

PROTECTED INNOCENCE CHALLENGE

STATE ACTION. NATIONAL CHANGE.

South Carolina Report Card 2016

South Carolina's child sex trafficking statute does not require force, fraud, or coercion. Additionally, child victims are not subject to prosecution for offenses committed pursuant to their victimization, but specialized services and housing are not guaranteed to child sex trafficking and CSEC victims. Buyers of sex acts with children may be prosecuted under the trafficking law if controlling third party or trafficker is identified.

Final Score

74.5

Final Grade

C



10

10



21

25



11

15



6

10



17

27.5



9.5

15



Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

South Carolina's human trafficking statute includes sex trafficking, which does not require force, fraud, or coercion when the victim is a minor. The state has several CSEC laws: promoting prostitution of a minor, participating in prostitution of a minor, first and second degree sexual exploitation of a minor, employment of person under 18 to appear in public state of sexually explicit nudity, and engaging a child for sexual performance and producing, directing or promoting sexual performance by a child. Prostitution laws do not refer to the human trafficking law to identify commercially sexually exploited minors as victims of sex trafficking, but the trafficking in persons law protects minors from prosecution on prostitution charges related to trafficking. The Criminal Gang Prevention Act includes human trafficking and CSEC offenses as predicate acts, making this law available to prosecute sex trafficking enterprises.



Criminal Provisions Addressing Demand

The human trafficking law can apply to buyers who "obtain" a minor for commercial sex following federal precedent, so long as a controlling third party or trafficker was involved. A mistake of age defense is prohibited under the human trafficking laws, first and second degree sexual exploitation of a minor, and the CSEC statute, participating in prostitution of a minor, which also prohibits buying sex with a minor. South Carolina's solicitation laws distinguish between buying commercial sex acts with an adult versus a minor through the statute on criminal solicitation of a minor for sexual activity. This law may also provide a means of prosecuting buyers who use the Internet or electronic communications to solicit commercial sex acts with a minor, but no statute specifically criminalizes using the Internet or electronic communications to purchase sex with a minor. A buyer must register as a sex offender if convicted of human trafficking, participating in the prostitution of a minor, or criminal solicitation of a minor for sexual activity. Restitution is mandatory and civil asset forfeiture is available for human trafficking convictions.



Criminal Provisions for Traffickers

A trafficker convicted of human trafficking could be sentenced to up to 15 years imprisonment, to which the court may add an additional 15 years to be served consecutively when the victim is a minor under 18. Promoting the prostitution of a minor and using or employing a minor to engage in a sexual performance is punishable by 3-20 years imprisonment, and recording, photographing or filming a minor engaged in a sexual activity is punishable by 2-10 years imprisonment. Though not specific to the Internet or electronic communications, the statute on criminal solicitation of a minor may provide a means of prosecuting traffickers who recruit minors for illegal sex acts that may include sex trafficking. Traffickers must register as sex offenders for offenses related to human trafficking, prostitution of a minor and child pornography. Grounds for terminating parental rights exist when a victim is hospitalized or dies as a result of trafficking in persons or offenses related to child pornography. Restitution is mandatory for human trafficking offenses. Traffickers face civil asset forfeiture for human trafficking offenses and criminal forfeiture of equipment used to commit child pornography offenses, although no fines apply for human trafficking or CSEC offenses.

Demand | Selected Commercial Sex Crimes

Crime (name of law abridged)	Classification	Sentence	Fine	Asset Forfeiture (available)
Human Trafficking	Class A Felony	Up to 15 years imprisonment (plus discretionary 15 years to be served consecutively, if victim is under 18)	n/a	●
Participation in prostitution of a minor (§ 16-15-425)	Class F felony	2-5 years	n/a	○
Criminal solicitation of a minor (§ 16-15-342)	Class E felony	Max. 10 years	Max. \$5,000	○
Possessing child pornography (§ 16-15-410)	Felony	Max. 10 years	n/a	●

All criminal penalties are statutory; many states also have sentencing guidelines that are not codified which affect sentencing.



