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April 30, 2015

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New Research Shows Health Center Providers Key Players in Combatting Sex Trafficking of Children

OAKLAND, April 30, 2015 – New research from [Asian Health Services \(AHS\)](#), a member health center of the [Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations \(AAPCHO\)](#), shows that primary care providers in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) play a critical role in addressing the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is growing and is estimated to affect 300,000 children annually in the United States.

Findings outlined in an [article published in *The Journal of Applied Research on Children*](#)* show that significant health impacts, which include violence, substance abuse, mental illness, sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy, can be used as clinical indicators to screen for sex trafficking of children. Researchers determined that primary care providers are key to screen for commercial exploitation in youth patients. “Community health centers are uniquely positioned to address the problem of sex trafficking of children,” says Kimberly S.G. Chang, MD, former family physician at AHS, Mongan Commonwealth Fund Fellow at Harvard, and lead author of the article. “We have a powerful opportunity as providers to prevent and intervene in a problem that has severe long-term physical and mental health consequences for these adolescents.”

AHS, a FQHC in Oakland, Calif., reviewed its patient medical records to determine the prevalence of commercially sexually exploited children. AHS providers developed and administered a CSEC screening tool on patients with suspected risk factors. “Patient patterns of clinical testing and sexual health are important indicators in identifying children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The provocative findings also underscore the need for routine screening among adolescent patients,” said Thu Quach, PhD, director of community health and research at AHS and co-author of the article.

“These findings are incredibly valuable,” added Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of AAPCHO. “It is our hope that this study will be distributed broadly within the community health center network so more providers will understand the impact they can have to help victims of CSEC through early intervention and clinical screening.”

Dr. Chang, and Dr. Rochelle Rollins from the Administration for Children and Families, are partnering with AAPCHO, the Migrant Clinicians Network, and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, to provide a training to highlight the importance of identifying victims of human trafficking in health care settings. The training, given for partners in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will be conducted in-person, and available online via a webinar. The training is scheduled for May 18, 2015 from 1:00-3:00pm EDT. Register for the training [here](#).

*The *Journal of Applied Research on Children* is a publication of the CHILDREN AT RISK Institute—an academically oriented policy and research collaborative focused on facilitating research and scholarship to promote new and innovative public policy solutions to the challenges faced by children. This issue was generously sponsored by the Allstate Foundation. Download the article [here](#).

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About AHS

AHS is a community health center in Oakland, California, that offers primary health care and dental services, serving over 24,000 patients and over 105,000 patient visits annually. Our mission is to serve and advocate for the medically underserved, including the immigrant and refugee Asian community, and to assure equal access to health care services regardless of income, insurance status, language, or culture. For more information on AHS, please visit www.asianhealthservices.org.

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 35 community health organizations dedicated to promoting advocacy, collaboration, and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders in the United States. For more information on AAPCHO and its Guiding Principles and Values, please visit www.aapcho.org.

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