Protocol provides support to youth who are called to testify as witnesses in criminal cases against their exploiters/traffickers to reduce re-traumatization (Newcombe, French, Walker Brown, & Guymon, 2020, pg. 121). It creates a notification process when the District Attorney's Office plans to call a youth witness and establishes a Victim Witness Support Team that is individualized to the youth's needs and is led by a member of Probation or DCFS. Within DCFS, County Counsel, the Runaway Outreach Unit, the CSEC Unit, and Social Worker participate as members of the individualized support team. The protocol includes participation of DCFS, the Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender, Independent Juvenile Defender Panel, Children's Law Center, and specialized advocacy agencies.

Locate Protocol. This protocol was created to establish roles and responsibilities of agencies and their aim in locating and recovering missing youth. In 2015, Senate Bill 794 was enacted, and part of this bill required Probation and Child Welfare Departments to report any missing youth to law enforcement and to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, attempt to locate the youth immediately, and upon locating the youth the providers must gather information about the experiences of the youth while they were absent. In an effort to meet these requirements, in 2017, Probation collaborated with DCFS and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department to create Locate Teams. LAPD joined the CSEC Locate Team in March 2020.

Specialized Programs. CSE specific programs with which the Unit works directly and collaboratively.

Community-Based Advocacy. The first partnership between Los Angeles County, Los Angeles Probation, and the Los Angeles Superior Court was established in 2012 with Saving Innocence . In 2019, Los Angeles County expanded its advocacy partnership with the addition of ZOE International. Both Saving Innocence³ and ZOE International⁴ offer case management, permanency planning, resource referrals, and emergency services, using a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach. Advocates provide youth with a trusting relationship

³ <https://savinginnocence.org/>

⁴ <https://gozoe.org/>

with an adult outside of Probation or DCFS. Advocates are also critical in various County protocols such as the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, where they assist law enforcement in providing support and crisis management to the youth upon initial contact with law enforcement. Saving Innocence also have survivor advocates who provide critical support to the youth they serve, conducting prevention and intervention workshops and helping youth who are testifying against their traffickers through the Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol. Advocates work closely with Social Workers in supporting the youth and actively participate in MDT and CFT meetings.

Runaway Outreach Unit. The Runaway Outreach Unit (ROU) is a specialized countywide program in DCFS with the goal to locate and stabilize youth who leave home or care. The program is designed to provide non-traditional specialized case assistance by ROU Social Workers to primary case carrying Social Workers. ROU Social Workers are specially trained to locate, place, and establish rapport with youth and stabilize their crisis situation. The program takes a strengths-based risk reduction approach to ensure the program is less punitive, focusing on providing a comfort zone for youth to return. Much of the service delivery process relies on thinking outside the box to make youth feel at ease about engaging in services. Since the inception of ROU, over 3,500 youth have been returned, with an overall runaway recidivism rate at an all-time low of 34% (down from 54%).

Multi-Agency Response Team (MART). The Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) works in collaboration with law enforcement to provide emergency protective services to children identified in homes with high levels of illegal gang, firearm, and narcotic activity, as well as investigating other high profile “intelligence sensitive” child endangerment cases, and youth impacted by CSE. MART provides an expedited and trained response to law enforcement referrals to help minimize the traumatic effect these crimes have on children and families. MART is comprised of highly trained and countywide case-carrying Emergency Response Children’s Social Workers. These workers are familiar with the service areas they are assigned to and are able to respond expeditiously during crises to plan for youth safety.

Child Protection Hotline. DCFS has adapted its training and processes for when CSE is suspected or reported to DCFS’ 24/7 hotline, which serves as the county’s intake line for reporting of any suspected or known child abuse and/or neglect. The Child Protection Hotline works with the CSEC Liaison to report a suspected case of CSE. Typically, a hotline staff will be asked to evaluate and appropriately document cases of CSE. Hotline staff are trained to initiate an expedited response when a youth is identified as CSE through the First Responder Protocol or located through a Safe Youth Zone specified location and notify either MART or the Probation Officer, depending on whether DCFS or Probation is identified as lead in the child’s case.

Individualized Incidental Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund). The Restoration Fund – an in-house program - provides necessary funds for programmatic activities not covered by other county funding streams, giving much more room for Social Workers to request additional funds as needed to work with youth towards their goals and promote their wellbeing. Use of this fund includes, but not limited to, legal documentation fees, vocational services, personal wellbeing (e.g., yoga, dance), childcare, alternative clothing (e.g., for prom or job interviews), uncovered dental services, college touring fees, transportation fees for families, and more.

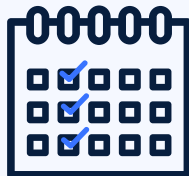
Parent Empowerment Program. Parents/Caregivers of youth experiencing CSE are invited to a 10-week Parent Empowerment Program, where parents and primary caregivers learn and talk about how/why children come to experience CSE, how to communicate with and support their children, resources available in the community, and how to assess signs of CSE. Each session is co-facilitated by a clinician and a parent advocate with lived experience of parenting a child who was a victim of CSE and persevered through the journey towards healing and recovery with their child. Parents have reported gratitude for the information and support provided by the program. Online/remote sessions have also been provided recently, increasing participation from parents.

Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Court. In partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court, County Counsel, and Children’s Law Center, DCFS initiated a dedicated courtroom to serve children and youth experiencing CSE in the dependency system. The establishment of the dedicated courtroom was based on lessons learned from the Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court in the delinquency system. By having a dedicated Judge/Hearing Officer, and specially trained County Counsel, Children’s Law Center attorney, and DCFS staff, DREAM Court allows for increased expertise, consistency in practice, and better outcomes for youth. This means that, unlike other DCFS Court processes, DREAM Court seeks collaborative, rather than adversarial, discussions and decision-making.

Detailed Description of the DCFS MDT Process

MDT meetings are held weekly and can include new or continuing cases. Each case is scheduled at a specific time for the case carrying Social Worker to join. In general, 10-12 cases are reviewed during each MDT meeting.

For purpose of highlighting the collaborative process, a case is described below.

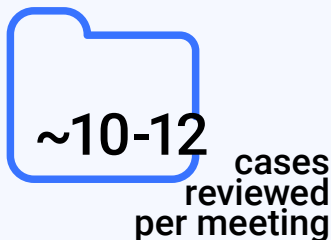


Weekly meetings

Cases are scheduled at



specific times
throughout the meeting



Both new and
continuing cases are
reviewed

Participants present

- Facilitator (or Direct Line Manager)
- Four Social Workers
- Two youth attorneys
- Two youth advocates

Representatives from

- County Office of Education
- Probation
- Department of Mental Health
- School District

Case Summary

Leanna is currently away from care. She was recovered two weeks ago then left care without permission again last week. She is pregnant, resulting from a rape, and not receiving any prenatal care. She states that life on the streets is all she knows, and that the system cannot help her. The assigned Social Worker has been trying to convince her to “receive help” that she needs. Leanna has an open juvenile justice case for a misdemeanor for providing false identification to a peace officer. She is very scared of going to jail and has a bench warrant issued from the juvenile court. When her advocate tried to communicate with her through Instagram, she

blocked the advocate. The current primary issue is that Leanna continues to leave care. Leanna is in contact with her attorney but has demanded that her attorney not share any information about her whereabouts or contact information. Thus, the attorney is not at liberty to speak. Mom and Leanna seem to have a very hostile relationship. The attorney says that both Leanna and her mom refused to participate in any programming or services. She currently does not have a mental health referral. She is still enrolled in high school, according to the education database, but not currently attending school.

Case Action Plan and Discussion

1. Develop a list of possible places she could be based on where she has been found in the past.
2. Report her as missing to the human trafficking bureau and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
3. Given Leanna’s fear of incarceration, her attorney will reach out to explain that she could be arrested and put in juvenile hall if she doesn’t show up to her upcoming court date.
4. Attorney will try and connect her to a reproductive specialist for prenatal care.
5. Given recent trauma, the Department of Mental Health will send a referral to a psychiatrist.
6. The representative from the County Office of Education will follow-up with school and see if the client needs an Individualized Education Plan.
7. In considering her therapeutic options the social Worker mentioned that most of the Black clients want Black women for their therapist. Social Worker also urged others in the room to always ask clients what therapists they want. DCFS has a lot of Licensed Social Workers with cultural competence internally, but there was a sense that they are not being utilized enough. The facilitator will discuss with administration to set up procedures to coordinate across Probation and DCFS to utilize available expertise with cultural competence.
8. The team discussed alternative placement options that could provide more stability.

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

6. Implementation Fidelity: A Measurement Plan for the Child Trafficking Unit in the Probation Department

Suggested Citation

Dierkhising, C. B., Kim, B. K. E., Ackerman-Brimberg, M., & Sandoval, J. R. (2022). Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Based on the logic model of the Child Trafficking Unit, we developed a measurement plan of the program's activities. For those interested in implementing a similar program, this measurement plan can be used as a guide or checklist to ensure you are implementing the model as intended. For those interested in embedding evaluation into the development and implementation of a specialized unit, this section can be used as a guide for a process evaluation. A process evaluation can help ensure that a program has been implemented and/or is functioning the way it was intended. A process evaluation would include an assessment of all the activities stated in the logic model of the specialized unit as described in the prior sections. Not all jurisdictions will have the specific specialized protocols or programs that are included in the logic model. However, it would be expected that all other activities (i.e., multidisciplinary teaming, trauma-informed case management, and relationship-informed care) would be implemented and/or assessed to replicate the specialized unit. We focused on the Child Trafficking Unit in Los Angeles County's Probation Department in developing this measurement plan given it has been in existence for longer than the DCFS CSEC Unit and, thus, is more established and consistent in the way it functions and collects data.

In developing this measurement plan, we first identified whether such data were already being collected by the unit, including how and within which data system. A similar process should occur for jurisdictions looking to implement a specialized unit. Once an assessment of the data currently being collected that related to the activities in the logic model was complete, the missing items were then identified. In order to fill in the gaps two new data collection tools were developed; a new database and a youth survey. Both tools are described in detail in this section. Because most jurisdictions do not typically collect data that has the level of detail needed to assess all program activities described in this report, these additional tools are likely critical for the development and assessment of a specialized unit for CSE. It should also be noted that some of the activities integrated into the new database were being collected by the unit using internal spreadsheets, external to the administrative data system.

Table 2 lists the program activities of the Child Trafficking Unit, strategies for operationalizing or measuring those activities, the data source (e.g., administrative data, youth survey, new database), and person who inputs the data. The data source is specific to the Los Angeles County Probation Department's Child Trafficking Unit, however, because administrative data collection has some similarities across jurisdictions, we expect some of the variables or data sources to mirror other jurisdictions. Again, when implementing or evaluating a unit such as this, jurisdictions should first identify what data elements are already being collected in their county or state.

Table 2. Measurement Plan based on the Child Trafficking Unit Logic Model

Activities from Logic Model	Operationalization	Data Source	Person Responsible for Inputting Data
<i>Multidisciplinary Teaming</i>			
Referral and Assessment	Referral source, recommendations made, and referral outcome	New Database	Assessment DPO
Regular Multidisciplinary Team Meetings	MDT Calendar	New Database	MDT Coordinator
<i>Trauma-Informed Case Management</i>			
Collaboration	(1) List of all contacts in case and (2) number of partners with action items on the case plan/MDT	New Database	MDT Coordinator & Case Carrying DPO
Frequent Contact with Youth	DPO entering contacts into current case management system	Administrative Data	Probation Department
Service Continuity	Length of time case assigned to DPO	Administrative Data	Probation Department
Service Referrals	Number and type of services youth is referred to	New Database	MDT Coordinator
Goal Setting	Progress made towards goals (i.e., action items completed).	New Database	MDT Coordinator & Case Carrying DPO
Safety Planning	(1) Whether there is a safety plan in place	New Database	Case Carrying DPO
Harm Reduction	(1) Survey question to DPO, and/or (2) whether DPO received training on this topic	New Database	Case Carrying DPO
<i>Relationship-Informed Care</i>			
Youth and Family Engagement	Survey questions	Youth Survey	Evaluation Partner
Organizational Support	Organizational Leadership Scale - adapted for everyday practice (Appendix D)	New Database	Case Carrying DPO
Staff Wellness	Monthly survey to staff on self-care goals and progress towards goals	New Database	Case Carrying DPO
Youth Voice and Choice	Survey questions	Youth Survey	Evaluation Partner
Empowerment	Survey questions	Youth Survey	Evaluation Partner
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	(1) Survey questions and (2) trainings attended by DPOs	Youth Survey	Evaluation Partner
<i>Specialized Protocols</i>			
Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol	Whether youth experienced this protocol and if so when.	DCFS CSEC Tracking System (CTS)	Varies
Detention Protocol	Whether youth experienced this protocol and if so when.	Other	Varies
Victim-Witness Testimony Protocol	Whether youth experienced this protocol and if so when.	DCFS CSEC Tracking System (CTS)	Varies
Locate Protocol	Whether youth experienced this protocol and if so when.	Other	Locate DPO
<i>Specialized Programs</i>			
Community-Based Advocacy	Whether youth has an advocate	Administrative Data	Case carrying DPO
STAR Court	Whether youth was assigned to STAR Court	Administrative Data	Probation Department

Youth Survey

Direct input from youth is essential to properly assess certain components of the program’s activities. In order to capture youth feedback, a youth survey was developed that includes data elements that map onto the following four activities: youth and family engagement, youth voice and choice, empowerment, and historical, cultural, and gender issues. In developing the survey, we first drew from common questions in other youth surveys (e.g., [Youth Thrive; Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium Youth-Adult Survey]). After reviewing these resources, the internal research team narrowed down the question items based on the specific activities in the logic model. Then, the National Center for Youth Law held several listening sessions with youth as well as with members of the CSEC Action Team’s Advisory Board¹ to identify the most appropriate questions, modify the wording of questions to make them youth-friendly and clear, and receive any additional feedback about the survey and how it should and could be used. Final revisions were made based on the feedback.

