A Research-to-Practice Summary:
Supporting youth involved in domestic minor sex trafficking:
Divergent perspectives on youth agency

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ARTICLE:

SUMMARY:
Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to identify best practices for working with youth involved in domestic minor sex trafficking, especially focusing on two questions:
1. How do key stakeholders familiar with DMST describe best practices for working with this population?
2. Which practices are not widely supported by all disciplines/stakeholders regarding best practices?

Design:
20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with key stakeholders from New Jersey working with DMST:
- 45% employed with nonprofit organizations that provide direct services to survivors
- 55% from law enforcement, child protective services, or education
All interviews were conducted face-to-face, and anonymity was provided to the participants

Findings:
1. Areas of Consensus
   a. Recognize impacts of complex trauma on youth development
b. Recognize prior victimization and/or family discord as a precursor to DMST involvement

c. Need of thorough and frequent staff training

d. Difficulty in measuring outcomes

2. Areas of Divergence

a. Meaning of Running Away
   i. Program failure vs. behavioral symptom of DMST victims
   ii. Lock-down facilities vs. more open facilities

b. Ideal model of service provision
   i. Remote, locked facilities with limited community resources available vs. more urban, locked facilities with greater access to community resources

c. Use of Technology
   i. Access to cell phones and social media create greater risk for youth to return to DMST vs. no technology access AND remote location vs. allowing technology access as it will be eventually available

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