

2015

RESEARCH REPORT
2014 DOMESTIC CHILD SEX
TRAFFICKING INSTITUTE
EVALUATION



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE
AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges® (NCJFCJ) headquartered on the University of Nevada campus in Reno since 1969, provides cutting-edge training, wide-ranging technical assistance, and research to help the nation's courts, judges, and staff in their important work. Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has pursued a mission to improve courts and systems practice and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation's children and families.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST) is a growing and complex problem in the United States. It is estimated that thousands of children are at risk of being exploited and many are already being trafficked. The average age of entry into this underground world is between 12 and 14 and often involves children in the foster care system. Many of these child victims are frequently seen as offenders. Juvenile and family court judges are in a unique position to assist these youth transition out of “the life” and provide them with the necessary services to heal and recover from the trauma associated with DCST. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) recognized the lack of training available related to this topic. In response and with support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), NCJFCJ developed and delivered the 2014 National Judicial Institute on Domestic Child Sex Trafficking in Reno, Nevada.

The Institute was led by a faculty team of knowledgeable judges and professionals who have been recognized for work on this issue in the courtroom and beyond. The DCST Institute provided judicial officers with tools needed to develop or enhance their ability to handle these multifaceted and challenging cases. The Institute’s goal was for judges to return to their communities with a greater ability to identify children who are at-risk for or are currently being trafficked, effective prevention and intervention strategies that respond to the individualized needs of each victim and improve case outcomes, and a stronger sense of their courtroom and community roles to help prevent and end domestic child sex trafficking.

NCJFCJ continuously looks for ways to improve trainings through careful evaluation. Pre- and post-surveys were used to assess knowledge acquisition, expectations, attitude change, and decision making. Below is a summary of the key findings from the pre- and post-survey results.

KEY FINDINGS

Knowledge Acquisition

- There was an increase in self-reported knowledge across all 16 topic areas.
- Statistically significant differences from pre- to post-average knowledge levels in seven topics were found.
- Participants self-reported they could better define 10 of 13 terms related to DCST.

Perceptions of Policy and Practice

- Statistically significant increase from pre- to post-Institute in the number of participants who agree...
 - juvenile detention for DCST victims is traumatizing.
 - there should be legislative reform to include safe harbor laws.
 - detention centers should screen for DCST.
 - judges have great discretion in how they treat DCST victims.

Case Scenario (Decision Making)

- Statistically significant increase in the number of red flags identified by participants from pre- to post-survey.
- Increase in the number of participants who said they would screen, assess or evaluate for trauma, involve the victim in their placement decision, appoint a victim advocate, and involve child welfare.

Practice Change

- Participants noted they would be more aware of the red flags and be better able to identify DCST victims.
- Participants said they would build more collaborative teams and educate court staff.
- Resources and a lack of buy-in were anticipated challenges to implementing change.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST) is a growing and complex problem in the United States. It is estimated that up to 325,000 children are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) and possibly at least 100,000 are currently being victimized¹. In addition to these sobering statistics, youth who are involved in the foster care system are at greater risk for CSE because these youth often runaway or have a history of child sexual abuse. Juvenile and family court judges are in a unique position to assist these youth to transition out of “the life” and provide exploited children with the necessary services to heal and recover from the trauma associated with DCST.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) recognized the lack of training available related to this topic. In response, NCJFCJ developed and delivered a judicial training on the complex issues surrounding DCST. The *2014 National Judicial Institute on Domestic Child Sex Trafficking* was held November 3 – 5, 2014 in Reno, Nevada. The DCST Institute was the result of a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Futures Without Violence, Human Rights Project for Girls, and NCJFCJ. The two-and-a-half day institute was led by a faculty team of experienced judges and other professionals from throughout the country who have established work on this issue in the courtroom and beyond.

The DCST Institute provided new and experienced juvenile and family court judges with tools they need to develop or enhance their ability to handle these multifaceted and challenging cases. The goal of the Institute was for judges to return to their communities with a greater ability to identify children who are at-risk for or are currently being trafficked, effective prevention and intervention strategies that respond to the individualized needs of each victim and improve case outcomes, and a stronger sense of their courtroom and community roles to help prevent and end domestic child sex trafficking.

NCJFCJ conducts thorough evaluations in order to continuously improve trainings. The 2014 DCST Institute included pre- and post-surveys to assess knowledge acquisition, expectations, attitude change, and decision making. The following report is a summary of the pre- and post-survey results.