The survey is intended to promote the integration of youth feedback into probation practice and evaluation activities – both at the individual and program level. There are different ways that the survey can be used, therefore we have made it free to use and modify based on how a jurisdiction decides to use it. Primarily, we developed it for research and evaluation purposes, specifically to support the assessment of implementation fidelity of the Child Trafficking Unit. However, there is also great value in using the survey to inform and guide practice improvement for probation departments and other agencies including community-based organizations serving youth. In addition, there is potential to adapt the survey to be used in other agencies (e.g., child welfare, mental health, etc.). Youth participants in the listening sessions indicated that their input on how services are going in real time is not often sought; this survey tool can be used to fill that gap.

How the survey is used will influence the survey administration protocol. If the survey is used for research and evaluation, then the survey and its administration should be approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This allows an external researcher or evaluator to collect and analyze the data, the results of which should be subsequently shared with probation in a de-identified format. If the survey is used internally for practice improvement, then the survey can be administered by the Probation Department without IRB approval. Either way, the purpose of the survey, who is receiving the information, and how the information will be used must be made clear to the youth respondent.

If used for real time practice improvement within an agency, some special considerations exist. First, if the survey data are collected and reviewed by probation (or another agency directly serving youth), youth may not be as willing or open in responding to the survey. Strategies to ensure that youth feedback is voluntary, safe to provide, and honest should be discussed in-depth prior to administration. For example, a Probation Department could identify one person, ideally a supervisor, in the department or a specialized unit to receive and review the data. This person can then share the feedback in an aggregated/de-identified form to the department/unit.

Second, youth participants in our listening sessions indicated a desire to have direct contact with a supervisor if their needs or concerns weren’t being addressed by their service providers or Probation Officer. Because of this, we included an optional open-ended question where a youth respondent could provide their contact information and ask for individual follow-up. If this is used, then clear protocols must be laid out regarding how and who will respond to youth to ensure that any urgent needs, including issues that may require mandatory reporting, are attended to in a timely fashion. It is possible, that a jurisdiction may want an external party, such as a community-based partner, advocacy organization, or ombudsman, to follow up with youth, as needed, in order to provide additional opportunities for youth to provide feedback in a confidential and safe way and to seek resolution of any identified issues. If a jurisdiction is not able to identify an appropriate process for responding to and addressing youth concerns, the open-ended question option should be excluded.

¹ <https://youthlaw.org/news/first-its-kind-advisory-board-led-survivors-csec>

Lastly, agencies should consider frequency of administration of the survey. If being used to inform ongoing, individual practice-level decisions, it should be administered regularly – such as every 3-6 months - to see if there is improvement over time. Ideally, there would also be a way to anonymously track individual responses over time (e.g., with anonymous unique identifiers) to monitor improvement or lack thereof, which could trigger a higher-level response as needed.

Overall, the hope with the youth survey is to provide an option and a resource for soliciting and incorporating youth feedback into both program evaluation and direct practice improvement. Youth who are marginalized, including through exploitation and system involvement, are often stripped of their power and control over what happens in their lives. Yet, they hold incredible knowledge and expertise about what they have experienced, and what they need to heal and thrive. This survey, as well as listening sessions and other methods for welcoming input from youth should be used, and the information heeded, to improve the programs and practices for young people.

Download a free,
editable, Word
Document version of
the survey, [here](#).



Youth Survey About Probation Services

This survey was developed as part of a federally funded project to assess the service delivery model of a specialized unit in a Probation Department for youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation. The survey is intended to promote the integration of youth feedback into Probation practice and evaluation activities. The survey can be freely used and/or modified, in part, to match the survey administration protocol of varying jurisdictions.

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For questions about the use or development of this survey please contact:

Mae Ackerman-Brimberg
National Center for Youth Law
mabrimberg@youthlaw.org

Feedback on Probation Services



Your voice, opinions, and feelings matter. This survey was created to help the Probation Department understand how best to work with you and other young people. It includes topics such as youth and family engagement, collaboration, youth voice and choice, and services/resources. Your answers will be used to help your probation officer serve you better. Your answers may also be used to make changes that may help other youth in the future.



Taking this survey is voluntary, which means you do not have to take this survey if you don't want to. If at any point you decide you do not want to take the survey, you can stop. You may skip any question that you don't want to answer.



This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. It is important you answer each question honestly. This survey may take you less than 10 minutes, but you may take as much time as you need.



This survey is anonymous, meaning that no one will know if you took the survey. Your probation officer will not know whether you took the survey, and they will not see any of your individual answers. The information in this survey will be going to [a supervisor/designated person in the Probation Department]. The purpose of [] receiving your responses is to make sure that everything is going okay with young people on Probation, to address problems, and/or highlight successes that young people bring up in the survey.

[Recommended addition for agencies/communities/organizations that are able to follow up with youth.]

If you have questions or want to talk to someone, towards the end of the survey there is a section where you may ask for resources or to talk to someone about things that came up in the survey. If you wish, you may give your name and contact information so that someone can follow up with you.

Youth and Family Engagement

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer tries to build a relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel supported by my probation officer.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer tries to build relationships with my family and other important people in my life.	1	2	3	4	5

I feel my probation officer contacts me (check one box):

- Too much
- Just the right amount
- Not often enough
- Never

Collaboration

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know that there is a team of people supporting me.	1	2	3	4	5
I know where to go or who to reach if I have a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
When people on my team say they are going to do something to help me, they follow through.	1	2	3	4	5

The person/people that I feel supported by are my: (check all that apply)

- Probation Officer
- Social Worker
- Advocate
- Case Manager
- Therapist/Clinician
- Parent/Relative/Caregiver
- None of the above
- Other _____

Youth Voice and Choice

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel comfortable talking to my probation officer about my opinions on decisions in my life (e.g., where I want to live, school).	1	2	3	4	5
I am given all the information I need to make decisions in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer respects my input and ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
I help set my own goals.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer celebrates my achievements and strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't feel judged when I share my concerns or ideas with my team.	1	2	3	4	5

Services/Resources

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer connects me with services and resources I need or want.	1	2	3	4	5
If a program, provider, or service is not working for me, I feel comfortable talking to my probation officer to get it changed.	1	2	3	4	5
There are services and resources I have asked for but am still not getting.	1	2	3	4	5

Race/Ethnicity, Culture and Gender

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer is respectful of my gender identity.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer is respectful of my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer uses my correct name and pronouns.	1	2	3	4	5

My probation officer connects me to:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Services and activities related to my racial, ethnic, or cultural background (ex. skin and hair care, foods from my culture, connection to community elders, rituals/ceremonies).	1	2	3	4	5
Service providers who look like me, if I request it.	1	2	3	4	5
Service providers that speak the language I prefer using.	1	2	3	4	5
People and activities related to my religious or spiritual background and practices (e.g., church, temple, mosque, elders, rituals/ceremonies).	1	2	3	4	5

Is there anything else you want to tell us about your probation officer or about Probation?

Optional

[Addition for agencies/communities/organizations that plan to follow up with youth]

This is totally optional.

If you would like someone from [Probation] to follow up with you about anything from this survey, please include your name and contact information.

<hr/>
Your name
<hr/>
Your phone number
<hr/>
Your email address

Development of a New Database for Probation

Administrative data commonly collected across jurisdictions capture a wealth of information on a youth's case, though, it often does not collect the type of process-oriented information that can inform implementation fidelity. Our research team sought to develop a web-based information system to capture the activities in the logic model not captured by current data systems. In doing so, we carefully considered how a data system could help service providers do their job more efficiently. We recognized that many human service agencies have their own databases, but they are limited by the types of data they can collect in their internal systems. Therefore, we focused on key aspects of the work of the Child Trafficking Unit to create a data collection process, specifically a database, that models the workflow of the unit.

The database was developed by the research team with guidance from Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit. Our aims for the system were to:

- Collect data in a structured/consistent way
- View and retrieve real-time case information
- Track trauma-informed case management and youth goals
- Build custom data reports to oversee programmatic activities
- Allow the unit to co-design the system development and user interface

The database integrates two open-source software platforms (Drupal and CiviCRM) to create a web-based interface that allows Child Trafficking Unit administrators and staff to record case referrals, case information, and SMART case plans. We designed the system in four primary sections: (1) User Dashboard, (2) Referral and Assessment, (3) MDT Calendar, and (4) Caseload Overview. These sections correspond to several of the activities identified in the logic model for the Child Trafficking Unit. We focused on these specific activities because they were either not captured in the current information systems that were being used (most often because they were newly identified as part of the current study), or they were captured elsewhere but not in an efficient manner (see Table 2).

Leveraging the Database as a Case Management Tool

Our mission was to build a data system that: (1) aligns with case management processes, (2) leverages the data system as a tool for case management, and (3) can be used for evaluation and/or practice improvement purposes. The emphasis on the case management processes is replicated in the data interface, beginning with the referral process. The system was built to match the program workflow, which organizes the internal data structure for how services are provided overtime. This enables future program evaluations with a longitudinal time-ordering focus. For example, the referral and assessment forms create a youth record and organize this data according to the different program support levels (e.g., at-risk youth, secondary support, or full program support). An initial review of the referral begins the case timeline that can activate other activities across time (e.g., Initial MDT Meeting, Ongoing Review, 90-Day Review, and As-Needed meetings).

The following sections highlight several features of the database that facilitate case management activities. All screenshots in this section use pseudonyms for the case names and simulated data for illustration.

¹ Kristine Chan, MSW, Doctoral Candidate at University of California, Irvine developed the database and wrote this description of the database. For those interested in developing and implementing a similar system please contact cdierkh@calstatela.edu

User Dashboard and “Scheduled” Activities. Most human service agencies use case note documentation as an action that has already taken place (e.g., completing case notes after meeting with a client). In the new database, activities come with different activity statuses, such as “scheduled” and “completed.” A user can log an activity in the future (e.g., an MDT meeting on a specific date), and this activity is then “scheduled” on the user dashboard as a future event. In the example below, the database organizes and tracks upcoming case management activities and helps users manage their tasks. Simultaneously, this ensures that the user revisits the activity record to provide data for that activity once completed.

The screenshot shows the user dashboard for Kristine Chan. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Home, Referral and Assessment, MDT Calendar, and Caseload. The main heading is "Dashboard - Kristine Chan". Below this, there is a section titled "Your Assigned Activities" with a table of activities. A red arrow points to the table with the text "Personalized user dashboard with upcoming 'scheduled' activities". To the right, there is a "Recent Activity" list with names: Latisha Brown, Skylar Aguirre, Christal Norris, and Kristine Chan. A red arrow points to this list with the text "Track recent activity in the system (for the ease of moving between records)".

Type	Subject	Added by	With	Date	Status
MDT 30-Day	(no subject)	Chan, Kristine;	Norris, Christal;	May 13th, 2022 3:21 PM	Scheduled
Initial MDT	(no subject)	Chan, Kristine;	Munoz, Sasha;	May 6th, 2022 12:00 AM	Scheduled
Initial MDT	(no subject)	Chan, Kristine;	Brown, Latisha;	May 2nd, 2022 3:20 PM	Scheduled

The screenshot shows the "Schedule Follow-up" form. A dropdown menu is open, showing options: Referral, Initial MDT (highlighted), MDT 30-Day, MDT Ongoing, MDT 90-Day, and MDT As-needed. A red arrow points to the "Initial MDT" option with the text "Schedule a date for the 'Initial MDT' and Assign the activity to a staff (email will be generated to the user)". Below the dropdown, there are input fields for "Schedule Follow-up Activity" (with a calendar icon), "Subject", and "Assigned to" (with a search icon).

