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Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Teens

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Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Teens



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Abstract

This research explores whether commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) abuse drugs or face greater histories of abuse than their delinquent peers. This research will evaluate whether girls who are CSEC victims experience more abuse of drugs or experience more physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. The study also explores whether CSEC victims witnessed more abuse than non-CSEC victims. A survey of needs and issues facing delinquent girls was given to 130 girls between the ages of 13 to 18. Questions asked about their drug use, abuse history, and whether they witnessed abuse. This research found that many girls who are CSEC victims experience and witnessed more abuse than non-CSEC victims. The results also showed that CSEC victims and non-CSEC delinquent peers showed no significant difference in drug use.

Literature Review

Teen girls are being brought into prostitution every day and are constantly being sexually exploited. Prostitution has to do with all exchanges of sex for money or goods and services, such as drugs, food, housing, clothing, etc.” (Lavoie, Thibodeau, Gane, & Hebert, 2010 p. 1149). It has been estimated that 400,000 children are involved in prostitution in the United States every year (Hellemann & Santhiveeran, 2011). Many girls are victims of physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, or even murdered during their time as a prostitute (Hellemann & Santhiveeran, 2011). Women in prostitution are more vulnerable to being victims of homicides. In 2011 2.5% to 2.7% of female homicides were women involved in prostitution and 2 to 10 million children under 18 years of age were prostituted (Hellemann & Santhiveeran, 2011). Many girls involved in prostitution are runaways who are trying to leave their abusive family environments (Menaker & Franklin, 2013). According to Anderson many girls get involved in prostitution because of their financial needs and will exchange sex sometimes in exchange for goods.

According to Hellemann and Santhiveeran three out of five female adolescents were raped five or more times while being prostituted (Hellemann & Santhiveeran, 2011). What we see is a higher abuse rate and higher risk factors for those involved in prostitution. Prostitution includes a great amount of stress and adolescents involved in prostitution can experience many psychological problems due to the stress. Many girls enter prostitution due to stressful life events such as breakups, death of someone close, and changes (Lavoie et al., 2010).

Teens will use multiple different drugs to cope with being prostituted and some are introduced to drugs by their pimps (Grace et al., 2012). Once a trafficker has introduced the girl to drugs they make the girls dependent on them for the drugs and force them to work for them (Lutya, 2010). Drug use will make a teenager more at risk for being victims of prostitution (Lutya, 2010). Many girls involved in prostitution come from homes where they have a parent that is involved in drugs, too. A study of 222 prostituted individuals in Chicago found that 83% were raised by parents that are addicts. Studies found that many adolescents used drugs and alcohol and even self-mutilation as coping strategies and 21% to 96% of the girls involved in prostitution used drugs and alcohol (Hellemann & Santhiveeran, 2011).

Many girls are physically, mentally, and sexually abused while being prostituted. Girls may choose not to report the abuse that they endure during a prostitution because then they may fear retaliation, being arrested for prostitution, or being put back in their undesirable home situations (Grace et al., 2012). Some girls may exhibit Stockholm syndrome and feel as though their pimps are a giving and loving person and they will become in denial about their abuse. This makes it difficult for service providers to provide help for those who are sexually exploited

Several laws have been created to help teens involved in prostitution, such as The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and The Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998 (Halter, 2010). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 has been rewritten to include victims under 18 who have been forced or not as victims of trafficking (Menaker & Franklin 2013). Some states have “Safe Harbor” laws the decriminalize prostitution amongst minors and offer other programs for teens (Menaker & Franklin 2013).

