



# *Sex, Lies, and Betrayal:* Gang Culture and Sex Trafficking



Georgia Division of Family and  
Children Services

Office of Prevention and Family Support

"This project was supported in part by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CFDA 93.590). Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CFDA 93.590)."



# *Welcome*

Latera Davis, LCSW  
Office of Victim and Volunteer Services



# Terminal Performance Objective

The purpose of this presentation is to educate and raise awareness on the impact of sexual exploitation of females within Gangs. The link between child maltreatment, sex trafficking and gangs will be explored. This presentation will discuss criminal street Gang culture and the emerging trend of domestic minor sex trafficking being used as a means to exploit females and support criminal related activities.



# Enabling Objectives

Participants will:

- ✓ Define Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and Criminal Street Gangs
- ✓ Examine Anti-Gang and Trafficking Laws
- ✓ Discuss the risk factors of victims and gang related sex trafficking
- ✓ Discuss the link between sex trafficking and criminal gang activities
- ✓ Describe recruitment, coercion, and control methods within gangs as it relates to sex trafficking victims
- ✓ Explore the challenges of complex trauma, learned loyalty, and a victim-centered response to identify and support gang-related sex trafficking victims
- ✓ Identify and explore approaches to combat gangs and sex trafficking
- ✓ Identify a collaborative approach and trauma focused services response



# Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000)

- Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sexual act;
- The commercial sexual act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, in which the person performing such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services by means of **force, fraud, or coercion.**



# Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2015)

“(D) the establishment of child human trafficking victim witness safety, assistance, and relocation programs that encourage cooperation with law enforcement investigations of crimes of child human trafficking by leveraging existing resources and delivering child human trafficking victims’ services through coordination with—

- “(i) child advocacy centers;
- “(ii) social service agencies;
- “(iii) State governmental health service agencies;
- “(iv) housing agencies;
- “(v) legal services agencies; and
- “(vi) non-governmental organizations and shelter service providers with substantial experience in delivering services to victims of child human trafficking;

“(C) collaborative efforts with child advocacy centers, child welfare agencies, shelters, and non-governmental organizations to provide services to victims and encourage cooperation with law enforcement; and

“(4) the establishment or enhancement of victims’ services programs for victims of child human trafficking, which offer services including—

- “(A) residential care, including temporary or long-term placement, as appropriate;
- “(B) 24-hour emergency social services response systems; and
- “(C) counseling and case management services.



# Georgia Legislature

**The Safe Harbor Bill** provides funding for restorative services like safe housing, trauma counseling and medical treatment to child victims of sex trafficking without raising or creating any new taxes.

**Sexual Exploitation of a Child** was defined under Georgia law (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5(4)) and DFCS policy as reportable by Mandated Reporters (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5(b)).

## **Bills being proposed in 2017**

[HB 86](#) (Oliver-82nd) Adds acts involving trafficking a person for sexual servitude to the definition of sexual abuse in the code section delineating requirements for mandatory reporting of child abuse. STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill now rests in House Rules Committee.

[HB 341](#) (Reeves-34th) Among other things, the bill adds patronizing and soliciting to the list of crimes which qualify as human trafficking offenses, revises provisions regarding the model notice for the human trafficking hotline, and clarifies provisions relating to the probation portion of a split sentence imposed for certain sexual offenses. STATUS: House Hopper.

[SB 39](#) (Unterman-45th) Increases the penalty provisions relating to pimping and pandering. The bill also requires registration on the State Sexual Offender Registry when an individual is convicted for the second time for pandering. STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee this Tuesday.