Multidisciplinary Team Meeting Calendar. The MDT Calendar section is a visual look at upcoming and future MDT meetings. We provide different methods of viewing future events: a monthly calendar view, a table view that filters events in the next seven days, and a search function for upcoming MDT meetings for a specific youth. Viewing and filtering data using these methods is particularly useful for staff whose primary responsibility is MDT coordination. We can answer these questions on a single-page view: How many MDT meetings do I have this week? When is the next MDT meeting for “Jasmine”?

The screenshot displays the MDT Calendar interface. At the top left, it says "MDT Calendar" with a red annotation "MDT Meetings are color-coded by type" pointing to a meeting on Monday, May 8th. The calendar shows dates from 8 to 11. Meetings are color-coded: purple for "Initial MDT", blue for "MDT 30-Day", and green for "MDT 90-Day".

On the right, the "MDT Meetings This Week" section shows a table of meetings scheduled for the next 7 days:

Date	Name	Meeting
05/02	Latisha Brown	Initial MDT
05/06	Sasha Munoz	Initial MDT

Below this is a "Search by Client" section with a text input field containing "jasmine" and "Search" and "Reset" buttons. A red arrow points to the "Search" button. Below the search is another table showing results for "jasmine":

Date	Name	Meeting
06/07	Jasmine Cox	MDT 90-Day

Real-Time Case Information and Reminders. The caseload page provides an overview of all active clients being served by the unit and can be organized by Probation Officer. This dashboard view tracks real-time information about each client on the caseload (e.g., current location, probation disposition, DCFS legal status, etc.) and the last MDT meeting. This latter column is a calculated date that serves as a reminder to encourage consistent contact with clients. For example, “3 months ago” indicates that the client has not had a MDT for three months. Real-time case information is a common status report, and there is a spreadsheet export option for auditing and reporting. This is to allow efficient access to data.

Caseload

Name **Location** **Probation** **DCFS**

Track real-time information about youth and last MDT meeting

See cases by DPO

Kristine Chan

PDJ	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Current Location	Probation Disposition	DCFS Legal Status	Education Status	Last MDT
P987654	Christal Norris	13	Female	White/Caucasian	Home with Relative/Guardian	790	Family Maintenance/VFM	Enrolled in GED	3 months ago
P123456	Latisha Brown	14	Female	African American or Black	DCFS Group Home/STRTP	602 HOP	Family Reunification (FR)	Not enrolled	4 months ago
P532456	Sasha Munoz	16	Female	African American or Black	Home with Biological Parent(s)	602 HOP	N/A	Enrolled in High School	2 months ago

Not Assigned

PDJ	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Current Location	Probation Disposition	DCFS Legal Status	Education Status	Last MDT
P342224	Skylar Aguirre	13	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latinx	DCFS Group Home/STRTP	602 SP	Family Reunification (FR)	Enrolled in High School	1 week ago

Displaying 1 - 4 of 4

Export data into a spreadsheet

Caseeload Navigation

[Main Caseload](#) [At-Risk Group](#) **View youth records by case type**

MDT Meetings This Week

Scheduled for the next 7 days

Date	Name	Meeting
05/02	Latisha Brown	Initial MDT
05/06	Sasha Munoz	Initial MDT

Recent Activity

- Latisha Brown
- Skylar Aguirre
- Christal Norris
- Kristine Chan

	Name	DOB	Gender	Race	Location	Probation	DCFS	School	Last_MDT	DPO	Group
54	Christal Norris	13	Female	White/Caucasian	Home with Relative/Guardian	790	Family Maintenance/V	Enrolled in GED	3 months ago	Kristine Chan	CTU Unit Assignment
56	Latisha Brown	14	Female	African American or Black	DCFS Group Home/STRTP	602 HOP	Family Reunification (FI)	Not enrolled	4 months ago	Kristine Chan	CTU Unit Assignment
56	Sasha Munoz	16	Female	African American or Black	Home with Biological Parent(s)	602 HOP	N/A	Enrolled in High Sch	2 months ago	Kristine Chan	CTU Secondary Support
24	Skylar Aguirre	13	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latinx	DCFS Group Home/STRTP	602 SP	Family Reunification (FI)	Enrolled in High Sch	1 week ago	Not Assigned	CTU Secondary Support

Export the Caseload Dashboard
Excel Spreadsheet Example

SMART Case Plans. A unique feature of this system is the development of the SMART case plans from paper form to a web-based interface. The SMART case plan section automatically appears in each client record which serves as a reminder to the user what the goals and action steps are for each youth based on their case plan. Goals and action steps can be updated over time to reflect the progress and completion of tasks. Additionally, these case plans can be exported in PDF format for court reports and spreadsheets to share with other stakeholders working with the youth. This feature is essential to encourage information sharing. Case plans are often developed with other partners. Therefore, this option encourages collaboration and prevents duplicated goals/action steps across multisystem and community partners.

Sasha Munoz

[Edit](#) [Delete Contact](#)

Summary | **Activities 2** | Relationships 1 | Groups 1 | Contacts 0 | Service Referrals 0

Gender	Female	Phone	
Date of Birth	April 1st, 2006	Email	
Age	16 years	Address	

Identity

Pronoun	She/Her
Race	African American or Black

Legal Status

PDJ	P532456
Probation Disposition	602 HOP
DCFS Legal Status	
Lead Agency	
Dept No.	

Case Management

Current Location	Home with Biological Parent(s)
Education Status	Enrolled in High School
Employment Status	
Documents in Youth's Possession	
Safety Plan Created	
Safety Plan Upload	

Access Keys:

Contact ID: 4 Data submitted from the referral form auto-populate to case record

Last Change by: Kristine Chan (April 28th, 2022 8:01 AM)
Created: April 26th, 2022 10:33 AM

SMART Case Plan Track real-time case information

Relationships & Community Develop and track MDT Case Plan over time

Created Date: 04-01
Goal Status: In-Progress
SMART Goal: Improve minor's relationship with mother to improve communication. Minor and her mother will participate in family counseling once a week for the next 6 months.

- DMH will connect the minor and family to a local family-counseling program. [DMH] Yes (2022-07-01)
- DPO will monitor compliance with the therapist once a month. [Probation] No (2022-07-01)

[Edit Goal](#)

Alcohol and Substance Use [Edit Goal](#)

Created Date: 04-06
Goal Status: In-Progress
SMART Goal: Minor will not use any illegal drugs for the next 6 months.

- DPO will drug test the minor once a week. [Youth; Probation] No (2022-04-06) (2022-07-01)
- DMH will continue to provide 1-1 substance abuse counseling. [Youth; DMH] No (2022-04-06) (2022-07-01)

[Edit Goal](#)

To submit a SMART goal, click [here](#) or view case plan in a [table](#).

[PDF](#)

Youth Name
 Latisha Brown

Goal Created Date
 mm/dd/yyyy

Goal Area

- Alcohol and Substance Use
- Education
- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Personal Activities/Hobbies
- Relationships & Community
- Work
- Other

What is the SMART goal?

SMART Goal Status
 Goal Status
 In Progress

Action Steps

Action Step	MDT Members Assigned	Service Referral	Start Date	Due Date	Target Achieved?	Completion Date
	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver <input type="checkbox"/> Probation <input type="checkbox"/> DCFS <input type="checkbox"/> DMH <input type="checkbox"/> DPH <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate <input type="checkbox"/> Attorney <input type="checkbox"/> Other...	None	mm/dd/yyyy	mm/dd/yyyy	None	mm/dd/yyyy

Add 1 more items

NIJ - Evaluation of Specialized Unit for CSE

Home Referral and Assessment MDT Calendar Caseload

SMART Case Plan [View Case Plan in a table format](#)

Youth Name	Goal Area	Created Date	Goal Status	SMART Goal	Action Steps	Due Date	Completion Date
Sasha Munoz	Relationships & Community	04-01	In-Progress	Improve minor's relationship with mother to improve communication. Minor and her mother will participate in family counseling once a week for the next 6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DMH will connect the minor and family to a local family-counseling program. [DMH] Yes (2022-07-01) DPO will monitor compliance with the therapist once a month. [Probation] No (2022-07-01) 		
Sasha Munoz	Alcohol and Substance Use	04-06	In-Progress	Minor will not use any illegal drugs for the next 6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPO will drug test the minor once a week. [Youth; Probation] No (2022-04-06) (2022-07-01) DMH will continue to provide 1-1 substance abuse counseling. [Youth; DMH] No (2022-04-06) (2022-07-01) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022-07-01 2022-07-01 	

Overall, the intent of this database was to assess the feasibility of data collection based on the logic model of the Child Trafficking Unit. In doing so, we worked to ensure the system matched regular workflow of Probation Officers in the unit. In the next section, we discuss the feedback on the data system and the assessment of the capacity of the agencies to collect data.

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

7. Supporting and Assessing the Research Capacity of the Specialized Units

Suggested Citation

Dierkhising, C. B., Kim, B. K. E., Ackerman-Brimberg, M., & Sandoval, J. R. (2022). Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Many programs that are designed and delivered within child welfare or probation systems are not designed with research and evaluation in mind. Often, it is not until after services have been in place for some time that there is an initiative, directive, or interest to conduct an evaluation. This makes evaluation activities difficult because data collection systems are either not in place or were developed for compliance and monitoring purposes rather than research and evaluation. Increasingly, however, agencies are being asked by funders, policymakers, or other stakeholders to show how their program functions, whether it is effective, and the impacts the program has on youth outcomes. When evaluators come in after the program has been functioning for some time, the appropriate data needed to assess program outcomes or program fidelity are not always available.

In cases where programs or services are not set up with evaluation in mind, an evaluability assessment is often needed, which was the purpose of the current project. As part of this assessment, we evaluated whether there is capacity to collect evaluation data within the agency. In doing so, we conducted interviews with individuals to get feedback on two data collection systems: 1) the newly developed database for the Child Trafficking Unit (described above), and 2) a newly implemented database in the DCFS CSEC Unit. Using these data platforms as examples, we were able to assess the capacity of the specialized units to collect data for evaluation purposes.

This section describes the assessment of the research capacity of the specialized units in a way that, we hope, other jurisdictions will consider when developing and implementing a specialized unit for youth experiencing CSE.

Lessons Learned from Implementing a New Database in DCFS

During this project, DCFS planned and implemented a new database, called the CSEC tracking system (CTS). The system was envisioned to be an integrative database that allows effective and streamlined communication about each case across community-based advocacy programs, Social Workers, and their supervisors, both within and outside of the department. The system sought to promote transparency in advocacy service provision to ensure that youth are receiving appropriate services. Several functions were built into the data system to promote best practice. For example, if a newly referred youth's safety plan is not completed within 14 days, the system alerts the case worker as well as the supervisor. In addition, the embedded service date tracking mechanism was built to keep each provider accountable for not only the state/county reporting requirements but also the timely connection to and delivery of necessary services for young people. Overall, the system has compliance monitoring built in based on the requirements of the community-based advocacy contracts, but it was not built to monitor compliance for the sake of compliance or penalizing advocates for not meeting requirements; rather the intention was to facilitate and streamline quality service provision for youth impacted by CSE.

The CTS was officially launched in early 2022. It took approximately 2.5 years to develop, from initial brainstorming to the actual launch. The administrator who led the effort to launch the database identified three essential elements for a successful transition into a new database. First, a champion, who recognizes the importance of collecting and using data, should be committed to developing a database that collects necessary data. Second, at least two members from the data team were needed to consistently work with the champion to develop the technical aspect of the database. Third, at least two members from the data team were needed to support the training and troubleshooting of the newly launched database. Because members of the data team generally do not have a background in social work, the team members needed to work closely with the champion or other case workers who know the work.

During the testing phase, before the official launch, CTS was piloted by multiple staff to ensure accessibility, feasibility, and acceptability. This iterative process allowed for adding or improving necessary data elements into the system to make daily work and supervision easier and more efficient. Within the first two months, 24 new referrals were submitted using the new system.

In the initial launch process, the CTS was welcomed by Social Workers and advocates, who also felt that a central database for service tracking would be useful. Strong leadership, in this case, was enough for workers' buy-in and willingness to learn, adopt, and use a new database. Training was done organically, after the introductory training, based on request.

Lessons learned in the development, launch, and use of the CTS provide an important insight on the capacity of service providers to enter and track data. Through interviews, we have identified several benefits and challenges to adopting and implementing the CTS.

The biggest benefit to the CTS, from the administrator's perspective, was that the new database helped monitor and supervise the work being done by contracted advocates. While there were some technical issues (e.g., inability to download data in excel spreadsheet format, error messages for apostrophes or special characters in case notes, etc.) it enhanced efficiency of generating high quality deliverables, such as monthly management reports and compliance rates. It provided an overview of all active cases with aggregate summary of completed/ongoing advocacy activities, number of service hours, type of services provided, parties involved, and the length of time each process took across the life of a case (e.g., Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol referral, intake assessment, safety planning, etc.). From the case worker's perspective, the new database was perceived as user-friendly – easy to adopt and learn – information sharing system that made it easier for them to track referrals.

