- Human Trafficking Webinar Series –

Centering the Experience of Boys, Young Men, and Male Identifying Students in Human Trafficking

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Transcript

Greta Colombi: Hello and good afternoon. Welcome to our webinar Centering the Experience of Boys, Young Men, and Male Identifying Students in Human Trafficking. This is the latest event in a series of webinars sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education since January 2020 to focus on the critical role of America's schools play in addressing human trafficking. We are so glad to have you with us today. My name is Greta Colombi and I'm the director of the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments or NCSSLE. And NCSSLE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. And together we work to build the capacity of state education agencies, districts, and schools to make school climate improvements, foster school safety and maintain supportive, engaging and healthy learning environments to empower the success of all students.

To learn more about NCSSLE and to access a range of resources that address school climate and conditions for learning as well as human trafficking, we encourage you to visit our website. To give you a sense of what the website looks like and what it includes, here we share some of our most popular products on the left and an image of our homepage on the right. We also share the latest resources and events coming out from the field via social media. So please do follow us and please note that all the materials that you will see today, including the slides, reference resources, an archived version of the recording will be available on the event webpage within this website. Actually, the slides and the speaker bios are already there.

All right. We are excited to hear from our speakers today who will be sharing interesting data and perspectives on boys and male identifying students. After

this introduction, we will start with a presentation that highlights data and strategies. Then we will engage in two panel discussions. After a quick wrap up, we will spend 10 to 15 minutes in a live Q&A for those who are able to stay on. And please remember to post your questions into the Q&A feature within Zoom to be able to share those with us so that we can ask them later. To round out our introduction, let's take a few minutes for a welcome from the U.S. Department of Education so we can hear about their work on addressing human trafficking. Joining us today from the department is Ms. Carlette KyserPegram. Carlette is an education program specialist in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education within the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. Carlette.

Carlette KyserPegram: Thank you Greta, and welcome to everyone. On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, I want to extend a sincere appreciation to all of you for joining today's webinar. As a part of our continued Human Trafficking webinar series, today we are focusing on a population that is often overlooked when working to identify and address human trafficking, and that is boys, young men, and male identifying youth. In this webinar, we intend to explore how and why that is and how methods of supporting males can differ from females. We will start with researchers who will present data dispelling the myth that the exploitation of children is a problem that only affects girls and young women, as well as data showing that boys and male identifying youth are in fact frequently exploited and trafficked. Then we'll transition to two panel discussions to better understand the experiences of male and male identifying youth who have experienced human trafficking, featuring experts with lived experiences and educators working directly with youth in school anti-trafficking programs.

I hope that you'll find the content helpful in your continued efforts to build a safe, supportive learning environment for every student, including those who have been impacted by human trafficking or who are at risk of being trafficked. Next slide. As you may know, the U.S. Department of Education is committed to addressing human trafficking. We have developed several resources that we believe can help you recognize and address human trafficking in your schools. I'll mention a few of them, and for those of you who have joined us in the past, please consider this a helpful reminder. First, with the support of NCSSLE, we produce this webinar series addressing human trafficking. These webinars range in focus from understanding the signs that a young person may be experiencing trafficking to how to intervene when you suspect trafficking, and how to support students who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking or who have been identified as having been trafficked.

All of these webinars are archived, including the recordings, slides, and related resources, and are listed on the webpage that should be appearing in the chat box. You can visit the series webpage to get information on future human trafficking webinars too. Second, we have produced three critical guides that are related to human trafficking. These documents include, number one, A Human Trafficking in America's Schools: What schools can do to Prevent, Respond, and Help Students to Recover from Human Trafficking. Two, a document titled, Addressing the Growing Problem of Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors through PBIS. And three, a document entitled, How Schools Can Combat Human Trafficking and Partnership with People With Lived Experiences. All

three of these resources touch on what to do generally and what to generally look out for when you suspect that a young person has been involved or may be involved in human trafficking.

And finally, we produced the Human Trafficking in America's School Staff Development Series as a compliment to the resource that I mentioned earlier, Human Trafficking in Schools Guide. It is comprised of three brief online videos with subject matter experts, including those with lived experiences in trafficking, sharing information you need to know and discussion questions with individual staff and teams or staff that can explore afterwards, along with posters and social media and website graphics to reiterate key messages. All of these resources that I mentioned are rooted in the latest research and best practice information available while drawing on the wisdom of individuals with lived experience and trafficking prevention advocators.

And they can all be found on a dedicated human trafficking webpage at the U.S. Department of Education's website. With that said, I want to thank you again for joining us today. The entire team here at the Department of Education recognizes the important work that you are undertaken to create a safe, supportive environment for all students, including those that have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. We hope this webinar provides the information and strategies you will need to understand, recognize, and respond to students being trafficked. Thanks again.

Greta Colombi: Thanks so much, Carlette, and thank you so much for sharing those great resources. There are increasingly more human trafficking resources available, but there aren't as many that focus on the school perspective, so we really do hope you find them useful. So with that framing, I would like to now introduce David Perry and Caroline Greig, both from the WestCoast Children's Clinic who will share helpful human trafficking data on boys and male identifying students and strategies educators can use to help recognize and address human trafficking for this particular population. You can please visit the event webpage to view their full bios and that link is now being posted in the chat. So with that, David.

David Perry: Great. Thank you so much for having us. We really appreciate the invitation to come speak with you all today and for the opportunity to present our findings. So again, my name is David Perry, I'm a researcher at WestCoast Children's Clinic and I'm here with Caroline Greig, our anti-trafficking initiatives project director, and we are here to talk about our exploitation and gender research report. So many child serving agencies across the country like child welfare, already starting to look for signs of exploitation in the most vulnerable populations of youth. And yet we do not know how many exploited youth who are not involved in those systems remain unidentified, and that's where folks in the education system can step in to help identify youth experiencing exploitation, but who would otherwise fall through the cracks. You as educators interact with youth more consistently and know them more intimately than providers in many other settings and are in a unique position to see these kids and help connect them to support.

So last year, WestCoast Children's Clinic's research team conducted a study that explored how and why commercial sexual exploitation of male transgender and gender-nonconforming youth is not being identified by professionals who work with children and youth. And we'll get into the main takeaways of that study. But first I want to give a brief overview of WestCoast Children's Clinic and our anti-trafficking work. WestCoast Children's Clinic is a nonprofit community psychology clinic located in Oakland, California, and we provide mental health services to children and youth across the San Francisco Bay Area. Our overarching mission is threefold, one to provide psychological services to vulnerable children, adolescents and their families regardless of their ability to pay. Two, to train the next generation of mental health professionals and three, to conduct research to inform clinical practice and public policy. And we also address child sex trafficking by providing specialized mental health services to sexually exploited youth through our C-Change program by creating and disseminating our Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool, also called the CSE-IT to screen for signs of trafficking in children and youth.

And by bolstering the protections and support systems for all survivors of commercial sexual exploitation through policy advocacy, community education, training, and of course research. So a couple of notes before we... on terminology before we begin. CSE stands for commercial sexual exploitation, and we often use the term, the acronym CSEC when talking about the commercial sexual exploitation of children. There's a more detailed legal definition of commercial sexual exploitation, but it basically boils down to the exchange of sex for anything of value if induced by forced fraud or coercion. Importantly, however, for anyone under the age of 18, forced fraud or coercion do not apply, which means that for kids, the exchange of sex for anything of value is by definition exploitation. Next, I want to point out that we use the terms trafficking and exploitation interchangeably when talking about CSEC.

