

Coordinating collaborative efforts for individualized response and case management, case planning and services for each identified Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) to support holistic healing and recovery.

CSEC Report 2021

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Message from Children and Family Services Division Director, Christine Snapper

As the Children and Family Services (CFS) Division Director with the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA), I am pleased to share the Agency's First Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) program annual report. In this report, you'll learn about the establishment of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) and SSA's role as a key member. The report further describes how collective task force efforts paved the way to help launch SSA's CSEC program, countywide CSEC Steering Committee and other innovative partnerships within Orange County. At the heart of these collaborative efforts is a steadfast multi-disciplinary team of county and community agencies, law enforcement, the Orange County District Attorney's office and victim advocates who work together to advance public awareness and prevention efforts, mobilize innovative intervention services and offer specialized training to serve vulnerable youth who are victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

In reviewing this report, you'll gain insight into the evolution of our partnerships and how Orange County has leveraged trust, mutual respect and a clear understanding of the specialized expertise and resources that each partner brings to the table to serve youth who are victims of human trafficking with a more holistic and trauma-informed approach.

These relationships, nurtured within and among our local communities, serve as an example of the great gains we can make through an integrated approach to examining and responding to the specialized needs of those we serve. The SSA CSEC Program and OCHTTF collaborations serve as a gold standard for U.S. and international agencies and dignitaries who are looking for CSEC Program training and/or for those seeking to build similar programs in their regions.

SSA is grateful for the long-standing partnerships forged among the OCHTTF and the relationships fostered through Orange County's CSEC Steering Committee. The evolution of our work together to serve a vulnerable CSEC youth population demonstrates that our commitment towards an integrated system of care is the way forward!

Sincerely,

Christine Snapper

Christine Snapper

Children and Family Services Division Director, SSA

Introduction/History

In 2004, Waymakers, an Orange County nonprofit, collaborated with the Westminster Police Department and founded the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF). During this time, the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) had established an informal partnership with law enforcement as we jointly worked to identify and recognize human trafficking in Orange County. While leading the OCHTTF, Westminster Police Department readily engaged their co-located social worker during instances when human trafficking of a minor was suspected. This early partnership set the foundation for the unique collaboration we have today and enabled working relationships to build between SSA, law enforcement, victim advocates and the District Attorney's office over the years.

The California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care is charged with providing recommendations to the Judicial Council of California on ways in which the courts and their child welfare partners might improve safety, permanency, well-being and fair outcomes for children and families in the state. In 2011, the Commission invited the OCHTTF to provide education on the human trafficking of minors. As a result, a subcommittee on human trafficking was created to address the issues within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

In 2010, the role of lead law enforcement agency transitioned to Anaheim Police Department when they, along with Waymakers as OCHTTF co-chair, were awarded a grant for a pilot of the Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking. In 2014, Anaheim Police Department transitioned from a single vice investigation unit to a multi-law enforcement agency human trafficking task force investigative unit. Between 2010 and 2014, SSA continued informal partnerships with the OCHTTF until legislation was created to allow for child welfare to implement formal programs for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC).

In June 2014, Senate Bill 855 clarified that children who are victims of exploitation will be served by the child welfare system, a system designed to protect and serve abused and neglected youth. It established an optional CSEC program which provided counties with funding for expenditures related to the costs of implementing such a program, which included prevention and intervention services, and specialized training related to how to best serve children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. SSA was one of the first of 38 counties in California to opt-in to this funding that identified a child welfare supervisor to serve as the County's CSEC Coordinator and to serve as liaison for community partners working with this population in Orange County. The CSEC Coordinator collaborates with California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to report on the development and status of Orange County's program and efforts to ensure state mandates are being followed.

Since the inception of the CSEC program in Orange County, SSA has responded to calls from the OCHTTF and others who report suspected commercial sexual exploitation to the County's Child Abuse Registry (CAR) hotline. Since 2015, SSA has trained child welfare social workers on working with this population and has identified over 30 CSEC specific staff throughout the various programs within SSA's Children and Family Services Division who are dedicated to support Commercially Sexually Exploited (CSE) youth.

