

Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking
Intervention Research

SEX TRAFFICKING AND GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D.

About STIR - Research & Community Outreach



National Science Foundation

Exploring illicit networks of drug and human trafficking: Las Vegas Metro Police Department, Phoenix Police Department, and Hawaii partners

Law Enforcement Studies

Exploring crime data including criminal histories of traffickers, experiences of victims, developing typologies of buyers, and exploring trends and changes. Developing and evaluating innovative interventions including VPTI and STOP outreach.

Community Partners

Client data - exploring experiences, services, and program evaluation Case management, residential services, homeless youth (YES study).

National Studies

Labor trafficking of minors and adults - 11 years
Sex traffickers of minors - 10 years

Arizona Human Trafficking Hotline

Providing crisis services 24/7 in partnership with AZDPS. Served over 300 callers since February 1, 2023. 50+ law enforcement tips, extensive services including housing support, transportation, workforce assistance, and other resources.

Phoenix Starfish Place

Opened in 2017, 15 unit apartment complex for sex trafficked women and their minor children. Two-year supportive housing program. Lived experience expert informed.

Outreach

Labor trafficking outreach monthly (ALTO) to day labors

Sex trafficking outreach monthly (STOP) with LE
Bi-annual drop in center on track

Correction Projects

Working closely with MCSO - screening on tablets, interviews/connection to the hotline.
Provide STAR group. Working with AZD

About STIR - Trainings & Resources



Trainings

- Community college students and staff
- Hospital staff and community health workers
- Behavioral health providers
- Clinicians
- Community Corrections
 - adult and juvenile probation
- Law enforcement partners
- Regional annual human trafficking

Resources

- Arizona Human Trafficking Tipline:
 - 1-877-429-8477
- labortraffickinghelp.com
- sextraffickinghelp.com
- projectstarfish.education
- sextraffickingandspecialeducation.com



Trigger Warning

The material presented here is sometimes difficult to hear about and can cause upsetting feelings.

Have a plan...who can you talk to after this training about how you are feeling

What is Sex Trafficking

- According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, sex trafficking is defined as a situation “in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age”.
- Always sex trafficking when under age 18 if there is an exchange.
- Males, females, and transgender persons can be victims of sex trafficking.

Gender:

Most research focuses on girls and women. We know boys and men and transgender persons are impacted but for a number of reasons are harder to see.

Race:

Forward facing data and victims seen/heard are most often POC. This is multi-layered and based on systemic racism and discrimination.

Sexual Orientation:

LGBTQI+ youth and trans individuals face unique challenges.

Atypical Cognitive Development:

It has been reported that 22% of sex trafficking victims received special education services while in school.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white rectangular card. The card is the central focus, containing text in a clean, sans-serif font. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with fingers gently gripping the edges of the card.

GENDER,
RACE, SEXUAL
ORIENTATION

What Is Sex Trafficking?

Force

- Kidnapping
- Physical violence
- Sexual Assault
- Drugging

Fraud

- Tricking victim into believing the trafficker loves her/him
- Telling the victim she/he is going to be a model
- Offering to provide basic needs without explaining true intention

Coercion

- Blackmailing
- Debt bondage
- Threats against victim or victim's family

Scope of Sex Trafficking in Arizona

- 309 child victims identified from 1/21 to 5/23.
- Age range- 6 to 67
- 20% were trafficked as children
- POC, LGBTQI+ and those kicked out of their homes
- Average age of child victim in AZ 15.1 years old
- 22% reported they had been in special education services.
- 15-20% of traffickers are a family member.

