

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

LAW ENFORCEMENT FIRST RESPONDER PROTOCOL

FOR COMMERCIALLY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: A SIX YEAR REVIEW

2014 - 2020



A SIX YEAR REVIEW



The Los Angeles County Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (the Protocol) was first launched in 2014, with the goal of ensuring that when youth are identified as experiencing or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), law enforcement, county agencies, and community-based advocates provide quick, coordinated, service-based responses. By 2018, the Protocol had expanded from its original pilot areas, consisting of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD), Compton and Century Stations, and the Long Beach Police Department, to all Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and LASD jurisdictions. That year, the County released “*What We’ve Learned: A Four Year Look*,” a report presenting data from the first four years of implementation of the Protocol, from August 14, 2014, to August 14, 2018. This report, “*What We’ve Learned: A Six Year Review*,” presents updated data from the first six years of implementation of the Protocol, through August 14, 2020.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROTOCOL

Law enforcement officers are often on the front line of discovering and identifying children and youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation and those at-risk of exploitation. Detectives conduct covert, proactive operations both on the streets and online to identify potential victims of exploitation. Patrol officers may encounter youth on the street or when responding to radio calls for domestic disputes, which may initially appear to be intimate partner or family violence, but are exploitive. Historically, in Los Angeles and around the country, the law enforcement response was to arrest the child for prostitution or related charges, to detain them in juvenile hall, and to prosecute them through the juvenile delinquency system. With the growing understanding that exploited children and youth are victims of child abuse and that there is “no such thing as a child prostitute,” Los Angeles County began to transform its approach to victims of commercial sexual exploitation through extensive training of county officers and service providers, the creation of a collaborative court, and the formation of a specialized probation unit to serve exploited and at-risk children.

Building on its early innovations, in 2013, the Board of Supervisors charged a task force with developing a multi-agency response to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth (CSEC/Y) that avoided arresting and detaining victims in juvenile halls. Ultimately, a major success of this multi-agency partnership, comprised of the Probation Department, the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Health Services, the Sheriff's Department, and the Department of Public Social Services, in collaboration with the National Center for Youth Law, was the development and implementation of the Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for CSEC, the first of its kind. The goal of the Protocol is to ensure that when a youth is identified who is experiencing or at risk for CSE, law enforcement, county agencies, and community-based advocates provide a quick, coordinated, service-based response.

NO SUCH THING AS A CHILD PROSTITUTE



The Protocol focuses on both meeting the immediate, short-term needs of the youth, and supporting them to achieve long-term safety and stability through youth-centered, strengths-based, and trauma-informed services provided by a team of professionals connected to the youth. Given that the first 72 hours after identification represents a critical point of intervention and an opportunity for building rapport, trust, and relationships with the youth, the Protocol focuses on providing intensive supports and engagement during that period of time.



The Protocol outlines the roles and responsibilities of the partner agencies, which includes an expedited, 90-minute response following identification and additional, intensive engagement over the following 72 hours. Within the first 90 minutes after identification, law enforcement must engage the youth using victim-centered, trauma-informed strategies,

report the known or suspected exploitation as child abuse to the Child Protection Hotline, assess the youth for any urgent medical or other needs, and transport the youth to a staging area. Once at the staging area, a community-based advocate, as well as specialized workers from either Probation or DCFS, meet with the youth, ensure their basic needs are met (such as clothing and food), and hold a multidisciplinary team meeting (MDT) to establish a safety plan and determine where the youth will stay that evening. Within 24 hours and again throughout the first 72 hours, the advocate checks in with the youth to make sure they are still safe and their needs are being met.

“Having immediate support by the youth’s side from the very beginning is invaluable. It’s important to show up to let the youth know that they are important, and we are here to help them every step of the way.”

-Probation Department

Also within 72 hours, or sooner if necessary, the young person receives a full medical and mental health assessment at a Department of Health Services Medical Hub or at juvenile hall if detained. Youth also receive any necessary urgent medical care, including reproductive health services such as emergency contraception and HIV prophylaxis, which both must be administered within certain timelines to ensure effectiveness.

Following the expedited response over the first 72-hour period, both the specialized Probation and/or DCFS units and the community-based advocate remain connected to the youth. The community-based advocate serves as a support for the youth, guiding them through interactions with the various county agencies, ensuring that their voice is informing decision making, and providing case management and crisis management assistance as needed. The advocate provides these supports for a minimum of 90 days, and longer if needed. The specialized Probation and/or DCFS units also provide enhanced engagement and intensive ongoing case management services.

WITHIN 90 MINUTES:

- ✓ Law enforcement reports abuse
- ✓ Law enforcement takes youth to staging area
- ✓ Community-based advocate arrives & engages with youth
- ✓ All assess for medical and other needs
- ✓ All address youth's immediate needs

WITHIN 72 HOURS:

- ✓ Youth receives full medical and mental health assessment
- ✓ Identify roles of child-serving agencies
- ✓ Ensure youth's basic needs are met
- ✓ Hold MDT meeting to safety plan & determine where youth will stay
- ✓ Advocate checks in with youth to ensure their safety

*“They sent me to [placement]. Well, first we went to the clinic, which is a routine thing to get checked out or whatever. Then we went to [placement], and I was just basically there. But the thing is, I felt, like, how **me and my advocate really bonded**. Even though my family wasn't there to see me, she was.*

*She was there that night with me through the whole process, and then she even came the next morning and talked with me, so it was just having someone there because the first couple of nights, [at placement] I'm just like - 'You know what? Forget it. I'm leaving.' But just having her there and just being able to talk to someone helped. I'm just like, you know, **at least someone's expecting me to do better**, knowing I can do better. So, it's like, why not stay for her?”*

-Youth

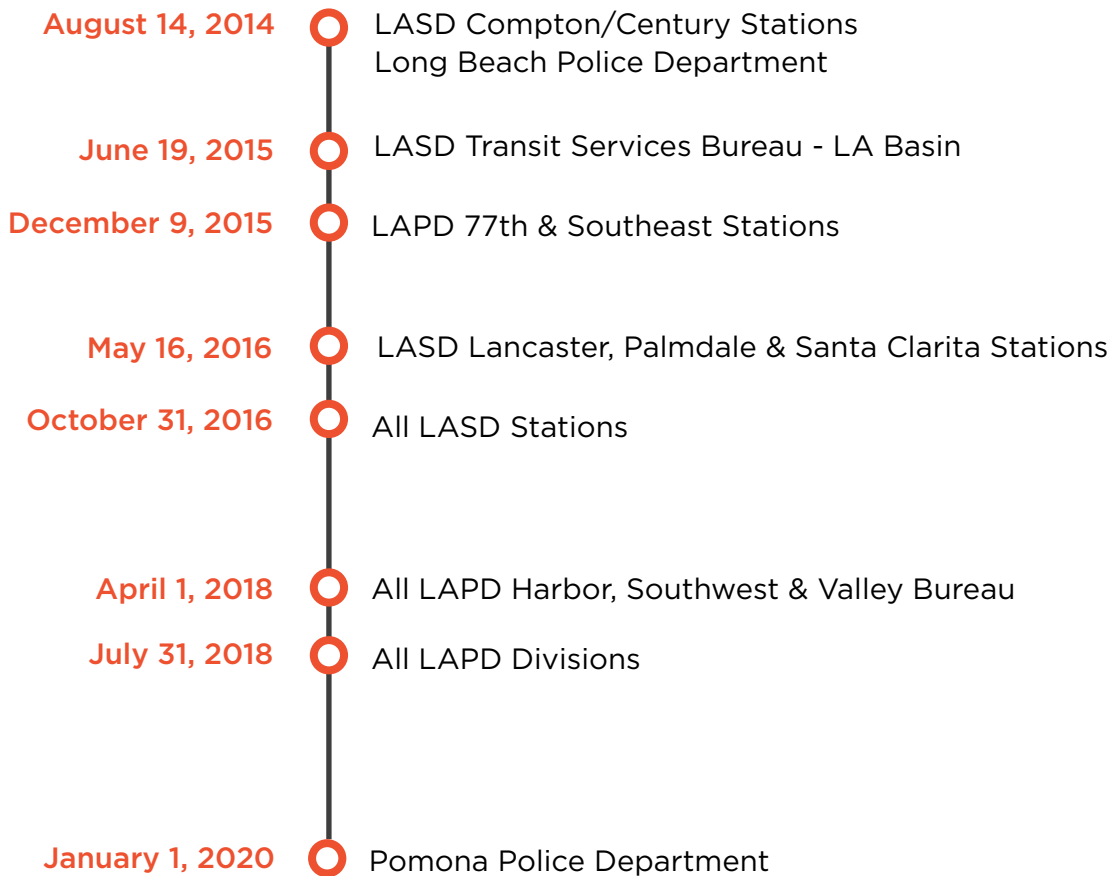
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL

In 2014, the Protocol was implemented in pilot areas, consisting of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Compton and Century Stations, and the Long Beach Police Department. In late 2015, implementation of the Protocol was expanded to the Los Angeles Police Department's 77th and Southeast Divisions.

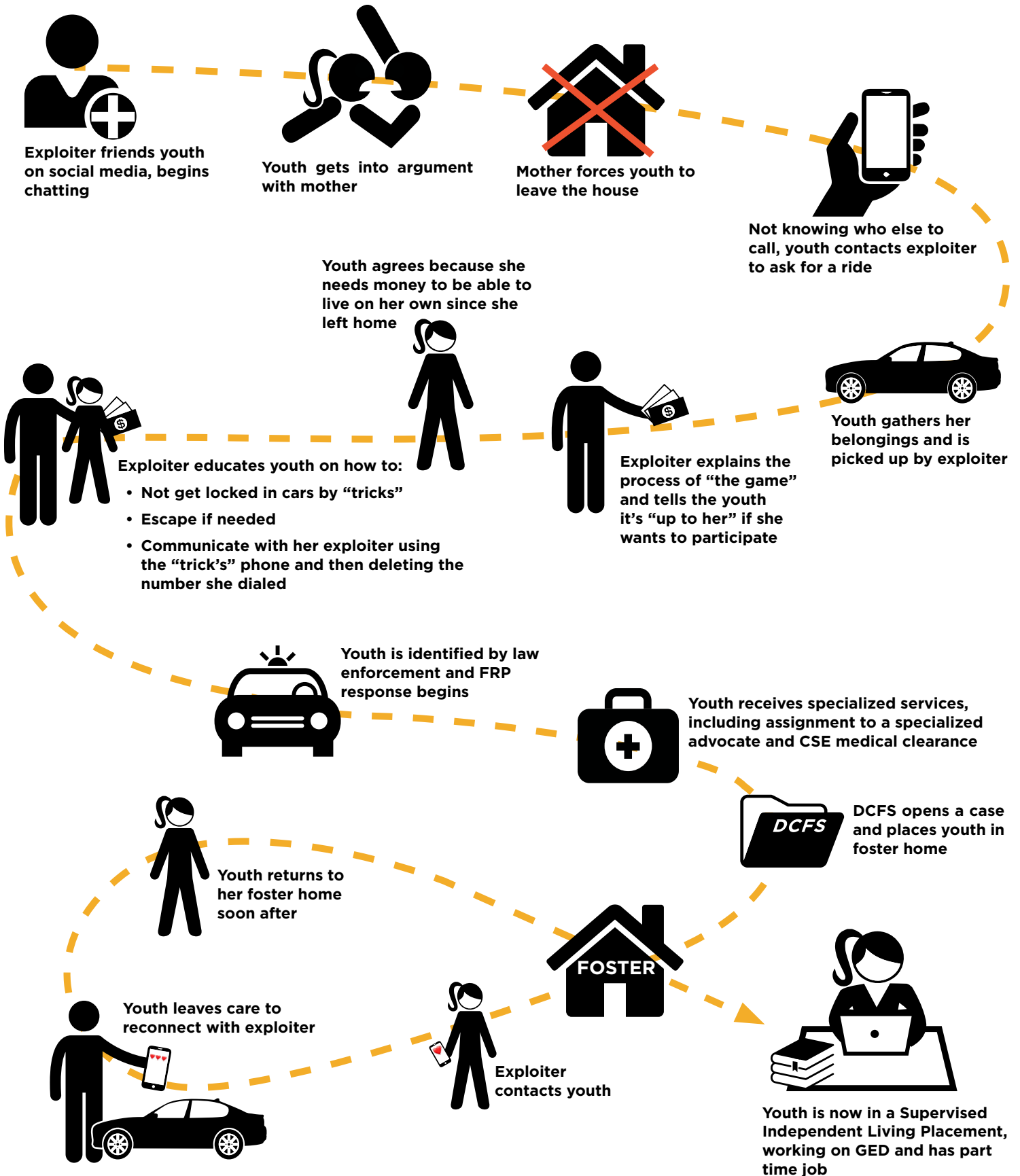
By the end of 2016, the Protocol was rolled out to all LASD stations. By July 2018, the Protocol was rolled out to all of the remaining LAPD divisions. And in January 2020, Pomona Police Department came on board. The County plans to expand the Protocol to cover local police departments, fire departments, and medical first responders in 2021.

To facilitate continuous problem solving, oversight, and improvement after implementation of the Protocol, the County agencies and the providers implementing the Protocol, in partnership with the National Center for Youth Law, formed the Multi-Agency Review Committee (MARC). The MARC meets regularly to analyze data, discuss challenges and ongoing needs, amend the Protocol as necessary, assess the sufficiency of resources, and report to the Board of Supervisors about the progress of Protocol and its implementation. For example, the MARC has spearheaded and planned the efforts to expand implementation of the Protocol beyond the pilot areas. To facilitate this expansion, the MARC is planning to create a briefing video, along with a one-pager, to highlight basic steps of the Protocol for law enforcement agencies. The MARC is also planning to develop a three-hour virtual training presentation to engage remaining police departments by summer 2021.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION TIMELINE