Since 2015, CSE youth who fall under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court have been assigned to a specialized court – GRACE (Generating Resources to Abolish Child Exploitation) Court. Overseen by the Presiding Judge of the Orange County Juvenile Court, GRACE Court provides additional resources to meet the unique needs of this population. This collaborative court meets frequently with CSE youth and a multi-disciplinary team that includes, but is not limited to, social workers, victim advocates, therapists, youth support specialists, the Orange County Department of Education, as well as the youth and their family. While the team of professionals working together to meet the needs of the youth is imperative, there was a missing link; a gap that no human could provide. To bridge this gap in 2018, GRACE Court added a certified therapy dog to provide additional comfort and support to the youth. Baxter, a German Shepard, was the first therapy dog in the Orange County Juvenile Court and was profiled in local and national news coverage, building public awareness about human trafficking of youth and the County’s collective efforts to combat this issue. When Baxter passed away in 2020, we knew his legacy of support must continue, and it has, with Cadence. Cadence is a Golden Retriever trained and certified by the Patriotic Service Dog Foundation and began her work in GRACE Court in early 2021. The youth often say they look forward to coming to court, an often-overwhelming environment, to spend time with the therapy dog that shows up and provides them unconditional comfort.

In 2015, SSA completed its interagency protocol/MOU for collaborative efforts to address CSEC. As a part of the protocol and since 2016, SSA hosts the Orange County CSEC Steering Committee, providing oversight to CSEC programs to ensure that county agencies and partners are effectively collaborating to identify and serve youth who are at risk or confirmed as commercially sexually exploited. The group is convened under the leadership of its co-chairs, the Presiding Judge of Orange County Juvenile Court and the SSA Children and Family Services Division Director. The CSEC Steering Committee consists of three active work groups which focus on: (1) Placement, (2), Resources and Support Services and (3), Public Awareness and Prevention.

In mid-2017, with the input of the Public Awareness and Prevention work group, SSA re-envisioned the Be The One campaign in partnership with OCTA and other key community partners, specifically to help raise awareness of the risks and indicators of child sex trafficking in Orange County. To date, Be The One campaign advertisements are featured on OCTA buses, at John Wayne Airport’s terminal baggage displays, featured on a multitude of social media channels and on posters in over 100 community-serving locations across the county.

In addition, the Prevention and Awareness workgroup, in cooperation with the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF), advised on the development of a CSEC/Human Trafficking Prevention curriculum that has been piloted in junior high schools in the Anaheim Union High School District by community- based organization, Higher Ground.

In 2018, with the input of the Resources and Support work group, SSA contracted with Orangewood Foundation to provide a resource support and drop-in center for both CSE youth and those at risk of CSE called Project CHOICE (Creating Healthy Opportunities and Inspiring Change through Empowerment). The goal of Project CHOICE is to provide a safe haven and respite space for youth that addresses their holistic needs. Project CHOICE empowers youth ages 11-21 years old to take back their power of choice through a survivor-centered and strengths-based approach, prioritizing the health, safety and stability of each youth. Programs include individual case management, safety planning, medical, mental health and substance use support, housing referrals, education/ employment assistance and linkages to community resources.

As required, SSA reports quarterly to CDSS on the status of the CSEC program. In addition, the CSEC Coordinator attends the CSEC Action Team, a multidisciplinary body comprising experts from across the state and including survivors. This team is dedicated to researching and identifying promising prevention and intervention practices, providing guidance to county agencies and community partners and conducting policy evaluations to ensure improved outcomes for children. They meet on a quarterly basis and cover a diverse set of topics relevant to youth experiencing CSE.

In 2021, SSA joined the Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) project. PACT is a contract between CDSS and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC). PACT's mission is to engage county child welfare agencies and their multidisciplinary partners as they implement a coordinated cross-system, interagency model to improve service delivery to children and youth at risk of or experiencing sex and/or labor trafficking in California.

Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth

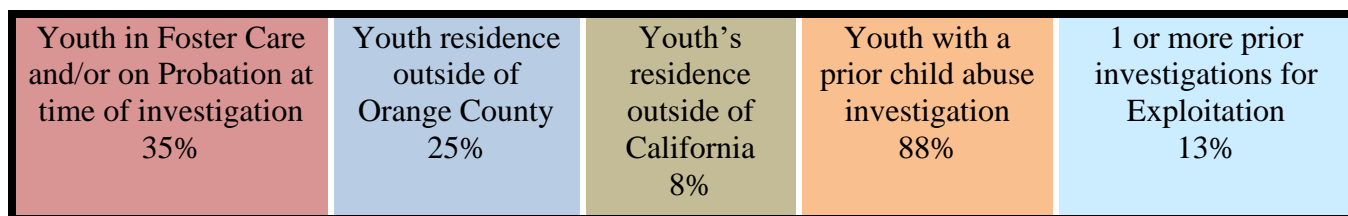
Risk Factors and Statistics

Any child has the potential of becoming a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, however there are certain vulnerabilities that make a child at higher risk. Children who have a history of abuse or neglect, especially sexual abuse — as well as youth involved in the foster care system — are particularly vulnerable and are at greater risk of being commercially sexually exploited. Since 2014, 100 percent of the children recovered by the OCHTTF had a history of abuse or neglect in their background, while 88 percent of all youth suspected of being commercially sexually exploited had a history of child abuse.

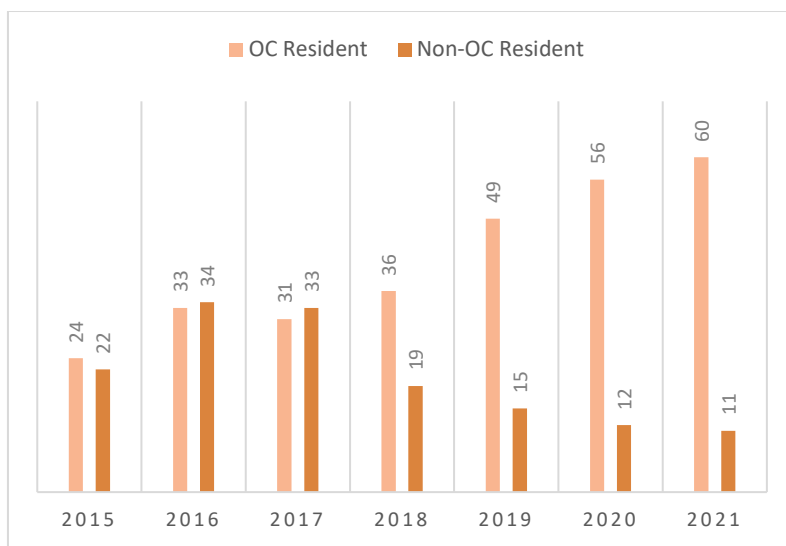
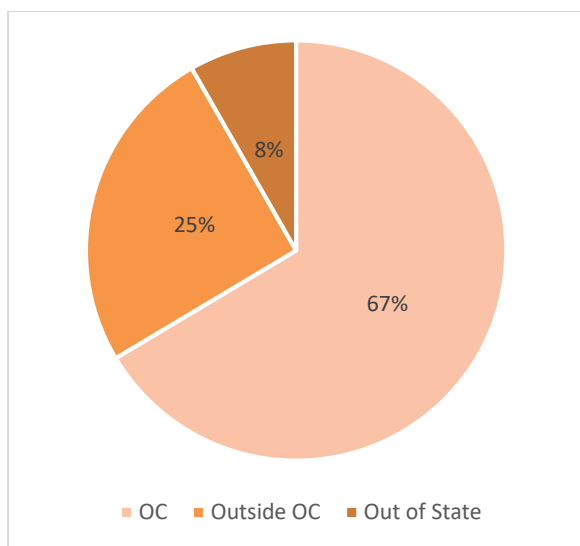
Additional risk factors for the commercial sexual exploitation of youth include, but are not limited to: poverty, significant familial and school disruptions, chronic history of running away, identifying as lesbian, gay bisexual or transgender (LGBTQIA), physical or mental disability or illness, family substance abuse or early substance use and unaddressed trauma. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is this a checklist for determining if a child may be a victim of CSE. However, it is important to be aware of the risk factors in order to provide prevention and intervention to youth.

