

VILLAGE IS POSSIBLE

Our Wounds Are Our Wisdom

INSIGHTS FROM CSEC/Y SURVIVOR LEADERS



This report is the collective learning of Just Build Village Then, LLC
In partnership with Village Is Possible
Supported by Foster America
The container for this report was created by Dr. Denicia Carlay

2023

Table of Contents



01

Grounding in
Who We Are &
How We Flow

03

Orienting to our
focal population:
CSEC

04

Sub-Focus:
Impact on
Black Girlhood

05

Methodology

07

Survivor
Leader
Spotlight

10

Movement
through Time

21

Call to
Action

22

Wisdom From Our
Wounds

29

Recommendations: Conclusion
PIVOT

36

40

VIP Response

44

Support VIP

45

References

46

Acknowledgments

Grounding in Who We Are



Village Is Possible (VIP) is a non-profit project co-created by survivors of complex childhood trauma and sexual exploitation. VIP seeks to cultivate spaces of healing from the impact of racial and genderized conditions that make this world unsafe for girls, womxn, and femme bodies, with a particular interest in protecting the bodies of Black girls. Since the colonization of Turtle Island (Northern America) Black girls have been and continue to be disproportionately kidnapped and targeted for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). CSE is the rendering of sexual acts in exchange for something of value where a third party benefits from the exchange. This experience can be devastating to the hearts, minds, and bodies of those exploited and the family lines connected to this invasive and oftentimes intergenerational trauma.

VIP creates sacred spaces to address and heals deep rooted, intergenerational layers of systemic oppression through the restoration of families and community (village) that have been intentionally ruptured through colonization, capitalism, and the policing and mass genocide of Black and Brown Bodies.

VIP was birthed from a need to address the significant gap in providing intergenerational healing and familial support to system impacted youth and families. VIP is a community driven organization working alongside those who have experienced sex trafficking and/or system involvement. “Community driven” represents the shared skills in a community to design and guide their own strategic conversations. We have much to learn from those with exploitation experience that are leading movements to change the societal conditions that allow for exploitation to occur, while providing resources and pathways of support for those impacted. These change agents are commonly referred to as “Survivor Leaders.” While each survivor leader’s experience is unique to them, they naturally have a deeper understanding of the complex trauma experienced by being exploited than those outside of that experience will ever fully grasp. Centering their voice and guidance in this work is key, as is centering the practices of indigenous healers reflective of the identities most impacted by sexual exploitation. This position paper was a project of VIP with the intention to amplify those valuable voices.

visit www.villageispossible.org to learn more

Grounding in How We Flow

VIP cultivates healing-centered spaces of BEing for BIPOC families allowing them to heal and build bridges of connection to identities stolen from them by systems of oppression. We do this through a holistic process of re-connecting survivors of the child welfare, carceral, and/or human trafficking systems back to their bodies, hearts, minds, spirits and ancestors. We employ a network of providers ranging from body workers to mental health clinicians to support youth in this process. We believe that restoration, reunification, and healing are more effective when holistically integrated together instead of compartmentalized into separate categories. Through this process, we are able to produce DEEP MEDICINE that can heal generations to come.

Village Is Possible is not just a name; it's an embodiment. It means a village rising around youth, their families, communities, and the providers who serve them – a village ready with unwavering support, a mindset of acceptance and understanding, and the willingness to hold space as youth impacted by trauma are able to access the ancestral wisdom that exist within them. To be a well village requires access to trauma-informed, culturally sustaining, restorative practices and resources tailored to the unique needs of each individual as the VIP that they are. A well village also protects the young, honors the elders, and shares wisdom and resources amongst one another from the rooted knowing that we are all connected.

The central mission of VIP is to cultivate sacred spaces that aid with in a survivors' reconnection to self, their community, and the land. VIP situates itself within the culturally sustaining practices of **Somatic Abolitionism (SA)**, developed by Resmaa Menakem, and **Healing Centered Engagement (HCE)**, developed by Dr. Shawn Ginwright. Two transformative Black male practitioners and scholars that have dedicated over 30 years, and their life's work to the communal medicine of racialized healing. In accordance with SA, this position paper is organized in accordance with the cultural somatic toys of **GROUNDING, ORIENTING, MOVEMENT, and TOUCH**.

Through this position paper, we seek to take a *collective breath* ...

*Inhale (1, 2, 3, 4)
hold (1, 2)
and fully release/exhale (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)*



as we make space for the DEEP medicine that exists within this paper from truly valuable voices. We began with **GROUNDING** the reader in who we are and what we do as the collective of VIP. Next we will **ORIENT** ourselves to the literature regarding our focal population - youth who have been sexually exploited. We will then **MOVE** through time to highlight the awareness building and advocacy that has happened in the last 30 years. Finally, we **TOUCH** on the key findings and recommended steps that need to be taken next to truly support CSE children/youth (CSEC/Y) in a healing centered way. As a bonus learning, we highlight the ways in which VIP is aligned with those steps and what community can do now to support these efforts. If you are reading this, you are already committed in some way to building communities of care and justice. Together, we can be that well village where all have access to the resources and support to thrive and just... be...FREE!

Orienting to our focal population: CSEC



Polaris describes Human Trafficking as the act of exploiting and profiting at the expense of adults or children by compelling them to perform labor or engage in commercial sexual acts through force, fraud, and/or coercion (2022). A specialized subcategory applies though to children. Any young person under the age of 18 being used for commercial sex for any reason, either monetary or economic gain, is classified as CSEC/Y (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Youth). There does not need to be proof of force, fraud, and/or coercion regarding children because by nature, they are still developing their ability to make critical and conscious decisions independently. The exploitation of vulnerable children for sexual purposes has severe physical, psychological, and emotional impacts. Systemic inequalities create conditions of access for perpetrators of exploitation. In the U.S. economic need is one of the leading indicators of vulnerability to human trafficking. Historically, the poverty rate in the U.S. is highest among Native Americans at around 25%, followed by African Americans being 20% below the poverty line, and then Latinx at 17%. According to the South Dakota District U.S. Attorney's office, in SD, 40% of reported victims of sex trafficking were Native women, although they only represent 8% of their population. (Whitney, C. 2022). This issue is so prevalent there is an entire movement dedicated to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIWUSA). California is ranked as having the highest number of reported cases of human trafficking in the U.S. LA County, reported 92% of girls in the juvenile justice system identified as victims of sex trafficking are Black. Of those, 62% were CPS involved. A group particularly vulnerable to human trafficking is children who enter the foster care system. Foster care placement is one of the top contributors in increasing the chances of sex trafficking (Davey, S. 2020).

Addressing the issue of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children/Youth (CSEC/Y) requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses prevention, identification, and restoration. CSEC/Y is a pressing global issue that demands a comprehensive understanding of its root causes, identification, and interventions. Extensive research has been conducted over the last decade that identifies key components such as establishing safety, securing stability, cultivating connection, promoting self-esteem, and providing access to safety essential for helping these vulnerable children escape the cycle of exploitation and regain autonomy and self-identity. Youth who have experienced the foster care system are particularly susceptible to being recruited into the sex industry due to unmet needs around love, community, belonging, stable housing, and a higher disposition to trauma bonding. "Child welfare involvement, specifically out-of-home foster care placement, is one of the top contributors in increasing the chances of sex trafficking (Davey, S. 2020)." Traffickers take advantage of this natural need for love and belonging and manipulate their victim's sense of self. A report conducted in 2016 by NCMEC found that 86% of the likely sex trafficking victims were in the care of social services when they went missing" (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children). Even with this knowledge, there are few consistent direct services provided for youth who have experienced exploitation. Staff shortages, funding scarcity, and lack of cross-system coordination serve as barriers in delivering the services these youth deserve.

Sub-focus: Impact on Black Girlhood



The disproportionate number of children of color in the child welfare system is reflective of racism that exists in the larger society as discrimination trickles down into services extended to families from traditionally oppressed and exploited communities (Harris, 2007). To be clear, this overrepresentation is not indicative of issues endemic to Black and Brown homes. For instance, several studies (Morton, 1999; Sedlak & Schultz, 2001; Sedlak & Schultz, 2005) have determined that, despite their higher representation among low-income populations, there is not a higher rate of abuse in African American or Native American families. Instead, the child welfare system has systematically punished families due to their poverty and Blackness (or proximity to Blackness) under the guise of keeping children “safe.”

Nationally, there is evidence that Black children are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system relative to their representation in the general population. 2020 data from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCANDS) show that Black children account for 21.7% of all screened-in child maltreatment cases despite making up only 13.7% of the child population in the United States (NCANDS 2020). There is parallel evidence suggesting that Black children involved in the child welfare system in the United States are at the highest risk for sexual exploitation and human trafficking due to vulnerabilities created by their involvement in the system. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, 60% of human trafficking victims in the U.S. were involved in the foster care system at one time (Davey, S. 2020). Once in the foster care system, Black youth are more likely to experience sexual abuse at roughly twice the rate of their White counterparts (Davey, S. 2020). Black youth are also overrepresented in child sex trafficking cases. According to the FBI, 52% of all juvenile arrests for commercial sex acts are African American children (Thorn, 2022).

The national child welfare system’s disproportionate impact on Black youth is reflected in California, the most populous US State. According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP), while 27% of youth in California child protection services are Black, Black people comprise only 13% of the state’s population (<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>). Data from 2022 indicates that once a Black child comes to the attention of child welfare in California, the system finds itself incapable of overcoming the pervasive pull of structural and systemic racism (<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>). This continues despite child welfare’s awareness of disproportionality and disparity; years of employee training and coaching on the impact of implicit bias in decision making; and the call for practice shifts that are equitable, inclusive, and built on a shared understanding of best practices for children. Racial bias and disparities are present from the very entrance into the system: calls to the hotline. Black children in California in 2022 were 3.08 times more likely than White children to be named as suspected victims of abuse or neglect (<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>). The data from 2022 shows that once children are entered into the system, the disparities only grow, with Black children in California being 5.43 times more likely than White children to still be in foster care 12 months after their initial removal (Webster, D., 2023). Parallely, sex trafficking of children constitutes a crisis in California. The Child Trafficking Response Team in the California Department of Social Services reported in their August 2022 newsletter that there were 6,888 children victimized by or ‘at risk’ of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in the child welfare and probation systems statewide between June 2016 and December 2021.