¹ Kotrla, K. (2010). Domestic minor sex trafficking in the united states. *Social Work*, 55(2), 181-7. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/193904157?accountid=452>

METHODS OF SURVEY DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Utilizing the *Guide to Conducting Effective Training Evaluations*² tools and resources, researchers developed an evaluation plan to examine changes in knowledge, attitude, and decision making as it relates to DCST. In addition, researchers were interested in any changes participants anticipated making as a result of their attendance, which could include identifying red flags and appropriately addressing the needs of victims. The research staff utilized a pre/post-test design, with a case scenario to evaluate changes in decision making. Participants were given a unique identification in order to link pre- and post-survey responses. Researchers have employed a similar methodology at previous trainings³. This methodology will inform whether the DCST Institute is effective in increasing participants' identification of "red flags" and changing their decision making.

Pre-Survey

Researchers created an online survey that assessed participants' current knowledge, understanding, and views of the issues surrounding DCST, as well as their expectations. The knowledge questions asked participants to rate their knowledge prior to attendance on a 4-point scale⁴ of specific topics related to DCST (e.g. profiles of victims, trauma-informed systems of justice, emerging legislation). Participants were asked to rate how well they could define DCST terms on a 5-point scale⁵ (e.g. breaking, renegade, wife-in-law). Participants were provided a series of statements and asked to determine if they were myths or facts. The survey also had statements in which participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point scale⁶ (e.g. detention is the safest option of DCST victims). A brief case scenario was provided and participants were asked two follow-up questions (Are there any red flags for sex trafficking? What would you do at the detention hearing?). The pre-survey also included demographic questions to assess how long participants had been judicial officers, which types of cases they handle, and how many child abuse and neglect and juvenile justice cases they hear.

NCJFCJ created and sent an invitation with a survey link to the DCST participants. DCST Institute participants received the initial email the week of October 20, 2014. Two reminder emails were sent to participants. The survey link remained open for two weeks (10/20/14 – 10/31/14). Participants were informed that their responses would be anonymous and all responses would be reported in an aggregate manner. Ten DCST Institute participants completed the survey, which accounted for a 66.6% response rate. Any participants who did not complete the pre-survey online, were given a paper copy to complete onsite on the first day.

Post-Survey

Researchers created a paper survey to assess change in knowledge, attitude, and potential practice change. The post-survey included the original knowledge and agreement questions on the same scales asking participants to think about what they learned. The post-survey asked participants if the Institute increased their capacity to handle DCST cases and how they anticipate changing practice. In

² Gatowski, S. and Dobbin, S. (2014). *A Guide to Conducting Effective Training Evaluation: Recommendations, Strategies, and Tools for Dependency Court Improvement Programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjfcj.org/resource-library/technical-assistance/guide-conducting-effective-training-evaluations>.

³ Research Report: 2013 Child Abuse and Neglect Institute in Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncjfcj.org/resource-library/publications/research-report-2013-child-abuse-and-neglect-institute-atlanta-ga>.

⁴ 4-point scale (4 – great deal of knowledge, 3 – fair amount of knowledge, 2 – limited knowledge, and 1 – no knowledge)

⁵ 5-point scale (5- very well, 4 – well, 3 – adequately, 2 – poorly, and 1 – very poorly)

⁶ 5-point scale (5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neither, 2 – disagree, and 1 – strongly disagree)

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In addition, the post-survey included the original case scenario to evaluate if answers changed from the pre-survey.

The post-surveys were administered onsite on the final day of the Institute and each survey had a unique ID on it to match to the pre-survey. Eleven DCST Institute participants completed the post-survey, which accounted for an 84.6% response rate.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS (PRE-SURVEY)