And for the purposes of this presentation, we use the term providers to mean any professional who works with children or youth and who may be in a position to observe signs of trafficking. So this could mean social workers, educators, counselors, and even front facing administrative staff. Regarding gender terms, when referring to boys, we are talking about male children and youth whose gender identity matches their sex at birth. Gender-nonconforming youth are kids whose appearance or behavior do not conform to traditional gender roles and trans youth are kids whose gender identity does not match their sex at birth. I want to note that we combine trans and gender-nonconforming youth for the purposes of our study and for this presentation. So I use the term trans youth to refer to both populations, but we do want to acknowledge that their experiences as survivors should not be considered identical.

Okay, so back to the current study. I want to begin by highlighting the myth that spurred our research efforts and that is that the commercial sexual exploitation of children is primarily or exclusively a problem that affects cisgender girls and young women. So for this presentation, I did a couple of Google searches related to the terms child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. And here are the kinds of images I came across, which as you can see

are all of girls. Now, I did occasionally find images of boys and trans youth in these searches, but they were always in group shots with other kids and never in solo pictures like these. So this is just an illustration to make a point, but I hope that it conveys how much of a focus there is on female populations within anti-trafficking work. Of course, you may be thinking and understandably, that perhaps girls are more likely to be exploited and that may be girls do make up the large majority of exploited youth.

However, the existing evidence does not necessarily back that up. First, there is no accurate count of overall prevalence when it comes to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. And this is important because without these data, any claim that girls are more likely to be exploited or make up, the vast majority of exploited youth is mostly based on conjecture. Second, there are studies that suggest at least within certain populations like homeless youth, that the numbers of exploited girls and boys are equivalent. And finally, though there is a much smaller population of trans youth, research suggests that they are exploited at much higher rates than their cisgender peers. Citations for all of these studies, by the way, can be found in our research report, which is linked in the event webpage, and I think it will also be linked in the chat at the end of this presentation.

So earlier I mentioned WestCoast's exploitation screening tool, the CSE-IT, it's used fairly widely in 26 states across over 300 agencies and organizations. And though we do work with some education partners who use our tool, most of our screening data come from child welfare, juvenile probation, and community-based organizations that work with vulnerable youth populations. As of June, the CSE-IT data included over 280,000 screenings of nearly 197,000 youth. So with all these data, what did the CSE-IT screenings show with regard to exploitation and gender?

Well, there are two important data points related to our project, both of which back up the existing research. The first is that of all the youth who have a clear concern score on the CSE-IT meaning a high likelihood of exploitation, 15.4% of them are boys. Now this shows that boys are in fact exploited and though 15% is a significant proportion of exploited youth, we believe that this is still an under count. Second, the rate of exploitation among trans youth using CSE-IT data is 17%, which suggests that one out of every six trans youth who were screened are being exploited, providing supporting evidence of the disproportionately high rates of exploitation among this population.

Which brings us back to this central myth. I've just provided evidence that significant proportions of boys and trans youth are exploited, which contradicts this widely held belief. So we have to ask ourselves, what are the consequences of not believing that boys and trans youth are experiencing this type of abuse? Well, the most obvious outcome is that it leads to exploited boys and trans youth not being looked for by people who work with kids. And this means that their abuse is prolonged and may never even be identified. On the provider side, this lack of identification leads to the mistaken belief that there's no need or demand for male and trans-specific CSEC services, which leads to these types of services being underfunded or not even existing. So even if they are identified,

there may not be anywhere for these exploited youth to go to get the help that they need.

And finally, without identification through active accurate screening, the data that are then used to make policy decisions will also not reflect these use, which continues the cycle of invisibility and neglect by the systems that are supposed to protect them. So male and trans youth are being exploited, but they are not being identified. What then are the specific barriers to identification they face? But we sought to find out through the next part of our study.

So last year we conducted focus groups and interviews with over 34 survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and providers who work with exploited male and trans youth. Participants included individuals from many gender identities throughout the United States and parts of the UK and from a wide range of professions including children's mental health, homeless direct service and advocacy, the justice system and social work. And this part of the study resulted in three key findings.

First, our participants noted that by and large, the signs of trafficking are universal across gender identity. Essentially what this means is that when you're looking for exploitation in kids, there don't seem to be major differences in what it looks like among girls, boys, trans youth, and so on. Now, to clarify what we're talking about is whether there are any signs that trafficking may be happening and not what makes a youth more or less vulnerable to trafficking, nor how a young person experiences the trauma of trafficking because those things can be different for girls, boys, and trans youth. But when we're talking about trafficking indicators such as frequent running away, homelessness, unexplained cash or goods, multiple sexually transmitted infections and signs of current trauma, they should all raise red flags no matter what the youth's gender identity is. So this finding suggests that there are not drastically different indicators for exploitation among youth of different gender identities.

Which leads to our next finding, which is that while the primary signs of trafficking seem to be universal across gender identity, the perception of what trafficking looks like is not. So even folks who have CSEC training and have identified signs of trafficking in girls, they tend to miss these same signs in boys and trans youth. So for instance, providers may not consider boys or trans youth who experience survival sex, which is the exchange of sex for anything of value to help them meet their basic needs to be exploitation. For these youth, the exploitation that they experience is interpreted as being a choice that they make to make money or to experiment with their sexuality when in reality this is a very clear red flag for an exploitative situation at best and for any youth under 18 meets the legal definition of exploitation. Now, to be sure, female youth who have experienced survival sex can face the same type of skepticism, but providers tend to have a more protective and paternal response when it comes to girls.

Another example is how exploitation related trauma can manifest or be perceived differently based on gender. So for example, say there's a student who seems angry and is acting out, will that student be seen or treated

differently if they're a boy or if they're a girl? Based on the results of our study, the answer may be yes. The behavior of exploited boys may be attributed more to character where the youth is labeled as aggressive or violent or mental health, such as a diagnosis of ADHD rather than as a potential sign that they're experiencing trauma or abuse. Which leads us to our third key finding about why providers might see signs of trafficking, including which youth are and are not trafficked through a gendered lens.

So we live within a society that reinforces culturally ingrained stereotypes and prejudices about gender identity. These biases color the way we as professionals who work with children approach the possibility of exploitation in the kids we serve and shapes the policies decision makers put into place to protect them. From our conversations with survivors and providers, two specific barriers to identification and care came to light.

The first is the idea that boys simply cannot be exploited. This belief stems from the perception that men and boys are never victims, especially when it comes to sex crimes. Instead, male youth are primarily seen as potential exploiters rather than as survivors of trafficking. Second, trans youth face outright prejudice and discrimination, period. Even ignoring individual level prejudices that some people may hold towards trans youth. It is very apparent, especially right now, the discrimination and act of hostility faced by many trans youth across the country from the various systems that are supposed to protect them. There are a variety of anti-trans state laws that have or are in the process of being passed whose ultimate outcome is basically to deny a youth's trans identity. How then are exploited trans youth in those states going to trust any providers in any child serving system if those providers cannot legally see them for who they are?

Unfortunately, these biases are baked into our cultural norms as well as our child serving systems. So we have to take an active approach in combating them if we want to help these kids. So those were the three main takeaways from our study. Next, based on these findings, we'll talk about the ways educators can help identify and support these kids.

