

**DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN
&
FAMILY HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
A COMMUNITY AWARENESS TRAINING**

Liesl Wingert, BS, MBA
Program Coordinator - East Region
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development

1

The DEC Mission

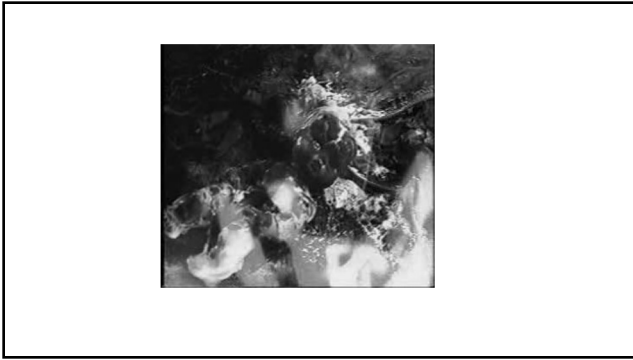


2

Some materials and content in this course will be graphic or disturbing in nature. We encourage you to take care of yourself as needed.

We know that the materials presented, and additional content can be triggering. Please know that self-care is encouraged. If you need to turn off your camera or take space throughout the presentation, please feel free to do so.

3



4

Defining Drug Endangered Children (DEC)

The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children defines drug endangered children as children who are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of legal or illegal drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution.

They may also be children whose caretaker's legal or illegal substance misuse interferes with the caretaker's ability to parent and provide a safe and nurturing environment.

5

Children at Risk

9.2 million children
in the United States live in homes
where a parent or other adult
uses illicit drugs

6

Children at Risk

Children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are:

- 3 times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused
- 4 times more likely than other children to be neglected

7

Children of parents with substance use disorders have a higher likelihood of developing substance use problems themselves.

8

Illinois definition of "neglect":

In Illinois, neglect is defined as the failure of a parent or caretaker to meet "minimal parenting" standards for providing adequate supervision, food, clothing, medical care, shelter or other basic needs.

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2017.

9

Addiction

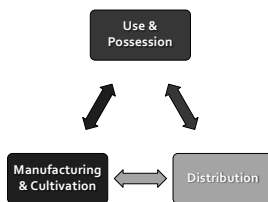
- Is defined as a **chronic, relapsing disorder** characterized by compulsive drug seeking, continued use despite harmful consequences, and long-lasting changes in the brain. It is considered both a **complex brain disorder** and a **mental illness**.

10

Addiction

- **Nature vs. Nurture**
 - **Nature - Pre-wiring** and is influenced by **genetic inheritance** and other **biological factors**.
 - **Nurture - Influence of external factors after conception**, e.g., the product of exposure, life experiences and learning on an individual.

11



12

The real gateway drug is not marijuana or alcohol..... it is trauma.



13

Prenatal Risks

Effects of prenatal drug exposure:

- **Are difficult to isolate due to:**
 - *poor prenatal care*
 - *poor nutrition*
 - *Prematurity*
 - *adverse postnatal environment*
- **Depend on:**
 - *the substance being used*
 - *frequency of use*
 - *duration of use*
 - *Quantity of use*



We have an opportunity to educate professionals and adults on the effects

14

Postnatal Risks

- Home invasion
- Abduction and ransom
- Violence
- Lack of supervision
- Lack of necessities
- Drugs transported in children's items
- Children brought to drug buys
- Children used as decoys
- Overdose
- Harmful chemicals
- Black mold and spores
- Ventilation
- Explosions
- Loss
- Ingestion and exposure
- Sex trafficking

15

Long-Term Effects/Risks

Children growing up in drug environments may experience:

- Emotional problems: anxiety, PTSD, complex emotions
- Behavioral problems: sexually act out, act out what they have seen
- Cognitive problems: inability to pick up on social cues, difficulty paying attention, delayed

16

- Salt Lake City, UT
- "Rocking up" crack cocaine
- Officers entered two bedrooms and discovered these two children behind closed doors



17

True Stories

www.nationaldec.org

18

Drug endangered children and human trafficking

The same children are at risk.....



19

Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.

(Department of Justice, 2024, 22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)(A))

20

What is Family Facilitated Human Trafficking?



21

Concerning stats:

- In 2018, over half of criminal human trafficking cases involved children
- Children made up 68% of all victims in new sex trafficking cases
- 82% of familial trafficking involves illegal drugs

(Journal of Family Violence, 2018; Human Trafficking Institute, 2021)

22

- Family members are involved in 36% of all sex trafficking cases
- Over half of the trafficking cases begin with family members – 65% trafficked by mothers and 32% trafficked by fathers
- 60% of domestic child trafficking victims have a history with the child welfare system

(2021, Human Trafficking Institute)

23

What we know about these children:

- Intergenerational involvement in sex abuse/prostitution
- Less likely to run away (but may try)
- Less likely for victim to have substance abuse issues
- Increased truancy/absence from school
- Child welfare involvement for neglect
- Lack of detection by child welfare
- Higher rates of suicide attempts (50% +)

24

They do not have a choice!

Caregiver uses threats, bribes, intimidation, physical force, parental authority and weapons to maintain the child victim.

25

RED FLAGS

- child welfare involvement
- excessive absences from school
- injuries
- ER/doc visits
- change in mood/behavior/appearance
- runs away from home
- STI
- suicide
- self-harm
- PTSD



26

“When trauma emanates from within the family, children experience a crisis of loyalty and organize their behavior to survive within their families.”

Sprang, G., & Cole, J. (February 13, 2018). Familial Sex Trafficking of Minors: Trafficking Conditions, Clinical Presentation, and System Involvement. Journal of Family Violence, 33, 3, 185-195.

27

Think about it.....

- More common in rural areas/easy to hide?
- Younger child is unable to leave
- Typical promo/education does not address this type of abuse

28



29



Thank You

www.nationaldec.org

30

Liesl Wingert
lwingert68@siumed.edu
