

A Program Proposal from The New York City Coalition to Address the Sexual Exploitation of Children

Project Abstract

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a growing problem in New York City. The number of children engaged in prostitution has increased over the past few years, while the average age of those children has dropped. Although recognition of the problem has grown, collaborative efforts in the city are still in their infancy. In recent years, the city has developed a core group of criminal justice staff and social service providers who have worked diligently and, increasingly, as a team to get teenage prostitutes off the streets and send pimps to state prison. Yet additional support is needed to enhance their efficacy.

The mayor's office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator (CJC) proposes to spearhead an initiative to address the multiple issues surrounding CSEC in New York City. CASEC—the Coalition to Address the Sexual Exploitation of Children—will develop and implement a four-pronged strategy designed to expand and strengthen an integrated collaborative of city agencies and local service providers; enhance outreach and prevention, targeted at specific high-risk populations; increase direct services to victims of CSEC who come into contact with the justice system; and enhance the prosecution of pimps who recruit teenagers into street prostitution.

The combination of system integration, outreach, services, and prosecution is designed to prevent further exploitation and recruitment of children into prostitution. CJC seeks \$284,793 to support a 7-month planning period and a 1-year demonstration project. The activities of the planning period would be to strengthen and expand the collaborative, develop short- and long-term strategies for the demonstration period, and delineate a timeline and long-term budget. During the implementation phase, the collaborative would continue to refine and develop strategy, and work aggressively to link CSEC victims to supportive services, reduce recruitment into prostitution and prosecute pimps to the fullest extent of the law.

Problems and Assets Statement

Over the past several years, the number of children under age 16 victimized by commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC)—and actively engaged in street prostitution—has grown dramatically in New York City. Police and social service providers report a substantial growth in the number of young teenagers working at known prostitution locations beginning roughly three years ago. Their perceptions are backed up by arrest statistics: the number of individuals under age 18 charged with prostitution has climbed over the past five years from 74 in 1997 to 212 in 2002—a 187 percent increase at a time when overall prostitution arrests in New York City had dropped. Local service providers also report that the population

is getting younger: one service provider working with victims of CSEC reports that the average age of clients has dropped from 17–18 in 1999 to roughly 15 today.

Victims of CSEC are a vulnerable population. Many are runaway, throwaway, or otherwise homeless children. Exploiters take advantage of this vulnerability, developing patterns of domination and control that are difficult to break. In New York City, police and service providers report that a new breed of young pimps not only actively recruits teenage prostitutes, but also uses them to recruit other girls. Victims of CSEC are at heightened risk of violence and of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, herpes, hepatitis, syphilis, and gonorrhea.

Child Prostitution Markets in New York City. Estimating the size and scope of the problem in New York City is difficult. ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes) estimates that as many as 5,000 children in New York City are involved in prostitution. However, the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems come into contact with only a few hundred annually. Local service providers work in depth with an even smaller population—roughly 100 children per year.

Although knowledge of the juvenile prostitution markets in New York City is incomplete, city agencies and service providers know much more now than they did several years ago. Law enforcement and service providers identify five distinct markets for juvenile prostitution in New York City: local teenage street prostitutes; transients from outside the city, who work here sporadically; teenaged boys; girls working in escort and Web-based services; and internationally trafficked children. Knowledge of these markets is far from complete. Knowledge is deepest about the street prostitution segment of the market, consisting of local girls, transients, and boys. According to law enforcement and service providers, the local girls are generally under the control of local pimps. They work solely within the city along several established prostitution strolls, including Hunts Point in the Bronx; Queens Plaza; East New York in Brooklyn; and, to a lesser extent, the east side of Manhattan around 23rd Street and Lexington Avenue. The transient girls are primarily from other areas, such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, and upstate New York. They share some strolls with the local girls, though they are also found in midtown Manhattan, particularly around the Port Authority bus terminal. The boys tend to work independently in Greenwich Village. The other two market segments—escort services and the internationally trafficked population—have proven difficult for law enforcement to penetrate or for service providers to engage. Comparatively, little is known about these two segments of the market.

