

THE MY LIFE MY CHOICE EXPLOITATION



PREVENTION CURRICULUM: RESULTS FROM A 3 YEAR EVALUATION

The My Life My Choice evaluation study was a longitudinal, multi-site evaluation funded by the National Institute of Justice. It was conducted by researchers from the Boston University School of Public Health and the Northeastern School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. The purpose was to assess whether youth who participated in the My Life My Choice's 10-session Exploitation Prevention Curriculum benefit from it. The Curriculum was created in 2003 by a survivor of exploitation, a public health social worker, as well as testimony from dozens of child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Since then, survivors and ally staff with extensive expertise and first-hand experience have revised it several times. It is designed for youth who are at-risk for commercial sexual exploitation, or who have experienced exploitation, with the goal of shifting their knowledge, attitudes and behavior to reduce the risk of exploitation or to prevent re-victimization.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Knowledge about CSEC and risks for exploitation **IMPROVED FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS**, particularly for those who were 11-15 years old and those in a residential facility.
- Experiences of commercial sexual exploitation in the past three months **DECREASED BY 50%** immediately after group.
- Participants were **2 TIMES LESS LIKELY** to report dating abuse victimization in the past three months at the six-month follow-up.
- **100% OF YOUTH** reported talking to a friend about the dangers of exploitation.
- Participants were **3 TIMES AS LIKELY** to have educated a friend about the myths and facts of selling sex at the six-month follow-up.
- The risk of self-reported sexually explicit behaviors in the past three months **REDUCED BY 48%** immediately after group **AND BY 47%** at the six-month follow up.
- Participants' trust in police **INCREASED IMMEDIATELY AFTER GROUP AND AT THE SIX- MONTH FOLLOW-UP.**
- Youth perceived their facilitators as honest, warm, and trustworthy.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The positive results of the evaluation suggest that the My Life My Choice Prevention Curriculum may have helped to create positive changes in youth knowledge, attitudes and behavior. The My Life My Choice Curriculum is the only comprehensive curriculum that has been evaluated and for which there is evidence that participation is associated with decreased risk of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

THE MY LIFE MY CHOICE CURRICULUM IS THE ONLY COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM THAT HAS BEEN EVALUATED AND FOR WHICH THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT PARTICIPATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH DECREASED RISK OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 354 youth participated in the evaluation of the Exploitation Prevention Curriculum across Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut and Florida. Youth were surveyed at the start of the prevention groups, again at the end of the group and finally at six months after starting the prevention group. The My Life My Choice Survivor Mentoring Program was also evaluated and results show that it may reduce commercial sexual exploitation. The results are posted on our website.

DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER	
Female	95%
Male	2%
Transgender or Nonbinary	3%
RACE/ETHNICITY	
Black/African American	28%
Hispanic/Latina	25%
White/Non-Hispanic	25%
Other	22%
GROUP LOCATION	
Middle School	9%
High School	29%
Residential Facility	42%
Other	20%

Rothman, E.F., Farrell, A., Paruk, J., Bright, K.T., Bair-Merritt, M., Preis, S.R. (2019). Evaluation of a Multi-Session Group Designed to Prevent Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors: The "My Life My Choice" Curriculum. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*