

Methodology

The purpose of the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework is to elaborate the key policy principles that have been identified as critical to making the proper response to domestic minor sex trafficking. These principles, as listed above, are eliminating demand, prosecuting the traffickers, identifying the victims, and providing protection, access to services, and shelter for victims. These principles can be grouped into six areas of law:

1. Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking
2. Criminal Provisions Addressing Demand
3. Criminal Provisions for Traffickers
4. Criminal Provisions for Facilitators
5. Protective Provisions for the Child Victim
6. Criminal Justice Tools for Investigation and Prosecution

Each area of law may have several laws that affect the policy within the state's code. As such, specific questions must be asked to determine whether state laws sufficiently address the policy need.

Analysis

Each state will be graded on the basis of the following points of law:

1. Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

- 1.1 The state human trafficking law addresses sex trafficking and clearly defines a human trafficking victim as any minor under the age of 18 used in a commercial sex act without regard to use of force, fraud, or coercion, aligning to the federal trafficking law.

Note: The vast majority of states have human trafficking laws. Within these statutes, however, there are variations in coverage; some do not expressly cover the sex trafficking of minors. State human trafficking laws that are consistent with each other and with federal law in scope and penalty will prevent migration of the crime to more lenient states or onto tribal lands, many of which are close to densely populated areas and contain attractions for this activity, such as casinos.

- 1.2 Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is identified as a separate and distinct offense from general sexual offenses, which may also be used to prosecute those who commit commercial sex offenses against minors.

Note: In the absence of a clear and specific child sex trafficking statute, CSEC laws become critical to punish the crime of commercial sexual exploitation of a child. CSEC statutes are those that make the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor a criminal offense. These offenses range from prostitution of a minor to employment of a minor for live or recorded sexual performance. Also, sexual offenses can be committed in the course of commercial sexual exploitation and, in some cases, establish the predicate offense for certain trafficking or CSEC offenses. Sexual offense statutes may also be used to prosecute CSEC offenses, although this is not preferred due to the potential resulting failure to identify the victim as a trafficking or CSEC victim.

- 1.3 Prostitution statutes refer to the sex trafficking statute to identify the commercially sexually exploited minor as a trafficking victim.

Note: Language referring to human trafficking is necessary to ensure that CSEC victims are properly identified as human trafficking victims and thus may access the protections and benefits outlined under federal and some state statutes. This is also necessary to further the collection of data on human trafficking, which is critical to countering domestic minor sex trafficking.

- 1.4 The state racketeering or gang crimes statute includes sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) offenses as predicate acts allowing the statute to be used to prosecute trafficking crimes.

Note: Motivated by high profits and lower risks, gangs are increasingly involved in sex trafficking of minors. A racketeering statute provides a tool to dismantle the infrastructure of a gang by prosecuting all of its members and seizing the assets used or gained through the gang's criminal activity. Amending or enacting a RICO or gang crime statute that includes sex trafficking and CSEC offenses as predicate acts provides states with a powerful tool to combat sex trafficking enterprises.

2. Criminal Provisions Addressing Demand

- 2.1 The state sex trafficking law can be applied to buyers of commercial sex acts with a victim of domestic minor sex trafficking.

Note: Language capturing buyer conduct is necessary to mount a comprehensive attack on domestic minor sex trafficking.

- 2.2 Buyers of commercial sex acts with a minor can be prosecuted under commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) laws.

Note: Anti-demand provisions are critical. State laws on commercial sex abuse of a minor, child prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation of minor, etc. must cover the crime of buying sex with a minor. These provisions will ideally refer to the human trafficking statute to make it clear that buying sex with a minor is domestic minor sex trafficking.

- 2.3 Solicitation of prostitution laws differentiate between buying sex acts with an adult and buying sex acts with a minor under 18.

Note: This can be accomplished by amending traditional solicitation and prostitution laws to make them inapplicable to buying sex with a minor along with amending CSEC or trafficking laws to ensure that buyers of sex acts with minors are included. This is important to ensure that crimes of domestic minor sex trafficking are separated from crimes of solicitation and/or prostitution and that buyers are never allowed to proceed with diversion programs, such as a “John School” or other treatment programs.