Response to CSEC. The city's response has been evolving in recent years as awareness of the problem has increased. In the fall of 2002, the mayor's office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator convened an agency task force, consisting of representatives from the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the

city's district attorney's office, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the New York City Law Department and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), to examine and improve the city's response to CSEC. In December 2002, the New York City Council held hearings to gather information on the subject.

The growing collaboration has built upon the efforts of a cadre of service providers and criminal justice professionals (police, prosecutors, and court personnel) who have been working over the past few years to respond to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Police and prosecutors have focused attention on prosecuting pimps, developing appropriate alternative sentences for johns, and improving the city's ability to respond to the growing problem of teenage prostitution. There have been some successes since its formation in September, 2000. The Child Recovery Unit (CRU) of the NYPD's Vice Enforcement Division has made 43 arrests of promoters and each year has made an increasing number of recoveries of minors engaged in prostitution: 28 in 2000; 54 in 2001; and 70 in 2002.

Until this past fall, collaborative efforts to address CSEC in New York City have been informal and evolving, based more on personal than on formal institutional relationships. For example, the CRU and Paul & Lisa, a service provider, maintain contact and share information about girls that they encounter. A sergeant from the Juvenile Crime Special Projects Squad of the Fugitive Enforcement Division of the NYPD, operating out of Queens Family Court, conducts street outreach throughout the city, uses space in the Brooklyn district attorney's office for debriefing and counseling, and refers some girls directly to Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS), another local service provider. GEMS also has agreements with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Correction (DOC) to engage girls held in detention facilities and jails.

There is a growing recognition that justice system leverage can help link girls to service providers who can help wean victims of CSEC away from prostitution. There is also increasing awareness that service providers can work effectively with law enforcement and prosecutors in their efforts to get exploiters off the streets.

Identifying Barriers. The developing collaborative effort among law enforcement and service providers to combat CSEC in New York City has focused on identifying barriers to an effective response and gaps in services. Justice system personnel and service providers alike recognize that pimps are difficult to identify and prosecute and that victims are often reluctant to testify. Also, the justice system leverage is limited. Many youth arrested for prostitution are never identified as juveniles and are processed through the adult system, where they typically receive a sentence of time served and return to the streets—providing little opportunity for engagement or debriefing. The effort to engage child prostitutes through the juvenile justice system faces other problems as well. In New York State, juveniles cannot be charged with loitering

for prostitution, the most common prostitution charge for adults. This hampers efforts to mount effective prosecutions against pimps, as well as engage girls in services.

When juveniles *are* arrested for prostitution, there are additional barriers to engagement. The child is often placed in a group home run by the Administration for Children's Services. Group homes have no lockdown capacity and have become prime locations for recruitment by pimps. Law enforcement and service providers stress the need for a safe haven to accomplish three goals: to help engage girls immediately after arrest; to support witnesses testifying against pimps; and to provide transitional housing for girls ready to leave the street.

Proposed Response. To address these multiple issues, the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator proposes to develop and implement a comprehensive response to the problem of child and youth prostitution. The project would expand and bolster the collaborative efforts among government agencies and service providers and work to develop short- and long-term strategies to prevent and respond to CSEC in New York City.

Project Utility

The project, to be known as CASEC, the Coalition to Address the Sexual Exploitation of Children, would form an integrated collaborative of city agencies and local service providers to address institutional obstacles that affect the City's ability to curb teenage prostitution. Currently, there are four primary points of contact with victims of CSEC in New York City including:

- The justice system (police, prosecutors, corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice).
- Other city agencies (e.g., child protective services).
- Youth service agencies, specifically targeting victims of CSEC.
- Youth service agencies, targeting runaways and street youth.

CASEC would foster better integration among these groups. At present, the primary mechanism for identifying victims of CSEC is the criminal justice system—when they are arrested for prostitution. Some dedicated units within the NYPD (CRU, the Fugitive Enforcement Division) recognize these youth as victims who have been opportunistically exploited and help link them to local services. Yet other branches of the Department may not even recognize that they are children due to the widespread use of false IDs on the street. Teenage prostitutes housed in city-run congregate care facilities may be perceived more as problem residents than as victims of CSEC and, therefore, not linked to appropriate interventions. Some service providers working with runaways may be reluctant to collaborate with the justice system in its efforts to prosecute exploiters.

