

**Webinar: *Commercial Sex Trafficking – Research Findings to Support Investigations: American Indian Persons, Part III***

**September 26, 2017**

**Moderator:**

Melissa Blasing, Project Coordinator, National Criminal Justice Training Center, Fox Valley Technical College

**Host:**

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**Presenter:**

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**Welcome**

Alyson Freedman: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us for today's Webinar, *Commercial Sex Trafficking – Using Research Findings to Support Investigations, Part III*. The third and final Webinar of this three-part series. My name is Alyson Freedman and I am with OJJDP's National Training and Technical Assistance Center. As your technical host, I would like to take a couple of minutes to discuss a few features of the Adobe Connect Webinar platform, and provide a few announcements to keep in mind.

**Webinar Tips**

Alyson Freedman: For those wishing to download a copy of the PowerPoint slides and other important documents, you may do so by locating the handouts pod directly above the chat pod. Click on the name of the file, and then click the download button.

**Adobe Platform Information**

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## **Webinars on OJJDP's Online University**

Alyson Freedman: Finally, this event will be archived in approximately 3 weeks on OJJDP's Online University, at [www.ojjdpou.org](http://www.ojjdpou.org), where you can also view past Webinars. Again, thank you for joining us today. I will now turn it over to our moderator for today's Webinar, Melissa Blasing, from the National Criminal Justice Training Center at Fox Valley Technical College.

## **Moderator: Melissa Blasing, Project Coordinator, National Criminal Justice Training Center, Fox Valley Technical College**

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Alyson, for that introduction. As Alyson mentioned, my name is Melissa Blasing, and I am a project coordinator with the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) program, a program within the National Criminal Justice Training Center at Fox Valley Technical College. The AMBER Alert TTA program has partnered with OJJDP's National Training and Technical Assistance Center to host this Webinar as part of our AMBER Alert Webinar Series.

## **AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program**

Melissa Blasing: In conjunction with our mission, this series works to bring together state, local, and tribal subject matter experts to present and discuss critical issues related to missing, abducted, and exploited children.

Melissa Blasing: To learn more about the AMBER Alert program, our training and technical assistance opportunities, and to view past Webinars, including part one and part two of this series, please visit our website link available on this slide.

Melissa Blasing: Before we begin, I would like to remind you to submit your questions via the Q and A box located on your screen, as we will answer these questions at the end of the presentation.

Melissa Blasing: And, without further ado, I would like to introduce and turn today's presentation, *Commercial Sex Trafficking: Research Findings to Support Investigations of American Indian Persons*, over to our presenter and subject matter expert, Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Associate Professor and Director for the Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research at Arizona State University. Dominique?

## **Presenter: Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Director, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, Arizona State University**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Good afternoon, everyone, or good morning. I am in Arizona so it is still morning here. I want to give you a little bit of a background about why I am, I am speaking to you today, and a little bit of the activities that the research office that I direct are participating in, and then we will talk about our work, other people's work on American Indian persons who have been sex trafficked, and then our work and our plan.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So I am a clinical social worker. I have developed, over the last 12 years, an intervention called Sex Trafficking Awareness and Recovery (STAR). It is a program that we run in 11 organizations here in Arizona. It is a psychoeducation group, it is 11 weeks, and it has content about abuse and trauma, crisis, mental health, things about self-harm, and how to cope and how to transition out of the life as they are ready to transition. The key point of STAR group is to talk about the sex trafficking experiences in a way that our clients can comprehend and can integrate that information into their work, into their change process.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We are also really active in the Phoenix and Arizona community as community organizers. We have developed a pop-up drop-in center based on our research, which happens every 6 months. The next one is in December, and it brings between 15 and 20 organizations together, and during one day at a senior center here on the track, which has extensive street level prostitution. And we provide medical care, mental health, substance abuse, access to rehab, food, clothing, mentors, and showers, and resources for housing. The survivor community we work with is very active in designing innovative interventions, and that is one of the, one of the newer ones that we have developed. In April, we had a pop-up drop-in center and we had 58 persons walk in who were prostituted and trafficked, and received services through our program.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: In the next week, we are opening the first housing program that is a relationship between HUD (Housing and Urban Development) and our city and our university to provide therapeutic services for persons who have been sex trafficked and their children. It is a 15-unit housing program, which we are implementing a therapeutic overlay to try to sustain exiting and support for people who are in the process of kind of getting back on their feet and supporting them in their work. So that is here in Phoenix.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We have conducted extensive research. We have, this is the third Webinar in the series. Our research on sex traffickers is available online, as well as the second Webinar which was on sex buyers. And we look at programs and do program evaluations. We work with law enforcement partners, particularly the Las Vegas Metro Police Department. We work with the Phoenix Police Department, and we try to develop innovation in the way that we bring together our survivor community, our community partners, research, evaluation, and how we can, how we can move forward in combatting sex trafficking. So we work large scale. We had a study that we completed earlier this year where we had 1,400 cases of sex trafficking of a minor arrests around the country. And we do small-scale studies where we evaluate treatment programs for adolescents and look at the risk factors of those who have been trafficked compared to those who have not, trying to design programming specific to the, to the trafficked youth.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We also have a final innovation that we are working on and are rolling out this month called ProjectSTARFISH.education. It is a website that we developed for schools, educating about sex trafficking from the top down. So it is designed for school administrators, school principals, school teachers, school social workers, people who are working with youth. There is a Sex Trafficking 101 embedded in it with a completion certificate. And it has school-related curriculum for different classes, as well as multi-month activity lists for people to integrate it into their schools if they want to have like a club participate in anti-trafficking work here. There are a number of suggestions for that. It is called ProjectSTARFISH.education.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, again, this is part three of a series. The first one is sex, was about sex traffickers in the U.S. The second was about sex buyers. And this is the final one who, which is about

American Indian persons. We, I would like to initially recognize that this is a very complicated process to study sex trafficking victims in any context, but this is a cross-cultural issue that we relate to in Arizona because we have 22 tribes here and we have lots of, almost 300,000 persons who live here who are, who identify as American Indian. But also, as a researcher, how to do ethical research with the American Indian community and respect their traditions and culture, but also work as in partnership to identify significant problems and victimizations among their, among their persons.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: This, some of this work has previously been presented and discussed at the National Congress of American Indians this summer at the Mohegan Sun, and we talked about how to move forward with this study and how we were going to develop our sensitivity and understanding about how to approach this process. We have worked extensively in our community with consultants who are American Indian persons, some of whom have been survivors. Others are working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs or in agencies that support American Indian persons and try to support housing and mental health and drug and alcohol treatment in our community. And we have an ongoing workgroup that we have developed here in, in Arizona to move forward on this, this work and try to figure out how to, in the, in the smartest, most innovative, most respectful way possible, move forward in our research. So let me move to the next slide.