Similarities and Differences Between Domestic Violence and Sex Trafficking

Domestic Violence & Sex Trafficking

- Secrecy
- Violence
- Dominance & Power
- Mind control
- Rules
- Involvement of children as a tool
- Relationship-based
- Grooming
- Trauma bond
- 5 types of abuse

Sex Trafficking Only

- Stigma
- Participation in unique subculture
- Victimization by people outside the primary relationship that do not help
- Sexual activity outside the primary relationship

Risk Factors

- Family instability
- Poverty
- Special education
- attendance
- Gang involvement
- History of abuse
- Substance use
- Trauma
- Child welfare involvement

Protective Factors

- Family stability
- Social support network
- Education/school
Connectedness
- Positive peer support
- Future goals
- Limited drug/alcohol
exposure
- Healthy relationship
boundaries

Victim Warning Signs

Experiencing

- Homelessness
- Unexplained absences and truancy
- Chronic runaway
- Signs of abuse (old & new)
- Presence of an older boyfriend
- Involvement in the system
- Tattoos or brandings
- Expensive items
- Isolation or distance
- Less communication
- Vocabulary
- Expensive new phone or second phone

Terminology

- Game or life
- Daddy, boyfriend, boss manager
- In call or out call
- Dancer or escort
- Bottom girl or bitch
- Trick or date
- Track or blade
- Out of pocket
- Wifey or wife-in-law

Means of Control

- Threats against victim
- Threats against victim's family or friends
- Beatings, burnings, rapes and starvation
- Isolation
- Psychological abuse
- Drug dependency
- Document withholding
- Debt bondage
- Threats of deportation
- Branding





Tattoos/Brandings



Case Study 1

Olivia (not her real name) was 25 years old when she called the Arizona Human Trafficking Hotline. She recently moved to Arizona to live near relatives from a reservation in the Phoenix area. She was raised in another state by a mother who had been in the life of prostitution and recently died of drug overdose. Olivia had been in and out of sex trafficking situations since she was 18. Her family in the Phoenix area wanted to support her but didn't invite her to live with them so she was on her own. She took a job as a waitress at a busy sit-down restaurant and met an older man who chatted with her a few times / he brought in his son who was attractive and funny, and made her feel attractive and he paid a lot of attention to her. He asked her out. When they began to date he treated her well, bought her presents, and asked her lots of questions about her life, goals and dreams.

He quickly took her to get a license to become a dancer in strip clubs and got her to quit her waitress job to dance seven days a week. He took her money and also took care of all of her bills, told her what to wear, who she could talk to, and where she should go. He arranged for her lap dances at the club and for "extra extras" - where she went home with customers and had sex with them for money and her boyfriend would pick her up. He recently started to hit and choke her when she didn't