In spite of the potential tensions between criminal justice agencies and CSEC advocates, in recent years some local service providers have worked in close collaboration with police and prosecutors in joint efforts to get their clients off the streets. Increasingly, service providers recognize the value of criminal justice system in helping them engage CSEC victims in services and in efforts to prosecute exploiters to the fullest extent of the law.

Spearheaded by the mayor's office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator (CJC), CASEC would integrate these various groups and develop a coordinated agenda to enhance prevention, prosecution and program services. During the planning phase, the interagency working group would be convened regularly to develop appropriate responses to the five components of the CSEC market; identify barriers to effective intervention; share information and develop a common mission; and, ultimately, reduce recruitment into street prostitution and provide better avenues for escape. This group would survey the landscape for best practices, determine how best to leverage existing resources, and develop a comprehensive workplan to be rolled out during the implementation phase.

As the coordinating agency for all criminal justice related activities in the City of New York, the CJC has the contacts, buy-in and leverage to bring all the parties to the table and re-engineer the city's response to these victimized children. By building a comprehensive collaboration of justice and child welfare agencies, nonprofit service providers and victims, this project is expected to produce the following:

- 1) A clearer understanding of the breadth and depth of this problem.
- 2) An institutional perception shift, from offender to victim.
- 3) Improved information-sharing.
- 4) Improved prosecutorial outcomes for pimps and johns.
- 5) Expanded service provision along with improved outcomes for victims.
- 6) A strategy for expanding incrementally to other segments of the CSEC market over time.

Goals and Objectives

Overall Objectives. CASEC's overarching goal is to reduce the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in New York City. To do this, it will first establish an integrated collaborative that includes representatives of city agencies and local service providers. The primary focus of the collaborative is to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing CSEC. During the planning phase, the collaborative, chaired by dedicated staff in the Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office, will develop a detailed action plan, specifying a three-part agenda that includes the following:

- Strategies for outreach and prevention, targeted at specific high-risk populations (e.g., outreach to youth in programs serving runaways and to girls living in congregate care facilities in high-risk neighborhoods).
- Strategies for increasing direct services to child victims of sexual exploitation who come into contact with the juvenile and criminal justice system in New York City (e.g., expanding the number of counselors working with local service providers).
- Strategies for enhancing the prosecution of pimps who recruit teenagers into street prostitution (e.g., legislative strategies, the development of a safe haven).

Planning Period. Early in the planning period CASEC would hire a project coordinator with experience in juvenile justice. One of the first tasks would be to expand the existing collaborative of government agencies to include members from the Department of Youth and Community Development (the agency responsible for programs for runaways); the Department of Juvenile Justice (the agency responsible for juvenile detention); and the Probation Department. Shortly thereafter, it would establish a formal working group of service providers, including representatives of GEMS, Paul & Lisa, Green Chimneys, and other groups working with children at risk of CSEC. Together, the expanded collaborative would develop a detailed strategy for responding to CSEC in New York City.

Key objectives for a 6-month planning period include the following:

- Convene monthly meetings of agency and program representatives.
- Conduct three focus groups with former victims of CSEC, agency representatives and local service providers to expand knowledge about all five segments of the CSEC population including local youth, transients from other locations, boys, trafficked children, and children working at escort services and through Web sites.
- Identify three key barriers to successful intervention (e.g., insufficient counseling and outreach staff; the lack of a safe haven for engagement and temporary housing).
- Develop strategies to address these barriers.
- Work closely with federal sponsors to identify funding opportunities to address identified barriers.
- Draft a detailed three-part strategy paper, outlining plans for expanded prevention, increased service provision, and enhanced prosecution.
- Identify the preliminary target population for demonstration activities, focusing initial attention on the most accessible segment—local youth engaged in street prostitution at known prostitution tracks.
- Draft an outline of long-term strategies for addressing other CSEC population segments in New York City.
- Draft a timeline for project implementation.

