

Child Sex Trafficking - How Bad Is It?

The VIRTUS® Programs

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) successfully accomplished "Operation Cross-Country" under its "Innocence Lost" initiative. The operation was a three-day nationwide undercover mission that targeted perpetrators who victimize children. It resulted in the arrest of 150 perpetrators and the rescue of 105 children, mostly 13 to 17 years old. The youngest child rescued was nine. The U.S. operation took place across 76 cities.

According to an FBI official, child sex trafficking is still "one of the most prevalent, violent and unconscionable crimes in our country."

The FBI refers to the young victims as "children with a void." The perpetrators who exploit the children identify a child's void and work to fill it in hopes that the child will become dependent upon them.

The majority of children come from foster homes or are runaways. The most vulnerable children are ages 13 to 16 when forced into sex trafficking. One official said, "Many of these children don't have concerned family members who are looking for them."

The victims "span all socioeconomic levels and demographics," and they "cut across racial lines."

All FBI field offices across the U.S. were involved in the 72-hour operation. Two hundred thirty agencies also joined forces with the FBI.

A range of state and federal charges will be brought against the apprehended perpetrators, according to the Department of Justice. "FBI rescues more than 100 children, arrests 150 pimps in sex-trafficking raid," www.foxnews.com (Jul. 29, 2013).

According to the Polaris Project, human trafficking "often goes underreported due to its covert nature, various misconceptions about its definition, and a lack of awareness about its indicators on the local level."

The website forthesakeofone.org reports that, "100,000 to 300,000 children are at risk for sex trafficking each year. In addition, there are approximately 2.8 million children who live on the streets, a third of which "are lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home."

There are reported cases of child sex trafficking in all 50 states. The largest trafficking points are California, New York, Texas, and Nevada. In 2009, the U.S. State Department reported that the U.S. is now the world's number one destination for child sex trafficking.

How can we help prevent child sex trafficking?

- Educate yourself and your children on the issue of human trafficking.
- Know your neighbors. Help create a neighborhood community.

- Report suspicious situations. Take action. Failing to report violates the law.
- Provide your child with love, daily needs, physical and emotional security, and appreciation.

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