

# CSEC: Meeting Victims Where They Are

## Overview

**CSEC** (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) is a term that refers to crimes against individuals under the age of 18 involving sexual abuse or exploitation for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits). This includes those who have engaged in survival sex and those who do not have a trafficker.

California Senate Bill SB1322 passed in January 2017 makes it clear that children are always victims in commercial sex acts and cannot be criminalized or arrested for their experiences.

CSEC youth experience significant abuse, trauma, and neglect and may present with various manifestations of their trauma.

Responding to CSEC requires a trauma-informed and survivor-centered philosophy.

## Trauma-Informed Responses

- **Safety**  
Ensuring physical and emotional safety
- **Trustworthiness**  
Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries
- **Choice**  
Prioritizing client choice and control
- **Collaboration**  
Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with clients
- **Empowerment**  
Prioritizing client empowerment, self-efficacy, and skill-building

### For More Information

**MISSEY Inc.**  
Provides services to CSEC and at-risk youth 12-24.  
[www.missey.org](http://www.missey.org)

**San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking** Provides a forum for over 30 agencies working to protect survivors.  
[www.SFCAHT.org](http://www.SFCAHT.org)

## Survivor-Centered Responses

- Focus on working with the survivor to **build self-efficacy**
- Center the **discovery of** individual survivor's **life goals**
- Recognize the survivor's lived experience as **true expertise**
- Understand that **relationships fuel change**
- **Believe in the resiliency and brilliance** of young people

### The Polaris Project

Resources include educational materials, policy change activities, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline.  
[www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

### HEAT Watch

Developed by the Alameda County District Attorney, includes infographics and a CSEC Toolkit for providers.  
[www.heatwatch.org](http://www.heatwatch.org)

### GEMS

Based in New York. Direct services, educational materials, and survivor leadership resources.  
[www.gems-girls.org](http://www.gems-girls.org)

**Survivors may be at any stage in the change process and their understanding and definition of their experience should inform service providers' approaches. Consider each stage as a part of a complex process of behavioral change that is cyclical, not linear. The cycle could happen once or could be repeated many times.**

## How to recognize the individual stages and what you can do to help.

### Pre-contemplation

- May not self-identify as a victim, be defensive, refuse services
- May deny force, fraud, or coercion, but will admit to commercial sex participation

**Acknowledge lack of readiness and offer useful resources**

### Contemplation

- Has decided situation should change, often caused by a specific event (arrest, new assault, pregnancy, STD, etc.)
- May be ambivalent to intervention but open

**Help identify sources of support and safety**

### Preparation

- Made a decision to change something about situation
- May begin saving money, packing belongings, exploring shelters etc.

**Create plan for intervention: support, shelter, counseling, reporting, safety planning**

### Action

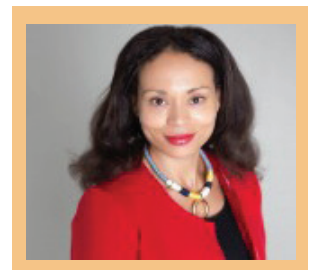
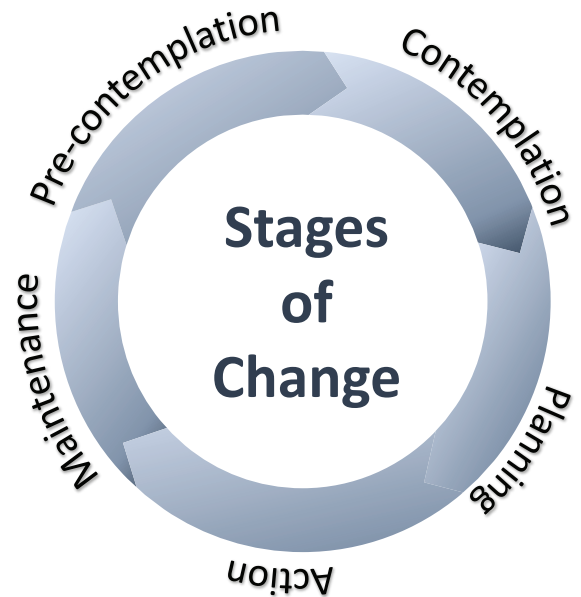
- May enroll in treatment or undergo intake, make police report
- May cut off ties, change contact info, relocate

**Address safety concerns while processing anxiety and loss**

### Maintenance

- Develops new life skills (new job, living independently, new relationships etc.)
- Can avoid responding to triggers

**Offer long-term support, patience, focus on realistic goals**



Created by Holly Joshi, Executive Director at MISSEY, a youth serving non-profit providing direct services and advocacy for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Holly has 16 years of public service experience and over a decade of leadership and advocacy work in the movement to end commercial sexual exploitation. She led the Oakland Police Department's Child Exploitation Unit and served as the Training Manager at MISSEY before moving into her current role.

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