- 2.4 Penalties for buyers of commercial sex acts with minors are as high as federal penalties.

Note: Under federal law, sex trafficking of a child is punishable by significant penalties that reflect the seriousness of this offense.⁸ Consistency in sentencing between states will prevent the crime from migrating to more lenient states. Also, stiff penalties are just and are critical to deter demand.

- 2.5 Using the Internet or electronic communications to lure, entice, or purchase, or attempt to lure, entice, or purchase commercial sex acts with a minor is a separate crime or results in an enhanced penalty for buyers.

- 2.6 No age mistake defense is permitted for a buyer of commercial sex acts with any minor under 18.

- 2.7 Base penalties for buying sex acts with a minor under 18 are sufficiently high and not reduced for older minors.

Note: Under federal law, sex trafficking of a child is punishable by significant penalties.⁹ State laws that set lower criminal penalties for sexual offenses against older minors are ignoring the definition of a minor and perpetuating the false perception that a victim aged 16 or 17 is a lesser victim. This, however, is not to be confused with enhanced penalties for offenses against a minor below a certain age that are considered especially egregious. For example, 18 U.S.C. § 1591 provides an enhanced penalty of a minimum of 15 years to life imprisonment for trafficking a minor under 14.¹⁰

- 2.8 Financial penalties for buyers of commercial sex acts with minors are sufficiently high to make it difficult for buyers to hide the crime.

Note: Meaningful fines, asset forfeiture, restitution and fees can make it difficult for buyers to hide the crime they have committed from family and community. Directing the fines to a dedicated account can simultaneously offset the costs of investigating, prosecuting, and restoring the victims of the crime. Impound fees must be significant to act as a deterrent.

- 2.9 Buying and possessing child pornography carries penalties as high as similar federal offenses.

Note: Child pornography is defined in federal law as any visual depiction involving the use of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct, or a visual depiction that has been created or modified to appear as a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct.¹¹ Child pornography is actually an image of sexual abuse perpetrated on a child. The most common forum for child pornography today is the Internet and once images are on the Internet, they cannot be removed completely and can continue to circulate revictimizing the child each time they are viewed. Child pornography is also frequently encountered in combination with other sexual offenses against children and may serve as a gateway to acting out the images of sexual abuse on children.¹² Therefore, possessing child pornography should be viewed as a serious crime meriting meaningful prosecution.¹³

- 2.10 Convicted buyers of commercial sex acts with minors and child pornography are required to register as sex offenders.

Note: The exchange of money or something of value does not sanitize the buyer of commercial sex with a minor from the sex offender registration requirements; domestic minor sex trafficking is a sexual offense. Buyers convicted of human trafficking with a sexual purpose or of a CSEC offense should be required to register as sex offenders.

3. Criminal Provisions for Traffickers

- 3.1 Penalties for trafficking a child for sexual exploitation are as high as federal penalties.

- 3.2 Creating and distributing child pornography carries penalties as high as similar federal offenses.

- 3.3 Using the Internet or electronic communications to lure, entice, recruit, or sell commercial sex acts with a minor is a separate crime or results in an enhanced penalty for traffickers.

- 3.4 Financial penalties for traffickers, including asset forfeiture, are sufficiently high.

Note: Financial penalties may include asset forfeiture, restitution, and fines for the crimes of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Asset forfeiture laws are critical to disrupting the criminal trafficking enterprise, offsetting the cost of investigation, prosecuting the crime, restoring the victim, and ensuring that the ill-gotten assets of trafficking are not retained by the convicted trafficker. Asset forfeiture laws have been very effective in fighting drug trafficking¹⁴ and should be viewed as an effective tool in the fight against domestic minor sex trafficking. Asset forfeiture is commonly tied to Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statutes in many states and thus requires

⁸ 18 U.S.C. § 1591(a), (b)(2).

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id. § 1591(a), (b)(1).

¹¹ Id. § 2256.

¹² ALEXANDRA GELBER, U.S. DEPT OF JUSTICE, CHILD EXPLOITATION AND OBSCENITY SECTION, CRIMINAL DIVISION, RESPONSE TO “A RELUCTANT REBELLION” 5-6 (2009), available at <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos/downloads/ReluctantRebellionResponse.pdf>.

