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WHO ARE WE?

This study was conducted by the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT) and funded by the Women's Foundation of Colorado.

WHAT DID WE DO?

LCHT examined the enforcement of current prostitution laws in the City and County of Denver to better understand the links between the purchasing of sex and the issue of human trafficking.

WHAT DID WE ASK?

1. What is the profile of persons arrested for buying sex in the City and County of Denver?
2. What happens to individuals charged with a prostitution-related offense in the City and County of Denver?
3. What are the motivations for law enforcement to arrest people who pay for sex?

HOW DID WE DO IT?

Collection of primary data:

- LCHT collected surveys, conducted individual interviews and facilitated a focus group with Denver Police Department Patrol Officers.

Analysis of archival data:

- 735 (2009-2010) cases filed at Denver's City Court
- 121 (2009-2010) cases filed at Denver's County Court
- Denver Police Department arrest records for 2,072 cases (2006-2010)
- Denver Police Department Vice Narcotics complaint records (2006-2010)

WHAT DID WE LEARN?*

- The law does not differentiate between buyers and sellers of sex.
- Prostitution enforcement has become a vehicle for anti-trafficking efforts, but the means have not adjusted for the ends.
- The concept of a victim of trafficking is confined to minors involved in prostitution.
- People who buy sex and people who sell sex are not seen as engaging in the same type of crime.
- Johns are described as "regular guys."
- Prostitutes are described as either "drug addicts" or "victims."
- Women are arrested and punished more frequently and severely than men (for the same violations).
- Women are more vulnerable to suffering from the ramifications of anti-trafficking efforts pursued by the further criminalization of prostitution offenses if the current law in Denver remains unchanged.

*Language use note: For the purposes of this study, the terms "john" and "prostitute" were used in order to provide consistency and mutual understanding across myriad fields. This use is not meant to generalize or make assumptions.

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WHAT CAN WE DO?

training needs

Encourage Denver Police Department to institutionalize training regarding human trafficking and prostitution as part of ongoing professional development for all officers and command staff.

Encourage local prosecutors and judges to engage in ongoing trainings pertaining to human trafficking, as well as current legislation at both the State and Federal level.

Promote efforts within the City and County of Denver to include City Officials and employees in trainings on human trafficking and its relationship to prostitution within our community.

Identify and train service providers and community agencies that might interact with those involved in prostitution on human trafficking.

policy considerations

Identify legislative remedies (at the State and local level) necessary to better distinguish between buyers and sellers of commercial sex if the Denver community intends to pursue a demand reduction strategy through the mechanism of prostitution enforcement.

Encourage State policy makers to take into account the local nature of prostitution enforcement when developing State policies.

Consider increasing resource-allocations to support policies that require increased enforcement activity.

Encourage policy making that involves vertical integration between all systems involved in prostitution enforcement in order to work toward a response that is based on shared goals and values.

IN SUMMARY, THE DESCRIPTION OF JOHNS AS EMPLOYED MARRIED MEN WITH REGULAR LIVES WHO JUST WANT TO HAVE SEX - WHICH VERY WELL MAY BE TRUE - APPEARED TO FRAME THEM AS BEING LESS CRIMINAL THAN PROSTITUTES.

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community involvement

Encourage prosecutors and judges to participate in local and State task forces on human trafficking.

Re-engage key stakeholders and community members (working within and outside formal systems) in structured roundtable discussions centered on the intersections between prostitution and human trafficking.

Conduct community outreach to raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking and marginalized populations.

Encourage community leaders to create forums that include marginalized communities to help shape policies surrounding a response to prostitution and human trafficking in Denver.

QUESTIONS?

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