# Commercial Sexual Exploitation

*Commercial Sexual Acts include:*

- Pimp controlled street prostitution
- Escort services
- Residential and underground brothels
- Cyber-pornography or internet based exploitation
- Private parties
- Familial Pimping
- Erotic/nude massages
- Stripping
- Gang based prostitution





# Criminal Street Gang

The federal definition of gang as used by the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is [\[1\]](#):

- An association of **three or more individuals**;
- Members collectively identify themselves by **adopting a group identity**
  - common name, slogan, identifying sign, symbol, tattoo or other physical marking, style or color of clothing, hairstyle, hand sign or graffiti;
- Whose purpose in part is to **engage in criminal activity** and which **uses violence** or intimidation to further its criminal objectives.
- The association may also possess some of the following characteristics:
  - The members may employ rules for joining and operating within the association.
  - The members may meet on a recurring basis.
  - The association may provide physical protection of its members from others.
  - The association may seek to exercise control over a particular geographic location or region, or it may simply defend its perceived interests against rivals.
  - The association may have an identifiable structure.



# Criminal Street Gangs

- Estimated 1 million gang members who belong to more than 20,000 gangs are criminally active in all 50 U.S. states. (National Gang Threat Assessment of 2009)
- The U.S. Government has prosecuted over 200 cases of gang based commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution, or human trafficking.
- **3,598 cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2014** and 973 cases were reported in the first three months of 2015.
  - However, victims do not frequently report victimization because of shame or fear, and thus this number is likely an underestimation of sex trafficking cases in the United States.
- **Approximately 15 percent of respondents to the street gang survey stated that gangs in their jurisdiction engage in human trafficking.** This is an underestimation for two reasons: the aforementioned under reporting, and misclassifications whereby gang-involved cases are cited as prostitution, rather than sex trafficking, when a minor is involved.



# Gang Types

- **Street Gangs:** *Street gangs are criminal organizations that are formed on the street and operate in neighborhoods throughout the United States. Neighborhood-based gangs are confined to specific neighborhoods and jurisdictions, with no known leadership beyond their communities. National-level gangs have a presence in multiple jurisdictions.*
- **Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs):** *OMGs are ongoing organizations, associations or groups of three or more persons with a common interest or activity characterized by the commission of, or involvement in, a pattern of criminal conduct. Members must possess and be able to operate a motorcycle to achieve and maintain membership within the group.*
- **Prison Gangs:** *A prison gang is a criminal organization that originates in the penal system and continues to operate within correctional facilities throughout the United States. Prison gangs are self-perpetuating criminal entities that also continue their operations outside of prison.*



# Case Examples

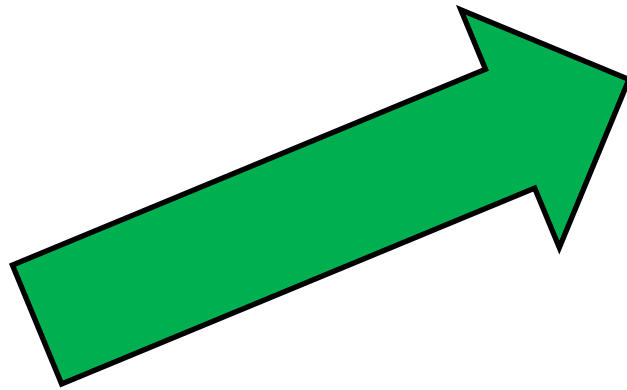
According to the Los Angeles, California, District Attorney's Office, a Long Beach gang member engaged in human trafficking in which the victim was forced to provide sex for money and give all profits to the gang. If the victim did not make \$500 a day, she was threatened, beaten, and cut with a knife.

According to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a Thetford Avenue Buffalos gang member from Dorchester, Massachusetts, was sentenced to 153 months in prison and five years of supervised release for sex trafficking of minors. The gang member photographed a 14- and a 15-year-old girl in suggestive poses and, using their photographs, created online advertisements for commercial sex.

In February 2015, three MS-13 members or associates were arrested for human trafficking in Fairfax County, Virginia. These arrests are consistent with a reported increase in gang-related human trafficking in Northern Virginia. Over the past year, 20 percent of the leads for the Fairfax County Police Department's Human Trafficking Unit were gang related