### **American Indian and Alaska Native Persons and Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So here are some of the things that I want to sort of begin the conversation about. So as a, as a preamble, American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls and males and transgender persons and boys would be included as domestic victims of sex trafficking under the TVPA (Trafficking Victims Protection Act). So we, I did not feel like you needed me to define sex trafficking again. They would fall underneath the definition of sex trafficking. But the laws that protect them from victimization are different than the ones that, that protect them if they are on reservation or off reservation, and that is important to consider. So if the crime was committed within the boundaries of a reservation, the laws are different. It does not fall under the TVPA in the same way, and there are elements that are complicated and complex for us to understand. And I will talk a little bit about some of them.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So there are some significant challenges of conducting research on sex trafficking victimization to start with. The first one is, it is a hidden crime, it is something that we struggle with in the, in the pursuit of identifying how big the problem is, who is experiencing it, how can we support, how can we support the victims, what needs to happen? And we are finding that it is difficult to make contact with people who have been sex trafficked unless we work with law enforcement and develop – we have yet to, but we are working on developing better screening tools to identify persons in schools and in other places where they may, may be contacted. So the challenges conducting research on sex trafficking present – are already some very serious limitations. We know that in, in none of the studies that we have done, although we have done extensive research on sex trafficking in our community, that, that we cannot possibly be catching or capturing all of the data because it is, it is such a, it is such a hidden crime and it is so difficult to, to capture.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So the second challenge is conducting ethical research with American Indian and Alaska Native persons. So at the conference this summer, the National Congress of American Indian conference, we talked about how to approach studying victimization with persons who are American Indian. The sample that I am talking about today came from a group that were participating in a city-based program that is off reservation. But we talked about the approaches and the complexity of

working with, with American Indian populations and working with tribal, getting tribal permission, and how to, how to approach that. And those are some of the challenges that I have heard from my colleagues that it is very important to do it that way, it is very important to work together and to, to work towards the same goals. But it continues to be a challenge for time and for approval and for things like partnering on grants that sometimes have quicker timelines than perhaps we could get through getting a tribal resolution.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, also, we know that among our clients, I have worked with about 3,500 persons who have been sex trafficked in the last 12 years, and very few of them are very forthcoming about their, their traumatic experiences, at least initially. So we know that in other communities where people feel that talking about sexual exploitation is laden with shame or laden with reservations, that we are having a tough time making sure that we build a relationships with persons before we ask them these questions. But that is very, not often traditional in most data collection methods, like through law enforcement or through intake through diversion like I will talk about today.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So previous research, I am going to talk about some of the previous studies that have been done that are very thorough and very thoughtful, but, but almost all of it has been conducted in Minnesota, which I do think has a great window into the work that, that we are seeing, but it is not necessarily applicable to American Indian and Alaska Native persons who are situated in other parts of the country. And we think it is really important to pursue if there are nuances of region and there are things that are changing that we figure out how to, how to do that best. So that is what I am in pursuit of, furthering our study to expand outside of Minnesota and, and learn about our own communities, and see if we can further the understanding, as well as further the support systems and networks we developed to, to treat the victims of trafficking.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So our current study, which I will talk about, is, is ongoing and we are developing it, and I will, I will tell you more about that in a few minutes.

### **Challenges of Conducting Research on Sex Trafficking Victims**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Other challenges are: there is limited awareness in our community, particularly in schools, regarding sex trafficking risks and the procedures of how to report those minors. So, both for American Indian persons and non-Native persons, we do not see a depth of understanding and knowledge in our school system currently. Certainly, our law enforcement and many of our social services have been, have been trained, but we are still seeing this gap in schools. So that is on reservation and off reservation. But how do we, how do we increase that knowledge of schools to be, become more of a participate to flag these youth and, and young adults as they are, are getting into trouble?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So there are limited screenings for sex trafficking overall at, at social service agencies, medical, and mental health contacts, at least in our community. So the flag to find victims of trafficking are limited. We have, are working on each and every one of these things, but it is, it continues to be limited. Some communities are better than others, but we know that we are missing clients because we are not asking the right questions.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We are seeing screenings at homeless and runaway programs, and you will hear through the studies that I will talk about in Minnesota that it is one of the primary reasons that sex trafficking victims are identified by traffickers, because they are homeless and runaway and they have

pervasive housing needs and, and basic needs to be met. So we are seeing that in our community, both in southern Arizona at our family services and here in Phoenix at our multiple agencies, Tumbleweed, UMOM (United Methodist Outreach Ministries), Native American Connections. And one in 10 who are serving our homeless runaway communities are asking questions about sex trafficking, and they are flagging those persons for support and services.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: And finally, our ongoing problem is that the primary contact with sex trafficking victims in our, in our country continues to be through law enforcement. And, and that is, that skews, skews our knowledge and skews the information that we can kind of develop in a way that, that I am not sure how we can, we can account for that.

### **Emerging Issues**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So something to consider that we have, we have not figured out how to research yet, although I do know other people are pursuing it, that there has been a very significant jump in, in sex trafficking in the, in North Dakota due to the oil boom. And here is just an article that was really hard to read, but it was really helpful to understand some of the complexities and some of the challenges that are faced by the victim advocates who are trying to provide services. I have worked with members of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who have gone out and tried to, tried to find ways to support the persons who are being trafficked in those communities, and it proved to be very challenging and, and complicated and, and both the reasons that the victims were brought into those communities as well as trying to figure out ways to get them out of those communities.

### **Current ASU STIR Research With Sex Trafficking Victims**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So here are two studies that we are currently working on with sex trafficking victims, and each of these we have, we have included American Indian persons and, and as typical, they are sort of mixed into our population. The *Youth Experiences Survey* is an ongoing study that we do every year with homeless runaway youth from 18 to 25. It has also been conducted in Kentucky and, and southern Indiana, and it looks at the trafficking experiences of these youth. So it is available for download for you.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: And the second one which I will talk about much more is about the groups that we run, Sex Trafficking Awareness and Recovery Group, which is conducted at our Phoenix Prostitution Diversion Program. And that is the, where we collect the data that I will talk about in a moment. [cough] I am so sorry. I am a little bit allergic to Arizona.