Social or environmental factors such as: community violence, open access to technology for youth, glorification of the “pimp culture,” the over-sexualization of youth and the adult sex industry, which is often viewed in mainstream media and common across many social media platforms. Youth who desire to be popular and want something more — whether seeking monetary gains or aspiring to be an actor, singer or model — may be targeted, especially online. It is not uncommon for parents and caretakers to teach their children how to identify a stranger in the community but forget to teach how to identify a stranger on social media. Youth refer to strangers on social media as those who “like”, “follow”, “subscribe” and “friend;” it is up to trusted adults to continuously monitor and teach children how to stay safe inside and outside their home. And, it is the responsibility of trusted adults to recognize vulnerable children, and work to protect them and intervene when commercial sexual exploitation may be occurring.

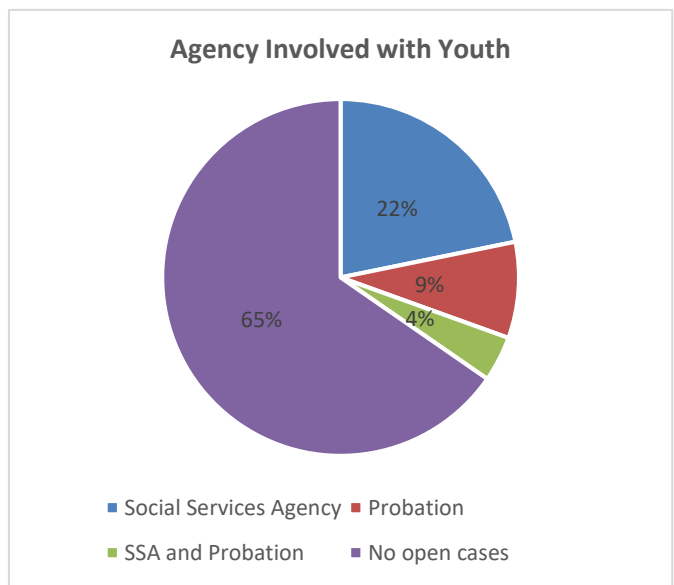
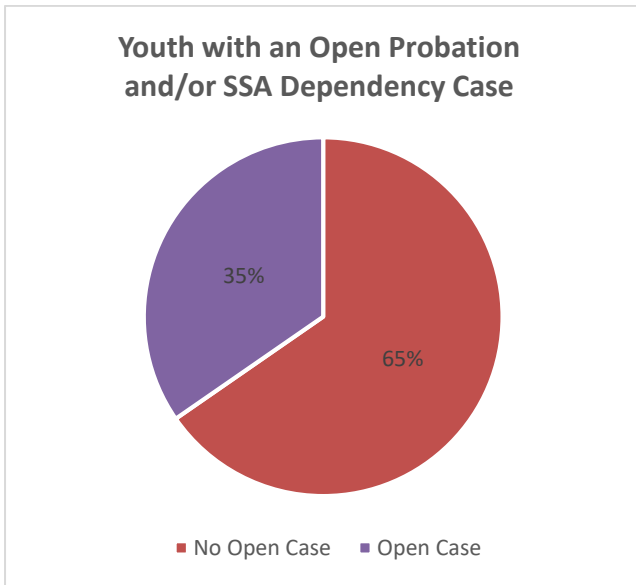
Data 2015 - 2021



