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## **Largest-Ever Research Studies Finds Almost One-Fifth of Surveyed Homeless Youth in Ft. Lauderdale Are Victims of Human Trafficking**

### **LGBTQ Youth, Young Women Disproportionately Affected, According to New Studies**

New York, NY (April 17, 2017) -- Researchers announced findings today from the largest-ever combined sample of homeless youth in the United States and Canada, revealing that nearly one-fifth are victims of human trafficking, including those trafficked for sex, labor, or both. Homeless youth in Ft. Lauderdale were among those surveyed for the study; locally it was found that 17% of the 47 local respondents had been trafficked for sex, labor, or both.

The dual studies by researchers at The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania and Loyola University (New Orleans) Modern Slavery Research Project, drew on interviews with 911 homeless youth across 13 cities, including 12 cities where homeless young people accessed services through Covenant House, between February 2014 and March 2017. Covenant House operates the largest network of residences and community service centers for homeless youth across the Americas, reaching more than 46,000 youth every year in 30 cities across six countries.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth were disproportionately affected. Though they accounted for just 23% of the respondents interviewed, LGBTQ youth accounted for 57% of the sex trafficking victims. Overall, 28% of the young women interviewed were trafficked for sex and 7% of the young men interviewed were trafficked for sex. Only one respondent was trafficked for labor.

"The results of this important study are empirical evidence of what we have believed to be true for many years about the youth we serve at Covenant House Florida in terms of their experiences on the street and their vulnerability to becoming victims of trafficking," said Covenant House Florida Executive Director James M. Gress. "This study also validates, once again the important role that Covenant House Florida can play in providing these young victims with a path to safety and self-sufficiency, away from the predators of the streets."

Nationally, the researchers found that 19.4% of the interviewed youth were victims of human trafficking, with 15% having been trafficked for sex, 7.4% trafficked for labor, and 3% trafficked for both. Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age. Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, debt bonding or slavery.

“Too many youth are desperate and alone on the streets. Homelessness makes them vulnerable to traffickers,” said Covenant House President Kevin Ryan. “We don’t have to live in a world where desperate kids are bought and sold. If we want to reduce the number of youth who are trafficked, we have to end youth homelessness. We can, we must, and we should.”

The 10-city studies encompassed interviews with young people aged 17 to 24. Among the national reports’ key findings:

-- 15% of the total population of 911 young people had been trafficked for sex (21.4% of young women and 10% of young men). An astounding 26.9% of LGBTQ youth reported experiences consistent with the U.S. federal definition of sex trafficking.

-- 32.1% of the youth interviewed had engaged in some way in the sex trade at some point: 40.5% of young females; 25.3% of young men. Fifty-six percent of the transgender youth reported being involved in the sex trade in some.

The Loyola research further found that:

-- 67.9% of the youth who had engaged in the commercial sex trade had done so while homeless.

-- While 21% of the youth interviewed had a history in the foster system, 29% of the youth who were trafficked and 27% of the youth who were engaged in the sex trade had been wards of the state or in the foster care system at some point in their lives.

“This critical study shows us that one in five homeless children is a victim of human trafficking,” said Anne Milgram, the former New Jersey Attorney General and now a Professor of Practice and Distinguished Scholar in Residence at New York University School of Law. “It gives much needed insight into how we can better fight both homelessness and human trafficking, two terrible problems that are faced at the same time by many youth in America. We need to act now to better fight these tragic events in the life of a child.”

Researchers interviewed homeless youth at Covenant House shelters in Anchorage, Atlanta, Detroit, Ft. Lauderdale, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Oakland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. Interviews were also conducted with young people at Tumbleweed, one•n•ten, and Native American Connections – all located in Phoenix.

**For more information on these ground-breaking studies, got to  
CovenantHouseStudy.org or contact:**

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*Founded in 1972, Covenant House is one of the largest privately funded agency in the Americas helping homeless youth, providing 24/7 crisis care and ongoing support to over 46,000 homeless youth each year in 30 cities across six countries. For more information go to [www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org).*