THE ROAD TO AND FROM EXPLOITATION - AS DESCRIBED BY A YOUTH



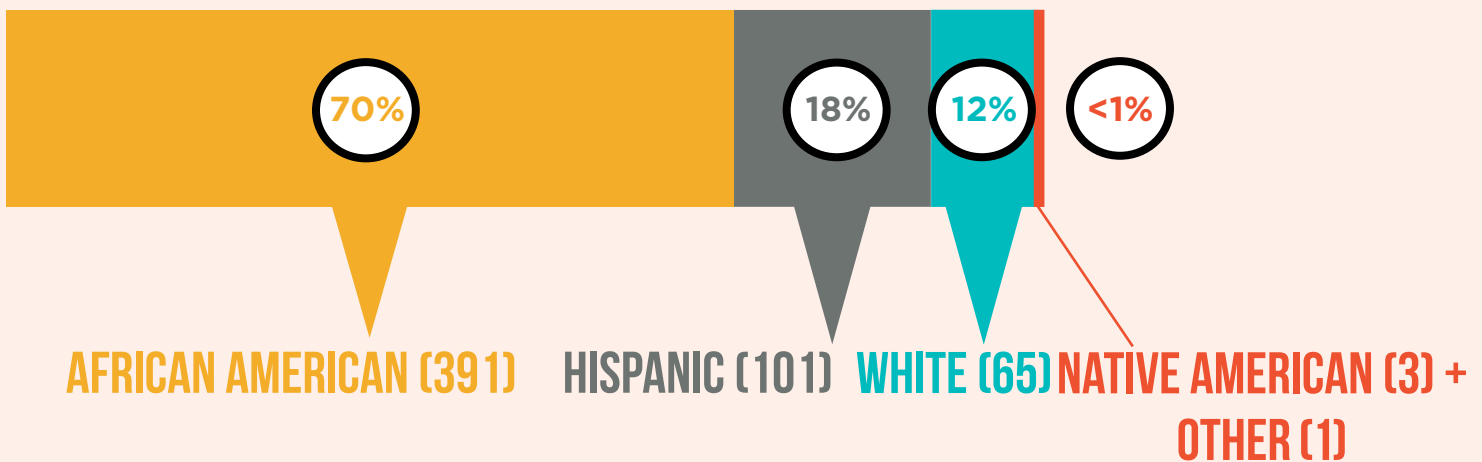
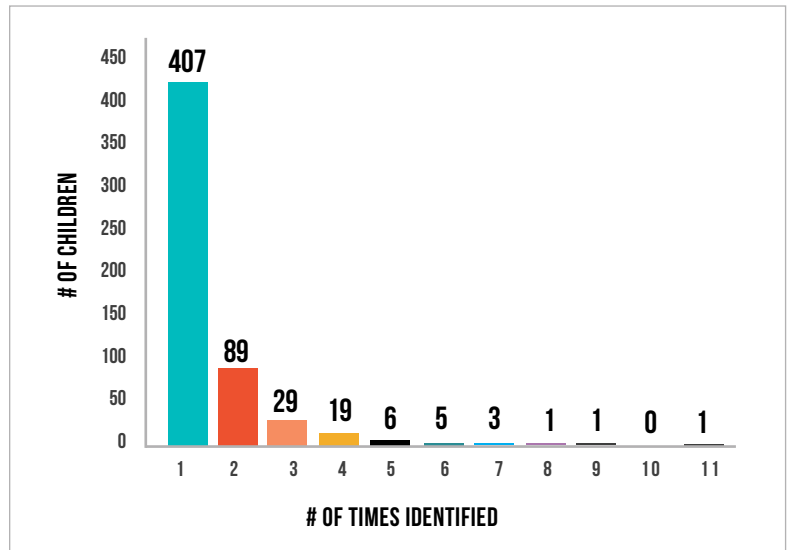
This report presents data from the first six years of implementation of the First Responder Protocol, from August 14, 2014, to August 14, 2020. Data contained in this report was compiled from the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the Probation Case Management System (PCMS), and the First Responder Intake Document that community-based advocates are responsible for completing.

OUTCOMES: DEMOGRAPHICS

561 unique children identified

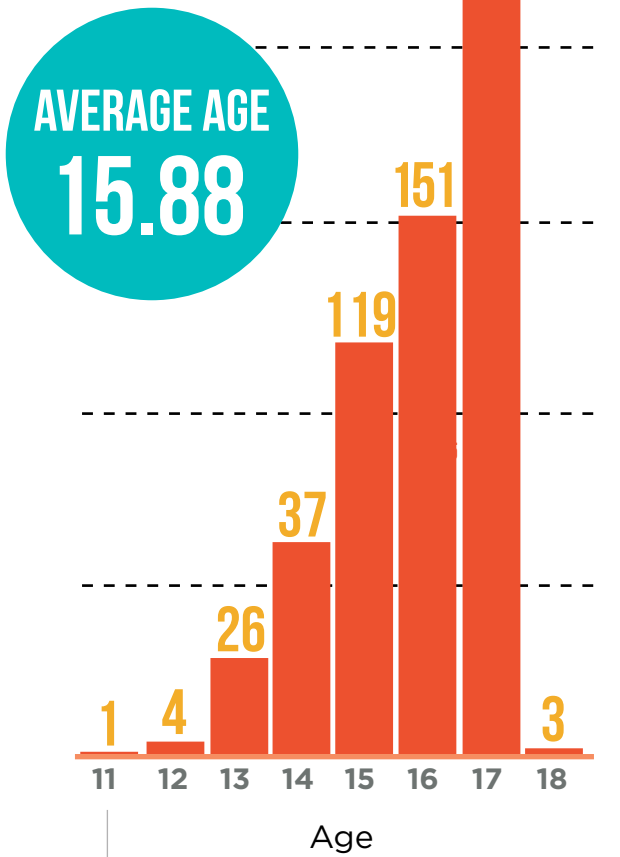
861 total identifications

- 407** children identified one time only
- 89** children identified twice
- 29** children identified three times
- 19** children identified four times
- 6** children identified five times
- 11** children identified six or more times

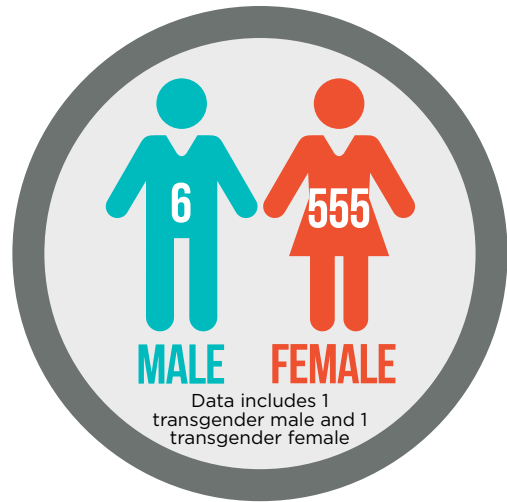


**CSE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS
AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH**

AGE AT FIRST IDENTIFICATION



AN ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD CHILD WAS IDENTIFIED



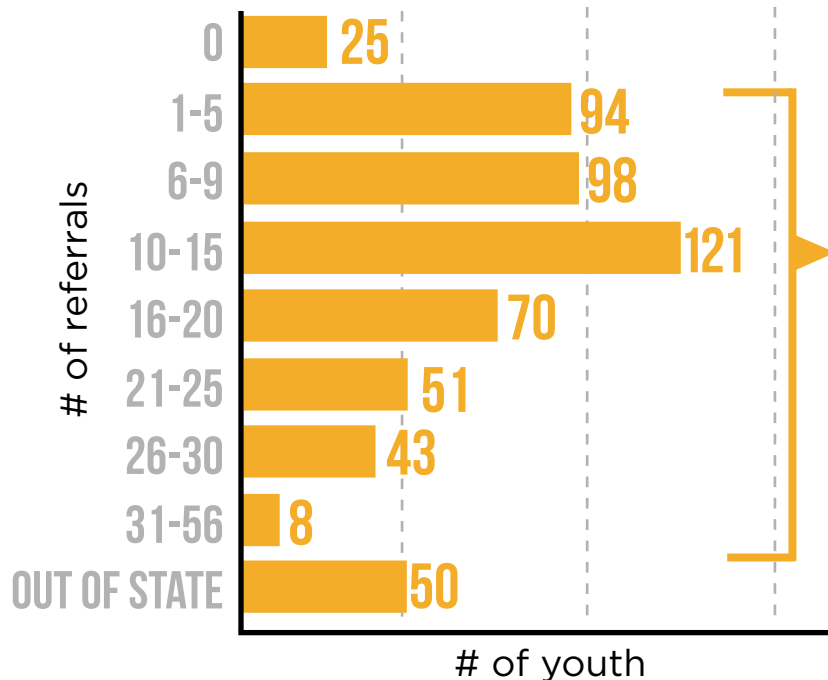
“The collaborative partnerships developed through the work we do with CSEC have been the strongest and most committed I have seen in my County career. The First Responder Protocol is based on collaborative relationships and the partnerships we have built are instrumental in making a difference in the lives of the children we serve. It is great to be part of this team, and know that I, or more importantly a child, can reach out to a partnering agency and they will immediately be available to assist.”