Several challenges were noted, however, about the use and utility of the CTS. The first challenge was the inflexibility of the user interface. For example, the database would only allow the assigned worker to edit or submit the referral, thus, creating a workflow bottleneck where referrals for advocacy services would not get submitted on time. Allowing other case workers or supervisors to submit the forms would ensure a more efficient referral process. This was similarly noted by advocates and their supervisors, in that inputting service activities were only available to assigned advocates making it impossible for other advocates supporting the case to document the work they had done with the youth.

The second challenge was that, unlike how it was originally envisioned, the CTS functioned as a standalone database that added further busy work for inputting data for case workers, advocates, and their supervisors. While the initial purpose was to make an efficient system, incomplete referrals accrued on case workers' desk who may have been out on vacation or out sick, and other caseworkers could not add the service activities to the cases since they were not assigned to them which meant having to document activities in a separate spreadsheet to ensure that the billable service activities and hours were noted.

The third challenge was ensuring the accuracy and usefulness of information automatically calculated by the database system. For example, the number of days calculated by the referral system reflected the number of days from the day the DCFS CSEC Unit received the referral instead of when the referral from the DCFS CSEC Unit was actually received by the advocacy agencies. Relatedly, the administrators could not track how long it took from the initial referral to advocacy referral, making it impossible to monitor timeliness of the services.

Despite the challenges in the initial launch, overall, those interviewed recognized that the CTS as a promising approach to collecting and monitoring high quality data relevant to service provision for youth impacted by CSE. Improvements are currently being made to the CTS based on ongoing feedback from caseworkers, advocates, and their supervisors.

Feedback on a New Database for Probation

After the new database for the Child Trafficking Unit was developed for this project, an introductory video was created and shared with Probation Officers in the unit. These Probation Officers were then individually interviewed to gather feedback on their willingness and interest to use such a database. The following questions guided the discussion:

- How much time do you spend on data tracking/collection per week?
- Do you think it would take you more or less time if you used the new database compared to your current process?
- How willing are you to use a new database?
- If we were to implement this new data collection system, what do you think the challenges would be? And conversely, how do you see it being helpful?

Currently, Probation Officers in the Child Trafficking Unit have several spreadsheets where they input data based on their role (e.g., assessment, case carrying DPO, etc.). These spreadsheets are *in addition* to the use of the case management system that the Probation Department currently uses to track administrative data. The Probation Department's current system has its own challenges, including limited capacity to track program-level data and the more collaborative, relational components that make the Child Trafficking Unit's service delivery model unique; therefore, these additional spreadsheets are used so that the unit can internally track the additional information they need.

It was estimated that, at minimum, approximately 114 hours a month are spent entering data into these spreadsheets. This amount was estimated across all roles/positions of Probation Officers and staff in the Child Trafficking Unit, as the amount of time spent depends on the person's role and responsibilities. Importantly, this number increases when caseloads are higher, depending on how many youth are away from home or care per month (e.g., Locate Protocol tracking), how many youth are referred to the unit (i.e., referral and assessment tracking), and if there are any additional requests made of the unit. Additional requests for information on the Child Trafficking Unit are common and often come from stakeholders (e.g., the Board of Supervisors, the Integrated Leadership Team, etc.) that are interested in a particular aspect of the work for practice, research, or policy reasons. Examples include the number of youth identified through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol during a particular time period, most common housing / placement situations for youth in the unit, or numbers of youth currently incarcerated in a county detention facility.

All Probation Officers interviewed reported that they believed it would take them less time to enter data if the new database replaced their current process (i.e., the additional spreadsheets). In addition, everyone interviewed was willing and interested in using the new database. Probation Officers felt the helpful functions of the database were that it was interactive, could schedule meetings (e.g., MDTs) in real time, is searchable, could aid in tracking prior assessments of youth that did not come to the unit, and included reminders on when youth need contact and/or MDTs.

Potential challenges Probation Officers considered were potential overlap with the current case management system they use, getting buy-in from all the case carrying DPOs, and concerns that it would be too much work if they had to enter historical data. Recommendations included the need for appropriate training, technical support, not requiring entering historical data entry (i.e., starting with current caseloads), and not limiting people's access to the database within the unit (which can create barriers to data entry).

Overall, Probation Officers were interested in using the database, believed it would reduce their time spent on data entry, and wanted support in implementing the database.

Research Capacity of the Specialized Units: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Progress has been made in how service systems and affiliated agencies identify and support children and youth experiencing CSE. Challenges remain, however, in addressing the comprehensive needs of children and youth impacted by CSE. Juvenile justice and child welfare professionals are on the front lines of this work and are in need of best practices and programs. A recent review of the literature found that of 179 peer-reviewed articles identified that included a description of a program or service for youth experiencing CSE, only twelve of them were evaluated (Kim, Dierkhising, De Leon, Sandoval, Brissett, & Bounds, 2022). And for those that were evaluated, the scientific rigor was not high. This highlights the need services and programs as well as rigorous research and evaluation on programs and services.

Overall, both the specialized units in the Probation Department and DCFS have the capacity for a more in-depth evaluation, though additional support and data collection would be needed. Based on the feedback of the two databases described above we have identified several recommendations for supporting the capacity of these specialized units to engage in further evaluation activities. For jurisdictions looking to implement similar units, we recommend careful consideration of these lessons learned.

Cultivate Buy-In for Data Collection Among Service Providers. Service providers within health and human services often have several competing demands between direct client services and administrative duties. Data collection is not always something that they are willing or able to take on. However, in our interviews we found that, service providers were willing to engage in data collection when it is presented as something that will help their workflow. For example, buy-in from service providers was relatively high if they felt the new data collection effort would improve information sharing, reduce time spent on other tracking activities, match their workflow, and/or enhance their ability to support youth through case management.

Match Data Collection to Workflow. Efficiency in data collection is maximized if the data collection process does not feel like data collection. In other words, that it mirrors, and actually enhances, service providers' workflow rather than assigned as an additional task. This is important for efficiency and cultivating buy-in for data collection and/or a new database. One example of efficiency from the database we created for the Child Trafficking Unit is the option for downloading the data (e.g., in either a PDF or excel format) so that case information, updates, or action items can be shared with key stakeholders in real time, such as in court reports or in emails to collaborators. Conversely, this was an identified challenge with the DCFS CSEC Tracking System (CTS). Importantly, it is recommended that the data collection process also drive practice improvement. For example, the calendaring of events in the newly developed database for the Child Trafficking Unit provides a notification when a youth is in need of an MDT according to the schedule set forth in the policy. In addition, the SMART goals identified at a previous MDT auto populate to the next MDT meeting form to allow for easy tracking and follow-up.

Focus on Practice Rather than Compliance. Human service organizations increasingly rely on information management systems to track client data for quality assurance and accountability. However, technologies that focus solely on accountability and organizational demands reduce the potential that data can bring to leverage system actors' work, especially when there is less consideration of how the system can help staff do their tasks more efficiently. Part of this problem stems from the fact that some information systems are developed by administrators and web developers rather than direct service providers that do the on-the-ground work (Munro, 2004). As a result, information systems are built with a focus on auditing and supervision (e.g., compliance data) rather than utilizing the system to facilitate more robust involvement in the services they provide to clients (e.g., process or outcome data).

Collaborate with Service Providers to Develop a Data Collection Plan. Data collection processes, including data systems, must be developed and implemented in collaboration with direct care service providers. It is important to engage case-carrying workers - not just administrators - when developing a database or a data collection system so that the process accurately reflects the actual workflow instead of heavily focusing on monitoring and compliance. This helps shift the focus towards youth outcomes and practice improvement rather than service outputs.

Incorporate Youth Feedback into the Data Collection Plan. To measure the true impact of a program, the youth receiving its services must be able to share feedback about how and whether the program is working for them. Youth have key insights into what they need to achieve their goals and can tell you what is working for them and not. Too often providers shy away from asking youth because it may require a shift in approach, process, or staff. Planning for and including youth feedback into a data collection plan from the outset is important as it considers the unique nature of the information being collected such that the data system and infrastructure can accommodate it. Youth and those formerly served by the systems should be engaged in identifying what information to collect (e.g., their perspectives on which service providers are most effective or what types of services are missing from the service array), the language to be used in describing their experiences, as well as the best methods to engage young people in providing feedback. Collaborating with youth in the research and evaluation process not only ensures accurate measurement of important program elements, but it can be empowering in itself. Youth in our listening sessions for the development of the youth survey noted that they had never or infrequently been asked the types of questions in our proposed survey and were excited to take part in the development of a tool that other youth may benefit from.

Plan for Implementation. To be successful, attention must be paid to how the database is implemented. Specifically, it was noted by interviewees that those using a new database need training and ongoing support until it has become part of ongoing practice. Training prior to rollout and ongoing technical assistance can mitigate and address any problems as they arise. For example, the CTS database experienced unexpected glitches that are being addressed as part of an ongoing improvement process. As part of implementation, issues related to confidentiality must be addressed as well. For example, if the data collection process uses a new database legal and ethical considerations are needed to ensure that identifying information can be uploaded and managed in the new system.

Plan for Ongoing Technical Assistance to Reduce Time Spent on Data Collection. Unfortunately, the development/maintenance of information systems often do not advance at the same speed as an organization. Most commercialized technology have pre-built functions and features that administrators cannot change or customize. As a result, program evaluation and the data available on client outcomes may be limited. In some cases, opportunities for technological improvements or requests may be delayed, unavailable, and/or not supported by internal IT units. For example, in the Los Angeles County Probation Department there is a significant lag, several months and in some cases even two years, to make a change in the current case management system so that it can capture information specifically relevant and important to the Child Trafficking Unit. This is one reason the unit manages its own set of spreadsheets. In other cases, information is entered easily, but the information extracted is limited, burdensome, or delayed. In these situations, significant staff time is used to collect, organize, and/or archive data (e.g., via spreadsheets) to internally oversee their operations and client outcomes. In the Child Trafficking Unit, over 100 hours a month are spent on additional data activities. Additional research has also documented how information systems have undermined social work/human service practices because a disproportionate amount of time is spent in front of the computer instead of with clients (Gillingham, 2015; Lagsten & Andersson, 2018).

Integrate Multiple Sources of Information. Successful evaluation of specialized units, require the integration of multiple data sources. The use of linked administrative data is becoming more common, particularly in child welfare (Soneson, et al., 2022, Strelevitz & Wulsin, 2022), and allows for a more complete picture of youth outcomes and trajectories across service systems (e.g., Herz et al., 2019). Yet, there are limitations with linked administrative data, mainly the amount of detail that can be captured on an individual basis. Because of this, we recommend using multiple data sources, including newly developed data systems such as the one created for the current project, to ensure the accurate measurement of the variables outlined in the logic model of the program. Multiple data sources are needed because the data are measured at various levels of analysis, for example, the level of the service provider (e.g., perceptions of organizational support), the youth (e.g., mental health, perceptions of services), and the system (e.g., referral source, timing of MDT, etc.).

Plan for a Phased Approach to Evaluation. When most service providers think about evaluation, they often think of an outcome evaluation. However, there are several types of evaluation, such as an evaluability assessment to clearly define the program model and assess its research capacity (i.e., the current project), a process evaluation to identify whether the program is functioning with fidelity to the model, and an outcome evaluation which can show whether the program is having the intended effect. The decision on the type of evaluation that is most appropriate will often depend on how established the program is and/or the data collection processes already in place. These different approaches can be thought of as phases of evaluation. In the current report we lay out a plan for a process evaluation; however, we also provide details on the outcomes of the programs (see Appendix A) that can be pre-emptively embedded into data collection systems, along with fidelity measures, so that outcomes can be tracked as well.

Embrace Research-Practice Partnerships. This project is an example of a research practice partnerships (RPP) which are defined as, “long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of rigorous research about problems of practice. RPPs are intentionally organized, and hold promise for improving the relevance of the research produced, the use of research by organizations, and outcomes for youth.” (W.T. Grant Foundation, n.d.). Before a jurisdiction begins the implementation or evaluation process of a specialized unit, we recommend that they work to establish an RPP. RPPs have become more common as funding for programs has become more closely tied to evaluation and outcomes. In addition, a shift in the academic arena towards a greater investment in community-engaged research (e.g., Balls-Berry & Acosta-Perez, 2017; Wallerstein et al., 2020) has increased the use of RPPs. We recommend that child welfare and juvenile justice (including probation) professionals consider fostering these partnerships, and vice versa. Agencies can reach out to their local universities or identify individuals through networks, such as the Child Wellbeing Research Network¹, to begin discussions about partnering.