¹³ Id. at 14–15.

¹⁴ Asset Forfeiture, U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMIN., <http://www.justice.gov/dea/ops/af.shtml> (last visited Oct. 26, 2015).

prosecutors to charge these crimes in addition to human trafficking. Restitution is important to provide victims of sex trafficking with the funds to access treatment and to restart their lives. States should follow the federal model of requiring restitution for all victims of human trafficking¹⁵ and CSEC. Lastly, meaningful fines can be a deterrent and help to fund the programs necessary to serve victims.

3.5 Convicted traffickers are required to register as sex offenders.

3.6 Laws relating to termination of parental rights for certain offenses include sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) offenses in order to remove the children of traffickers from their control and potential exploitation.

Note: Traffickers may impregnate their victims, including minor victims, with the intent of maintaining control. The effect is to have second generation victims within a criminal “family.” Breaking the bonds between victims and traffickers include freeing their child from a continuing relationship with the trafficker parent. Also, children of traffickers can become victims of trafficking at the hands of their trafficker-parents.

4. Criminal Provisions for Facilitators

4.1 The acts of assisting, enabling, or financially benefitting from child sex trafficking are included as criminal offenses in the state sex trafficking statute.

Note: Facilitators are those people or entities that knowingly enable domestic minor sex trafficking or benefit from sex trafficking in any way. State sex trafficking laws must also make the act of facilitation a crime.

4.2 Financial penalties, including asset forfeiture laws, are in place for those who benefit financially from or aid and assist in committing domestic minor sex trafficking.

Note: Asset forfeiture laws are critical to disrupting the criminal trafficking enterprise, offsetting the cost of investigation, prosecuting the crime, restoring the victim, and ensuring that the ill-gotten assets of trafficking are not retained by a person or an entity convicted of knowingly benefitting from sex trafficking, such as hotels or online classified businesses.

4.3 Promoting and selling child sex tourism is illegal.

Note: Businesses and individuals selling travel based on or containing components of commercial sexual exploitation of children are committing the crime of child sex tourism and driving demand for sex with children. Laws prohibiting child sex tourism should apply to a natural person as well as a corporation, and the penalty prescribed for the crime must be sufficiently serious to present substantial risk and deterrence, and should be comparable with the gravity of the crime.

4.4 Promoting and selling child pornography is illegal.

5. Protective Provisions for the Child Victims

5.1 Statutorily-mandated victim services define “victim” to specifically include victims of domestic minor sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) to ensure prompt identification and access to victims’ rights and services.

Note: Language defining a minor who has been used in a commercial sex act (prostitution, pornography, or sexual performance) as a victim of sex trafficking or CSEC can lead to improved identification and responses at all levels.

5.2 The state sex trafficking statute expressly prohibits a defendant from raising consent of the minor to the commercial sex acts as a defense.

Note: Many states allow a minor to consent to sex at an age lower than the age of majority. But a minor used in a commercial sex act is a victim of adult criminal behavior; the child’s consent, therefore, cannot mitigate such acts. For this reason, consent must not be available as a defense to the crime of domestic minor sex trafficking.

5.3 Prostitution laws apply only to adults, preventing criminalization of minors under 18 for prostitution offenses.

Note: This is consistent with defining a minor in prostitution as a victim of domestic minor sex trafficking. This also establishes that a prostituted minor will not be charged as an offender, in either juvenile or adult criminal court, but rather, will be protected as a victim.

5.4 State law provides a non-punitive avenue to specialized services through one or more points of entry.

Note: Juvenile sex trafficking victims may come to the attention of service providers through various points of entry into state systems. Clear statutory mechanisms to direct juvenile victims to specialized services are critical to preventing further traumatization and ensuring a protective response consistent with their status as crime victims. Protective shelter and services are far preferable to the current practice of charging the minor with an offense in order to detain him or her for his or her own safety and to assist in investigating a criminal case. Service providers struggle with case management when these victims are ordered to inappropriate placements, such as ill-equipped foster care, group homes, and detention facilities, or they are returned to poor home environments. Debate exists over the level of security in and duration of these placements, as well as the size and location of such shelters; however, agreement exists as to the need for a variety of approaches from long-term shelters to home-based care to specialty foster homes, etc.¹⁶

¹⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 1593.