### **Previous Research**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So I would like to tell you a little bit about some of the research that has been conducted and how, what we know about the research helps us determine how to move forward in our, in our practice, whether we are supporting victims, whether we are going towards prosecution, whether we are, there are investigations, and so on.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, according to Pierce and Koeplinger, Native American women are the most frequently victimized, excuse me, are the most frequent victims of physical and sexual violence in the U.S. compared to other racial and ethnic groups. So we know that they are disproportionately victimized, that we have significant evidence that Native American persons, whether they are male or female or transgender, that they are experiencing pervasive victimization in, in different settings. But how do we

recognize sex trafficking? How do we help identify it? How do we help the community become aware of it and develop prevention and intervention is sort of the whole purpose of our work towards this.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So we are going to look at four studies that have been done on Native American women and girls, all in Minnesota. These are incredibly well done studies for a group that is very difficult to find and difficult to study, and some of the emerging knowledge has been incredibly helpful for us to move forward to develop what we need to know to, to ask questions in our community.

### **Koeplinger and Pierce (2009)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So Koeplinger and Pierce, in 2009, explored four different databases. They interviewed 95 Native women and girls at a social service agency, and they found that 40 percent of them reported involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, and 27 percent met the criteria for sex trafficking under Minnesota law. That...They had another sample of 33 clients they explored, and 63 percent had a sex trafficking experience before they turned 18, so they were child victims of sex trafficking. In another study, they had 38 sex trafficked girls and women, and they specifically looked at recruitment. They looked at how, they looked at how traffickers sell them and how they were exploited by those traffickers, and what they found was that 52 percent were recruited by a friend, 19 percent was by a family member, and 19 percent was by a boyfriend. I think we make a huge assumption from what we have studied and what we have looked at and what we see in media and in movies that the boyfriend is traditionally what we, we identify as the, the primary trafficker. And in their research they found that it was primarily recruitment by a friend. I think that is really important to note.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: When they looked at 95 other clients, they looked at why they exchanged sex, why they were involved in commercial sex. What was the purpose? And 34 percent identified that it was for money. So only 34 percent, while the others identified reasons like shelter and housing, food, drugs, alcohol, transportation or use of a car, or some other type of assistance. So the, the traditional things that we expect when we explore sex trafficking, which are it is a boyfriend who is a trafficker and it is always for money, really is, is demystified here. And the fact that they are finding really alternative reasons for involvement really speaks to how, how prevention and intervention can be designed differently.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So the next study – oh, hold on one sec. Let me go back to that last study. Sorry about that. They also found that, that the entry mechanisms for these groups of people – so they took all of their information and put it together and found that the, the mechanisms for entry into sex trafficking situations were things like stripping and pornography and connecting to others on the internet. That sexting was a risk factor, and that feeling like being sexually exploited was normal due to their childhood experiences of abuse.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: They also talked about experiences by the, the interviewees of violent traffickers and romantic traffickers. The idea that stripping is something that we are seeing kind of bubble to the top over and over as an entry mechanism continues to be valid with strip clubs emerging outside of reservations in places that may have specialty dancers where they advertise that they have Native American women and young adults dancing there.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: They also identified that their victims had a history of running away or being thrown away by their families, and they were identified as homeless and did not have adequate housing. And the variables that we hear over and over again in our work – substance abuse, extreme poverty,



involvement in child welfare, dropping out of school – continued in this Koeplinger and, and Pierce research in 2009.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: They talked about the lack of safety of the victims who tried to exit. So how do they get out of the situation once they have, once they have gotten into it or once they have been snared into it? And they repeatedly spoke about in their research that safety was the key concern. How do you find safety? They have fear and distress of authority. They have perhaps reported things before and the response was not supportive or helpful. Their interactions with child welfare have been maybe negative. They are, they have been involved in juvenile justice and, and they really have few options. They are in situations where they are unable to meet their basic needs. And then they have some important cultural rules that talk about shame and not talking about things, and not speaking poorly about your community in a way that would keep someone silent.

### **Pierce and Koeplinger (2011)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So the next study is, was done by Pierce and Koeplinger in 2011, and what they found was that poverty was a key factor for the American Indian and Alaska women and girls that were targeted by sex traffickers. So they found that Alaska Native and American Indian women and girls were disproportionately served by homeless youth shelters in Minnesota, and that that poverty and lack of housing and lack of stable housing was a propellant that sex traffickers were, were using those needs as a, as a recruitment tool.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: They also talked about historical generational trauma and the risk factors that emerged from that historical generational trauma to include violence and victimization in their families and their communities, depression, mental illness, suicidality, drugs and alcohol abuse, child abuse, intergenerational prostitution, which is something you will hear about in another study as well, the trafficking of their siblings, and the trafficking of their mother or grandmother. So in this study, Pierce and Koeplinger talked about the exiting needs of American Indian and Alaska Natives were confounded by this idea of cultural safety, as not having a place that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally, and physically safe. So exiting requires a place to go to and in, and in almost every case in, in their narratives and in their exploration their, their victims did not have a place where they could find spiritually, socially, and emotional safety.

### **Farley et al. (2011) *Garden of Truth***

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So Farley wrote the *Garden of Truth* in 2011. She interviewed 105 Alaska Native and American Indian women in Minnesota, and she explored their experiences that led them directly into the sexual exploitation. So those 105 persons were, were all sex trafficked. And she also talked about how that sex trafficking experience led them, kind of what, what were the struggles to exit. So here are some of the things in their life history. Nearly 80 percent had an experience of sexual abuse. Two-thirds had a member that had been placed in a state run boarding school for American Indian persons. Ninety-two percent had been raped. Ninety-eight percent had been homeless. Eighty percent had received some sort of substance abuse treatment, and 52 percent had a diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Those were very significant barriers to healing, barriers to change, and this is a really interesting and exciting study to read about the narratives of challenges to, to healing and to exiting and to, to moving forward and finding a life worth living.

