

CSE-IT EXPLAINED FOR CASA VOLUNTEERS TESTIFYING IN COURT

2024



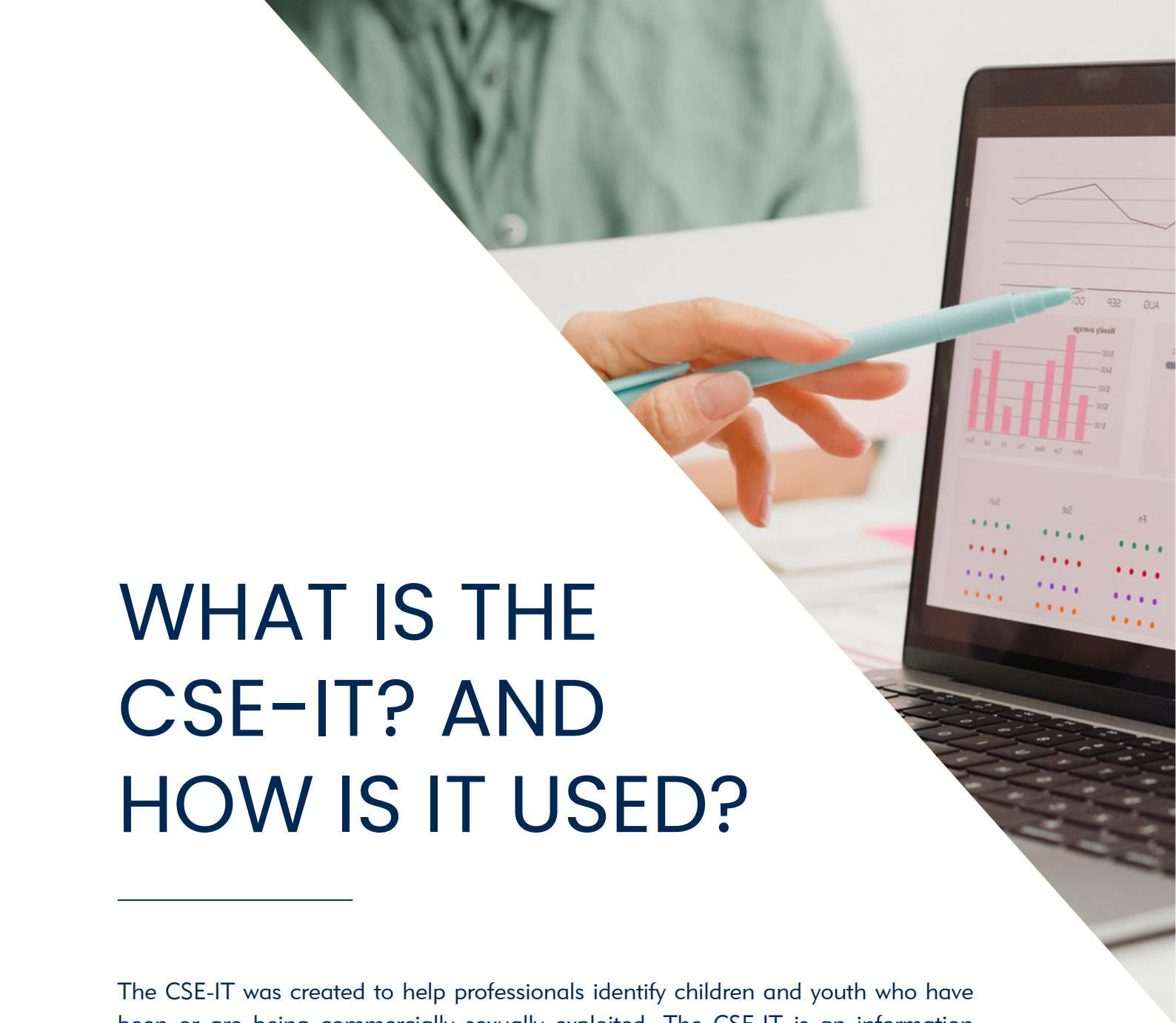
TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

As a CASA volunteer, you may be asked about the Commercially Sexually Exploited-Identification Tool (CSE-IT, pronounced “See It”) in court. Understanding the CSE-IT enables you to present well-informed and credible information to judges. It allows volunteers to articulate observations, concerns and evidence effectively, supporting their specific case with documented indicators of exploitation.