Caroline Greig: We have seven suggestions for what educators can do. We've included recommendations from the study and expanded on them to connect directly to education settings. And a quick thank you to our partner organizations that offered insight into this. I'm going to talk about each of these in detail. First, it's important to acknowledge that boys, trans and gender-nonconforming youth can and are currently being exploited. So we need to call this out directly and make it part of the CSEC narrative. This also includes sharing knowledge, informing your peers or leadership, be that in staff meetings, department meetings, one-on-one settings.

Our next suggestion is to provide training that incorporates information on all these genders. So, we suggest that training be updated specifically to address myths about exploitation and gender. So, including a section that talks about boys, trans, gender-nonconforming youth. Another suggestion is including youth as different gender identities into examples in the training. This really helps emphasize and normalize that trans, boys, gender-nonconforming youth are

exploited to. If you're working with an outside organization to bring in that training, definitely ask them directly how they're going to address gender. And specifically for those populations, some may not have it incorporated, so it might be up to you to ask them to add it. And we would also say include all staff in these trainings. Some staff may observe things that others may not. That includes the secretary overhearing a conversation in the main office versus a classroom teacher who can see changes over time.

And just a quick note that there are statewide policies that vary around requiring training for education staff. Some states do require it and offer funding opportunities. Others don't require it or don't offer funding. So, we definitely recommend looking up your state's policies. And similarly, we recommend education for youth and caregivers on CSEC content that specifically addresses gender and these myths. Again, policy can vary by state around providing this education versus requirements and funding opportunities. But there's definitely a movement toward this prevention work targeting youth and caregivers.

And this can be through conversation. Can also be more formal through curriculums that work on CSEC and gender, be that in workshops or PTA meetings you hold for families. Thinking about youth, is it incorporated into your health curriculum or is there maybe online content or subscriptions that can be included? There definitely are a number of community-based organizations that have created amazing curriculums, that can come to your schools or even potentially you can send referrals for youth. West Coast is even working on actually finalizing an education focused for youth training. A really clear way to identify trafficking for all genders is having a screening tool.

We have a number of partners that are school settings that are using our tool, the CSE-IT. When you're looking for a screening tool, because there are a number of them out there, we have a few recommendations. One is that it should be validated. You want to know that it's effective, that it won't over or under identify youth. That's just an important piece in knowing that you're using a tool that's going to be worth it. Next would be thinking to make sure that it's trauma informed. We highly advise that it is not an interview and does not require disclosure of exploitation from the youth. We don't want to re-traumatize a youth by pushing for personal and sensitive information. It also could be really uncomfortable for a staff to have to press for those questions.

And a third key component would be tracking your data. So, the ability to track outcomes and have some quantitative data to be able to use. As educators, you know that data informs. It determines interventions and services within your system. The same is true with screening data. You can see prevalence, you can highlight cis-male, trans-populations, gender-nonconforming. It can also help you think about what you need to incorporate in your own school communities or help demonstrate a need for services and for funding. And along those same lines, we know that our partners that are most successful have clear protocols and next steps in place for staff to support them with identification and even accessing services for youth who are vulnerable to exploitation.

So, in thinking about protocols, one piece to keep in mind is having a defined population. So, David talked earlier about the role of gender and bias in our society. If we depend on a provider to decide when screening happens, purely based on suspicion, bias is more likely to creep in and you are less likely to identify male and trans youth. So, we suggest a defined population, thinking about an age range, 10 and up or another age range that makes sense for your education or your community. And then thinking about a group, be that your tier two or tier three populations, maybe all youth on school social workers' caseloads. And those youth could be screened consistently, in addition to any youth that staff refer for specific concerns.

Next would be thinking about specific staff that are going to be responsible, either for screening and, or supporting with next steps for staff that identify youth and for the youth. We suggest that that staff person can also do outreach within the school, within the district to help make sure they're known and folks know to access them. And then, of course, when does screening happen and how often? What's the accountability around that? Is it once or twice a year? Is it in a team setting? Is it independently? After screening, you'll get an outcome. So, depending on the tool you choose, that outcome is going to look different for us and our tool, the CSE-IT. It's possible or clear concern that then triggers a next step.

So, next steps that could be defined. The first, of course, is reporting to child welfare. As a mandated reporter, you're going to need to call if there's a suspicion of commercial sexual exploitation. It is child abuse. You can use your screening tool to help with that call. We do know that most often there isn't disclosure of exploitation from that youth. So, having some of those direct things to refer to can be really useful when you're having that conversation. There may already be child welfare involvement. Talk to that caseworker if you know them and also make that call into the hotline. It can just trigger a separate process within the child welfare system if there's suspicion of exploitation.

And then other clear next steps can be related to referrals. Thinking internally, is there going to be a specific CSEC staff that folks should go to or is it just connecting with the school social worker? In terms of other referrals, we know that you are not child welfare and you are not caseworkers, but you could have a defined next step with a referral to a community-based organization that you partner with or that you know is doing this work. And next would be, of course, knowing your resources, very related. First, who's connected to that youth? So, much of what you do as educators is based on relationships. Who is that someone who can encourage that youth to access support? It's a really key part of this work.

And then thinking, who are the experts in your school, in your district that are knowledgeable about anti-trafficking work or has connections in the community, again, with those great organizations? And then, of course, those amazing organizations across the country are working with specialized mental health services, with prevention curriculums or advocacy, many which are survivor led and offer great experience and context. Some who focus on these LGBTQ populations, be that in-person services or virtual. If you already know of

these organizations, maybe that focus on that LGBTQ population. Ask them if they work specifically with CSEC youth. Is there any programming they have or do they know of an organization that does? So, access those resources.

We do know and want to note that it could be more challenging to identify cis-male specific services. I think we typically see programs that get funding just for girls or the LGBT community. But ask, they may have it in place or they may be able to accommodate it. And then, of course, educators should work to build these relationships with cis-male, trans and gender-nonconforming youth. The participants from our study had several suggestions to guide relationship building. We know, as David discussed earlier, boys and trans youth who are at high risk of trafficking face these additional hurdles of prejudice and stigma when trying to access care. This teaches them that they cannot count on systems and service providers. So, it is so crucial to take extra time to build trust and rapport with these youth.

This also includes offering non-judgmental support. These youth, as well as all youth that are trafficked, are placed in situations where they are trying to survive. The more we judge them for the exploitation they experience, the more we push them back into these exploitive situations. So, we need to remember that these are kids and they need help. And of course, this includes providing spaces that are safe and inclusive. Providing spaces where boys and trans youth feel safe and included is imperative. It's respecting how youth presents and identify, establishing potentially affinity groups using correct gender pronouns.

Even just creating gender inclusive materials is going to be welcoming and encouraging. And ultimately, you need to ask what space is available in my school or district to support youth of all gender identities. We know this is becoming ever more challenging in parts of the countries. If space cannot be created within your school community as a whole, then we hope that you can be that safe space for youth. School settings can play a really key role in early identification of commercial sexual exploitation of children, of any gender identity. You might be the first person to notice what's happening and that can change a child's life.

The earlier we make that happen, the better. Thank you so much for having us. Please reach out if you're looking for more information on training, on screening for exploitation, on our research. You can find us online at westcoastcc.org. We're also on social media. Again, a copy of the report is in the chat and it'll be linked on the event page. You can also feel free to email us. Thank you so much again. And we're really excited to hear from the panel.

