

FOREVER FOUND

Ventura County Human Trafficking Cases

Sample Cases Selected for Public Awareness

2016

At any given time, 60% of female youth residing in Ventura County Juvenile Facilities are estimated to have been commercially sexually exploited (child sex trafficking).

Source: Ventura County Behavioral Health Clinic at the Probation Juvenile Facilities

Type of Trafficking: Operations to Reduce Demand

Description: In a combination of two operations in March and April 2016, Oxnard Police Department placed fictitious ads offering sex and received over 150 responses. The operations resulted in 16 arrests. This operation was paid for in part by the Forever Found Law Enforcement Fund.

Source: Oxnard Police Department and Edhat: <http://www.edhat.com/mobile/news.cfm?id=168980>

Type of Trafficking: Operation to Reduce Demand

Description: On January 29, 2016, Ventura Police Department conducted an operation in which they posted a fictitious ad on a prominent website selling sex. The ad received over 100 responses in just under 8 hours. Callers were told by an undercover officer that the person for sale was a minor. Officers arrested the first four callers who arrived at the designated meeting spot. This operation was paid for by the Forever Found Law Enforcement Fund.

Source: Ventura Police Department and the Ventura County Star: <http://www.vcstar.com/news/local/ventura/four-arrested-in-ventura-operation-targeting-sexual-predators-2a0471e8-3ccb-6912-e053-0100007fb732-366339391.html>

2015

In 2015, Los Angeles-based nonprofit CAST received 5 calls from human trafficking victims in Ventura County. Calls were from Oxnard, Simi Valley, & Thousand Oaks.

Source: Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, Hotline

Type of Trafficking: Labor trafficking

Description: The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking in Los Angeles provided long-term legal services to a group of 33 agricultural workers who were trafficked in Ventura County.

Type of Trafficking: Sex trafficking

Description: Philip Lowe was arrested for the sex trafficking of a 15-year-old runaway girl. He forced her to exchange sex acts for money in Ventura County Hotels. He is also suspected of forcing two women into prostitution. Lowe was sentenced to 10 years and 8 months in prison for trafficking of a minor—the first such sentencing for Ventura County.

Type of Trafficking: Sex and labor trafficking

Description: On November 3, 2015, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors signed a resolution affirming the County's commitment to work against sex trafficking. Testimony from the Ventura County Coalition Against Human Trafficking, Ventura Police Department, Children and Family Services, La Hermandad Family Center, and Interface Children and Family Services regarding sex and labor trafficking in Ventura County can be viewed at index item 32 through this link: http://ventura.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=67&clip_id=4100

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Forever Found launched its Mentor Program in late summer 2015 and has matched 7 survivors of trafficking and other abuses to date.

Source: Forever Found Local Programs

2014

Type of trafficking: Arrests of child sexual predators

Location: Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara Counties

Description: "Operation Broken Heart" arrested 275 child sex offenders (4 in Ventura County) who responded to fictitious online ads offering sex with 12-14 year old boys and girls. Note: Although the victims were fictitious, this case shows the high number of people willing to purchase or sell sex with children. Additional arrests were made for possession and distribution of child pornography.

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/26/operation-broken-heart-child-predators-arrested_n_5535464.html and <http://www.vcsd.org/press-release.php?id=954>

In 2014, Los Angeles-based nonprofit CAST received 11 calls from human trafficking victims in Ventura County. Calls were from Camarillo, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Simi Valley, and Ventura. The majority of cases were labor trafficking of immigrants.

Source: Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, Hotline

2013

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking out of residence

Location: Oxnard

Description: A fifteen-year old girl was allegedly brought from Los Angeles to a residence in Oxnard where she was sold for sex. She was rescued through an anonymous tip.

Source: KEYT News on November 19, 2013

<http://www.keyt.com/news/police-arrest-two-in-sex-trafficking-case-involving-15yearold-girl/23059484>

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking out of residence

Location: Oxnard

Description: Two seventeen year old high school girls were forced by their aunt and uncle to prostitute out of their house. Victims were freed by Oxnard Police Department vice detectives.