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WHAT IS THE CSE-IT? AND HOW IS IT USED?

The CSE-IT was created to help professionals identify children and youth who have been or are being commercially sexually exploited. The CSE-IT is an information integration tool designed to be completed by CASA staff with input from CASA volunteers who work directly with youth. CASA programs and other providers already collect information that can be used to complete the tool and may come through conversations with youth, observations of their appearance or behavior and other sources, including health records, police and case records, as well as conversations with providers close to the youth. The CSE-IT is a guide to support identification and should not be used as a determining factor as to whether a youth is or has been sexually exploited. The CSE-IT uses eight key indicators: Housing and Caregiving, Prior Abuse or Trauma, Physical Health and Appearance, Environment and Exposure, Relationships and Personal Belongings, Signs of Current Trauma, Coercion and Exploitation. The eight key indicators are based on the last 90 days, except one. Prior Abuse or trauma is calculated by what the youth has experienced over their lifetime.

SCREENING VERSUS DIAGNOSIS

It is important to note that the CSE-IT is a screening tool and is not to be used diagnostically or to investigate criminal activity. Instead, it is a preliminary step that prompts additional information gathering and interventions. When a screening tool indicates risk, CASA staff, volunteers, caseworkers and others associated with the young person must gather additional information to determine appropriate interventions and responses. For youth at risk of victimization through commercial sexual exploitation, appropriate interventions may include conducting a full assessment of their needs and strengths, safety planning, harm reduction, crisis support, specialized treatment planning or a forensic investigation, depending on the severity of the situation.

Universal screening is the first step in identifying a problem and is conducted when pre-determined criteria are met, regardless of the presence of symptoms. The tool is used as a universal screening according to the policies of the CASA program on cases with children and youth aged 10 and over. It is used regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, residence, health, socioeconomic status, appearance or behavior of the youth.

CSE-IT VALIDATION



The CSE-IT is validated and accurately screens for youth who have been commercially sexually exploited. The content of the CSE-IT (including all versions of the tool and user manuals) is based on research conducted by WestCoast Children’s Clinic (WCCC) and partner agencies. WCCC gathered data through focus groups, interviews and expert reviews from over 100 survivors and Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) providers, in addition to reviewing existing screening tools and literature on risk factors and indicators of commercial sexual exploitation. WCCC validated the CSE-IT in 2016 with data from the pilot study that included 52 agencies, over 2,000 service providers and 5,537 youth. This study revealed that at least 635 young people, or 11.4% of children of sample agencies, had clear signs of exploitation.

For information about the validation study, please refer to the following resource:
Basson, D. (2017). Validation of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation- Identification Tool (CSE-IT): Technical Report. WestCoast Children’s Clinic.
<https://www.westcoastcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/WCC-CSE-IT-PilotReport-FINAL.pdf>

COURT REPORT



Although CSE-IT screenings are completed by CASA staff with input from CASA volunteers, it is important for CASA volunteers to be aware of CSE-IT results and include information on CSE-IT screenings in their court reports to judges. Be sure to include the scores of CSE-IT screenings (No Concern, Possible Concern or Clear Concern), along with an explanation of how this score was calculated. Judges may be unfamiliar with the CSE-IT; therefore, understanding what the CSE-IT is and how it is administered will help CASA volunteers explain it better. CASA volunteers should include CSE-IT key indicators when describing youths' CSE-IT scores. Giving an overview of what is known about the youth and the score received will allow judges and advocates to better serve youth affected by sex trafficking.

*TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CSE-IT,
REVIEW THE CSE-IT RESOURCE GUIDE.*