### **Pierce (2012)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So Pierce has another study that she explored two parts of a, of a social service agency that served Alaska Natives and American Indian persons in Duluth and in – hold on – Minneapolis. Sorry. I had Minnesota in my brain. And that they, she did two different things. She held roundtables and talked to people who serve sex trafficked persons, and really explored the ways that, that they interacted with persons who had been trafficked. And what they found was that there were specific types of, of traffickers that were really luring their American Indian girls off the reservations to the city, and these were traffickers who were using sort of the finesse techniques. So some romance, but, but more likely they were promising that the victim would become a model or a dancer. They were offering road trips or shopping trips to the city. They were offering to take care of them, that they were offering free places to stay, to buy jewelry or clothing, and to make them feel special.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: They, again, focused specifically on runaway, throwaway, or homeless youth who were most vulnerable. And they particularly targeted kids who had dropped out of school and had no employment options or other work options.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So in her study, she also – so those were the roundtables with specialty groups that were working with trafficked kids. Then she analyzed the intake data for 58 American Indian high-risk and sex-trafficked adolescent girls. She did not have any Alaska Natives in this study. And she found that 34 percent of them had traded sex for something of value. And, and these were, these, these next three statistics were the ones that were really sort of significant in, in this study, is that 26 – over a quarter of them – had a family member that was also involved in prostitution. So all the kids that she interviewed were, had been trafficked as, as adolescents, and 26 percent had a family member involved in prostitution, 41 percent had one or more friends involved, and 31 percent knew a pimp personally. So if they were not in a, in a trafficking situation, there was someone they knew who was a trafficker that had access to them and that they knew personally.

### **No Published Research in Arizona**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Now I am going to move into our study and why we decided that pursuing research on American Indian persons in Arizona who have been sex trafficked is an important, is an important pursuit. So what we know is currently in our services for juvenile probation, adult probation, social services, mental health, that the vast majority of the victims that we work with are kind of grouped together with other groups. We do have a couple of specialty agencies here who currently are, are working on becoming more trained on sex trafficking, but currently do not have any services specific toward sex trafficking. They do not have specific screening or funding or services that are different from what they would get if they were in the traditional programs, culturally appropriate, but traditional programs for domestic violence or substance abuse treatment or, or housing, kind of rehabilitation, so safe, supportive housing.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So law enforcement and federal prosecutors in Arizona have repeatedly reported that they have no cases of sex trafficking coming from tribal land. We have extensively spoken about how, how cases can be built and how that communication from tribal law enforcement can be developed. But currently there are no cases in the city of Phoenix, there are no cases at our federal level, as a state. And, and how can that move forward? And we are working with other law enforcement around our community to, to talk about how. We, we know that people are being trafficked from, from tribal land. How can, how can those cases be developed and what needs to happen next?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So it is not clear if American Indian persons in Arizona have a unique experience or treatment need, if they have been trafficked here or if they were trafficked in other places, if they were trafficked from or on the reservation, or they were trafficked in the city. We do not know if, if the recruitment or the, the response, the, the exiting support is different, and that is something we really want to look at. And I have worked for 11 years with sex trafficked clients and, and trainings since 2006, and, and working with tribal law enforcement in our community, and we have heard repeatedly from all of our partners that their American Indian clients are, have unique features, that they are being trafficked for things that, that we had not perhaps heard of in the past, and that the situations were somewhat different as which would, which would really necessitate that victim advocate response be, be, be aware and, and work towards an understanding of that, that sex trafficking can look really different in different scenarios and settings.

### **Why Should we Study the Sex Trafficking Experiences of American Indian Persons in Arizona?**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We also have some good news, that the Navajo Nation, the largest tribe in our country, which is part – one of their councilmembers is part of our Arizona Human Trafficking Council out of our Governor's Office – he worked really hard and got through a law against human trafficking just recently. And so I have attached that so you can see the language. We also have 22 registered tribes in Arizona, with the Navajo and Tohono O'odham being the two largest in the U.S. And we have nearly 300,000 American Indian persons living in our community. And because there is a depth of knowledge about vulnerabilities that are experienced by American Indian persons already done about child welfare and about sexual abuse and child maltreatment, that we know that, that there is some particular vulnerabilities for this work. And we are working with members of our community to try to find ways to integrate conversations about sex trafficking into other types of prevention work.

### **Sex Trafficking and American Indian Persons: Phoenix, Arizona, Pilot Study**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So this is a pilot study that we have developed. We have the University's permission to do this study, and it is of, of all of the people, it is a cross-sectional design of all of the people that have participated in our Prostitution Diversion Program. So in the City of Phoenix, if you are, if you are picked up for a prostitution charge or an escort without a license charge, an escort violation – so we have an escorting law here and persons are required to register as escorts, and if law enforcement responds to an online escort ad and they do not have a license, they would, instead of charging them with prostitution, they will charge them with an escort violation. Those two groups are sent to the Phoenix Prostitution Diversion Program as an alternative to jail, and they do not have to pay any, any cost to attend the Diversion Program.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: The Diversion Program was started in 1997 by a sex trafficking survivor who worked with Catholic Charities, who is the provider, and the city to design a program led by survivors to support persons who are being prostituted or trafficked, and sort of into the exiting process. This is not culturally specific to any group. It is a regional program. It is only within the, the very wide margins of the City of Phoenix, which is a huge community. And we did not ask for any tribal affiliation. We simply asked about, about what the person's race and ethnicity was, but we did not ask what tribe they were from.

### **Pilot Study**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So we had, persons who completed the survey, we reset our, our pilot study starting in 2011. We have been collecting data there for a couple of years before that, but we reset our data collection, and so this starts in January and goes through May of this year, with 840 persons

participating in the Diversion Program, and 4.4 percent of them identified as American Indian. The age range of the participants was between 18 and 52, with an average of 29 years old. And 34 of the 37 respondents who identified as American Indian were female, two were male, and one identified as both genders.

### **Survey Completed at Diversion Intake**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: This is what our intake looks like at the Diversion Program. It talks about their life history, their experiences about exchanging sex, their child welfare involvement, their child maltreatment, their readiness to leave, their trauma scores, and any barriers to exiting. So some, almost all is qualitative – excuse me – almost all is quantitative data and a couple of questions which you will see are qualitative.

### **Academic and Social Service History**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So what we know about the 37 American Indian persons that we researched were 51 percent of them had been expelled or suspended from school, so had some school complications. Thirty-seven percent, over a third, were put into or identified as having been in special education classes. Almost 60 percent had been social service involved as children, so their families had a social service involvement. And just over 35 percent had been in foster care. The youngest age for foster care involvement is zero, it was just after they were born, and the oldest age they were placed into foster care for the first time was at 16. The average age of foster care entry was 8.8, 8.6 years old.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So these are the 37 cases that we are analyzing. We cannot, if you go back to the last two slides before, we cannot analyze the 37 into the, the 800 other cases. It is too small of a sample and would not be able to, to find any real richness or nuances. Those two groups are too big, too, too disproportionate in size. So we are just going to do a description, I am going to just give a description of, of what we are seeing.