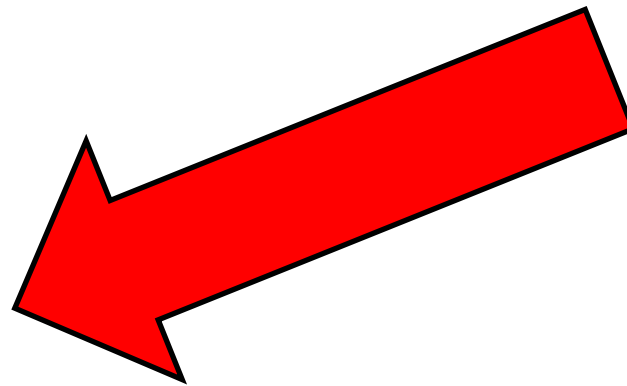
# Financial Gain



## High Profit



## Low Risk





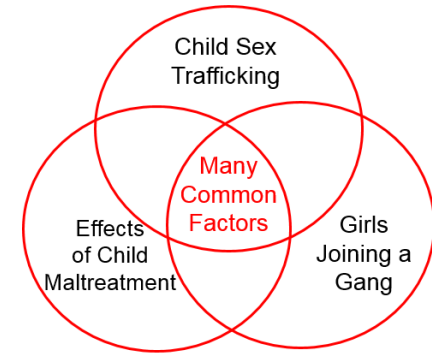
# Risk Factors and Victimology



# Risk Factors



When youth are **beaten physically and molested sexually**, their **odds of gang involvement are four times higher** than youth who do not experience maltreatment.



A history of **maltreatment** has a **higher correlation** to predict gang involvement than **lack of support, communication, education, and supervision**.

- In a 2016 study conducted using data from Illinois' Department of Children and Families Services, researchers found **61% of sex trafficking victims had a previous allegation of maltreatment**, and
- 28% had at least one entry into out-of-home care prior to becoming sex trafficking victims

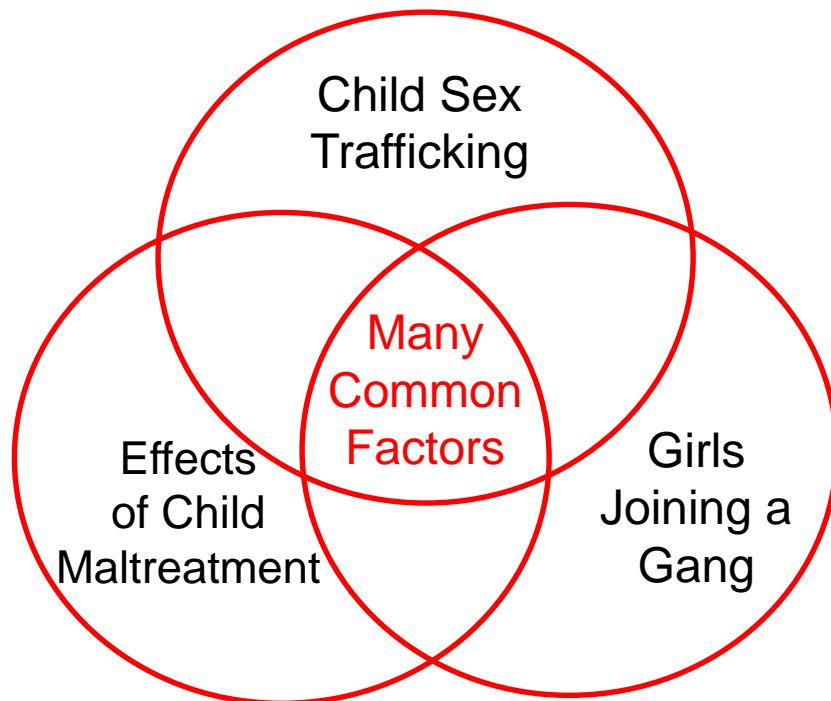




# Risk Factors

## Child Sex Trafficking

- Pre-Teen and Adolescent female
- History of Abuse and Neglect
- History of running away
- Psychological or emotional problems



## Girls-Joining a Gang

- Emotional Need
- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Low self esteem
- Drug Abuse
- Poor peer relationships
- Unsafe school
- Dangerous neighborhoods
- Distressed family

(The Sexual Exploitation of Girls in Gangs)





# Girls Who Join Gangs

## Perpetrators

- violence alongside male gang
- members

## Associates

- partners, sisters and mothers might be involved with hiding drugs and weapons, washing blood-covered clothing, etc.
- Even where they have no formal involvement, partners can serve to 'glamorize' gang members, and to put pressure on them to provide the material wealth associated with criminal behavior.

