Prevalence of Sex Work in the Chippewa Valley: Preliminary Research

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Abstract
The aim of our Women’s Studies Capstone project was to find out the prevalence of different types of sex work and prostitution in the Chippewa Valley, while also addressing HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. This is the first part of an ongoing project between the Women’s Studies Program and the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW). The ARCW had no formal research on sex work in the Chippewa Valley, because of this, outreach and prevention services for individuals who engage in sex work were limited. Tangible evidence of sex work in the area will help ARCW receive funding for prevention work. We accumulated preliminary information based on public data, police records, literature reviews, and interviews with county and non-profit officials. The alliances we established can be maintained by future Women’s Studies Capstone students.

Sex Work, Prostitution, & HIV/AIDS Prevention

What is Sex Work?
The formal or informal exchange of sex acts for anything of value, such as food, money, drugs, clothing, or shelter.
When sex work as described above is done as a consequence of poverty or economic dependence, it may be referred to as survival sex.

Significant Findings from Literature Review
Economic necessity was often identified as the source of their prostitution involvement but alcohol or drug addiction is often what sustained their participation. Popenoe, S. (2005). Living on the margins: flight from contemporary American poverty and dependence. Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 5(4), 153-168.
Participants who reported having engaged in prostitution were three times more likely to be positive for HIV than those who did not report a history of prostitution. Participants who were victims of abuse and neglect during childhood were more than twice as likely as those who were not victims to be positive for HIV in middle adulthood.
One of the strongest relationships for females found in the study was that physical abuse during childhood frequently led to prostitution and early sexual contact (this relationship was not found with the male participants). Sallmann, J. (2010). Going “hand-in-hand”: Connections between women’s prostitution and substance abuse. Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 10(3), 115-138.


Homeless individuals who reported sharing needles were 5.1 times as likely to have a history of survival sex as those who had not shared needles.
Homeless gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth and young adults were 1.7 times more likely to have engaged in survival sex than their heterosexual counterparts. Walls, N. L., & Roll, B. (2011). Correlates of engaging in survival sex among homeless youth and young adults. Journal of Sex Research, 48(5), 420-436.

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