



Hotels Take On the Oldest Profession

Lodging establishments champion the **rights of children** as awareness grows about a dark business

BY PRISCILLA PÉREZ BILLIG



For nurse practitioner Jessica Munoz it began with a disturbing pattern. A certain dynamic unfolding at her hospital was just not adding up.

“I started to notice these girls being brought into our emergency rooms,” Munoz says. “I quickly realized it’s a problem here in Hawaii. We have children being bought and sold for sex—our local children.



Jessica Munoz

It’s a problem we’re seeing in our emergency rooms, our healthcare fields, on the streets and in hotels. It is everywhere. We just don’t see it because we are not aware.”

Statistics are hard to come by. Hawaii is the only state that has failed

Effect on the Hospitality Industry

- Safety risks—connected to other criminal activities, drugs and jeopardizes safety. Reputation—bad publicity associated with trafficking.
- Financial—bottom line can be impacted by negative publicity and legal fees, business interruption and property damage.
- Legal—various state and local laws can hold hoteliers liable for trafficking that occurs on their properties.

SOURCE: Ho’ola Na Pua



Early floor designs for the Ho'ola Na Pua facility



to pass an anti-sex trafficking bill. Experts with Ho'ola Na Pua (New Life for Our Children), an organization whose mission is to provide a home for underage female sex-trafficking victims, say that traffickers target girls whose average age is 12 to 14 years. According to reports, 100 to 200 Hawaii children go missing every month, Hawaii has the third highest teen suicide rate in the nation, 35 percent of incarcerated young girls are runaways and there is limited aftercare for underage victims of sexual exploitation.

Munoz, president of Ho'ola Na Pua, says child sex trafficking is a crime that knows no socio-economic boundaries and no racial disparities. She says the experience causes the victim to develop complex trauma disorder, which she describes as post-traumatic stress disorder on steroids.

“Trafficking networks rely on legitimate business, including lodging properties, to conduct their operations,” says Karen Wataru-Nakaoka, executive director of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA). “The lodging properties have an opportunity to bring awareness and educate their employees on the importance of being alert to illegal activity happening on property and create training programs that empower appropriate action.”

Wataru-Nakaoka adds that HLTA and the Women in Lodging & Tourism are working with the American Hotel & Lodging Association to provide information to industry members that will enable them to

develop policies and procedures that prevent trafficking from occurring on their properties.

The AHLA is helping the hotel and lodging industry better combat the practice of human trafficking and, more specifically, child sex trafficking. Its educational divisions have developed an online training program in partnership with ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes).

corporate and social responsibility and encourages hotel brands to take a stand against sexual exploitation.

Hotels Step Up

“Human trafficking is a growing problem in hotels,” says Stephanie Dowling, regional director of communications for Starwood Hotels & Resorts. “As an industry, we’ve done a lot to identify the issues.”

Dowling says Starwood Hotels & Resorts considers training its associates on this issue and what to look for a priority and social responsibility across Starwood’s global company



Stephanie Dowling



Karen Wataru-Nakaoka

Victim's Behavior

- False IDs.
- Lying about age.
- Restricted communication.
- Won't make eye contact.
- Inappropriate attire.
- Large amounts of cash, jewelry, new clothes.

SOURCE: Ho'ola Na Pua

ECPAT’s campaign, “End Slavery at the Source,” has a call to action to the hotel industry and their customers asking for every hotel and lodging chain to join the Tourism Child Protection Code of Conduct. The code is a voluntary set of business principles to prevent sex tourism and sex trafficking of children, promotes

Trafficker's Behavior

- Pays in cash one day at a time.
- Escorts men into rooms, lingers until they leave, watches the door.
- Removes self from operations—may have an adult female pay for room.
- Seen with a group of women.
- Doesn't leave victim alone, calls often, controls money.

SOURCE: Ho'ola Na Pua

and community.