### **Family History**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So the family history. They had reported having zero, no other, no siblings or up to 11 siblings, and they had a range of zero, zero children and 11 children. Forty-five percent reported their parents were never married. Three-quarters had a family member in jail. Almost 60 percent had a family member or foster parent or step-parent who had a problem with drugs or alcohol. Fifty-one percent witnessed someone in their home doing drugs. Almost 60 percent ran away from home before they were 18. And over a quarter had a member who is also involved somehow in the sex industry. So these are some of the pictures that we are seeing of the challenges these clients had faced as children, in their environment, and in the community that they lived.

### **Abuse Experiences**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So here is their child maltreatment report. So 62 percent reported being molested as a child. Forty-four percent reported that they had been raped before age 18. The youngest age reported for sexual, for, for molestation was as an infant, and the youngest age for a sexual assault or rape was 4 years old. The emotional abuse was, was reported by just over a quarter of the, the victims, and we have a sub-scale that we use for emotional abuse with seven questions. But it is a bit difficult to

validate an emotional abuse questionnaire. We believe it is a good proxy for emotional abuse, but I cannot say I think it is, it is actually perfect. I think it is very subjective.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Thirteen percent reported food was, was held as punishment when they were a child. And someone, 10, one out of every 10 reported that someone had hit them so hard when they were a child that they had bled.

### **Self-Harm Behaviors**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So self-harm behaviors. So these are the internalization of, of things and how our clients were coping with their, the experiences of their life. And 40 percent reported that they had been, had cut or self-mutilated in some way. Thirty-four percent said they had not eaten for long periods of time. Twelve percent, so one out of, one out of 10, had been involved somehow in a gang. Fifty-three percent engaged with sex with a complete stranger. And 43 percent had a, had attempted suicide history. So 37 percent reported engaging in risk-taking behavior, and the definition of that in the survey are things like getting in and out of cars with people you do not know, not worrying about your own safety, things like that.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Drug and alcohol use. Fifty-four percent believe – so over half believe that they were addicted to drugs or alcohol. We have them separated by drugs and alcohol, but it was kind of important to, to look at the totality. Eighty-eight percent had used drugs at some point, and 50 percent believed that they were using alcohol excessively.

### **Exchange of Sex for Something of Value**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So when we asked about the exchange, we do not ask about why. We ask about kind of how and what happened, and what were the things for. So 91 percent of the 37 reported that they had exchanged sex for money. The, the second largest was for drugs. A place to stay was over, over a quarter. And then you can see protection, clothes, jewelry, and other. So understanding that, that, that the exchange is sometimes for other things. We have a case that our Bureau of Indian Affairs reported about that in a, in a community not too far out of, out of Arizona where a person was exchanging sex. Her husband was forcing her to exchange sex so they could pay for firewood, so it was a straight exchange for the firewood for the winter. So we did not know how to, we do not know how to nuance that. We do not know how to ask other questions other than “other.” And how could, how could we nuance that in a way that we could understand some of the, the complexities and differences that these clients may experience?

### **Age and Sex Selling**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So when they were asked if they had ever exchanged sex for something of value, 16 of them, so 43 percent, were under the age of 18 the first time they exchanged sex for something of value. So they were clearly identified as sex trafficking victims under the TVPA. But it is important to consider that the average age is 15.6, and I think we, that is in our community our research consistently shows the age of sex trafficking as a, as a minor to be between 14.8 and 14.9. So this seems a bit older and I think that is something to consider for us when we, when we target prevention and look at prevention and intervention. So the youngest age reported for a person who exchanged sex for something of value was 13, and the oldest was 42.

## **Sex Selling**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So where, where was the sex selling? So 60 percent were on the street, 44 percent were on the internet, 17 each had a pornography or they were on telephone, 18 percent were in strip clubs, and 3 percent participated in a legal brothel, an illegal brothel, not a, not a legal brothel.

## **Trauma Symptoms Inventory (Briere 1995)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So our, one of the surveys that we conduct in our assessment of the Diversion Program was called the Trauma Symptom Inventory by John Briere. And we found that the clients, so there is a clinically significant, not clinically significant number, and we use the, the raw number to look at change from pre to post, but this is their initial number. And 40 percent reported having dissociative symptoms, 35 percent had defensive avoidance, 37 percent had intrusive experiences. So 35 percent identified as dysfunctional sexual behaviors, and 35 percent identified as impaired self-reference. Impaired self-reference really speaks about really not having a firm sense of self, having a shifting sense of self-identity.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, as we approach our work, we look at these variables. We look at the input from our total group, and we try to design our program to meet these needs. So, if we are seeing high rates of depression in this, in this group, we have almost a quarter who, who had a clinically significant rate of depression, we would, we would try to integrate that into our program. But because our, our program is for a much larger group and may not have the same inputs, it is really hard to design and make sure we are meeting these specific needs.

## **University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Scale (URICA)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So there are some specific – another questionnaire we use which we, we really like is called the URICA, and that is about change and readiness to change. And we found that, that the majority of the clients were in the contemplation stage, and that is that they are aware that there is a problem that is happening in their life, but they do not know how to move forward yet. So, they are thinking about it, but they are not moving forward. And for us in a diversion program, this is really critically important that, that they are provided with all of the opportunities they need to move forward and have the time and the opportunity to think about it. So, these numbers are really helpful to us as we design. We also have to recognize that in, in the case of our prostitution diversion program, that the trafficker is oftentimes dropping them off at our program. It is an outpatient program. It is a couple hours a day, a couple days a week. So, sometimes we, we just have to acknowledge that they may be thinking about it, but the person they are about to interact again with in, in the car that is picking them up is, is the person that is controlling them, and we have to consider that.

## **Sex Traffickers/Pimps**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, as our, as we went through the survey, we found that there were very specific comments about traffickers with these, this American Indian group that reported. So they reported things like, “I did not like it, because I was never given what I wanted with the money.” “I was in a very bad situation.” “My pimp used to be my boyfriend. It was his idea for me to prostitute on the streets. He used to abuse me, hit me around, and if I did not do what he told me to do, he always made me work every night.” “It was really hard. You can never rest or sleep until you have his money.”



