

Engaging Catholic Communities in Ending Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

A Toolkit and Resource Guide



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The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) addresses the culture, institutions, and individuals that perpetrate, profit from, or support sexual exploitation. Our work includes prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services.

CAASE envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

—United Nations, Articles 1 and 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Engaging Catholic Communities in Ending and Sexual Exploitation is a resource created by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) for groups within parishes (i.e., women’s groups, study groups, social groups, etc.) and any other individuals of faith who are passionate about ending sexual exploitation. This toolkit provides background information on issues surrounding prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation both generally and affecting Chicago specifically, including pathways to entering the sex trade, barriers to exiting the trade, and the role that customers and pimps play in maintaining and profiting from the sex trade. This kit can be used to raise awareness *and* mobilize your community to join the fight to end sexual exploitation. As Catholics, it is imperative that we take action on this issue. As followers of a faith that advocates for social justice and helping those who are suffering, there is no choice *but* to be a voice for justice.

This toolkit includes the following resources:

- Biblical passages that can help you explore the issues surrounding prostitution in a way that is spiritually relevant to your community
- Practical action steps to eliminate the exploitation of women and children

Additionally, there are supplemental materials available on our website (<http://www.caase.org/toolkits>) where you can find information about organizations you may want to partner with, as well as movies and books to raise awareness.



Activist Spotlight: John Newton, William Wilberforce, and Elizabeth Heyrick

In the 1700s, 11 million people were captured in Africa and transported to the West Indies to be enslaved in forced labor and bondage. Britain was responsible for the largest proportion of the slave trade. John Newton was a slave trader who almost died on a slave run and prayed to Christ to be rescued. He was saved and thereafter devoted his life to ministry. He later wrote perhaps the most famous hymn of all time, “Amazing Grace.” The line “that saved a wretch like me” refers to the fact that he had enslaved many Africans.

Around the same time, a young member of the English Parliament, William Wilberforce, was rising through the political ranks. In 1785, he underwent a conversion experience and became a Christian, leading to a lifelong concern for reform. He soon decided that something had to be done to stop the slave trade. John Newton became one of Wilberforce’s mentors and advised Wilberforce stay in politics and fight for equality there. As he became a prominent leader in Britain against the slave trade, Wilberforce inspired others to give of their time, their talent, and their money to change the world around them. He grew into a kind but firm leader who created a diverse coalition to join him in his abolitionist work. Through tireless activism, this group helped pass legislation in England that abolished the UK slave trade. This legislation, in turn, greatly influenced the abolition of the slave trade in America and ultimately in France.

The emancipation leader Frederick Douglass praised Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists, describing their work as what “finally thawed the British heart into sympathy for the slave, and moved the strong arm of government in mercy to put an end to this bondage.”

Another person known for anti-slavery work in 18th- and 19th-century England is Elizabeth Heyrick. She campaigned for the immediate—not gradual—abolition of slavery and led women’s groups to successfully challenge men such as Wilberforce to quicker action.

HOW CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES CAN HELP

The sexual exploitation of women and children is a particularly repugnant aspect of this trade, and must be recognized as an intrinsic violation of human dignity and rights. The disturbing tendency to treat prostitution as a business or industry not only contributes to the trade in human beings, but is itself evidence of a growing tendency to detach freedom from the moral law and to reduce the rich mystery of human sexuality to a mere commodity.

—Pope John Paul II

(Letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, Secretary for Relations with States, “Twenty-First Century Slavery—The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings,” May 2002.)

Micah 6:8

And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Catholic tradition is rooted in the concepts of love and compassion, and these overarching values form the foundation for Catholics’ leadership roles in social justice efforts throughout the world. With a long history of striving to make the world better for all, Catholic communities can play a key role in the fight to end human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This toolkit can be a catalyst for activism within parishes and faith communities that are interested in working towards social change, as well as by any individual who is passionate about ending sexual harm.