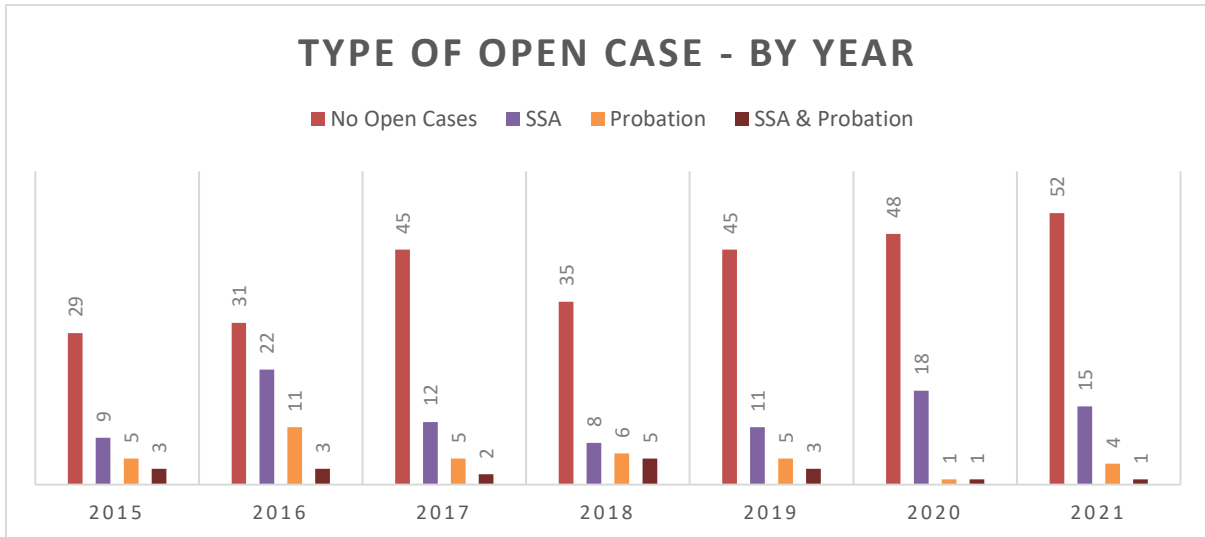
Since the inception of SSA's CSEC program, the data has evolved as awareness, training and law enforcement response has increased across Orange County. The data in this section tells that story. Examining this historical data through present day demonstrates many of the initial referrals of suspected exploitation were regarding youth whose primary residence was someplace other than Orange County. This was largely due to the OCHTTF's proactive investigatory efforts wherein they recovered youth who were passing through Orange County as part of their trafficking activities. However, more recently we see youth who are residents of Orange County coming to our attention, due to increased awareness and training among community agencies, educational professionals, mandated reporters and the community at large. Furthermore, this data demonstrates a trend many studies also reveal – prior history of child abuse is a vulnerability to being commercially sexually exploited. This holds true in Orange County when over a 7-year period, 88 percent of calls to the Child Abuse Registry where exploitation was suspected, there were prior reports of child abuse. It is notable, as well, that 35 percent of the youth were already part of the Juvenile Court System.

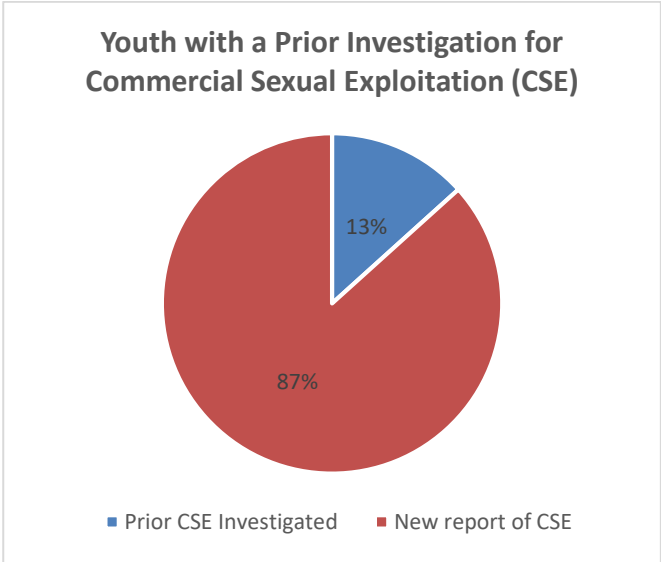
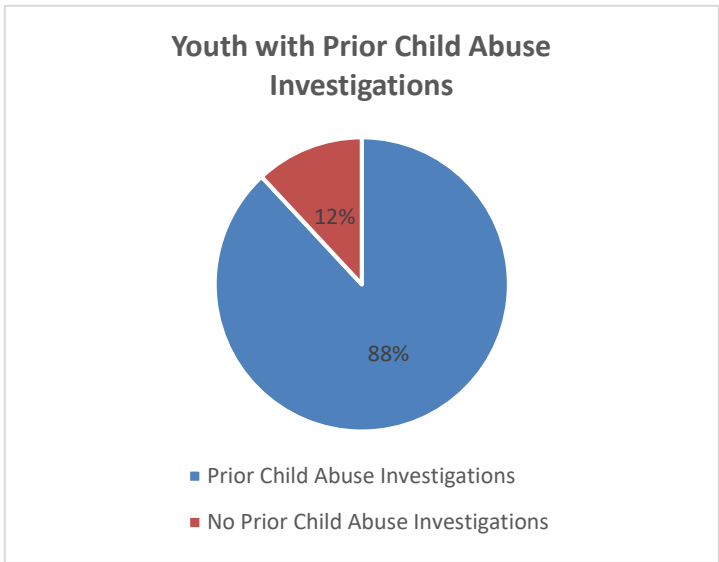