- Draft a budget for supporting enhanced prevention, service delivery, and prosecution through a combination of in-kind contributions and Federal support for the demonstration project.

Demonstration objectives. During the demonstration period, CASEC would continue to meet as a collaborative in an on-going effort to develop strategies targeted to lesser-known market segments. One of the first tasks would be to hire staff to be dedicated to local service providers who would be responsible for expanding outreach, prevention, and direct provision of services. Other key objectives (subject to modification during the planning period) include the following:

- Address barriers to successful engagement of victims of CSEC (e.g., explore ways to develop a safe haven; promote legislation that will permit holding juveniles for loitering to expand opportunities for engagement).
- Continue to work closely with Federal sponsors to identify funding opportunities to address identified barriers.
- Conduct semi-monthly outreach/prevention sessions.
- Monitor and document efforts to enhance prosecution of pimps and johns.
- Monitor and document service provision to victims of CSEC.
- Develop and expand peer support networks to facilitate efforts to help victims escape the streets.
- Establish links to adult courts (e.g., Midtown Community Court in Manhattan) in an effort to develop new avenues for engaging young prostitutes in services.
- Expand contacts with local DAs to share information about promising prosecution strategies.

Project Strategy

CASEC would attempt to reduce the incidence of CSEC in New York City in four ways including system integration; prevention and outreach; expanded services; and enhanced prosecution. The combination of outreach, services, and prosecution is clearly designed to prevent further exploitation and recruitment of children into prostitution. In recent years, the city has developed a small core group of criminal justice and agency staff who have worked diligently and, increasingly, as a team to increase the number of former prostitutes who have left the streets and the number of pimps sent to state prison. Additional support is needed to enhance their efficacy. But the project as a whole would seek to expand beyond these efforts to develop an even broader agenda and broader scope.

System Integration. A central means of promoting change is through establishing a fully integrated collaborative, bringing together the various groups that work with victims of CSEC (criminal justice, other city agencies, CSEC service providers, and other youth service providers). The collaborative would serve as more than a planning group. It would oversee and monitor the implementation of strategies supported

by project funds. It would respond to barriers to successful operations and develop ways to enhance the effectiveness of current efforts (e.g. digital cameras and video cameras for police units to foster recovery of runaways and help identify active pimps). It would work to generate additional support for project objectives (e.g., financial support for safe havens; political support for legislative change). The collaborative would serve as the primary means of transforming the perception of teenage prostitutes from offenders to victims. It would also serve to expand interventions (outreach, services, and prosecution) to additional segments of the market and to leverage additional local resources (e.g., local youth service providers, local courts, and prosecutors) to join in the effort.

Outreach and Services. The primary means of reducing recruitment is through outreach and prevention efforts, currently carried out by local service providers at known prostitution tracks, in juvenile detention facilities and adult jails. Prevention sessions are designed to provide children with the tools to recognize commercial sexual exploiters and the dangers of exploitation. In addition, prevention focuses on training group home managers and school employees to identify at-risk children. There is a clear need to expand prevention and engagement efforts to additional venues such as group foster homes, schools in high-risk neighborhoods, and programs that serve runaways. During the planning period, CASEC would identify a list of preliminary targets for expanded outreach and prevention.

In addition, CASEC would focus on increasing direct services to current victims of CSEC by expanding the staff available to groups currently working with the population (e.g., GEMS, Paul & Lisa). These groups provide dedicated specialized services and empathetic consistent support to victims of CSEC, including counseling, therapeutic and recreational groups, victimization education, assistance with basic survival, drug addiction programs, health care, and educational/vocational services. The project would also seek ways to develop a safe haven to help engage girls immediately after arrest, support witnesses testifying against pimps and provide transitional housing for girls ready to leave the street.

Enhancing Prosecution. Each victim would be encouraged to participate in short- and long-term investigations surrounding their exploitation through contact with the NYPD and district attorney's offices. The NYPD's detective bureau, vice units, and select precincts would be trained to identify child prostitutes, verify their age, debrief them, gain their trust and encourage them to participate in supportive services and, ultimately, encourage them to cooperate with efforts to prosecute their exploiters. In addition, CASEC would provide needed equipment including digital cameras, video cameras, etc. to help police and prosecutors build a trail of evidence to enhance prosecution.