Prostitution and human trafficking are human rights violations of that occur in neighborhoods in the Chicago Archdiocese, throughout Illinois, and indeed worldwide. Between 16,000 and 24,000 women and girls are affected by the sex trade in Chicago on any given day.¹ As long as people remain unaware of the root causes and extent of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, victims will continue to be traumatized. Catholic communities can be a vehicle for both raising awareness and advocating on behalf of the victims of these crimes.

This toolkit focuses specifically on the importance of *ending the demand* for paid sex, which means targeting purchasers, traffickers and others who profit from the sex trade. While this is just one piece of a complicated puzzle, it is the piece that is most commonly overlooked. Providing prostituted individuals with social services and other resources is vital for helping them escape prostitution, but as long as demand exists, vulnerable individuals will continue to be recruited and coerced into the sex trade. That is why we are reaching out to you to help us *end the demand*.

¹ C. O’Leary and O. Howard, *The Prostitution of Women and Girls in Metropolitan Chicago: A Preliminary Prevalence Report* (Center for Impact Research, 2001).

SLAVERY: What is the age-old issue?

Ecclesiastes 4:1

¹Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

Human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, is pervasive nationally and internationally. There are more people enslaved today than at the peak of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In the United States, a person is a victim of sex trafficking if s/he is being exploited to engage in commercial sex. A person is a victim of sex trafficking if:

s/he is being forced, coerced, or tricked to either work or engage in sex for money, and s/he would experience serious harm if s/he tried to leave situation,

OR

s/he is under 18 and is having sex for money—it isn't necessary to prove force or coercion for minors: the law recognizes that children cannot meaningfully consent to sex.

While transportation or movement can be involved in human trafficking, trafficking is simply forced/coerced labor; it does not require transportation or movement across borders.

For those of us who are in a position to do something to combat human slavery, however small our contribution, neutrality is a sin.

—Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz,
Department of Defense

Learn more about the issue: There are many films and books about human trafficking and prostitution (see the supplemental information). Expand your personal knowledge about these issues by checking out any of our recommended resources or facilitate a book club or film screening for a group of friends or your community of faith. Reach out to other churches in your denomination or community and engage them in your activities.

Pray: Pray for justice and healing in your worship services, small group meetings, or personal practice. Here is one example adapted from a prayer offered by the Sisters of the Holy Family:

God of all peoples, awaken our hearts and deepen our commitment to work for a world where every person is free and able to live their lives fully and joyfully. We ask for conversion of heart for traffickers and for strong laws that protect victims and resources so that they may lead fulfilling lives. Help us to grow in our awareness that we are all connected. Give us wisdom, inspiration, and courage to stand in solidarity, so that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all your people. Amen.

Participate in the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness:

In 2012, President Obama declared January to be National Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Throughout the month, events are held to raise awareness about and promote taking action against human trafficking. Choose an action from this section, create your own, or join an event planned by another organization to commemorate this month.

LOVING LIKE GOD: *Why should Catholics get involved?*

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Prostitution will not end unless we end the demand. By shifting the focus from targeting women in the sex trade to eliminating the demand for paid sex, we believe that we will see a real reduction in prostitution and the harms associated with it in our communities and in our city.

In Illinois, the rate of prostituted individuals being arrested for felony prostitution has increased over 1,000 percent since 1995². This makes it difficult for women to escape prostitution and pursue rehabilitation due to the fact that an arrest record makes it much more difficult to secure a job or home. The johns, on the other hand, frequently receive lesser punishments, such as car impoundment, fines, and municipal violations, resulting in very little deterrence. Clearly, this \$9-million-a-year³ strategy is not working.

He promised me everything and better. Clothes, cars, a house, himself. I was just looking for someone to love and love me.
—Prostitution survivor

² Illinois Department of Corrections, *Statistical Presentation 2004* (Springfield, Ill., 2005), 38.

³ City of Chicago’s estimated cost of arresting, prosecuting, and detaining people for prostitution offenses (Sentencing Project 2002), <http://www.sentencingproject.org>.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Adopt congregational fasting or prayer: Choose a time of year and a length of time appropriate for your faith community to fast and pray for sexually exploited people in your community. Incorporate into this time opportunities to teach your congregation or group about the issues facing women in prostitution and appropriate responses to the problem.