Greta Colombi: Excellent. Thank you so very much, David and Caroline. You provided really interesting data and some really straightforward tips, and what folks can be doing to address commercial sexual exploitation of children. And when you talked, and I was hearing you talk about risk factors and the importance of the protocol and much, much more, and it just made me think about our Trafficking in America school guide that Carla had mentioned earlier. So, we're going to pop that into the chat as well. Within that, it gives details on lists of risk factors that

you can be looking for and examples, an example, protocol, et cetera. So, we hope that is helpful to you.

So, with this context, we are ready to transition to our panel discussions. And for the first panel, we will be shifting gears a bit as we hear a little bit more about labor trafficking and its relationship to boys, young men and male identified students. So, we will be talking with Jodi de la Peña, grant manager for human trafficking prevention, and Jose Garcia, Peps, the program manager for newcomer safety initiative. Both from Oakland Unified School District in California. As we get started, let's start with you, Peps. How are you seeing boys and young men being recruited and groomed, especially in regards to labor trafficking?

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Yeah. For a lot of the population that we work with, which is mainly newly migrated young people from Mexico and Central America, South America and the Caribbean, what's considered Latinx or Latino identified young people. We are seeing a lot of the recruitment happening through social media, through community, like what's considered grassroots means, which is recruiting people where you're at, where there's food places. Or I even seen some cases of people putting fraudulent labor or work opportunities on small flyers, et cetera. Sadly, some of that happens within some of the detention centers, as well as just here in America on the state side.

Greta Colombi: And what are some of the specific risk factors that make some young men more vulnerable to human trafficking, especially as what you're seeing, what you just shared?

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Yeah. So, definitely, economics. It's the main determining factor. A lot of the young people that I personally work with are newly arrived to the country, and they don't have a way of legally and making a legitimate living, aside the fact that they're extremely young. And sometimes through their immigration journey, they are true adept. Whether the adept is legitimate or not, the young people don't know the difference. All they know is that there's a threat to themselves or their families back home. But that's one, the economic factors that push them into coerced or forced criminality, as well as it targets young people, young men of color. So, there's a lack of protective factors for young men of color, just because there is always society and culturally, there's always an assumption of culpability when it comes to young men.

So, there's always an assumption that if a kid is in exploitive situation and they're male identified, that it's their fault or they look for it or they like that lifestyle, et cetera. So, also, there's a difference between some of the cultural norms in different countries that don't translate to US labor laws, and even exploitation, and CSEC laws as it happens here stateside, where it's definitely ahead when it comes to protecting young people. So, a lot of these young people, they just themselves don't know. So, when you couple that with the perceptions of masculinity when it comes to young men, is that if you are in an exploitive situation, that you got to figure your way out of it.

There's gender expectations that you're supposed to just put up with it. On top of that, when it comes to young males, there's an assumption that you should be able to take care of yourself even if you're 10, 11, 12 years old, that you're supposed to be contributing something. So, that sets them up already. It primes them or ingrains into their psyche that they need to be working or working for something, otherwise they're useless or they're not going to be able to survive.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so much, Peps, because that really gives color to what David was sharing earlier. And thank you so much. So, what are some risk factors and red flags specific to newcomers, because I know you work directly with newcomer students?

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Yeah. So, some of the specific risk factors is that when young people... You might be working with middle schoolers or high schoolers, and again, economics sets them up for a lot of dangerous situations. Nobody that should be in middle school or high school, should be working packaging plants when they should be getting an education. So, that's one of the red flags. If they continue being tired and talking about working, so that's definitely an indicator that either they're being involved in some sort of survival economics activities, whether it's forced criminality, labor trafficking or sexual trafficking.

But also, the fact that a lot of the newcomers, when it comes to unaccompanied minors, even if they have sponsors or family who is living here when they come out of the detention centers, is that they might not have their working documents issued, which takes anywhere between a year and a half to two years, sometimes five years, depending on immigration and Department of Homeland Security backlogs. So, that basically sets them up to only work in underground economies to make a living, aside the fact that they might be underage. And that really opens the door for both CSEC and labor trafficking. A lot of the young people I work with started as labor trafficking and it escalated to CSEC. So, it's really important that when you see that young man that's tired, that's irritable, definitely doesn't have the basic necessities that you do a check on them. So, that's one of the main red flags that I see.

Greta Colombi: Thank you. And this is a question to both you and Jodi. What are gaps and resources for newcomers and how can we address those gaps?

Jose "Peps" Garcia: So, for gaps, one of the main things that I see is that there's very few programs that specifically work with young people that are newcomers. It's usually they're being told that there's already other groups or grassroots organizations that allegedly are working for them. So, instead of providing the infrastructure and the funding for newcomer-specific groups, is that they're told to just work with what's already existing. I apologize, this child's babysitter was stick today.

Greta Colombi: No worries.

Jose "Peps" Garcia: She'll be accompanying me. So, that's what makes it really hard. So, sometimes they give money to already non-working, very, I don't want to say mediocre, but programs that are already not performing. And then on top of that, they're

given extra funding to allegedly work with newcomers. And then we just don't see that. So, there's a disconnect. And then the other gap that I see is that educators, funders, grassroots organizations and community partners just don't have education in terms of the hardships that a lot of these young people face. So, they're not equipped culturally to serve them. So, then it's hard for them to address the needs for a population that they're not keeping track of. So, if they're not even on their radar, because these young people are in underground economies or they're already underserved, or they don't have a large community that's advocating for them, there's nobody that's looking out for them or it's not in their scope. They're not keeping an eye out for it.

Jodi de la Pena: Thanks, Peps. I want to talk a little bit about some of the ways to address those gaps. And some of this is similar to what David shared earlier, the importance of connection with students, that personal connection. We know that schools are sometimes the only place where students might build trust and might reach out for support, especially if they're experiencing exploitation by a family member. So, we need the schools to create those relationships, to go out of their way. And as Peps was also saying, going against the cultural and societal norms, creating a space where it's safe for especially our male students to ask for help and guidance. And this includes building our linguistic and our cultural capacity.

We have a lot of Spanish speakers, we have other indigenous languages here that it's harder to address. So, just building that personal connection and then connecting our students to resources. Because if they are in exploitative situations, due to financial reasons, due to legal reasons, we need them to know that they have other options. So, some of the ways that we engage with our students is to connect them with legal representation, whether that be immigration or around workers' rights, around youth workers' rights, around public benefits. And something that Peps and his team has been really creative in offering incentives or stipends to keep them engaged in school. So, that's our first thing, we connect.

The other way to address it is to educate and screen. And we've talked a lot about that already. Schools are a great place to educate. At OUSD, we receive funding from the Office on Trafficking in Persons to do human trafficking youth prevention education work. So, we are increasing the awareness of sex trafficking of our males, of labor trafficking across all of our youth, the vulnerabilities, especially in the needs of our newcomer students. And we do this by training staff, by working with our caregivers, by training our students, and also getting really creative on how we provide that education.

When we have a lot of newcomers who may not be literate in their own languages, don't speak Spanish, speak another language, we've had to come up with ways like audio scripts that don't rely on reading, that don't rely on the languages we're used to translating into in order to communicate. We've embedded trafficking into our health ed curriculum and we are required to talk about sex trafficking in health ed. We added labor trafficking, because we see a lot of the labor trafficking here, and the screening. I really appreciate West Coast. We actually looked at your validated tools and are using a couple of them. One is the Quick Youth Indicators for Trafficking. This is four quick

questions. It talks about both sex and labor trafficking. And the other one is the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool. Longer, 20 questions, asks about migration, asks about work situations. So, those are the two that we rely on.