-Department of Children and Family Services

OUTCOMES: CHILD WELFARE HISTORY

These figures are based on the number of referrals for allegations of abuse or neglect made to the Child Protection Hotline. Referrals to the Hotline may include multiple allegations. This data does not account for whether the allegations contained in the referral were substantiated, unsubstantiated, or inconclusive. Child welfare history could not be determined for out-of-state cases.

CHILD WELFARE REFERRALS WHEN FIRST IDENTIFIED THROUGH FRP

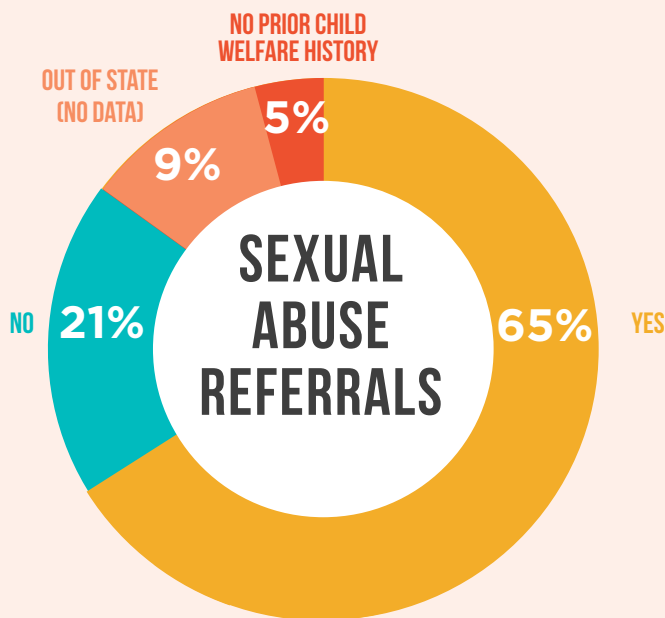


*One sensitive case omitted from data

6,437 TOTAL REFERRALS FOR 561 CHILDREN

95%
of children have a prior child welfare referral

AN AVERAGE OF
13.3
CHILD WELFARE REFERRALS PER CHILD

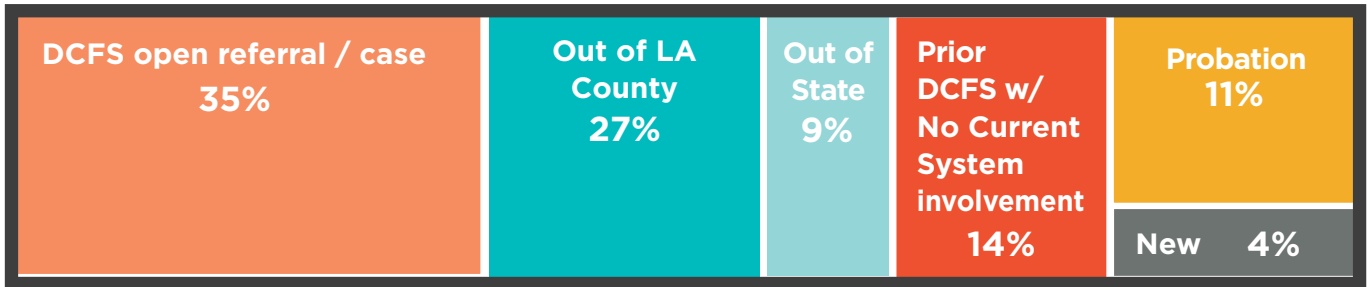


*One sensitive case omitted from data

Children who have been CSE are likely to have experienced prior sexual abuse.

OUTCOMES: IDENTIFICATION DATA

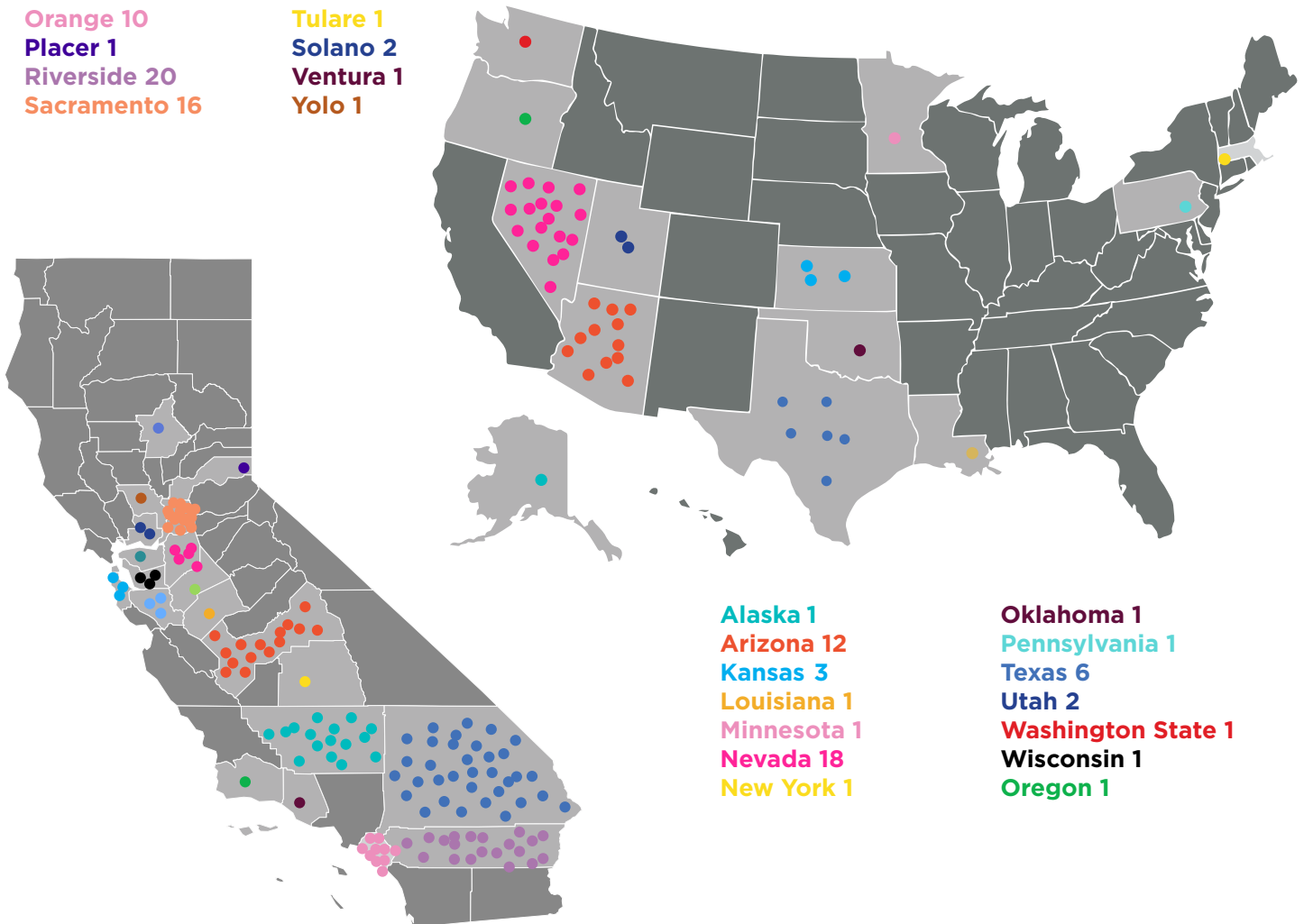
SYSTEM JURISDICTION AT TIME OF FIRST IDENTIFICATION THROUGH FRP



(No current or former system involvement)