The above graphs indicate that over a 7-year period, the number of investigations of exploitation regarding youth who reside in Orange County increased over time. Overall, 67% of youth from 2015-2021 were residents of Orange County. However, the data demonstrates that as proactive investigations and prosecution by the OCHTTF increased, fewer youth were brought to Orange County to be trafficked. In addition, awareness and training about CSEC increased reporting regarding local youth.

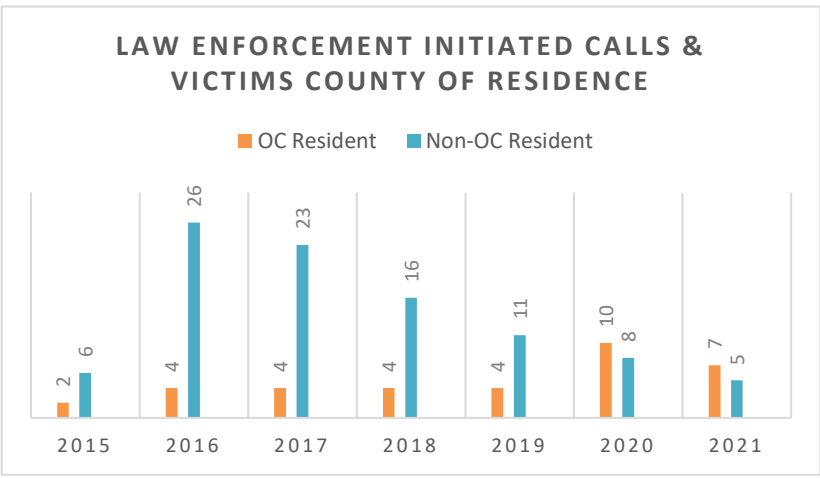
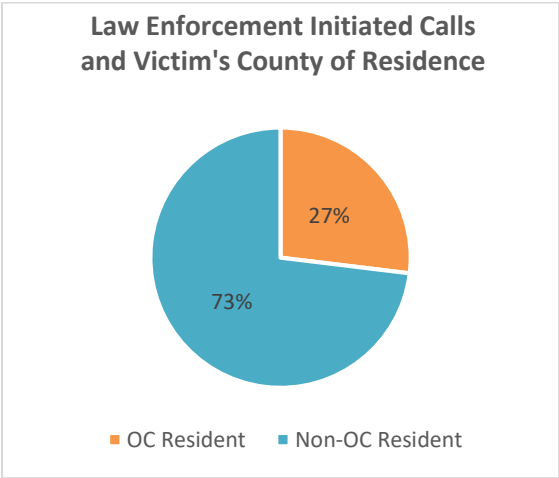


When a youth has an open dependency or probation court case, that increases their vulnerability for Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The graphs above show which system the youth was involved with when SSA made contact with the youth regarding exploitation. 35% of youth from 2015-2021 had an open probation and/or SSA dependency case. Further breakdown shows that 22% had an open dependency case with SSA, 9% were on Probation and 4% had open cases in both systems of care. In the graph below those factors are further broken down by year, demonstrating a fairly consistent pattern over time.