Service providers must also be integrated in this process. New York City is unique in having service providers that understand the importance of the criminal justice system as a way both to engage girls in services and to punish those that exploit children. Ensuring that service providers and law enforcement

work together in investigating and prosecuting pimps increases the likelihood of successful outcomes in those cases.

Project Design

The primary goals of the planning period will be to strengthen and expand the interagency collaborative, increase knowledge of various market segments for underage prostitution in New York City and develop both short- and long-term strategies for expanding outreach, increasing service provision, and enhancing prosecution. Specifically, the activities of the planning period will proceed as outlined below:

Objective	Activity	Responsible Party	Due Date	Deliverable
Strengthen Interagency Collaborative	Hire Project Coordinator	CJC Deputy Coordinator	Month 1	Employment Contract
Strengthen Interagency Collaborative	Expand existing membership to include DJJ . DYCD, Probation	Project Coordinator	Month 2	List of Groups and Contacts
Strengthen Interagency Collaborative	Convene service provider collaborative	CJC Deputy Coordinator and CJC Project Staff	Month 2	List of Groups and Contacts
Strengthen Interagency Collaborative	Convene monthly meetings of agency and program representatives	Project Coordinator	Ongoing	Notes/Attendee List
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Participate in federally supported technical assistance and training	Project Coordinator	Month 4	
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Conduct three focus groups with former CSEC victims, agency reps. and local service providers	Project Coordinator	Month 4	Focus Group Summaries
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Identify three key barriers to successful intervention	Interagency Collaborative	Month 4	Intervention Outline
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Work closely with Federal sponsors to identify funding opportunities	Project Coordinator in Conjunction with Interagency Collaborative	Month 5	List of Funding Opportunities
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Draft detailed three-part strategy paper, outlining plans for expanded prevention,	Project Coordinator in Conjunction with Interagency	Month 5	Strategy Outline

	increased service provision and enhanced prosecution	Collaborative		
Develop Short-Term CSEC Strategy	Identify preliminary target population for demonstration activities. Focus on most accessible segment-local youth engaged in street prostitution at known prostitution tracks	Project Coordinator in Conjunction with Interagency Collaborative	Month 6	Definition of Target Population
Develop Long-Term CSEC Strategy	Develop Strategies for expanding outreach to other market segments	Project Coordinator	Month 6	Outreach Strategy
Project Implementation Preparation	Draft detailed timeline for project implementation	Project Coordinator in Conjunction with Interagency Collaborative	Month 6	Detailed Timeline Document
Project Implementation Preparation	Draft budget for supporting enhanced prevention, service delivery, and prosecution	Project Coordinator	Month 6	Detailed Budget

During the implementation period, the collaborative will continue to meet to monitor and assess existing efforts, refine project strategy, and develop new strategies to address the needs of additional market segments. The matrix below provides the specific objectives of the demonstration period as well as an estimated timeline for project activities.

Objective	Activity	Responsible Party	Due Date	Deliverable
Strengthen Prevention/ Outreach Plan	Hire staff dedicated to local service providers responsible for direct provision of services	CJC Coordinator in Conjunction with Project Coordinator	Month 1	Employment Contract
Strengthen Prevention/ Outreach Plan	Address barriers to successful engagement of victims of CSEC	Project Coordinator in conjunction with interagency and service provider collaborative	Month 2	Documentation
Strengthen Prevention/ Outreach Plan	Conduct semi-monthly outreach/prevention sessions	Project Coordinator and service providers	Ongoing	Notes/Attendee List