¹ <http://childwellbeingresearchnetwork.org/>

Implementation and Assessment Guide for Specialized Units Serving Youth Experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Probation and Child Welfare Settings

8. Conclusion and Lessons Learned

Suggested Citation

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We hope that this guide can aid jurisdictions in the development, implementation, and evaluation of specialized units for youth impacted by CSE in child welfare and probation settings. There are additional considerations and lessons learned that were either the impetus behind this project or came out of this project that are important to share. We hope these final thoughts provide additional context and areas to explore for other jurisdictions, given the unique nature of every community.

Taking a Leap of Faith

Los Angeles is remarkable in that they developed their specialized court, specialized unit within the Probation Department, and the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol (FRP) several years before the State of California passed SB 1322, prohibiting the arrest of minors for prostitution-related offenses. Implementing these changes, in particular the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, which required buy-in and collaboration with law enforcement, was a paradigm shift that opened the door to further reform. It took significant time and effort to garner the trust and relationships necessary to try something new and better support young people. But this deep collaboration, as well as the knowledge that creativity and innovation could have a huge positive impact on young people while also easing the jobs of all partners involved, set the stage for future collaboration and partnerships necessary to address the CSE of children more broadly. Each jurisdiction will have different resources, needs, and capacity to address this issue. The lesson here, for any jurisdiction, is that not only is it possible to try something new and build nontraditional partnerships, it can greatly benefit youth when you do.

Changing the Narrative

An important part of the work has also been changing the language and shifting the narrative to highlight the trauma and abuse youth are experiencing through exploitation, the ongoing harm that their criminalization causes, and challenge people's perceptions of the dynamics of CSE. The Rights 4 Girls [No Such Thing as a Child Prostitute](#) campaign² was pivotal in the County (and country) in doing this. All service systems were challenged with rethinking and reframing how they talk about youth, their victimization, and their needs. Still, there is more work to be done. We now know that the label of "CSEC" itself can have stigmatizing effects, with housing and services limited for those youth who are given this label. Other terms, like "AWOL" and "runaway" are used more often with youth impacted by CSE, and tend to put blame on the young people for their trauma and resulting behavior, rather than holding systems and communities accountable to support them in getting their needs met. Narrative shifting away from blame and shame is imperative. How we talk about children and youth and what is happening in their lives has enormous implications for how we treat them, who we believe is deserving of help and opportunities to succeed, and the obligations we place on systems and community partners to truly support young people.

Recognize and Address the Impact of Race and Gender-Based Oppression on Exploitation in Your Community

Race, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation all intersect to create heightened vulnerabilities to exploitation for youth with marginalized identities, and impact whether and how we are identifying youth as exploited (see Section 3). To truly tackle exploitation in our communities, therefore, partners must develop a deeper understanding of the drivers of exploitation, the historical and societal factors causing vulnerability, and the disproportionate impact on certain youth in our communities. We must then take that knowledge and use it to challenge our own biases and assumptions, ensure we are identifying youth of all races, sexual orientations, and gender identities who are experiencing CSE, and build out culturally responsive and gender-inclusive services. We

² <https://rights4girls.org/campaign/>

recommend jurisdictions become knowledgeable and well versed in these issues, and use this knowledge to adjust practices, build out programs, and tailor services. But these changes must not be made in a vacuum. Agencies must build relationships with the communities they serve, acknowledge the historical and current harms the systems themselves cause, and ensure that communities and/or youth are included in the development and implementation process of new policies and programs. These changes must occur at the individual, community, and system level.

Survivor Leadership

To change language, culture, and practice you must also center youth voice and survivor leaders in all reform efforts. Scholars, survivors, and the United States Department of State all agree that survivors of human trafficking are critical to the anti-trafficking movement and that survivors' inclusion must move beyond the telling of their stories to true leadership (Human Trafficking Leadership Academy, 2017). Survivors are critical to the success of programs and moving the needle forward in policy and practice. Los Angeles has prioritized survivor leadership in the development of trainings, creation of intervention curricula, connection of young people to survivor and peer mentors, and empowerment activities for youth, among other things. The National Center for Youth Law³ (NCYL) also coordinates the California Child Welfare Council's CSEC Action Team Advisory Board, comprised of adult lived experience experts who participate in advocacy, provide consultation, and assist in policy and protocol development across the State of California. Currently, NCYL is exploring additional ways to systematically integrate youth voice and leadership into policy and practice changes across the state and nationally. The youth survey developed as part of this project is an important example of this, and we encourage jurisdictions to implement it and adapt it to their own needs. Any jurisdiction interested in improving their response to CSE must prioritize meaningful leadership by, and collaboration with, individuals with lived experience.

Role of Bridge Builders

Building out the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol, and the several multidisciplinary protocols that followed (e.g., Victim Witness Testimony Protocol), benefitted greatly from the partnership with and consultation by NCYL. NCYL brought expertise about CSE generally, the current legal landscape, and best practices nationally; identified and brought together necessary collaborative partners; navigated partner disagreements and tensions in development of the policies and protocols; drafted the written policies and protocols; supported implementation; and identified necessary policy and practice changes that needed to take place to support that implementation. And because of its position at the state and national level, NCYL was able to elevate these approaches beyond Los Angeles County. It can be beneficial to have a neutral or external third party to support or lead these efforts to bridge disparate partners and keep continuity and momentum throughout the process of developing, implementing, and sustaining policy and practice change.

Training and Awareness Building

Establishing support for specialized units and ensuring youth are properly identified when experiencing CSE has required raising awareness of the issue broadly. As early as 2012, widespread training was identified as a priority in the County's efforts to combat trafficking. In 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion that requires *all county employees* to be trained with basic awareness about CSE and skills to identify and respond to youth who have experienced CSE. This includes an online training module that is part of all county employee's orientation. This has been critical in changing the language, raising awareness, and institutionalizing the importance of identifying and providing services to youth experiencing CSE. Countywide training is remarkable in a place the size of Los Angeles County.

³ <https://youthlaw.org/focus-areas/commercial-sexual-exploitation>

Couple System Responses with Community-Based Organizations

While child welfare and juvenile justice agencies continue to play a large role in identifying and providing services to youth impacted by CSE, community-based organizations and advocates are a critical component to supporting, identifying, and serving youth in their own communities in culturally responsive ways. In our previous research on housing and services, youth overwhelmingly highlighted the relationship they established with their community-based advocates as helpful and, often, transformative in their recovery and healing process (Dierkhising et al., 2018). Importantly, advocates can help elevate the youth's voice and provide a supportive and trusting partner outside of government agencies, which many youth distrust because of harm these systems may have caused them and/or their families and communities in the past. Community-based agencies provide services to young people in places they are already comfortable and familiar with, understand and are attuned to the unique resources and needs of particular communities, can provide a bridge to services for youth and families who have had negative experiences with or have been harmed by systems, and can often offer more creative, nontraditional activities, or healing practices.

Identify and Support Champions for Change

Finally, this work is only possible with the dedication of true champions for change. Los Angeles County has been lucky to have many of these champions across a range of county agencies and community-based organizations (see Newcombe et al., 2020). This work began with two champions – within Probation and the courts – who applied for and received a small grant to begin the Child Trafficking Unit and the STAR Court in 2012. Identifying and developing relationships with champions within many other agencies – child welfare, health, mental health, education, and beyond, has allowed for a true multidisciplinary approach to this work. In addition, it is essential to promote continuity and put supports in place to avoid attrition over multiple years to allow champions to develop expertise about the issue and trusting relationships with each other. For other individuals, agencies, and/or jurisdictions who are considering embarking on this work, or strengthening their dedication to this work, we hope you will be the next champion for change.

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Appendix A: Anticipated Outcomes of the Specialized Units

Outputs

Outputs include measures related to the implementation of the program activities such as tracking service provision and case management. Outputs can also function as measures of fidelity to the program model and can be used as part of a process evaluation, which are helpful to assess whether programs are implemented and functioning in the way they were intended to. Tracking of outputs can also be used internally for holding service providers accountable to youth as well as ensuring compliance with practice guidelines and expectations.

Number of Youth Assessed and Served. All youth who are served by the specialized units must first be referred and assessed. Referrals and criteria for inclusion in each unit happen differently but, ultimately, both function as critical to ensuring youth receive appropriate services.

Number of Referrals Made to Services. Once youth are served by the specialized unit, service linkage is an essential part of case management. Thus, the number of service referrals that are made is one metric used to ensure that youth are being linked to the services they need.

Number of Training Hours. Given the complex nature of the work service providers are doing within the specialized units, receiving ongoing training provides useful tools and skills as well as emotional support to deal with vicarious trauma.

Number of Self-Care or Wellness Activities. For youth to receive quality care, service providers are encouraged to commit time for self-care given the potentially traumatic nature of the work and the exposure to vicarious trauma. This information should also ensure that self-care does not fall under the sole responsibility of workers themselves, but that organizations and agencies foster a culture of support and provide ample opportunities for wellness activities.

Number of Multidisciplinary Team Meetings Held. Multidisciplinary team meetings are a backbone of the collaborative case management process of the specialized units and should be held regularly (e.g., weekly).

Number of Agency Collaborators on Case. To ensure that partnering and collaboration is being done for all youth it is helpful to track the number of agency representatives that have been consulted or have contributed to service access, service referrals, case management, or other supports for the youth.

Number of Case Plans that Include Goals and Harm Reduction Strategies. All youth should have case plans that include specific, measurable goals and evidence of the use of harm reduction strategies.

Number of Family Meetings/Contact. As noted in the activities section, family engagement is an essential part of case management. This number provides an overview of the frequency of contact with families.

Length of time with Probation Officer or Social Worker. Service continuity and frequent contact with Probation Officers or Social Workers help build rapport and trust. Length of time the case was assigned to a specific Probation Officers or Social Worker can be used as a metric for continuity of care.

Proximal Outcomes

Proximal outcomes include more immediate or short-term results of the program's activities. These outcomes are expected to be achieved while the youth is still on Probation or the youths' dependency case is still open. While all youth have unique goals based on their specific needs, the overall program strives to achieve these proximal outcomes for all youth.

Academic Improvement. The specialized units are intended to improve the youth's academic achievement based on the youth's personalized academic goal. Because the programs strive to meet youth where they are at, academic improvement can be seen in a variety of ways. For some youth improvement may mean going from not attending school at all to attending on a semi-regular basis. Other examples include but are not limited to graduating from high school, receiving a GED (i.e., high school equivalency diploma), improving grades in a specific course, enrolling in school, and so on.

Accessing Employment Opportunities. The specialized units are intended to support access to gainful employment. Based on the youth's goals this outcome may be achieved by successful entry into the workforce as well as other activities that can lead to employment such as creating a resume or learning how to use an employment website (e.g., Indeed).

Safe and Stable Living Situation. Safe and stable housing is a vital outcome for all youth. The living situation for youth will often depend on their delinquency and/or dependency status. Youth may be living with their legal guardians, in foster care, in a group home, or another living situation. Regardless, all efforts are made to ensure that youth feel safe where they are living. When youth feel safe, they are more likely to stay in their home. If youth feel safe and are comfortable staying in their living situation this goal has been achieved.

Removing Ties to Exploitation. The specialized units are intended to support youth in removing ties to their exploitive experiences and contacts. This may include removing tattoos and separation from people/peers and places associated with exploitation.

Social Support System in Place. The specialized units are intended to support youth in establishing prosocial and supportive relationships with peers and adults. This often means that youth can identify someone they can rely on if they are in need of emotional support, comfort, or help. This can also include having people to share personal joys and accomplishments with.

Accessing Services. The specialized units are intended to connect youth to supportive and individualized services. This is achieved by tracking whether youth are able to access service referrals, and track progress of services. This is meant to ensure that barriers to service access are addressed (e.g., transportation, wait-lists, etc.) so that youth can engage in services. Buy in is also needed for youth to access services, meaning Probation Officers and Social Workers will need to discuss goals and check in on progress of services.

Progress Towards Goals. A primary activity in these specialized units is identifying individualized goals, therefore, ensuring progress towards these goals is expected. Ideally, SMART goals are identified, with youth input, and specific action items are specified and assigned to the appropriate party (e.g., mental health, Probation, etc.) so that progress is made. Oftentimes, harm reduction strategies are embedded into goals. For example, if a youth's overall goal is to quit smoking marijuana, progress towards that goal may be defined as the youth cutting back from smoking every day to smoking twice a week.

Reductions in Traumatic Stress Symptoms. The specialized units are intended to support recovery from trauma. This is, in part, achieved through the reduction of traumatic stress symptoms. This can be assessed through the imple-

mentation of a standardized measure developed to assess traumatic stress (see for screening and assessment tools for children and youth <https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/screening-and-assessment>).

Long-Term Outcomes

Long-term outcomes include lasting outcomes beyond the period during which youth are under the care of Probation or DCFS, typically 6-12 months following participation in the program. While service providers might not witness every youth reach these long-term outcomes, these are what all service providers aspire for youth to stably achieve.