Ask your priest to address the issue in a sermon: Raise awareness about human trafficking and sexual exploitation in your congregation by addressing the issue in a religious sermon.

Make counseling available: Depending on the size and makeup of your parish, licensed counselors or therapists may already be part of your community. If you have the resources, your congregation should consider the benefits of adding a counselor to your staff to provide trauma treatment and counseling services to victims. And if you are a small parish with minimal resources, just being able to refer someone to a counseling service can be incredibly helpful to those in need and promotes the establishment of a safe, supportive network for victims. Train your leaders and staff that when speaking with victims, they should *listen* to the story, *believe* it, and *refer* the person to proper counseling.

Sign up for End Demand Illinois Action Alerts: The End Demand Illinois Campaign is shifting law enforcement's attention to sex traffickers and people who buy sex, while creating a network of support for survivors of the sex trade. Sign up at <http://www.enddemandillinois.org/>.

Watch Demand with members of your congregation: This documentary exposes the men who buy commercial sex, the vulnerable women and children sold as commodities, and the facilitators of the trade within the marketplace of exploitation.

You can watch the movie online at: <http://www.sharedhope.org/Media/VideoResources.aspx>.

LOVING MERCY AND JUSTICE

Isaiah 58:5-9

⁶ “Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed^[a] go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness

Research conducted both in Chicago and nationwide consistently reveals that women in prostitution experience high rates of homelessness, childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Most were recruited into the sex trade as minors.

When we think of a woman in prostitution compared to a victim of sex trafficking, different images often come to mind. We tend to blame women in prostitution for their involvement in the sex trade but view victims of sex trafficking as innocent.

When poverty, untreated mental health issues and Even though an adult in prostitution who entered the sex trade entirely of her or his own volition and who is not involved with a third party is not legally considered a victim of trafficking, it is important to move *beyond* legal definitions to understand the human rights violations experienced by both trafficked and non-trafficked individuals in prostitution.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Host a book club or movie screening for your parish or faith-based group and discuss what you learn as well as steps you can take to help prostituted women and children. Refer to the supplemental materials to find relevant books and movies.
<http://www.caase.org/toolkits>

Serve fair-trade coffee or have traffick-free chocolate parties: Buy fair-trade and traffick-free chocolate and coffee and use them to start conversations with faith community members and friends about human trafficking, both abroad and in Illinois. Use fair-trade coffee at religious functions and encourage surrounding communities (especially schools and colleges) to do the same.

Add a personal dimension: Sometimes we find ourselves so removed from an issue that we cannot imagine that it is happening in our communities. As a faith leader, you can help raise awareness about human trafficking and sexual exploitation by hosting an “educational hour” and inviting a prostitution survivor or expert to share their experiences and expertise with your congregation. This is a great opportunity to create dialogue on these important issues. If you are interested in having someone speak to your community, please contact the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation at info@caase.org.

Volunteer: Partner with organizations that are working on this issue. Many organizations and coalitions are looking for individuals to help support their goals through volunteer time, collaborative community efforts, and donations. Areas of need are medical care, translation, job placement, housing, legal services, and mentoring. Your faith community can also help by organizing a clothing, blanket, or food drive. Chicago-based organizations working to end sexual exploitation can be found in the supplemental information. If you need assistance finding an organization that matches your gifting, please contact CAASE.

SERVING OTHERS: *Where are those in need?*

Matthew 25:35-40

³⁵ “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, ^[a] you did it to me.”