## Victims

- Partners, sisters and mothers can be targeted by gangs.
- For example, if a debt is owed to a gang, women who are associated with the debtor may be targeted to pressure the debtor to pay up.
- Women associated with rival gangs can also be targeted with violence (including rape)



# What are the signs?

- Chronic Runaway
- Truancy
- Makes reference to frequent travel to other cities
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Child in possession of hotel keys
- Cigarette burns
- Malnourished
- Signs of drug addition
- Fearful, anxious, withdrawn
- Parental Hx of prostitution arrests
- Living or hanging out in areas known for “prostitution”
- Unexplained and sudden changes in attire or material possessions
- Over sexualized
- Wearing sexually provocative clothes
- Calls boyfriend “daddy”
- References terminology associated with sexual exploitation
- Gang affiliation
- Fake identification
- Tattoo and branding



# Gang Warning Signs

- **Graffiti.** Unusual signs, symbols, or writing on walls, notebooks, class assignments, or gang "literature" books.
- **Colors.** Obvious or subtle colors of clothing, a particular clothing brand, bandannas, jewelry, or haircuts.
- **Tattoos.** Symbols on the body.
- **Initiations.** Suspicious bruises, wounds, or injuries resulting from a "jumping in." Gang initiations have taken place in school restrooms, gyms, locker rooms, playgrounds, and even hallways.
- **Hand signs.** Unusual hand signals or handshakes.
- **Language.** Uncommon terms or phrases.
- **Behavior.** Sudden changes in behavior or secret meetings.



# Criminal Street Gangs

## Recruitment:

- (1) Romeo Method “There is a price to pay for love and affection”
- (2) Forced-Gang enterprise “As many as 25 percent of the estimated 60-80,000 female street gang members in predominately male gangs are forced into sex, including prostitution”.(Innocence Lost)
- (3) Manipulation
  - Gang Hosted Parties
  - Skip Parties

## Types of Pimps:

Boyfriend Pimp	Gorilla Pimp	Gang Pimps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psychological control and manipulation</li><li>• “Sells the dream”; youth believes pimp is her boyfriend</li><li>• Violence as enforcement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severe violence and forced drug use as primary control</li><li>• Frequently kidnap youth and traffic out of area</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gang pimping is a newer trend</li><li>• Girls often used sexually/violently in gang initiation</li><li>• Dual loyalty to gang and “boyfriend”</li></ul>



# Developmental Stages

## *"The Life"*

### **Enticement**

- Financial gain
- Shedding of moral objections

### **Learning the Lifestyle: feeling powerful**

- Adapting to the environment and learning the rules
- Focusing on the rewards and benefits of the lifestyle

### **Living the Lifestyle: trusting the game**

- Increase of time spent in prostitution
- Distancing from conventional connections (church, school, etc.)

### **Caught up in the Lifestyle: accumulating burdens**

- Chronic depression, drug abuse, and learned helplessness
- Physical and emotional health deteriorate