Education, Vocational Training, and/or Employment. Youth is engaged in education, vocational training, and/or employment, which are all avenues to financial stability and key to breaking ties to commercial sexual exploitation. These outcomes may look different across youth, as some youth may want to pursue education whereas others may want to get an internship or vocational training to prepare for employment. Education and employment also provide important and tangible opportunities for youth to build confidence and leadership that can carry over into other parts of their lives.

Housing Security. Youth have a long term, secure, and safe home. Youth live in a home of their choice, that is affordable, and in a community that they feel safe in.

Youth Free of Exploitation. Youth are no longer experiencing commercial sexual exploitation. Depending on the youth, this might take years, or may be cyclical, as many people move in and out of exploitation as their circumstances change (for example, if they suddenly become homeless and have nowhere to stay or way to feed their families). This process may look different for each youth depending on their experiences, but it is the ultimate goal of the work.

Self-Sufficiency. Youth have the agency, life skills, and developmentally appropriate supports to meet their daily needs. As many services available to youth come to an end at age 21, it is important that youth have the capacity and skills to take care of themselves socially, financially, and emotionally. This also includes being able to recognize when support is needed and knowing other avenues and people to access support. In addition to tangible skills, self-sufficiency includes the youth's subjective view of themselves, including their feelings of control and autonomy over decisions in their lives. The tangible and intangible components may not always develop simultaneously. For example, while some youth are able to gain financial literacy and life skills (e.g., banking, housing, cooking, seeking medical care, cleaning, etc.) relatively quickly, gaining feelings of agency may take longer. For system-involved youth and youth who have experienced CSE, their daily life and goals are often defined for them. Gaining agency means that youth themselves are able to define what is important to them and how to live their lives.

Improvements in Mental, Behavioral, & Physical Health. Youth are mentally and physically healthy, and have the resources needed to address future health needs. This may include ongoing healing of trauma or ongoing sobriety. Implicit in this outcome is ensuring access to adequate health and mental health care (including reproductive health care).

Healthy Relationships. Youth understand the meaning and value of healthy relationships and have developed relationships outside of the specialized units that provide positive support in their lives – with peers and adults alike. Youth also have the capacity and resources to remove or avoid future unhealthy relationships in life.

Community Engagement/Supports. Youth have support from family, peers, and/or community members or organizations. Youth have a sense of community and know where to access support in the community that they live in.

Appendix B: Sample Job Posting for Specialized Probation Officers

Probation Department

Special Recruitment Notice

Subject: RECRUITMENT OF ONE DEPUTY PROBATION OFFICER

The [] Probation Department is recruiting one (1) Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) to fill a position in the specialized program for youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). The DPO will carry small, specialized caseloads and work closely with the youth, their families, placement providers, and community partners to deliver enhanced supervision and aftercare services to victims of sexual exploitation. In addition, the Deputy will be working closely with the Collaborative Court program, victim advocates, as well as responding to crisis within 1.5 hours, to probation youth identified through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol. The specialized program services will be an outcome-driven, victim-centered intervention and case management for youth who have been identified or are at risk of sexual exploitation.

The staff selected will be provided resources to allow for mobility. The specialized DPO may be required to travel out of county, including out of state, to conduct monthly visits with youth placed in other jurisdictions. The DPO selected must be willing to work a flex schedule including nights, weekends and holidays, to accommodate special assignments and crisis response as needed. The DPO must also be detail oriented, and adaptable to the emerging changes to legislation, protocols, and the need to respond immediately to crises that occur with this population.

Duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Supervise a small caseload of youth on probation who have been identified as Commercially Sexually Exploited.
- Participate in collaborative Multi-Disciplinary Team/Child Family Team meetings with the Collaborative Court, service providers, and youth to develop a comprehensive cross-systems case plan, targeting service needs with the ultimate goal of decreasing youths' re-victimization by traffickers, improving personal safety, and supporting youth to meet their self-identified goals.
- Provide systems navigation services for the program youth and parent/guardians, including but not limited to school enrollment assistance, and linkages to social, financial, vocational, mental health and healthcare services where necessary.
- Collaborate with public and private agencies and organizations to identify and enhance resources and services for program youth.
- Participate in ongoing MDTs with the Collaborative Court, service providers, youth and their families to provide transition planning and post-residential treatment services
- Provide strength-based case management interventions and strategies including harm reduction and trauma-informed care.
- Conduct home and community based face-to-face visits with youth, family, and service providers.
- Track and document youths' progress in required databases in accordance with the program requirements and state and federal regulations.
- Provide crisis response to identified probation youth through the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol.
- Participate in all CSE and Child Welfare trainings and additional professional development opportunities.

Desired knowledge and skills:

- Strong organizational and case management skills.
- Ability to be flexible, innovative, and self-motivated.
- Works well independently, self-motivated with good time management skills
- Juvenile field casework experience
- Ability to engage and collaborate with outside agencies such as attorneys, judges, law enforcement officer and community-based service providers.
- Ability to navigate systems, problem solve, and be resourceful.
- Willingness to learn new supervision and case management techniques and interventions.
- Proactive and willing to take on ad hoc assignments and adapt to continuous program revisions
- Desire to work with the specified population

Depending on the needs and desires of the population the jurisdiction is serving these additional considerations could be added

- Due to the nature and sensitivity of this program, a female Deputy is preferred
- For this posting a Spanish speaking Deputy is also preferred

Appendix C: Guidance for Multidisciplinary Team Meetings for Children & Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT CHILD TRAFFICKING UNIT

I. Multi-Disciplinary Teams: State and Local Landscape

Multidisciplinary collaboration is critical for supporting the wide range of interests, goals and needs of youth experiencing and at risk of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). Youth may benefit from support related to family, housing, education, physical and mental health, sexual and reproductive health, life skills, safety, and many other areas. Multidisciplinary teaming (MDT) is a means of bringing together a broad range of people and services to provide holistic support.

Pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 855 and the Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) Section 16524.7¹, each county electing to participate in the statewide Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Program must develop an interagency protocol that utilizes a multidisciplinary approach. The law does not specify a certain approach, but the MDT must provide “coordinated case management, service planning, and services” for children and youth.² A jurisdiction may utilize multiple types of MDTs in order to meet the needs of youth in the county. There are certain agencies who are required to participate in a youth’s MDT. These required participants are: Child Welfare, Probation, Mental Health, and Public Health.³ Optional MDT participants include: Specialized Advocacy Provider, Education, Law Enforcement, Survivor Mentors, Children’s Attorneys, and the District Attorney’s Office.

In Los Angeles (LA) County, there are several different types of MDTs that occur for youth who have been commercially sexually exploited, experienced other types of exploitation, or those who are identified as at-risk. These include MDTs tied to specific agencies (such as the weekly Probation-led CSEC MDT and the weekly DCFS-led CSEC MDT), as well as MDTs tied to specific protocols (such as the crisis MDT that occurs as part of the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for CSEC). Given that youth who have been CSE come into contact with several different systems in various circumstances, this complex, yet coordinated and collaborative approach is necessary to provide holistic, impactful services for youth in LA County.

II. Probation CSEC MDT: History & Overview

This document outlines the goals, structure and logistics for the Probation-led CSEC MDTs (hereinafter “Probation MDT”) in Los Angeles County. Probation started facilitating specialized CSEC MDTs in 2012, when the Probation Department, in collaboration with the Superior Court, received a grant from the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to develop a program to meet the needs of girls who were

¹ See Cal WIC § 16524.7, stating that each county electing to receive funds through the statewide Commercially Sexually Exploited Children’s Program shall submit a plan to the state describing how the county plans to utilize the state funding, including “...documentation indicating the county’s collaboration with county partner agencies, educational entities, and children-focused entities, which shall include the formation of a multidisciplinary team to serve children pursuant to this chapter.”

² See Cal WIC § 16524.8.

³ Cal WIC § 16524.7 also requires that substance use treatment providers serve on the multidisciplinary team. In Los Angeles, the representative from the Department of Public Health assists with referrals related to substance use.

exploited or at-risk of exploitation in the juvenile justice system. This resulted in the creation of the Probation Department's Child Trafficking Unit (CTU), which has evolved to serve youth of all genders connected to Probation who are impacted by commercial sexual exploitation.

Similarly, the Probation CSEC MDTs have also evolved over time, partially due to a changing legal landscape in California, and also in an effort to consistently examine and adjust practices to better meet the needs of youth. The Probation MDT meets on a weekly basis, in addition to on an ad hoc basis, as needed. The Probation MDT provides support to youth impacted by CSE who are assigned to CTU, as well as youth served by the Probation Department more generally.

The goals and activities of the Probation MDT are multi-faceted:

- Individual level: The Probation MDT works to support individual youth to meet their goals and needs. This occurs through case planning, cross-system collaboration, making referrals and connections to service providers or others, and taking other actions to support the youth's progress. Although youth and families are not present at MDTs, they drive the goals; the MDT works collectively to remove barriers and provide supports to youth to meet their individualized goals.
- Collective: In addition to serving individual youth, the Probation MDT is a place for continuing to monitor and evaluate the needs, services and supports for all youth impacted by CSE who are on Probation, as well as reflecting on and highlighting trends that may impact multiple youth, such as an exploiter targeting several youth in a certain area.
- System level: The MDT seeks to identify issues that must be addressed at the systemic level, such as a housing provider that requires additional training or service gaps that the County should work to fill. Once identified, these systemic issues may be elevated and addressed at the unit, Department, or County level.

III. Probation CSEC MDT: The Details

A) Participants

(1) Regular Participants

One of the key features of the Probation MDT is strong collaboration between consistent partners. The Probation MDT includes the following partner agencies:

- Probation
- Child Welfare
- Education
- Mental Health
- Public Health
- Specialized Advocacy Agency
- Youth's Attorney (Delinquency and/or Dependency)
- District Attorney

In general, the meeting participants are regular representatives from the partner agencies, rather than the people working directly with each individual youth. Although the representatives may not work directly with the youth, they are responsible for gathering the relevant information by coordinating with those connected to the youth.

Many of the current MDT participants have been involved for several years, some even since the beginning of these MDTs. The consistency in MDT participants has allowed the team to build rapport, and develop comfortable, produc-

tive working relationships, enabling them to more effectively work together and better support youth. All members are active participants who bring unique viewpoints and insights based on their expertise.

Additionally, each MDT participant has undergone extensive CSEC-specific training (which includes, at a minimum, information around awareness, engagement strategies, trauma, harm reduction, and working with particularly vulnerable subpopulations, such as LGBTQ youth) and has experience working with youth who have experienced CSE.

(2) Optional Participants

In addition to the regular representatives from each partner agency, additional optional members may participate as needed to provide more individualized and youth-specific information. This may include direct service providers or others who know the youth, such as the youth's individual Deputy Probation Officer, Children's Social Worker, mental health clinician, advocate or parent/caregiver, housing provider, LGBTQ advocate, court appointed special advocate (CASA) or others.

(3) Youth

While the youth does not participate in these MDTs, it is critical that their voice is brought to the table through their advocate and other partners. Youth's interests, passions and preferences drive the goal setting and is centered in the MDT's decision making. It is the responsibility of at least one MDT partner (to be determined by the MDT) to check in with the youth directly before and after the meetings to share the planned agenda and discussion items for the meeting, identify any questions or concerns the youth has, provide the youth an opportunity to share any information they would like communicated at the meeting, and understand the youth's preferences and perspectives on goals or other decisions to be made at the meeting.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of each MDT participant, see Section V, Partner Roles & Responsibilities, below. See also Youth Engagement Tip Sheet & Probation Officer Engagement Guide.

B) Scheduling and Notification

- The Probation CTU Court Liaison (hereinafter, Court Liaison) will keep track of the MDT calendar and notify participants of the youth to be discussed at the upcoming MDT meeting on a monthly and weekly basis.
- The MDT calendar will be finalized by Tuesday evening. All MDT participants will have access to the updated MDT calendar through the use of Microsoft Teams and should proactively check the calendar in advance of the meeting.
 - **Monthly:** The Court Liaison will update the full calendar for the upcoming month by the 30th of each month and email a reminder to the MDT participants to review the calendar.
 - **Weekly:** The Court Liaison will update the weekly agenda and email a reminder to MDT participants by Monday 12:00pm with the MDT calendar for Wednesday.
 - **Add-on:** If MDT participants have a youth that they would like to add on to the MDT agenda, they should email the Court Liaison by close of business on the Monday before the MDT.
- The Court liaison will keep a participant list from each weekly meeting and inform participants of relevant confidentiality rules. This information is reported to the State on an annual basis and impacts Countywide funding for CSEC.

C) Types of MDTs

There are three overarching types of Probation CSEC MDTs – Crisis, Initial, and Ongoing – each designed to bring partners together to build on youths’ strengths and respond to their needs in a coordinated manner at different stages of their lives and court cases. Below, the logistics, components and structure of the various Probation CSEC MDTs are spelled out in further detail.

