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COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION-IDENTIFICATION TOOL (CSE-IT) GUIDE

A research-based, validated screening tool that helps improve the early identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY)

TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

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WHAT IS THE CSE-IT?

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT, pronounced "See It") is a research-based, validated screening tool that helps improve the early identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY). The tool was developed by WestCoast Children's Clinic (WCCC) and is currently used in Texas and multiple other states and across various sectors, including juvenile justice, education, advocate agencies, runaway/unhoused youth agencies and limited areas of child protection.

The CSE-IT consists of 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. All indicators are based on the last 90 days except for one. Prior abuse and trauma are based on the youth's lifetime, not the last 90 days.

In Texas, Lighthouse, developed and managed by Allies Against Slavery, is the software program that local CASA programs will use to enter information into the system and perform CSE-IT screenings.

The CSE-IT is designed to be a quick (5-7 minute) information integration tool, not a structured interview. At CASA programs, the CSE-IT is to be completed by CASA staff. Credible information from intake processes, the CASA volunteer, case files, colleagues, child protective services, juvenile probation or caregivers may be used to complete the CSE-IT and score indicators. The tool is a way to organize all the information gathered to assess for likelihood and risk of sexual exploitation. It is not intended to meet investigative, statutory, legal or other criteria.

There are three possible outcomes of the CSE-IT:
0-3 score – No concern/Not enough information
4-8 score – Possible concern
9-23 score – Clear concern

WHAT IS THE CSE-IT?
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No Concern/Not Enough Information

This final score indicates either that the information available does not suggest the youth is being sexually exploited or that there is not enough information to determine a higher rating at this time. This rating does not state that sexual exploitation categorically does not exist. A No Concern/Not Enough Information score means that no trafficking interventions are needed at this time.

Possible Concern

Information indicates that the child may be at high risk for or experiencing sexual exploitation, but there is either limited information available or the current behaviors and circumstances do not clearly indicate exploitation. Caseworkers, CASA volunteers and other caregivers should actively monitor a young person who receives this rating, fully assess their needs and initiate preventive actions to ensure that exploitation does not intensify or occur.

A score of a possible concern results in a referral to the caseworker, and triggers the CASA program to implement an intervention process through education and advocacy through the CASA volunteer and current resources.

Clear Concern

A clear concern means observations, client records or information from others involved in the case indicates that numerous risk factors and vulnerabilities are present. This final score suggests the youth is being commercially sexually exploited or is at high risk for sexual exploitation.

All Clear Concern scores are to be reported to The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Statewide Intake (SWI) at 1-800-252-5400 for concerns of abuse/neglect, risk of trafficking and notifying the primary caseworker of the concern.

Review Implementation Stage of the CASA ACT: Program Guide. To note: some CSEY advocate agencies and care coordination teams provide services to children and youth with a possible concern.

See page 7 best practice #16 for more information.

WHY SCREEN?

88% of people who have been trafficked say they interacted with a professional who missed the chance to identify and help them.[i]

In 2016, The University of Texas conducted a prevalence study that estimated 79,000 children in Texas were survivors of sex trafficking. No other studies have been performed since 2016; therefore, today's actual numbers may be higher.[ii]

According to a DFPS study in 2014, Human Trafficking of Domestic Minors, most victims of sex trafficking do not self-identify, or they come into the child welfare system for other reasons and are not identified as victims of trafficking. [iii]

In Fiscal Year 2022, there were 38,294 children in the conservatorship of Texas, of which 1,334 were missing at some point during that period. Most of these children had been located by the end of the year. 69% were between the ages of 15-17. Of the children who were found from being missing, about 10% reported being victimized or sex trafficked while missing.[iv] These numbers are conservative estimates of trafficking victimization given the challenges and inability of victims to self-identify, as well as the lack of recognition of trafficking by key stakeholders who intersect with such victims.