Source: Detective James Langford, Oxnard Police Department (Forever Found Contact)

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking

Location: San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties

Description: A California man met a 16-year-old girl from Maryland online. After grooming and recruiting her, he met her in person and began prostituting her along the California Coast. She was recovered after several months in a Santa Barbara Hotel by the FBI and the Santa Barbara Police Department. The trafficker received 38 years to life in the first human trafficking conviction in Santa Barbara County.

Source: http://www.noozhawk.com/article/sentencing_explosive_ending_to_countys_first_human_trafficking_trial

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Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking

Location: Ventura, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties

Description: An Oakland man deceived a 16-year-old girl from Oakland and forced her into sex trafficking for about a month before she called police. He trafficked her in Ventura, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties. The trafficker was under investigation for a prior trafficking case and was sentenced to 23 years to life in state prison.

Source: <http://www.sgvtribune.com/general-news/20141106/oakland-man-gets-23-years-to-life-for-pimping-teen-in-southern-california>

Forever Found helped with two confidential cases of girls being sold for sex in Ventura and Los Angeles counties (2012-2013).

2012

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking in home brothels

Location: Oxnard and circulated to Los Angeles and Las Vegas

Description: Home brothels in two houses across from each other downtown Oxnard. Two girls were at one house and a third girl was at the second house. Ten to twenty “clients” visited each brothel daily. The brothel was shut down by Oxnard Police Vice Detectives.

Source: Detective James Langford, Oxnard Police Department (Forever Found Contact)

Type of trafficking: Sex Trafficking out of Hotel

Location: Ventura

Description: A seventeen-year old girl was located at a hotel in Ventura. The girl was a missing person from Oakland and reported to officers that she had been trafficked for sex throughout several states intermittently from the age of 14 until the present contact. She also told officers that she was exploited through online advertising for sex acts.

Source: Det. David Ruggiero, Ventura Police Department (Forever Found Contact)

Type of trafficking: Labor trafficking

Location: Rural area in northern Ventura County

Description: Workers were forced to maintain illegal marijuana groves produced by gangs in the Los Padres National Forest and were guarded by armed guards. Their plight was discovered through tips from the public. The illegal operation was shut down by Homeland Security.

Source: http://www.toacorn.com/news/2012-08-23/Front_Page/Human_trafficking_at_home_in_Ventura_County.html

In 2012, the Ventura Police Department conducted investigations into prostitution occurring at local massage parlors. No victims would self-identify.

Source: http://www.vcreporter.com/cms/story/detail/turn_off_the_red_light/10668/ and Forever Found law enforcement contacts

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2011

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking in home brothel

Location: Oxnard and circulated weekly to Los Angeles

Description: A rear residence in La Colonia area of Oxnard was “managed” by a heavysset male in his 30’s armed with a gun. One to two different women were shuttled there weekly from Los Angeles and forced to services 15-25 clients per day. The brothel was shut down by Oxnard Police Vice Detectives.

Source: Detective James Langford, Oxnard Police Department (Forever Found Contact)

Type of trafficking: Sex trafficking in home brothel

Location: Oxnard and Pacoima

Description: Two armed sex traffickers operated a multi-city operation out of home brothels. One was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison for pimping.

Source: <https://www.oxnardpd.org/pressreleases/1503>

Type of trafficking: Sex Trafficking out of Hotel

Location: Ventura

Description: A fourteen-year old girl was located at a hotel room in Ventura. She was a missing person from San Diego. She was contacted in a room with an adult male customer. She admitted to being commercially sexually exploited in Santa Barbara and Ventura. She also told officers that she was exploited through online advertising for sex acts.

Source: Det. David Ruggiero, Ventura Police Department (Forever Found Contact)

From mid-2010 to mid-2012, California’s nine regional human trafficking task forces identified 1,277 victims and arrested 1,798 individuals.

Source: The Office of the Attorney General of California, 2012