

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States

MYTH • Sex trafficking only happens overseas to young girls.

FACT • Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking **occur every day in the United States**. Its victims—both male and female—live in cities and small towns across America.

MYTH • Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sex are recognized as victims of crime and abuse.

FACT • Sexual exploitation and sex trafficking **are forms of child abuse**, but the children and adolescents who are **victims can still be arrested** for prostitution, detained or incarcerated, and subject to permanent records as offenders in most states.

MYTH • People who buy sex with minors or engage in the sale of sex with minors are caught and punished for these crimes.

FACT • Despite laws in every state that enable the prosecution of these individuals and despite the hard work of prosecutors and law enforcement in many jurisdictions, those who sexually exploit children and adolescents have **largely escaped accountability**.

MYTH • It is easy for professionals who interact with minors to recognize victims, survivors, and youth at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

FACT • Many teachers, doctors and nurses, child welfare workers, and other individuals who interact with youth are unaware that commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors occur in their communities or **lack the knowledge or training** to identify and respond to them.

MYTH • Help is readily available for victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

FACT • There are **too few services to meet current needs**. The services that do exist are unevenly distributed geographically, lack adequate resources, and vary in their ability to provide specialized care.

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www.iom.edu/sextraffickingminors

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