

Regional Law
Safety & Justice
Committee



REGIONAL LAW SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 28, 2015

7:30 – 9:00 A.M.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month: A Unique Role for Cities – Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director, King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Ms. Stone, Executive Director of the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC), began the meeting with a presentation on Sexual Assault Awareness month, happening nationally in April. She tailored her presentation to cities, but content applied to all levels of government. The national theme: “Prevention is possible” has been adapted locally to “Imagine a world free of sexual violence.”

Ms. Stone told the group she has seen much enthusiasm and a change in approach in the last 4-5 years. Previously people would say, “This doesn’t happen here.” Now movies like *Spotlight* are encouraging discussion of sexual abuse and the Seattle archdiocese just released names of those accused of sexual assault in Western Washington. Ms. Stone does not believe that would have happened years ago.

Ms. Stone reviewed national statistics (see slides). One in three girls and one in six boys experience sexual abuse in childhood. 60% of sexual assaults are never reported to law enforcement. Most sexual assaults are committed by family members or acquaintances.

Ms. Stone outlined the actions businesses, governments, and individuals can take, and explained the resources available from the King County Sexual Assault Center and from other area organizations.

Cities in particular, and also other governments, can promote and support sexual assault awareness month. Mayor Denis Lay of Renton has issued a challenge to other mayors to support and promote the month. Governments can help more people come forward. KCSARC works with law enforcement, prosecutors, and legislatively. While resources are scarce, governments can do more.

Individuals can talk with kids about healthy relationships, sexual violence, and consent. Ms. Stone emphasized that this is not a one-time conversation – it’s not a flu shot, but something that needs to be built into culture.

Part of KCSARC’s role is ensuring that victims have someone with them throughout the process. Services are available in English and Spanish. The organization is also heavily involved with Sexual Assault Protection orders. Washington is one of a handful of states that has this type of protection order. Under current law, the order must be renewed every two years. There is legislative bipartisan support to

modify the law to align with other protection orders so that length of time is set by a judge. Ms. Stone asked for support from other governments to enact that change.

The organization is also working with employers to provide information to their employees.

Ms. Stone's specific suggestions for cities are:

1. Take the pledge and issue a proclamation: template provided by KCSARC
2. Run the KCSARC video on your public access station: the video shows kids in their own words
3. Promote 100 Conversations: the website and app that helps adults talk to kids about sexual assault <http://www.100conversations.org/>

KSARC can send cities the number of calls they've responded to in specific areas. In addition to KCSARC King County is fortunate to have a number of other area resources available (see slide). RLSJC members received a packet with information about Sexual Assault Awareness Month, 100 Conversations, and other KCSARC resources.

Buyer Beware Program: – Val Richey, King County Prosecutor's Office

Mr. Richey provided information about the Buyer Beware program, a new approach to prosecuting sex crimes. Mr. Richey last spoke to the RLSJC two years ago when the program was in the planning phase. His presentation provided an overview of the area market for buying sex, with an emphasis on minors, and described Buyer Beware's approach, which focuses on demand and targets seven different sectors of society.

For a long time the criminal justice focus was going after people who were sellers. This traditional approach focused on arresting and prosecuting prostituted people. Mr. Richey explained that there are three groups of people involved in prostitution – pimps, buyers, and prostituted people. But law enforcement disproportionately arrested the people involved in prostitution who are among the most vulnerable in our society – poor, minorities, mentally, ill, homeless. The assumption was that the sex trade could be stopped if law enforcement kept arresting prostituted people. That assumption was both unethical and ineffective. When thinking about a different approach, the area that had not been addressed was demand – buyers of sex.

The demographics of minor victims and buyers are opposite (see slides). Based on King County arrests for buying sex from minors, minor victims are disproportionately black and Native American, while buyers are disproportionately white compared to King County overall demographics.