### **Comment About Trafficker/Pimp**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Here is another one. "My pimp used to be my boyfriend. When he found out I lost my job, he came up with the idea of me working with prostitutes on the street and making money every day." And, oh, I guess that is the same one I just read. Sorry about that.

### **How did you get Involved (entry)?**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So here are some other entry questions that are important for you to think about. There are a couple of different ways. So here we see a friend, which we heard about from some of Sandy Pierce's research, that a friend was part of the conduit into the work. So, on the left side you will see a friend, economics, force, fraud, and coercion, strip club.

### **Entry (continued)**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: And then the next slide is avoid jail, pimp/boyfriend, drugs/alcohol, and family.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So let us go to a friend. So we saw a number of, of our clients reported that a friend had kind of walked them through it or talked to them about it, or sometimes we saw a mother's, their mother's friend, an adult came over to their house and told them about it.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Economics was absolutely a push factor for the victims that we had in this group.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: The force, fraud, and coercion. "He was very manipulative. He very quickly made me feel worthless and made me feel like I could not do anything. So he pushed me in this direction, saying it was my way to help out."

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: And then the strip club, sort of half way, the bartending and dancing eventually became an opportunity to escort. Started working at a strip club, and that was not enough, and the opportunity to make money was really present there.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, being homeless, avoiding jail, finding money in ways of not being detected by the system was also identified.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Here is the, the same one with the pimp is a boyfriend.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: The drug addiction, "I needed a place to lay my head and I could buy my drugs," "My addiction to drug and alcohol."

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: We had a young woman, she was 18 years old who was in a sample who, who talked about being sexually abused as a child. And then when she turned 13, her dad said to her, "My dad told me to go make my money, like go make his money." So her, her whole, her whole intent was that she needed to – he pushed her into being, into situations where she had to exchange sex for something of value, in her case though with money, and then a trafficker found her. And then here is a place where her sister taught her. Her sister was, this was a different case where her sister was also being trafficked and brought her into that network. In that case, there were some gang members involved.



## **Vulnerabilities**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So some of the vulnerabilities that you will see in this group were that the people in their lives presented as vulnerabilities, their friends or their family members. They knew pimps. There were people in their lives who they identified as pimps, and in many cases there were boyfriends who pushed them in the, in the, into the trafficking situation. And some of the situations included alcohol and drug use, previous abuse, they needed money, they had experienced loss, their trauma symptoms were very high. Many of them had significant levels on, on the trauma symptoms, which result in some continued problems. And many of them were kind of in that mid stage of motivation to change.

## **Ready to Leave**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So when, when we asked the clients through the survey, were they ready to leave? And 84 percent said they are ready to leave.

## **What Prevents you From Leaving?**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: But some of the challenges included they did not have anywhere to go. They felt a lack of support. They could not find another way to get money. They did not know how to live in a different way, like the right way of living, and they just simply – so we see kind of economics, place to live, finding a job. The vulnerabilities that pushed them there are also retaining them in the situation.

## **What has led to the Decision to Leave**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, some of the 37 were able to exit were successfully exiting and said the following things that led them to the decision to leave. “Because I am tired of it. I am not only hurting myself, but my family and friends. Plus I just want to go now and live a normal life again.” “I have nothing to show for my life. I want something better.” “I never wanted this life. It is risky and scary, and I love living. I want to continue my life successfully.” “Decided to go to college to get a better job and money.”

## **What we do not Know**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, some of the things that we do not know from this research. So, what we have done now, the next step for us we have, where we have continued our development of a, a regional council who are working on American Indian research on sex trafficking made up of people from our community who are members of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Persons who have small coalitions for American Indian persons and their victimization and their concerns, working with different advocates from different organizations, some who are American Indian persons themselves. But trying to figure out how do we respond to this, just these 37 cases? What can we learn from this, and what should we do moving forward? Should we pursue training? Should we...How, how should we move forward in a, in a way that participates in the community and feels like we are not telling people what to do, but asking people how to participate with us? And how can we work together?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, are these respondents unique when we compare to other participants in the Diversion Program, our key program? We cannot do those comparisons. But the, the risks that they demonstrated were significant and of, of great concern. So, we think that based on this knowledge we can start developing some new information in our community to develop prevention programs. We can

use this information to train tribal law enforcement, federal prosecutors, and, and speak to our communities to start developing prevention programs, trying to look through some of these indicators.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So do these respondents have special treatment needs is also a concern. Should there be culturally specific or specific programming that are developed from that? So, these are one of the questions that we are going to work on in our work group.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Are there unique ways of supporting their exiting experiences? Oftentimes, we have heard anecdotally that people do not want to participate in the prosecution of their offender. These are tribal women or men or transgender persons, because they did not want their, their community to find out. So, are there ways that we can, that can support victims in their exiting, whatever that looks like, and, and have them create a place that feels safe and they are able to participate as they wish?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Where is the sex trafficking being initiated? So, what we were not able to determine from our study that Sandy Pierce has done, but we do not know if it is the same in our community, was are people going onto reservations and recruiting victims? Are they using technology and social media? How are they finding the victims? We do know how they are being trafficked here. We know that they are on the street and on the internet and being used in, in multiple ways of sex selling, but we do not know how it is initiated. So, where should that prevention be targeted?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Are the victims on tribal land or in urban settings? We do have a tremendous population that lives part time on reservations and part time in the city. Many of our clients have multiple addresses, but we do not know where the, where the trafficking initiated.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: How are the casinos involved? How can we work with our casinos to create prevention and intervention? I know tribal law enforcement has become increasingly aware, but is, is law enforcement really the avenue to pursue? We have done some trainings with casinos. I know others around the country have as well. But how can we, how can we determine the level of involvement of casinos? And how can we, how can we bring them in as participants in this prevention and intervention?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: And finally, is technology/the Internet being used as part of that recruitment of, of these victims?

## **References**

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, here are the references for the different pieces of the different studies that I presented for you, and then I am ready for questions and answers.

## **Presenter Q and A**

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Dominique. I would like to remind our listeners to continue to submit questions in the Q and A box as we begin this, as we begin this Q and A portion of the presentation. So, Dominique, one of our first questions was in regards to the percentages that you discussed with the pilot study, and specifically I think it was slide 31 with the self-harm behaviors.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Sure. Let me go back.

Melissa Blasing: The percentages shown...Yes. So, the percentages shown, is that based off the sample of the 37 who identified as American Indian?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Yes.

