



46 Investigates: Child Trafficking In Georgia

Wendy Saltzman, CBS46 Investigates

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A new report released exclusively to CBS 46 News pinpointed Georgia not only as a national hub, but also as one of the world's hot spots for child trafficking.

The study documents the number of children being raped for profit in metro Atlanta. "A Future, Not a Past," a study commissioned by the Juvenile Justice Fund, has found that at least 250 underage girls are prostituted in Georgia every single month.

"It saddens me deeply to think that we could be leading the pack in child prostitution," said Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle.

This is the first ever in-depth study of its kind in measuring the scope of the problem by tracking actual incidents of child prostitution on the street, over the Internet and in newspaper advertisements. "They are doing street surveillance, and they are doing Internet monitoring," said coordinator Kaffie McCullough. "We've had them as young as 10. The average is about 14. They are both trapped and trafficked."

McCullough said 250 girls is more than the total number of girls killed in car accidents in Georgia every year.

The report counted not only actual incidents of child prostitution on a monthly basis, but also documented cases in which Georgia's children are being trafficked for sex across state lines.

"Some of it is organized crime where you can see them one day in Georgia on Craig's List, and two weeks later they are in Seattle on Craig's List," said state Sen. Don Balfour of Gwinnett.

Craig's List has been identified by "A Future Not a Past" as one of the main sites for the commercial exploitation of children.

"You have a virtual street, and then we have a real street," McCullough said.

McCullough warned that the Internet has given people easy access to underage girls. The study found that the sex trade extends across the state and into suburban neighborhoods like Alpharetta and Norcross.

"It's rich, it's poor," Sen. Balfour said. "It's across socioeconomic lines."

And what researchers are finding is the majority of these "Johns" are specifically searching for youth.

"We're measuring how many girls across the state of Georgia are being brought into this particular business," McCullough said. "Because it is a business, and unfortunately these girls are the supply."

"We are going to have the toughest laws on the books to ensure that if you do get caught, you are going to get punished to the fullest extent of the law," Cagle said.

Cagle and Fulton County district attorney Paul Howard are joining forces to slow down the problem, and to completely put an end to it. "If you do it, if we catch you, then we are going to prosecute you, and we are going to put you in jail," Howard said