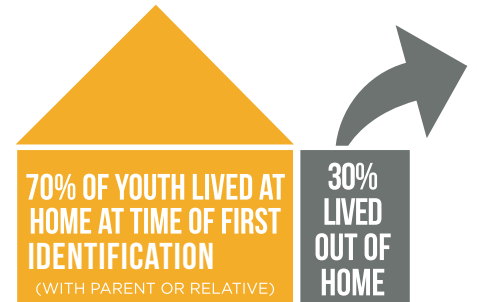
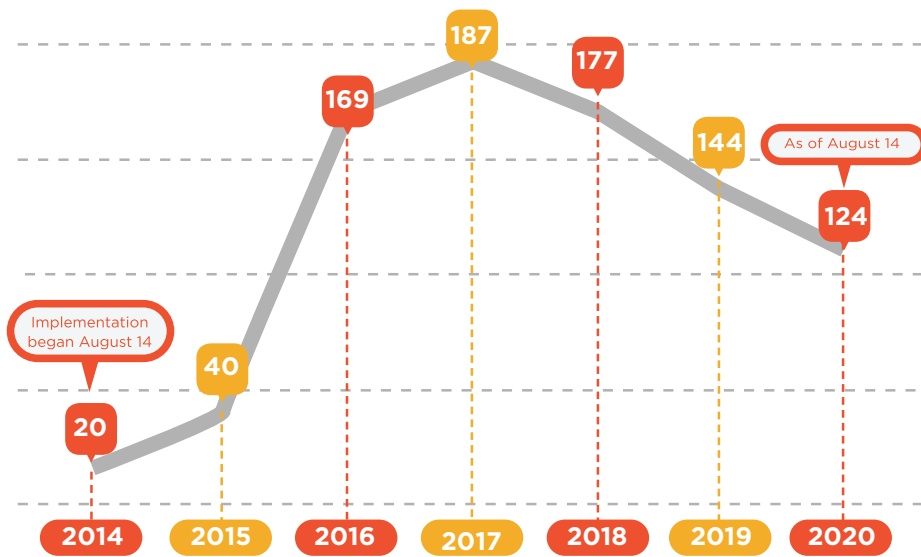
- Alameda 3
- Butte 1
- Contra Costa 3
- Fresno 15
- Kern 16
- Merced 1
- Orange 10
- Placer 1
- Riverside 20
- Sacramento 16

- San Bernardino 36
- San Francisco 3
- San Joaquin 5
- Santa Barbara 1
- Santa Clara 2
- Stanislaus 1
- Tulare 1
- Solano 2
- Ventura 1
- Yolo 1

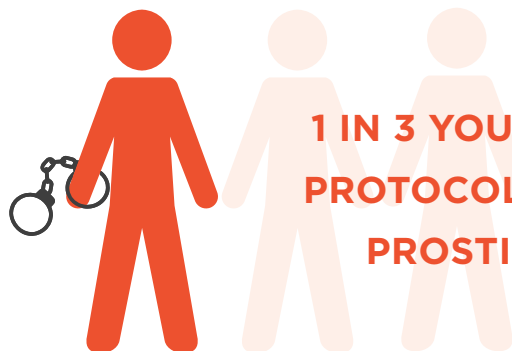
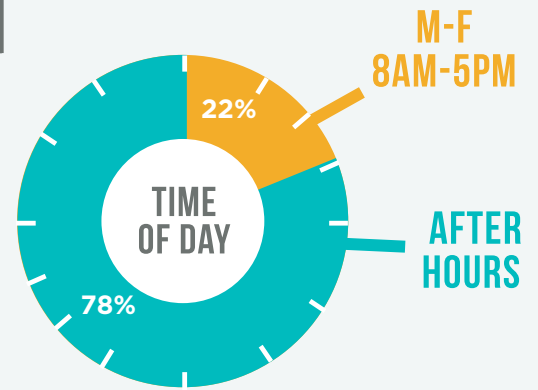
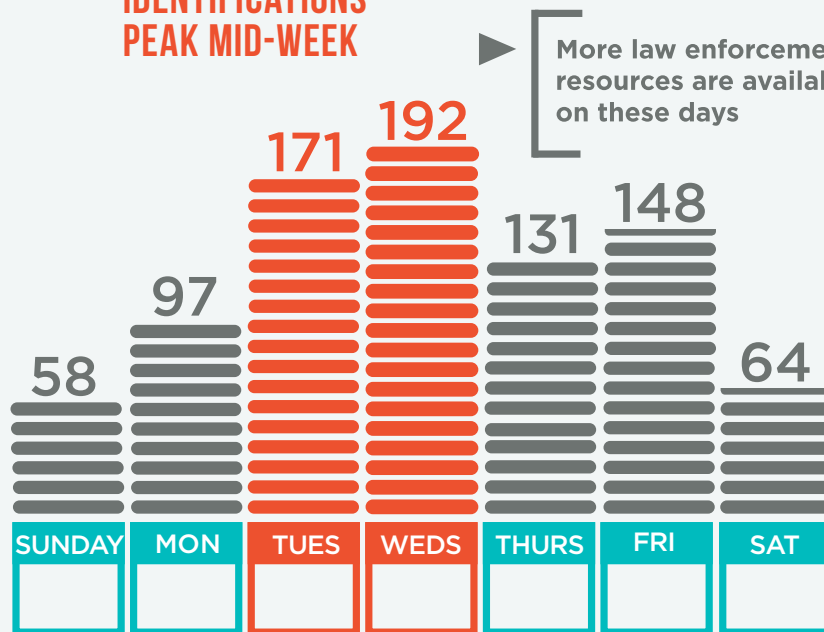


This report does not capture data related to dual-involvement. Many of these youth may have been involved in both DCFS and Probation.

FRP IDENTIFICATIONS BY CALENDAR YEAR

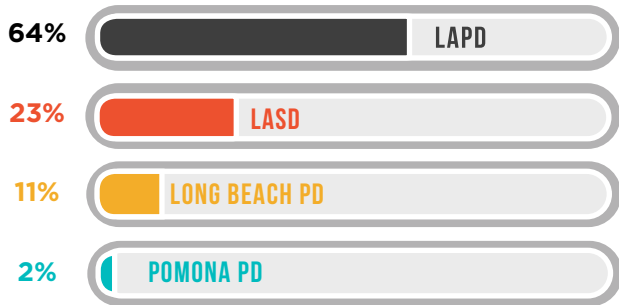


IDENTIFICATIONS PEAK MID-WEEK



1 IN 3 YOUTH IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE PROTOCOL WERE LATER ARRESTED FOR PROSTITUTION AFTER TURNING 18