¹⁶ See NATIONAL COLLOQUIUM 2012 FINAL REPORT, *supra* note 8.

- 5.5 Commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking is identified as a type of abuse and neglect within child protection statutes.

Note: Expanding or interpreting the definition of “abuse and neglect” in the child protection statutes to include sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation would allow child protective services to include it as a specific type of maltreatment and bring situations of domestic minor sex trafficking within the investigative and protective functions of child protective services.

- 5.6 The definition of “caregiver” or another related term in the child welfare statutes is not a barrier to a sex trafficked child accessing the protection of child welfare.

Note: Child protective services is often precluded from intervening in a case of non-familial domestic minor sex trafficking because the agency’s mandate is limited to cases in which a parent or legal guardian is the cause of danger to the child. Defining such a person to include the person in custody or control of a minor, or providing specific authority for child welfare to serve child sex trafficking victims irrespective of the perpetrator of abuse, can bring greater protections to domestic minor sex trafficking victims through the intervention of child protective services.

- 5.7 Crime victims’ compensation is specifically available to a child victim of sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) without regard to ineligibility factors.

Note: Ineligibility criteria contained in state crime victims’ compensation programs often result in child sex trafficking victims being denied funds. Victims may be determined ineligible due to, among other things, their “involvement in the underlying crime” for which they are claiming the compensation, i.e. prostitution, or for failure to cooperate in a law enforcement investigation. This must be remedied with direct language specifically identifying these minors as victims.

- 5.8 Victim-friendly procedures and protections are provided in the trial process for minors under 18.

Note: Trauma reduction tools can increase the victim’s successful participation through safety and protection. Some examples include:

- a. Court appointment of an attorney for the domestic minor sex trafficking victim, serving, as appropriate, as the child’s legal counsel or as a guardian ad litem, could help protect the child from court system-related trauma and help better assure that their rights and legal interests were protected.
- b. Victim-witness coordinators, who have received training on child trafficking issues, are needed to shepherd the domestic minor sex trafficking victims and families through the criminal justice process.
- c. Rape shield laws limit a defendant’s ability to cross-examine victims about their past sexual behavior.
- d. Prohibition on publication of an alleged rape victim’s identity.
- e. Closed courtrooms for minor victim testimony can help with the problem of intimidation by defendant traffickers’ friends and family packing the courtroom.
- f. Closed circuit television testimony can reduce re-traumatization of a domestic minor sex trafficking victim and assist in securing his or her testimony against an offender.

- 5.9 Expungement or sealing of juvenile delinquency records resulting from arrests or adjudications for prostitution-related offenses committed as a result of, or in the course of, the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor is available within a reasonable time after turning 18.

Note: Victims of domestic minor sex trafficking (and adult sex trafficking) report being hampered in attempts to restore their lives through employment or education because they have criminal records, or in cases involving a minor, records of juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency records can prevent survivors from obtaining academic scholarships, securing certain employment, and working with children in some cases. Saddling the victim of sex trafficking with a criminal or juvenile delinquency record is contrary to his or her legal definition as a victim and can inhibit full reintegration into the community.

- 5.10 Victim restitution and civil remedies for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) are authorized by law.

Note: Criminal restitution is an important part of the punishment for a convicted offender of trafficking and can provide funds for a victim to recover from the victimization. Restitution should be mandatory in any case of domestic minor sex trafficking and a means of calculating the typically unquantifiable costs of the victimization should be determined in the law. As an example, criminal restitution is mandated in the federal trafficking law.¹⁷ Often though, criminal cases are not pursued, or a convicted offender is not able to pay the restitution. Therefore, victims of domestic minor sex trafficking must be allowed to pursue civil remedies for the damages they have suffered as a result of the victimization. These might include compensatory damages, attorney’s fees, and punitive damages. The continuing effects of sex trafficking on a young person can lead to future medical costs and other costs as they regain control over their life. Opportunities to access both criminal restitution and civil damages are means to pay for these needs.

- 5.11 Statutes of limitations for civil and criminal actions for child sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) offenses are eliminated or lengthened sufficiently to allow prosecutors and victims a realistic opportunity to pursue criminal action and legal remedies.

