12-09 - Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Child Prostitution)

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

NEWSLETTER

Field Operations Support Services, (323) 890-5411

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

(CHILD PROSTITUTION)

On January 1, 2012, Senate Bill 1279 (Pavley) authorized a pilot project within Los Angeles County to address the problem of minors who are being exploited for the purpose of prostitution. This project brings together stakeholders within various County Departments, including the Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Superior Court, District Attorney's Office, and non-governmental organizations to address this problem. Though this project has yet to be fully implemented, it will require a change in philosophy as to how we deal with these minors during our contacts with them.

Deputy personnel will most often encounter these minors while investigating street level prostitution. While it is important to note these are children, deputy personnel must make a concerted effort to look at these children as potential victims rather than simply as prostitutes. Studies have clearly shown that most of these children have suffered some type of mental, physical, or sexual abuse by their pimps. Additionally, these children have most likely suffered abuse in their homes before they were recruited by a pimp and will say that life is better now than it was at home.

When deputies encounter these minors, interview skills and patience are paramount. They will almost always be uncooperative during questioning and will protect their pimp at all costs. Deputy personnel should understand this lack of cooperation is most likely fear based and is the result of a pimp who has threatened her if she cooperates with law enforcement. After fully investigating any criminal activity in which the minor may have been involved, deputy personnel should attempt to interview the minor to determine if she is being sexually exploited and, if so, by whom. Additionally, deputy personnel should attempt to identify any previous abuse the child may have suffered at the hands of another pimp, parent, guardian, et cetera. During this interview, deputies should avoid calling the child a prostitute and calling the exploiter a pimp. If the minor is uncooperative, then the interview should end on a positive note if possible and refer to detective personnel for further interviews.

If circumstances legally permit, deputy personnel should review the contents of the minor's cellular phone to identify a pimp or anyone else who may be exploiting the minor for sexual purposes.

A new statistical code has been created to track incidents involving child prostitution. Please use this statistical code in addition to any criminal statistical codes used.

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NOTIFICATIONS

If deputy personnel detain a sexually exploited child and uncover evidence of the existence of a pimp, notification to Major Crimes Bureau's Vice Detail (after hours, the on-call Vice Detail lieutenant via SHB) shall be made in the following circumstances:

- There is evidence, either electronic or from statements, of transportation across state lines for the purpose of prostitution ("Mann Act", Title 18 U.S.C, Sec 2423).
- There is evidence that the child was kidnapped and being made to work as a prostitute out of immediate fear of death and/or G.B.I.
- There is evidence that the child was mentally, physically, or sexually abused by her pimp.

If the minor discloses sexual abuse at the hands of a pimp or anyone else, separate notification shall be made to Special Victims Bureau (after hours via SHB) pursuant to existing protocols.

Information regarding the content of this newsletter may be directed to Field Operations Support Services.

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