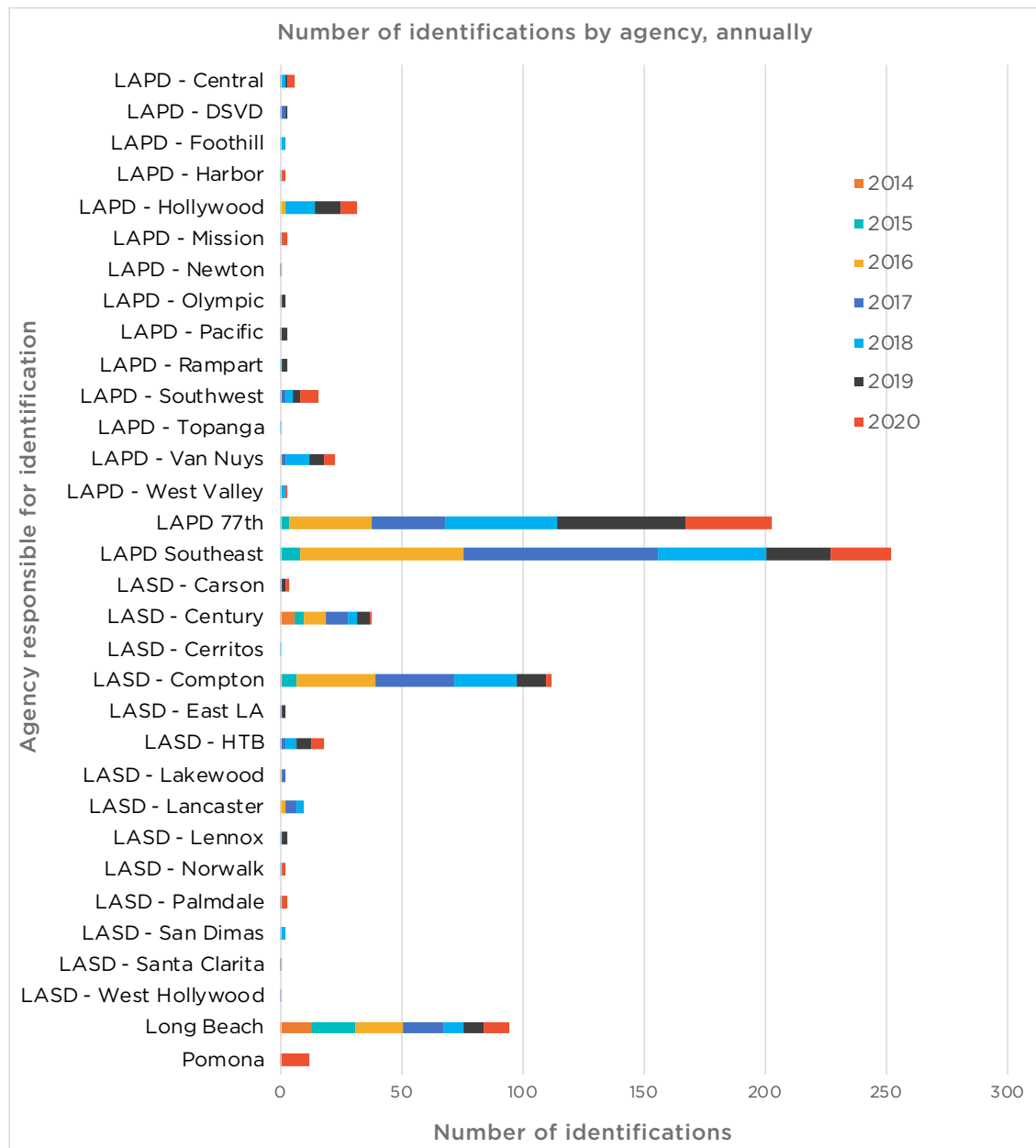
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY INVOLVED IN IDENTIFICATION



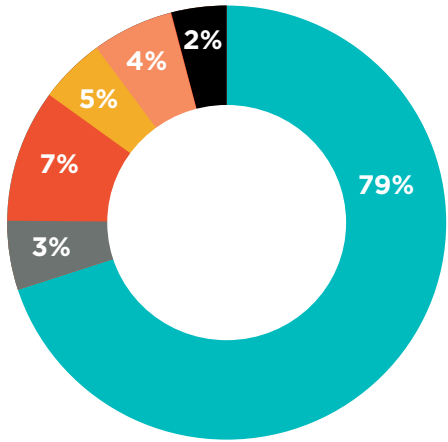
“The First Responder Protocol has served as the foundation for our evolving policies and practices when dealing with commercially sexually exploited youth. It established a starting point for our ongoing collaboration with DCFS, the Probation Department and a team of dedicated service providers. Together, we share the priority of identifying and caring for CSEC youth, while holding their exploiters accountable, and the FRP is the product of our combined effort.”

**-Human Trafficking Bureau,
LA Regional Human Trafficking Task Force
Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department**

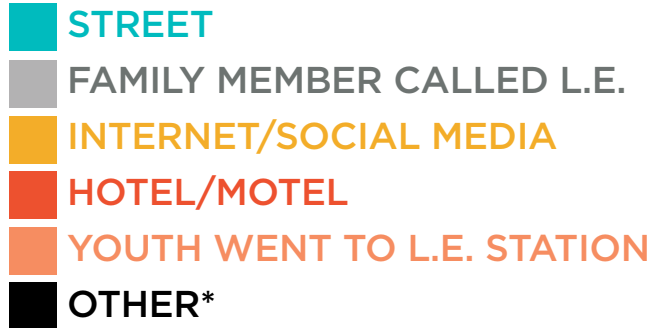
FURTHER BREAKDOWN OF AGENCIES INVOLVED IN IDENTIFICATION



HOW/WHERE YOUTH WERE IDENTIFIED

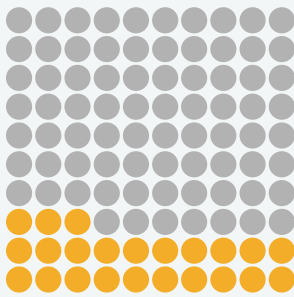


36 YOUTH CONTACTED LAW ENFORCEMENT ON THEIR OWN

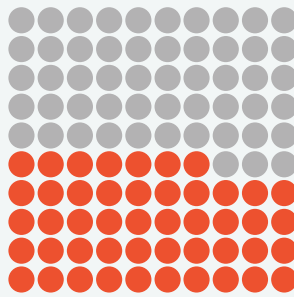


*Including 911 call, arrest, hospital call, traffic stop, train station, Metro, track missing phone, and unknown

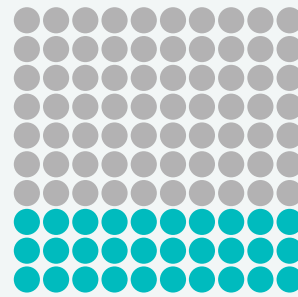
DID YOUTH PROVIDE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TRAFFICKER?



23% YES



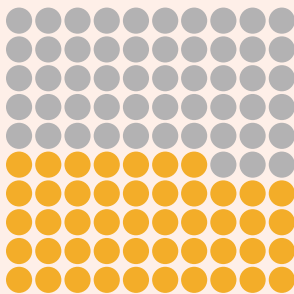
47% NO



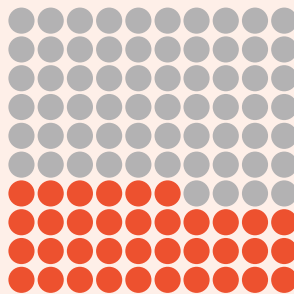
30% NOT NOTED

Youth identified trafficker by name or alias/AKA

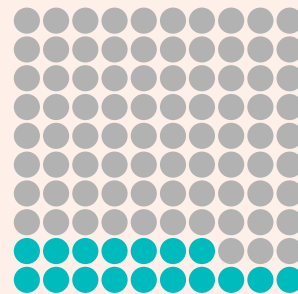
IF YOUTH PROVIDED IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TRAFFICKER, WAS THE TRAFFICKER ARRESTED?



