

The Solution to the Child Trafficking Problem in America

BY **JOSEPH A. TRAVERS**, CPI, CCDI, CMECI

If we can stop the girls at the runaway part, we'll put a big dent in the sex trafficking part.

A vigorous effort by law enforcement agencies and non-government professionals – licensed private investigators – can combine forces to reduce the supply of trafficking victims (runaway and missing children) from organized slave traders, sex traffickers and predators. Boots on the ground investigation is needed to collaborate working and actionable intelligence. It will take a cooperative effort on the part of both law enforcement and licensed investigators to stop trafficking before it begins.



THE PROBLEM:

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) there were 460,000 American children missing in 2024. According to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) there were 330,000 missing foreign children in the United States. A 2015 study, “Gangs and Sex Trafficking in San Diego” by Dr. Ami Carpenter of the University of San Diego concluded 30% of missing children would become victims of exploitation. These statistics reveal that 237,000 children are victims of exploitation per year. That’s an average of almost 5,000 per state.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS:

The work that Saved in America (SIA) does could not be accomplished without the excellent, collaborative partnerships it has with law enforcement agencies and licensed private investigators. Saved In America’s success is attributed to its operators: licensed, insured private investigators.

Saved In America operators have effectively completed operations with Las Vegas Metropolitan Police, Nevada Child Seekers, Childproof America, the Human Trafficking Information and Exchange Committee of DHS, the Texas Attorney General's Office, and the National Association for Missing and Exploited Children (Special Response Teams of licensed private investigators).

EXPANSION OF QUALIFIED RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONNEL:

There is a growing space in the field of child sex trafficking prevention for private investigation organizations. "Sometimes in a police investigation, a third party can be beneficial," said Stephan Summer, a nationally recognized expert in human-trafficking cases. "I do see room for these agencies, especially for cases that aren't criminal, before law enforcement is involved – provided they do it right."1 Saved In America has assisted in over 280 recoveries, and law enforcement and specialists in the area of human trafficking are seeing the benefits. Most current domestic public and private organizations mainly serve as informational or research institutions. Organizations interested in runaway recovery can contact Saved In America for help on developing a recovery model. We at Saved in America hope to see action-oriented private investigator organizations and individuals like ours develop, assisting in the recovery of children across the country as trained Certified Missing & Exploited Child Investigators. (CMECI).

PIMPS, PREDATORS, AND PEDOPHILES:

Stopping child sex trafficking requires attacking the program on all fronts – combatting the demand, removing the supply, and targeting the groups who profit from the trade. Carpenter's study found that "facilitators make on average \$670,625 per year." This is a remarkably high income for relatively little work exploiting others. In reality what this means is that there is a demand, and a pay-off for those working in the sex trafficking industry, and that the demand and financial benefits need to be tackled.

SIA AND THE FUTURE:

Saved In America is working hard to combat child-sex trafficking through the preventative recovery of runaway and missing children. SIA is planning several projects to expand its reach recruiting additional current and retired law enforcement officers and licensed private investigators through its reserve CMECI program. SIA currently has over 100 reserve CMECI's across the country. Saved In America will expand its current education and awareness seminars and presentations across the country to educate and assist the public and law enforcement organizations on how to assist with the child trafficking problem by assisting with the runaway missing children problem. The goal is to put a whole new look on what a "runaway" is and removing the runaway from the "commodity" list for predators and perpetrators so that criminals can't access and victimize the runaway missing



SIA gathers intelligence and evidence to locate and identify missing children and trafficked victims, violent pedophiles (pimps), and trafficking locations. The Law Enforcement Liaison reports all information to local and/or federal law enforcement officers.

child. Currently, police and sheriff departments will only look for runaway and missing 12 through 17-year-old children under one of and/or two conditions;

- a. If the child has an urgent medical condition that requires immediate medication
 - b. There is physical evidence of a physical abduction
- Therefore, runaway and missing child cases are rarely, if ever, investigated by law enforcement personnel.

THE SIA SOLUTION:

States can adopt a plan to hire licensed/insured private investigators who possess C M E C I



training (a much lower cost per hour than law enforcement personnel (and/or a possible daily expense per diem rate) to investigate cases of runaway/missing children (including foster children which encompasses 60% of all runaway/missing children). The licensed private investigator CMECI's could report to a task force of law enforcement agents or 'missing child' detectives.

Here is a checklist of how SIA CMECI operators work with law enforcement:

HOW SAVED IN AMERICA WORKS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Provides social networking investigative leads and human intelligence
- Provides surveillance hours by experienced licensed and insured private investigators with backgrounds in law enforcement and military special operations
- Provides a current sworn peace officer as a liaison with local, state and federal law enforcement
- Provide training and education
- Preserves evidence for future criminal prosecution
- A mutual understanding of protocol: Saved In America operators give information and intelligence to you for your investigation
- Saved In America operators coordinate location/s of runaway, missing & exploited children to law enforcement for recovery by law enforcement

ALL OF OUR OPERATORS ARE VOLUNTEERS AND OUR SERVICES

To become a SIA CMECI reserve, please go to the volunteer tab at [SavedInAmerica.org](https://www.SavedInAmerica.org)

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REFERENCE

1. Repard, Pauline. (2015)



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Pastor Travers was a Police/Fire Commissioner for the City of Oceanside, California from 2008 to 2020. He is a Member of the National

Crimes Against Children Investigator's Association (NCACIA), the Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation (CESE), the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), the Council of Association Leaders (COAL), and former President for the California Association of Licensed Investigators (CALI), the Largest Private Investigation Association in the World, receiving the President's Award in 2014 and the Investigator of the Year Award in 2015. As Executive Director for Saved In America www.SavedInAmerica.org. Pastor Travers has assisted parents and law enforcement with the recovery of over 280 young girls vulnerable to Child Sex Traffickers since December 2014.