During the first 11 months of 2020, there was an alarming increase in child sexual abuse materials. 1,500,000 unique commercial sex advertisements were posted in Texas, over 20% of which advertised suspected children.[v]

The priority of the CSE-IT tool is to triage quickly and effectively those youth who are at higher risk of trafficking or survivors of sex trafficking and coordinate services for them. The results of CSE-IT screenings will also establish documented research on what is occurring in Texas and help with victim legislative advocacy.

WHO IS SCREENED?

The CSE-IT is a validated universal screening tool for children 10 years and older; therefore, children in the custody of DFPS ages 10 and up are eligible to be screened. If screening occurs only on children suspected of being a victim of sex trafficking, the data is inaccurate, and victims are likely to be missed due to a lack of consistency. Universal screening is "proactive and does not require signs or suspicion of exploitation as a prerequisites to screen. Instead, universal screening means screening all youth who meet pre-determined criteria".[vi]

Screening should also occur on children and youth who run away more than four times in a 12-month period; children who are 12 years of age or older and have run away; children who are on runaway status for more than 30 consecutive days and are recovered; children with two or more incidences of sexual abuse and/or exploitation within a 12-month period; and child victims of sex trafficking. CASA ACT recommends CASA programs perform universal screenings for youth aged 10 and over.[vii]

Youth who have experienced exploitation may be victimized for two or three years before being identified as a victim. By using the CSE-IT universally, CASA programs can identify victims quickly and recommend services, thus decreasing the length of time a youth is sexually exploited.

VALIDITY OF THE CSE-IT

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 WCCC and partner agencies. WCCC gathered data through focus groups, interviews and expert reviews from over 100 survivors and Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) 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.

BEST PRACTICES

#1) CASA supervisors and staff should be trained in the CSE-IT and how to complete screenings while being mindful of confidentiality.

#2) CASA programs should have a staff member assigned to oversee the completion of CSE-IT screenings for children ages 10 and over and the program's trafficking efforts (such as training of volunteers, engagement with stakeholders, ACTs approach, etc.) if applicable.

#3) CASA programs will become registered licensees of Lighthouse. See the Lighthouse Onboarding Process below.

#4) The CSE-IT is completed by CASA staff, not CASA volunteers.

#5) The youth is never directly involved in or a part of the screening.

#6) All screenings should be performed before the 60-day status hearing to facilitate courts to act as soon as possible on services.

#7) CASA staff and the child's caseworker should collaborate to complete the CSE-IT screening. CASA staff will attempt to contact and notify the child's caseworker about the plan to complete the CSE-IT screening and will endeavor to involve the caseworker in this process. The inability to reach the caseworker will not delay the screening. If the caseworker is not present or available for the screening, CASA staff will advise the child's caseworker of the completion date and the overall score of the CSE-IT screening.

#8) CASA volunteers may be present for screenings because they may have information about the child that is unknown to the staff.

#9) CASA staff may screen all eligible youth on multiple occasions. It is an intentional element of screening. CSE-IT screenings should occur every six months if a youth has not previously scored as a clear concern. Note that if a youth has scored a clear concern, there is no need to screen again afterward.

#10) If a child is missing from or exits foster care, a screening should be done once they are back in foster care. A CASA volunteer may request a CSE-IT screening when new information is disclosed. After the initial screen, subsequent screenings are attached to an existing file in Lighthouse, ensuring there are no duplicate accounts for children.

#11) CASA staff will educate volunteers through ongoing continuing education about their role in the CSE-IT screening process, specifically about becoming familiar with the CSE-IT key indicators. In court proceedings, CASA volunteers should be able to explain the CSE-IT as a validated tool that is not meant to be investigative. To help understand the CSE-IT, CASA volunteers can review the CSE-IT Explained for CASA Volunteers.

BEST PRACTICES CONTINUED

#12) Once a month, or at a different predetermined regular interval by the program, CASA staff will identify which children served will turn 10 years old and notify the supervisor that the child is due for a CSE-IT screening. A birthday report from Optima/case management system may be used to identify which children are turning 10 years old by a given date.

