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Educating Advocates about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

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## Educating Advocates about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

### Abstract

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, over the last six years, 2,300 children have been commercially sexually exploited annually (2018). Identified risk factors include: homelessness, previous abuse, sexual orientation and foster care. Consequences are: loss of life, poor sexual health, rape, abuse, drug addiction and incarceration. Approximately 80% of commercially sexual exploited children (CSEC) were in direct contact with the Department of Family Services (DFCS) sometime during their exploitation. Until recently, CASA of Santa Cruz County didn't offer extended educational training (EET) for advocates on CSEC. In June of 2018 CASA piloted its first CSEC 101 training. After completing two successful trainings, is confident that they are now doing their part to combat CSEC. It is suggested that CASA continue to provide CSEC 101 training bi-annually, which will contribute to the requirement of advocate EET and the public's need for awareness around the topic of CSEC.

*Keywords:* CASA, CSEC, DFCS, educational training, awareness, foster care

**Agency Description**

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Santa Cruz County, is a non-profit organization whose mission is, “to be a voice in dependency court, providing advocacy, stability, and hope to children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned” (CASA, 2018). This organization’s mission is accomplished through the recruitment of CASA advocates. The first step in becoming a CASA advocate is to complete a mandated thirty-five hour training. This training teaches advocates about the family court system in conjunction with how to provide the proper support to foster youth. After the training is completed, advocates attend a day in court where they get sworn in by a judge. The final step is choosing a CASA youth. Advocates are asked to spend at least two to four hours a week with their CASA youth, and are encouraged to create healthy relationships that will create a sense of stability (CASA, 2018).

CASA was created in the early nineties and has provided both emotional and physical support for foster youth across the nation for the past 27 years. CASA’s vision addresses five specific topics (CASA, 2018):

1. Foster Youth: Safe, Happy, Healthy and Thriving
2. Children Receive Educational Success
3. Transitional Age Youth- Successful Adults
4. Reliable Organizational Financial Resources
5. Be a Voice for Foster Youth in the Community

**Problem Description**

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a topic that has steadily gained momentum over the past decade. It is stated that 244,000 American youth are at risk for CSEC each year. The frequency in which these youth are involved with the welfare system is disturbingly high (Estes & Weiner, 2003). CASA finds themselves in close proximity with this vulnerable population. It is important for this organization to join the coalition to combat CSEC,

as their stated mission is to advocate for these youth. Understanding what CSEC is and locating CSEC resources for their youth, will help CASA accomplish their mission. CSEC is a local issue that, until recently, has been recognized as only an international issue (Polaris, 2018). Over the last seven years, legislation has been created to protect this population. This is a domestic issue that is rampant in foster care and is present in the Santa Cruz community (Cornell Law, 2018). Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) have been assembled to combat the issue of CSEC by the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS). These teams encompass an array of community members such as: social workers, mental health agencies, district attorneys, foster parents and, at times, CASA advocates (personal communication, 2019). It is through this collaboration that this population will be served.

**Risk Factors.** There are multiple risk factors that make certain youth more vulnerable to CSEC. Research shows that having a history of foster care is on the top of that list. Fong, Cardosa (2010) and Sewell (2012) state that peer recruitment in foster homes is one of the most convenient ways to bait youth into CSEC. Outside of foster care, other risk factors include: being a runaway, history of trauma, mental and behavioral health needs, physical health needs, previous sexual abuse, inadequate supervision and unmet family needs (Landers, Mcgrath, Johnson, Armstrong, & Dollard 2017). Risk factors, such as these, make youth easier targets for traffickers to manipulate.

**Consequences.** The consequences of CSEC are clear. Within CASA the most crucial one is not meeting the needs of the youth. If this organization is not prepared to take on the issue of CSEC, these children might feel isolated and discontinue support services. Within the community, ramifications of not addressing CSEC include public health issues such as: loss of life, poor sexual health (pregnancy, HIV, STIs), rape, incarceration, crime, substance abuse and

criminals flourishing within communities (Landers, Mcgrath, Johnson, Armstrong, & Dollard 2017). Although the consequences are clear, the alternatives to addressing CSEC are still under discussion (see Appendix A for Problem Model).