47% YES



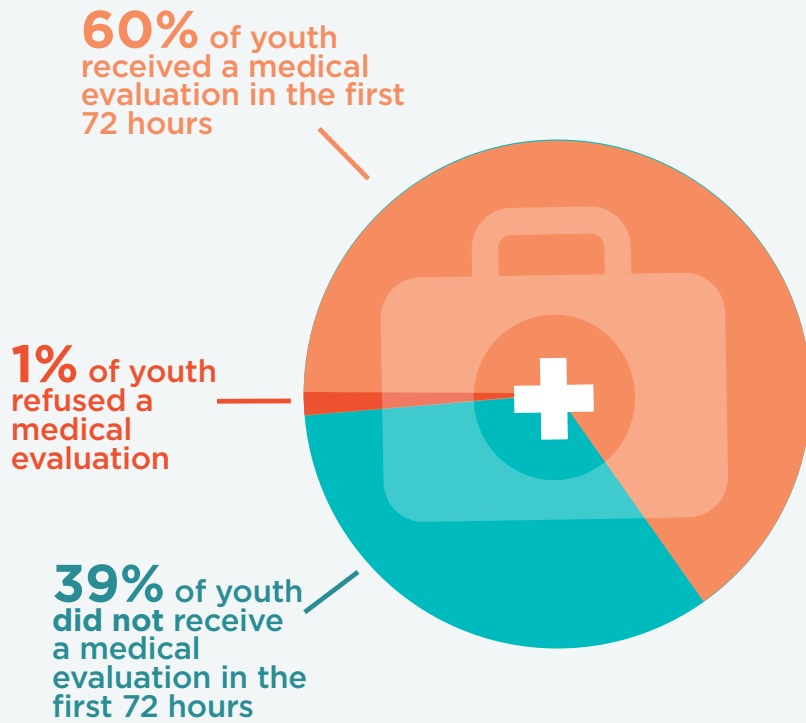
36% NO



17% NOT NOTED

This only includes on-the-spot arrests, and does not include arrests of traffickers following an investigation

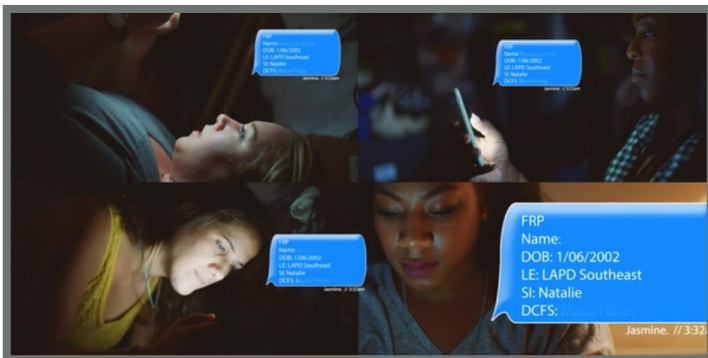
HEALTH CARE PROVIDED



CSE MEDICAL CLEARANCE:

- Offer sexual assault evidence collection exam, if indicated
- Brief medical history
- Symptom-targeted physical exam
- Sexually Transmitted Infection testing
- Presumptive treatment for gonorrhea and chlamydia
- Offer emergency contraception, if indicated
- Offer HIV post-exposure prophylaxis, if indicated
- Provide condoms
- Begin discussion of contraception options

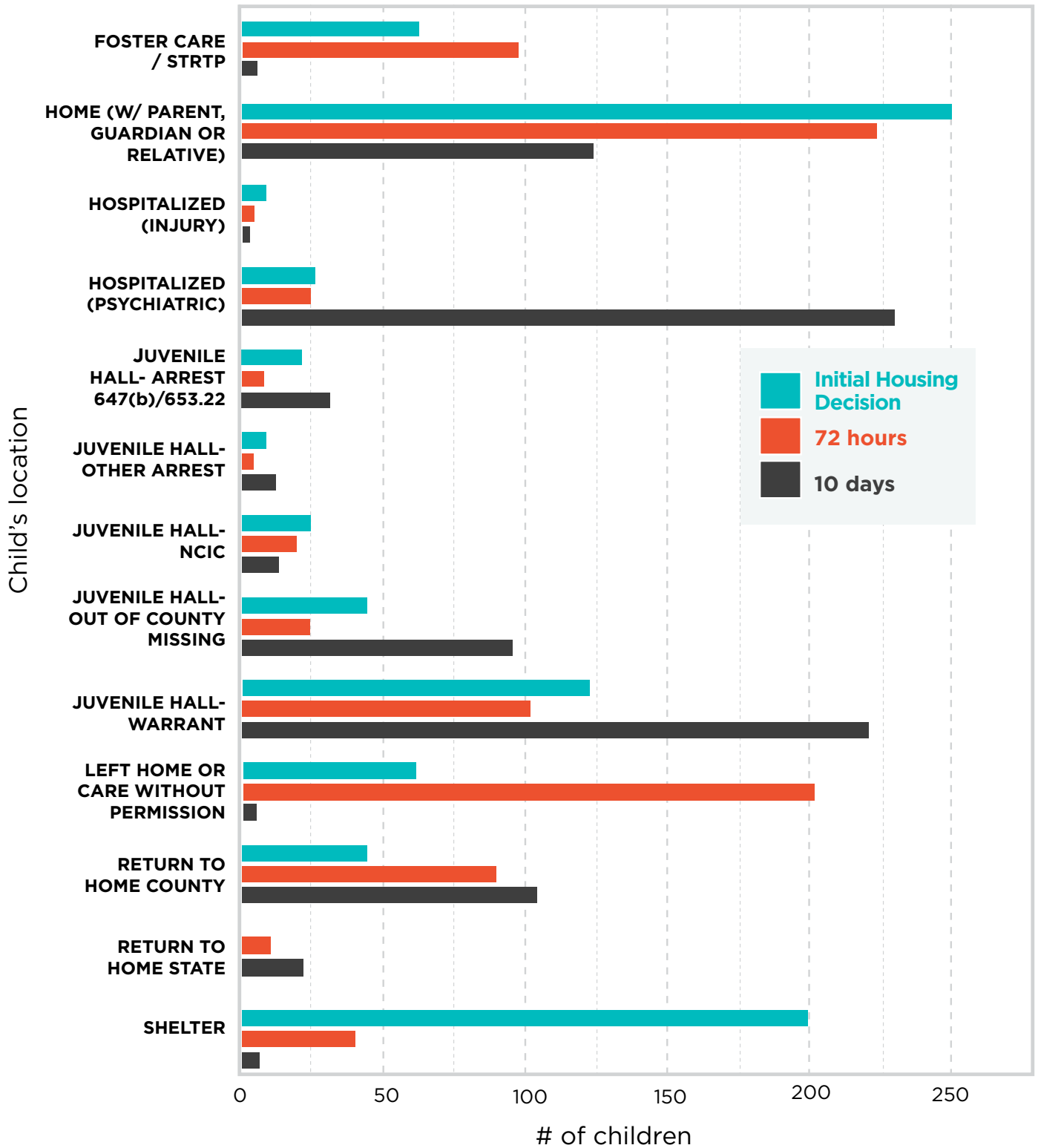
Note: the youth can consent or withhold consent for any aspect of the clearance exam



“Working with the CSEC MARC has been an incredibly collaborative experience, with professionals from different agencies coming together ready to think outside the box and break down any bureaucratic barriers that keep us from meeting the needs of the human trafficking victims we serve. We have made great strides in ensuring these youth receive the preventative care and medical treatment they need as quickly as possible.”