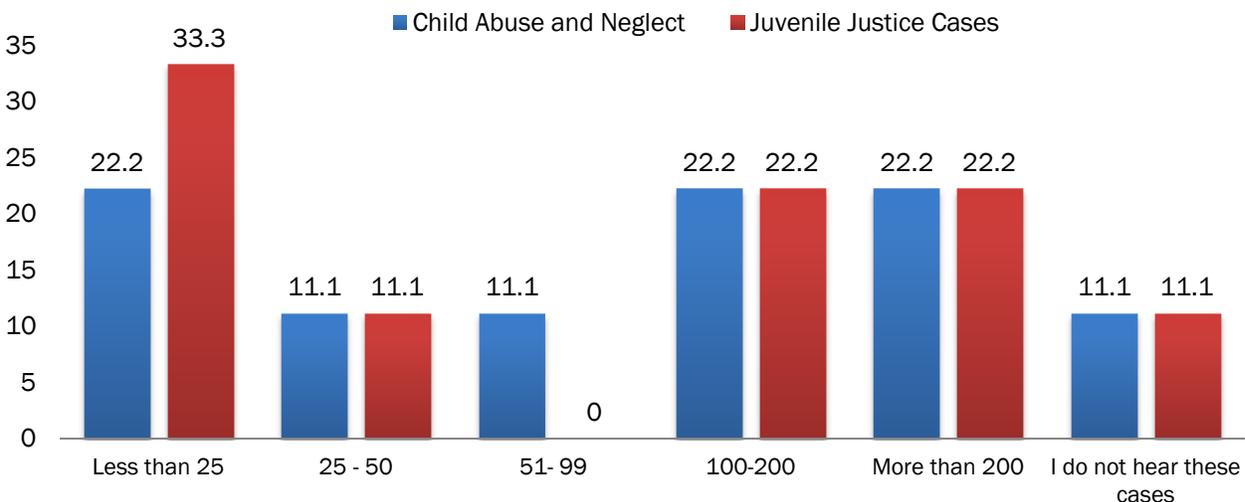
Results from the pre-survey indicated that approximately 44.4% of participants had been a judicial officer for 15 or more years, followed by 33.3% who had one to four years of experience, 11.1% had five to nine years, and 11.1% had ten to fourteen years. No one indicated less than a year of experience as a judicial officer. Over 55% of participants indicated that they worked in both child abuse/neglect and juvenile justice (see figure 1).

FIG. 1 - ROLE OF JUDICIAL OFFICER



Approximately, 22% of survey respondents hear more than 200 dependency and juvenile justice cases every three months and 22% hear 100 - 200 cases (see figure 2). Survey participants were asked to estimate what percentage of cases on their docket involve sex trafficking. Four participants estimated 10% of cases on their docket involved sex trafficking, another three participants estimated less than 5% of cases, and one estimated at least 25%. Many respondents who provided estimates stated they were unsure of the true prevalence as screening may be lacking their jurisdiction.

FIG. 2 - AVERAGE NUMBER OF CASES HEARD EVERY 3 MONTHS



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KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

Participants were asked to self-rate their knowledge level (pre- and post-Institute) on 16 items related to DCST topics. Respondents' pre- and post-survey answers were matched for analysis. Responses were then averaged and sorted from least to greatest knowledge, along with calculating the mean difference between pre- and post-Institute. The least amount of change in knowledge was for the topic, "*prevention opportunities*," where the most amount of change occurred for the topic, "*the impact exploitation has on DCST victims*" (see table 1). Overall, there was an increase in knowledge across *all* topic areas, with a mean difference of 0.7, SD = 0.4. T-test analyses⁷ revealed there were statistically significant⁸ difference between pre- and post-survey average knowledge levels in seven topics (see table 1).

Table 1. Change in knowledge by topic area (sorted from least to greatest).

Topic Area	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	Mean Difference	p-value
Prevention opportunities for DCST.	3.27	3.36	0.09	0.76
The role of culture in DCST cases.	3.20	3.30	0.10	0.76
The profiles of buyers (i.e. "Johns").	2.91	3.18	0.27	0.49
Promising practices for DCST victims.	3.27	3.55	0.27	0.28
Appropriate services for DCST victims.	3.18	3.64	0.45	0.21
Emerging legislation that relates to DCST.	3.00	3.45	0.45	0.27
Standards of care as they apply to DCST.	3.10	3.60	0.50	0.18
The profiles of traffickers (i.e. pimps).	2.73	3.36	0.64	0.09
Trauma-informed systems of justice.	2.73	3.45	0.73	0.09
Judicial leadership as it relates to DCST.	3.09	3.82	0.73	0.04
The impact trauma has on adolescent brain development.	2.45	3.36	0.91	0.06
Difference between screening, assessment and evaluation.	2.91	3.82	0.91	0.02
The profiles of DCST victims.	2.70	3.70	1.00	0.01
The dynamics of exploitation on DCST victims.	2.73	3.82	1.09	0.01
The risk factors for entry into domestic child sex trafficking.	2.64	3.82	1.18	0.01
The impact exploitation has on DCST victims.	2.55	3.82	1.27	0.00

