

At-Risk Youth Caught in the Vortex:

The Intersection Between Human Trafficking, Immigration Policies, And Trauma-Informed Services For Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

Using the case study below, discuss the issues facing Maria and her child. Consider the immigration policies affecting her; how the interstate compact addresses Maria's movement between states; and which state is obligated to provide services to her and her child.

SCENARIO: Maria, a girl from Central America, had been trafficked for labor and sex in her country. Her father physically abused her. He also accepted money from a Guatemalan gang for Maria, which took her to a home and held her captive. The gang members beat and raped Maria on an almost daily basis and eventually forced her into prostitution. When she became pregnant at age 14, Maria fled to New Mexico with the assistance of a handler who charged her the equivalent of \$500. In New Mexico, Maria lived with Anna Gonzalez, a woman she did not previously know. While living with Ms. Gonzalez, Maria gave birth to a baby girl. Maria was still 14 years old. Anna petitioned the court and gain guardianship of Maria. Anna made Maria help her clean houses, without pay, in exchange for room and board, and lessons to teach Maria to speak, read and write English.

After two years, Maria, then 16-years-old stole money from Anna and took a bus to Texas where she and her child lived with the Rodriguez family, who were friends from Central America. Maria applied for public assistance for herself and her child but benefits were denied when she could not produce proper documentation.

Rodriguez family's daughter Theresa befriended Maria and helped her settle into her new environment. Theresa and her boyfriend began taking Maria to parties so "she can meet people her own age." Eventually, the boyfriend goaded Maria to engage in sex acts with his friends for money. The Theresa's boyfriend kept the most of the money but gave Maria some money for her child. After several months, Mr. Rodriguez learned what Maria was doing, threw her and the child out of his home and called CPS. Upon hearing Maria's story, CPS placed Maria and her child in a resource home and filed a complaint for care and custody with the Court. Maria was assigned an attorney and the case was scheduled for proceedings.

What concerns would you have for Maria and her child? With respect to case processing, how would we prioritize the legal issues?

The CPS caseworker?

Maria's attorney?

The child's legal advocate?

The judge?