“We have in place a very comprehensive training both online and in a classroom setting,” she adds. “The training is offered in many languages, is tailored to someone’s level of guest interaction and decision-making. The program is mandatory for all associates and leaders.”

Hilton Worldwide offers an online course, “The Role of the Hospitality Industry in Preventing and React-

adhere to this “brand standard” and have appropriate human trafficking training measures in place.

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts developed training programs for its managed and franchised properties and is a signatory to the ECPAT Code of Conduct. Wyndham has donated more than two million Wyndham Rewards points to the Polaris Project to help in situations where victims are recovered and need a place to

onto the Internet to find people—and those are often children,” Guelbart says. “There is no separation online that says someone is underage. There is a lot of information available and we actively provide information to hotels so that they can be involved in stopping it.” She adds that ECPAT-USA’s campaign site for #DoesYourHotelKnow? is available online at www.ecpatusa.org/code.

Hotel Industry Principles

- Educate employees to recognize and report instances of trafficking in or around hotel properties.
- Establish policies and procedures for reporting of trafficking.
- Encourage others in the hotel industry to join the fight against trafficking.
- Encourage business partners in the travel industry to educate their employees and take steps to combat trafficking.
- Work collaboratively with law enforcement and policymakers.

SOURCE: AHLA

ing to Child Trafficking,” to its more than 4,200 hotels through its internal learning center, Hilton Worldwide University. Hilton provides information to employees on the issue of child trafficking through various means of communication and helped develop the Global Freedom Exchange, a mentoring opportunity for women leaders on the forefront of efforts to intervene in child trafficking.

Marriott International has delivered “Human Rights and the Protection of Children” training to all employees. The training is mandatory for all Marriott-managed properties and franchise properties worldwide. The company integrates this training into the orientation process for all new employees and tailors this training for its mandatory security officer certification program.

Hyatt Hotels Corporation teamed up with the Polaris Project—a global organization working to combat human trafficking—to develop a comprehensive training program, required training for key hotel functions including housekeeping, front desk, concierge, bell staff, hotel management and security teams. Hyatt also requires its franchises to

stay. The company uses the Polaris Project as an emergency contact and assistance provider to help give hotel staff guidance if they suspect an incident of trafficking.

The world’s oldest profession can now deliver via a new platform.



Michelle Guelbart

Michelle Guelbart, director of ECPAT-USA private sector engagements, writes in a paper presented at the 2013 Hospitality Law Conference regarding sex trafficking and the hospitality industry: “With the use of online classified ads, child trafficking has moved off the streets and onto the Internet. Traffickers rent rooms in hotels, log online, create an ad in adult sexual services pages, and sell victims right out of the hotel or have victims meet purchasers at nearby hotels. Hotel rooms are a preferred venue for the sale of children because exploiters believe they are anonymous at hotels, giving them a sense that there is little risk in their behavior.

“That quote is still incredibly accurate because buyers are going

Offering Aftercare

The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources has awarded a 40-year lease to Ho’ola Na Pua for a 12-acre property that includes a 24,000-square-foot building. The site, on an undisclosed location on the North Shore, will become a long-term special treatment facility to house up to 32 girls.

“This is actually a therapeutic program which will work with the girls over a year or so to help them recover from the trauma of living that life,” says Jody Allione, vice president in charge of business operations and site procurement. “We don’t have a construction contract yet. The former president of Watts Constructors, Denny Watts, has volunteered to help us with construction management. We also have three architects, Dennis Furukawa, Anna Grune and Jamie Emberson, doing work for us pro bono.”

Allione adds that the hotels recognize there is a problem and there is something being done about it by them as well as Ho’ola Na Pua. She says it comes down to people responding to a problem.

“It is important to understand that some engaging in this illegal activity are still children, do not have the resources to get out on their own and live in fear of retaliation from their traffickers,” says HLTA’s Wataru-Nakaoka. “I am proud to be part of an industry that takes this issue seriously and is making the effort to do our share to combat trafficking.”



Jody Allione