

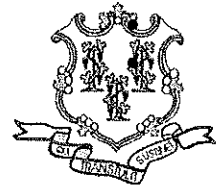


STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Judiciary Committee

March 27, 2017

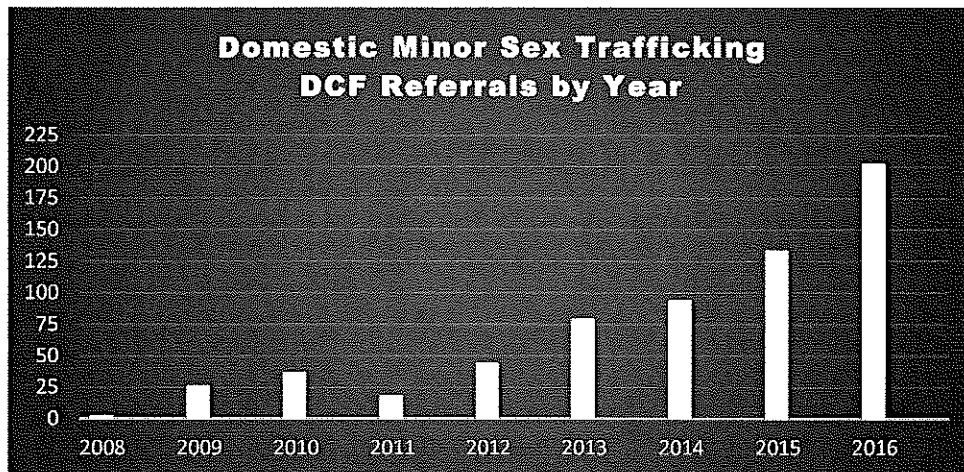


H.B. No. 7309 AN ACT CONCERNING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers the following comments regarding H.B. No. 7309, An Act Concerning Human Trafficking.

This bill includes a number of recommendations from the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Council, including a requirement that DCF and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) develop an educational training program for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking. This training program is to include a video presentation that offers awareness of human trafficking issues and guidance to law enforcement personnel, judges of the Superior Court, prosecutors, public defenders and other attorneys who represent criminal defendants, hospital emergency room staff and urgent care facility staff who have contact with patients, and persons employed by a local or regional board of education or a constituent unit of higher education who have contact with students. While we recognize the need for additional training for these groups, we may be challenged to produce the required information within existing resources.

DCF trained well over 1,100 individuals in 2015 and over 1,600 in 2016. The Department received 133 unique referrals of suspected child victims of sex trafficking in 2015, and 202 such referrals in 2016. The data indicates that the training program enhanced the ability of the individuals who were trained to identify potential victims. The continuing challenge is in educating our children and youth in their communities. Prevention curriculums are available from a variety of sources, but they are under-utilized. New efforts are under-way to expand awareness of sex trafficking among our youth. In addition, the TIP has started a new campaign to address the ever growing demand for child victims in our state.



The need to provide enhanced protections for minor victims is clear. Between 2008 and 2016, 634 children have been referred to DCF as possible victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) or Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). In 2016, DCF received a total of 202 referrals of youth who are either at risk or are confirmed victims of DMST and CSEC. This dramatic increase in referrals leads us to believe that our awareness efforts are resulting in identification of youth who are being exploited. Unfortunately, this trend also indicates to us that there are many unidentified victims in our state that are in need of rescue and support.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.