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Anti-Trafficking Trainings and Group Work Models

NYC's Administration for Children's Services' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation (OCTPC) offers a variety of trafficking awareness and prevention trainings for professionals, communities and youth and groupwork models for youth. Please email Trafficking.training@acs.nyc.gov with inquiries.

Trainings for Professionals and Communities:

Understanding Child Trafficking: A Bio-Psycho-Social Perspective. 4 hours (can adjusted to shorter timeframes). An original training by Selina Higgins.

Description: To understand trafficked children, you must first understand cognitive and social-emotional child development and the impact of trauma upon the developing psyche. This workshop will provide an extremely comprehensive view into the potential developmental etiology of child trafficking, beginning with cognitive development, infant attachment and behavioral learning influences. The attachment pattern developed between an infant and the primary caregiver can have extensive influence across the entire life cycle. The deficits and resultant needs that develop through early attachment can unconsciously impact upon subsequent relational and safety choices.

This workshop will demonstrate how the development of certain infant attachment experiences can lead to subsequent juvenile trafficking vulnerability, and how traffickers fulfill the inherent social-emotional deficits to trauma bond with and exploit youth. The presentation will proceed to the impact of trauma, teen cognitive and social-emotional development and learning, relational influences, media impact (advertisements, social media influencers, music videos), recruitment techniques, gaslighting, trauma bonding, and red flags and language affiliated with the commercial sex industry. The workshop concludes with engagement tips for work with trafficked and traumatized youth. PowerPoint, video clips, and recent media cases will be utilized to facilitate learning. This proprietary workshop has been provided at multiple national and regional conferences.

Endorsing Exploitation: The Influence of Media on the Developing Vulnerable Adolescent. 3 hours (can be edited to shorter timeframes). An original training by Selina Higgins.

Description: Society's normalization and glorification of exploitation through the attitudes and norms expressed within media both overtly and covertly promulgate over sexualization and unhealthy relationships for adolescent and pre-adolescent youth. The normalizing concepts within media ads, museum art, films, shows, social media

influencers and music videos serve to numb reactions and promulgate a sense of false glamour concerning sexual exploitation. This detrimental impact upon juvenile social-emotional development coupled with immature cognitive processes and often previously experienced trauma can influence the concept that exploitation is not only acceptable, but also appealing. The vulnerability to trafficking is also deeply enhanced through deficits and resultant needs that develop in insecure attachment types which unconsciously impact upon subsequent relational choices. The workshop will focus upon the identification of a variety of media platforms that not only influence but actually normalize and/or glamorize exploitation. Media ads, film excerpts, music videos, museum art, social media influencers and video games will be utilized as influential examples. Warning: Some media material is explicit in nature, so persons who are sensitive, easily offended or have the potential for traumatization/re-traumatization should not attend.

Safety Planning WITH Trafficked Youth 3 hours. An original training by Selina Higgins, Dr. Ann Marie Nikola and Jessie Boye-Doe.

Description: Safety plans are integral to optimizing safety at every stage for survivors of trafficking and youth at-risk of sexual exploitation. Planning should occur regularly, relate to whether the survivor plans to leave or remain with the trafficker, and address multiple criteria. Since youth are the experts of their situations and experiences, they should always have an opportunity to be engaged directly in safety planning. This workshop will discuss the importance of safety planning WITH youth and provide strategies to encourage them to take ownership of and participate in the development of their own personalized plans. The workshop will suggest dos and don'ts, discuss short-term versus long-term planning, and provide strategies to engage youth who may be reluctant to participate in planning. It will also provide an opportunity to practice individualized plan development through case scenarios and role play opportunities.

Turn Up The Lights! Recognizing and Constructively Responding to Gaslighting 2 hours. An original training by Selina Higgins.

Description: Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse that occurs when a person or group manipulates one or more people into questioning their sanity and perception of reality. It is a power exertion tactic used to gain control for the purpose of emotional and psychological manipulation. Utilizing techniques that distort facts and memories, deny experiences and exacerbate confusion, gaslighting can lead people to distrust their own thoughts and question their decision-making abilities. Gaslighting has been noted as a productive tool within toxic intimate relationships that can successfully result in victim control and dependency. It has been used by traffickers to achieve and maintain power, but it is also used by other control zealots, including DSM-5-TR Cluster B personality disorders.