Orienting to the Methodology



Project Director Spotlight: Denicia Carlay, Ed.D, LCSW, PPSC, “Docta Neesh”
Docta Neesh created this project from a knowing that those who are doing the most transformative work in the field of prevention and restoration for those exposed to CSE, are those who have survived and are actively healing from those conditions themselves. As is the mantra of VIP, **“Our wounds are wisdom.”** With the charge of gathering knowledge of best practice in supporting survivors of sexual exploitation for the purposes of contributing to the growing knowledge hub of Foster America, Docta Neesh looked first to the survivors leading these direct service and wrap-around efforts as they have cultivated the strongest network of support around those caught within the confines of this systemic

injustice. For this project, Docta Neesh tapped into her village of survivor leaders that have taught and mentored her within this movement over the last 20 years through their front line efforts to empower youth, train service providers, and lobby for legislative change. This report doesn't do the extensive sacrifice of their living legacies justice, but does amplify the valuable voices who have been ringing loudly from the start. To provide a 360 lens of the conditions encountered by those working within the system, Docta Neesh also met with Jurisdictional leaders in the field of Child Welfare. Docta Neesh also draws from her 18 years of practice based experience, and lifetime of healing through the impact that the foster care system and the socio-political dismantling of Black families through the “war on drugs” in the 1980's in the leadership and design of this project. Lastly, various articles were reviewed of researchers studying the best practices for supporting survivors of CSE involved within the foster care and/or juvenile carceral system. A particular focus was paid to the meta-analysis report (*need to add title/authors of that CDSS report) and the State Level Report Cards evaluated by Shared Hope International looking at (*need to add the 6 domains)

Requests for interviews were sent to Survivor and Child Welfare System Leaders across the country, with a particular focus on those within the states of California, Minnesota, Texas, Tennessee, and Florida, as these states received higher rankings on meeting the needs of child and youth experiencing sex trafficking through an evaluation conducted by Shared Hope International. Shared Hope International is a global non-profit that strives to prevent the conditions that foster sex trafficking, restore victims of sex slavery, and bring justice to vulnerable women and children. In 2023, they released report cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking where all 50 states and D.C. were graded under an advanced legislative framework, providing a comprehensive analysis and assessment of all state statutes related to and impacting child and youth sex trafficking. Twenty Survivor and Child Welfare Jurisdictional Leaders were recruited to be interviewed about the best practices being utilized within their region.

Centering qualitative research on the narratives of survivor leaders provides a vital foundation for understanding the nuanced experiences and perspectives within communities affected by various issues. By elevating these stories, we not only honor the resilience and expertise of survivors but also gain insights that can inform more effective interventions and policies.

Methodology Continued...

In accordance with the solicitation guidelines, our research methodology employed a snowball sampling technique, leveraging the case study approach to highlight unique profiles and mitigate potential biases, thus ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced analysis. Of the 14 candidates solicited for participation in this project, 5 Survivor Leaders and 2 Jurisdictional Leaders (7 total participants) completed the 30-45 min interview with Dr. Denicia Carlay.

The interview utilized a structured approach to gather comprehensive information on the topic of supporting survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The interview explored the interviewee's lived experience and how it informs their current work.

Community context was thoroughly examined through questions addressing the scale of the challenge in the community and the current state of services available to support survivors of CSEC. This included inquiries into the availability, referral processes, cost, usage, and outcomes of these services, as well as the historical influences shaping them.

The interview identified needs and services for CSEC survivors, tracking their evolution over time. The interview concluded with an open-ended question, inviting the interviewee to share any additional insights or reflections on their experience as a survivor leader.

For system leaders, the interview followed a similar structure, but with an introduction aimed at understanding the role of the interviewee's organization or agency in this field.

The community context was explored through questions assessing the scale of the challenge in the community and the current state of services available to support survivors of CSEC. This included inquiries into the availability, referral processes, cost, usage, and outcomes of these services, as well as an examination of the historical and contextual factors shaping them.

The interview concluded with an open-ended question, inviting the interviewee to share any additional insights or reflections on their experience working in supporting CSEC and survivor leaders.

In addition to interviews with the 7 participants who are spotlighted below, VIP also reviewed a series of research articles that are referenced throughout this paper, but a particular focus was paid to data projects that have done rigorous evaluation of state level efforts around this topic. Those projects were:

- 2023 California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Report: Presentation Evaluating California's Efforts to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (SB855) and debriefing webinar hosted by CSEC Action Team Advisory Board
- Shared Hope International's Report Cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking



Survivor Leader Spotlights

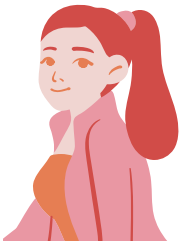


Survivor Leader Spotlight: Nola Brantley Co-Founder of M.I.S.S.E.Y (Motivating, Inspiring, & Supporting Sexually Exploited Youth) and Nola Brantley Speaks

Nola Brantley Co-Founder of Motivating, Inspiring Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY) and Founder & CEO of Nola Brantley Speaks is best known as a nationally acclaimed advocate who has played a large role in spear-heading the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) awareness and advocacy movement in the state of California since 2004. Her experience with the compounded risk factors of intergenerational poverty and trauma, the impact of the foster care system and

misuse of authority all serve to give Nola a powerful first hand understanding not only of the CSEC issue, but also of the underlying societal tapestry that creates and perpetuates the current epidemic of exploitation and violence plaguing America. Nola has become nationally recognized as a powerful voice for the issue of CSEC through her moving and information packed public speaking. Her hard work and perpetual vigilance have brought both focus and concrete resources to this chronically underserved and largely unrecognized population of victimized youth. She has taught innovative aftercare methods for abuse survivors to individuals from around the world. Currently, Nola is working as a CSEC subject matter expert and a sought after master-trainer through her consultancy company Nola Brantley Speaks where she has trained over 350,000 professionals to date.

Survivor Leader Spotlight: Carissa Phelps, Esq. and founder of training institute - Runaway Girl



Carissa Liana Phelps is a renowned American author, attorney, and advocate, widely recognized for her dedicated work with sexually exploited runaway children and homeless youth. Her life and transformative journey are depicted in the award-winning documentary "Carissa." Amidst the hardships, Carissa's resilience shone through. Her academic pursuits led her to achieve both an MBA and a J.D. degree from the

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In her continued efforts to support and advocate for vulnerable youth, Carissa founded Runaway Girl, Inc, which is dedicated to aiding runaway and homeless youth, and it provides specialized training for organizations to effectively combat homelessness and human trafficking. Carissa's inspiring life story and her journey towards healing and helping others is captured in her book, "Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets, One Helping Hand at a Time," published in 2012.



Survivor Leader Spotlight: Alicia Tappan, Founder & CEO of Survivor-Led Solutions, Public Speaker, Author, Community Influence and Advocate

Alicia is pursuing her Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology: Crisis Management. She has extensive work with trauma-informed care and Human Trafficking. She played a pivotal role in the fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) as the Executive Director for the first safe house in Northwest Florida. In 2019, Florida's

Attorney General, Ashley Moody, recognized Alicia as Survivor of the Year for her efforts in building capacity for Human Trafficking awareness & education. She has presented hundreds of trainings at the national level, including National Homeland Security, Florida Department of Children and Families and has appeared in numerous news reports, articles, and podcasts. Alicia has recognized the gaps in the systems of care, including "finding a victim in a criminal situation" with law enforcement, comprehensive care for CSEC youth and their families, and the need for long term leadership, professional development and mental health services for survivors. Alicia hosts annual survivor leader trauma informed retreats with survivors nationally.

Survivor Leader Spotlight



Survivor Leader Spotlight: Rachel Thomas, M. Ed, Human Trafficking Educator

A graduate of UCLA with a Masters in Education and a personal survivor of human trafficking, Rachel has over 12 years experience in teaching, mentoring, corporate training, curriculum writing and public speaking. She has educated and inspired a wide range of audiences including teens, social service providers, churches, teachers, college

students, law enforcement and lawmakers. One of her most meaningful accomplishments is Ending The Game Intervention Curriculum which is being used in over 180 facilities nationwide to help survivors break the bonds of attachment to traffickers and/or the lifestyle of commercial sexual exploitation. Since 2012, Rachel and the Sowers Team have reached over 150,000 live audience members and millions more through numerous media outlets including New Day Morning Show on CNN, Inside with Chris Cuomo: Anyone's Daughter on HLN, The T.D. Jakes Show, The New York Times Upfront Magazine and ABC's Newsmakers. Rachel was honored by Congressman Ed Royce of California's 39th district and Los Angeles Supervisor Don Knabe for her leadership and trafficking prevention efforts. Recently, Rachel was appointed to the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking for a term of two years.



Survivor Leader Spotlight: Kia Dupclay, Founder and Executive Director of Free to Dream Big

Kia Dupclay (She/ Her/ Hers) is a human rights advocate with the passion to end homelessness and human trafficking. She was born in East Oakland and while in foster care moved down to Los Angeles. She has dedicated herself to make changes within the community and legislation. As an electrical engineering major, Kia focuses on integrating

technology and nonprofit to dismantle broken systems and assist in creating unconventional solutions to the way services are provided. Kia has won the Los Angeles County Building Bridges Award, S.C.R.I.P.T Award, Real Unsung Hero Award and has spoken across the country. Kia sits on four boards and as a part of the NYCL's CSEC Advisory Board, she was recognized by the California State Senate. As a part of LAHSA's youth advisory board and adult advisory board, she's received awards from the Mayor of Los Angeles. As a part of Rise Above Defeat's Board she coordinates outreaches in areas known for human trafficking. She also worked as a trainer and research developer at the Coalition To Abolish Slavery and Trafficking and she is the executive director of Free 2 Dream Big, an organization that provides outreach, training and support for survivors of human trafficking. With 10 years of lived experience in both human trafficking and homelessness, Kia approaches advocacy work with love, compassion and integrity. Kia fights against injustice and strives to provide trauma informed care to every person she meets. Her favorite saying is "Be like Nike and Just Do It!"

System Leader Spotlights



Jurisdictional Leader Spotlight: Gloria Carroll, Santa Cruz County Child Welfare Director & former CSEC Liaison and Division Director for Alameda County Children and Family Services

Gloria Carroll is a seasoned professional in the field of child welfare, currently serving as the Child Welfare Director for the County of Santa Cruz since May 2023. With a career spanning over two decades, Gloria has dedicated her professional life to improving the systems and services that support vulnerable children and their families.

Before her current role, Gloria held the position of Division Director at the County of Alameda from January 2019 to May 2023. In this capacity, she led the Alameda County Social Services Agency's Department of Children and Family Services, focusing on Eligibility and Permanent Youth Connections/Independent Living Program. This role was based in Oakland, CA, and marked a significant period in her career where she oversaw major programs and initiatives aimed at supporting youth in transition to independence.

Prior to her directorship, Gloria served as a Child Welfare Supervisor in Alameda County from April 2018 to January 2019. Located in Hayward, California, she played a pivotal role in the Independent Living Skills Program, contributing significantly to the development and implementation of strategies that enhance the life skills of youth in foster care.



Jurisdictional Leader Spotlight: Nikki Conway, Scott County HHS Child Welfare Manager

Nikki Conway serves as the Child Welfare Manager at Scott County Health and Human Services, a role that underscores her dedication and expertise in the field of child welfare and protection. Her career is marked by a profound commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of children within her community.

In her position at Scott County Health and Human Services, Nikki oversees a range of crucial programs and initiatives designed to safeguard children and support families. She plays a key role in developing and implementing policies and practices that address the complex needs of children who are at risk or have experienced abuse and neglect. Her work involves close collaboration with various agencies, including law enforcement, schools, and other community organizations, to create a comprehensive support system for vulnerable children.

Prior to her current appointment, Nikki worked most of her career in Ramsey County, primarily in the city of St. Paul supporting runaway youth through nonprofits as a youth case manager by "trade and by heart." Nikki has been in the field of child well-being for over twenty years.

