



28 August 2018
Attn. Katherine Chon

Dear National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth,

On behalf of the American Medical Women's Association - Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans:

We all agree the commercial sexual exploitation of minors is an egregious human rights violation. As originally stated by the National Academies of Medicine in 2013, the solution to this public health crisis depends on meaningful partnerships between education, law enforcement, and healthcare sectors - with our government's support.

Research shows that many adult human trafficking victims report seeing a health care professional during their victimization, and we have no reason to believe this is different for child victims.

Thanks to the work of physician advocates like Dr. Jordan Greenbaum, we now have ICD-10 codes for flagging human trafficking, but research shows that physicians are missing the signs of trafficking *primarily because of lack of training*.

AMWA's 2014 Position Paper states that "the horrific harm borne by sex-trafficked women and girls - (and we would add boys and men) - is real and devastating... Physicians and other healthcare providers urgently need additional training to effectively identify and treat survivors of sex trafficking."

To this end, AMWA-PATH leads a free, CME-accredited training called [SUSTAIN](#). We have trained hundreds of medical professionals across 7 states and have partnered with dozens of community nonprofits, law enforcement entities, and first responders in the past year alone. Similarly, AMWA-PATH's free, CME-accredited, [online videos](#) provide an introduction to the topic for professionals across the nation.

We recognize that most hospital systems still lack effective protocols to help these patients. In our SUSTAIN training, we routinely reference [HEAL Trafficking's Protocol Toolkit](#) as a resource for healthcare professionals who voice an interest in doing more.

AMWA-PATH's recommendations are as follows:

1. **We must require universal training** on the identification of victims of human trafficking across medical disciplines and hospital systems. This training must emphasize the importance of trauma-informed care and long-term medical follow-up.

2. **We need data on long-term follow-up.** In order to effect real change we must be able to follow these patients and measure their outcomes. Such data will allow us to create and validate screening tools and protocols for treatment.
3. **We must build medical homes in alliance** with community responders, NGOs, legal advocates, and educational institutions to look far beyond the initial identification and crisis intervention and provide full wrap-around services during and after the transition to freedom.
4. **We need financial and logistic assistance** to coordinate safe and trauma-informed emergency and long-term **housing** for these at-risk youth.
5. **We must create and sustain occupational and vocational training** programs that offer a **positive** path out of poverty.
6. **We must prevent recidivism** by dedicating resources for the ongoing mental and physical health care recovery needs for survivors.
7. **We must study and promote resilience factors among vulnerable youth**, such as establishing healthy bonds with at least one trustworthy adult.
8. **We must better understand the abusive intimate relationships** among today's youth and provide guidance to building healthy and sustainable peer relationships.

By assessing the outcomes of the above initiatives, we will be able to:

1. **Identify prevention strategies** that target future generations of those who are at risk of sex trafficking.
2. **Implement awareness and prevention programs** in our schools and school-based health clinics.
3. **Implement awareness and prevention programs to combat misogyny and sexual abuse and exploitation** and to foster awareness of healthy intimate relationships.

The sex trafficking of children and youth is a public health crisis causing enormous economic, psychosocial, medical, and legal burdens for society. Healthcare professionals can and should play a key role in consulting with U.S. government officials to identify victims of child sex trafficking and to advise about the safest and healthiest policies for our nation's children, especially those who we deem at increased risk for abuse. Ethically, morally, and by our sworn Hippocratic Oath, we are committed to the safety, well being and healthy futures of these children.

AMWA-PATH

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