Melissa Blasing: Okay. That was one of our questions.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: This is the whole...My whole description is only of the 37, so this is a small sample that has some richness to it. We asked quite rich questions, but these are really limited to just the 37 cases that we have had. We have had no access to any other type of research or data in our community, so we think this is sort of, this pilot is just the beginning. But, yes, this is just about those 37 cases.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you. We have also had a lot of comments in our discussion board about screening tools...

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Sure.

Melissa Blasing: ...for child serving agencies. Do you have any thoughts on this or recommendations? I know there has been a lot of tools discussed, and I just wanted to get your insight on this.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: I know, I know OTIP (Office on Trafficking in Persons) is developing a standardized screening, and we have tried actively in our community to integrate in a, in a policy protocol some sort of a screening. And we are really struggling in Arizona. Our Department of Child Welfare continues to, to only take reports of sex trafficking if there is a parent or guardian involved in the trafficking situation. So any pursuit of any type of screening after what we would need to get a report to child welfare or law enforcement has really been discouraged. So we are working with lots of other entities, trying to develop some sort of screenings, but they are really limited to who, what, where, and when. We have been very, very concretely discouraged to pursue valid screening instruments that might give us much more information. So we, we kind of have our own regional struggles and our own regional conversations. We know that in certain child welfare systems there are complex screenings. We know that in, in some settings there are really wonderful ways of getting good information, but we are not able to integrate them. So in, in our child welfare system in Arizona there is a flag that if a child is, is on runaway status or returned from runaway status, that they are asked if they have been trafficked, which meets one of the federal, one of the federal law guidelines. In our, in our homeless runaway programs, they have questions in their surveys that are valid, but it does not equal a screening. A screening is something quite different and looking at risk factors and trying to find a score. There are just sort of yes and nos. "Have these things happened?" And in our juvenile justice system we have spent a huge amount of time training all the juvenile probation officers. And, again, they are restricted by what they can screen for, but they can ask the child. And they have a couple of different answers if they believe that the child has been trafficked, if they suspect that there may be some trafficking, or there is no trafficking. So we are limited as a state. Each and every, each and every state has their own constrictions and restrictions, but we, we know that we are having a really tough time going past the who, what, why, when questions by some of the people who make the decisions in our state about, about law enforcement and child welfare policy.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Dominique. And to follow up with that question, we also have some comments about safety planning. And I know that this is something that you are looking towards, in

regards to what we do not know in regards to supporting their exiting experiences. But do you have any recommendations or thoughts in regards to resources that the audience could look to in regards to safety planning?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So, we have, we have created a mechanism for our community to understand what services are available. So, safety planning per se, that if someone is engaging with a person who they feel is in an unsafe situation, we do not have a lot of new direction. We have our traditional safety plans that we would do with a domestic violence victim or a person who is in a violent relationship. But we, what we have done is we have created something called [www.sextraffickinghelp.com](http://www.sextraffickinghelp.com). It is a website that is Arizona specific, and what we have done is put all of the agencies that are trauma-informed and victim-centered on that website, who have been trained either by us or by, by other kind of valid trainers. And the idea is to create a capacity in our community to serve trafficked youth and trafficked adults, particularly based on their, their needs. So, when you go onto that website, [www.sextraffickinghelp.com](http://www.sextraffickinghelp.com), you will find that it is organized by, by either by topic, or if you go to the bottom there is GIS used to, to organize it by region. And the idea is that a kiddo is coming out of detention. She has been trafficked. She is going into foster care, that the psychologist that works there who is running the STAR group knows that this person is at high risk for being re-trafficked, probably still has some relationship with that trafficker. What resources can she connect that victim to? The best way we could be, we could support that work was to put them all in one place, that it describes their services, describes exactly who to call. All of those services do not specifically serve trafficking victims only. Some of them do, but not all of them. But the person that is listed is known, is, is someone that they can call directly and obtain services. And that was the best way we could find to, for any population in our community, to try to build capacity, show the depth of the services that we have available and that people could instantly respond and, and get those services.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you. So, we had some questions in regards to, if you could provide any examples of trafficking survivors that might have interacted with the justice system as a defendant, just for other crimes. But I think maybe perhaps, I know that sometimes there are difficulties in having victims testify. But have you seen any examples on what that looks like? And I think that might kind of coincide with safety planning, the safety planning aspect.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: So as a defendant, so we have worked with non-Native women in our community who have been charged as, as sex traffickers as bottoms and have, and have received consequences or sentences related to that charge. What I was talking about regarding American Indian communities is that tribal law and human trafficking have not, other than in the Navajo Nation, we are – and we have been trying to find out where are other places that have a policy that makes human trafficking illegal on tribal land. So, of course, federal law has, has some implications, but because tribal law enforcement are not perhaps communicating with our, our federal prosecutors, we, we are not seeing cases develop. And have we worked with local law enforcement who said, “You know, we have arrested women for, for prostitution.” When they get to the Diversion Program, their trafficking emerges, but when they are interacting with law enforcement and the, the detective is questioning them, they do not present necessarily as a trafficked person and they are not willing or, or interested in participating in, in pursuing prosecution of their trafficker. So, law enforcement says to us and our, and our, our group that is working on this, “We are not seeing it.” So, the trafficking of American Indian persons, is it happening? The sex trafficking of American Indian persons, it is actually happening here? And if it is actually happening here, what should we do next, and how should we move forward?