Mr. Richey described the marketplace for sex in the area. Most sex is sold online – with over 100 websites where prostitution is available. There is a huge volume of ads selling sex. The crushing volume of the demand side of the marketplace often goes unnoticed. In one 24 hour period on one website about 7,000 people were estimated to be soliciting sex. Local sites have built communities to discuss how to buy sex, post descriptions, and write reviews similar to Yelp. One of those local sites had 15-

20,000 members. Mr. Richey described the activity as “a massive criminal enterprise to exploit people.” Detectives posting fake ads will get 200-250 responses in 2 hours.

While statistics on the supply side are hard to find, research indicates about 90% want out and are being controlled by 3rd parties (pimps). Criminal justice has traditionally been focused on those people. However, there are roughly four times as many buyers of sex than sellers in King County (see slide). However, the demand side of the market appears to be much larger. In an active year, law enforcement could probably arrest 500 people, but this is only a tiny fraction of the estimated tens of thousands of buyers in the region. Thus, demand would not be addressed and commercial sexual abuse would not end. Criminal justice is important to ending commercial sexual exploitation, but not a silver bullet. Commercial sex buying is an individual problem for each transaction, but it's also a social problem. Buyer Beware was developed in collaboration with other entities to address both the individual and social problem (see slide).

Buyer Beware developed a multi-pronged approach targeting seven sectors of society:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: Law enforcement shifted from targeting the supply side to the demand side. See slide – over 50 minors were charged with prostitution crimes in 2009. Over time, those kids are now referred to services. In 2013, law enforcement and prosecutors started going after buyers who are the cause of this issue: 140 have been arrested for buying sex between 2013 and 2015.

Some people have the view that exploitation ends when someone turns 18. That's not the case – Buyer Beware has been working with cities to reduce arrests for adults too. For the first time ever in 2014, there are more arrests of buyers than arrests of sellers.

The traditional approach when there were buyer arrests was citation and release. There is a mandate for a 6 hour lecture (“John School”), which was not considered effective. Buyer Beware developed a substantive 10 week program to stop sexual exploitation. Johns may be court referred, but they are also self-referred, which might be surprising. Many of these Johns are ashamed and stuck in a cycle. Mr. Richey explained that he has sympathy for these individuals, who did not previously access to resources to help end their behavior. Sexual Addicts Anonymous has a religious component, which isn't for everyone, and most of them are not hard core sexual deviants in need of traditional sexual deviancy therapy.

Mr. Richey has heard from numerous attorneys regarding their client's appreciation of the program. He noted it is very unusual for a defendant to speak positively about court-ordered treatment. Attitudes are changing substantially and trainers will be following up to determine if changes in behavior are long lasting.

TECHNOLOGY: Most men buy sex through the internet. Buyer Beware create ads that pop up when someone searches for sex that provide education about human trafficking. The program can reach 150,000 a month with Google ads and 3-4,000 a month with Bing ads. The program also targets review boards, including a recent seizure that was in the news. A separate social media project targeted men between the ages of 18 and 24, because, on average, men start buying sex at age 21.

BUSINESS/EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: Most buyers are white professionals, and employer policies can play an active role in discouraging sexual exploitation. The program launched with 18 employers, including King County and the City of Seattle. Last Friday King county came together with representatives from all agencies to watch a video and brainstorm solutions.

EDUCATION: Mr. Richey framed this component as, “talking, talking, talking” with young people about the risks of commercial sexual exploitation. The programs have focused on high school education, but are now branching out to college campuses. Rather than focusing all sexual assault education on women, the approach focuses on guys as well.

MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS: Because of the historically terrible relationship with law enforcement, LGBTQ communities have extremely low reporting rates. Buyer Beware works to let people know they will not be arrested for prostitution if they come forward to report violence by buyers.

HEALTH: Buyer Beware is working toward developing and distributing pamphlets for the Stopping Sexual Exploitation program at STD clinics. Men often go to clinics rather than their normal doctor when infected with an STD. They’re at a point where they may be open to learning.