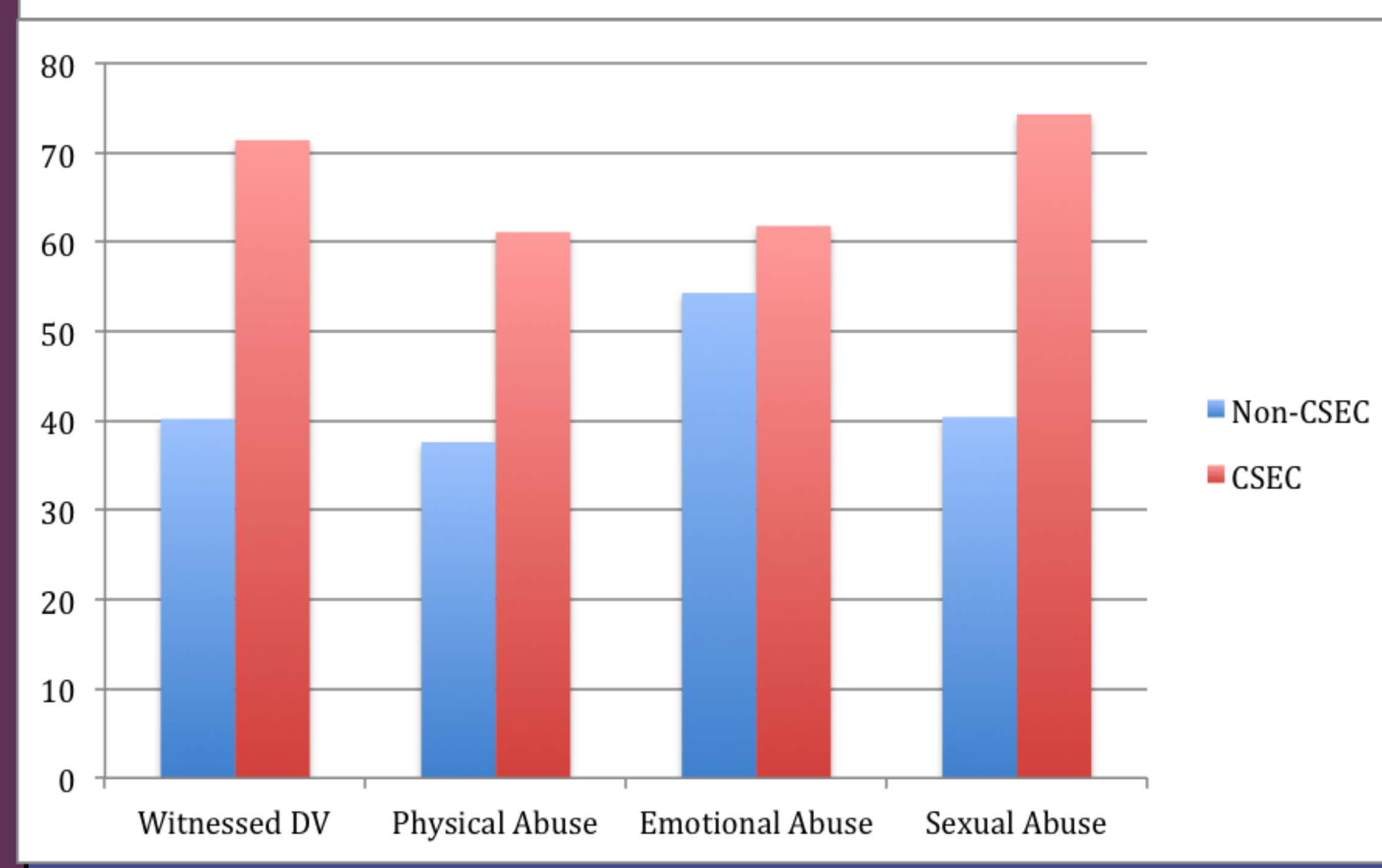
