



MEDIA RELEASE

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L.A. County and the National Center for Youth Law Jointly Release New Report Highlighting the County's Efforts to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Today, Los Angeles County, in partnership with the National Center for Youth Law, is proud to release a new report, **"Building Bridges: How Los Angeles County Came Together to Support Children and Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation."** The goal of this report is to reflect on Los Angeles County's work over the past 10 years to support youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), to highlight innovative programs and practices Los Angeles County has developed, to share lessons learned with other jurisdictions across the country, and to celebrate the individuals who have made these tremendous improvements possible. The report recognizes the County's efforts to center and amplify the voices of survivors in the development of County policies and practices and highlights the County's expansive efforts to educate the masses, respond to legislative changes, foster multidisciplinary collaboration, design innovative protocols, support youth through education and empowerment, address the specialized housing needs of youth who have experienced CSE, and much more.

Over the past decade, Los Angeles County has become a national leader in its efforts to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. Since 2010, the County has led initiatives to prevent youth from being commercially sexually exploited, proactively identify youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation, connect youth with intensive, specialized services, and implement dynamic education campaigns and widespread training initiatives. Through creativity, collaboration, and commitment--together with County agencies and leaders--Los Angeles County has taken steps to ensure children are not criminalized for their exploitation, but instead empowered with the support and services they need to meet their goals, heal, and thrive.

“Over our nearly decade-long partnership with the County, we have been fortunate to partner with the folks working directly with kids who have experienced exploitation, the leaders of local government, and a group of survivor leaders. Because of their tenacity, creativity, courage, and fortitude, Los Angeles has emerged as a true leader in the movement to address commercial sexual exploitation,” says Kate Walker Brown, Director of the National Center for Youth Law’s Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative. “And the changes in Los Angeles have not only improved responses for youth here but have and will continue to make an impact far beyond our county borders.”

And while Los Angeles County has made significant progress, it remains committed to tackling the work that remains. The County will continue to fight to make clear that our children are not for sale.

“Throughout Los Angeles County, there are hundreds of victims of commercial sex trafficking who fall prey to a vicious cycle of abuse and harm,” said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. “We must do more to protect these youth who are often the most vulnerable in our communities – especially those who are homeless, in the child welfare system, in juvenile justice facilities, or in personal crisis. This report and the work it highlights is another testament to the dedication and commitment of this County to address sex trafficking and support our young victims.”

“I thank the National Center for Youth Law for their longstanding partnership with Los Angeles County,” said Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “There is no duty more urgent than improving the lives of children and youth by creating communities free from commercial sexual exploitation. This new report exemplifies what it means to carry out that goal in partnership with survivors, advocates, and community to realize a world where youth can thrive.”

“I am proud of the work that our County departments, government partners, legal and community advocates, and survivors themselves have done to dismantle and eradicate the violent and repugnant crime of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. “It is my hope that this comprehensive and timely compendium will provide a blueprint that other jurisdictions can use to move away from the criminalization of youth and toward a care-first, trauma-informed approach.”

“Over the last few years, more than 500 sexually exploited children have been recovered through collaborative efforts in LA County,” said Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. “This latest report from the County addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of young people lifts up the testimony of survivors and also makes clear how urgently needed these efforts are. Our mantra remains the same: There is no such thing as a child prostitute.”

“Los Angeles County has come a long way in its efforts to protect children from the abuse and trauma of sexual exploitation,” said Supervisor Janice Hahn. “We have been able to improve our intervention strategies and identify the groups of young people who are disproportionately targeted, including members of the LGBTQ+ community. This report sheds light on the courageous work being done throughout our County and the impact this progress has had on victims and survivors.”

To read the full report, click [here](#).

For more information, please contact:

Michelle Guymon, Director, Child Trafficking Unit, Probation Department
michelle.guymon@probation.lacounty.gov

Karla Tovar, Head, Marketing & Communications, Probation Department
Karla.Tovar@probation.lacounty.gov

Kate Walker Brown, Director, Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative,
National Center for Youth Law
kwalker@youthlaw.org