Note: Because of the traumatic effects of sex trafficking on a child, lengthening or eliminating the statutes of limitations on criminal and civil actions for child sex trafficking and CSEC crimes and the injurious effects on the person is important to allow the victims full access to justice. It is preferable to follow the federal model of eliminating the statute of limitations in criminal actions for sex crimes involving children.¹⁸

¹⁷ U.S.C. §§ 1593(b)(1), (b)(3), 2259(b)(4).

¹⁸ Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003 (PROTECT Act), Pub. L. No. 108-21, § 202, 117 Stat. 650, 660 (codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. § 3283).

6. Tools for Investigation and Prosecution

- 6.1 Training on human trafficking and domestic minor sex trafficking for law enforcement is statutorily mandated or authorized.

Note: Laws calling for the development of training materials and training of law enforcement officers are important to the response to domestic minor sex trafficking victims. Due to the unique conditions of DMST, specialized training is ideal; however, this training might be combined with general human trafficking training. Training in victim identification, the definition of domestic minor sex trafficking, investigative techniques, and victim-witness management is critical to increased identification of and improved responses to the victims. Training has resulted in demonstrable increases in investigations of domestic minor sex trafficking in many places around the country.

- 6.2 Single party consent to audiotaping is permitted in law enforcement investigations

Note: Requiring two-party consent to audiotaped conversations makes undercover domestic minor sex trafficking investigations difficult and dangerous. Allowing for single party consent empowers law enforcement to more efficiently investigate and better prepare cases for prosecution while providing greater protection for the investigating officers interacting with traffickers and buyers.

- 6.3 Wiretapping is an available tool to investigate domestic minor sex trafficking.

Note: Access to wiretapping can be a decisive factor in initiating domestic minor sex trafficking investigations. The evidence obtained can lead to better prosecutions and could alleviate the need for victim testimony in domestic minor sex trafficking cases. The growing use of text messages to perpetrate sex trafficking makes it even more important to allow access to wiretapping in these investigations as access to text messages are governed by wiretapping laws.

- 6.4 Using a law enforcement decoy posing as a minor to investigate buying or selling of commercial sex acts is not a defense to soliciting, purchasing, or selling sex with a minor.
- 6.5 Using the Internet or electronic communications to investigate buyers and traffickers is a permissible investigative technique.
- 6.6 Law enforcement and child welfare agencies are mandated to promptly report missing and recovered children.

Note: Identifying the missing and exploited child leads to identifying the domestic minor sex trafficking victim and provides an opportunity to intervene. The National Crime Information Center (NCIC), a computerized index of criminal justice information, relies on the entry of reports of missing and exploited children by local law enforcement. Also, immediate reporting to local police, the NCIC, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) whenever a child goes missing is critical to identification and intervention, especially given the high correlation between missing children and trafficked children.¹⁹ At the same time, it is critical that first responders check the NCIC database and report to NCMEC whenever any domestic minor sex trafficking victim is rescued to see if the victim has been entered into those systems as a reported missing child.

Grading

The Protected Innocence Legislative Framework will assign a point value of 0 to 2.5 based on a written point allocation scheme accounting for the critical elements of each of the components of law discussed above. The points will be totaled for each of the six areas of law. The six totals will be added to determine the final number for each state, which will translate to the corresponding letter grade as follows:

- A | 90 - 102.5
- B | 80 - 89
- C | 70 - 79
- D | 60 - 69
- F | < 60

These letter grades will reflect the level of protection available through law in a domestic minor sex trafficking case in the respective state. A short analysis of each state's legislation will follow with recommendations.

It is important to note that the methodology looks solely at the laws in place in a given state and their de jure compliance with the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework at the time of the review. This analysis does not review how states enforce or implement their laws, though enforcement is critically important.

¹⁹ SARA ANN FRIEDMAN, ECPAT-USA, INC., WHO IS THERE TO HELP US? HOW THE SYSTEM FAILS SEXUALLY EXPLOITED GIRLS IN THE UNITED STATES: EXAMPLES FROM FOUR AMERICAN CITIES 3 (2005), available at <http://ecpatusa.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Who-Is-There-to-Help-Us-3.pdf>.