This workshop will:

- Examine the historical roots of gaslighting, its purpose, and the subliminal signs that gradually become bolder and more visible.
- Recognize how love bombing can serve to reinforce abuse and develop a traumatic bond
- Survey the relationship between gaslighting behavior and DSM-5-TR Cluster B personality disorders
- Identify typical gaslighting phrases
- Present comparison and contrast between unhealthy phrasing and more salubrious language
- Provide response strategies to increase empowerment and alleviate exploiter control
- Utilize video clips to provide language and control examples.

“All in the Family” - The Dynamics and Repercussions of Familial Trafficking
2 hours. An original training by Selina Higgins.

Description: Familial trafficking occurs when a family member, guardian or romantic partner facilitates a victim’s sexual exchange for any item of value, or through the production, posting or trade of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM). It can also occur through forced or uncompensated labor, or when monetary proceeds are taken by a partner or family member. In certain circumstances, although not actively facilitating trafficking, family members can also be complicit.

Familial trafficking is often a hidden crime, due access and control factors which create a shield of invisibility to both victims and potential observers. Since they have no other comparison, victims accept the abuse because they view it as their “normal”. Their love and loyalty to the abuser makes it difficult for victims to recognize their situation and for outsiders to identify the abuse. The violation of trust and protective responsibility can result in betrayal trauma, resulting in profound emotional harm of a level that exceeds stranger trafficking.

This workshop will discuss the concept of family, the difference between sex abuse and familial trafficking, power dynamics, social misconceptions, red flags, psychological and systemic repercussions, and tips for working with survivors, including safety planning. Media cases will be utilized as examples. Please note that some people may find these cases distressing so please focus on your well-being before deciding to register to ensure emotional safety and informed choice.

NYC's Child Welfare Trafficking Policy and Screening Children for Sex Trafficking in ACS' Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) 3 hours. An original training by Selina Higgins, facilitated by Selina Higgins and Clifton Robertson.

Description: In September 2020, ACS released Policy and Procedure 2020/05: Identifying, Assessing, and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims, which articulates guidelines and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in identifying children and youth for sex and/or labor trafficking, and for safety planning, coordinating with law enforcement, and making referrals for appropriate services. The Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) is the electronic mechanism that all ACS and provider agency staff must use to screen children for sex trafficking. This training will provide an overview of child trafficking, a description of the legislation that led to mandated sex trafficking screenings for children in the NYS and NYC child welfare systems, a detailed overview of the policy and a step by step walk through of CTDB screening procedures, including a live hands-on demonstration of CTDB screenings. This training is a must for all NYC child welfare staff and any other professional who needs to understand ACS' trafficking policy and to perform the screenings correctly.

Child Protection, Foster Care, Preventive or Detention Agency "Road Shows"

Description: A 1-hour condensed version of the basic knowledge and skills needed to learn about ACS' trafficking policy mandates, identifying trafficking red flags, screening in the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB), connecting with the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation, notifying law enforcement of a trafficked child and referring for the NYS Victim Confirmation Process. Timing can be adjusted to fit within area meetings. Provided by the OCTPC social workers assigned to each area:

- Child Protection and Detention: Veronica Moreno
- Foster Care: Clifton Robertson
- Preventive: Carmen Sanchez

Identifying and Supporting Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Youth Trafficking, Parts 1 and 2.

NYS Office of Children and Family Services' (OCFS) Trafficking 101 course. 6 hours total but can be condensed into shorter timeframes depending upon module choices. OCTPC team members have been certified to present this training.

Train the Trainer Seminar: Identifying and Supporting Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Youth Trafficking

A 3-day Train the Trainer seminar covering the NYS Office of Children and Family Services' (OCFS) Trafficking 101 course. Presented by Selina Higgins, who has been certified by OCFS to train trainers their course. All modules will be walked through and thoroughly explained with attendee participation in all exercises to gain personal experience towards training others. Additional material will be provided by the trainer.

This course is for agency or program-based professionals with prior training experience who will use the model to train others. An agency focused training commitment and data submission is required.