The average age of entry into prostitution is **12-14 years old**.⁴ The overwhelming majority of individuals engaged in prostitution have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, with estimates ranging from 65 to 95 percent.⁵

Being abused teaches victims to expect and accept abuse. It also teaches young people how to disassociate their bodies from their minds. *Being able to dissociate is necessary to survive the trauma of prostitution.*

Every 60 seconds, two more children are forced into slavery.
—*Stop the Traffik*

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Lent: Lent is often associated with giving up something that is pleasurable in our lives. But Lent can also be a time when we give up practices that are unhealthy either to ourselves or society. By focusing on giving up practices that are harmful to the global community, we can connect to the issues of slavery and exploitation in the following ways:

- Raise awareness about how what we purchase, eat, wear, and participate in can contribute to global slavery. Challenge members of your congregation to give up slave-made food, clothes, and other products. Go to <http://www.slavefree.com> or <http://www.equalexchange.coop/> to learn more about slave-free products. Free trade items can be purchased for gifts throughout the year.
- Encourage people during Lent (and thereafter) to stop patronizing institutions, stores, and companies whose advertising is degrading and whose commodification of women’s bodies helps normalize the existence of the sex trade. Examples are gyms with “pole dancing” classes, TV stations with shows that glamorize prostitution or pornography, and magazines with ads that degrade the dignity of women.

Talk with congregants who are government and law enforcement officials: Set up a meeting to discuss the reality of human trafficking and the efforts of anti-trafficking organizations working on the issue. Tell them how to get involved in the work of these organizations.

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors* (Washington, DC, 2007).

⁵ M. Farley et al., “Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder” in M. Farley, ed., *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (New York: Haworth, 2003), 33-74.

CATHOLICS ARE COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Luke 10: 29-37

²⁹But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. ³²Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. ³³But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. ³⁴He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' ³⁶Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" ³⁷He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Individuals involved in the sex trade need a variety of social services and other resources to exit the sex trade safely. Unfortunately, instead of viewing these individuals as victims in need of assistance, society tends to label them as criminals.

Although ample research demonstrates that the customers, pimps, and traffickers are fueling the sex trade and abusing women and girls in prostitution, the criminal and legal systems continue to target and punish the victims. The one-sided focus fails to address the root cause of prostitution: *the demand to purchase sex*.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Build a relationship with your local elected

officials: Help your representatives understand how important it is not to revictimize women in their community. Advocate for targeting those causing the harm-pimps, traffickers, and customers-instead of revictimizing prostituted individuals with arrest and incarceration. Most political leaders allot one day per week to meet with their constituents. Chicago residents can find their alderman at <http://www.chicityclerk.com/citycouncil/alderman/find.html>.

Contact your legislators: Your voice counts! Keep abreast of relevant legislation and support initiatives that provide resources to women and hold perpetrators accountable. An easy way for you and your congregation to voice your opinions and make an impact on this issue is to write, call, or meet your local legislator. Each Illinois legislator has a Springfield office and a community office. And each US legislator has a DC office and a local office. You can find your local and national representatives at <http://www.capwiz.com/cfw/state/main/?state=IL&view=myofficials#0>.

Monitor the Media: If you see something in the media that promotes or glorifies the exploitation of women, write letters to the editor and/or producer. All forms of media (newspapers, magazines, television programs, etc.) have avenues for this. If you see advertising or billboards that are offensive or degrading, contact the company or publisher and inform them of your opinion. To access CAASE's guide on how to respond to harmful depictions of the sex trade in the media, please visit <http://www.caase.org/toolkits>.

Thank you for using our toolkit for Catholic communities. We hope that you found the resource helpful. Faith-based communities regularly perform inspiring work that is rooted in love, compassion, and leadership. Therefore, Catholic communities are in a strategic position to work towards eliminating human trafficking and sexual exploitation. CAASE is always available to answer any questions, suggestions, or concerns that you may have while reading and working with this toolkit. Please do not hesitate to contact us at outreach@caase.org.

We also encourage you to look at the supplemental information provided in addition to this toolkit. These materials include

- Religious statements against human trafficking and sexual exploitation
- Faith-based programs/curricula
- Chicago-based organizations: Direct Services/Outreach
- Chicago-based organizations: Advocacy
- Must-see films
- Must-read books

Lastly, we would greatly appreciate your feedback regarding your experience with the toolkit. You can fill out a brief survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W5NZRXM>