Melissa Blasing: Thanks. So our next question is in regards to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. And from one of our listeners, you know, they have listened to your last presentation and this one. And question, or the comment and question is that there are many parallels between what you are doing and the Adverse Childhood Experiences study. Do you plan or have you seen any studies that focus specifically on that ACE study as a measure that can be used to define risk in this population?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Our project – so I think that is someone I used to work with at DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice) – hello – in Florida. I, so we have a study called the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), and that study was repeated in, we, we – well, let us start with this. We have integrated into all of our research with sex trafficking victims in any setting the ACE's questions, but we do not use the traditional ACEs, the list. So, in Kentucky, or Kentucky-ana as Jennifer Middleton calls it, they took our YES survey and added a straight ACEs questionnaire. And they have recently published on that. So that is Jennifer Middleton out of the University of Kentucky School of Social Work. And they found that, that absolutely, and we have found across the board that the ACEs are significant in our population. What the hard part is, is working with kids who are at high risk for a long, long time like I have. We know the mechanisms are there for someone to be trafficked. It is simply if a trafficker finds them, if a person, a friend talks them into it, if a person, if the opportunity comes along. And we have found that the ACEs just push them closer and closer to that opportunity or to that trafficker, to that situation that they will get into or be placed into because of the vulnerabilities they have. So, we do, I do believe that the ACEs absolutely are, are on our list of risk factors. We know them to be incredibly important and to revictimization and we, we have made the link with, with trafficking. We just do not, we do not know how to design prevention better, because of our knowledge of the risk factors, other than what we have tried to do for other types of child maltreatment. So, yes, we are working on it. Yes, I think this is incredibly important, and we are still trying to figure out where to move forward in the future.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you. So going back to screening tools, we had a question about any screening tools used in schools. I know you talked a little bit about Project STARFISH in some previous Webinars, but could you just touch on that again?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Sure. So, Project STARFISH is a, a new program we developed through the McCain Institute, through some support from the McCain Institute. And the idea was we have a really difficult time here in Arizona bringing prevention into schools, and we have really limited opportunities. And so, our technique to work with kids was to work with their school social workers, their empowerment specialists, their principals, superintendents, and their teachers. So, this website, [www.projectstarfish.education](http://www.projectstarfish.education), provides things like samples of policies that if a youth in the school is identified as a trafficking victim, what should that teacher, social worker, principal, the police officer assigned to the school, what should they do? What is their next action? And each state has a different action or a different plan. We know it is law enforcement and child welfare, of course, but what is the procedure? How do they move forward? What is next? So, we developed model policies. We have developed trainings for teachers and mental health workers and medical personnel, which are all available on that website as well. Just a quick 101, takes about 15 minutes to take. And what our hope is, is that school personnel will be interested, take that certificate, take that little training, and then bring the conversation to their schools from a trusted adult, so that if someone does identify, that we would be able to have a plan in action so that, that the teachers and the social workers and the principal and the school resource officer all kind of – and the school nurse of course – all have a plan. Screenings in schools are complicated by the same screening restrictions that you will find for any child welfare screening. So, in our state we are restricted to who, what, when, where, and why. We are, we are unable to implement screenings in our schools that have more complexity to it about trafficker when – when did

that happen? How did you get to know them? We are really a little such hamstrung by some of those restrictions. One of our pursuits, and we will be starting hopefully a project in January, is with forensic nurse examiners. They are able to screen, because they are already using that information to testify in court. So those are considerations as you develop screenings, that if there is a prosecution, if there is court action, that the person completing the screening may be required to testify. And that is just a consideration. I am not saying it is a deterrent, but it is a consideration. So, for us in our state, we were able to and are going to work to develop a screening for forensic nurse examiners. So, their questions, which will already be admissible to court, will support findings of, of reports from the victim that are not, that are not, that, that it expands the, the data collected for that case using that screening. Other screenings around the country, I have a notebook full of screenings from other places, but, but we have, we are not able to implement them in, in, in the programs that serve persons under the age of 18 in our state.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Dominique. And we also have questions in regards to people interested in perhaps what the steps would be in their state. And as you mentioned, the research and the data is limited. But do you have any recommendations of either a place that they could go to just start that process, really identify what the numbers may look like in their community or any kinds of resources?

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: On based on, on sex trafficking of American Indian persons or, or in general?

Melissa Blasing: Yes. Yes.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: American Indian persons?

Melissa Blasing: Both.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Well, I mean we, we have done some comprehensive literature searching and, and data searching and you are going to, those four resources that I identified were the ones that were the most comprehensive, were the ones that we were most able to connect to in a way that was helpful in our work. There are wonderful stories written by survivors that are really helpful to sort of understand the process. Some of the media reports are really interesting and great stimuli on, on how to begin research in communities, but we simply do not have a good template of, of where to go and how to, how to go forward. We are, we are working on it, and we are trying hard to do it in a culturally appropriate respect-based way. But this is, there are a number of, of constrictions to finding victims, identifying victims, interviewing victims, and, and trying to use that information to make change. So, we know that this data has limitations. It is, it has got, it is only 37 cases. It has, has lot of weaknesses, but we also think that it is a great pilot for us to justify the interest, get people motivated to move forward, that we cannot forget this. This is, this is an important conversation. These are people who are human beings and exist, and their stories were very real. So, we think that this is just the step forward on this. And I hope many of you who are listening have a better way of, of putting data together and talking about American Indian persons and Alaska Native persons who are being sex trafficked, because we simply have a, have a blank slate here. And we really need a lot more information as we compel tribes to integrate training and, and knowledge building, and then procedures and policies to make things not legal on their, on tribal land as well as interventions and actions for prevention and, and resources for people if they are trafficked as a, as a response.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Dominique. And I know we had a question in regards to the references. I just wanted to put up this slide and then give you, Dominique, just one more chance to make any closing comments before we conclude today's Webinar.

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz: Thank you all so much for listening. I really want to emphasize that trafficking research is complicated, and it, it is not, it is not a straight shot. We have lots of barriers, but it is incredibly important as, as a community, as a society that we look beneath the surface, that we move forward on this. We have a research center here where we work hard to pursue research. There are a number of other institutes around the country who are doing really great work, and I just want to encourage you to try to access their research. Many of the, the articles that I talked about are available on the web. They are not through academic institutions. But it is important that we know more and ask more questions, and ethically and culturally appropriately do this research moving forward.

Melissa Blasing: Thank you, Dominique, for providing your insight and responding to our audience's questions. I would encourage you all if you still have questions or there are other topics that you would like to hear more about, to include those ideas and thoughts in our evaluation. We will definitely take a look at that, and it will help in our planning for future Webinars. So, before we close I would like to thank you for participating in today's Webinar, and give a special thanks to Dominique for joining us. This concludes our three-part series with her, and so I do appreciate her taking the time to share her research findings and that of others to support the investigations in regards to commercial sexual exploitation. So, at this time, Alyson, I will turn the presentation back to you.

### **Webinars on OJJDP's Online University**

Alyson Freedman: Great. Thank you, Melissa, and thank you, Dominique. This Webinar will be archived on OJJDP's Online University in approximately 3 weeks. You can contact the National Criminal Justice Training Center at Fox Valley if you have, if you need more information. You can also contact OJJDP or NTTAC via the Help Desk, and the contact information is on this slide.

### **Online Evaluation**

Alyson Freedman: And we would also appreciate it, as Dominique mentioned, if you could take a few minutes to complete the feedback survey at the end of the Webinar. Thank you so much, and have a great afternoon.

[End.]

*Points of view or opinions expressed in this webinar are those of the presenter(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.*