With our students in particular, we're also talking about workers' rights presentations, bringing outside service providers to do that. We talk about the immigration relief that is available to them. Most of our staff, students, caregivers, don't know that there's such a thing as a trafficking visa. So, we educate on that. We connect them with resources with OTIP. And the other part of it is just expanding awareness and understanding of labor trafficking, as human trafficking with our partners. We hear a lot about CSEC at the city level, at the county level, at the state level. And really, labor trafficking is not part of the conversation oftentimes. So, bringing that part of the conversation in and expanding understanding of how our recent immigrants especially are particularly vulnerable, and need different services and resources. So, third thing, collaborate and allocate. We can't do this on our own. We need a lot of partners around us to address this, and so we look for the CBOs who are offering home-based or school-based tutoring or mentoring. We have a program called Soccer Without Borders. That's the way that a lot of our youth stay involved.

We also look for experts, and this is how I know Peps. He is an expert in working with these populations. He has the linguistic, the cultural capacity to provide these services, and he needs more funding, so we are looking for ways to provide funding for these services. As Peps mentioned earlier, a lot of times, the funding goes to the service providers who have been doing this work for a while. Maybe they speak Spanish, and if they do, that's considered linguistic and cultural ...

Greta Colombi: Oh.

Jodi de la Pena: Okay?

Greta Colombi: So sorry, but my audio blipped. Yeah, please finish up and then we can move to the next question.

Jodi de la Pena: Okay, so just working with the experts. There's also diversion programs with the DA's office. We have a lot of unaccompanied minors getting caught in San Francisco for drug trafficking. Turns out that it's actually forced criminality and labor trafficking. They're coming over to us and we're providing more supports and services.

And then the last piece I'd say is just to advocate. I think we really need to change the narrative around males, around trans, and around labor trafficking. What we have found is that the media often highlights the criminal activity without recognizing that this is labor trafficking, and does not highlight their experience as victims of crime. I've been very encouraged to see in the New York Times recently two articles this year that have been talking about child labor and exploitation, and that is changing the narrative. Policy changes, I think

we heard already, states have different policies. For us, sex trafficking is recognized as child abuse and neglect, labor trafficking is not, so advocating for those policies to change.

And then as Peps mentioned earlier, tracking the data. We don't know how many of our youth are vulnerable or are experiencing labor trafficking. We don't know where they're coming from, country of origin, immigration status, and so it makes it really hard to provide and design programs for them when we don't know how many we're serving.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so much. That was super helpful to hear both of your perspectives on thinking about gaps. Now as we close up this panel one, I have two questions for you that I'm hoping that we can go through relatively quickly. After doing this work for some time, what have been your key lessons learned?

Jodi de la Pena: For me, a lot of it is what I already shared, that we need a village response to human trafficking, and we need to provide equitable supports to all of our youth who are vulnerable to human trafficking, whether that's males, non-binary, trans, newcomers.

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Yeah, for me, it's that early intervention, it's always going to give you the most desirable result, so the earlier we can get to these young people and build those relationships, which takes months, years, the earlier we can get to addressing their issues, and just treating them as a case-by-case basis. Those would be my two main lessons that I would like to share.

Greta Colombi: I appreciate that. A case-by-case basis and really getting to know young people. Thank you so much, Peps. And what gives you hope as you continue this work? Both of you are clearly committed to the work you're doing and to the students you're serving. What gives you hope?

Jodi de la Pena: What gives me hope is that doing prevention education actually makes a difference for some of our students, that we are able to recognize red flags earlier, that we are able to intervene earlier if there is trafficking and exploitation. And we are able to connect them with resources such as Peps' organization or immigration support or support through OTIP.

Jose "Peps" Garcia: For myself, it's that just even being included in this conversations is what does give me hope, just because throughout the years of feeling invisible, not just myself as an advocate, but also the young people that we work with, I think that's given me hope that there's more people paying attention and that they're being humanized. That's the main point is that everything about their lives and what they've gone through, even their immigration journey, and even once they're stateside is dehumanizing to them in one way or another. By rehumanizing their experiences is what's going to allow us to put the resources, the time, and the people to address this epidemic, so I'm really grateful to be here.

Greta Colombi: Well, thank you so very much, Jodi and Peps. As many schools are welcoming newcomer students, I think your information and perspectives on labor trafficking and exploitation are especially helpful. So, after speaking with educators, let's turn to our next panel, and for this second panel, we will be hearing from two people with lived experience, Jesse Leon and Jerome Elam. Together, they will help you better understand the data you heard earlier and reflect on why the work shared by Caroline and David, as well as our Oakland speakers, is so, so critical, so let's start with Jesse.

Jesse Leon: Hi. Thank you for allowing me to be here today. Today is a dream of mine, especially having gone through some of the horrific experiences that I experienced while I was in junior high. Peps and Jodi, thank you for being here. It means a lot.

This was me at 11 years old. I'd love for you to think back about what you were doing when you were 11. What were your hopes? What were your dreams? I was a loving, nerdy, caring kid with welfare glasses and hair parted on the side, and my mom loved me, and I was extremely studious, loved getting lost in worlds in National Geographic magazines. And then one day at 11 years old, the picture on the right, on the left I'm 10, I got sent to a gift shop in the local neighborhood to buy water balloons by the kids in the neighborhood. We were wetting each other with the *manguera,* the water hose, and they put their money together and sent me to a gift shop, a local gift shop to buy water balloons. And the owner of the gift shop sexually abused me, and about a month later started trafficking me, and I hated who and what I was. And I blamed myself and I vowed to never let this little loving, nerdy kid ever out again.

And so I changed. I changed everything about me. From 14 to 15 years old, this is me, putting on a really hard facade externally, because I blamed myself. So, maybe if I was tougher and I knew how to fight, like maybe my brother did, if I looked like the other guys in the neighborhood, maybe this wouldn't have happened to me. And at 14, the authorities finally got involved. One day in junior high, I had a overwhelmingly incomprehensible reaction to a situation, which oftentimes occurs with our youth, especially BIPOC youth in low-income communities. And sadly, many of our youth experience these situations and these overwhelmingly incomprehensible reactions at the most inopportune times.

I happened to get in a fight and got handcuffed, and was threatened with going to juvenile hall. And the kid's mom wanted to press charges, and the kid was in the ICU. I begged for help. I told the police officer, the school police that was there, what was happening. He then called the school social worker, and for the next couple of hours, the school social worker, the principal, and the police officer are coming in and out of the office while I'm still handcuffed and covered in blood. They sent me home with a stack of papers to have my mom sign to put me into state programs for the victim compensation program. Now, I think it was called the Victim Witness Program at the time, and I was assigned a therapist.

From 14 to 18 years old, after the authorities got involved, and my perpetrators, the individuals that caused me sexual harm, disappeared. As I mentioned earlier, they were drugging me, so I was an addict at 14, and I turned to the commercial sex trade of the streets as a sexually exploited child. At 16, I ran away from San Diego. Ended up walking the streets of Santa Monica and Hollywood Boulevard, and at 18 years old, I ended up homeless, sleeping under a bush in a park, weighing 135 pounds. So, what did you need when you were 11 years old? What did you need when you were 14? And what did you need if you were an 18-year-old kid, 135 pounds, sleeping under a bush in a park, begging for help and not knowing where your life is going, and rejecting all the love that's being thrown your way from your mom, which became the biggest focal point of all my anger and frustrations?

