Memorandum Summarizing the Available Screening Tools to Identify Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)

This memo summarizes the criteria used to evaluate screening tools to identify commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC). WestCoast Children's Clinic (WCC) conducted a literature review and environmental scan of available tools and evaluated those tools according to specific criteria, as described below. WestCoast also incorporated information provided by the Child Welfare Council's Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Action Team.

This review was motivated by the need to implement a systematic screening protocol to identify youth who are exploited more quickly. Specifically WCC and the Action Team searched for a tool that is:

- Evidence-based;
- Used for screening prospectively (i.e. not wait until signs and suspicion of exploitation are obvious);
- Short enough and results in data that is easy to analyze (i.e. is not based only on narrative description); and
- Usable in multiple agencies and systems so that there is a standard, reliable protocol for measurement.

It was important to also find a screening tool that could be used as a universal screener – that is all children and youth meeting an age criteria would be screened regardless of gender, sexual identity, race, or other demographic characteristics. Finally, we wanted the screener to trigger follow-up actions as warranted, such as a full assessment of the youth's health, safety, and placement needs and strengths.

No tool met the criteria outlined below, which was the impetus for developing the Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT). The attached matrix of tools briefly summarizes the strengths and the challenges posed by each of the tools we found. WCC shared a preliminary list of tools it found with the CSEC Action Team Prevalence and Assessment Subcommittee and put out a call for any other screening tools available (published and unpublished). The final list in the matrix includes all of the tools that WCC found or provided through that process.

LIST OF CRITERIA

Validated: This is indicated as 'yes' in the matrix if there has been some data collection and evaluation of the tool's properties to ensure reliability and validity. To date, only two tools have been validated, namely the Vera Institute of Justice Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT) and the Covenant House Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM).

Length: Tools vary widely in the number of questions. The number of questions alone is not the most descriptive indicator of how useful a tool might be, especially since for some tools, not all questions are asked of all interviewees/clients. However, length is still a helpful heuristic for understanding the time and documentation burden of using the tool. Time and documentation burden affect a tool's ease of use, which is an important consideration for implementing a tool in any system or agency, but especially in a large system. Many of the lengthier tools ask questions that are more suitable to an in-depth assessment.

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For example, they ask many questions about traumatic experiences. However this detailed information about trauma (who was involved, what exactly happened) is not needed to identify whether or not a youth has been abused, and in some settings and situations is not appropriate. The Vera TVIT, the Loyola University Comprehensive Screening and Safety Tool (CSST), the Polaris Project Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment, and the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST) all share this problem. Detailed information about the traumatic experience may be relevant in a formal investigation or in therapy rather than in an initial screening.

Source of information: This refers to what information is used to determine whether a client or potential victim has been subject to sexual exploitation or other forms of trafficking. Most tools on the matrix rely on self-disclosure by the victim, which is a serious limitation. While direct questioning or interaction with youth is an important component of information gathering, it should not be relied on as the sole source. Many youth, especially younger youth, do not self-identify as a victim or as being exploited and do not recognize their own situation as one involving force, coercion, or manipulation. In our 2012 study, *Research to Action: Sexually Exploited Minors Needs and Strengths*, we found that 37% of youth do not recognize their own exploitation. Thus, relying on self-disclosure alone may result in many missed opportunities to identify when a victim is being subject to violent abuse.

Of the 14 tools on the list, only 3 do not rely on self-disclosure. One of these is the Connecticut Department of Children and Families in-depth case review and psychological assessment. While this is not strictly speaking a tool, it is on the list because it is a systematic review of cases for signs of exploitation. This mode of data collection, while thorough, is largely retrospective from history files and is not feasible with large caseloads. The Barnardo's SERAF form and the San Luis Obispo CSEC Screening Tool both allow for information gathering from any source, including directly from the youth, from observations of the youth's behavior or appearance, from case history files, or from other collaterals.

Domain/System specific: Most of the tools on the list can be used in varied settings. However, a few were developed especially for use in specific settings. For example, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (MD DJS) tool and the Portland State University InterCSECt tool (used in Washington state) are both specific to juvenile justice settings. Similarly, the Covenant House HTIAM is tailored to homeless youth seeking shelter services.