#13) CASA programs should not directly contact Children's Advocacy Centers or Care Coordination Teams if in operation when receiving a clear concern score. Instead, CASA programs will notify the child's caseworker and the DFPS Hotline (see below). The child's caseworker will complete a referral to care coordination team. If the caseworker cannot be reached and/or a timely response is not received, the CASA program should notify the next person in the chain of command, i.e. the caseworker's supervisor, and working up until the matter is resolved.

#14) CASA staff and volunteers will advocate for (but not refer directly to) Care Coordination Services and CSEY Advocate services for the youth when appropriate.

#15) CASA staff using the CSE-IT will be trained in making reports to DFPS Statewide Intake and Law Enforcement. The information that informed the completion of the CSE-IT is crucial for these entities to assess jurisdiction and provide response and support to a survivor.

#16) Do not use the online reporting option for reporting concerns of sex trafficking. REPORTING TIPS: Articulate all the specific information known that supports the individual CSE-IT indicators and the potential evidence of exploitation, abuse and/or neglect, along with the total clear concern score. Advise that the primary caseworker is to be notified of report regardless of whether or not DFPS will investigate. When calling the DFPS Statewide Intake Hotline, DFPS may be unaware of the CSE-IT; therefore, it is crucial the reporter focuses on the details of the youth's life that resulted in a clear concern.

Note: Not all reports will meet DFPS's statutory authority to investigate.

Next, contact the caseworker. If the caseworker cannot be reached, the CASA program should notify the next person in the DFPS chain of command.

If a local CASA program has a signed MOU in place between the CASA program and the local Care Coordination team that outlines parameters for CASA's role, including confidentiality, the CASA program may contact the local CSEY Advocate Agency to refer a child for Care Coordination services.

HOW TO BEGIN CSE-IT SCREENINGS

CASA programs will begin their implementation of the CSE-IT screenings by following the Lighthouse onboarding process and completing the CSE-IT and Lighthouse trainings.

Lighthouse Onboarding Process
#1) The decision to complete CSE-IT screenings via Lighthouse should be made by the local CASA program Executive Director (ED). Only the ED or other person with designated signing authority should sign the Lighthouse agreement.

#2) A designated person from the local CASA program with signing authority completes the paperwork to set up the program and its users in Lighthouse.

#3) Visit Lighthouse Quick Start Guide.

#4) A member of the Lighthouse team will contact the CASA program to request location and user information (organization's address, program information, counties served and Lighthouse users' first/last names and work email addresses).

#5) Read and electronically sign the CSE-IT Lighthouse Person Record, acknowledging how to complete a screening using non-identifying information.

#6) Email lighthouse@alliesagainstslavery.org any time for support or assistance.

#7) Reach out to Texas CASA for other questions about what implementing this tool could look like at the CASA program.

Complete Texas CASA and Lighthouse CSE-IT Training
#1) Step 3 of the Quick Start Guide is CSE-IT and Lighthouse Training.

#2) CSE-IT trainings are offered regularly and will be publicized in the Inside CASA blog.

#3) CSE-IT training for an entire CASA program may be able to be arranged, upon request.

#4) Once the CSE-IT training is completed, Texas CASA will send the trainees' names to both Lighthouse and the trafficking team at DFPS. Lighthouse users will need to verify having completed the CSE-IT training. Once CSE-IT training is confirmed by Lighthouse, the site, and users are activated on Lighthouse and invited to view the Lighthouse CSE-IT training webinar: Lighthouse 101 Webinar. DFPS uses the trainee's program information to be able to notify CPS/SSCC staff in those areas and make them more aware of and prepared for the CSE-IT.

#5) Step 4 of the Quick Start Guide is Login. Users go to Lighthouse to login using the email address from registration. Select "Forgot Password" to reset the password. You are now ready to use Lighthouse.

CSE-IT SCREENING INPUT

- Review Lighthouse's <u>Quick Start Guide Step 5</u>, which details the input process.