Movement through Time



1990's - 2005 Bringing Youth from the Shadows

Prior to 1990, there was little awareness about the prevalence of child sexual exploitation within marginalized communities. While being exposed to sex trafficking on the streets of Oakland, CA as a youth, VIP Co-Founder/Executive Director, Dr. Denicia Carlay reflects on the national attention brought by survivor leaders across the nation at the turn of the century, creating an entire movement to bring this salient topic out of the shadows. To highlight a few, two of those phenomenal pioneers were Rachel Lloyd (New York) and Nola Brantley (San Francisco - Bay Area, California).

In 1990 at age 22, Rachel Lloyd, a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation, arrived in the US. While working for an organization serving adult women emerging from the commercial sex industry, Rachel spent nights on the streets doing outreach and days visiting Rikers prison and homeless shelters. Through her work, Rachel began meeting girls as young as 11, overwhelmingly low-income girls of color, and children who had been arrested and charged with prostitution. At the time, the word 'trafficking' hadn't even entered the lexicon and the girls she was meeting were treated as pariahs by law enforcement, service providers, and child welfare workers. Rachel saw only smart, strong, resilient girls and young women, who had been manipulated and coerced, women who desperately needed love, support, and practical resources like housing, clothing, and access to education.

After participating in Out From the Shadows, the first International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth in Canada in 1998, Rachel saw that providing shelter and food to individual survivors, while critical, was not enough. There needed to be a true cultural change in how victims and survivors were viewed including:

- Training for professionals interacting with youth to help identify and serve victims
- An understanding of factors that put some children at higher risk than others
- A shift in legislation to stop protecting guilty men and persecuting victims
- Raising awareness that commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking exists

Inspired by the summit and the other young adult survivors she met, Rachel also knew that all these efforts needed to have survivors at the forefront. So with \$30 and a borrowed computer, Rachel founded GEMS, on her kitchen table and created an organization that has:

- Created a place of safety and support for thousands of girls and young women
- Passed legislation that finally protects children
- Reached millions of Americans through awareness and cultural change efforts
- Created the survivor leadership movement
- Permanently changed the conversation and landscape on CSE (Commercial Sexual Exploitation) and domestic trafficking in the U.S.

Movement through Time



From the Shadows continued...

While growing up in San Francisco, CA, Nola Brantley experienced sexual exploitation by a variety of men in her community. Just before the age of 15, Nola was targeted and slowly and deceptively recruited into sex trafficking by a law-enforcement officer who worked at her school site. Nola Brantley has traveled the continuum of abuse that many sex trafficking victims and survivors have traveled. Her experience, direct or indirect, with the compounded risk factors of poverty, unaddressed trauma, intergenerational abuse, foster care involvement and misuse of authority all serve to give Nola a powerful firsthand understanding not only of the CSEC issue, but also of the underlying societal tapestry that creates and perpetuates the current epidemic of exploitation and violence plaguing the United States. Even while experiencing her own challenges and abuse, Nola involved herself from a young age in social justice oriented community activism. As her journey of healing unfolded, sisterhood within the female community played an important part. "I was surrounded by a bunch of women that empowered me and were able to help me reveal who I really was," Nola has reflected. In 2001 Nola went to work at Scotlan Center, an Oakland-based nonprofit organization working on a variety of social justice issues at the local level. Through her passion and drive, Nola was able to develop a multitude of programs—a girls empowerment program, a teenage parenting program and a child abuse prevention program—that were run for six years. Her work there would lead to a pivotal point in her own personal and professional growth: that is how she would begin to witness firsthand the overwhelming epidemic of DMST/CSEC in Alameda County.

"I didn't begin doing DMST/CSEC activist work because I was a survivor; I discovered I was a survivor through doing the work," says Nola.

Nola, along with a small group of fellow young female community activists then took action: they became part of the Alameda County Sexually Exploited Minors Network and ultimately decided that the issue was so central it merited its own organization. It was then, in 2007, that four young, passionate and dedicated women founded the now nationally recognized organization MISSEY (Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving, Sexually Exploited Youth). We had the privilege of sitting with Nola for this knowledge hub project. During that time, Nola shed light on her crucial role in supporting survivors of child sexual exploitation, particularly through training and education initiatives. Nola underscored the significance of lived experience in comprehending and effectively addressing the needs of survivors, highlighting the limitations of those lacking such experiences. She also drew attention to the imperative of addressing the unique challenges faced by special groups disproportionately impacted by trafficking, including African American girls, Native American youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, unaccompanied minors crossing the border, and youth with intellectual disabilities. Nola emphasizes the glaring gap in housing for trafficking victims and stresses the importance of incorporating youth input and agency in the development of services. Advocating for a model that combines the expertise of licensed professionals with the lived experience of survivors, Nola emphasizes the value of mentorship and peer support in the healing journey and navigating the survivor community, particularly mentorship from those who are still close to the environments that perpetuate sexual exploitation.

Movement through Time



2005 - 2014 - Building Awareness

As the movement continued to grow, Survivor Leaders led the efforts to train service providers and policy makers around the unique and complex needs of exploitation survivors. Two Survivor leaders to highlight within this time frame are Carissa Phelps and Rachel Thomas. Carissa has been instrumental in transforming the landscape of anti-trafficking efforts through her lived experience and ongoing work. She empowers survivor leaders, providing them with opportunities to share their stories and expertise, fostering a more inclusive and survivor-driven movement. Carissa has cultivated a strong survivor community, offering support and avenues for personal and professional growth. Her advocacy focus has included cultivating spaces for survivors to co-train the general public through the lens of their lived expertise, as well as supporting survivors in taking legal actions against corporations involved in trafficking. Carissa is now a part of a law firm, utilizing her legal skill to focus more “upstream” on holding businesses accountable for their implicit and explicit role in sex trafficking. Carissa acknowledges and supports elder leaders in the anti-trafficking movement, highlighting their contributions. Ultimately, she underscores that a community's success is measured by how well it cares for its most vulnerable members, be they children or elders.

Trained as an educator, Survivor Leader Rachel Thomas has served a pivotal role in developing youth-focused curriculum and training programs for professional and community members to understand psychological coercion in human trafficking and powerful ways to support victims on their journey to overcome it. This psychoeducational curriculum empowers survivors by providing an evidence-driven framework to understand and uproot harmful psychological coercion (a.k.a. “The Game”) that many victims have been subjected to during or before their exploitation experience. Later, she developed “The Cool Aunt” series as a supplement to educate youth at risk of exploitation as well as their family and community members. She teaches about the S.T.R.E.A.M.S. of influence within our society that creates the conditions for traffickers to have access to potential victims. Rachel’s lived experiences strongly influence her work, and it resonates with the target audience. She emphasizes the importance of authenticity, relevance, and trauma-informed content in the materials she develops, drawing from her own journey to help others find hope and healing.

Movement through Time



2014 - 2020 - Policy Focus

Prior to 2000, the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed human trafficking cases under several federal statutes related to involuntary servitude and slavery, but the criminal laws were narrow and patchwork. In the last two decades, Congress has passed a number of comprehensive bills designed to bring the full power and attention of the federal government to the fight against human trafficking.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 is the first comprehensive federal law to address trafficking in persons. The law provides a three-pronged approach that includes prevention, protection, and prosecution. Although the passage of the TVPA signified a reorientation of federal policy toward trafficking victims, laws in all 50 states still classified commercially sexually exploited youth as criminals who could be incarcerated for prostitution. In response, several states enacted “Safe Harbor” laws designed to reclassify youth as victims and ensure access to services and legal protections. These laws function to decriminalize juvenile prostitution such that victims can no longer be convicted for their exploitation or establish diversion pathways that redirect victims from the justice system into child welfare or specialized services. New York was among the first to enact the Safe Harbor law in 2008. By 2014, 22 additional states had enacted anti-trafficking legislation that included various Safe Harbor protections.

In 2014, California enacted SB855. This legislation formally defined which children were categorized as exploited. Identified Child Welfare Systems to be responsible for intervening if a parent was unable or unwilling to protect their child from exploitation (Welfare & Institutions Code 300(b)2), and created an “opt-in” CSEC program that provides participating county child welfare agencies with guidance and funding to prevent and intervene on behalf of children that are either experiencing or at risk of experiencing exploitation. Between the implementation of SB855 in 2015 (July) through December 2021, 38,168 minors in California were documented by a child welfare agency as having concerns of CSE. 65% were female-identified. Racial breakdowns were as follows: 50% Latinx, 24% white, 16% black, 5% Asian, and >1% Native American. The median age at the time CSE concerns were first documented was 12 years old.

Movement through Time



Policy Focus continued...

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017, Pub. L. No. 115-393, provided additional funding and mandates to support victims of trafficking, and to increase the transparency of the federal government's anti-trafficking work, including:

- Requiring the Attorney General to issue a human trafficking victim screening protocol for use in all federal anti-trafficking law enforcement operations, and, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, to identify and disseminate tools and recommended practices for the screening of HT victims;
- Directing DOJ to submit a report to Congress on the efforts by the National Institute of Justice to develop a methodology to assess the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States;
- Mandating the U.S. Advisory Council to review federal government policies and programs and file its findings annually in a report to Congress;
- Adding 18 U.S.C. §1595A, which allows the AG to bring a civil injunction to enjoin any act under Chapter 77, Chapter 110, or 117.

One of Survivor Leader Alicia's key contributions has been in advocating for survivor leadership and its role in the multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach to addressing CSEC. She presented at the Department of Children and Families (DCF) conference on the importance of survivor leadership within the MDT framework. Alicia stressed the need for all three components of the triangle: the victim (or foster care child experiencing CSEC), the survivor leader (someone who has escaped exploitation), and the MDT wraparound team, which could include law enforcement and clinical professionals. Alicia's experiences highlighted the inadequacy of the "if-then" model often used in rehabilitation programs. She found that this approach mimicked the dynamics of trafficking and did not effectively address the needs of survivors. In response, she and her team transitioned from a traditional safe house model to an advocacy center and wraparound service provider. This shift focused on intensive case management, trauma-informed care, and empowering survivors by celebrating their achievements and unique needs.

While there are organizations and not-for-sale clubs in schools attempting to involve youth, she stressed the need to bridge the generational gap by leveraging social media and engaging with young people where they are most comfortable. Alicia Tappan's life experiences and recommendations underscore the significance of survivor leadership, trauma-informed care, and early intervention in combating child sexual exploitation. Her journey from survivor to advocate has been marked by a passionate commitment to empowering youth and fostering comprehensive support systems within child welfare agencies. Her insights provide valuable guidance for addressing the complex issue of CSEC while prioritizing the voices and experiences of those affected.

Movement through Time



2023 - Eco-Systemic Healing

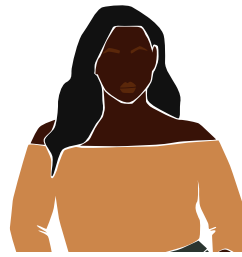
In 2023, CDSS conducted a deep evaluation of the 9 year impact of SB855. A team of researchers partnered with survivor leaders to evaluate which agencies were actively collaborating to meet the needs of exploited children, to assess child welfare's capacity to do, what barriers they were encountering, and what were some best practices being utilized regarding CSEC response programs. These research teams reviewed county strategic plans, conducted surveys of child welfare staff, and developed case studies from 12 California counties. Data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP) was also analyzed to learn more about the child welfare involvement for youth having experienced CSE (commercial sexual exploitation). CCWIP captures information from the Child Welfare Case Management System regarding a number of variables including but not limited to maltreatment while in foster care, case service delivery, placement stability, CSE confirmation, and revictimization. In general, counties that scored high in collaboration and met the minimum SB855 implementation requirements were more likely to investigate and substantiate reports of CSE.