Guide to Action: Some tools help guide the service provider in arriving at a determination of whether the person being screened is in fact a victim of trafficking. Only 4 tools do this, namely the MD DJS tool, the Portland State University InterCSECt tool, Barnado's SERAF form, and the San Luis Obispo CSEC screening tool. These tools have a score or summary that integrates the information gathered and helps the provider decide on a course of action. While useful, none of these scoring methods have been evaluated for accuracy. Tools that do not summarize the information gathered in some way are not as valuable for prevention. With respect to the protocol in CT, because it is retrospective, it does not screen proactively and cannot be used for prevention. In instances where an in-depth psychological assessment is completed, the information may be extremely helpful for case or treatment planning. However this step takes place after screening and requires a mental health professional.

Format/Mode: This indicates whether the tool is an interview questionnaire (structured, semi-structured, or unstructured) or whether it follows another format, such as case review or checklists. There are tradeoffs with different formats. Interviews can be helpful in suggesting to the provider what to ask youth. However they are either inflexible (resulting in irrelevant questions or inappropriate wording for certain situations) or so unstructured that they are no longer a systematic or consistent protocol.

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We recommend *not* using an interview tool. Interviewing skills are extremely important and should be developed independently of whatever tool is being used in an agency. In fact, a provider's proficiency with interviewing and engaging youth in conversation can be hampered by a structured or semi-structured interview protocol, which may interfere with rapport building as well as with the agency's existing intake, interview, or assessment processes. To be authentic and provide a safe space for disclosure of abuse, providers should use language that is natural to them, that young people can relate to, that is sensitive to the trauma youth may have experienced, and is appropriate to the situation and to the victim's development and circumstances. Instead, we recommend that providers use a tool that helps them prepare for what information to gather and that integrates that information. Checklists of key indicators are more appropriate for this reason.

Case review, while more flexible than interviewing, is retrospective and labor intensive, and therefore not as effective as checklists of key indicators.

Open- or closed-ended: Some of the interview tools ask only open-ended questions, which make them unsuitable for use in large agencies or systems. Narrative text is not practical for quick analysis or for running frequencies, such as counting how many youth answered certain questions in certain ways. Tools with closed-ended questions or categorical checklists are necessary for this purpose.

Intended populations: Some of the available tools are intended to be used both with minors/transition age youth (TAY) and with adults. A tool that addresses both groups can be useful in settings where both age groups are receiving services. One drawback to such a tool is that many items that are appropriate for adults are not relevant for minors or TAY and often the language is not suitable for children. The Vera TVIT and the Polaris Project & National Human Trafficking Center Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment both have this problem.

Appropriate for Minors: While most tools are suitable for use with minors, some would only be appropriate with significant modifications to the questions and to the language used, such as the Vera TVIT, the Polaris tool, and to a lesser extent the Covenant House HTIAM. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services screening tool is written for adults and would require significant modification to be workable in a child-serving setting.

Sexual Exploitation/trafficking: All of the tools reviewed here are intended to screen for sexual exploitation or sex trafficking.

Labor trafficking: Some of the tools on this list are appropriate for all forms of trafficking. In practice, this means these tools have longer questionnaires with questions that may be irrelevant to the circumstances of the person being screened. Some providers and advocates have noted that the key indicators for sex and labor trafficking are very similar and largely overlap. However most of the dual-use tools have separate questions to identify sex and labor trafficking. It is not clear whether this is because the indicators are in fact so different, thereby requiring different sets of questions to identify these situations, or whether this is because the tools are poorly designed.

Notes: This field contains some qualitative notes on the tools. As a general observation on these tools, many of them require suspicion of commercial sexual exploitation in order to screen. However this defeats the purpose of screening, which is to identify a problem before there are obvious signs. Furthermore, several tools require expertise as to the how exploitation manifests in psychological symptoms. For example, some tools ask the provider conducting the screening to indicate whether the child has psychological signs of having been trafficked. Even among mental health experts, only those very experienced with CSEC victims would be able to answer such a question reliably. Even then, a tool that is too general defeats the purpose of having a systematic set of questions to aid identification.

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While no single tool meets all the criteria we want in a screening tool, three tools stand out for having particular strengths, namely:

The Vera TVIT is validated, is applicable across a range of trafficking situations, and it explicitly addresses transnational trafficking in persons. The difficulty with this tool is that it is not practical for screening as much as for more in-depth investigation. A major weakness is that, as the authors of the tool have noted, it is not as effective for identifying CSEC as it is for adults and for labor trafficking victims.

The Covenant House HTIAM is validated and unlike the other interview questionnaires, uses language that is nonjudgmental and not invasive. However the difficulty with this tool is that it only has 2 questions pertaining to sexual exploitation, thereby missing many key indicators that can help identify that a youth may be sexually exploited. Moreover, it requires self-disclosure, which also misses opportunities to identify youth, especially younger youth. Nonetheless, agencies working with older youth who are seeking help may find this tool helpful.