- CASA staff will create a CSE-IT screening due date to occur 60 days after the first supervisor assignment on the case. The screening should be a part of the procedures due around the same time as the Status Hearing. This date will be entered into the contact log in Optima under "Safety Advocacy." CASA staff manually audit files to ensure compliance.

- In the person record of Lighthouse, CASA staff will only enter:
  - the first initial of the child's first name, a random letter for the child's last name,
  - for birthdate, enter January 1 and the year the individual was born to capture the approximate age without using the date of birth
  - approximate age, race, ethnicity and gender assigned at birth.
  - Click "Submit."

- Lighthouse auto-generates a "Person ID (PID)" number for each record created. This number may also be entered into Optima so the program can cross reference the Lighthouse person record and associated screenings. This ensures an easy way to recall the CSE-IT record if needed to update.

- The PID number is entered into Optima's "field ID" in the youth's profile.

- If you edit the person record at a later time, remember to use only the first initial of their first name, the random first initial of their last name, and the year of birth (01/01/xxxx) in those fields, so that identifying information is not captured in the record.

- All CASA programs are expected to input the same background data. For confidentiality purposes, CASA programs should not utilize any of the other fields of background data. Do NOT complete the following fields: current gender identity, sexual orientation, education level, education type, disability and immigration status.

- Review Lighthouse for a better understanding of CSE-IT screenings.

ADVOCATE WITH AND FOR YOUTH

Youth who are missing or have missing events are vulnerable to sex trafficking. CASA programs should follow the Missing from Foster Care Protocols. DFPS has separate protocols found in their Protocol for Care Coordination, but that does not interfere with CASA protocols. If some protocols are duplicated, the CASA program should still complete them.

As the CSE-IT is used in your program, youth may receive a score of possible or clear concerns. Some care coordinators are willing to serve victims with possible concern CSE-IT results. However, to support youth who score a possible concern, CASA programs may also choose to implement the Preventative Advocacy steps, an intervention process through education and advocacy.

If a youth is a confirmed trafficking victim or suspected-unconfirmed trafficking victim and/or an identified victim via a score of clear concern on a CSE-IT, and their CASA volunteer is not trained in anti-sex trafficking/CSEY protocols, CASA staff will communicate with the CASA volunteer to complete the anti-sex trafficking training. The goal is not to disrupt the rapport building or the relationship between the youth and CASA volunteers. CASA staff can help navigate the process while the CASA volunteer completes the training.

Once screenings begin, programs will be able to identify those youth who are considered a clear concern. This tool is important because it allows victims to be identified earlier and become eligible for specific services tailored to the needs of these youth. With identification, youth who are trafficked will begin a journey of healing with their CASA volunteer.

If a youth receives a score of clear concern, follow the Care Coordination Team Response. Programs may add their local program name to the document's title and begin to use it in their program. If your program implements the CASA ACT Specialized Approach, CASA ACT volunteers can be assigned.

EXPLAINING THE CSE-IT IN COURT

While CASA staff will be completing CSE-IT screenings with input from CASA volunteers, it is important for CASA volunteers to be able to answer questions a judge may have in court. CSE-IT Explained: For CASA Volunteers Testifying in Court, shares the background of the CSE-IT, including the difference between screening and diagnosis. It also details how the CSE-IT is a validated tool. CASA programs can share this document with their CASA volunteers who are advocating with youth who have been trafficked. CASA volunteers should be familiar with the key indicators found on the CSE-IT, always being mindful that a youth is never to be questioned to complete the CSE-IT or involved in the tool completion.

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REFERENCED RESOURCES

- Guidelines for Administering the CSE-IT
- CSE-IT Validation Study

[i] Lederer
[ii] Busch-Armendariz, et al.
[iii] Human Trafficking of Domestic Minors (2014)
[iv] Children and Youth Missing from DFPS Conservatorship & Human Trafficking Initiatives (2023)
[v] Office of the Attorney General (2020)
[vi] Basson, et. al, 2018, p. 5
[vii] Basson and Haley, 2012

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