### **Project Description**

This project was created to provide two separate trainings on CSEC. CSEC is defined as the force, fraud or coercion of a minor to commit sexual acts for the financial benefit of an exploiter (Cornell Law, 2018). These trainings included a two-hour course about CSEC and how it disproportionately affects children in the foster care system (NCMEC, 2018). Flyers to advertise the training were distributed through email and weekly CASA updates. Deborah Pembroke, a collaborative partner and chair of The Coalition to End Human Trafficking, created a basic CSEC 101 crash course for advocates. At the end of the second training, resource information cards were handed out. These cards included easy to follow instructions on how to report CSEC and obtain support services.

**Project Justification.** The primary purpose of this capstone was to address the issue of CSEC and its relationship to CASA. On average, over 2,300 children have been sexually exploited over the last six years and this number continues to escalate (HTH, 2018). Approximately 80% of these children were in direct contact with the DFCS sometime during their exploitation (NCMEC, 2018). The CSEC population is considered highly underserved due to the very nature that they are crossover youth; meaning, they are in direct contact with both the juvenile justice system and the welfare care system (CYMP, 2015). It has been recognized that this population faces a disconnect of services due to the lack of awareness regarding CSEC (NCMEC, 2018).

Through the education of advocates, CASA aimed to be a part of the solution to end CSEC through awareness. CASA has become a substantial force in the fight against the disproportionate amount of foster children being targeted. It has been the goal of this project to equip advocates with the knowledge and resources to meet this population where they are and to provide appropriate levels of care (Holger-Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburgh & Saewyc, 2013). CASA and their advocates have provided frontline support in the fight against CSEC in Santa Cruz County.

**Implementation Method.** This process began with outreach. Community stakeholders were asked to come into CASA to train their advocates. This included reaching out to the Coalition to End Human Trafficking (CEHT) chair, Deborah Pembroke. She was asked to collaborate with CASA in an effort to bring awareness to their advocates about CSEC. Curricula was developed and put into a power point, which addressed key concepts of CSEC and tools/resources to combat it (West Coast Children's Clinic, 2018). The next part of the process included finding a venue to house the training and a date that would fit the trainer and advocate schedules. After the trainings took place, evaluations were handed out to assess how the training was conducted and the ability to understand and utilize the information presented.

**Participants.** The CHHS intern was tasked with bringing the stakeholders together and presenting to CASA the potential benefits of creating a CSEC training for advocates. The program director of CASA had to make the decision of whether or not to support the training. Accepting the intern's capstone meant supporting the intern through the steps of implementation. Outside stakeholders, such as Najeeb Kamil and Deborah Pembroke, from the CEHT, generously provided information and training resources. Lastly, thirty CASA advocates and four

community partners participated in the trainings and learned together how to better support CASA youth.

**Resources.** Resources that were used in the implementation and success of this training included:

- venue to conduct the trainings
- financial resources to provide food during the trainings
- advertisement of the educational trainings
- distribution of printed materials—power point slides
- post-evaluations

**Challenges.** Sustainability of the project is the first challenge. From there, a challenge could be filling seats. An additional challenge could come from the collaborative partners. Presently, the trainer is conducting the training pro-bono. Without financial incentives, the trainer might not be able to continue to allocate personal time to train CASA advocates. Furthermore, CASA of Santa Cruz County, ultimately works under the guidelines of National CASA, and they could choose to stop the training at any time (National CASA, 2018).

**Scope of Work.** This project has been in motion since the 2018 Spring semester. It has included reaching out to stakeholders and building collaborative partnerships that produced the first CSEC training in July 2018. Throughout the duration of this project, the goal has been to gain a better understanding of CSEC and the benefits that come from providing this training to advocates. Fall semester 2018, consisted of further researching CSEC and its relationship to foster children. Spring semester 2019, was spent fine tuning the mechanics of a successful production, ending with a well-received second training in March 2019. Evaluations from advocates have been collected and compiled into an excel document. The feedback was then



shared with the program director to substantiate the need for continuing the training (see Appendix B for detailed information).

### **Project Assessment**

**Expected Outcomes.** The expected outcomes of this training were to bring a basic awareness of how and why foster children are particularly at risk for being CSEC. The specific deliverables included; recognizing the signs of CSEC, understanding how to report CSEC to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, and obtaining resources of support inside and outside of CASA.

**Assessment Measure.** The metric that was used to calculate the project's success were post-evaluations given to advocates after the trainings concluded. These surveys had a total of 9 questions. The first five were quantitative questions evaluating the process in which the training was administered. The following four were qualitative and addressed how the information was received and the ability to apply it thereafter. Feedback on the training reflected that it was overall received well. The quantitative feedback ranked an average of 4.5 out of 5 and the goal of a basic awareness of CSEC was met successfully (see Appendix C for blank evaluation).

