

OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR

CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT

2007 JUN 29 11:52
To: Office of the City Administrator
Attn: Deborah Edgerly
From: Police Department
Date: July 10, 2007

Re: A Report on Past Efforts and Current Strategies To Eliminate the Escalation of Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation of Minors in The City of Oakland

SUMMARY

As requested by the Rules and Legislation Committee, staff has prepared this informational report containing details of the Department's past efforts and current strategies to eliminate the escalation of prostitution and child sexual exploitation in the City of Oakland.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is an informational report. Funding in the amount of \$450,000 was allocated for this effort under the current Department of Justice (DOJ) Human Trafficking Grant Project G283410, by Resolution No. 79275 C.M.S., dated May 2005.

BACKGROUND

In 1999, the Police Department noticed a huge increase in the number of run-a-ways who were being arrested for prostitution in the City of Oakland. In every case, these girls were treated as suspects and sent to Juvenile Hall. Upon recognizing that these girls were in fact victims, the Department changed its approach to such cases and established a dedicated team of investigators to handle all child sexual exploitation investigations.

While many efforts have been put forth to address this issue, the problem has continued to worsen. Consequently, Oakland has developed an unfortunate reputation (among law enforcement agencies working in this discipline) of being one of the more notable areas in the western United States for prostitution; (in large part) due to the ever growing pool of young girls (victims) who are lured, coerced, and forced into the illegal sex industry by the ultimate sexual predator - the pimp.

Oakland's reputation for this demeaning service is now being marketed over the Internet, exacerbating the problem. Various websites advertise Oakland's prostitution opportunities, which oftentimes serve as a counter-intelligence provider by alerting would be customers (i.e., johns and prostitutes) of law enforcement activities.

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As a result, the problem of child prostitution continues to grow to near epidemic levels; affecting a disproportionately large number of children and families in Oakland's communities.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Past Strategies and Efforts

Over the past eight years, the Police Department has implemented following strategies/actions:

1999/2000 - Established the Child Exploitation Unit (CEU), which is tasked with the investigation of child prostitution, child sex rings, child pornography and Internet crimes against children. From 1999-2002, this unit interviewed more than 100 child prostitutes (the vast majority being females fifteen years of age or younger). This effort provided the Department with an enormous amount of information that had previously been overlooked, including:

- The overwhelming majority of these individuals were past/present sexual abuse victims;
- They came from dysfunctional homes;
- They were often run-a-ways, in which at least half were *unreported*;
- They were often in placement / group homes, which unfortunately were nothing more than recruiting grounds for pimps¹;
- They were running from a home situation and not to the prostitution lifestyle.

2004 - Vice Crimes Unit merged with the Child Exploitation Unit, an effort that afforded the Police Department the ability to conduct coordinated vice crime and child prostitution operations / investigations.

2005 - The Police Department was awarded a \$450,000 DOJ grant to address human trafficking. Initially this grant was to address regional human trafficking; however, since January of 2006, the focus has changed to domestic trafficking, most notably child prostitution.

2004/05 - Prior to refocusing the human trafficking efforts, the Police Department averaged about 12 Vice Enforcement Operations per year, each resulting in about 50 or more arrests. These operations focused almost completely on arresting prostitutes, regardless if they were juveniles or adults. Experienced investigators were transferred out of the CEU, subsequently staff reverted to pre-1999 police practices and standards.

¹ *Young girls were placed in group homes by the county for a range of reasons, e.g., child abuse victims, incorrigible behavior . While in these group homes, the girls were lured / recruited by other girls into prostitution.*

In 2006, a revised strategy was put into place which consists of the following modifications:

- Changed all Vice related operations from merely enforcement to investigative;
- Staffed operations with experienced follow-up investigators (brought back two of the past CEU investigators);
- Conducted pre-operation intelligence gathering;
- Emphasized advocate participation (built this component into operations);
- Conducted weekly operations in select areas of the City of Oakland;
- Re-designed and emphasized dynamics of domestic human trafficking, and utilized the DOJ Human Trafficking grant;
- Established Police Department tip-lines² website to receive calls for information on sexual assaults and prostitution activities (all calls are logged on an Excel spreadsheet and forwarded to the appropriate investigative unit for follow-up. This information is also shared daily with the Police Service Area Commanders);
- Conducted *in-house* training with Police Department personnel assigned to field duties, (e.g., Problem Solving Officers and Patrol Officers);
- Attended 19 community and / or Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meetings and gave presentations on *The Dynamics of Child Prostitution / Human Trafficking and How to Accurately Report These Incidents to the Police Department*;
- Established a close working relationship with the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, which eventually resulted in a Deputy District Attorney being assigned to handle human trafficking related cases;
- Expanded CEU's working relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigations³.

2006 Results:

Number of Operations	47
Total Arrests	660
Felony	47 (of the 660 arrests)
Human Trafficking	20 (of the 660 arrests)
Human Trafficking Cases ⁴	16

² The tip line number for prostitution activities is 238-2373; for tips on sexual assaults please call 637-0298.