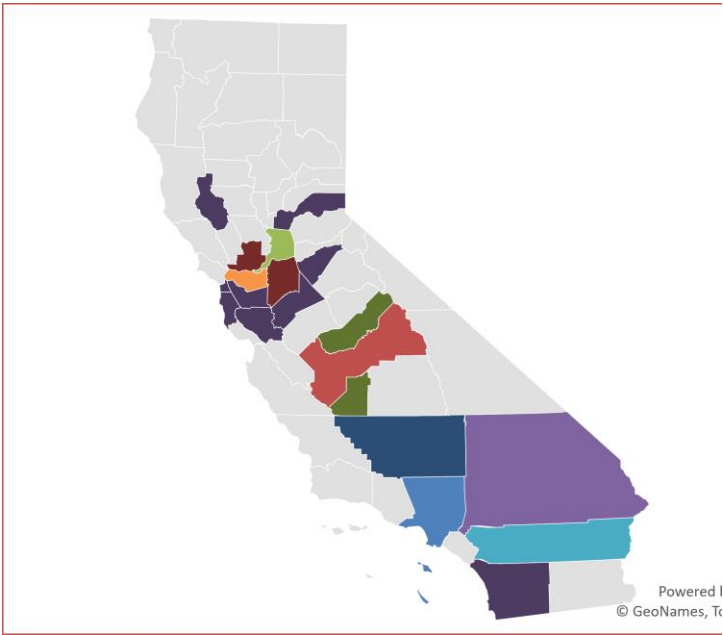


Children who have experienced prior child abuse and/or neglect are more vulnerable to Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The graphs above show that trend in Orange County with 88% of youth from 2015 – 2021 having a prior child abuse investigation. Unfortunately, youth are often exploited more than one time, which we see in the graph above showing 13% of youth from 2015-2021 were involved in a previous Commercial Sexual Exploitation investigation.



SSA partners with Law Enforcement on all investigations involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children, many of whom have been sexually trafficked by a pimp. From 2015 – 2021, 73 percent of youth first contacted by Law Enforcement and identified as a victim of sex trafficking were not residents of Orange County, but rather youth brought into Orange County by their trafficker. While 73 percent appears to be a large number the graph on the right depicting the breakdown of each year demonstrates that, over time, the gap between the number of Orange County youth residents and non-Orange County youth residents identified as being sexually trafficked by law enforcement is closing. This is largely due to the increase in efforts made by the OCHTTF and other law enforcement jurisdictions to investigate and prosecute Human Trafficking. Orange County law enforcement has garnered a reputation that if a trafficker brings a youth into Orange County, they will be arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

California Map of Out of County Youth Located in Orange County



Los Angeles	31
Fresno	20
Sacramento	12
San Bernardino	10
Riverside	6
Contra Costa	5
Kern	4
Solano	3
San Joaquin	3
Kings	2
Madera	2
Counties with 1	Lake, San Francisco, San Mateo, San Diego, Stanislaus, Santa Clara, Placer, Alameda, Calaveras, Trinity

A number of victims from outside of California and the US were recovered in Orange County – their home state/country is as follows:

Nevada	5		
Washington	4	New Jersey	1
Michigan	2	Maryland	1
Ohio	2	Missouri	1
Texas	2	Illinois	1
Colorado	2	Florida	1
Iowa	2	Utah	1
Alabama	1	Oregon	1
Arizona	1	New Hampshire	1

Outside the US:

Mexico	3
Unknown	2
Honduras	1

Partnering Agencies

SSA partners with agencies and nonprofits in the Orange County community who provide services to CSE youth, and many of these partners are active participants in our CSEC Steering Committee. Partner agencies include both government and non-government organizations and specific MOU partners including the Orange County Probation Department, OC Health Care Agency (HCA) and the County of Orange Juvenile Court.

As a core OCHTTF member, SSA trains alongside the OCHTTF across the state of California. Together, we have presented at national conferences and before international delegations, with much of the material focused on how we have successfully worked together as an Enhanced Collaborative Model. We continue to receive invitations to speak to professionals and the community alike.

The Orange County Probation Department has a CSEC trained Deputy Probation Officer who is assigned to all CSE youth who are on formal probation. In addition, Juvenile Hall screens all youth for possible CSE and when identified, sends out a notification to all MOU and OCHTTF partners.

HCA has CSEC trained clinicians who work directly with the youth and provide a continuum of care and services wherever the youth may be residing. HCA also implements prevention and intervention curriculum for youth in care. Curriculums such as My Life, My Choice, Word on the Street and Ending the Game are regularly implemented. Further, HCA provides a Full-Service Partnership (FSP) in GRACE Court. FSP is a Mental Health Services Act program which provides an array of services to youth and/or families that address emotional, mental and physical health and promote stability, resiliency and wellness.

The County of Orange Juvenile Court has been instrumental in the services and support to CSEC with a model collaborative court, GRACE Court. With frequent hearings and an emphasis on the youth's voice, GRACE Court participants are provided a place to be heard and an opportunity for goals to be realized. GRACE Court has grown over time beginning with 22 participants in 2015 to serving to over 45 participants today.