Rationalizing Abuse

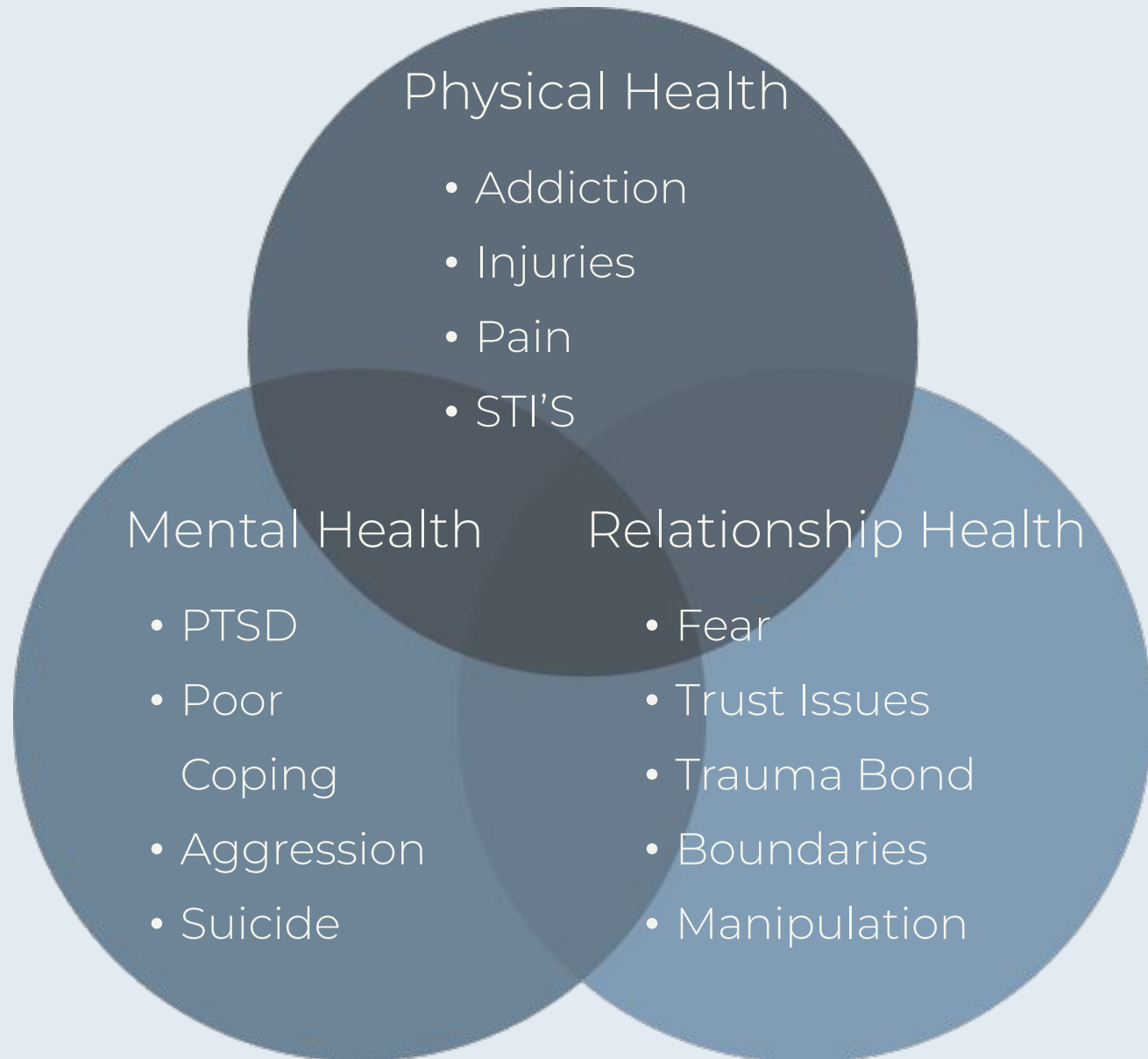
Rationalization

- “I’m not **looking for a relationship** ... sometimes I’m looking for some company”
- “It’s **all clean**. I don’t have to worry about your feelings”
- “**I’m not the cause** of prostitution”
- “This is a **‘working girl’**”

Reality

- There is no shame in sex – but there IS shame in **coercing women and children into selling their bodies for it**
- It’s basic supply and demand. **Take away the buyers, take away the abuse.**
- Forced prostitution doesn't just hurt the victim. It hurts **the buyer – and their families** – and **society** at large
- This was a 16 year old girl that **did**

Negative Consequences of Sex Trafficking



What makes
the dynamics
of sex
trafficking
victims
different
from other
victims?



- Multi-systemic trauma
- Type 2 trauma
- Nature of the relationship with the trafficker
- Prior trauma history
- Complex/limited social networks
- Family involvement
- Drug use/addiction
- Limited

Resources

- www.socialwork.asu.edu/stir
- www.sextraffickinghelp.com
- Projectstarfish.education
- [Homeland Security Blue Campaign](#)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#)
- [TrustA7](#)

Training Brochures

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are complex issues that require a multidisciplinary approach. Mental health providers play a crucial role in supporting survivors and addressing their unique needs.

1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

STREETLIGHT | **Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research** | **ASU School of Social Work**



Child protective services are on the front lines of identifying and supporting survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training provides essential information for recognizing signs and providing appropriate interventions.

1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



Health care providers are often the first to identify survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training equips providers with the knowledge to recognize signs and provide compassionate care.