Major Successes - spreading awareness and bringing more partners to the table.

Major Challenge within this success - these multi-disciplinary teams (MDT) "can be overwhelming since so many service providers are involved. Everyone is bringing their own ideas about what services can be offered." (Service Provider statement, CDSS SB 855 Outcome Study 2023). Additional barriers identified were the features of commercial sex industry that drive demand, and the constant challenges around placement, staffing, and service shortages.

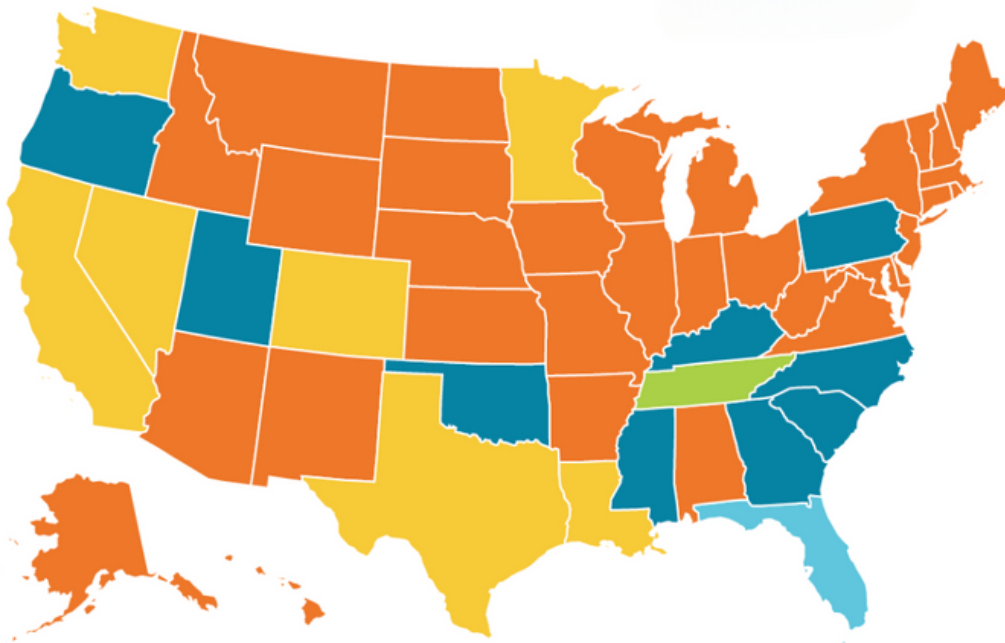
Survivor Leader Kia Dupclay provides a compelling perspective on the critical issues surrounding CSEC services, particularly in supporting youth survivors of sexual exploitation. Kia underscores the imperative of amplifying survivor voices, urging system leaders to prioritize their needs and well-being. Her personal lived experience adds a poignant dimension to the discussion, emphasizing the challenges of navigating a society that normalizes sex work. Kia advocates for a shift towards holistic care and self-care, recognizing the importance of addressing the mind, body, and spirit in supporting survivors. The interview sheds light on the vast scale of the trafficking problem in Los Angeles and the tension points within the community. In light of these observations, the following recommendations are proposed: Firstly, system leaders should actively involve youth in decision-making processes, ensuring genuine inclusion and valuing of their perspectives. Secondly, there is a need to recognize and implement wraparound services that go beyond immediate needs, focusing on long-term healing and well-being.

Movement through Time



Shared Hope International The Report Card

Since 2011, Shared Hope has laid the foundation for policy, practice, and cultural transformation by supporting state legislators and stakeholders to enact the minimum fabric of laws needed to address child sex trafficking. The Report Cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking released in 2023 built upon the last decade of progress, challenging states to take the next step in the fight against sex trafficking by focusing on the area where the largest gaps remain—victim protections. Each state's grades are based solely on an analysis of state statutes. Grading on statutory law provides a clear mechanism for evaluating policy goals across all states while ensuring that survivor-centered reforms are an enduring part of states' responses.



A
90-110

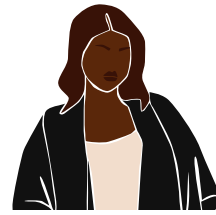
B
80-89

C
70-79

D
60-69

F
<60

Movement through Time



Shared Hope International The Report Card

In efforts to better understand how policy implications were being implemented within practices held at the community level, interviews were conducted with Survivor and System leaders from various states. For the purposes of this knowledge hub project, a focus was placed on California, Florida, Minnesota, and Tennessee.

CALIFORNIA

Issue	Grade	Score
1. Criminal Provisions	B	14.5 17.5
2. Identification of and Response to Victims	F	14.5 27.5
3. Continuum of Care	D	9.5 15
4. Access to Justice for Trafficking Survivors	C	11 15
5. Tools for a Victim-Centered Criminal Justice Response	C	7 10
6. Prevention and Training	B	12.5 15
EXTRA CREDIT Youth		3
EXTRA CREDIT Child Labor Trafficking		4
OVERALL GRADE TIER I		C 76

FLORIDA

Issue	Grade	Score
1. Criminal Provisions	A	17.5 17.5
2. Identification of and Response to Victims	D	18.5 27.5
3. Continuum of Care	B	12 15
4. Access to Justice for Trafficking Survivors	B	12 15
5. Tools for a Victim-Centered Criminal Justice Response	A	9.5 10
6. Prevention and Training	B	12 15
EXTRA CREDIT Youth		2
EXTRA CREDIT Child Labor Trafficking		5
OVERALL GRADE TIER I		B 88.5

MINNESOTA

Issue	Grade	Score
1. Criminal Provisions	B	15 17.5
2. Identification of and Response to Victims	F	13 27.5
3. Continuum of Care	B	12 15
4. Access to Justice for Trafficking Survivors	C	11.5 15
5. Tools for a Victim-Centered Criminal Justice Response	C	7.5 10
6. Prevention and Training	D	9.5 15
EXTRA CREDIT Youth		4
EXTRA CREDIT Child Labor Trafficking		5
OVERALL GRADE TIER I		C 77.5

TENNESSEE

Issue	Grade	Score
1. Criminal Provisions	A	17.5 17.5
2. Identification of and Response to Victims	C	21 27.5
3. Continuum of Care	F	7.5 15
4. Access to Justice for Trafficking Survivors	B	12.5 15
5. Tools for a Victim-Centered Criminal Justice Response	A	9 10
6. Prevention and Training	A	14.5 15
EXTRA CREDIT Youth		3
EXTRA CREDIT Child Labor Trafficking		5
OVERALL GRADE TIER I		A 90

Movement through Time



2023 - State System Spotlight

California



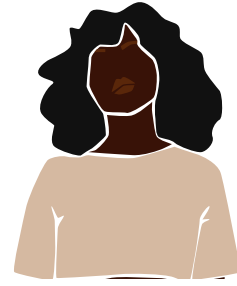
According to Shared Hope International (2023), California has been at the forefront of combating child sex trafficking. California has effectively addressed buyer and trafficker accountability under state laws, as well as mistake of age defenses and decoy defenses. California's continuum of care initiatives have received appropriations support, yet gaps exist in community-based services, multi-disciplinary team responses, and extended foster care services. Gloria Carroll, a California Child Welfare Director, delved into the complexities of supporting commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) and put forth two key recommendations. Firstly, Gloria stressed the urgent need to enhance accountability and data collection practices within CSEC support systems. She expressed concerns about the inconsistent use of screening tools, supervisory oversight, and the effective utilization of collected data in decision-making processes. Secondly, Gloria emphasized the significance of involving individuals with lived experience and a strong commitment to the cause in CSEC support initiatives. She suggested that passionate individuals should be entrusted with CSEC-related assignments, underlining the potential for their dedication to drive meaningful improvements in addressing CSEC challenges. In essence, Gloria underscores the critical importance of data-driven strategies and passionate engagement to advance the support and protection of commercially sexually exploited children.

Florida



According to Shared Hope International (2023), Florida has achieved considerable success in enacting laws aimed at addressing various facets of child sex trafficking. Florida's legislative response to child sex trafficking is commendable, with comprehensive criminal provisions in place. The continuum of care for trafficking survivors in Florida demonstrates a holistic approach, with multi-disciplinary team (MDT) responses. Florida has extended protections and support to sex trafficked youth aged 18 and above, indicating a recognition of their vulnerability and need for assistance. Although Florida has achieved considerable success in enacting laws aimed at addressing various facets of child sex trafficking, there are notable areas where improvements are warranted. According to survivor Alicia Tappan, six years ago, there was a significant lack of awareness and resources dedicated to combating CSEC in Florida. However, she highlighted positive developments, such as the formation of human trafficking task forces, respite care programs, and survivor-inclusive leadership boards. These initiatives aim to provide support, services, and awareness of CSEC in the state. Despite these improvements, Alicia pointed out ongoing gaps, particularly in the foster care system. Many foster parents lack adequate training and awareness of CSEC, leaving them ill-prepared to support survivors. She emphasized the need for intensified case management at all levels of social work, ensuring that professionals recognize and address CSEC indicators early.

Movement through Time



2023 - State System Spotlight

Minnesota



According to Shared Hope International (2023), Minnesota has made significant strides in combating child sex trafficking. Policy goals accomplished include holding buyers and traffickers accountable, screening protocols within child welfare systems, and provisions to prevent criminalization for prostitution offenses. Minnesota provides a continuum of care for survivors, including community-based services and extended foster care. However, there are gaps in multi-disciplinary team responses and legal support for survivors. While prevention and training efforts have been robust, there's a need for broader awareness campaigns and education in schools. Nikki Conway, child welfare manager from Scott County, Minnesota, discussed the challenges and nuances of addressing child exploitation and trafficking in her region. She highlights the unique system in Minnesota where child welfare is operated at the county level, leading to variations in how services are provided across different counties. Nikki also touches upon the strained relationships between tribal and state governments, particularly concerning indigenous communities. She emphasizes the need for more effective collaboration and genuine efforts to combat exploitation, as lip service alone won't suffice. Nikki's experience in the field and insights into the complex dynamics of child welfare and exploitation shed light on the challenges faced by youth workers. Her recommendations include building deeper partnerships with indigenous communities, addressing racial disparities, and enhancing training and support for child welfare workers to ensure that young people's needs are met effectively.

Tennessee



According to Shared Hope International (2023), Tennessee has become the first state to receive an "A" rating for supporting victims of CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children). Over the course of two years, the state has made significant improvements in its policies related to prevention and training, criminal provisions, tools for victim-centered criminal justice response, and access to justice for trafficking survivors. Tennessee is also one of the few states that have extended foster care services to age 24. The state has allocated more than three million dollars in state funds to support various community-based services that directly serve survivors within the state. Overall, the state's exemplary performance across various areas, including criminal provisions, victim identification and response, continuum of care, access to justice, victim-centered criminal justice response, prevention and training, and support for trafficked youth, showcases a comprehensive and survivor-centered approach. Other states can draw inspiration from Tennessee's proactive efforts, recognizing the importance of survivor-centered reforms and the critical role of statutory law in driving progress. Tennessee's success underscores the effectiveness of collaborative efforts between survivor leaders, legislators, stakeholders, and advocacy organizations in creating impactful change.

