Human sex trafficking is a form of modern day slavery and is a growing problem both around the world and in the United States. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against his/her will. Three years ago we started a mentoring program in collaboration with the FBI to provide support and services to rescued human trafficking victims. Through a mentoring relationship, we work to help survivors to rebuild their lives and respond to the complex psychological, emotional and physical needs that are often the result of abuse. Our mentoring program attempts to address both the immediate and long-term needs of each victim of trauma. These needs may include residential, medical and mental health care, education, employment, social and spiritual support. A framework for replicating this program across the country is discussed including the various components of the mentoring program, lessons learned, and future directions.

The Problem

In 2013, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children estimated that 1 in 7 endangered runaways reported to them were likely sex trafficking victims. Globally, the International Labor Organization estimates that there are 4.5 million people trapped in forced sexual exploitation. Once rescued many U.S. victims have no resources to support them (Department of State, 2013).

After drug dealing, human trafficking is tied with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world today. (Note Sheet, U.S. Department of State, June 6, 2003)

Mentor Program Overview

Overview

- Mentor program started in 2010.
- To date this program has 15 mentors that have mentored 15 girls.
- Ages range from 15-39. All girls are U.S. citizens.

Survivors

- Survivors are contacted shortly after rescue for intake and assessment.
- Most survivors have few resources and are either assigned to a treatment facility or attempt to live on their own.

Program

- Mentors are selected after 35 hours of training, personal interviews and passing a background check.
- Mentors are matched with survivors based on survivor needs, common interests, age, location, and experience.
- Mentor and mentee commit to a minimum of 1 year.
- Mentor models healthy relationship. Connect minimum of 1/week.
- Mentor helps survivor establish needed resources and reach her goals.
- Pro-social activities are planned as a group and encouraged.
- Monthly mentor meetings provide ongoing training and support

Mentoring Framework

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<tr>
<th>Rescue</th>
<th>Restore</th>
<th>Reintegrate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
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<td>Evaluation of Services</td>
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<td>Trauma Treatment</td>
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<td>Consistent, non-judgmental love and support</td>
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Research has shown benefits of mentoring programs (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). To date the program has mentored 15 girls and several have graduated from the program and are living on their own, finishing school, holding a job or raising a family.

Lessons Learned

More research is needed to better understand, prevent and respond to trafficking in persons in the United States. Specifically, research is needed in the following areas:

- Trauma informed assessment of survivors.
- Overall program evaluation of services provided to survivors.
- Effective interventions for human trafficking survivors.
- Standardized trauma informed training for mentors, first responders and after care providers.
- Development and sharing of effective resources for survivors.
- Best practices for mentoring human trafficking survivors.
- Attitudes towards survivors.

References

Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, Jan 6, 2003