Protective Provisions for the Child Victims

Not all commercially sexually exploited children are defined as juvenile sex trafficking victims, as the sex trafficking law does not protect minors who are exploited by buyers without an identified trafficker. Although the prostitution laws do not limit applicability to adults, the human trafficking statute provides that minors are not subject to prosecution for prostitution as human trafficking victims. The human trafficking law also provides an affirmative defense for all offenses committed as a result of being a victim of trafficking and specifically provides that human trafficking victims are entitled to victim compensation. No specific protective provisions are statutorily mandated for CSEC victims. However, a victim found to be an abused or neglected child by a person responsible for the child's welfare may receive a protective response through social services. Child abuse and neglect are not expressly defined to include infliction of sex trafficking, CSEC, or child pornography offenses, but a child is considered abused when an adult allows a sexual offense to be committed against the child, potentially including CSEC or trafficking. A person responsible for the child's welfare is defined to include parents, guardians, and foster parents, thus restricting an intervention by child protective services where a non-familial trafficker has custody and control of a minor. The human trafficking law expressly prohibits a defendant from asserting a defense based on consent of the minor, but the CSEC laws do not prohibit this defense. While the "rape shield" law is not specifically available to limit traumatizing cross-examination of CSEC and trafficking victims, the human trafficking law bars a defense based on the victim's past sexual conduct. Trafficking victims may have prostitution convictions vacated and expunged. Minors under 16 may have status and nonviolent offenses expunged, and minors who are 17 or committed D, E, or F felonies may have their records expunged one time. Restitution is mandated for human trafficking convictions. Civil actions may be filed by victims of human trafficking or sexual abuse defined to include prostitution-related offenses and child pornography offenses. A criminal case can be brought at any time, and the time for a civil action brought under the human trafficking law may be extended to 3 years after the offender completes a criminal sentence, or after the end of the trafficking, or after the victim turns 18. Additionally, the statute of limitations can be tolled based on psychological trauma if a victim could not have reasonably discovered the cause of action.



Criminal Justice Tools for Investigation and Prosecution

South Carolina law does not mandate or authorize training or the development of training materials on domestic minor sex trafficking or human trafficking, though such training could be included in the training provided by the Missing Person Information Center on exploited children. Single party consent to audiotaping is permitted, but wiretapping is not authorized for investigations related to human trafficking or CSEC. The crime of solicitation of a minor expressly prohibits a defense to the use of a decoy in an investigation for purchasing sex with a minor. Law enforcement are expressly authorized to use the Internet to investigate the crime of buying or selling sex with a child. Law enforcement is required to report missing children and once a child is rescued, law enforcement must confirm and delete the records unless grounds for criminal prosecution exist.



Criminal Provisions for Facilitators

South Carolina's human trafficking law penalizes one who "benefits, financially or by receiving anything of value" from sex trafficking with up to 15 years imprisonment, to which the court may add an additional 15 years to be served consecutively when the victim is a minor under 18. Business owners who use their business to aid or assist sex trafficking face possible fines, up to 10 years imprisonment, and forfeiture of their business charter. Facilitators convicted of promoting prostitution of a minor and transporting or financing the transportation of a minor for pornography face 3-20 years imprisonment. Facilitators convicted of producing, directing, or promoting sexual performance by a child face up to 10 years imprisonment, while conviction for distributing, transporting, and selling child pornography is punishable by 3-20 years imprisonment. Facilitators convicted of use of taxi for prostitution, a misdemeanor, face up to 30 days imprisonment or a fine up to \$100. A facilitator could also be subject to criminal gang laws. Although no fines apply, restitution is mandatory and civil asset forfeiture is available for human trafficking offenses. Convictions for child pornography crimes subject a facilitator to criminal forfeiture of equipment used in commission of the offense. No laws in South Carolina address sex tourism.

The Report Card is based on the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework, an analysis of state laws performed by the American Center for Law & Justice and Shared Hope International, and sets a national standard of protection against domestic minor sex trafficking. To access the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework Methodology, each completed Report Card, and foundational analysis and recommendations, please visit: www.sharedhope.org.