³ The Department has assigned one CEU investigator to the Bay Area FBI Task Force on Child Exploitation. This investigator now works concurrently with the FBI while investigating his own City of Oakland cases.

⁴ Eleven major child exploitation cases were developed in which numerous victims and suspects were identified.

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January – May 2007 Results:

Operations	20
Total Arrests	280
Felony	14 (of the 280 arrests)
Human Trafficking Cases ⁵	7 (of the 280 arrests)

Current Strategies and Efforts

The aforementioned efforts are continuing, and the following projects are underway:

In March of 2007, the Police Department re-opened the Juvenile and Family Processing Unit (Intake Desk). Operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the Intake Desk provides a large range of services to officers and the community concerning youth related issues such as child sexual exploitation. Field officers, investigators, and members of the community can now call the Intake Desk and report suspected cases of child sexual exploitation / prostitution and, in most cases, make referrals to the Sexually Exploited Minors network. Subsequently, Intake staff can connect these children to the Sexually Abused Commercially Exploited Youth / Safe Place Alternative (SACEY/SPA) program where an advocate can often respond within a very short time to the location of the incident. This service affords children an opportunity for near, immediate assistance in getting off the streets and on the road to rebuilding their lives.

In April of 2007, Assembly Member Sandre Swanson sponsored AB499 which was designed to re-classify sexually exploited minors into a separate category that would allow law enforcement to place *holds* on these victims. Ideally, the *holds* were intended to protect the child from returning to his/her exploiter while at the same time, providing the victim with support services during a thorough comprehensive assessment. This bill has not yet passed Assembly approval, due mostly to constitutional issues. The bill is currently being re-drafted and will be re-introduced.

In addition, the Police Department is researching the possibility of amending Proposition 69 (DNA Collection and Entry into the California Data Bank Program). The requested amendment would expand the collection and entry of DNA samples into the California Data Bank Program from those individuals who were arrested for any prostitution related felony and/or misdemeanor. Two benefits of this process include an increased ability to identify:

- *Johns* who have sexually assaulted a prostitute (oftentimes a sexually exploited minor) and who often move on to prey upon the general population (having used their past experiences as building blocks);

⁵ These cases are still open and active. Some of the victims have yet to be identified and/or located.

- *Pimps* who exploit children by prostituting them. It is a common practice for these pimps to violently sexually assault young girls as part of the *breaking in* process. As stated, these girls seldom disclose their victimization which perpetuates this violent social problem. Further, these offenders (pimps) oftentimes have no other criminal history.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Department has already begun to implement of the strategies outlined in this report.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to reduce, if not eliminate, child prostitution in the City of Oakland.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this strategy is to rescue victims, mainly children, from their predator/pimp. This can not be done strictly through law enforcement efforts. Support services are crucial to the physical, medical, mental and social health of the victim; therefore a broader more collective approach is warranted.

Community Members and Groups Served

Building upon earlier successes in raising the community's awareness, and more importantly, its response to this issue, it is vital to recognize that everyone in our community benefits from this strategy. Not every child prostitute is a stranger; they are someone's loved one. By reducing and hopefully eliminating this problem, individual lives and families can be saved.

Location

Unfortunately, juvenile prostitution is not restricted only to the City's major thoroughfares. Since these victims are often *dispatched* to homes, motels, and other locations, the Department's efforts are focused on behavior rather than locations.

Plan for Ongoing Operations and Maintenance

To prevent the loss of any gains that have been achieved in this process, it is vital that collective and coordinated operations take place. The Youth and Family Services Division (YFSD) will continue to conduct weekly investigative / enforcement operations as well as assist field officers in their efforts. With the expansion of staffing for the Strategic Area Command, Measure Y officers will have an opportunity to address such efforts like never before. It is incumbent upon the YFSD to collaborate with these officers so that the efforts do not lose focus on desired results.

Evaluation Period

Every six-months a close analysis of citizen complaints, associated crimes, and calls for police service must take place to determine the program's effectiveness, and to make any necessary strategy changes.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: With the reduction of prostitution and those crimes commonly associated with this activity, the physical atmosphere and the reputation of Oakland will improve; thus affording the City an opportunity for further financial growth.

Environmental: There are no environmental concerns associated with this report.

Social Equity: Removing the element of sexual predators from the streets of Oakland will improve public safety and the welfare of our children, making the City safer.

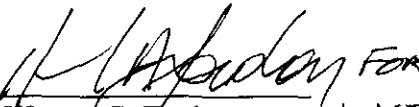
DISABILITY AND SENIOR ACCESS

There are no ADA or senior citizen access issues identified in this report

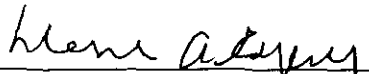
RECOMMENDATION / ACTION REQUESTED OF COUNCIL

This is an information report, therefore no action is requested of the Council.

Respectfully submitted,


Wayne G. Tucker
Chief of Police

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO
THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE:


Office of the City Administrator

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