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Newswire

by Chicago Documenters

Friday, September 1, 2023

Term of the Week

sex trafficking / noun

When a person is forced into non-consensual sexual acts. In Illinois in 2010, state [law](#) made it clear that anyone exploited for sex under the age of 18 is a victim, not a perpetrator.

Backstory: This law removed references to “juvenile prostitutes” in Illinois’ criminal code, recognizing that children have no capacity to consent to their own commercial sexual exploitation and are victims of a serious sexual offense.

A Crash Course in Youth Homelessness and Runaways

A closer look at the nuts and bolts of local government and civic power. This week we’re recapping the latest Public Newsroom co-hosted by City Bureau and the Invisible Institute.

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Discussion moderator Trina Reynolds-Tyler and panelists Forrest Moore, Susan Frankel and Nikki McKinney. (Photo: Maia McDonald)

Building on a soon-to-be-published City Bureau and Invisible Institute collaboration from reporters Sarah Conway and Trina Reynolds-Tyler into how Chicago police handle missing persons cases and how the families of missing persons are affected, City Bureau hosted its latest Public Newsroom on Wednesday, Aug. 30.

So far, their reporting found that Black people make up nearly two-thirds of all missing person cases reported to the Chicago Police Department over the last 20 years, and nearly 60% of those cases involve Black children under the age of 21.

to homelessness, sex work, trafficking and other challenges. Here are some key takeaways:

Youth who choose to run away or who are considering it often do so after failures from adults in their lives to help them address and navigate complex issues.

From teachers to doctors to managers at work and other community members they encounter, Dr. Forrest Moore said these adults may fail to notice the ways a youth is struggling. Moore is a policy fellow at Chapin Hall who helps youth-serving agencies by providing guidance on research and evidence use.

Susan Frankel agreed, saying that when she talks to young people who call in to the [National Runaway Safeline](#), very few received help from adults, often still attending school while living on the street, engaging in sex work or navigating abusive family dynamics. Frankel is CEO at NRS.

“One young woman was with her dad, at 14 years old, almost daily at the hospital. Someone at the hospital should have asked, ‘Why are you not at school; what do you need; how can we help?’” Frankel said.

To successfully address youth homelessness, community members and local stakeholders will need to meet young people where they are.

To help youth who are in crisis, Frankel and others at the NRS look at what their options are and what they need to feel safe and have agency in their lives, she said.

“What we are seeing is that it’s very, very brave and courageous for anybody to reach out for help,” Frankel said. “So we are really working with them to look at what their options are, and to help them think through what their safest choice might be ... instead of us deciding what’s best for them.”

Additionally, Chicago activist and mother Nikki McKinney said they believe active players in the child welfare system like the Department of Children and Family Services need to rebuild systems from the ground up to help youth – including re-evaluating how they employ local police officers and security guards, which some youth may not trust. McKinney is the lead organizer and co-creator of the [Street Youth Rise Up Campaign](#).

Systems of oppression are a big contributing factor to youth homelessness.

“What happens in society [is] we immediately go to blaming the family,” said Moore, adding, “There’s a tremendous amount of family breakdown for a young

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However, Moore believes it's important to recognize how youth homelessness is a symptom of oppression, and how larger systems fail to serve youth and their families. This recognition helps to identify where problems occur and how to support familial structures to remain intact, he said.

"Due to oppression, people are stripped of a lot of things and left to sort of figure it out, to build and create agency," he said.

When systems like the health care industry, schools and the police fail to communicate, this can contribute to youth homelessness, Moore said. Because they're not designed to work holistically and collaboratively, communication issues discourage young people from sharing when they're experiencing challenges.

Because data-sharing and interaction between these groups is often limited, helping youth at risk of homelessness is limited as well.

Note: Due to the holiday next week, the Newswire will come on Wednesday only. Join us the week after as we start a brand-new series about incoming migrants and community groups who are helping them find their place in Chicago. Happy Labor Day weekend, everyone!

Next Week

A selection of notable public meetings happening next week, organized by key topic. Looking for other past/upcoming public meetings and official records? [Search our database—updated daily.](#)

POLITICS

City Council Committee on Economic, Capital and Technology Development | Council members will be appointing members to [Special Service Areas](#). Alders will also discuss ongoing efforts to modernize the city's information technology systems. | [Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1 p.m.](#)

ENVIRONMENT

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#) EDUCATION

City Council Committee on Education and Child Development | This is a subject matter hearing on CPS resources and transparency. | [Wednesday, Sept. 6, 5:30 p.m.](#)

 DEVELOPMENT

Commission on Chicago Landmarks + Permit Review Committee | [Thursday, Sept. 7, 12:45 p.m.](#)

 CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Cook County Justice Advisory Council | [Friday, Sept. 8, 8:30 a.m.](#)

Local News

Key civic issues in the news this week.

Dying and disabled Illinois prisoners kept behind bars, despite new medical release law | [Injustice Watch](#)

Chicago's murder count makes national headlines, but accurately talking about crime data requires nuance | [WTTW](#)

Hyde Park divided over city plan to house migrants in Lake Shore Hotel | [Hyde Park Herald](#)

Why Chicago is losing the war on rats | [Illinois Answers Project](#)

'End To Overdose Now' rally calls for solutions to city's opioid crisis | [Block Club Chicago](#)

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