At 18, I got clean and sober. I just celebrated 30 years in recovery. I got into community college, thanks to people in 12-Step meetings. It took me four years to complete my associate's degree. I got a full ride to UC Berkeley, graduated with a bachelor's degree from Berkeley as a community college transfer student. Got a full ride to Harvard. Right here is me graduating from Harvard Kennedy School of Government with a Master's in Public Policy because others inspired me to not give up.

But no child should have to maneuver the mental health system by themselves. And I was a kid. My therapist knew about my drug use. My therapist knew that I was going to these places where children were being sexually exploited and did nothing, never once agree to meet with my mom after my mom begged for family therapy sessions. Never once met with my mom when my mom was begging for help with my drug use, and my mom begging the church and the community for help and no one knew how to help. So, what did you need when you were 11 years old? What did you need when you were 14 or 18?

I needed access to culturally responsive, multilingual, gender-affirming, trauma-informed care from a BIPOC male perspective, and I would argue that this is still not available to this day. Since the publication of my memoir, I'm Not Broken, and No estoy roto, last year, and the release of my TED Talk titled Sex Trafficking: The Lost Boys, I've received numerous requests of people begging for help, people asking for information of where they can find services now as adults that are dealing with some of the traumas they experienced as a child, and the resources are limited. I'm doing the best I can, but I can't do it on my own.

But see, this is a dream of mine. When I told my mom that I would be speaking with educators to make sure that no other child experience the same horrors that I did, or that other families don't experience the same horrors that we did, she lights up with joy and says, "Wow, there is a light at the end of the tunnel." And so, my goal is that philanthropy steps up. I'm an expert. I work in the intersections of philanthropy and affordable housing. My bio is in the information of the panel. My dream is to get philanthropy engaged and create public-private philanthropic partnerships to address the issues of BIPOC men and boys and two-spirit LGBTQ+ individuals so that no other child experience these same issues that I did.

For too long, when someone is reaching out for help, and say you have Kaiser, it takes sometimes three months to get an appointment with a therapist. And therapy is like dating. If you start asking if they have experience with CSEC, with trauma-informed care, most of the time, the response is "No." No one should have to wait three months for an appointment and then another month for a follow-up. So, we need greater resources.

And what can we do for our students? Listen. The school social worker, the police officer, and the principal ... Well, the police officer was the only one that seemed to be a support and he was a Latino, but he dropped me off at home by myself. No school social worker, no school psychologist, no principal helped me explain to my mom, who went to the third grade in Mexico, that I was being sexually abused out of a gift shop. And in Spanish, we don't have a word for molest. Molest in Spanish means *molestar* means to bother. So, this little child is left alone to help explain to his mom that she had to sign these papers to get me some help for my anger.

So, if I could have some kind of impact and some kind of change to be implemented, this is my dream to be here today. Please check out my TED Talk, Jesse Leon. Please follow me, or reach out to me at JesseLeonAuthor@gmail.com. I'm here as a resource and happy to help. Thank you for allowing me to be here today.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so very much, Jesse, for your heartfelt sharing, and just provides a layer of understanding. And I think we think of all of the 11-year-old children out there, and other young children who are vulnerable, and how critical it is for us to jump and to help. And I really appreciate your message and your sharing.

We are going to continue and we're going to be having a discussion now with Jerome Elam, and thank you so much, Jerome, for joining us. We're just going to engage in discussion and continue exploring how we can center trafficking and thinking about trafficking as it relates to boys, young men, and male-identified young people. You had mentioned how you had been trafficked while attending elementary and middle school. What were the signs that people around you, including teachers, missed?

Jerome Elam: Thank you for that question, Greta. I mean, there were so many signs. I was trafficked from age five to age 12 by one of my mom's boyfriends, and I was groomed by him over a long period of time. I describe grooming as psychological quicksand. And one point I always try to make is that they only groom the child, they groom the adults around the child, so that child is never believed when they begin to disclose.

So I'm a five-year-old. I'm being trafficked while I'm in school. And one of the things about being trafficked is that you're malnourished, because the traffickers aren't going to spend money on feeding you. Your clothes are worn and tattered with holes in them. You act out in different ways. You can either be people pleasing, or you can basically be angry and lash out, and I was angry and I lashed out, so I got in trouble constantly. And then to have sexual knowledge above your age. I mean, to discuss things that you shouldn't know about as a

five or 10 or 12 year old, that is definitely a sign. And one of the things that happened to me, unfortunately, when I was trafficked is that I was quite frequently choked unconscious by the people who would buy my services. So, I would come to school with finger marks around my neck and I would button up my collar, and so no one really knew what to look for.

Now, one of the baselines that we use today is what we call ACEs, adverse childhood experiences. And unfortunately, when I took that particular diagnostic tool, I maxed out at 10. What that looks at is whether there is alcoholism, violence, abuse in the home, so I had all these factors. My mother was an alcoholic, pregnant at 17, lived her life at the bottom of a bottle. So, when someone came along and gave me a little bit of attention, because as a child, since there was no father present in my life, I like to say that I was desperate for affection, like a drowning man's desperate for oxygen. So, this predator came in and showered my mom with gifts, took me to sporting events, and basically got control of me, and he did this by threatening my mother's life.

Now, those of us that come from dysfunctional settings understand that it doesn't matter how big a train wreck your parents are, that as a child, you would do anything to protect them. So, he secured my silence by threatening my mother. I would be pulled out after school and be trafficked. I would be pulled out of school and trafficked on weekends and the holidays. The signs were really there, but the awareness wasn't.

And I really want to reiterate something, that there was one teacher in my life who was very kind to me, and that made the world of difference. Because I'm very fortunate in that I spent 25 years with a trauma therapist trained by Masters and Johnson to work through what happened to me. And we sat there for so many weeks and so many months, so many years, and one of the questions that I asked quite frequently was, "Why am I here, and so many others aren't?" We came down to the solution that that teacher, that one person, had shown me unconditional love, and given me that tether that kept me bound to this world, and gave me that will to live.

So I think one of the things that we all need to talk about is how teachers need to be supported financially by the community, because that teacher can save so many lives. They can impact the child and help them have that understanding that they matter. And so we need to do more to help teachers so they can devote that time that a child needs. I always say that a smile can go a long way. And we need to also look at bus drivers, janitors, front office people, everybody, learn the signs and recognize.

I was invisible in the eyes of all these people, and during the seven years I was trafficked, I tried to tell a total of 10 people, including an ER doctor, and no one believed me, because no one would consider that a boy was being trafficked. And I begged. So please, there is research that says that a child has to tell an average of nine adults they're being trafficked or abused. Please, let's get that number down to one, because if we can just listen to a child.

And one of the things that we do, which is incredibly effective, is we go into schools and talk about healthy relationships, because when you show children what love really should be, you get so many kids disclosing that things are happening to them. And I had this happen globally around the world, so we need to really be aware. But again, I think the number one tool that we have is our gut, so when you feel something's wrong, dig. I got out of being trafficked because I ended up in the emergency room, and one nurse fought for me, and I love nurses. She fought for me tooth and nail to get me the help I needed, and I'm here today because of her, and I thank God for her every day.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so much, Jerome. We heard a lot about what people can be seeing and how trafficking can be recognized. What steps do you think should be taken once a child has been identified as a victim? What can schools do, do you think?