Call to Action:

The Time is Now

California is ranked as having the highest number of reported cases of human trafficking in the U.S. Foster youth and youth that have been sexually trafficked and/or exploited face an array of barriers and challenges in regarding to access to services. Notably, there is also a gap in services that lack a focus on healing to these youth which is a gap that we have designed our organization to fulfill. Most commonly, barriers of a lack of financial support out there for capacity building and organizing for youth driven events. This creates a trickle down effect as providers lack financial resources in their programs to provide adequate care of each youth needing services. Lack of adequate care leads to youth disengagement due to previous providers not following through which also adds to the lack of trust in service providers these youth already feel. While Child Welfare agencies are responsible for these youth, child welfare is significantly understaffed and overwhelmed. Thus, **families and communities are not getting the support they need right now.**

Black girls in Ohlone Lands (Oakland), and throughout the Bay Area to Sacramento County corridor are being disproportionately targeted for human trafficking. In May 2023, Oakland nonprofits banded together to call attention to a problem that they say is often ignored, that of the growing number of Black girls and young women being targeted by kidnappers.

"A group of about 27 or so nonprofits gathered together to develop a game plan to address actual kidnappings and attempted kidnappings that have been happening to Black girls in the community,"
- Vanessa Russell

Oakland City Councilmember Treva Reid shared that “of the 1,500 missing persons that are total in the city of Oakland, over 400 are Black women...That is a concerning, troubling number.” As a response to these injustices, the community itself issued a state of emergency in Oakland, CA for Black girls.



Wisdom from our Wounds

Engaging in the interviews with Survivor and System Leaders felt like sitting at a table with the OG's sharing nuggets of wisdom and care.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF THIS PROJECT WAS:

From your experience (lived and/or practice based) what are the best practices to comprehensively support survivors of child sexual exploitation?

The data shared here is an attempt to capture themes from those exploratory interviews, as well as recommendations from the 2023 California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Report: Presentation Evaluating California's Efforts to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (SB855) and debriefing webinar hosted by CSEC Action Team Advisory Board. The themes are relayed through the framework of Healing Centered Engagement (**HCE**). **HCE** was developed by Dr. Shawn Ginwright, CEO & Co-Founder of Flourish Agenda in 2018 from 30 years of practice-based youth development work. **HCE** involves a process that transforms individual practices, advances healthy interpersonal connections, and improves institutional culture to create healthier outcomes for youth and the adults who serve them. In order for organizations to successfully integrate healing centered approaches with families and communities, change agents need tools and learning experiences to empower them to lead from the inside out, and to be empowered to heal themselves so they can do the necessary healing for their communities.

HCE offers an asset-driven approach aimed at the holistic restoration of well-being. The approach comes from the idea that people are not harmed in a vacuum, and healing and well-being come from transforming the root causes of the harm at each level. **HCE** is rooted in the belief that transformation happens at three levels: Personal, Interpersonal, and Institutional.

- Personal transformation focuses on the values, experiences, aspirations, and identities that make us who we are in and outside of work.
- Interpersonal transformation allows us to shift from transactional relationships that focus on our roles as employees, to transformative relationships, which focus on our shared humanity.
- Institutional transformation focuses on practices and strategies that achieve wellness and equity by improving organizational effectiveness.

HCE postulates that there are five key principles needed to make these radical or root level shifts that are C.A.R.M.A. Each C.A.R.M.A. principles will be defined below through the central themes that emerged during this project.



Principle C: CULTURE

Culture refers to the values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and practices shared by a group of people. It encompasses the collective identity and heritage that shapes individuals' perspectives, behaviors, and interactions within a community. Recognizing and honoring the cultural backgrounds and identities of survivors is essential in providing healing centered support. Understanding the values, norms, and traditions that shape survivors' identities can help providers create an inclusive and supportive environment where survivors feel respected and understood. Harmed identity (internally and collectively) is a root determinant in why Culture leads off CARMA .By embracing culture, practitioners can enable survivors to connect with their communities for support and healing.

So what type of CULTURE do we need to adopt to support survivors of CSEC?

The Data says: A Culture OF EQUITY, PROVISION, CARE AND CO-CREATION

"I wish I had had someone teach me about trauma bonds and teach me about yeah, psychological manipulation and like that new name you created to be anonymous in the strip club was not just a name. You know, names mean something and you created a whole personality or you created a whole identity. And the more you operated in that identity, the more natural it felt. But that's not the real you."

- Rachel Thomas

When a person experiences trauma during key developmental ages (in utero through age 25), there is complex harm experienced to their development identity. When our identity is harmed, we lose a sense of self. As we learned from the "Movement Through Time" section, much of the early revolutionary work done was around building about awareness about this social toxin, or societal harm, and changing the narrative from like criminalizing victims to empowering survivors. As a result of this intention, there has been a heightened accountability around CSEC identification, legal and fiscal accountability, and training, but we most move beyond settling for the identification of common "risk factors" because remaining at that baseline level means that many CSEC continue to go unnoticed and under-supported. Survivor Leaders spoke to the healing centered culture needed to appropriating identify, intervene, and restore when sex trafficking has occurred to a valuable voice. A commitment to developing practices that center an analysis of racial, gender, and economic equity, holistic care and provision from prevention through maintenance co-creating with these valuable voices as the experts,



Principle “C”: CULTURE

What is needed for this recommendation to be actualized? Survivor leaders offer their insight that a more critical analysis of racial, gender, and economic equity needs to occur. Not just an awareness that traffickers benefit from structural oppression that places groups of people on the margins of survival. But a commitment to developing practices that centralize a youth’s needs around safety, belonging, and nurturing.

- **Racial, Gender, & Economic Equity:** From the inception of system of child “protection” in the late 1800’s through today’s trends in 2024, Black and Native parents are more likely to be investigated for child abuse and neglect, have their children removed from their care, and are less likely to be reunified with their families than any other racial group. Black, Native, and Latinx youth are overrepresented in child sex trafficking cases. Being involved in the foster care system at any race leads to greater susceptibility to becoming a victim of trafficking. Sexual orientation plays a significant role as well LGBTQ+ children are more likely to experience trafficking. The CDSS (California Department of Social Services) Policy and Practice recommendations underscore that in order to Improve identification, we must promote equity, reduce bias, and decrease time before identification. Survivor & System Leaders spoke to just an awareness that traffickers benefit from structural oppression that places groups of people on the margins of survival. But There is a lack of attention to specific groups disproportionately affected, such as African American girls, Native American youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with intellectual disabilities. Nola and Kia in particular stressed the need for targeted prevention efforts and better connections between issues like sexual abuse, historical oppression, racism, and vulnerability to trafficking.
- **Provision:** Survivor Leaders spoke to the importance of having resources readily available for CSE so that when there is an expressed need, it can be met. There was also a theme of respecting youth as the experts in what it is that they need, instead of assuming as adults that we know better than them. System Leaders reflected on the challenges and limitations within Child Welfare to consistently do this. There is often contracts with community based agencies to provide direct service support to CSEC, but the accountability and quality varies significantly from agency to agency. Survivor Leaders also uplifted the need to have more specialized and trauma informed resources that are expansive and holistic. Kia and Carissa in particular highlighted the value of breathing techniques, taking hikes, coloring, gardening, and a host of other natural self regulating and natural resources that aren’t also made accessible for CSEC.
- **Co-Creation:** Across the board, Survivor Leaders underscore the importance of engaging authentically with youth, validating their choices including how they choose to express themselves, and including them at every step and stage of their process through truly co-design with them as the experts of their lives and experiences.



Principle “A”: AGENCY

Agency refers to the individual and collective power to act, create, and effect change in personal circumstances and external systems. It involves the capacity to make choices, set goals, and take initiative to shape one's own life and the world around them. Enabling survivors to recognize and exercise their individual and collective power is crucial in supporting their recovery and resilience. By fostering expansive agency, providers can help survivors affirm a sense of control over their lives and advocate for their own needs and rights. Expansive agency means providing opportunities for survivors to make choices, set goals, and take action can promote self-determination and autonomy, enabling them to create positive changes in their personal conditions and external systems

What conditions can restore AGENCY for survivors of CSEC?

The Data says: AGENCY TO ME, AGENCY TO BE FREE

“But really engaging us in a professional setting is not the thing that people naturally are inclined to do, right? They're inclined to coddle, they're inclined to see our weaknesses, they're inclined to see, you know, this caused this... So we're still in this like growth, I feel like, and it's a, it's still, it's a very important time where we don't wanna lose real opportunities to have power, to have influence.” - Carissa Phelps

- **Agency to be Free:** Lack of choice and autonomy is a common experience of many CSEC, especially those that are system involved. Foundation is a lack of choice around safety. There may have been community and familial experiences around not having choice around what happens to their body and well-being. Once involved in a system like child welfare or juvenile detention, decision are made for them by providers and judges around what they have access to, what they are required to do, and where they are placed, which is often rooted in scarcity due to lack of viable resource parent or foster homes available nationwide. Recruitment efforts into trafficking are often successful because they are perceived to offer youth more “choice” and belonging than what they are currently experiencing. Once in exploitation though, this cycle of stripping away autonomy and choice is repeated. Survivor Leaders focused on creating choice and opportunities for youth at every juncture from how service delivery to job opportunities.
- **Agency to be Me:** Another theme found from this project was the tokenization of survivor voice. There is often a desire from systems to “hear” from their trauma stories so that system leaders can make changes from a more informed approach. But once invited to sit at the “table” of power, there is a devaluing that occurs in how survivors show up. Oftentimes it is their experience that the system’s expectation is for the survivor to change into the cultural norms of a Euro-Centric “professionalism.” Stripping them of their self autonomy and sending a message that it is the survivor who must change to make the “system” feel comfortable. Survivor Leaders in this project pushed back to say “No! Accept me fully as we are because there is power in how we show up!”



Principle R: RELATIONSHIPS



Relationships involve the capacity to create, sustain, and grow healthy connections with others. They encompass the bonds, interactions, and mutual support networks that contribute to individuals' well-being and sense of belonging within communities. Building healthy and supportive relationships is fundamental in helping survivors heal from trauma and rebuild their social networks. Providers can facilitate the development of trusting and empathetic connections with survivors, and provide a safe space for them to share their experiences and emotions. By nurturing meaningful relationships based on respect, empathy, and reciprocity, practitioners can create a supportive community where survivors feel validated, understood, and valued.

What conditions can foster transformative RELATIONSHIPS for survivors of CSEC?