### **Findings**

As a result of the initial CSEC training, CASA has educated 30 advocates and 4 community partners. Warning signs, local resources and a basic understanding of CSEC is now common knowledge for these individuals. CASA has expressed an interest in continuing the training for future advocates. At the very least, this project has influenced the interactions between advocates and 30 of CASA's youth.

**Assessment Results.** On an administrative level, this educational training was considered highly useful and effective. Out of 34 participants, 94.27% stated that the information was presented effectively and that concepts and skills were both useful and relevant. Additionally,

93% of participants stated that they were likely to apply this information moving forward in their relationships with CASA youth. Having this educational training as a part of CASA's curriculum strengthens the preexisting relationship between both advocates and foster youth in conjunction with CASA and the DFCS of Santa Cruz. Furthermore, the influence of this curriculum creates a space for continued growth around uncomfortable social issues that impact foster youth.

**Strengths and Successes.** This project was successful due to community partnerships, support from CASA and having a talented facilitator. From the beginning, the DFCS of Santa Cruz, specifically Najeeb Kamil, helped this project hone in on the available statistics and research surrounding CSEC. Having CASA as the force behind this training legitimized it. CASA is a well-established, highly respected organization that provided the platform for this project. Lastly, all of this would have never been successful without Deborah Pembroke. Deborah, the Coalition to End Human Trafficking chairperson, delivered this presentation in a way that was easy to understand without losing the severity of the issue.

**Limitations and Challenges.** Initially, this project had a difficult time gaining traction due to the graphic nature of the topic. CSEC was viewed as intimidating and a potential setback in acclimating advocates into the world of CASA. Outside of that, another challenge that emerged was the timing of the first training. The first training was scheduled during rush hour and as a result 25% of the people showed up late. Another limitation that influenced this project is the fact that CSEC is an understudied topic.

### **Recommendations**

**Agency.** CASA of Santa Cruz should continue to be open minded in addressing difficult topics that pertain to foster youth. CASA advocates spend a great deal of time with at risk youth and therefore have the potential to be great role models and sources of support. CASA of Santa Cruz is encouraged to continue to cultivate strategic partnerships with community organizations

that support foster youth success. Some of these relationships include: Foster Ed, Encompass, Santa Cruz Mental Health, and more specifically with this project, the Department of Family and Children Services, The Monterey Rape Crisis Center and The Coalition to End Human Trafficking.

**Broader Social Significance.** Further research needs to be collected, both nationally and locally, on the number of children who currently are survivors of CSEC. As of right now, there are no government run programs that are set up to collect these statistics. Yet, as it was previously stated, 80% of these children were involved within a government program, the DFCS, sometime during their exploitation (NCMEC, 2018). The greater assumption of this project is that this state of consciousness will inspire progress towards prevention and intervention programs nationally.

### **Conclusion**

The process of navigating through a capstone is hard. Everything is new. You're new in an internship—who are these professionals and how do you fit in with them? There is this looming project that hangs over your head and, if you're lucky enough to do so, you create that project. If you see a need, create a project that is sustainable and aims to meet that need. In saying that, understand that it is now your responsibility to provide validity to that need, so be ready to research! Be committed! This project is a year-long process and that is a semester longer of commitment than what most students are used to. Be ready to get real comfortable with being uncomfortable. This whole process will push you out of your comfort zone.

I went into an internship that I had a personal connection to. Learning how to navigate the professional and the personal was the hardest part of my process but proved to be highly beneficial. Try to remain confident. This was the year that I learned that I was capable of creating something of value and this is something that I will always remember. You can do this

too. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Navigating through your organization might be hard so remember you're not expected to know what you are doing. Be receptive to the learning process. Do the reflections, they really do help you process your work. Breathe, you're going to be great!