The San Luis Obispo tool (which was not available when this list of tools was first compiled) is a useful model and has developed along similar lines as the WestCoast CSE-IT. It allows for multiple sources of information, not only self-disclosure by the youth. It captures data in a categorical checklist form. It is flexible in that it allows providers to gather information about and to interact with youth in an individualized manner. However the tool is missing several key indicators that providers have noted are important for identifying youth in different settings. Moreover, the items are not grouped in any way to facilitate the information integration purpose of such a tool. Also, it uses an untested scoring system. If the scoring were evaluated for accuracy, this would be encouraging.

References and URLs: these are included where available.

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Matrix of Screening Tools
to Identify Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

	Organization	Tool Name	Validated	Length	Source of Information	Domain/ System Specific	Guide to Action; Potential Use for Prevention	Format / Mode	Open- or Closed-Ended	Intended Populations	Appropriate for Minors	Sexual Exploitation/ Trafficking	Labor Trafficking
1	WestCoast Children's Clinic	Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool	In process	10 key indicators plus 48 guiding questions	Any	Any	Yes	Checklist of indicators	Closed	Minors and young adults	Yes	Yes	No
2	Shared Hope International	Intervene	No	42 questions at intake plus 55 questions to explore or confirm possible trafficking	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Structured interview	Open	Minors	Yes	Yes	No
3	Vera Institute of Justice	Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT)	Yes	75 questions (long form) or 55 questions (short form), some questions are only asked as followup if client answers "yes" to a previous item.	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Structured interview	Mixed	Adult and Minors	Only with significant modifications to questions and to language	Yes	Yes
4	Loyola University Chicago Center for the Human Rights for Children & Intl Org for Adolescents (IOFA)	Rapid Screening Tool (RST) for Child Trafficking	No	12 questions	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Structured interview	Open	Minors	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Loyola University Chicago Center for the Human Rights for Children & Intl Org for Adolescents (IOFA)	Comprehensive Screening and Safety Tool (CSST) for Child Trafficking	No	33 questions	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Structured interview	Open	Minors	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Asian Health Services and Banteay Srei (also used by Native American Health Center)	CSEC Screening Procedure and Guideline	No	1 question	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Verbal interview question	Open	Minors	Yes	Yes	No
7	Polaris Project & National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)	Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment	No	142 questions	Self-disclosure by victim	Any	No	Unstructured interview (suggested questions)	Open	Not specified	Only with significant modifications to questions and to language	Yes	Yes
8	State of MD - Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) (Neil Mallon)	Deterntion Screening Interview: Tier One	No	17 questions	Self-disclosure by victim; observation	Juvenile Justice	Yes	Semi-structured interview	Mixed	Minors	Yes	Yes	No

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9	State of WA	Portland State University CSEC Screening Interview	No	25 questions	Self-disclosure by victim; observation	Juvenile Justice	Yes	Semi-structured interview	Mixed	Minors	Yes	Yes	No
10	State of CT - Department of Children and Families (DCF)	None	---	---	In-depth case review and/or psychological assessment	Child welfare	No	In-depth case review and/or psychological assessment	---	Dependents of the state	Yes	Yes	Not specified
11	Barnardo's	SERAF (sexual exploitation risk assessment framework)	No	42 items	Any	Any	Yes	Checklist of indicators, presence or absence	Closed	Minors and young adults	Yes	Yes	No
12	Covenant House, NY	Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-14)	Yes	37 questions	Youth self-disclosure	Any	No	Structured interview	Mixed	Minors and young adults	Some items	Yes	Yes
13	San Luis Obispo	CSEC Screening Tool	No	22 questions	Any	Any	Yes	Checklist of indicators	Closed	Minors	Yes	Yes	No
14	U.S. Department of Human Services (also Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force)	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Human Trafficking Screening Tool	No	14 questions	Self-disclosure	Healthcare but flexible for use elsewhere	No	Semi-structured interview	Open	Not specified	No	Yes	Yes
15	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	Human Trafficking Screening Tool	No	60 questions	Self-disclosure	Any	No	Semi-structured interview	Mixed	Minors	Yes	Yes	Yes

