The Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT)

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT, pronounced "see it") is a research-based screening tool that helps improve early identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY). The tool was developed by West Coast 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/homeless youth agencies, and limited areas of child protection.

75% Exploitation ongoing for two or more years

75% Don't see themselves as being exploited

50% 14 or younger when exploitation started

Source: WestCoast Children's Clinic (2012). Research to Action: Sexually Exploited Minors (SEM) Needs and Strengths.

We cannot solve a problem that we cannot see, and unfortunately, commercial sexual exploitation often goes unrecognized. The CSE-IT was developed to increase the visibility of and improve our response to youth who are at risk, have been, or are currently being exploited. Research for the validation of the tool indicates that most youth are exploited two or more years before being referred for services, do not self-identify as victims, and are unlikely to make an outcry. Screening allows for earlier identification using research-based indicators of exploitation and creates opportunities for earlier intervention.

The CSE-IT is built on the premise of universal screening and is recommended for use with all youth served ages 10 and older. The CSE-IT is not a diagnostic tool, and it cannot confirm victimization. Confirmation of victimization requires using educated, professional judgment in consideration of evidence and what is known about the youth and the circumstances. The CSE-IT helps screeners identify the existence of a relative number of research-based indicators in a particular youth, assigning a score that can help screeners effectively triage which youth have relatively high scores and need further assessment and services.

The CSE-IT is designed for professionals that work directly with youth. These professionals already collect information that can be used to complete the tool through engagement with youth and the collection of information from other sources including records; therefore, the tool is not designed as a structured interview to be read to a subject or given to youth as a self-administered questionnaire. To use the CSE-IT, professionals must attend CSE-IT User Training.

The CSE-IT is not diagnostic. It is not to be used as an assessment tool. It is not meant to meet investigative, statutory, legal, or other criteria, nor does it determine that victimization has occurred. The CSE-IT is used as an information integration tool to inform next steps.[1]

The CSE-IT provides a more objective screening than applying individual knowledge about trafficking indicators and subjective intuition. The CSE-IT also provides a common language for understanding research-based indicators and risk factors, and gives the user a concrete outcome, or number score, allowing multiple systems to respond accordingly.
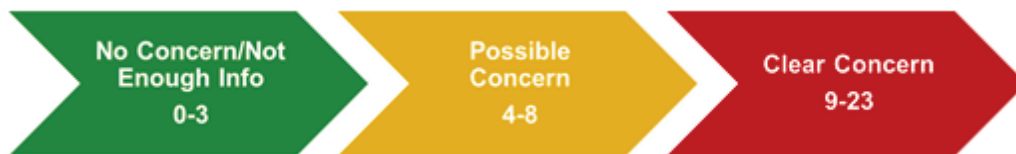
CSE-IT Key Indicators
1 - Housing and Caregiving
2 - Prior Abuse and Trauma
3 - Physical Health and Appearance
4 - Environment Exposure
5 - Relationships and Personal Belongings
6 - Signs of Current Trauma
7 - Coercion
8 - Exploitation

The scoring rubric allows users to indicate that they have no information, or that the information that they do

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[1] Basson, Danna (2017). Validation of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT). Technical Report. Oakland, CA: WestCoast Children's Clinic.

have indicates *No Concern*, *Possible Concern*, or *Clear Concern* related to these indicators.

- *No Concern/Not Enough Information (0-3):* Information available does not suggest that the youth is at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation.
- *Possible Concern (4-8):* Information available indicates that the youth may be at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation.
- *Clear Concern (9-23):* Information available indicates that the youth is at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation.

The score on the CSE-IT provides quantitative information about the youth's risk for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, it provides a prompt to action, which includes additional information seeking and informs what action is necessary, such as mandated reporting, safety planning, and continued client engagement.

All clear concern scores must be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Statewide Intake (Abuse and Neglect Hotline) at 1-800-252-5400. The report must include the facts that caused the individual to believe the child has been abused or neglected and the source of the information. The Statewide Intake (SWI) division is the "front door to the front line" for all DFPS programs. Statewide Intake assesses all reports of abuse, neglect, (including sex and/or labor trafficking) or exploitation, and routes them to the appropriate local office when allegations meet the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' (DFPS) investigative jurisdictional authority in accordance with Texas Family Code §261.301.

DFPS will investigate allegations only if the suspected perpetrator is a person traditionally responsible for the child's care, custody or welfare (e.g., member of the child's family or household, school or daycare staff) and if the perpetrator:
- Knowingly causes, permits, encourages, engages in, or allows a child to be trafficked, or
- Fails to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked.

<div align="right">Texas Family Code §261.301</div>

SWI will ensure that a report of child trafficking not under DFPS investigative jurisdiction is processed as an Information & Referral (I&R) and sent to law enforcement (LE), local law enforcement, the Texas Department of Public Safety Joint Crimes Information Center (JCIC) and the local Children's Advocacy Center (CAC).

Becoming a CSE-IT User

The Child Sex Trafficking Team, WCCC, and Allies Against Slavery have worked together to integrate CSE-IT within *Lighthouse*, an innovative software platform. This integration enables users to complete screenings easily and securely online and access and analyze their CSE-IT data at any time. Individuals are required to complete training to utilize the CSE-IT, and users should be competent in trauma-informed approaches to youth interaction. Additionally, agencies will need to register and sign an agreement with Allies Against Slavery in order to access the *Lighthouse* platform.

Visit **https://alliesagainstslavery.org/lighthouse-support/** to learn more.