### **Leaving the Lifestyle: taking stock and getting out**

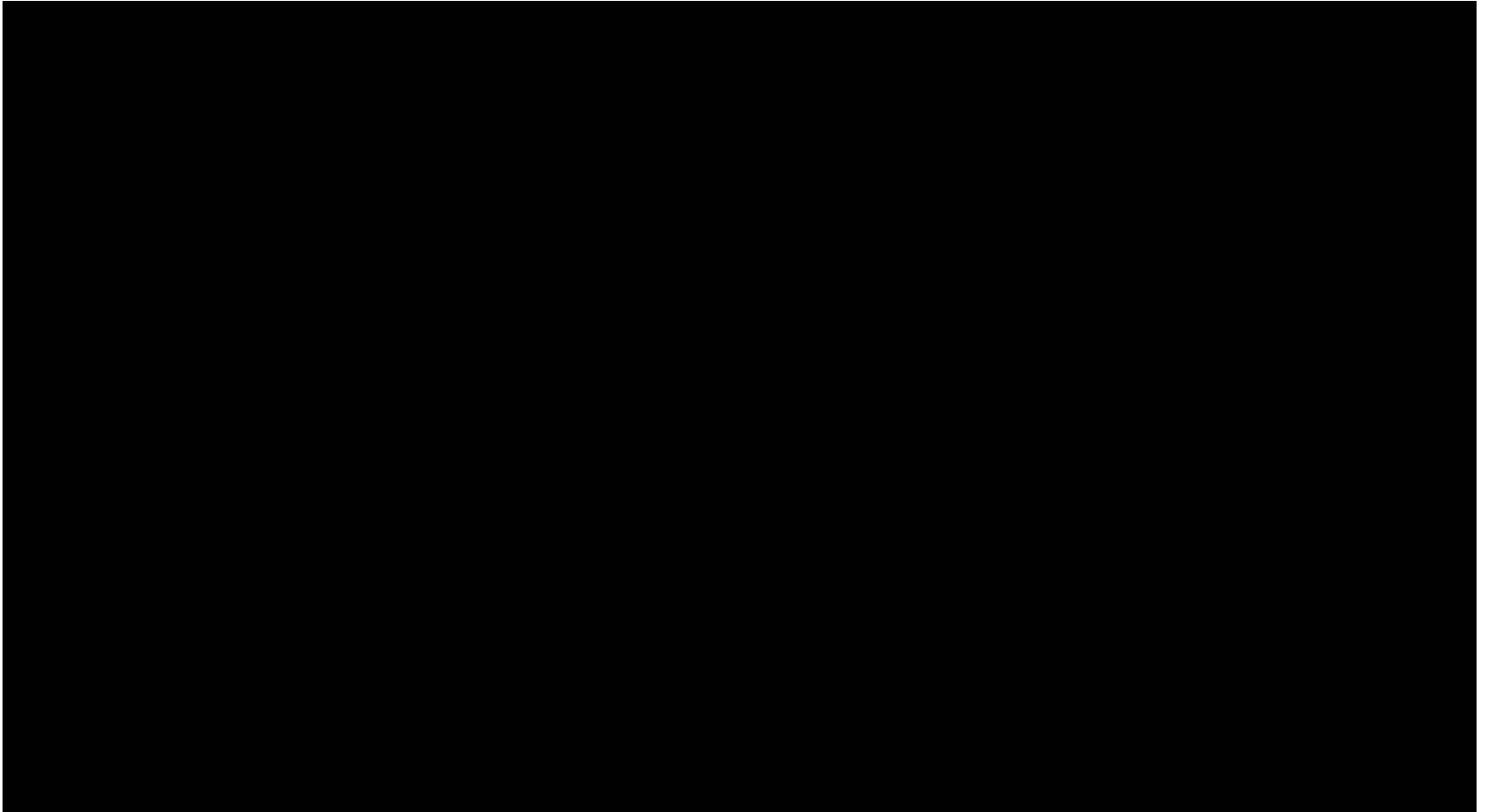
- Belief that there is "something better"

### **Reentry: loss of options**

- Following a stressful event without help and support



# Shared Hope





# Intervention



# Complexities

- Mental Health Issues
- Adolescent Development
- Emotional connection to exploiter (s) that often compels victims to return to the “life” (Trauma Bond and Learned Loyalty)
- Distrust of system/authority figures
- History of juvenile justice involvement
- Lack of consistent living environment or caregiving figure
- Runaway/throw-away history
- Exposure to violence in the home
- Lack of healthy relationship norms
- High-risk sexual behaviors
- Lack of Safety/Security
- May not see themselves as victims or in need of help



Project Intersect (2013)





# Trauma Bond Learned Loyalty

- Child perceives as an incredibly intense or important relationship with the pimp/exploiter
- Trust and Power
- Emotional Bonding
- “Love donation”-provide sex to other men to win a place in the gang.
- Integrating victim-centered policies and practices in juvenile systems that meet safety and security needs as well as reducing risk, traumatization, and recidivism

(Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma, 2013)



# What is a Trauma Informed Approach?

- Trauma-informed services are sensitive to the pervasiveness of trauma and its impact on survivors, including how trauma affects a survivors ability to cope, to access services, and to feel safe both physically and emotionally
- Encourages programs to improve the identification, screening, assessment, and referral to appropriate services
- Integrating victim-centered policies and practices in juvenile systems that meet safety and security needs as well as reducing risk, traumatization, and recidivism

(Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma, 2013)



# Trauma-Informed Care

## *Important Things to Remember*

- Not what's wrong with you but what happened to you
- Symptoms are adaptations
- Violence causes trauma and trauma causes violence





# Services and Collaborative Approaches



# Challenges

- Societal acceptance of the problem
- Lack of beds and resources
- Gang stereotypes
- Lack of evidenced based programs-resources
- Lack of properly trained staff
- Minimal investigative and prosecutorial related experience to gang related trafficking cases



# Suggested Approaches

- Continuum of prevention, victim identification and intervention services
- Prevention can include similar programs and policies to child maltreatment prevention → focus on stable parents, resources, and the healthy development of children
- Residential Treatment and Transitional Services
  - Short Term Safe Houses
  - Long Term Residential Programs
  - Outpatient prevention, at-risk, and supportive services
- Psychosocial interventions that incorporates a trauma focused approach
- Gender-informed interventions



# Collaborative Approach

- Coordinated Survivor-Centered Care
  - Multidisciplinary organizations working together to address the medical, legal, and mental health needs of survivors
  - The survivor is the cent of all decisions concerning recovery and system involvement.
- State and local government adding human trafficking to the list of suspected criminal gang activity
- Gang and Human Trafficking Task Forces working collaboratively
- Developing community outreach, education, and awareness specific to gang related trafficking





*It takes a unified response  
for a complex issue.*









# Resources

1. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Fact Sheet. (2010). Retrieved from [http://www.missingkids.com/en\\_US/documents/CCSE\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/documents/CCSE_Fact_Sheet.pdf).
2. Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Office. [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov). (1-888-428-7581).
3. Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) <http://www.gems-girls.org/>; (212-926-8089).
4. Havlicek, J., Huston, S., Boughton, S., & Zhang, S. (2016). Human trafficking of children in Illinois: Prevalence and characteristics. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 69, 127-135.
5. Innocence Lost: Gangs and Sex Trafficking. (2012, July). *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*.
6. Keith G. Burt. (2012). *The Sexual Exploitation of Girls in Gangs* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://mecptraining.org/wp-content/uploads/06-20-12-MECP-webinar-FINAL-.pdf>.
7. Lederer, L. (2010, February). Sold for Sex: The Link between Street Gangs and Trafficking in Persons. *The Protection Project Journal of Human Rights and Civil Society*.
8. Lillie, M. (2013, November). Gang Involvement with Human Trafficking. *Human Trafficking Search*.
9. National Crime Prevention Council. *Girls and Gangs*. <http://www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/gangs/GirlsGangs-eng.pdf>
10. National Human Trafficking Resource Center <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtcr/overview>. (1-888-373-7888).
11. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com); (1-800-THE-LOST).
12. Polaris Project. *Domestic Sex Trafficking: The Criminal Operations of the American Pimp*. [www.PolarisProject.org](http://www.PolarisProject.org).
13. Project Intersect. (2013). *Georgia Center for Child Advocacy*.
14. Sharedhope International. (2014). *Gang Trap: Trafficking Response and Prevention. Part 2 of Video*.
15. Thompson, K. M., & Braaten-Antrim, R. (1998). Youth maltreatment and gang involvement. *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*, 13(3), 328-345.
16. Youth Gang Programs and Strategies. OJJDP. August 2000.



Latera M. Davis

404-683-8819

[lateradavis@djj.state.ga.us](mailto:lateradavis@djj.state.ga.us)

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice  
3408 Covington Highway  
Decatur, GA 30032