



Homeless LGBTQ Youth and the Increased Risk of Human Trafficking



Stacey Spaulding, M.Ed.

Director of Teen Services, Preble Street

Daniella Cameron, MSW

Director, Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Coalition



Preble Street Mission Statement

The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty, and to advocate for solutions to these problems.

About Preble Street

- Preble Street is a social services organization founded on the principles of access for everyone, harm reduction, and unconditional positive regard.
- Since 1975, Preble Street has served the most vulnerable people in Maine, working to turn hunger and homelessness into opportunity and hope through 14 programs across the state.
- The hub of services in northern New England's largest urban area, Preble Street provides 24/365 programs to meet urgent needs and to develop innovative solutions to homelessness, hunger, and poverty.

Teen Services Program Model

- The Teen Center is a low-barrier drop-in open from 8:00am to 8:00pm daily to meet the survival needs of youth through basic services—meals, clothing, laundry, showers, personal hygiene items, mail, etc.—and engage them through outreach, building relationships, and encouraging them to access services.
- Between 8pm and 8am, the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter--across the street from the Teen Center--provides immediate access to 24 overnight beds, safety, and basic needs, as well as crisis intervention, referrals, and integration with collaborative partners.
- The availability of a drop-in center, overnight shelter, and street outreach ensures that homeless teens (12-21) have access to safety and shelter around the clock regardless of their willingness to engage in other services, their state of mind, or their substance use status.

Collaborative Partners

Co-located at the Preble Street Teen Center:

- **Day One Street Program** — provides mental health and substance abuse services
- **Portland Adult Education** — Street Academy provides education and employment assistance
- **Portland Public Health** — India Street Clinic provides medical care and referrals

Collaborative Partners

Community partner collaborations with Preble Street Teen Center:

- **Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine**
- **Family Crisis Shelter** — co-facilitates a women's group aimed at building safety and empowerment skills
- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** — Street Law Project provides outreach and legal services
- **Portland Outright** — does outreach and co-facilitates an LGBTQ group
- **The Opportunity Alliance** — Homeless Youth Liaisons provide case management and facilitate family mediation
- **Frannie Peabody Center** — free, confidential HIV/Hepatitis testing and counseling

Youth We Serve

- The most challenging to serve
- Alienated from society, underserved, and with inadequate natural supports
- Among the challenges they have experienced are physical or sexual abuse and mental health and/or substance use problems
- Have been in the foster care system
- Have had problems with the law enforcement system
- Are at high risk for pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections

Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Coalition

Since 2013, the Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Coalition has provided services to women and men, transgender individuals, and children who have been forced into all types of human trafficking including sex and labor.

Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Coalition

PSATC provides the following:

- Intensive Case Management
- Assistance with basic needs, including medical substance use treatment
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Shelter and housing referrals
- Linkages to other services
- Help with access to public benefits
- Civil, criminal, and immigration referrals
- Culturally sensitive services
- Advocacy through the criminal justice system

PSATC Approach to Services

- Client-centered
- Empowerment philosophy increases access to Services, Support and Information
- Supports survivor's right to make choices
- Facilitate growth and healing

Human Trafficking Definitions

What's the difference between trafficking and exploitation?

- Human trafficking: Compelling into labor/commercial sex work through force, fraud, or coercion, for economic gain of a trafficker.
- Or any minor in commercial sex work is a victim/survivor of human trafficking.
- Exploitation: The abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust to profit monetarily, socially, or politically from the labor or commercial sex work of another.

Human Trafficking: Risk Factors

Who is vulnerable to trafficking?

- Youth, especially runaway and homeless youth
- Foreign nationals; displaced individuals
- People with mental health concerns/cognitive disabilities
- People living in poverty, oppressed, marginalized

Recruitment and Control

Trafficking recruitment may appear as:

- Bait and switch (fraudulent relationships, the promise of a better job or opportunity)
- Force (kidnapping, being sold into the sex trade)

Conditioning into trafficking may include:

- Abuse including sexual and physical abuse, starvation, confinement
- Emotional manipulation including threatening friends or family, shaming victim about informing family of activities
- Other means of coercion including supplying or withholding basic needs or alcohol, prescription or illicit drugs

Indicators and Red Flags

- **Referral from law enforcement** or community partner with suspicion of trafficking.
- No access to **personal identification**, especially passports for foreign nationals.
- Mentions of **quota or debt** in reference to employer/family member/partner.
- **Travel across state lines** (without known resources to do so).
- **Frequenting hotels** or areas known for criminal activities.
- **Unexplained physical injuries** or signs of untreated illness or disease.

Indicators and Red Flags, cont.

- **Disconnected** or cut off from any family or support system.
- Works **excessively long hours** or unusual hours and is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips.
- **Cannot identify address** or residence.
- **Not allowed to speak for themselves**—a 3rd party speaks or translates for them.
- **Untreated mental health and medical needs** (including STIs and a history of pregnancies).
- Evidence of **a controlling, abusive, or dominating** employer, partner, or older adult.

Video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4PTLbp5xBI>

LGBT Youth and Homelessness

- Statistically, 40% of homeless youth reportedly identify as LGBTQ, both nationally and locally.
- Increase of mental health and substance use
- Public perceptions
- Acceptance of self and identity
- Why are they at higher risk of trafficking?

Why are LGBTQ youth
at greater risk for
trafficking?



Poverty, hunger,
homelessness

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Poverty, hunger,
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Why are LGBTQ youth
at greater risk for
trafficking?

Often face
discrimination in
the general
workforce

Poverty,
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Lack of gender
affirming
healthcare



Poverty,
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Lack of gender
affirming health
care



Increased
substance use
and mental
health
symptoms



Prevention

- **Systemic**

- Poverty
- Homophobia/transphobia
- Racism
- Criminalization
- Child Abuse

- **Community based**

- All of you!
- Prevention Programming
 - MLMC (for CSEC not necessarily for HT)

- **Individual approaches**

- Harm reduction, low barrier services, and a housing first approach

Harm Reduction Strategies

Despite supports, people are going to make their own choices. Let's keep them as safe as possible:

- Information about Victim and Worker Rights
- Precautions
- Safety plans
- Alternatives
- Awareness
- Open doors

Challenges with Harm Reduction

- Harm reduction perceived as enabling
- Harm reduction vs. recovery
- Collaboration with health, mental health, education, housing
- Community/funders perception and expectations of harm
- Where we are on the harm reduction continuum
- Managing behaviors in programs
 - Safety for all
 - Consequences

Self Awareness When Working with Youth

- Check your own biases at the door
- Don't make assumptions
- Be honest and upfront around mandated reporting (youth under 18) and your role
- Be mindful of the language you're using
- Recognize and acknowledge their strengths
- Understand culture of clients you work with
- Trauma informed, victim centered, human rights approach