*4-point scale (4 - great deal of knowledge, 3 - fair amount of knowledge, 2 - limited knowledge, and 1 - no knowledge)

Participants were asked to self-rate how well they could define 13 DCST terms (pre- and post-Institute). Again, pre- and post-survey answers were matched for analysis. Responses were then averaged and sorted from least to greatest knowledge, along with calculating the mean difference between pre- and post-Institute. There was a decrease in knowledge level for three topic areas and an increase for the other ten (see table 2). T-test analyses revealed no statistically significant differences between pre- and post-survey average knowledge levels, with a mean difference of 0.32, SD = 0.38.

⁷ A T-test analysis is used in statistical examination to compare the means of two populations and determine if they are equal. In this situation, a paired t-test was used because responses were matched, which provided the opportunity to compare the mean difference of the pre- and post-survey results.

⁸ Statically significant findings indicate that the relationship between two variables is not mere random chance and are typically explained through a p-value. If the p-value is less than 0.05, then there is 95% confidence in the relationship between two variables.

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Table 2. Change in knowledge of terminology (sorted from least to most).

DCST Terminology	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	Mean Difference	p-value
Square	4.18	4.00	-0.18	0.77
Squaring up	4.18	4.00	-0.18	0.77
Squad	4.09	4.00	-0.09	0.89
Breaking	4.09	4.09	0.00	1.00
Charge	4.09	4.18	0.09	0.88
Pimps Up, Hos Down	4.00	4.18	0.18	0.79
In House	4.00	4.36	0.36	0.55
Renegade	3.90	4.30	0.40	0.58
Turnout	3.55	4.09	0.55	0.51
Out of Pocket	4.00	4.55	0.55	0.36
Guerrilla Pimping	3.91	4.64	0.73	0.20
Wife-in-law	3.91	4.64	0.73	0.25
Stable	3.45	4.55	1.09	0.14

5-point scale (5- very well, 4 - well, 3 - adequately, 2 - poorly, and 1 - very poorly)

Pre- and post-surveys asked participants to determine if five statements were either *myths* or *facts*. The Myth or Fact statements were the last component of the knowledge acquisition section. In two out of the five statements, there was an increase in the number of participants who answered correctly after the Institute. There were two other statements where there was no difference between pre- and post-survey, however, in the pre-survey 100% of the participants answered correctly. There was one statement where there was a slight decrease in the number of participants answering correctly (see table 3). The most significant increase (43%) was for the statement “the average age of entry into sex trafficking is 14 - 17.”

Table 3. Myth or Fact

Statement (Myth or Fact?)	Answered Correctly in Pre-Survey	Answered Correctly in Post-Survey	Percent Difference
The average age for entry into sex trafficking is 14 - 17 years old.	38.5	81.8	43.3
One out of three runaways will be lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.	84.6	100	15.4
Children in the foster care system are more vulnerable to become DCST victims	100	100	0
Only pedophiles buy sex with minors.	100	100	0
Only girls are victims of sex trafficking	100	90.3	-9.7

PERCEPTIONS OF DCST

Participants were asked to respond to six items measuring their views on practice and policy as they relate to DCST (pre- and post-Institute). Pre- and post-survey responses were matched and averaged. Overall, participants slightly shifted in responses from pre- to post-Institute. There was a statistically significant change in perception for the statement “legislative reform should include safe harbor

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laws⁹ to redirect victims from juvenile justice to child welfare system,” with more participants agreeing with this statement post-Institute ($p = 0.03$). There were also significant differences in an additional three statements from pre- to post-Institute, with more participants agreeing to statements regarding detention centers being traumatizing, screening, and judges having discretion in how they treat victims (see table 3).

Table 3. Change in perception by policy and practice area.

Practice or Policy Area	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	Mean Difference	p-value
Existing laws that criminalize prostitution should be used to prosecute children who engage in sex trafficking.	1.27	1.45	0.18	0.67
Juvenile detention for DCST victims is traumatizing.	4.36	4.82	0.45	0.05
Detention is the safest option for DCST victims.	2.36	2.45	0.09	0.76
Legislative reform should include safe harbor laws to redirect victims from juvenile justice to the child welfare system.	4.27	4.82	0.54	0.03
Detention centers should screen children who are at risk for sex trafficking.	4.64	5.00	0.36	0.04
Judges have great discretion in how they treat victims of sex trafficking.	3.64	4.18	0.55	0.006
5-point scale (5 - strongly agree, 4 - agree, 3 - neither, 2 - disagree, and 1 - strongly disagree)				

CASE SCENARIO

Survey participants were given a case scenario (below) in which they were instructed to identify any red flags for sex trafficking and to indicate what they would do at the detention hearing (i.e. orders regarding placement and services, parties who should be present, additional information needed, etc.). Staff administered the same case scenario to participants at the end of the Institute to evaluate if their answers changed due to participation. Respondents’ pre- and post-responses were matched for analyses.