(1) Crisis MDT

A Crisis MDT is an individualized MDT focused on addressing the immediate needs of a youth at the point of initial identification or, for youth that have previously been identified by Probation, following a time-sensitive event that must be addressed as soon as possible and cannot wait until the regularly scheduled weekly MDT. In most cases, a Crisis MDT will take place within no more than 24 hours after the crisis has been identified, with ongoing support over the initial 72 hours, as needed. The goal of a Crisis MDT is unique to each youth, but generally aims to address the youth’s immediate safety, health, and placement/housing needs.

Types of Crisis MDTs:

First Responder Protocol:

- **Overview:** When a Law Enforcement officer or other first responder identifies a youth that has been or is at risk of being commercially sexually exploited (typically through street patrol or sting operations, or when a youth is identified through a Safe Youth Zone location), they are mandated to call the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to report child abuse. This call to the hotline triggers the First Responder Protocol for CSEC (FRP) -- a rapid, collaborative response to support the youth. Within 90 minutes of the hotline call, individuals from Child Welfare, Probation, and a Specialized Advocacy Agency respond to the “staging area” (usually the police station or a medical facility) to support the youth and address their immediate needs, including safety planning, mental and physical health needs, and housing needs.
- **Process & Timeframe:**
 - The FRP response occurs 24/7 and the MDT is formed whenever a child is identified, including in the middle of the night, in a dangerous situation and requires immediate engagement and stabilization.
 - The designated FRP partners respond within 90 minutes of Law Enforcement’s call to the hotline and hold the MDT shortly thereafter.
- **Participants:**
 - Members at the FRP Crisis MDT include the youth, Child Welfare, Probation (as applicable)⁴, a specialized advocate, and Law Enforcement.

Post-Identification Crisis:

- **Overview:** Other crises may arise during a youth’s case which require the youth’s team to come together on short notice to address a specific situation or concern. Types of crises that may require immediate attention include, but are not limited to:
 - Imminent safety risk
 - Sudden, unexpected housing change or homelessness
 - Medical or mental health crisis or hospitalization
 - Safety issue related to victim witness testimony
- **Process & Timeframe:**
 - As soon as a crisis is identified, anyone on a youth’s team can initiate a Crisis MDT by contacting the CTU Supervising Deputy Probation Officer (SDPO) or CTU Director directly and notifying them of the crisis

⁴ A DPO from the CTU will respond to FRP calls if the youth is currently on Probation without a delinquency warrant, or if law enforcement or child welfare requests additional assistance.

and that a team meeting needs to be convened.

- The specific circumstances of the crisis will impact the timing of the MDT.
 - If the situation requires immediate attention and cannot wait until the regularly held weekly MDT, the Crisis MDT will be held as soon as possible, via conference call. The SDPO will coordinate with the necessary members to arrange the call.
 - If the crisis occurs close in time to the regularly held weekly MDT (i.e. if the crisis arises on Tuesday night and the youth can wait for 12-24 hours for the Wednesday meeting) and it is not necessary or feasible to hold the MDT prior to that time, the Crisis MDT will be held at the weekly MDT and coordinated by the Court Liaison.
- Participants:
 - Specific participants will be determined on a case-by-case basis, by the CTU SDPO and/or Court Liaison.⁵

(2) Initial MDT

- Overview: When a youth is referred to the CTU, an Assessment DPO will conduct a preliminary Assessment to learn about the youth's current circumstances and needs. The Assessment DPO will then bring this information to the Initial MDT, which is the forum in which MDT members learn about newly referred youth, determine whether the case would be appropriate for transfer to the CTU and/or a specialty court, discuss what immediate services are necessary for the youth, and begin initial service planning.
- Process & Timeframe:
 - Initial MDTs are calendared during the regularly occurring weekly Probation MDT meetings.
 - After a youth is referred to the Probation MDT, an Initial MDT must be held within 10 business days.
 - The CTU Court Liaison is responsible for setting the agendas for these meetings and facilitating the discussion.
- Content of Discussion:
 - At the Initial MDT, the Assessment DPO will present about the youth to the MDT.
 - The Assessment DPO's presentation should include:
 - General background of youth and family
 - Composition of family (names, ages) and relevant relationship dynamics (parental involvement with child, relationship between parents, involved relatives and their role in supporting the child, parental attitudes/beliefs/values); impact of family dynamics on child's safety, permanency, and well-being
 - Whether the youth has Native American/American Indian heritage and, if so, whether the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applies and any steps that have been taken to comply⁶
 - Broad DCFS history, including referral history, recent placements, and services provided
 - Information related to the youth's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (SOGIE), including pronouns used.
 - Overview of initial referral (including facts and who made the referral);
 - Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR)
 - DCFS investigative narrative (if completed)
 - Original referral email from youth's primary DPO
 - CSE history (age they were first exploited, where they were initially recruited from, or other circumstances surrounding exploitation), if known or disclosed
 - If not currently being exploited, but at high risk for exploitation, reasoning for risk
 - Overview of youth's current situation, needs and strengths, including:

⁵ Participants in a Crisis MDT will not typically include all mandated MDT partners, given the timing and urgency.

⁶ See the Judicial Council of California's ICWA Information Sheet: Delinquency for more information: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/ICWA-Delinquency-factsheet.pdf>

- Placement, housing, or current location
- Safety & stability
- Mental health
 - If there are significant mental health needs, DMH to provide additional information to inform the discussion.
- Physical health
- Education, including whether youth requires assistance with enrollment or accessing special education services
- Any other immediate, time-sensitive needs noted by the youth or observed by the Assessment DPO
- Status of court case and relevant court orders
- Information from any recent Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, if applicable, regarding the youth's and family's goals, interests, and needs, as well as their perspectives on any upcoming decisions.
- The Initial MDT will discuss whether the team feels that the youth's case is appropriate for transfer to the CTU and/or specialty court, as well as whether other supportive services are needed, regardless of whether the youth is transferred to the CTU or a specialized court;
 - The Assessment DPO may recommend that the youth NOT be transferred to the CTU due to the youth having one or more of the exclusionary criteria:
 - Involvement in another specialized court (such as Mental Health Court)
 - Significant mental health needs - DMH will present relevant information to assist in this determination
 - Involvement in Gang Unit
 - Regional Center client
 - Strong relationship with current DPO
 - Age 17 and 10 months or older
- Once it is determined that a youth's case is going to be transferred to the CTU, the team will begin to conduct initial engagement with the youth and preliminary case planning, including identifying and coordinating any needed services and supports.
 - Immediate: If transfer to the CTU is immediate, the team will identify initial action items for all team members to accomplish over the subsequent 30 days, in preparation for the youth's first Case Planning MDT.
 - Waitlist: If transfer to the CTU is appropriate but the youth's case is pending court disposition or the youth is missing, the youth will be placed on a waitlist for the CTU until the court disposition occurs and/or the youth is located. Once the disposition occurs and/or the youth is located, the Case Planning MDT will be scheduled and preparations will begin.
- Initial planning and engagement with youth before the Case Planning MDT will include:
 - Ensuring all basic needs are met
 - Face-to-face meeting with the youth:
 - For youth receiving advocacy services, the specialized advocate is responsible for meeting with them over this first 30 days and completing an Initial Intake & Needs Assessment, safety plan and advocacy plan.
 - Other face-to-face meetings will be determined by the team. While engagement is critical, it is also important not to overwhelm the youth with too many service providers conducting intakes. As such, based on the youth's identified needs, the team will determine together whether any team members or other services providers should schedule a face-to-face with the youth in the first 30 days.

- **Systems Review:** Regardless of whether the agencies are meeting with the youth face-to-face, they should engage in a “systems review” to pull pertinent information from case management system relevant to the youth’s history and case planning, and be prepared to present this information at the Case Planning MDT.
- **Coordination with CFT:** If a CFT has been held since the Initial MDT, the Court Liaison will coordinate with the DPO and/or CSW of record to learn about the youth’s and family’s self-identified goals, interests, and needs, as well as their perspectives on any upcoming decisions.
 - If a youth has been referred to the CTU for assessment and is missing, the Assessment DPO will work with the referring party to make a referral to the Locate DPO, pursuant to the Locate Policy. The case-carrying DPO along with other MDT members may assist in providing additional information to the Locate DPO.
 - If it is determined that a youth will not be transferred to the CTU or specialized court, the team will make any appropriate recommendations for services or supports (e.g., advocacy or mentorship), and provide such recommendations to the youth’s DPO of record.

(3) Ongoing MDTs

- **Overview:** The Ongoing MDT is the forum in which partners discuss ongoing case planning and goals for each youth assigned to the CTU, as well as keep apprised of youth who were not transferred to the unit but for whom the CTU provides secondary support. Ongoing MDTs involve a more thorough review of each youth’s needs, including collaborative SMART goal setting. Every MDT partner plays a valuable role in these MDTs and will have specific assigned responsibilities for each youth. In addition, the MDT partners must ensure that the youth’s voice is represented in the MDT, and that their interests, passions and preferences remain front and center in all of the team’s decision-making.
- **Types of Ongoing MDTs**
 - **Case Planning MDT (Youth Assigned to CTU):**
 - **Process & Timeframe:**
 - All new cases to CTU that are ready for immediate transfer will be scheduled for an MDT meeting 30 days after the Initial MDT.
 - Cases that were placed on the waitlist will be scheduled for an MDT within 30 days of being ready for transfer (when court disposition occurs, or a youth who has been missing is located).
 - The date and the items for discussion for the MDT should be provided to the youth ahead of time to allow for them to share relevant information with the advocate or other partners to ensure the youth’s voice and preferences are considered at the MDT.
 - **Content of Discussion:**
 - At the Case Planning MDT, all parties will bring information to inform case planning and SMART goal setting for the youth, as described above, and in the Agency Task Grid (see Attachment X).
 - In developing the case plan and SMART goals, the MDT will consider goals, interests and needs identified in other spheres in the youth’s life, seek to identify and prioritize common goals and themes, and avoid setting additional, competing or contradictory goals. This may include:
 - Juvenile field case plan/Foster care case plan
 - Advocacy plan
 - STRTP needs and services plan
 - Individualized education plan (IEP)
 - Court orders
 - Goals and priorities identified by youth and families at CFTs

- The team will consider the types of services the youth may benefit from. See Attachment XX for more information on types of services offered.
- **General Ongoing MDTs (30-90 days) (Youth Assigned to CTU):**
 - Process & Timeframe:
 - The Court Liaison will track the MDT calendar and ensure it aligns with court dates, as necessary. The MDT calendar will be communicated to MDT partners through monthly and weekly emails (see more details regarding communication above).
 - **Specialty Court Cases:** If the youth’s case is heard in the STAR Court (Dept. 260) or another specialty court, the youth will be scheduled on the MDT calendar the Wednesday prior to the youth’s specialty court hearing. Youths’ cases are typically heard in the STAR Court every 4-6 weeks.
 - **Non-STAR Court Cases:** If the youth’s case is heard in another Court department, the youth will be on the MDT calendar every 90 days, unless there is an earlier court date or a time sensitive issue that requires an earlier MDT.
 - The date and the items for discussion for the MDT should be provided to the youth ahead of time to allow for them to share relevant information with the advocate or other partners to ensure the youth’s voice and preferences are considered at the MDT.
 - Content of Discussion:
 - General Ongoing MDTs will address the youth’s progress towards the SMART goals that were set by the team in prior MDT meetings.
 - As the youth and team accomplish the goals, new SMART goals will be set in consultation with the youth.
 - If progress has not been made, the team will reassess the goal, determine if it should be altered, and identify additional supports that can be provided to assist the team and youth in reaching the goal. This discussion should be informed by the youth’s preferences and input, as collected by the advocate or other identified MDT partner prior to the meeting.
 - The Court Liaison will facilitate these discussions and be responsible for assigning and documenting tasks for each agency representative.
 - If the youth has been assigned to the CTU and then goes missing, the team will:
 - Discuss any information known about the youth and determine whether any support can be provided.
 - Communicate with the Locate DPO pursuant to the Locate Policy.
- **90-day MDT (Youth Not Assigned to CTU):**
 - 90-day MDT will also be held in the following cases:
 - Team determined at the Initial MDT that a youth should not be transferred to the CTU but concerns about CSE remain. CTU may provide support to the youth’s primary DPO, as needed.
 - CTU is providing secondary support to a youth located at Dorothy Kirby Center or a camp.
 - Process & Timeframe:
 - After the initial MDT, the CTU Court Liaison will inform the DPO of record about the team’s recommendations, the date of the 90-day MDT, and instruct the primary DPO to contact the CTU if circumstances change or if any new concerns arise in the interim.
 - At least one week in advance of the 90-day MDT, the Court Liaison will connect with the youth’s primary DPO to check in regarding the youth’s general wellbeing and whether there have been any changed circumstances.
 - The youth’s primary DPO will be invited to participate in the MDT via conference call.
 - Content of Discussion:
 - The team will determine whether it is necessary to re-assess the youth for possible transfer to the CTU.

