

PROTECTED INNOCENCE CHALLENGE

STATE ACTION. NATIONAL CHANGE.

District of Columbia Report Card 2016

Child sex trafficking is a crime without regard to force, fraud, or coercion. Minors under 18 are not criminally liable under the prostitution law and juvenile sex trafficking victims must be referred to specialized services and receive a behavioral health assessment. Laws designed to combat the growing use of the Internet to commit sex trafficking offenses are not provided.

Final Score

71

Final Grade

C



6

10

17

25

9.5

15

7.5

10

21

27.5

10

15



Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

D.C. has a separate law for the sex trafficking of children clearly defining a minor under the age of 18 used in a commercial sex act as a sex trafficking victim without regard to use of force, fraud, or coercion. Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) laws include: abducting or enticing child from his or her home and harboring for purposes of prostitution, pandering, inducing or compelling an individual to engage in prostitution, procuring, receiving money or other valuable thing for arranging assignation, and using a minor in a sexual performance. The prostitution law does not refer to the sex trafficking of children statute for victim identification or provide an affirmative defense to prosecution for prostitution. There is no racketeering statute. The gang crimes law does not include trafficking or CSEC offenses as predicate crimes.



Criminal Provisions Addressing Demand

The child sex trafficking law tracks the federal definition and can, following federal precedent, be applied to attempted buyers through the word “obtain.” Further support for this interpretation is found in legislation mandating the collection of human trafficking-related data, including data on buyers of commercial sex acts. No CSEC law specifically makes it a crime to buy sex with minors, but a buyer arguably could be prosecuted for pandering or contributing to the delinquency of a minor. A buyer is likely to be charged with soliciting prostitution, even though solicitation laws do not differentiate buying sex with an adult from buying sex with a minor. No statute expressly makes using the Internet to purchase sex acts with minors a crime; two statutes—enticing a child or minor and arranging for sexual contact with a real or fictitious child might apply but are not specific to use of the Internet. Buyer applicable offenses do not expressly prohibit a mistake of age or consent defense. D.C. does not require sex offender registration by those convicted of sex trafficking of minors, but does require registration for soliciting prostitution with a minor. Buyers convicted of sex trafficking are subject to asset seizure and forfeiture, as well discretionary restitution to the victim.



Criminal Provisions for Traffickers

Penalties for child sex trafficking are comparable to federal trafficking penalties, punishable by a maximum of 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$50,000. CSEC crimes of pandering and procuring and abducting/enticing a child for prostitution are punishable by a maximum of 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$50,000. Though the Internet is increasingly used by traffickers, no statute expressly makes using the Internet to sell commercial sex acts with a minor a crime; two statutes—enticing a child or minor and arranging for sexual contact with a real or fictitious child—might apply but are not specific to the Internet. Traffickers face mandatory criminal asset forfeiture for human trafficking or discretionary civil asset forfeiture for prostitution and pandering offenses, and restitution may be ordered at the discretion of the court. Sex offender registration is required for many crimes of which a trafficker could be convicted, but not sex trafficking of children. Sex trafficking of children and CSEC crimes are not enumerated as violent crimes for which a trafficker’s parental rights can be terminated, though parental rights may be terminated if it is in the best interest of the child or if the trafficker is convicted of other enumerated violent crimes. A first offense for knowingly creating and promoting child pornography is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine not to exceed \$25,000.

Demand | Selected Commercial Sex Crimes

Crime (name of law abridged)	Sentence	Fine (and/or)	Asset Forfeiture (Available penalty)
Sex trafficking of children (§ 22-1834)	Max. 20 years	Max. \$50,000	●
Soliciting for prostitution (§ 22-2701)	1st conviction: Max. 90 days; 2nd: Max. 180 days; 3rd +: Max. 2 years	1st conviction: Max. \$500, 2nd: Max. \$1,000, 3rd: Max. \$12,500	●
Pandering (§ 22-2705)	Max. 20 years	Max. \$50,000	●
Possessing child pornography (§ 22-3102(b))	Max. 10 years	Max. \$25,000	○

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



Protective Provisions for the Child Victims

Domestic minor sex trafficking victims may receive a protective response under the law. Sex trafficking of a minor and CSEC crimes do not expressly prohibit a defense based on consent of the minor to the commercial sex act. Minors are not criminally liable under the prostitution law and have avenues to access specialized services. When encountering a juvenile sex trafficking victim, law enforcement must refer the victim to organizations that provide specialized services as well as make a report to child welfare, which must conduct a specialized behavioral health assessment. For purposes of child welfare intervention, the definition of abuse includes sexual abuse or exploitation of a child, which includes allowing the child to engage in prostitution or a sexual performance; however, this does not expressly encompass sex trafficking offenses and the definition of custodian could prevent a child welfare response in non-familial trafficking cases. Victims of most CSEC offenses are eligible for crime victims' compensation, but some eligibility criteria could hamper their ability to recover, including the requirement to report the crime to law enforcement within seven days and file a claim within one year, unless good cause is shown. Victim-friendly criminal justice procedures are available in CSEC cases, including the "rape shield" law which limits traumatizing cross-examination of testifying victims in sex trafficking cases. D.C. law allows juvenile records to be sealed two years after final discharge from custody if the minor has not been subsequently convicted or found in need of supervision. Civil remedies against trafficking offenders and facilitators are expressly allowed for victims. A court may order a convicted offender to pay criminal restitution to a CSEC victim. The criminal and civil statute of limitations are extended for sex trafficking and CSEC offenses.



Criminal Justice Tools for Investigation and Prosecution

Training on human trafficking is required for law enforcement officers, social workers, and case workers. D.C. law allows single party consent for audiotaping, but wiretapping is not available as an investigative tool in sex trafficking cases. Use of a decoy to investigate the crime of arranging to engage in sexual conduct with a real or fictitious child is permitted, however, an offender is not expressly prohibited from raising a defense as to the use of a decoy for trafficking or CSEC investigations. D.C. requires immediate reporting by child welfare to law enforcement when any child in its custody is found to be missing from the child's home or out-of-home placement, and law enforcement must promptly report the missing child to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



Criminal Provisions for Facilitators

Facilitators are subject to prosecution under a separate statute for benefitting financially from human trafficking, punishable by a maximum of 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$50,000. Though not mandatory, a court may order a facilitator to pay restitution, and facilitators are subject to mandatory criminal asset forfeiture for human trafficking offenses. Knowingly promoting child pornography, defined as manufacturing, issuing, selling, distributing, circulating, or disseminating pornographic material, is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$25,000, increased to up to 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$50,000 for subsequent offenses. No laws in D.C. make sex tourism a crime.

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.