-Department of Health Services

CHILD LOCATION OVER TIME



LESSONS LEARNED

BUILDING AND DEVELOPING THE PROTOCOL



YOUTH AND SURVIVORS FIRST

This Protocol was designed with the help of people with lived experience. Youth and survivors helped advocates and county agencies conceive of a partnered process that involved both agencies as well as community-based partners. As the Protocol is implemented, agencies and community-based partners must continue to engage youth and survivors to ensure that the Protocol continues to meet their needs and adapt when it doesn't.



LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Law enforcement training is essential. It increases opportunities to identify potential victims and develop relationships that can support future safety and stability, providing a deeper understanding of the common risks, vulnerabilities, and resiliencies of youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation, how trauma and trauma bonding manifest in youth, and how to engage and respond to youth in different stages of change.



COORDINATED AND REALISTIC EXPANSION

Expansion must be realistic. The sheer size of Los Angeles County offers unique challenges. Meeting the 90-minute response time will likely prove to be more difficult as the Protocol expands. Additionally, partnering with not just one, but two very large law enforcement agencies, along with 46 independent police departments, each with pre-established processes, is onerous. Ensuring all partner agencies including DCFS, Probation, and the various advocacy agencies have the capacity to scale is also vital. Further, once the Protocol was rolled out in pilot areas, it became clear that traffickers shifted some of their operations to other parts of the County to avoid detection and intervention. This highlighted the need for expansion of the Protocol to the entire County, as well as constant communication and collaboration across the County agencies and between counties and states.

The sheer size of Los Angeles County offers unique challenges



LESSONS LEARNED

BUILDING AND DEVELOPING THE PROTOCOL



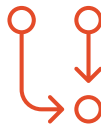
LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

On a systemic level, implementation of the Protocol requires an emphasis on building capacity within and across systems, not focusing on individuals to guide the process. This requires both buy-in from leadership, as well as support of staff on the ground. In addition, memorializing processes is critical to ensure that they are carried out consistently over time, even when there are personnel changes. To promote sustainability, staff must receive thorough training and supervision, as well as ongoing support to address vicarious trauma and burnout.



PARTNERSHIP AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

The First Responder Protocol recognizes that no one agency can meet the needs of a child or youth who has been commercially sexually exploited. The response draws on the expertise of each of the agencies and community-based partners to address the holistic needs of the children and youth. Successful implementation requires relationship building and partnerships among the many agencies and community-based organizations. These close relationships allow partners to be frank and honest about unmet needs and challenges they are facing in implementation, and where they need more support from other partners or external actors. Close partnerships and defined roles and responsibilities in an operational agreement also help to keep all those involved accountable to their roles.



PROTOCOL OPEN FOR ADAPTATION

Throughout implementation, numerous unanticipated needs and obstacles have surfaced. This has required flexibility and creative problem solving, as well as a willingness to adapt rather than be wedded to a particular approach. This has allowed for amendments and adaptations to improve the way we engage and serve children and youth who have been commercially sexually exploited or are at risk of exploitation.

LESSONS LEARNED

IMPROVING SERVICE PROVISION FOR YOUTH



COORDINATED AND IMMEDIATE ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring early engagement of youth immediately upon identification to begin to build rapport and trust is essential. Successful engagement with youth at the time of identification requires a commitment to meeting the youth where they are and addressing their immediate needs. For many youth, the time immediately preceding and following their identification can be very stressful—it may be their first interaction with law enforcement, they may be hungry, tired, confused, or scared about what is to come. They may feel upset or ambivalent about being separated from their exploiter, to whom they often feel attached as a result of trauma bonding, and who likely instructed them not to cooperate or trust law enforcement. Providing a coordinated response by all public agencies—law enforcement, DCFS or Probation, and health care—and community-based advocates orients the youth to a teaming approach and helps support youth during the immediate post-identification period and beyond.



COORDINATION WITH OTHER COUNTIES AND STATES

The data from the past six years shows that there has consistently been a significant number of youth identified by the Protocol who are brought to Los Angeles County from other counties or states. Once identified, this can present challenges to ensure that youth are properly housed and supported while in Los Angeles, safely transported to their county or state of origin, and that appropriate services are in place for them in their home county or state once they return. This requires ongoing coordination and collaboration beyond County borders to ensure that the youths' needs are communicated and met in a comprehensive and timely manner. Developing processes across jurisdictions in connection with the Protocol, as well as identifying a consistent point of contact in other jurisdictions from which youth are frequently trafficked, is helpful for facilitating this process.



CONNECTING YOUTH WITH APPROPRIATE SHORT-TERM HOUSING OPTIONS

While in the past the County relied on juvenile hall as a short-term housing option for youth identified under the Protocol who were involved with Probation or were from outside Los Angeles County, a true service-based response requires appropriate, safe, short-term housing options outside of detention. Therefore, as the County has shifted to a more victim-centered approach, it has increased the focus on identifying alternatives to detention facilities which take into account youth's needs and preferences.

LESSONS LEARNED

IMPROVING SERVICE PROVISION FOR YOUTH



INCREASED SUPPORTS FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

Data from the first four years of implementation of the Protocol showed that nearly one out of every five youth identified by the Protocol went on to be arrested for a prostitution-related offense after turning 18. Assessing the data two years later, this number jumped to one out of every three youth. While the Protocol is helping the County to proactively identify youth experiencing CSE, many youth continue to be exploited after turning 18. This means the availability of services should not end once a youth turns 18. Additional supports should be put in place to better support youth after turning 18, including specialized advocacy, increased transitional housing options, and assistance with obtaining sustainable employment.



Los Angeles County created a “soft room” in the Human Trafficking Bureau, which is used as a landing place for children and youth identified through the Protocol. The soft room has comfortable furniture, including a couch, and youth-friendly decorations. The soft room is a place for youth to rest, get a change of clothes and a snack, and meet with their advocates and specialized workers.

“The monthly Multi-Agency Review Committee (MARC) meetings have been a critical part of the Protocol’s success. Recognizing that we are all here for the same reason - to identify and support youth who have been commercially sexually exploited - we have worked together to identify what is working about the Protocol and put our heads together to adapt and improve the Protocol as necessary.”

-National Center for Youth Law

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COLLABORATIVE AGENCIES



THANKS TO MEMBERS OF THE MULTI-AGENCY REVIEW COMMITTEE

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Adela Estrada | DCFS |
| Aaron Alu | LBPD |
| Allison Newcombe | National Center for Youth Law |
| Amber Davies | Saving Innocence |
| Angela Torres | Pomona PD |
| Caroline Lee | LAPD |
| Dan Stanley | LASD |
| Diana Hernandez | Pomona PD |
| Emilio Mendoza | DCFS |
| Erin French | National Center for Youth Law |
| Ester Yu | ZOE |
| Eva Reina | DCFS |
| Gina Hamilton | DCFS |
| Janet Arnold-Clarke | Department of Health Services |
| Jasmine Edwards | Saving Innocence |
| Jeff Walker | LASD |
| Julia Vest | Probation Department |
| Kate Walker Brown | National Center for Youth Law |
| Loretta Worthington | Department of Health Services |
| Mae Ackerman-Brimberg | National Center for Youth Law |
| Mario Gallegos | LAPD |
| Meiko Taylor | ZOE |
| Michelle Guymon | Probation Department |
| Raquel Trujillo | DCFS |
| Sadiyyah Abdul | Probation Department |
| Tomas Vallejo | Probation Department |

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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CREATED BY