The Data says: SURVIVOR LEAD & SURVIVOR WEB

“Any survivor I ever developed a relationship with at M.I.S.S.E.Y., if they're an adult now and they wanna be connected to me, we are connected.” - Nola Brantley

- **Survivor Lead:** System Leaders and CDSSS Policy and Practice Recommendation all align in that there needs to be more access to and partnership with those who have “lived expertise.” CDSSS shared it to be a “Promising Practice” to establish 24/7 dual responses that involves both a child welfare and CSE advocate. Survivor Leaders echoed the value of training, engaging, and intervening through a team based approach that involves both a clinical or trauma informed profession and survivor. What’s important to amplify though is the need for this to represent an equitable partnership. Oftentimes the power dynamics involved devalue the lived expertise of the survivor in comparison to the educational expertise of the provider. So the theme of truly allowing the survivor to lead with the accompanying support of trauma-informed professionals promotes healing for survivors across the spectrum - those leading, those emerging, and those who do not yet see themselves that way.
- **Survivor Web:** It was clear, Survivor Leaders have got you! They will show up for other survivors, make space for other survivors, and meet other survivors exactly where they are at without judgement. Survivor Leaders in this project point to high value in mentorship and coaching opportunities available from survivor to survivor. Encouragement for more formal mentorships between older (OG) survivor leaders and younger survivors was also raised. Also of note, providing restorative support within the survivor community is also needed. Nola uplifted the need to create opportunities for peer to peer support groups that address trauma-related challenges within relationships among survivors.

Principle M: MEANING



Meaning involves the profound discovery of who we are, why we exist, and what purpose we serve. It encompasses the exploration of identity, values, and life goals that give individuals a sense of fulfillment, direction, and significance in their lives. Supporting survivors in exploring the profound questions of identity, purpose, and meaning can help them make sense of their experiences and find a sense of meaning and direction in their lives. Providers can facilitate this exploration by providing opportunities for reflection, self-discovery, and personal growth. By helping survivors uncover their strengths, values, and passions, practitioners can empower them to define their own narratives and pursue paths that align with their sense of purpose and fulfillment.

How can survivors of CSEC make MEANING and identify their purpose?

The Data says: TELLING MY STORY

"I've been told, you know, just thank you for just hearing my story, just being, letting me go from A to Z and giving space for that." - Carissa Phelps

Trauma is the Greek word for wound. Trauma is about "stuckness." Trauma is what happens inside of us when an experience occurs too soon, too much, too fast, and/or for too long without there being enough of something reparative to metabolize the energy of the event(s) (Menakem, 2021) In short, when trauma happens, the energy in our nervous systems gets stuck in the threat response cycle. This stuck energy mobilizes our defenses to cry for help, fight, flee, freeze or immobilize defenses, or dissociate.

For those of us who have experienced complex trauma, which is trauma that is compounded because the catalyst event(s) are rooted in childhood during key development milestones, this "stuckness" is also accompanied by a repetitive loop tied to survival. Complex trauma shapes the lens that we then walk through the world with. So how do we get unstuck and off that loop?

We share. We tell our story. Alicia has a commitment to empower survivor as leaders. She speaks to the importance of equipping survivors with the skills and support necessary to avoid re-exploitation and to control the narrative of their own stories.

Making space for youth to share their valuable voices in a way that is healing and not extractive of them, gives space for deeper processing of not only what has happened to them, but also what else is true about them - that they are powerful beyond measure. Survivor Leaders emphasize the importance of creating dedicated space for CSEC to express their needs and connect with their peers. Creating a safe forum for them to share their experiences, voice their concerns, and find solace and support from others who have faced similar challenges. These recommendations underscore her commitment to practical, youth-centered solutions that aim to address the unique needs of this vulnerable population.

Principle A: ASPIRATION

Aspiration refers to the capacity to imagine, set, and accomplish goals for personal and collective livelihood and advancement. It involves the exploration of possibilities and the pursuit of dreams and aspirations that contribute to individuals' growth, fulfillment, and well-being. Encouraging survivors to imagine and pursue goals for personal and collective livelihood and advancement can foster a sense of hope and possibility. Providers can support survivors in setting achievable goals that are driven by them, whether it's pursuing education, employment, or personal development opportunities. By nurturing aspirations and providing resources and support, practitioners can enable survivors to take steps towards realizing their dreams.

What conditions can restore hope and vision for survivors of CSE?

The Data says: ASPIRE TO INSPIRE AND PREVENT

“And so we reinvented EVERYTHING” - Alicia Tappan

Dr. Shawn Ginwright often says that the greatest impact of trauma on our society is the stripping of our capacity to believe what is possible. Survivor Leaders speak to the need to address the root causes that lead to trafficking so that impacted youth don't have to endure this possibility stripping. The key prioritization was on prevention rather than reaction.

Carissa in particular has been utilizing her position as a lawyer to take proactive measures around holding corporations accountable. She uplifts the value in targeting businesses and online platforms that enabling trafficking as this method seeks to disrupt traffickers' business models.

Like many of the Survivor Leaders, Alicia's goal specifically is to intervene and provide support before youth are pushed into the criminal justice system or other inadequate placements. Alicia also spoke to the how youth input is necessary as we work to re-create new ways of being that better support them.

To conclude, Survivor Leaders amplify that “healing happens over time” and that “healing is a lifelong journey.” It's important therefore to take these findings and the recommendations that follow as necessary lifetime commitments, not just for a point in time.



Survivor Leader Best Practices



- 1 POUR IN TO LEGACY SURVIVOR LEADERS
- 2 PARTICIPATORY DESIGN
- 3 HOLISTIC HEALING
- 4 VALUE SURVIVOR APPROACH
- 5 VALUE DIVERSITY
- 6 THOSE CLOSEST TO SURVIVING SHOULD GUIDE
- 7 TRAUMA INFORMED LIVED EXPERTISE EQUAL PARTNERSHIP
- 8 SHOW UP FOR SURVIVORS
- 9 AUTHENTIC & CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT
- 10 BE AN ENGAGED LISTENER & ACTIVE INQUIRER
- 11 PROVIDERS NEED HEALING TOO
- 12 SHOW THEM HOW HEALING IS POSSIBLE
- 13 SWIM UPSTREAM

Recommendations: PIVOTS

“What I want system leaders to understand is that like peoples lives are relying on them and they have, they have the power a lot of times it's like, I hear this narrative that really grinds my gears is that 'nothing happens overnight,' but this stuff has been going on four scores and seven years ago. Like, it's time to change it. And I think we need to stop saying that nothing can happen overnight because I've watched things happen overnight. I, and a lot of times we, we, limit ourselves when we keep a narrative that it's not gonna change or it can't happen right away.” - Kia Dupclay

Given the extreme societal pressures young people, families, social workers, and service providers are living under, it has become abundantly clear that we must pivot towards a new way of relating to our children and youth for them to flourish on an intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual level. We need to reimagine how we engage and relate to one another within child welfare from a healing centered framework that focuses on communal healing and well-being.

HCE PRINCIPLE: CULTURE

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: POUR IN TO LEGACY SURVIVOR LEADERS

“We need to embrace and support those who came before us..people who have been out there on the front lines... they've contributed their life. Their life's work to this to making it better. And what have we done back for them as their community?” - Carissa Phelps

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

“We have a certain curriculum, but if youth aren't engaging in it, I'll be like, okay, well let's spend this session to talk about what y'all wanna talk about, what would be helpful for you. And then you could easily build a curriculum that fits in with any program goals and objectives by getting the youth input and then just shaping it into those pro program goals and objectives and making sure you could do what the youth wanna do.” - Nola Brantley

“Meeting with our whole team, other survivors, we'd talk, we'd exchange ideas, they'd get to have their input, they'd observe the trainings and then Survivors get up and train law enforcement. Everybody was involved in creating the space. So they are apart of the solution” - Carissa Phelps

*“Necessary to get youth input and support their creation journey”
- Nola Brantley*

*“They are the experts”
- Carissa Phelps*

Recommendations: PIVOTS

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: HOLISTIC HEALING

"Some people don't even know that they need or that they can benefit from therapy. So many individuals have told me, 'I tried therapy.' I just really encourage them to seek new therapy. I tell them, 'We've really developed in this area many more trauma trained therapists, somatic therapists, people who can really help get back into their body and ground themselves.'" - Carissa Phelps

"Our journey of healing shapes how we show up in professional environments. By neglecting our own self-care and healing, we risk portraying a skewed image of survivors. We need to embrace our own healing journey to authentically show the strength and resilience of all survivors." - Nola Brantley

"I'm really big on teaching youth like what self-care is and like how to love on yourself and just like take care of you before you try to take care of someone else. And I think the biggest thing that I see is that like a lot of youth are taking care of others as if they're adults and like really trying to combat that narrative that you don't have to beat everything for everyone else." - Kia Dupclay

"Therapy Therapy, Therapy...I've made a lifelong commitment to myself that I will always be in therapy for the rest of my life. I will try to follow my therapist wherever she goes. I dunno how I'm gonna do it, but I hope she never leaves like where she is because she is just like a real, real pivotal part of my life." - Kia Dupclay

"My favorite thing is I host retreats. They're trauma-informed care spaces for a week or a day at a time where other survivors get together. We bring in mental health professionals because I saw a gap..." - Alicia Tappan

"I needed to understand the game and to have hope and encouragement for how to truly leave that old lifestyle and self behind and grab onto something else or embrace something else." - Rachel Thomas



HCE PRINCIPLE: AGENCY

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: VALUE SURVIVOR APPROACH

"And I think like being, learning how to navigate those spaces, learning how to be okay with being the lived experience in the room and not shying away from it. Because oftentimes I've seen people having to be people, be in a professional role and have to diminish their lived experience because of role that they did in. And I refuse like, I'm like, if you don't accept my lived experience, then you don't accept me because that's a huge part of who I am." - Kia Dupclay

"My experience allows me to see that whole picture through the perspective of a survivor. I still have blind spots, but don't we all? Don't you?"
-Carissa Phelps

Recommendations: PIVOTS

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: VALUE DIVERSITY

“I kind of don't want people who do not have lived experience. And not just from human trafficking, but across the spectrum because I see the value. So when I think about hiring, like part of what I look for is people with lived experience, experience.” - Kia Dupclay

HCE PRINCIPLE: RELATIONSHIPS

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: THOSE CLOSEST TO SURVIVING SHOULD GUIDE

“if you don't have the lived experience, then how is it, how can you consider certain things about a person living in poverty or a person that's experienced a certain type of abuse? If you yourself have not had that experience, you can learn about it academically, but there's just things that you're gonna miss if you don't have that lived experience. And even if you do, if you don't stay close to it, then you can still miss it...I stay close to my lived experience” - Nola Brantely

“It's also particularly important for youth to see their specific experiences reflected in those working with them” - Nola Brantley

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: TRAUMA INFORMED + LIVED EXPERTISE HAVE EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

“A Really successful model that is being used in the social service realm is the partnership between lived experience individuals and mental health clinicians. It's been highly effective in both training providers and within service delivery.” - Nola Brantely

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: SHOW UP FOR SURVIVORS

“I think the greatest challenge and opportunity for a community is to get in the mindset of just..offering better options. I think a lot of CSEC youth, if they had better options, would've taken them.” - Rachel Thomas



Recommendations: PIVOTS

"We got through this period recently where we educated lawmakers about not legalizing commercial sex acts, the proliferation of brothels, traffickers, etc. I want to give a full shout out to everybody community-wide: survivors, allies, and everybody who came forward. There were people coming out of the woodwork to protect our communities" - Carissa Phelps

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: AUTHENTIC & CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT

"One of the best practices I was a part of was the monthly empowerment activities and annual conference in Los Angeles County that brought together group home providers, social workers, probation officers, clinicians and survivor leaders to engage in empowering activities with kids. These activities included horse back riding, arts and crafts, dancing, and more, all aimed at building relationships. The three day long conference focused on deep healing and creative arts, with a strong emphasis on mentorship and ongoing relationships. Many of the girls who participated have gone on to achieve great things and are on a successful path in school and various programs." - Nola Brantley

"I used like a pro con pro approach. So we're gonna celebrate meeting you with something I called 'A Take Me With You Bag' that had like their favorite food, or favorite color, or favorite something. Then I would say, 'we're gonna do really hard work together. We're gonna dig in deep where some of those places that you don't wanna touch, but I'm gonna be there with you, and at the end we're gonna celebrate.' The pride had to match the challenge. If they got their driver's permit, we took them on a dolphin cruise. If they did hard introspection. We had a day just with them. It was very intentional to celebrate their unique needs." - Alicia Tappan

HCE PRINCIPLE: MEANING MAKING

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: BE AN ENGAGED LISTENER & ACTIVE INQUIRER

"No one's really settling in to see what those symptoms are coming from, unresolved trauma, childhood, you know, experiences that just led them down this path of things that they had to acquire or to, you know, accomplish in order to graduate from the foster care system. But then I saw the lack of real services for the families. And when those two things combined, it was like the child actually had to earn their freedom from something that happened against them, against their will as a kid. And that really got under my skin." - Alicia Tappan



Recommendations: PIVOTS

“Well, ending the game is literally the curriculum that I wish I would've had. That would've saved me about seven years of feeling stupid, lost, and alone... when I learned about psychological coercion, when I learned about vulnerability, when I learned the game and that it was always a game to the trafficker, then that helped me realize how to end the game.” - Rachel Thomas

“A lot of times people don't think about like the specialized populations or populations that may need different type of care. They only see what's on the surface like the homelessness. And it's like, well there's things that are different like that it may impact...” - Kia Dupclay

“Being an engaged listener and then knowing, because we do know so many lived experiences, where are those points when you hear somebody check out and just repeating the facts, but not really understanding, or when they just stop and suddenly they're on a different topic. Can we explore that, explore how we really stay engaged and listening?” - Carissa Phelps

“How do you know more about what the youth need than they do when you're not them and you're not at their age or stage of development? You can't know more than them about their lives. Your best bet is to listen to them and do your best to understand what they are saying they need and how they are saying it could best be delivered to them both as a group of youth, and as youth with unique needs.” - Nola Brantley

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: PROVIDERS NEED HEALING TOO

“Creating space for self-care within the provider community is important, so they have time for self reflection too.” - Nola Brantley

HCE PRINCIPLE: ASPIRATIONS

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: SHOW THEM HOW HEALING IS POSSIBLE

“Facilitate connections between younger survivors and experienced survivors who are actively progressing in their healing journey and who may possess the necessary experience and expertise to support and guide younger survivors in their professional paths. Establishing formal mentorship opportunities is important to support these connections. I strongly believe that survivors who are dedicated to their healing journeys can greatly assist younger survivors in recognizing their value and worth.” - Nola Brantley



Recommendations: PIVOTS

“Connect the younger survivors with older survivor leaders that have done their work, you know, that and that have the experience and expertise to guide them along the way, but create an opportunity formal mentorships... Letting them know their values, their worth. I think these are all things that OG survivors can communicate to them if they're OG survivors that have done their own work.” - Nola Brantley

SURVIVOR BEST PRACTICE ALERT: SWIM UPSTREAM

“I know we were talking about services, but we're creating more victims. We're just constantly more victims, constantly more victimization, more victimization even when we feel like we stop. It seems like ahead of us, right? How do we strategize to close the loop...” - Carissa Phelps

“So I know we were talking about services, but I'm talking about like, we're creating more victims, right? Like, we're just constantly more victims, constantly more victimization, more victimization even when we feel like we stop One thing, you know, here comes this other traffickers are all it seems like ahead of us, right? We're, we're, we're, you know, how do we strategize to make that loop, you know, like really strategize...” - Carissa Phelps

“I have a, I have a coach, a mentor for every area of what I do, right? Like in my doctor's studies, I've got an accountability partner, I've got a therapist, I've got an empowerment coach intentionally so that I have accountability, but also to teach me the skills that I didn't know were out there...so that's what I focus on providing to youth..I am still very much an advocate for empowering the youth because I wanna see that next generation of survivor leaders not have to work as hard as we've had to because we didn't have that mentor.” - Alicia Tappan



Recommendation: PIVOT

The language may have changed, but those underlying root mindsets that that takes more time and it takes a real heart commitment to do that as well.

- Carissa Phelps

In order to make the personal, interpersonal, and institutional transformation needed to operationalize the Survivor Leader Best Practice Recommendations, shifts are necessary for the radial (root) healing to occur. For Healing Centered Engagement, Dr. Shawn Ginwright conceptualizes these shifts into Four Pivots. A PIVOT is a transformative process through which individuals and communities navigate adversity, reclaim agency, and catalyze positive change. In Ginwright's framework, a PIVOT involves a dynamic shift in mindset, behavior, and action, often driven by the resilience and resourcefulness of marginalized groups. It emphasizes the importance of harnessing existing strengths, cultural assets, and collective wisdom to confront systemic challenges and create pathways toward healing, empowerment, and social justice. Our research aligns with Dr. Shawn Ginwright's concept of a PIVOT, as we integrate insights from survivor leaders to inform and enrich the PIVOT framework, fostering a deeper understanding of resilience, empowerment, and transformative change.

The Four Pivots for Reimagining Justice and Reimagining Ourselves

1. **Awareness:** From lens to mirror
2. **Connection:** From transactional to transformative relationships
3. **Vision:** From problem-fixing to possibility-creating
4. **Presence:** From hustle to flow



SHAWN GINWRIGHT, PH.D.

The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves

Recommendation: PIVOT

Pivot in our **AWARENESS**: From a **LENS** of our personal analysis (how we see the world), to a **MIRROR** (how we reflect on our place in the world).

- The best way to show love is through mirroring
- Removing Us' vs. them or othering approach
- Personal, interpersonal and institutional - we as survivors, we as community, and we as people that make up systems
- It's celebrated to come as you are

Pivot in our **RELATIONSHIPS**: From **TRANSACTIONAL** connections to **TRANSFORMATIVE** villages. Building the kind of connections and relationships that allow us to show up as fully human.

- Aligned matching - having mentors that are true mirror reflection of what's possible
- True village building - establishing life long connections
- Everyone is fully capable - what we need to succeed is already within us and we are the experts of our own experience.
- Equitable footing - right sizing power imbalances

Pivot in our **PRESENCE**: From the **HUSTLE** (i.e., always on the go, working, taking care of others) to **FLOW** (i.e., well-being, practicing self-care, implementing personal practices)

- Truly being present - able to actively listen, ask follow up questions. Important for us to be regulated

Pivot in our **VISION**: From only **SOLVING PROBLEMS** and issues to **CREATING POSSIBILITIES**. Focusing on what we want in our lives as opposed to what we want to eliminate.

- Learning to set down tools we've all been trained on - go from thinking to embodiment; listen and be present instead of categorizing
- Honor wounds - your own first so you can make space to honor others

These pivots serve as a powerful tool for self reflection. Coming from a space of awareness, connectivity, presence, and expanded vision are necessary to operationalize the CARMA principles of **HCE** in a way that truly creates transformation. The heart and mindset this framework affords serves as a comprehensive guide for addressing the complex needs of CSEC victims on their journey towards healing and recovery. As such, **HCE** will be used to structure the recommendations for how to build a space and continuum of best practices that truly support CSEC.

Conclusion

“I’ve begun to see this issue as less about the issue itself and more about a lack of options. That the streets are offering a better, they’re giving our kids a better pitch than CPS is.”

- Rachel Thomas

If, as someone engaging with this body of work, takes away one key theme, we hope it’s that authentic and lifelong relationships are the building blocks for healing and restoration for those who have experienced complex, systemic, intergenerational, racial and genderized trauma. These relationships must exist within a DEEPLY MEDICINAL NETWORK of key “village members” that serve as healers, mentors, mediators, coaches, and guides throughout the lifelong journey that healing takes. Engaging as a researcher within this project provided more strings within a larger web to come together. Learning about the life journey and collective work about these survivor leaders provides a wealth of information about the best practices needed to support survivors of sexual exploitation. Their journeys are reflective of the self-tending practices they cultivated along the way to acquiring the wisdom learned within their wounds.

The research project highlights the evolution of efforts to address CSE and trafficking, underscoring the pivotal role of survivor leaders in raising awareness and driving systemic change. Survivor leaders like Rachel Lloyd, Nola Brantley, Carissa Phelps, and Rachel Thomas have played instrumental roles in shifting societal perceptions, advocating for policy reforms, and providing crucial support to survivors. While this report has focused on femme-identified bodies, the actuality is that within the conditions of 2024, we have an ever-growing population experiencing poverty, the largest risk indicator for sexual exploitation, working alongside indigenous community.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, survivor leaders like Rachel Lloyd and Nola Brantley brought attention to the prevalence of CSE and trafficking, particularly among marginalized communities. Their experiences as survivors informed their advocacy work, leading to the founding of organizations like GEMS and MISSEY, which provide support and services to exploited youth. The passage of legislation like the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and Safe Harbor laws marked significant milestones in the fight against CSE. These laws aimed to reclassify exploited youth as victims rather than criminals, ensuring access to services and legal protections. Survivor leaders like Alicia Tappan have been instrumental in advocating for survivor leadership within multidisciplinary teams and promoting trauma-informed care.



Conclusion Continued...

Recent research has focused on evaluating the impact of legislative measures like SB855 in California, which aimed to intervene on behalf of exploited children and provide guidance and funding to child welfare agencies. While progress has been made, challenges remain, including barriers to collaboration among service providers and persistent disparities in support services.

Looking ahead, recommendations emphasize the importance of adopting healing-centered approaches within child welfare systems. Drawing from Dr. Shawn Ginwright's Healing Centered Engagement framework, these approaches prioritize personal, interpersonal, and institutional transformation to create a culture of resilience and well-being. By empowering individuals and communities to heal collectively, organizations can better support survivors and prevent exploitation in the future.

VIP manifests healing-centered approaches through its programming by prioritizing the holistic well-being of individuals and communities affected by CSE. VIP recognizes that trauma and healing are collective experiences and integrates this understanding into its initiatives. Through partnerships with survivor leaders, mental health professionals, and community organizations, VIP fosters a culture of healing that addresses the root causes of harm at personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels. By implementing Dr. Shawn Ginwright's Healing Centered Engagement framework, VIP empowers individuals to pivot towards awareness, transformative relationships, presence, and vision, thereby fostering resilience and promoting positive outcomes for survivors. VIP's programming embodies the principles of Culture, Agency, Relationships, Meaning, and Aspirations (CARMA), providing comprehensive support to survivors on their journey towards healing and recovery. Through its innovative and collaborative approach, VIP strives to create a supportive village where individuals can thrive and communities can heal from the impacts of CSE.



