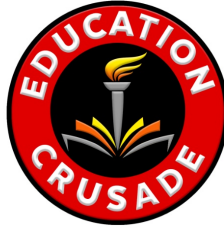


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March 19, 2023

***"Bless the beasts and the children, for in this world they have no voice ... no choice .... Light their way when the darkness surrounds them ... Give them love ... Give them shelter from a storm ... Keep them safe, keep them warm."  
(De Vorzon and Botkin)***

## **The Sex Trafficking of WCSD Students: More Than You Want to Know**

***"It's worse now than it's ever been ... and growing.  
It only continues because the administration doesn't do enough  
for these children to stop it."***

The following information was provided to Education Crusade (EC) in an interview with a WCSD employee who has worked their career trying to save students from being sex-trafficked.

**EC: How many WCSD middle schools and high schools have female students who are sex trafficked (sold as prostitutes) by adults?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"Most of them. Over half. Reno High School is a hub for sex-trafficking, even though they don't like to admit it. O'Brien Middle School is also bad. It's been that way for years, and it's getting worse."*

**EC: What is the age range of the girls who are sex-trafficked and how many are there?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"They range from 12 to 18 - as young as 6th grade. At some schools, it's only 2 or 3 girls who are involved. At other schools, it's 30 or more. At all our schools combined, I'd estimate over 200 girls; some boys are involved too."*

**EC: What is the background of WCSD girls who get involved in being sold for sex?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"It's very sad. The girls are not all poor. Most of them come from extremely troubled families with terrible parenting, and there are some foster kids. All the girls have very low self-worth. Some are run-aways but not the majority."*

**EC: How exactly do the WCSD girls get involved in sex trafficking?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"The girls are young, and they get into prostitution the traditional way. Through friends and/or girls who are currently 'in the life,' they get invited to parties and introduced to pimps, who are older men (not high school boys). . The girls are groomed by pimps over a couple of days, receiving compliments and special treatment. Eventually, the girls accept an invitation to an out-of-town party, usually Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, or Las Vegas."*

*The girls are encouraged to drink and use drugs, and much of the time, they don't even know what they're being given. At first, they're not usually interested in the drugs. Then, they're repeatedly raped, beat up, and threatened with what will happen to them if they report anything about how they've been treated. Also, without their knowledge, photos are taken of their sexual activity. The pimps threaten to show the photos to the girls' families if they don't obey.*

*The girls feel an overwhelming sense of shame. Convinced that they're now stuck in the sex-trafficking life, they develop strong drug addictions. The pimps give them drugs, food, money, a cell phone, clothes, and "trackers" to monitor the girls' movements. Then they start selling the girls to men for sex.*

*The girls comply so they'll continue to be provided with drugs and alcohol, as well as a small amount of the money the pimps earn by prostituting them. The girls also fear being seriously injured by the pimps if they don't adhere to the 'rules.'*

*The girls develop a sick relationship with the pimps and their other prostitutes, like a mutant family. They come to see their pimps as part father figure, part boyfriend; these destructive relationships can go on for years."*

**EC: Does all of this happen just on weekends?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"No. The girls will miss a lot of school as well, because like I said, their parenting and homes are usually a mess. The parents don't say anything because they often don't know or care that their daughters are missing school. The girls still keep attending somewhat, but lie to their families about absences because of threats from their pimps."*

**EC: So none of the actual selling of sex is happening at school?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"No ... and yes. The girls are often brought to school or picked up afterwards by their pimps, or even during recesses, so the*

*pimps are always an intimidating shadow presence. Sometimes, the girls are picked up by what are known as 'bottom bitches.' These are older prostitutes who have been with their pimp the longest and are working their way up in the sex-trafficking hierarchy like an assistant. They make the most money and can be very cruel to the newer and younger girls."*

**EC: When you're looking for WCSD girls to help, how do you find the ones that are being trafficked?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"It's hard to tell if you haven't had any training in what to look for. Everyone who does my kind of work needs a lot of training to be able to recognize the signs of girls being trafficked. You learn how to get the girls to trust you enough to admit that they're in that life. You have to develop a relationship with them, so the girls will let you help them."*

*There are also organizations in Reno that have repeatedly offered to give the school district more training in how to identify and help these girls. Once in a while, WCSD would let them train us. Most of the time, however, the higher-up administrators don't follow through on the training opportunities or really do anything."*

**EC: You hear about older sex workers saying that they actually LIKE what they're doing. Your thoughts?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** ***"I want to emphasize that 100% these young girls at our high schools and middle schools do NOT get caught up in sex-trafficking on purpose.** They are just trying to figure out how to survive in what have usually been hopeless, dead-end lives. They have grown up with no coping skills, very few moral values, horrible parenting, and bad male figures. They don't have strong enough support to help them get out of the prostitution, so they just get more and more lost in the lifestyle."*

**EC: Is there anything that school principals or WCSD's district administrators could be doing to stop this sex-trafficking and help these girls?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"I would say that no one at WCSD LIKES the fact that these children are being trapped into this life. BUT ... WCSD leadership and superintendents have not given staff training a high enough priority to significantly reduce this problem.*

- The Principals say they are too busy to deal with it, and just want my fellow Truancy Officers and I to investigate the individual cases.*
- The Reno Police cut the funding we used to get for a 10% officer, so we've also lost that resource.*

*What WOULD make a difference in reducing the sex-trafficking of our students, would be if WCSD hired more Truancy Officers like me to work out on the street to find these underage girls. It would allow us to do more thorough home investigations. We could encourage more parents to be stronger and report what their children are doing. We would be able to convince more girls to leave the self-destructive, sex-work lifestyle."*

*Also, the School Board should require the Superintendent, principals, counselors, teachers, and themselves to participate in training, and do ride-alongs with the Truancy Officers into the girls' homes and neighborhoods, so they could all get a realistic understanding of how bad the situation is.*

**EC: What is WCSD's reason for not funding extra workers like you?**

**INTERVIEWEE:** *"The District says they don't have the money, but then I hear about all of the other things the District DOES spend money on. It seems like WCSD does not give the lives of these very troubled, sex-trafficked girls the priority they should have. **I haven't heard the new superintendent say anything about this issue yet. I wonder if she even knows that it exists?"***