

Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) USA



Type of intervention



Peer Support

Mentoring

Group Work

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:



Tertiary prevention

Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Female | Peer Support, Mentoring, Group Work | English

Target population

GEMS works with girls and young women aged 12 -24 years who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation or who have been domestically trafficked.

Delivery organisation (e.g. LFF UK, Prison Service of England and Wales)

Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) is a Non-Governmental Organisation founded in 1998. It is based in New York, but its work has received national and international recognition. See website www.gems-girls.org.

Mode and context of delivery

GEMS provides services designed to empower young women to leave the commercial sex industry and develop their full potential. This is done through:

- Prevention and outreach services; this includes outreach services in residential homes and detention centres.
- Direct interventions, such as short term and crisis care in the community; court advocacy; transitional and supportive housing and holistic case management.
- Training programmes.
- Resources such as 'Very Young Girls', an award winning film about a 13 and a 14-year-old who are seduced, abused and sold on streets of New York.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required (e.g. professional background)

The workshops are peer-led by survivors and young people who have completed a 'training for trainers' course. The direct interventions are provided by professionally trained and qualified counsellors and therapists.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

The prevention and outreach work involves a series of short workshops lasting between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours.

Direct interventions are tailored to the needs and strengths of the individual and include both one-to-one and group sessions.

The youth leadership programme helps survivors become leaders and is a 16-week programme.

Description of intervention

All GEMS programmes aim to help girls and young women who have experience of commercial sexual exploitation or who have been domestically trafficked to leave the sex industry and develop their full potential. They include:

Prevention and Outreach services to educate youth about the risks and causes of commercial sexual exploitation. These peer-led workshops are held in various settings including in residential and detention facilities. Workshop themes include: commercial sexual exploitation basic introduction (45 minutes); commercial sexual exploitation and risk factors, which includes 'Breaking the Silence' video (1.5 hours); stages of recruitment and common language (1.5 hours). There is also a workshop on working/living with survivors for parents and frontline human service workers.

Direct Interventions include:

- short-term and crisis care
- court advocacy
- transitional and supportive housing
- holistic case management, which aims to empower survivors to recover from trauma, make healthy decisions and avoid self-destructive behaviour. One-to-one and group counselling are provided.
- The Educational Initiative Program, which provides financial incentives for educational achievements
- The Youth Development Program, which addresses young women's developmental, social and emotional needs through strengths based approaches
- The Youth Leadership Program, which helps transition from victim to leader through a 16 week leadership skills programme

Educational Resources include the award winning film 'Very Young Girls'. A trailer for the film can be seen on the GEMS website www.gems-girls.org. It provides an expose of human trafficking by following 2 girls aged 13 and 14 years as they are seduced, abused and sold on the New York streets by pimps and then treated as criminals by the police.

Evaluation

No published information currently available on evaluation of GEMS services; however the service has won numerous awards and honours.

["From Victim to Survivor, From Survivor to Leader"](#): This White-Paper Project documents the experiences of GEMS' members at GEMS, how they viewed these experiences, what they felt they'd learned, and what they need to feel supported in their development.

References

["A Stages of Change Approach to Helping Patients Change Behavior"](#): This article, by the American Family Physician, discusses Prochaska and Diclemente's Stages of Change Model, which GEMS uses in Support Services programming.

["New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children"](#): This OCFS-funded state-specific study is by contract research organization Westat.

["The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico"](#): This national study by Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner contains general statistics on the commercial sexual exploitation of children occurring throughout the US.

["The Effects of Federal Legislation on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children"](#): The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention produced this recent bulletin.

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