- If the team decides not to move forward with a re-assessment, they will discuss whether it makes sense to review the case again in 90 days or remove it from the MDT calendar indefinitely.
 - Cases will only be removed from the calendar indefinitely if CSE has not been an issue for 6 months or more.
- If the team decides to remove the case from the MDT calendar, the Court Liaison will document why the case does not require further review.
- The team will discuss any support the CTU, advocate, or other MDT partners can provide to the youth, as requested by the primary DPO or the youth.

(4) Termination MDTs

Overview: Termination MDTs are used to support smooth transitions for youth whose term of Probation is ending or for whom the advocacy agency has requested termination of services.

- **Termination of Probation:**
 - Process & Timeframe:
 - A termination MDT will be held 90 days before termination of Probation.
 - If any DPO is aware of a youth’s case that has an upcoming termination date, they will contact the Court Liaison, who will ensure that the youth is on the regularly scheduled Probation MDT.
 - Content of Discussion:
 - The team will discuss the progress of the youth’s goals, and identify any services or supports the youth may need in place to support the transition and post-termination.
 - The team will facilitate warm handoffs with any new providers prior to termination.
- **Termination of Advocacy Services**
 - Process & Timeframe:
 - The specialized advocacy agencies are required to give 30-days’ notice to the CTU prior to terminating a youth’s case.
 - Termination of services may occur if the advocacy has had no contact with a youth for at least 45 days or the youth is no longer interested in services.
 - Once a DPO receives notice from an advocate of their intent to terminate advocacy services, the DPO should notify the Court Liaison, who will add the youth to the regularly scheduled Probation MDT.
 - Content of Discussion:
 - The team will discuss the reasons and appropriateness of the potential termination of advocacy services.
 - If advocacy services are to be terminated, the team will identify any services or supports the youth may need in place to support the transition and post-termination.
 - The team will facilitate warm handoffs with any new providers prior to termination.

D) Identifying System-Wide Issues

Overview: In addition to individual planning, the weekly MDT is used to identify themes and issues affecting multiple youth or that require system-wide attention. The MDT consists of a regular group of collaborative partners familiar with the range of issues affecting youth impacted by CSE in the County. An important role of the MDT is to use this collective knowledge to identify broader issues and challenges as they arise, and elevate them so they can be addressed at the systemic level, if appropriate.

- Process and Timeline
 - At the end of each weekly Probation MDT, the Court Liaison will lead a discussion about whether any collective or systemic issues have been raised that week.
 - If the team identifies any such issues, the Court Liaison will notify the CTU Director, who will determine any appropriate next steps, such as revising a policy, or raising the issue with the CSEC Steering Committee or Integrated Leadership Team.
- Content of Discussion:
 - The team will consider issues including but not limited to:
 - Emerging trends in exploitation, such as locations, websites or apps used, types of exploitation, common exploiters among multiple youth, or other issues experienced or reported by youth
 - Common needs of youth discussed in the MDT, and concerns raised by youth, families or MDT partners, such as inadequate access to housing or other service providers, or negative treatment of youth by specific staff or service providers
 - Whether MDT partners and the County are able to respond and meet those needs and/or address identified concerns, including whether there are any gaps in services offered, service providers that require more support or training, policy or practice changes needed, or new service provider relationships/contracts to be developed
 - Whether any concerns were raised in individual cases related to the functioning of the County policies or protocols related to CSE (First Responder Protocol, Detention Protocol, Victim Witness Protocol)

IV. Probation CSEC MDTs – Internal CTU Processes

1) CTU DPO Participation in MDTs:

- The CTU Court Liaison and Assessment/Transition-Age Youth (TAY) DPO will attend all MDT meetings.
- All other CTU DPOs will attend on an as-needed basis, as determined by the Court Liaison or the DPO.
- If there are critical issues occurring in a youth’s life that requires extensive discussion, or if a youth’s case is nearing termination, the Court Liaison may request that the case-carrying DPO attend the MDT.

2) Communication & Documentation.

- The Court Liaison will remain in consistent communication with DPOs (both CTU and non-CTU) regarding youth they work with and will be the primary Probation representative communicating case updates and needs at MDT meetings.
- DPOs will email the Court Liaison to provide pertinent updates regarding each youth, and will include any specific questions or requests for MDT partners in their email.
 - DPOs must email their updates to the Court Liaison at least 48 hours before the upcoming MDT meeting.
- The Court Liaison will review all email updates prior to MDT meetings each week.
- The Court Liaison will keep notes regarding case goals, updates and newly assigned responsibilities on the MDT Form. This includes:
 - Initial
 - Document the MDT recommendations on the Initial MDT Case Review Summary docu-

- ment;
- Scan Initial MDT Case Review Summary document to the Staff Assistant;
- Document Initial MDT Case Review Summary in PCMS {Case note type: CSEC>MDT}.
- Ongoing
 - Update the MDT Form at each MDT meeting.
 - Within 24 hours after the MDT, the Court Liaison will email the updated MDT Form to the case-carrying DPO to notify them of what was discussed and any decisions made.
- The advocate, the case-carrying DPO, or other appropriate person as determined by the team, will communicate with the youth about any decisions made and other relevant information following the meeting.
- MDT information should be documented in PCMS and CWS/CMS.

V. Roles & Responsibilities of MDT Partners

Overview: The goal of the MDT process is to surround the youth with a broad range of people, services and supports to meet their needs and goals. As such, each partner has a role to play in bringing relevant information to the MDT about their interactions with the youth, and actions they can take to support the youth to meet their goals. Although Probation leads the Probation MDT, the aim is to collaborate and share responsibilities based on each partner's area of expertise.

The MDT Participants include:

- Probation
 - Court Liaison
 - Assessment/TAY DPO
 - Case Carrying DPO (as needed)
- Child Welfare
 - Dedicated DCFS Liaison
 - Case Carrying CSW (as needed)
- Education
 - LA County Office of Education (LACOE) Liaison
 - LA Unified School District Liaison
- Mental Health
 - Medical Case Manger
- Public Health
 - Dedicated Public Health Nurse
- Specialized Advocacy Agency
- Youth's Attorney (Delinquency and/or Dependency)
- District Attorney

Responsibilities of all team members: Each MDT partner is responsible for:

- Prior to the meeting, for all youth on the weekly calendar, collecting all information related to the youth's needs, progress on identified goals, and other relevant information related to their agency's interaction with the youth.
- Consulting the following, at a minimum, before each meeting:
 - Case management system
 - Case-carrying worker working directly with the youth (ex. DPO, CSW, mental health clinician, public health nurse)

- Youth
- Family or caregiver, if appropriate
- Engagement with the youth, as determined by the team members, prior to the meeting. At least one member of the team should have direct contact with the youth several days prior to an MDT meeting to:
 - Share the items for discussion with the youth
 - Identify any questions or concerns the youth has
 - Identify any information that the youth would like communicated at the meeting
 - Understand the youth’s preferences and perspectives on goals and other decisions that may be made at the meeting
- At the meeting, providing updates to the team about relevant topics including:
 - Progress toward identified goals
 - Changes in housing or placement
 - Educational or employment progress
 - Physical, sexual/reproductive, or mental health
 - Changes in youth’s family, including family dynamics, information about expecting and parenting youth
 - Updates in the youth’s juvenile court case, probation terms/conditions, or cases in which they are testifying as witnesses
 - Safety need
 - Transition out of care
- Identifying action steps that they can commit to in order to support the youth in advancing their goals and addressing their needs, including:
 - Engagement with the youth and/or family
 - Assessments, treatments or services that can be provided by the partners
 - Making referrals, linkages and appointments for other service providers, programs, and activities
 - Connection to positive and healthy relationships, such as mentors
 - Supporting youth with system navigation and accessing resources
 - Parent and caregiver support
- Engagement with the youth, as determined by the team members, following the meeting. At least one member of the team should have direct contact with the youth several days following to an MDT meeting to:
 - Share any decisions that were made or other relevant information
 - Address any follow up questions or concerns the youth has
 - Share action steps that the other members are taking

VI. Probation CTU Involvement and Responsibilities in Other MDTs

(I) DCFS/DREAM Court

- If a youth is dual status (with both open DCFS and Probation cases), a designated CTU DPO will attend the DCFS CSEC MDTs.
- The DCFS CSEC MDTs take place on weekly on Wednesdays from 9:00am-12:00pm.
- DPO responsibilities related the DCFS CSEC MDT include:
 - Review agenda sent by the MDT Coordinator in advance of the meeting
 - Check PCMS for youth on the MDT calendar to determine their Probation status, upcoming court dates, charges, DPO of record, and any other relevant information
 - If youth is assigned to the CTU, contact CTU DPO to determine whether there is any information to convey or questions to ask at the MDT meeting
 - At the MDT meeting, provide relevant information identified during pre-meeting information gathering,

answer any Probation-related questions, participate in goal-setting and identifying relevant services for the youth, connect the youth's CSW to their DPO, and provide copies of relevant documents such as court minute orders

- Respond to inquiries from DCFS in between and after MDT meetings

(2) Victim Witness Testimony Protocol – The Victim Witness Testimony Protocol establishes a process for supporting youth called to testify against an exploiter in adult criminal court.

- If the youth has an open Probation case or is dual status with Probation lead, then the CTU serves as the Team Lead for the Victim Witness Support Team.
- Process & Timeframe:
 - Pre-testimony: Once the Team Lead has been notified of a victim witness, the Team Lead will notify the Court Liaison.

The Team Lead will coordinate with the Court Liaison to determine whether any of the MDT members should be added to the Victim Witness Support Team.

As needed, the MDT will discuss the youth's case and will work with the Victim Witness Support Team to ensure the youth is provided with coordinated care and appropriate services and supports as they move through the testimony process.

- Closing & post-testimony: Within 10 business days of testimony, the youth's case will be discussed in the Probation MDT.
 - The Team Lead will notify the Court Liaison that testimony has been completed.
 - The Court Liaison will ensure that the youth is added to the MDT calendar within 10 days after testimony.
 - The MDT will discuss the youth's case and will help to ensure they are provided with coordinated care and any appropriate services following testimony.

(3) Detention Protocol – The Detention Interagency Identification and Response Protocol ("Detention Protocol") sets forth a process for identifying and providing services to youth in County detention facilities (juvenile halls, residential treatment facilities, Dorothy Kirby Center).

- If a youth is identified in detention as having experienced or at risk of CSE, two MDTs will take place in which the youth will be discussed: the Internal MDT, which will be conducted weekly inside the detention facility, led by the CSEC Coordinator; and the External MDT, the regularly scheduled Probation MDT.
- Process & Timeline:
 - The CSEC Coordinator inside detention will notify the Court Liaison that a youth has been identified within a detention facility.
 - The Court Liaison will ensure that the youth is added to the next regularly held Probation MDT.
 - The Court Liaison will coordinate with the CSEC Coordinator to collect any relevant information prior to the Probation MDT and present it at the MDT.
- Content of Discussion:
 - The team will discuss any necessary supports or services the youth may benefit from while in detention, as well as how to support the youth's successful transition from detention to the community.

Appendix D: Organizational Leadership Scale - Adapted

The Organizational Leadership Scale, developed by Aarons and colleagues (2014), was adapted for everyday practice for use in the current project.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	Slight extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very great extent

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement.

Staff Version

Proactive

1. My supervisor has developed a plan to facilitate good practice in our unit
2. My supervisor has removed obstacles to conducting our work in the unit
3. My supervisor has established clear standards for our work in the unit

Knowledgeable

4. My supervisor is knowledgeable about the practices done in our unit
5. My supervisor is able to answer my questions about the practices done in our unit
6. My supervisor knows what he or she is talking about when it comes to the practices done in our unit

Supportive

7. My supervisor recognizes and appreciates employee efforts towards good practice
8. My supervisor supports employee efforts to learn more about good practice
9. My supervisor supports employee efforts to do good practice

Perseverant

10. My supervisor perseveres through the ups and downs of the work in our unit
11. My supervisor carries on through the challenges of the work in our unit
12. My supervisor reacts to critical issues regarding the work in our unit by openly and effectively addressing the problem(s)

Supervisor Version

Proactive

1. I have developed a plan to facilitate good practice in our unit
2. I have removed obstacles to conducting our work in the unit
3. I have established clear standards for our work in the unit

Knowledgeable

4. I am knowledgeable about the practices done in our unit
5. I am able to answer my questions about the practices done in our unit
6. I know what I am talking about when it comes to the practices done in our unit

Supportive

7. I recognize and appreciate employee efforts towards good practice
8. I support employee efforts to learn more about good practice
9. I support employee efforts to do good practice

Perseverant

10. I persevere through the ups and downs of the work in our unit
11. I carry on through the challenges of the work in our unit
12. I react to critical issues regarding the work in our unit by openly and effectively addressing the problem(s)