Katrina is a 15 year old girl who has been detained for possession and consumption of alcohol and marijuana. Katrina also has an extensive history with child welfare, her mother's rights were terminated when she was 6 and has lived in many different foster homes ever since. Katrina ran away from her last group home 8 months ago. At Katrina's hearing, she reveals that she was sexually assaulted there and it prompted her to run. Katrina also informs the court that she has a boyfriend who is 22 and is currently living at his home.

Red Flags

The above case scenario has a potential of ten red flags that could be identified. The red flags included Katrina’s age, potential substance abuse, history with child welfare, mother’s rights were terminated, many placements, runaway, placed in group home, history of sexual assault, boyfriend is significantly older and she lives with him.

⁹ “Safe harbor laws are intended to address the inconsistent treatment of children, raise awareness about children that have been commercially sexually exploited, and ensure that these victims were provided with services rather than a criminal conviction.” – Polaris Project

RESULTS

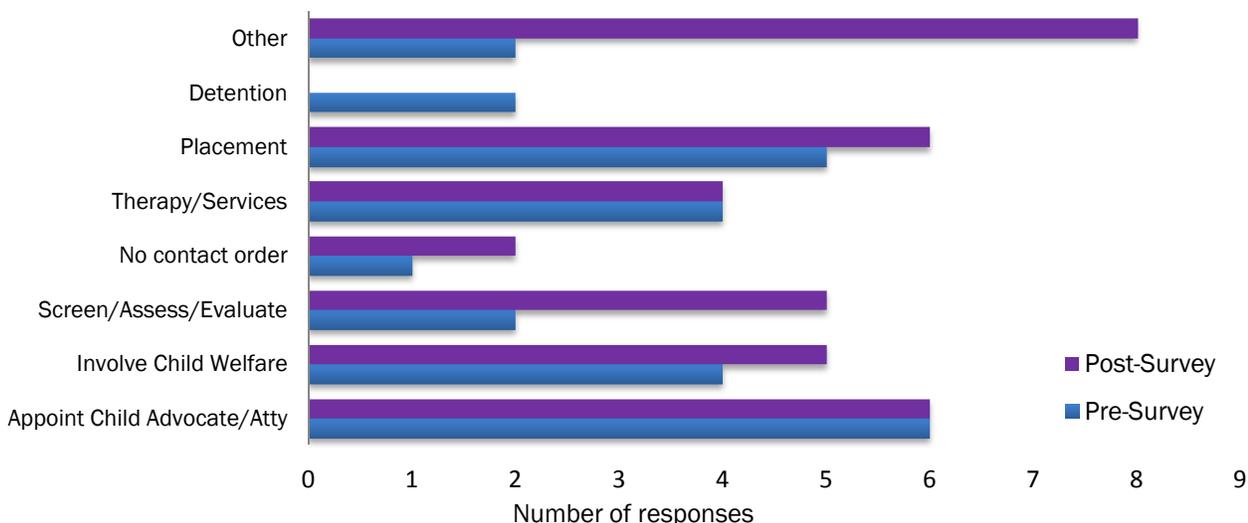
In the pre-survey, respondents on average identified 4.5 red flags. The most commonly identified red flags in the pre-survey were the age of the boyfriend, prior sexual assault and that she was a run-away. The least commonly identified red flags in the pre-survey were Katrina's age, placement in a group home, and potential substance abuse. In the post-survey, participants identified on average 5.9 red flags. The most commonly identified red flags in the post-survey were the age of the boyfriend, potential substance abuse and prior sexual assault. The least commonly identified red flags in the post-survey were living with the boyfriend, placement in a group home, and her age. A t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-Institute, with a mean difference of 1.5, SD = 1.2 ($p = 0.003$), indicating an improvement in identification of red flags from pre- to post-.