Jerome Elam: It's a great question, and I want to go back to ... And real quickly, perhaps, Jesse, you're such heroes, god bless you. Thank God for you, your courage in speaking. But I want to go back to something that they were hitting on, and that's being culturally sensitive, because one of the things that we've seen, in the US, we have so many people coming into this country, is that we need to make sure that when we encounter someone who is a potential victim of trafficking, that we have a translator that can come in and help them understand if they don't have a full grasp of the language.

Because I know some of my friends who work at the Mayo Clinic, and there's a large influx of Somali refugees who were being trafficked in that particular state. Well, they made the mistake of having a young woman come in, a Somali woman, who was a victim of human trafficking, and the translator was unfortunately an hour and a half away. So, they asked the mother to come in, and as soon as the mother walked in, it was all done. I mean, the daughter was not going to say a word. So, let's be culturally sensitive.

And I want to say that having worked around the world, I think there's so many commonalities to victims and their trauma. I think that what I'd like to say is that it doesn't matter where we live, our hearts still feel pain in the same way. It doesn't matter where we live geographically. So we really need to make sure that we have those tools in place. We notify law enforcement, we notify child welfare. And one of the things that I've seen in the past is, I've spoken with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children several times, and there are very rare occurrences when a child is recognized as victim of human trafficking, that they try to say that there is a waiting period, and there's not. And so immediately, if law enforcement doesn't respond immediately to a child missing or being trafficked, call the National Center for Missing Exploited Children and they'll get involved and help facilitate getting that child help. So we need to reach out to our resources. The school nurse, the school counselor, mental health professionals. I want to say very quickly that the research has bore out that when it comes to male victims of human trafficking, there has been success in having a woman be the first point of contact.

Because one of the things that we find is that if you look at male victims of trafficking, the people that are trafficking you, that are beating you, torturing

you, are all males. And so when a woman becomes involved, males are more likely to disclose in that instance. And also, I will say for my own experience, I would not be here if it wasn't for a female survivor who taught me that I could be a man. I could be powerless and a victim and vulnerable and still be a man. I am so grateful for her changing my life in that way because masculinity is the block, is what keeps us from talking about being victims of trafficking. If we can just share that stereotype, and we're doing it here today with Jesse, Peps, and myself, that men can be victims, can be vulnerable and that we can talk about these things and we can have full lives and find happiness.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so much, Jerome. We're going to go, I saw some questions coming through the Q and A, and this is a question that we get a lot. We've done a webinar on forced criminality, we've done a webinar on familial trafficking. We just had a webinar on supporting newcomers. And one of the questions that we hear a lot, and I would love to hear from both Jerome and Jesse for this, is how do you ask a child that they're being abused or trafficked without causing them trauma or fear? Because you have a whole audience of people who are wanting to help kids. How can they engage in that discussion? So there's the relationship building, and how do you talk about it when you have that relationship?

Jerome Elam: That's such a great question, and I want people to know that when you work with victims human trafficking, you cannot go to a victim and say, "Are you being trafficked?" They have no clue what you're talking about. So we have to learn to phrase our questions in a way that are receptive to the victims and talk about, do you feel safe? Are you being hurt? Are you being forced to do things that you don't want to do? Are you afraid? What are you afraid of? And so, one of the things I also say is important when you're dealing with victims of human trafficking is to form a bridge. You really have to look at a victim of human trafficking and find a part of you and them and connect with that part because you want to make sure that we're reinforcing the humanity and talk about things.

And the example I give is that one of my friends works in vice and works with victims. So what she does is she finds out what type of music a victim likes and goes out and vices every album by the artist so she connects on that level. So I think as you mentioned earlier, making that bridge, finding that connection, but also sharing your own vulnerability. Be the first, open that door up and say, you know what? I had an alcoholic father who used to beat me, or being that vulnerable person so they take that lead. And especially with male victims, if you are the one to go ahead and open that door, they will tend to follow.

Greta Colombi: Thank you so much, Jerome. And Jesse, how about from your perspective?

Jesse Leon: Oh wow. So for me, it's very different. I did not disclose, in essence as a child, I got in a fight. And in my book, I go into it into detail, but now that I think about it, the police officer, as he had me handcuffed, he knew me. He had that rapport with most of the Latinos. He was a Latino police officer. And his response, his questions to me were, "What's going on? This isn't like you. What's happening?" It wasn't, "What's wrong with you? Why are you doing this?" And when he told me that I hurt the kid so bad in the fight and that I was potentially going to face

some jail time, I started crying. Not all hurt people hurt people. Some of us become protectors, and I was protecting a friend of mine who was being bullied, and that's why the fight occurred.

So when I started crying and said "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt anybody, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," over and over again. And then I blurted it out, I just blurted it out. All I kept seeing were the faces of the many men that I'm being forced to have sex with. And that was all it took. The hard part about that, he didn't know how to deal with my response. The social worker that was brought in was questioning me as if I was being interrogated. Using words like the alleged incident. You could be lying so that you don't get in trouble. How do we make sure this is real? Was it a family member or your parents or an uncle? And so I immediately got angry and I lashed out like, what do you mean my family? We may be poor, but this doesn't occur in my family. What are you talking about? Are you making assumptions because I come from a poor immigrant Latino family? So the questions are really important, but allowing individuals to pause.

If I throw something out at you, Greta, and your response, even the smallest reaction of shock, disgust, not knowing how to respond, tears. If you're not holding it together, it immediately makes me shut down. So why should I keep going on? And so one last thing. I'm considered a success by the school district, by the state, by the department. They found me therapy, and they got me into the victim witness program. I'm a rescue. No, I wasn't. There was no follow through. There were no check-ins. No one at the state, the local, the district level reached out to me or my mom to say, "Are you getting the support that you need? What can we do? Can we have follow-up meetings with you once every week, once every two weeks, once a month?" So from 14 to 18 years old, I fell through the cracks and that's not okay. I found my support system luckily in recovery and by a few people in the school district that did care that showed me that they cared enough for me to be able to succeed in school.

Greta Colombi: So powerful. And it's really hard to be able to transition from here. I just really am so grateful to you for you being here today, for you sharing your thoughts and your experiences to help educators really better understand what to look for and how important it is to take action, and thoughts about how you can take action. And I think that your sharing, I think will really, I'm anticipating that it's really resonating with folks, and I just am so grateful that you are here.

As we shared earlier, we are now going to wrap up the content portion of the webinar, but please stay tight. We will be doing a Q and A for the balance of the time until 4:30 eastern time. As we close the content portion of this webinar, we hope that you have identified some strategies you can use to identify and address when boys and male identifying students and young men have been trafficked. We want to thank from the bottom of our hearts, our speakers and panelists for generously sharing their thoughts and information with us today. And we also want to thank you, our audience participants for attending the webinar and your active participation in the Q and A and your emoticons. It really takes all of us to ensure that all students have the ability to live free from trafficking and to develop to their optimal potential. Your [inaudible 01:20:43]

interactions with students and young people every day move us closer to that goal. So thank you for being here today.

We have several webinars coming up over the next several months. Our next webinar in the human trafficking webinars series, which will be expanded to include labor exploitation, is scheduled for November, and it will be specifically talking about labor exploitation. And as you can see, we also have a variety of other webinars coming out through our lessons from the field webinar series, and we hope that we will see you there. Please keep an eye on your email for announcements with registration.