MEDIA: Mr. Richey explained the importance of the media. The average guy is surrounded by a lot of pornography, review boards, etc. if that’s the only media message they’re exposed to, efforts to stop sexual exploitation will lose.

Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Youth – Leslie Briner, Sexual Exploitation Policy and Training Coordinator, YouthCare

Leslie Briner provided the final presentation on sex crimes, with a focus on sexual exploitation and trafficking of youth. Her presentation described misconceptions about trafficking, recent changes in the sex trade, different types of trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors, and explained some signs of trafficking. She discussed the definition of commercial sex, which occurs if “anything of value” is exchanged for a sex act. This means an exchange of money does not need to take place. (See training slides for details.)

One form of exploitation is survival sex. The definition of trafficking becomes gray when there is not a third party involved, but Ms. Briner invited the audience to expand their perspective to when a third party is not involved.

While there is a common idea that pimps are waiting outside soccer games to kidnap our daughters, this is rare. Kidnapping does happen, but uncommonly with strangers. While all children are at risk, we need to acknowledge disproportionality. Commonly people who are already in the life are kidnapped. It disproportionately impacts youth who are already vulnerable: youth of color, LGBTQ youth, youth in poverty, and those with instability in the home.

Ms. Briner, who has been working in commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking prevention for 10 years, described a significant change in how the sex trade works now that smart phones are ubiquitous. Before smart phones, the trade was largely street based, which is easier to control. Most girls had pimps

(also referred to as “3rd party exploiters” or “traffickers”), which are still common, but smart phones make the market more complicated. For example, there are incidents of high school cheerleaders pimping out younger students. Looking for a stereotypical profile of a pimp will cause a lot to be missed. In five minutes anyone can post a picture on Backpage and get calls immediately. If you’re 15 and you already have a history of harm and exploitation. Pretty much any 15 year old can access the market. Gang members are pimping youth on the side. Family exploitation is the most underreported. This might start with a break on the rent from the landlord if the son or daughter provides sexual favors and escalates from there.

The other major change in recent years is gang involvement. There was a division of labor between drugs and prostitution, but the recession changed that.

Another form of trafficking is self-managed groups of young women. There is a whole business side of this, which often goes unacknowledged. Even if there is not a 3rd party trafficker involved, these kids are not having fun. It is still abuse and still a felony. While not all buyers are actively overtly violent, if only 10% are, violence is a routine occurrence. There is also the inherent violence in the power imbalance. Ms. Briner recounted she has heard many stories of peer-to-peer commercial sexual exploitation. The social act of buying sex is becoming more normed among youth.

Ms. Briner described other types of commercial sexual exploitation that does not fit the expected scenario of one buyer and one seller operating in a hotel room. Instances of commercial sexual exploitation occur in strip clubs. While Puget Sound area establishments are well-regulated, it is common for girls to get fake IDs and go to work in strip clubs in Portland, which are less regulated. Web camming is increasingly and exploitation may occur at parties.

Red flags for commercial sexual exploitation include multiple cell phones, evasive behavior, and new, older friends

YouthCare runs the Bridge Collaborative in partnership with the Auburn Youth Resources and Friends of Youth. The Bridge collaborative is a CSEC advocate program with a 24/7 advocate hotline. Callers can speak with trained advocates at any time, who respond in a victim centered manner.

Legislative Preview: Rachel Smith, King County Executive’s Office; Ellie Wilson-Jones, Sound Cities Association, Policy Analyst; Nick Harper, Seattle Office of Intergovernmental Relations

The meeting ended with a panel presentation on the legislative priorities from the King County Executive’s Office, the Sound Cities Association, and the City of Seattle. See handouts for details on the King County and City of Seattle priorities as presented by Ms. Smith and Mr. Harper.

Ms. Wilson-Jones discussed issues the Sound Cities Association is watching closely, including a bill to ban fireworks. A version of the bill passed out of committee that would retain a one-year waiting period, but allow for a 30-day mechanism under certain circumstances. Other closely watched issues are bills on body cameras and affordable housing.