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1	WestCoast Children's Clinic	Development of the CSE-IT addressed shortcomings of other tools; meets key criteria for multisystem prospective screening tool, including reasonable length, relies on all sources of information, does not rely on self disclosure, is not domain specific and can be used across systems, provides a guide to action, is closed-ended, avoids a structured interview, is appropriate for minors.	The CSE-IT is an open domain tool for use in service delivery systems that serve children and youth. The copyright is held by WestCoast Children's Clinic to ensure that it remains free to use. For permission to use or for information, please contact Danna Basson at dbasson@westcoastcc.org.	
2	Shared Hope International	Lengthy, assumes the victim identifies as such and is seeking help	None	Paper copy only; Shared Hope requires you are trained 4-8 hours; they provide training for a fee
3	Vera Institute of Justice	Addresses transnational trafficking/smuggling; authors note the tool is not as effective with minor victims of sex trafficking as it is with other populations; some items irrelevant and wording not appropriate for minors; identifies the situation as "work"	Weiner and Hala, Oct 2008, Measuring Human Trafficking: Lessons from NYC	https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/224391.pdf
4	Loyola University Chicago Center for the Human Rights for Children & Intl Org for Adolescents (IOFA)	Tool is missing key indicators; no definitions or explanations offered for items; some wording is too general to be useful (e.g. child appears to be bought or sold)	Walts et al, 2011, Building the Child Welfare Response to Trafficking	http://www.luc.edu/chrc/pdfs/Building_Child_Welfare_Response_to_Child_Trafficking.pdf
5	Loyola University Chicago Center for the Human Rights for Children & Intl Org for Adolescents (IOFA)	Requires knowledge or suspicion of exploitation, so not useful for identification; unrealistic indicators, e.g. victim refers to self as "slave"; assumes victim identifies as such and is seeking help.	Walts et al, 2011, Building the Child Welfare Response to Trafficking	http://www.luc.edu/chrc/pdfs/Building_Child_Welfare_Response_to_Child_Trafficking.pdf
6	Asian Health Services and Banteay Srei (also used by Native American Health Center)	Direct, short, easy to implement in intake process, but not comprehensive and requires self-disclosure	None	http://asianhealthservices.org/docs/CSEC_Protocol.pdf
7	Polaris Project & National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)	Needs to be tailored to the program where it is implemented; many items with inappropriate language (e.g. "commercial sex act"), many invasive questions are irrelevant for screening purposes; assumes victim is seeking help.	None	http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/resources/comprehensive-human-trafficking-assessment-tool
8	State of MD - Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) (Neil Mallon)	Tool is missing many key indicators. (Note: very similar to tool developed by Portland State Univ)	Neil Mallon, MSW, LCSW-C CANS Training Specialist, The Institute for Innovation and Implementation, Univ of MD School of Social Work	

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	Organization	Notes	References	URLs
9	State of WA	Tool is missing many key indicators. (Note: very similar to tool used in MD-DJS)	Salisbury EJ, Dabney JD, Russell K. 2015. Diverting Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation From Juvenile Detention: Development of the InterCSECt Screening Protocol. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 30(7):1247-76	http://www.ccyj.org/Project%20Respect%20protocol.pdf
10	State of CT - Department of Children and Families (DCF)	In-depth, but not prospective since it uses case history files; not feasible for large caseload	Phone conversation with Tammy Sneed, Director of Girls Services, CT Department of Children and Families. 1/13/2014	
11	Barnardo's	Incorporates many sources of information but missing several key indicators	Sam Clutton, Jan Coles. 2007. Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework. Barnardo's Cymru. Wales, United Kingdom.	http://www.barnardos.org.uk/barnardo_s_cymru_sexual_exploitation_risk_assessment_framework_report_-_english_version.pdf
12	Covenant House, NY	Unlike other interviews noted above, question wording is largely nonjudgmental; questions can be read verbatim with mature youth, especially youth seeking help. A few items and wording issues do not pertain to minors. Only 2 of the 37 items pertain to sexual exploitation, so missing some key indicators.	Jayne Bigelson. May 2013. Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York.	http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf
13	San Luis Obispo	A strength of the tool is that it allows for any sources of information, not reliant on self-disclosure; provides sample questions for arriving at the information. A challenge is that it is missing some key indicators that providers have noted are important for identifying CSEC.		http://www.cwda.org/downloads/tools/csec/SLO-CSEC-Screening-Tool.pdf
14	U.S. Department of Human Services (also Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force)	Wording is in many instances inappropriate. Very general, open-ended questions.		http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/screening_questions_to_assess_whether_a_person_is_a_trafficking_victim_0.pdf
15	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	A strength of this tool is that it groups items into domains, which facilitates information integration and identification of a potential problem. Challenges include: some items are irrelevant yet missing other key indicators; some items do not match the domain (e.g. the Unsafe Living Environment domain does contain questions that address unsafe living environment); relies on self-disclosure.		