All webinars from the human trafficking and lessons from the field webinar series may be accessed from our website, and we're going to pop those, we just popped those links in there so you can find those other webinars. Each of our human trafficking webinars always includes those with lived experience because we really find it is very, very important and valuable so you can hear from others and more. As we conclude today's webinar, you will be directed to a short feedback form. Additionally, this link will be posted in the chat box and it will be included in the Zoom follow-up email. I believe Sarah has already been popping into the chat box for you.

The archived recording will be up tomorrow, so please look out for that. And we are now going to jump to our Q and A. And we received so many questions, so I'm going to start with Peps. Somebody had asked, they want to be aware of any signs that could flag trafficking activity going on, and so we just heard from Jerome and Jesse talking about it. And would you mind just telling us a little bit more, especially from the labor trafficking perspective?

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Sure. Some of the more obvious signs, like lack of sleep, irritability, when they start looking like they're losing weight. And that's the more visible ones, but there's also the opposite, when they start wearing more expensive clothes or they're constantly talking about they cannot make obligatory stuff. Like, hey, I cannot make this school on Wednesdays because I have to work. And it's like, well, why do you have to work in the middle of the week during school hours, et cetera? Or kids that mentioned staying up all night working. It's a little bit harder for kids from certain countries that have home businesses like liquor stores, et cetera, nail salons and whatnot because there's an obligation or expectations that they "contribute" to the family business. But we've seen cases where that starts in elementary, middle school. I myself was part of that when I was in middle school, and I didn't know that that was labor trafficking until I started doing this work. What I mean because it's so culturally ingrained for some populations. But those would be some of the more obvious ones.

Greta Colombi: We have a question for Jerome. How do you feel as though the experiences of boys being trafficked compare to those we see of female survivors, or those who've experienced it?

Jerome Elam: I think there are many similarities, but I think that for males, again, with masculinity becomes a prison for male victims of human trafficking. And you find it difficult to talk about what's happening to you, and a lot of times, you'll

try and just dismiss it as having some volition in what's happening to you, which you totally don't. So I think for men, you tend to carry that with you, and we definitely see that, for instance, in the research that rates of suicide among male victims of abuse is 14 times higher.

They have 38 times the rate of drug abuse, 53% more likely to be incarcerated, and 30% will likely be arrested for a violent crime as an adult. So we definitely manifest our trauma in a lot of ways, typically through physical violence. And so it's a lot harder to spot those signs. But again, through this webinar, other trainings, we begin to open our eyes and look at this with a whole new lens of being able to recognize that men are victims too. But again, it's all about looking at what your gut's telling you and looking at behaviors. If someone's changing dramatically in the way they act in school, they're not eating well. For me, I was picked up by different people after school and trafficked, so there are definitely signs to look for, but commonalities among males and females, but differences in males as well.

Greta Colombi: Thank you.

Jesse Leon: For me, the signs were just very visible, very clear. No one did anything. From 11 to 14 years old, that's 12, 13, 14. So seventh grade I was still a nerd, and I would get a pass to leave class. I'd come back smelling like weed, I'd come back smelling like alcohol. I would get a bottle of Bacardi, put it in a 7/11 cup with Coke, and I would drink that throughout the school day. I'd spend more time in the nurse's office hiding out, begging to be sent home, faking that I was sick, warming up thermometers so that they would send me home.

No one called my mom. No one did any type of home visits. No one did any type of why is he ditching? Why is he leaving school? Most of my commercial sexual exploitation on the streets was me ditching school. I'd show up, hang out with the friends, get high, leave for years. And no one would... So I'm not sure. Well, yeah, I am sure. Race, class, gender, sexuality, all come into play. I was a Latino kid that was perpetuating the stereotype of an inner city wannabe cholo. So no one cared to even ask questions or step up. I was the problem.

Greta Colombi: Thank you for sharing. So we've been talking, David. The next question is for you. Oh, I'm sorry. Pep, did you want to... yeah, sure.

Jose "Peps" Garcia: Yeah. I just wanted to add something real quick just for the whole audience, is that when it comes to the signs and red flags or something, that if you're not a professional and that is your expertise, that you always consult with someone because something that could be very... with young people can make or break. The chances of early intervention is make an assumption. So a kid might be tired, a kid might be wearing raggedy clothes, a kid might be missing a lot of school, but don't assume that you know it's CSEC or sexual or labor trafficking.

Always consult with somebody and come from a place of care. Regardless of how many red flags you see, always come from a place of care. And it's about curiosity, like asking questions and not putting your biases onto that young

person. So I just wanted to put that out there while we were discussing the red flags because I know that's one of the more challenging things that people encounter, especially if they don't have regulation with young people. If they make an assumption then that kid's going to... You lost that kid. So I just wanted to put that real quick, so I apologize.

Greta Colombi: No need to apologize. And I think it was such a valuable addition, Peps, because there are a lot of folks that are trying to figure out what do you look for and you want to be careful as you are looking and as you are seeing potential red flags to really come from that place. I really appreciate it, come from that place of care to figure out and understand what is happening. So if it is trafficking, then you make the connection. If it is domestic violence, then you have a different kind of response for that, but all coming from a point of care.

So I really appreciate that addition. I'm going to just ask one more question. And if we could do a speed response, and this can be for anybody who would like, I just saw a question come in, especially with today's times, things are different. With the increase of students becoming virtual learners, what do online teachers need to look for, or what would you think? What would you be listening for? How might it be different? And this might be also what you see in social media.

Jesse Leon: That is a tough one. Go ahead, Jerome.

Jerome Elam: Typically, if you're talking about social media, if you see sexually explicit profiles where these kids are changing, again, like we're saying, they're dramatically changing their behavior. They're more sexually explicit online. Typically, when you talk about trafficking, there's a lot of recruitment done in chat rooms where a child has no access to peers and they're looking to reach out and find someone to listen to them. So online looking at profiles, kids tend to engage in more sexually explicit talk and engage in. But if they go into these chat rooms, again, that's where we need to bring the parents in to look at how their behavior's changing. So it becomes very difficult to find someone who's on social media when most kids these days are more well-versed in how to get around methods of detection. So I think again, it's all about conversation, communication with kids by parents and teachers. Because again, if we can communicate with our kids and get them to talk to us, then we begin to recognize the signs that something's going wrong.

Jesse Leon: And one of the way I read the question was, what can an online teacher teach in a virtual class with a student be able to be aware of, say for example, if my background is completely set to this, this is all you see every day, you're never going to see the rest of my house. So it's real easy for me to be able to hide what's happening around me. Yet my reactions, my behavior may change based on my disengagement as Peps talked about. Am I being tired? Am I responding? Am I snappy? How is my behavior changing from a day-to-day basis? Not making assumptions, but being able to build that relationship and that rapport so that you are aware of, to be able to open up that conversation from a loving, caring place.

Greta Colombi: Well, I'm sure we could go on and on, but I'm afraid we will have to stop for now. I just want to share my heartfelt thanks to all of our speakers and panelists today, sharing really valuable information and perspectives that we really hope our audience can really come away with perspectives and strategies that they can use in their community. So with that, would love for folks to complete the feedback form. And in the meantime, please check out our archive presentations from the past which touch on these issues, complete the feedback form, and then just come next time. We really welcome you to be joining us and we hope that you all have a great rest of the day. So thank you so much everybody.