Strengthen Prevention/ Outreach Plan	Develop and expand peer support groups to facilitate efforts to help victims escape the streets	Project Coordinator in conjunction with service provider collaborative	Month 4	Schedule of group meetings
Strengthen Prevention/ Outreach Plan	Establish links to adult court in effort to develop new avenues for engaging victims in services	Project Coordinator in conjunction with interagency and service provider collaborative	Ongoing	Quarterly Report
Enhance Program Services	Monitor and document service provision to victims of CSEC	Project Coordinator in conjunction with service provider collaborative	Ongoing	Copy of Documentation
Enhance Program Services	Identify best practices, replicate them citywide		Ongoing	
Enhance Program Services	Develop training curriculum about CSEC for youth service providers		Month 5	
Enhance Program Services	Train additional youth service providers in CSEC issues		Month 5	
Enhance Prosecution Strategies	Monitor and document efforts to enhance prosecution of pimps and johns	Project Coordinator in conjunction with law enforcement	Ongoing	Quarterly Report
Enhance Prosecution Strategies	Expand contacts with local DAs to share strategy information	Project Coordinator in conjunction with interagency collaborative	Ongoing	Quarterly Report
Enhance Prosecution Strategies	Formalize ad hoc referral networks between NYPD and DAs		Month 6-7	
Enhance Prosecution Strategies	Identify legislative opportunities to maximize prosecutorial outcomes. (i.e. loitering provision)		Month 5-9	

Expand Long-Term Funding Strategy	Continue to work closely with Federal sponsors to identify funding opportunities to address identified barriers	Project Coordinator	Ongoing	Funding List
-----------------------------------	---	---------------------	---------	--------------

Management and Organizational Capacity

The planning and implementation phases of the CASEC initiative will be led by a Project Director, employed by the, mayor’s office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator. The Project Director will have a diverse array of experience both in the criminal/legal arena and in program services. A job description will be finalized by the collaborative within the first month of the planning period, and a Project Director will be hired within the first two months of the planning phase (See Attachment A for an initial draft of the Project Director job description). The Project Director will report to CJC’s Deputy Coordinator for Research and Policy, Michele Sviridoff (See Attachment B for Ms. Sviridoff’s c.v.).

CJC is uniquely qualified to house this project. The agency has extensive grant management experience; it is responsible for the administrative oversight and reporting requirements for over \$684 million in Federal and State grants. In addition, CJC serves as the mayor’s primary advisor on criminal justice matters including policy, strategy, budget, and legislation. CJC coordinates the activities of the city’s public safety agencies and serves as the liaison to the city’s district attorneys, the State criminal justice system and the New York State Unified Court System. In addition, CJC is the nucleus around which special criminal justice projects coalesce. Two such efforts led by CJC that will be particularly useful for this project are the mayor’s Sexual Assault Task Force and the mayor’s Child Abuse Task Force.

The mayor’s Child Abuse Task Force’s (CATF) main functions are to educate, train, and improve interagency cooperation in child abuse cases. CATF membership consists of representatives from the NYPD, all five district attorney’s offices, the Administration for Children’s Services, Health and Hospitals Corporation, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Education, private hospitals, child advocacy centers, victim advocacy groups, treatment providers, and the Law Department—essentially, any agency or group that has anything to do with the treatment, prevention, investigation, or prosecution of child abuse. Recent training sessions focused on shaken baby syndrome and New York State’s new forensic interview protocol. Frequently, smaller working subcommittees of CATF work on specific projects (e.g. the Abandoned Infant Protection Act public education campaign).

The mayor’s Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF) was formed in 2002 in response to concerns stemming from the increase in sex crimes in New York City. SATF is comprised of the chiefs of the sex crimes bureaus from all five district attorney’s offices, representatives from the Office of the Chief Medical

Examiner (OCME), NYPD and the mayor's office to Combat Domestic Violence. Since its inception, SATF has designed and implemented training for detectives responding to sex crimes scenes, implemented an intensive supervision program for high-risk sex offenders, applied for grant money to develop a DNA database, worked with OCME to designate forensic consultants to advise DA's, and instituted a plea policy change with the district attorney's offices that will increase the number of DNA samples collected each year.

The mayor's office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator's pivotal position within the criminal justice system in New York City, its extensive experience managing grants and special projects, as well as the wealth of resources available through existing task forces and diverse expertise makes it the ideal candidate for coordinating a project to reduce the commercial sexual exploitation of children.