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Illinois Merits Passing Grade in Child Sex Trafficking Analysis

December 15, 2011 By [Aaron Kase](#)

Illinois is one of few states with adequate laws to combat sexual trafficking of minors, according to a new report by anti-trafficking advocates.



- **Report analyzes states on victim protection and perpetrator prosecution laws**
- **Illinois receives B, 40 states plus D.C. given failing marks**
- **Feds maintain trafficking hotline to provide resources and information- 888-3737-888**

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Most States Receive Failing Grade

The “[Protected Innocence Initiative](#)” compiled by anti-trafficking crusaders Shared Hope International analyzed the sex trafficking laws in 50 states plus Washington D.C., and the results aren’t pretty.

Illinois received a “B” grade, along with Missouri, Texas and Washington. Otherwise, showings were dismal. Twenty-five states plus D.C. received “F” grades, while another 15 were given a mark of D. Arizona, Louisiana, Minnesota, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida were given passing “C” grades.

“We’re looking for zero tolerance, so it’s not surprising no state received an A,” says Alicia Wilson, policy council for Shared Hope International. “This is a newer issue coming to the attention of individuals, so laws have not had time to change.”

“Some of the biggest problem areas tended to be in combatting demand in those who buy sex with minors, and protective provisions for victims,” Wilson says. “We need to make sure laws are woven throughout the criminal code and social services code to identify victims, make sure victims have restitution, proper identification as victims and that all offenders are charged.”

Illinois Laws Protect and Prosecute

Some key places [Illinois laws do well](#), according to the report:

- **Trafficking law** “does not require proof that force, fraud, or coercion was used to cause minors to engage in commercial sex acts.”
- **Specific and enforceable sex crime laws:** “solicitation of a sexual act, promoting juvenile prostitution, soliciting for a minor engaged in prostitution, patronizing a minor engaged in prostitution,

keeping a place of juvenile prostitution, permitting sexual abuse of a child, grooming, traveling to meet a minor, juvenile pimping, and aggravated juvenile pimping”

- **Tough prison sentences:** “Traffickers convicted of sex trafficking face 4–15 years imprisonment, increased to 6–30 years imprisonment when coercion is used or the minor is under the age of 17.”

Threat of Sex Trafficking Real



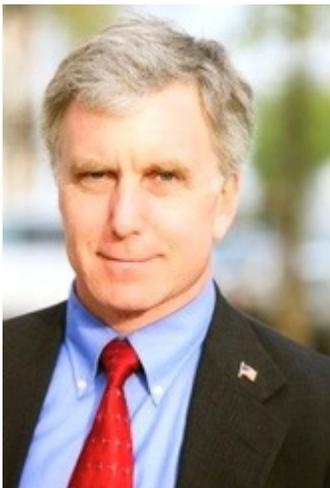
Shared Hope provides some [disturbing statistics](#) about minor sex trafficking:

- The average age a child is lured or forced into prostitution is 13 years old.
- Experts estimate at least 100,000 American juveniles are victimized through prostitution in the U.S. each year.
- The report detailed several [sex trafficking crimes involving minors](#) that have been prosecuted in Illinois:
- “Ten people were arrested in August 2011 by Cook County authorities, charged with involuntary sexual servitude of a minor and human trafficking under the state laws. The prostitution ring involved girls as young as 12 in forced prostitution on the streets of Chicago.”

- “In February 2011, twin 18-year-old brothers, Tyrelle and Myrelle Lockett, were sentenced to four years in prison on state charges of human trafficking after an undercover sting revealed they forced young women, including at least one minor, to perform sex for money.”
- “In December 2010, a Hammond pimp was sentenced to life in federal prison after being convicted of running a violent prostitution ring that recruited teenage girls by advertising as a modeling agency at the River Oaks Mall.”

When Federal Laws Aren’t Enough

Attorney Stephen De Luca



There is federal law already on the books— In 2000, Congress passed the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act](#) to improve education on trafficking and provide services to victims. However, that’s not enough, says New York attorney [Stephen De Luca](#), who started the [New York City Lawyers Against Human Trafficking](#) website to spread awareness and provide resources for victims and law enforcement.

The federal law, De Luca explains, was originally aimed at global trafficking. “The fight that first began at the global level resulted in research that revealed the market was booming for American children—we needed to turn more internal,” he says.

“Most gaps in responding to domestic minor sex trafficking have to be addressed at the state level.”

“The temptation is to think it’s not happening around us,” De Luca says. “However, we are a destination country, a source country and a transit country when it comes to trafficking.”

How You Can Help

If you observe or suspect an instance of sex trafficking, there are several steps to take, De Luca says:

- Don’t try to just step in. A would-be good Samaritan might destroy evidence, allow perpetrators to escape, and put him/herself as well as the trafficking victim at greater risk.
- Reach out. The federal [Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking](#) has a 24/7 phone hotline to help with finding local resources and next steps to take: 888-3737-888
- De Luca provides his personal cell phone for more information: 646-465-3487



Victims should seek out consultation from Rescue and Restore, local law enforcement and a family lawyer to connect to resources and protect their rights.

“Probably the most important thing about this study is the need to create safer environments for children,” De Luca says. “We need to decrease demand, find ways to rescue victims, and give them safe harbor.”

Other States Respond

Not all states were happy with the report findings. In Wyoming, which received an F grade, officials argued that [existing laws are sufficient](#) to prosecute crimes even though trafficking itself isn’t specifically named in any statute.

West Virginia State Senator Corey Palumbo has a similar reaction to his state’s F, telling [West Virginia Public Broadcasting](#), “In the report, they indicated we have several things that sort of crack down on commercial sexual exploitation of children, but nothing specific that hones in on this sex trafficking act.”

New York already provides a [comprehensive trafficking manual for lawyers](#)—alas, the state nevertheless received a D for inadequate laws.

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