

DCYF PROGRAM INITIATIVES

CHILDREN ABSENT FROM CARE (CAFC)

**COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF
CHILDREN (CSEC)**

DEFINITION - CAFC

A child under DCYF care, custody or control, leaves a facility or residence without prior authorization, or does not return to the facility at a predetermined and specific time from school, work or an event.

DEFINITION - CSEC

A commercial sex act which is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or the person is induced to perform a commercial sex act is under (18) years of age:

- Any minor under the age of (18), who is involved in a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking
- Commercial sexual exploitation of a minor does not require proof of force, fraud or coercion
- A commercial sex act is any sex act for which anything of value is given to or received by any person, includes prostitution, sexual performance and/or pornography

GOAL -CAFC

Ensure timely reporting and verification of all children absent from care to prevent further absences by utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach to enhance response identification, awareness and recovery

GOAL - CSEC

Ensure the safety and support of commercially sexually exploited children and prevent further exploitation by utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach to enhance response, identification, awareness, education, restoration and recovery

SCOPE OF PROBLEM (CAFC)

- In July 2015, (**57**) children were listed as absent from DCYF care
- Several children had been absent for two or more years
- No centralized reporting/tracking mechanisms
- No specific unit within DCYF to address the issue

SCOPE OF PROBLEM (CSEC)

- Unknown number of CSEC victims in DCYF care
- No centralized reporting/tracking mechanisms
- No internal policies/procedures within DCYF
- No specific unit within DCYF to address the issue

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

According to the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, assigned DCYF caseworkers are responsible for ensuring absent children are entered into National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Database and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Database within (24) hours

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

- Conducted full review of all DCYF policies and procedures to identify gaps, strengths and weaknesses
- Started the DCYF Special Projects Unit
- Engaged key stakeholders and partners
- Developed standardized policies and procedures

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

- Developed evidence based system wide assessment and data collection tools (surveys, CSEC Assessment tool and CAFC Face sheet)
- Hired (2) full time CAFC Investigators
- Drafted Safe Harbor legislation
- Currently providing mandatory CAFC and CSEC training to all DCYF workers

RI SAFE HARBOR LEGISLATION

Allows Rhode Island to comply with the provisions of the federal “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act PL 113-183” and the provisions of the federal “Justice for Victims Act of 2015, PL 114-22”

SAFE HARBOR LEGISLATION

Creates a new statute, § 14-1.1-1 The Rhode Island Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Act which ensures that minors, who are victims of sex trafficking are **treated as victims and not criminals**. The child is redirected away from the criminal or juvenile justice systems and referred to supportive services and programs; preserves the unity of the family whenever possible; provides for the care, protection, treatment; provides access to the Criminal Injuries Compensation fund

RESULTS

- Increased funding through federal grants
- There are currently **(18)** children absent from care. No long term absent children. Most of the absent children are chronic runaways
- Identified **(30)** confirmed sex trafficking victims in DCYF care
- CAFC and CSEC internal policies and procedures completed

RESULTS

- State-wide CSEC Protocols completed and implemented
- Improved collaboration with key stakeholders and other partners
- Improved child input, placement and treatment
- CAFC and CSEC training in progress. The training is being conducted by Day One