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Appendix A- Problem Model

**PROBLEM MODEL TEMPLATE**

<b>Project Title:</b> Educating Advocates about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)		
<b>Problem Statement:</b>		
<b>CAUSES/RISK FACTORS TO BROADER HEALTH PROBLEM</b>	<b>AGENCY-SPECIFIC “MICRO-LEVEL” PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PROJECT</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCES TO SOCIETY</b>
Resources Facilitator Recognition of Problem	There is no CASA advocate training on CSEC	Unmet needs Drop-outs Runaways CSEC
<b>CAUSES TO AGENCY PROBLEM</b>	<b>BROADER “MACRO-LEVEL” HEALTH/SOCIAL PROBLEM</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCES TO AGENCY</b>
Previous Abuse Foster Care Homelessness Substance Abuse Unmet needs Mental Health	The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Foster Youth are Disproportionatel-ly High	Loss of Life Poor Sexual Health (pregnancy, STIs, HIV) Rape Crime Substance Abuse Incarceration Criminals Flourishing in Communities

## Appendix B

## Scope of Work


	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Timelines-Deadlines</b>
1	Seminar with the Coalition to End Human Trafficking	Seminar attended COMPLETED SP18	March, 2018
2	Discussion of capstone project ideas with mentor	Approval granted COMPLETED SP18 AND F18	April, 2018 and October, 2018
3	Trauma Consortium Meeting with mentor	Meeting held COMPLETED S18	May, 2018
4	Meeting with potential speaker and secondary mentor for developing training	Speaker confirmed COMPLETED S18	May, 2018
5	Located venue and developed flyer	Flyer completed COMPLETED S18	June, 2018
6	Training offered	Training materials, attendance records COMPLETED S18	July 25, 2018
7	Evaluation conducted	Excel report on evaluation results COMPLETED S18	July, 2018
8	Conference call with speaker for discussion on additional trainings	Conference call made COMPLETED S18	August, 2018
9	Contact with Coalition Chair to discuss importance of CSEC in DFCS	Conference call made COMPLETED F18	September, 2018
10	Contact with Dallas CASA to discuss creating a pilot training nationwide	Conference call made COMPLETED F18	October, 2018
11	Identify new collaborative partners	Final approved collaborative partners COMPLETED SP19	November, 2018



12	Research data on CSEC	Reference list for capstone #1 COMPLETED SP19	June, 2018- October, 2018
13	Research and confirm location for sessions	Site location & dates/times confirmed/approved COMPLETED SP19	December, 2018
14	Create a CSEC awareness Instagram	Create an online awareness about CSEC COMPLETED W18	December, 2018
15	Review scope of work with mentors	Solidify Capstone project and goals COMPLETED SP19	December 3, 2018
16	Identify audience	Create spreadsheet of advocates COMPLETED SP19	January 24, 2019
17	Update event flyer	Final approved outreach materials distributed COMPLETED SP19	January 30, 2019
18	Create invitation	Emailing identified audience about training COMPLETED SP19	February, 2019
	Conference call with Deborah	Finalized training agenda COMPLETED SP19	February, 2019
20	Put on the second training	Put on the second training COMPLETED SP19	March 7, 2019
21	Implement training evaluations and compile data	Preliminary results submitted to mentor for approval COMPLETED SP19	March 31, 2019

22	Reach out to Najeeb	Keeps CASA agency updates- statistics-data of CSEC COMPLETED SP19	March 28, 2019
22	Speak with TA youth specialist of CASA	Linking project to agency after graduation COMPLETED SP19	March, 2019
23	Identify Contacts	Keeping and storing information of stakeholders COMPLETED SP19	March, 2019
24	Step by Step on implementation of training	Creating a guide on implementation of training COMPLETED SP19	April, 2019
25	Compile and analyze data	Findings report completed COMPLETED SP19	April, 2019
26	Complete draft report on findings	Submit to mentor for approval COMPLETED SP19	April, 2019
27	Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports COMPLETED SP19	May 3, 2019
28	Prepare capstone presentation in selected format	Present at dress rehearsal for grading	May 8-10, 2019
29	Final preparation for Capstone Festival	Final presentation	May 16, 2019

Appendix C -Training Evaluation



**CASA Training evaluation**

Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

It is important for CASA to know what you thought of this training and find out if there is anything we can do to improve future in-service trainings. Please take a few minutes to fill out this form. THANKS!

Circle the number that best describes your level of agreement with each statement. On this scale, 1 is the lowest rating and 5 is the highest rating.

- 1) The speaker(s) presented the information in an effective manner. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2) The training was well organized 1 2 3 4 5
- 3) I learned concepts and skills that are useful and relevant 1 2 3 4 5
- 4) I am likely to apply these concepts and skills as a CASA 1 2 3 4 5
- 5) Overall, I was satisfied with the training 1 2 3 4 5
- 6) What did you like MOST about this training?
- 7) What did you like LEAST about this training?
- 8) What is one thing you will take from this training and use as an Advocate?
- 9) What other topics would you like to see covered in future trainings?

\\uberserver\Transfer\TRAINING (Advocates) Jan. 2017