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June 19, 2010

Police Investigate Human Trafficking after Prince George's County Prostitution Arrests

Two breaking stories about forced prostitution in Prince George's County have police officers encouraging hotel owners and staff to be alert for signs of human trafficking. As officers launch an investigation, [Prince George's County criminal lawyers](#) will be keeping an eye on the developing situation.

Police began asking for hotel owners' help in identifying potential human trafficking after two arrests in just 48 hours. The first arrest came as a result of a tip that a 12-year-old girl was being used as a prostitute at the Knight's Inn. When police arrived, they found the girl, a runaway who was reported missing from Washington DC in May. They arrested Derwin Samuel Smith, 42, who was later charged with three counts of human trafficking, two counts of prostitution and false imprisonment.

Allegedly, Smith met the girl while she was working as a prostitute in Washington DC. He then transported her to other locations, including Prince George's County. The girl claims that Smith took the money the girl made as a prostitute, and when she wanted to quit, he held her against her will.

News of this arrest led to another tip, which reported possible forced prostitution at a hotel just half a mile from the Knight's Inn. When police arrived at the Garden Inn, they found a 19-year-old woman who had been abducted at knifepoint from a party in late April. The woman reported that a 16-year-old girl and another woman were also staying at the hotel. The police are investigating their participation, but believe the teenager was also a prostitute. In this case, Gabriel Dreke-Hernandez, 23, was arrested and charged with first- and second-degree assault, six counts of human trafficking, prostitution, kidnapping and false imprisonment.

The arrests launched a countywide initiative to crack down on prostitution and human trafficking in Prince George's County. Police are monitoring activity in and around local hotels, and they have asked hotel staff to be alert for signs of human trafficking, including paying for a hotel room in cash and refusing maid service. However, a [Prince George's County criminal lawyer](#) knows that such acts are not necessarily signs of criminal activity; they could simply be signs of

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not wanting to use a credit card or of desiring undisturbed rest.

One public official said that if hotel staff does not cooperate with the investigation, "they're abetting criminal behavior." [Prince George's County criminal attorneys](#) will continue to monitor the investigation to ensure proper handling of cases leading to arrest and criminal charges.