1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR EMS PROVIDERS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



EMS providers play a vital role in the care of survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training provides critical information for recognizing signs and providing immediate medical attention.

1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

TEEN SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



School educators and administrators are key in identifying and supporting survivors of teen sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training provides essential information for recognizing signs and providing appropriate interventions.

1-800-377-3388

Teen SEX trafficking

It's hard to see, but it's happening every day in America.



1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR ADULT PROSECUTIVE OFFICERS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



Adult prosecutive officers play a crucial role in identifying and prosecuting survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training provides essential information for recognizing signs and providing appropriate interventions.

1-800-377-3388

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

A TRAINING TOOL FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research | **ASU School of Social Work**



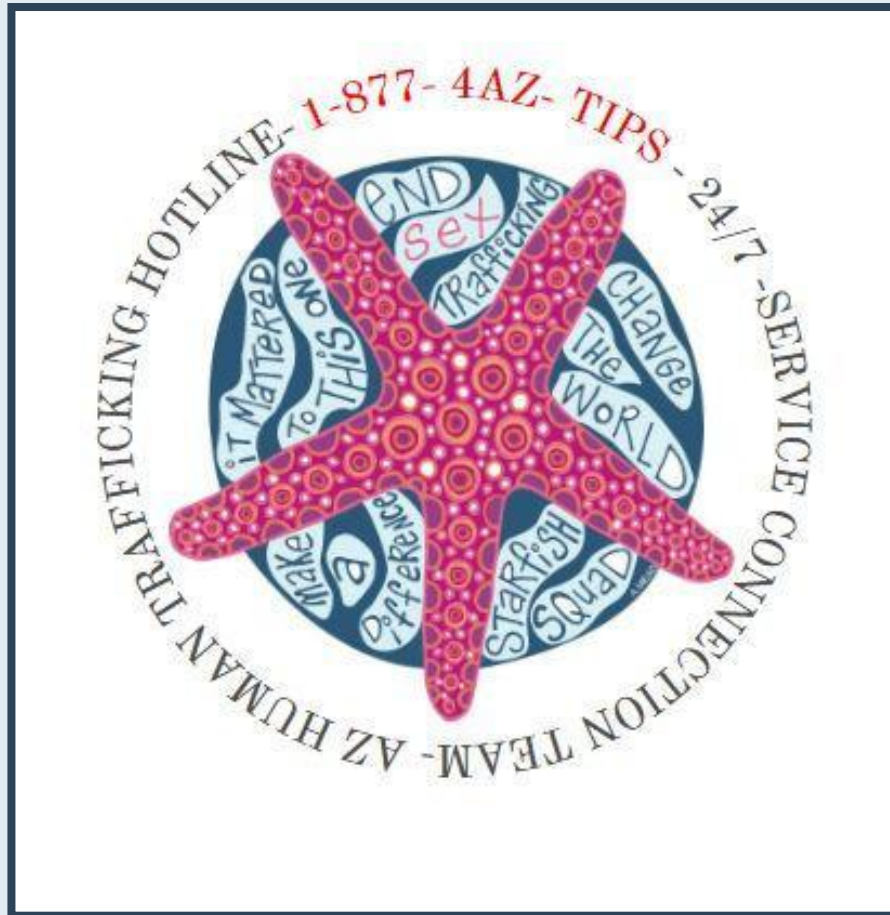
Police officers play a vital role in identifying and supporting survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This training provides essential information for recognizing signs and providing appropriate interventions.

1-800-377-3388

How you can help:

- 1. Talk about sex trafficking to the people you care about.**
- 2. Talk with your wallet- support groups that work directly with these victims.**
- 3. Become an advocate, an expert, and a partner in the movement to stop sex trafficking.**

Arizona Hotline



Call:
1-877-4AZ-Tip

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

CONTACT INFORMATION:

DOMINIQUE.ROE@ASU.EDU

