



Women's Fund OF MIAMI-DADE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EXPLOITATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN FLORIDA SEX TRADE REVEALED

Upcoming Super Bowl Sunday Presents an Opportunity to Focus on Issue

MIAMI, January 30, 2012 – There are estimated to be more underage girls in Florida being sold for sex in a given month than there are teen girls who died in motor vehicle accidents in three years in Florida.

So says a new study “Adolescent Girls in the Florida Sex Trade” being released today by a coalition headed by Women’s Fund of Miami-Dade that shows that hundreds of underage girls were trafficked for sex in Florida in the month of November, 2011. When taken as a snapshot of the sex trade in girls in our state, the research verifies that there is reason for concern.

“Even one underage girl being trafficked is one too many,” said Debi Harris, CEO of Women’s Fund of Miami-Dade. “Law enforcement, former victims and social workers tell us that the sex trafficking of underage girls is a harsh, everyday reality, and this study begins to demonstrate the magnitude of this crime that too often slips under the radar. We are focused on raising our region’s awareness of this crime in the hope of preventing it, penalizing its perpetrators and helping its victims to recover.”

The research was commissioned by Women’s Fund of Miami-Dade and was supported by funding from a coalition of partners that includes The Children’s Trust of Miami-Dade, Children’s Services Council of Broward County, the Lovelight Foundation, the Joseph H. and Florence A. Roblee Foundation and TriMix Foundation.

“Prostituting our children through commercial sex trafficking must have an informed, intelligent, vigorous and unrelenting response,” said Modesto E. Abety-Gutierrez, President and CEO of The Children’s Trust. “ Just like our collaboration on the *Dear John* campaign, which was launched earlier this month, our support for this research is another example of The Children’s Trust’s commitment to partnering with The Women’s Fund, Kristi House, The State Attorney’s Office, local law enforcement and others to address this ongoing tragedy in our community.”

Key findings from the research include:

- *Close to 400 underage girls were marketed for sex in Florida in November, 2011.*
The study estimates that 385 girls under age 18 were marketed for sex online or through escort services in November.
- *Most of the girls identified in this study were being sold on Internet classifieds web sites.*
361 of these girls were being marketed through Internet classifieds web sites; 24 were being marketed through escort services.
- *South Florida accounts for nearly 50% of all of the victims tracked in Florida*
The statewide data suggests that 385 girls under 18 were commercially sexually exploited during the period studied via Internet classifieds web sites (361) and escort services (24). Miami-Dade alone accounted for 96 of those girls and Broward County 92.
- *The commercial sexual exploitation of girls in Florida is more prevalent than many other problems in Florida generally regarded as too widespread to ignore.*
The estimated 385 girls being marketed for sex in the month of November in Florida is greater than...
 - ...the 109 teen girls who died by suicide and homicide in three years
 - ...the 215 teen girls who died by motor vehicle accidents in three years
 - ...the 338 females of all ages who died from AIDS complications in one year

The timing of the release of this report is deliberate. Sex trafficking and prostitution are carefully watched phenomena in the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl on February 5, 2012. In a report released by the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy (<http://technologyandtrafficking.usc.edu/report/primary-research/>) in September, 2011, "A number of reports have described a noticeable increase in trafficking during past Super Bowl games."

The report further cites *Time Magazine*, who stated that "during Super Bowl XLIV in Miami, one man was arrested after posting an ad featuring a 14-year-old on Craigslist as a "Super Bowl special".

"Adolescent Girls in the Florida Sex Trade" estimates the number of girls being actively marketed on the Internet and through escort services using a probability-based, empirical approach. These advertisements are two of the main sources through which buyers find girls. There are no systematic and replicable methodologies to count street-level trafficking activity.

Complete results of the Florida study can be found online at www.womensfundmiami.org.

About the Women's Fund of Miami-Dade

Women's Fund of Miami-Dade empowers women and girls through advocacy and funding for innovative initiatives that build equality, foster social change and create community partners.

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