

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Strengthening our Community Response

Within 72 hours, a runaway youth is approached by an exploiter or sex trafficker. While this is a national average, the phenomenon includes Tompkins County.

This is just one of many sobering facts attendees learned on April 26th about commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and our community's response.

[Women's Fund](#) sponsored this free gathering where participants learned how to build their skills for prevention and awareness of sex trafficking among women and youth. This event's takeaways, resources and opportunities for further training included how law enforcement and local organizations are responding.

See pictured below, panel moderator, **Francisco Paler-Large**, LMSW, Program Management Specialist, [Tompkins County Youth Services Department](#) and panelists **Samantha McBean**, Program Leader, [GIAC](#), **Kristi Taylor**, Education Director, [Advocacy Center](#) and **Christine Barksdale**, [Ithaca Police Department](#) and Community Foundation board member.



CSEC involves youth under age 18 and the force, bribe, or coerced exchange of sex for something of value, or the promise of something of value. In Tompkins County, it most commonly involves teens who need places to stay or other basic necessities, but involves children at all ages. The panel presented clear information on how to potentially spot CSEC, their experiences working with youth, and answered questions.

Paler-Large noted that the team's training is a key strategy: "*We can raise awareness, but it takes community members talking about it*". A dialogue where the public are informed and kids become more comfortable hearing about the phenomenon will help shift mindsets that allow CSEC to help stop exploitation of children in our community.

Women's Fund is grateful to CSEC team for their efforts to positively impact children, women and families in our community. To learn more about this community response or what training is available contact Ms. Taylor, [Advocacy Center](#), 607-277-3203, or ktaylor@theadvocacycenter.org.