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## **As Commercial Sex Trafficking of Children Rates Rise, Researchers Find Asian American Adolescents at High Risk**

**OAKLAND, Calif.** – A recent article from Asian Health Services (AHS), a member health center of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), shows that an increasing number of Asian American children are at risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking. It is estimated that as many as 300,000 children become victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the United States annually.

The [article published in the \*International Journal of Social Science Studies\* \(IJSSS\)](#), shows that due to multiple factors including poverty and intergenerational conflict, a growing number of Asian American adolescents—many of whom are of Southeast Asian descent—are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation. AHS staff and providers found an increase in the number of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC), as patients repeatedly sought care for symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases, reported multiple sexual partners, and revealed a history of sexual abuse. Recognizing the key role of primary care providers in addressing sexual exploitation and trafficking of patients, AHS with its community partner Banteay Srei developed a tool to screen patients for suspected CSEC risk factors.

“As providers, we have the unique and crucial opportunity to prevent children from becoming victims of sex trafficking,” said Dr. Kimberly Chang, AHS physician and a co-author of the study. “Patient clinical patterns and sexual health are key indicators in identifying children who are victims of or at risk for commercial sexual exploitation, and routine screening and increased patient and community education is necessary to curb the rising CSEC epidemic.”

AAPCHO recognizes the increasing rates of CSEC in the United States as a public health concern, and supports AHS in shifting care for victims from criminal justice to a health care framework. AAPCHO will continue to highlight the need for its members and other Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to get the support they need to use their key role of being the point of continued care and trust for CSEC and other victims of human trafficking.

A copy of AHS’ IJSSS article can be found [here](#). For more information on what needs to be changed to better support CSEC and other victims of human trafficking, see this [informational brief](#) for FQHCs and this [guidance document](#) for policymakers developed by AHS and AAPCHO.

### **About AHS**

AHS, founded in 1974, is a federally qualified health center whose mission is to serve and advocate for the medically underserved, including the immigrant and refugee Asian community, and to ensure equal access to health care services regardless of income, insurance status, language, or culture. For more information, go to [www.asianhealthservices.org](http://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 Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. For more information on AAPCHO, please visit [www.aapcho.org](http://www.aapcho.org).

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