Trainings and Groupwork for Youth:

Cyber Safety and Stress Survival Groupwork for Youth

A 4-session groupwork model created by Selina Higgins. Recognizing the risks of increased, unsupervised screen time combined with the unfortunate reality of Cyberstalking, Sextortion and AI generated and Deep Fake Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM), coupled by the ongoing deficit of social media and platform safety controls, *Cyber Safety and Stress Survival* highlights online child trafficking awareness coupled with Dialectical Behavioral Therapy distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness skills for youth to learn positive methods for stress relief in these difficult times. The model provides four facilitated sessions on (1) Recognizing Recruitment and Understanding Consent, (2) Online Vulnerability (3) Media Impact, and (4) Cyberbullying to help youth understand the dangers inherent with websites, influencers, social media, gaming platforms and cyber pseudo-friends. . Each session will close with an opportunity to participate in a DBT distress tolerance exercise, which they can utilize at other times to decrease anxiety and increase relaxation.

Topics include: What is juvenile sex and labor trafficking, applications that track location and extract information, Clear Web vs. Dark Web, Phishing and Catfishing, how media manipulates and influences trafficking vulnerability, how predators use online applications to groom and meet youth, Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM), Cyberbullying, AI generated Deep Fake technology and how and where to report human trafficking and internet violations. Gift card incentives provided.

Be SEA: Be Safe, Be Empowered, Be Aware: A Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Trafficking Awareness 12-Session Group Model for Youth.

A strength-based 12-week DBT skills-trafficking awareness model, created by Selina Higgins, to combine universally applicable skills for everyday life situations with trafficking awareness psychoeducation and strategies in a safe environment for the expression of feelings, disclosure, empowerment and validation.

- Weekly groups introduce:
 - Mindfulness skills to help build concentration and focus
 - Skills to help tolerate difficult situations (staying calm and moving on)
 - Skills to help increase communication effectiveness (get what you want and learn how to say no politely while maintaining self-respect and relationships)
 - Skills to help identify and change the emotions that you want to change

- Trafficking awareness and prevention, including recruitment, red flags, safety planning, sextortion, cyber safety, cyberbullying, resources and who to contact for help
- All group facilitators have are certified by Behavioral-Tech's 65-hour DBT Intensive Course
- Gift card incentives provided

Mitigating Trauma through Drama: Developing Positive Pathways for Lives Through Expressive Arts

An original model created by Melody Centeno, Founder and CEO of Foster Care Unplugged and Selina Higgins, Executive Director of ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation, with review and feedback by trafficking survivor-leaders.

This 8-session groupwork model utilizes psychodrama, a performance-based approach, to provide a trauma-informed mechanism to identify and express feelings and learn positive strategies to heal from past experiences. The model focuses upon trauma mitigation and mental health support through therapeutic expressive arts. Psychodrama provides an active, experiential approach that facilitates the ability to unpack and explore personal life stories, solve problems, set goals, express feelings appropriately, improve interpersonal skills and relationships, and strengthen the ability to perform personal life roles and in many cases, achieve catharsis.

- 2-hour weekly sessions
- Survivor-led therapeutic drama and writing exercises which help youth safely express and process their life stories, allowing them to identify strengths and strive towards supportive and positive alternate pathways
- Each session will introduce trafficking related topics to assist youth in developing awareness in a safe milieu. Youth can find and share their voices by working together through vulnerable scenario opportunities to develop strategies to heal traumatic experiences, build upon their strengths, and help develop resilience.
- Group members will never be encouraged to progress beyond their current limits. If any group member does not want to use trafficking related topics, they will be encouraged to select an alternate relational experience
- Gift card incentives provided

Love146's "Nota#number" Trafficking Prevention Model

A 3-day, 2.5 hours/day interactive, five-module prevention curriculum designed to teach youth how to protect themselves from human trafficking and exploitation through information, critical thinking, and skill development. Not a #Number uses a holistic approach focusing on respect, empathy, individual strengths, and the relationship between personal and societal pressures that create or increase vulnerabilities. Group facilitators have been trained and certified by Love 146 to provide this model.

“I AM LITTLE RED”

The 2-hour I AM LITTLE RED participatory learning session utilizes a 10-minute animated short created especially for middle school students (ages 11-14) of all genders with the goal of trafficking prevention and awareness. The film, written by 10 survivors of sex trafficking, plus Alec Sokolow (Academy Award nominated writer of Toy Story) and Mary Mazzio (director/Producer of I AM JANE DOE) is a contemporary re-imagining of the classic fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood. It addresses four tactics a “wolf” (trafficker/pimp) will typically use to lure a Little Red off their path. When coupled with the teaching guide’s 75-minute lesson plan, I AM LITTLE RED is a primary prevention tool aimed at reducing the risk of commercial sexual exploitation among children. Group facilitators have been licensed by 50 Eggs Productions to provide this model.