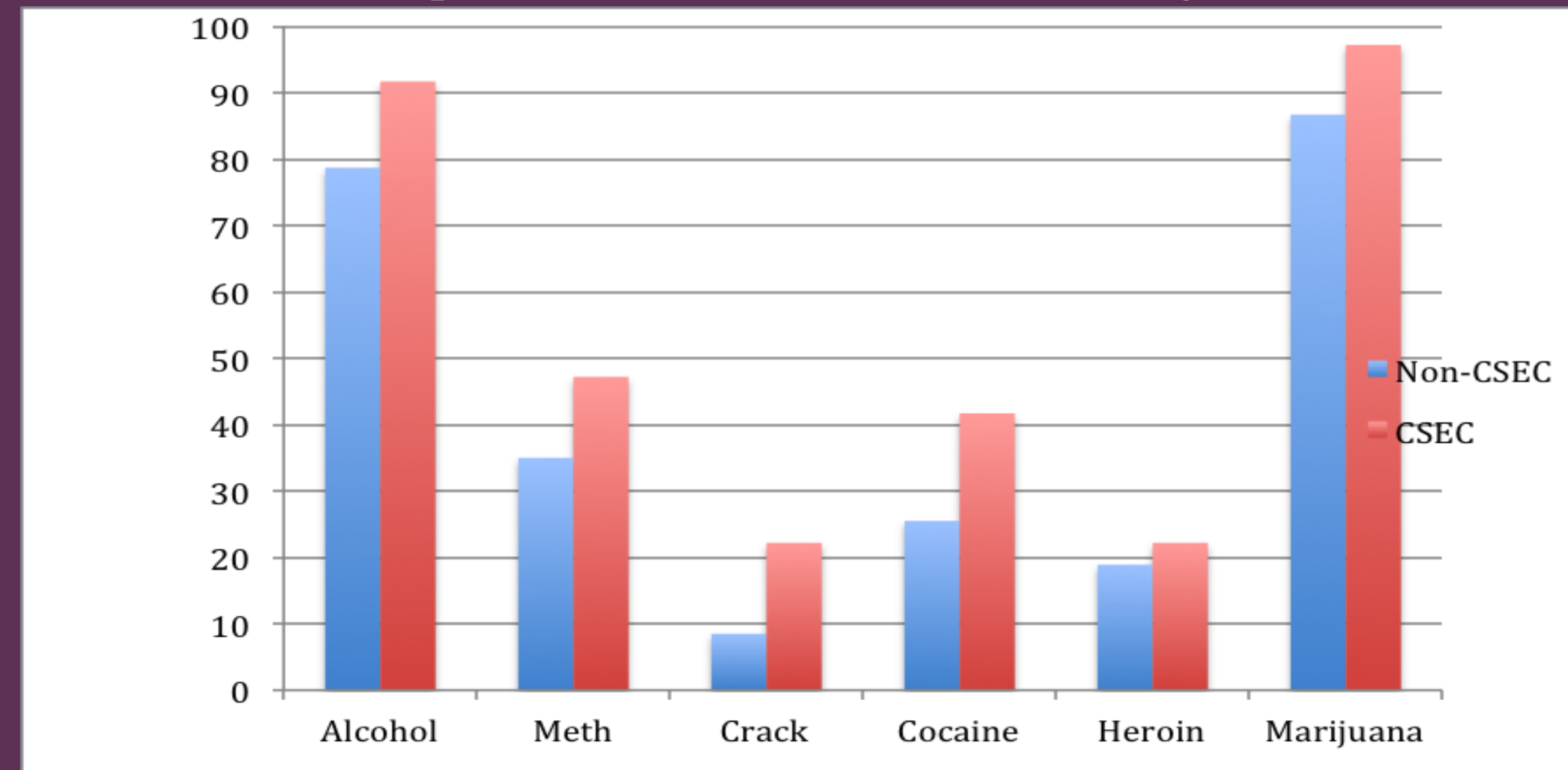
Methodology