Hearing Orders

Participants were provided an open-ended response question to identify what they would put in their order following the detention hearing. Pre- and post-Institute answers were analyzed for common themes and re-coded. There were eight main themes identified and these included: Appoint child advocate and/or attorney, involve child welfare, screen/assess/evaluate, no contact order for the trafficker, therapy/services, placement, detention, and other. Other answers included physical exams, talking to the child about relatives or other special people in their life and where they want to be placed, their educational needs, probation, etc.

Overall, there was an increase in the total number of items identified from the pre- to post-survey (28 versus 36, respectively). There was an increase in the number of participants who said they would screen, assess or evaluate for trauma. In addition, some respondents identified the need for gender responsive services. No one identified this service in the pre-survey. There was an increase in the number of respondents who said they would involve the victim in their placement decision. Some respondents stated they would order a physical health exam (no one identified this in the pre-survey). Additionally, a few respondents said they would continue the hearing if they did not have enough information and hear the case more frequently. Furthermore, no one responded in the post-survey they would place the child in detention. See figure 3.

FIG. 3 - NUMBER OF "HEARING ORDER" ITEMS IDENTIFIED IN PRE- AND POST-SURVEYS



PRACTICE CHANGE

Participants were asked if the DCST Institute increased their capacity to handle these complex cases and 100% of survey respondents indicated that it had. They were then asked how they anticipated changing their practice when they returned to their jurisdictions. Common themes arose from participants' responses. One theme identified was the need to modify court practice as a result of attending the Institute, such as identifying strategies to appropriately respond to DCST victims. Many respondents said they would modify practice through being more proactive when it comes to identifying red flags and victims. Many respondents also said they would be working to educate and build collaborative teams to tackle the issue within their jurisdiction through judicial leadership.

Participants were then asked to indicate what they anticipated would be barriers or challenges to implementing change in their practice. The most common concern among participants was a lack of buy-in from community stakeholders in their local jurisdictions. In addition, there was a concern that lack of resources and time would be a barrier to systems change. Lastly, some were concerned there were not services available in their area.

"I WILL BE MUCH MORE PROACTIVE IN MY OWN ROLE ON THE BENCH/MORE TRAUMA INFORMED [AND] RESPONSIVE IN HOW I INTERACT WITH MY YOUTH. I WILL SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE AND NOT BE AFRAID TO SHOW MY PASSION TO MY COLLEAGUES AND ASK/CHALLENGE THEM TO BECOME MORE INFORMED."

Overall, participants felt one of the most valuable things they took away from the institute was the increased education and awareness of red flags and how to better identify a potential victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Other participants noted that learning about standards of care was valuable to their practice on the bench. This is significant because judicial officers have the opportunity to improve victims lives by ordering the necessary services to help begin the healing process, both physically and mentally. In addition, participants said learning more about trauma-informed courts and how to become more trauma-responsive was beneficial. All these responses could indicate that the Institute has the potential to change practice in the court room for sexually exploited children and shift the view from offender to victim. Follow-up with participants could provide more information about how actual practice changed and if additional technical assistance is needed from courts.

CONCLUSION

Several national organizations are dedicated to raising awareness about domestic child sex trafficking and providing services to this underserved population. Raising awareness is the beginning to a community conversation about the problem. Family and juvenile court judges should be part of that conversation, as so many of these children are lured into “the life” through the foster care system and then often end up in the juvenile justice system. Judicial officers have a unique opportunity and challenge in addressing the needs of these traumatized children through awareness and leadership. However, there is a need for judicial officers to be properly trained and educated about this complex issue.

A thorough evaluation plan was developed by the NJCJFCJ research staff to improve future Institutes and involved pre- and post-surveys. The evaluation plan examined knowledge acquisition, perceptions of DCST, decision making and practice change. Evaluation results generally trended in a positive direction. Pre- and post-survey results demonstrated an overall increase in knowledge acquisition after the Institute. Perceptions of policy and practice as it relates to DCST had statistically significant shifts in views towards safe harbor laws and judicial discretion treating victims, with more participants agreeing to these statements. Furthermore, the case scenario revealed that post Institute more participants were able to identify additional red flags, were more likely to appoint a child advocate and ensure that CPS would be present at hearings.

The findings from this evaluation are encouraging and signal that the first DCST Institute achieved many of its goals. Raising awareness and educating judicial officers is an important step in ensuring that victims get the services they need to physically and mentally recover from the trauma they have experienced.