VIP Response: The HCE in VIP



VIP Culture Mission: Develop practices centered in racial equity, restoration, and healing is needed not just for CSEC, but the child welfare, service providers and community members apart of their formal and informal village.



VIP Agency Mission: Agency empowers CSEC victims by giving them the tools and confidence to regain control over their lives. This principle acknowledges their capacity to make choices that align with their aspirations, ultimately fostering self-determination and independence.



VIP Relationship Mission: Relationships are foundational to the healing and recovery process. Building supportive and trusting relationships with CSEC, Survivor Leaders, and System leaders creates a safe space where they can begin to rebuild trust, heal emotional wounds, and develop a sense of belonging.



VIP Meaning Making Mission: The principle of meaning making assists not only CSEC, but entire communities in finding the wisdom within their wounds.

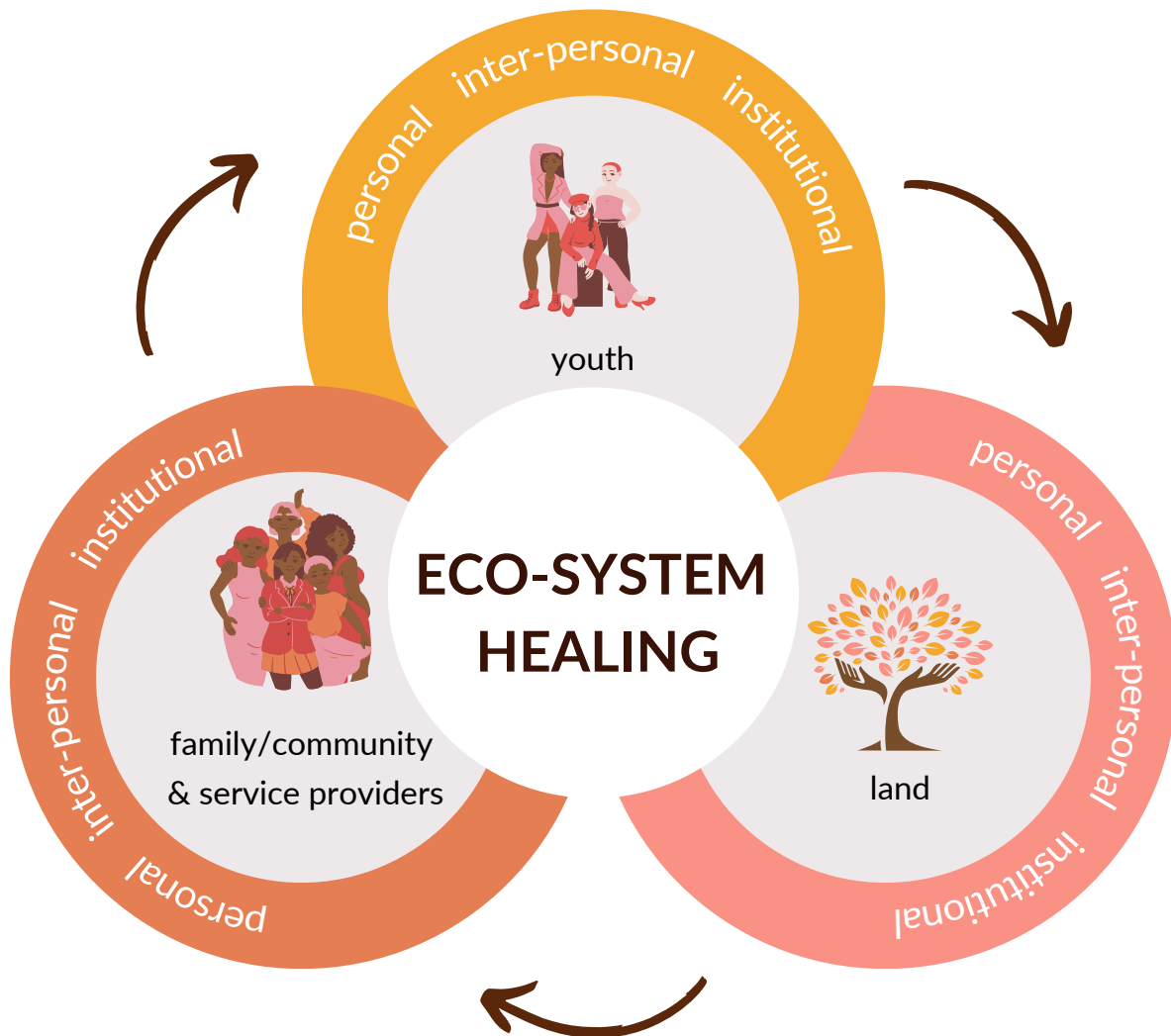


VIP Aspirations Mission: Aspirations encourage and support CSEC victims to pursue their goals and dreams, guiding them towards reintegrating into society as confident, empowered individuals who can contribute positively to their communities.



VIP Response: The HCE in VIP

In order to make the personal, interpersonal, and institutional transformation needed to radically heal from conditions of oppression that have lead to sexual exploitation, VIP strives to create sacred space and access to holistic resources for the entire eco-system around the youth. This ecosystem consists of the family/community and service providers who are also needing to engage in their own healing as they come alongside CSEC. And all of our healing is also intricately connected to how the land is able to heal. This promotes a pivot to **MIRRORING** our reflective communal healing, **TRANSFORMING** relationships intergenerationally through bio-genetic wellness, honoring the **FLOW** and grounding of nature and sacred ancestral energy, and creating **POSSIBILITIES** from the emerging Wisdom in Our Wounds.



VIP Response: The Village Vibes Project



As a response to the call to action to create spaces of awareness, safety, and well-being for Black girls, and any girls at risk of sexual exploitation, VIP has created the Village Vibes Project. Village Vibes was first piloted in 2023 in Oakland, CA through a grant awarded by Alameda County DCFS. The Village Vibes Project seeks to support and empower youth who have been impacted by sexual exploitation, foster care, and/or the carceral system. Participants will journey through a series of educational, preventive, and intervening practices to “Catch A Vibe” of healing through self and communal practices. These practices are co-created by those who have also endured deep rooted, intergenerational layers of rupture caused by racialized injustices against Black and Brown Bodies (colonization, mass genocide, and policing) and perpetuated through systems of oppression (foster care and juvenile careration).

Village Vibes Project focuses on creating safe spaces for BEing, BELONGing, & (re)BUILDing the highest versions of self and community through:



- Recognizing Self
- Healing development and restoration at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels
- Reconnecting with the Land
- Activism through embodied racial equity elicitation and land based practices
- Nourishing Village Roots
- Village cultivation within the healing frameworks provided to youth, their providers, and families

The Village Vibe Project will carry out these initiatives through 4 primary methods

- Reach - Education regarding holistic wellness through webinars and social media postings
- Release - Container building & Healing through: Bi-weekly Liberation groups (2hr Virtual) & Ceremonial Wellness Retreats (Quarterly half day retreats)
- Restore - Healing Maintenance through ongoing support and village building (linkage to resources such as advocates and Practitioners), as well as training provided to service providers (Stages of Change, Somatic Experiencing, HCand Ending the Game)
- Reflect - customized VIP Journals to support meaning making of a youth’s journey

Invest in Village Vibes



As a community driven, grassroots initiative Village is Possible is currently seeking funding to expand these services within the Sacramento and Solano County areas.

Proposed Budget	Value	Notes
Research and Development	\$5,000	Ending The Game, Somatic Abolitionism, Therapeutic Certificated Trainings for LCSW level VIP Staff, Life Planning and Professional Development for Sex Trafficking Survivor leaders
Equipment, Supplies & Event Spaces	\$15,000	In-person client and community Wellness events; including client travel, site accommodations, and materials/wellness packages
Staff (PhD, LCSW, Social Worker & Survivor Leaders)	\$60,000	Staff, travel, journals, & materials to partner with county partners
Holistic Providers & Practicioners	\$20,000	Youth access to holistic care providers of their choice (acupuncture/acupressure, chiropractic care, various forms of therapy, herbal consultations and purchases, etc)
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$3000	
Total	\$100,000	



Support VIP

VIP invites you to join us in continuing this vital work through a general donation to VIP. Your contribution, no matter the size, will directly support our ongoing efforts. By donating to VIP, you're not just giving money; you're investing in a brighter future for countless individuals and families.

Scan the first QR Code to the right to donate to VIP's general program fund. If you are interested in supporting our Survivor Leader program, VIP invites you to become a Village Is Possible Champion.



Lead by the mantra "Our Wounds are Wisdom", Village Is Possible is contributing to the movement to wrap inner, interpersonal and institutional village around CSEC through reconnecting them with their core selves, their family, and the land.

In 2024, VIP launch a special fundraising campaign that aims to raise \$40,000 to provide holistic services and a Living Wage one Survivor Leader at a time. VIP is spotlighting Youth Leader Lauren for this award.

As a community driven organization, VIP is seeking out Champions. VIP invites you to become one of our 40 Champions and make a significant impact on the well-being of our village. Each Champion's goal is to raise \$1,000 from their village, and together, we can support Survivor Leaders making a difference in the VIP community.

References



Brantley, Nola K. "Tips for Working with CSEC Survivors." American Bar Association.

Brantley, Nola K. Who Is Nola Brantley? Retrieved January 24, 2024, from <http://www.nolabrantleyspeaks.org/who-is-nola-brantley.html>

Children's Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS. (2017, July). Human Trafficking and Child Welfare: A Guide for Caseworkers. Child Welfare Information Gateway.

Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., et al. (2023). CCWIP Reports. Retrieved February 28, 2024, from <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/>

Gems Uncovered. (n.d.). About. Retrieved January 24, 2024, from <https://gemsuncovered.org/about/>

Ijadi-Maghsoodi, Roya, MD, Cook, Mekeila, PhD, Barnert, Elizabeth S., MD, MPH, MS, Gaboian, Shushanik, MSW, and Bath, Eraka, MD. "Understanding and Responding to the Needs of Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth." *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, Volume 25, Issue 1, January 2016, Pages 107-122.

National Youth Law Center. "Strategies to End Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth - A Collaborative Toolkit." Authored by National Center for Youth Law. Funding provided by Novo Foundation.

Recognizing the Signs. (n.d.). National Human Trafficking Hotline. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking/recognizing-signs>

Stauffer, B., [et al.] (2020). "Sexual Harms Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Resilience (STAR)."

The National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States. "Best Practices and Recommendations for States." Katherine Chon, Director of the HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP), is the Committee's Designated Federal Officer. Glen (JR) Ujifusa, Jr., Senior Deputy District Attorney, Multnomah County District Attorney's Drug Unit, Property Crimes Unit, and Human Trafficking Team, is Chairperson of the Committee.

Titi, Neziswa Vuyasande. "How Children Make Meaning of Sexual Trauma: Towards Decolonised Child-Centric Psychological Interventions." University of South Africa.

Villalobos. (2020). Human Trafficking and Children: A Fact Sheet . Futures Without Violence. Retrieved July 9, 2023, from <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Trafficking-and-Children-A-Fact-Sheet-Final.pdf>

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the survivor leaders and child welfare system leaders who shared their expertise with us.



www.justbuildvillagethen.com

www.villageispossible.org

[@village_is_possible](https://twitter.com/village_is_possible)

doctaneesh@villageispossible.org