SSA recognizes and appreciates the collaborative efforts of our partners, including but not limited to:

Orange County Probation Department
OC Health Care Agency
Orange County Juvenile Court
Orange County Juvenile Justice Commission
Orange County Department of Education
Office of Harold LaFlamme
Orange County District Attorney's Office
Orange County Public Defender
Juvenile Defenders
Waymakers
Orangewood Foundation
Anaheim Police Department
Santa Ana Police Department
Irvine Police Department

Orange County Sheriff's Department
Crittenton Services for Children and Families
Olive Crest
The Raise Foundation
Higher Ground
Teen Project at Vera's Sanctuary
Global Center for Women and Justice
Court Appointed Special Advocates
Anaheim Union High School District
Children's Hospital of Orange County
New Alternatives, CRF
Casa de la Familia
Women's Transitional Living Center

Accolades



Former Presiding Judges of the Juvenile Court who both oversaw GRACE Court during their tenure, each received the Judge of the Year Award by the North Orange County Bar Association. Congratulations Judge Hernandez on your award in 2019 and Judge Motoike on your two awards in 2021.



Deputy Probation Officer Lisa Carpenter received the Blue Ribbon Hero of the Month award for July 2021 presented on behalf of Orange County's Child Abuse Prevention Council, and convened by The Raise Foundation, for her work in assisting trafficking survivors and sharing her knowledge and expertise with others. During her humble award acceptance, Lisa remarked that she could not do this work without the help of her co-workers, community and county partners.



The Global Center for Women and Justice (GCWJ) at Vanguard University recognizes the need for a highly diverse and collaborative environment to combat human trafficking and advance the global status of women and vulnerable populations. GCWJ carries out this mission by working with students, educators, law enforcement, healthcare professionals and community leaders to end human trafficking and the cyber-exploitation of women and children. GCWJ holds a luncheon each year to honor individuals and organizations for their work in combatting human trafficking.

Senior Social Services Supervisor/CSEC Coordinator Nicole Strattman was awarded the Diamond Award for an Individual in 2021, while County Contract Provider, Orangewood Foundation – Project CHOICE was awarded the Outstanding Organization Diamond Award.





On June 12, 2019, SSA was recognized by the City of Westminster for Efforts Against Human Trafficking. The city thanked SSA for its dedication and actions to protect the local community.

The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) won the Diamond Award for an Outstanding Organization in 2017. The award was presented to the OCHTTF by then Congressman Ed Royce. SSA is a proud member of the OCHTTF.



Looking to the Future

SSA and our partners continue to work on innovative ways to prevent and intervene with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and to lead the way in combatting this important issue. Addressing the holistic needs of these youth is the preferred way to provide treatment and support. While specific prevention and intervention curriculums are crucial to helping youth heal, we also recognize the importance of unique interventions to help our youth, such as the healing presence of a therapy dog, equine therapy and creative art treatment. In Orange County we also recognize the critical importance of actively listening and ensuring we hear the survivor's voice.

Currently, SSA is working on expanding the services of Orange County's Child Advocacy Center, the Child Abuse Services Team (CAST), to provide Orange County law enforcement jurisdictions enhanced tools to successfully investigate human trafficking cases. CAST services not only aid in criminal investigation but provide a secure location and onsite medical facility to meet the unique medical needs of CSEC. Often CSEC youth find their reproductive health severely compromised and immediate attention to their medical needs is imperative. Further, CAST services are designed with a trauma informed delivery approach in mind. This helps ensure that the vulnerabilities or triggers of trauma survivors are not exacerbated, to avoid re-traumatization and ensure services are focused on support and healing.

SSA also recognizes the need for a universal screening tool that is validated in order to assist in identification of at risk youth before they are commercially sexually exploited. Such a tool will help enable and advance prevention and intervention. Furthermore, the Agency is actively working to recruit and provide specialized training to Resource Families who provide loving homes and care for these and other high needs youth.

Finally, as a participant in PACT, we are expanding our efforts to learn more about and identify child victims of labor trafficking.

There are a multitude of ways to help our youth; we must collectively continue to think creatively and further our collaboration with each other to continue our forward momentum in serving CSEC youth.