From August 2013 to December of 2013 face-to-face interviews were conducted of teenage girls. All the girls were detained in the Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS). The girls were asked questions from the Center for Disease Control’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the survey developed by Owen and Bloom (2000), and the GIRLS Initiative Workgroup convened by DJJS. 130 girls were interviewed by graduate students from the Department of criminal justice and were supervised by Dr. Alexis Kennedy. To understand the rates of risky behavior, a quantitative study was conducted polling a variety of behaviors.

Girls were asked about their history if they had ever traded sex for items and if so what kinds of items. They were asked what age did they trade sex and if they ever had sex for money. They were then asked about their abuse history and whether or not they had been abused or witnessed abuse.

The girls were asked if they used crack, cocaine, heroine, marijuana, alcohol, meth, and other drugs. The girls were also asked if they had witnessed abuse of a family member or been physically and mentally abused themselves.

All of the 130 girls interviewed were between the ages of 12 and 18. Out of the 130 girls 94 were non-CSEC victims and 36 of the girls were CSEC victims. For the remainder of the results, the victims were compared to the non-CSEC involved girls.



Results

The results showed that there was a significant difference between those who were CSEC victims and witnessed domestic violence compared to those who were not CSEC victims and had not witnessed domestic violence (t=9.885, p<.002). When whether a girl had been physically abused was analyzed the results showed that the difference was significant (t=6.311, p<.012). Analysis shows that the question of whether the girls had been emotionally abused did not have a significant difference (t=1.234, p<.267). The two groups varied significantly on whether girls had a history of sexual abuse (t=11.697, p<.001).

While CSEC victims were more likely to use drugs, they were not using at a statistically significantly higher rate than their delinquent peers for most drugs other than crack. The test results showed that there was no significance difference between the use of meth and whether a girl is a CSEC victim or not (t=1.925, p<.084). When we analyzed the use of crack we found that there was a significant difference between those who used crack and whether they were a CSEC victim or not (t=4.534, p<.033). When we compared cocaine use we found out that the results were on their way to significance (t=3.227, p<.072). When we compared heroin we realized that there was no significant difference at all between those who are CSEC victims and those who are not (t=-1.80, p<.672). When girls who used meth were compared we found that significance was approaching (t=3.096, p<.078).

Discussion

The results show that there is not much difference between drug abuse amongst teen girls who are CSEC victims and those who are not CSEC victims. These results could have occurred because both groups abuse drugs at about the same rate. However, no significant difference may have been found because the sample of girls was not big enough to analyze and show a difference in results. When we analyzed the results that pertained to CSEC victims and non-CSEC victims in regards to their abuse rates we found significant differences.

This brings us to the conclusion that CSEC victims are a hard group to understand and help. They are hard to help because they experience so many hardships in life. Many times they are raised in abusive environments with parents who are drug addicts. They are also raised in environments where they may experience others being abused or they may hangout in areas where they are targeted to be prostituted. When treating CSEC victims you have to treat each individual differently. These victims deal with problems ranging from physical abuse, rape, drug use, and psychological problems. CSEC victims already experience high sexual behavior where they are exposing themselves to different diseases. Then you add drug abuse and an abuse history on top of high-risk sexual behavior. This makes treating victims hard to do, because they all have different experiences and have different needs.

Learning how to identify whether a youth is a CSEC victim is possible and something that many people such as school officials can be taught to identify. However, if states do not change their laws and treat CSEC victims, as victims instead of offenders these youth will continue to be victims. Las Vegas should educate communities and providers on how to help CSEC victims and make special laws for them. They should start by passing Safe Harbor laws and then making laws according to assessments made on different CSEC victims. Officers and other individuals who help or come in contact with other CSEC victims should be trained and informed on how to better help CSEC victims.

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Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand whether girls who were involved in prostitution use drugs such as alcohol, meth, cocaine, and other drugs more than delinquent girls who were not involved in prostitution. This study was also to determine whether girls who were involved in prostitution had a greater history of abuse than those who were not involved in prostitution. This study may also give people a better insight into the girls that enter into prostitution in hopes that it will help identify the resources they need to either never enter prostitution or to leave prostitution. Knowledge about the effects of prostitution on girls and why they enter into prostitution can help service providers offer better community resources to the girls.

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