

### 3. Nurture the Victim/Offender

Investigators maintain a relationship with their victims while they are being held. They frequently visit the juvenile detention facility, often taking the child's favorite fast food so they can talk over lunch or dinner. They discuss plans for a life after prostitution and help build their self-esteem. They may encourage juveniles to contact their families if appropriate.

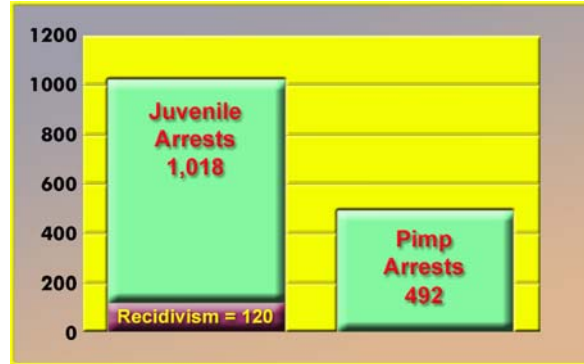
### 4. Prepare the Victim/Offender for Court

It is the investigator's responsibility to address the victim's concerns and misconceptions associated with their upcoming court appearance to ensure the victim is prepared for court and then transport them to the preliminary hearing. Once the victim's testimony is heard and entered as part of the court record, the material witness hold is released.

### 5. Support the Victim/Offender

Investigators collaborate with the courts and Juvenile Probation officers to access supportive services for the juvenile. Some juveniles cannot, or do not want to return to their previous home environment. Many are either throwaways or have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse at the hands of family members. These children are referred to various public and privately funded nonprofit organizations such as the "Paul and Lisa" program and "Children of the Night" program. These programs are voluntary but can also be court ordered and have been very successful in helping juvenile prostitution victims return to society. The Children of the Night Program provides hot nutritious meals served at regular intervals, a clean safe place to sleep, and freshly laundered clothes. Once

physical needs are met, the children are evaluated, counseled and given opportunities to update their educational skills. They may be placed in an independent living environment, a drug treatment facility, maternity home, their own home if appropriate, a psychiatric setting, a foster or group home, or in a customized setting tailored to their unique situation. The results have been highly successful.



#### The Results

Since its inception, the S.T.O.P. program has grown larger and more successful each year. It has beneficially changed the way the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Vice Section investigators address child prostitution and pandering cases. Finally and most importantly, the S.T.O.P. Program has positively and dramatically impacted the lives of juveniles once engaged in prostitution in the Southern Nevada.

**For more information about the S.T.O.P. Program, please call 929-3455**

To make a tax deductible donation to assist the S.T.O.P. Program, please contact the Friends of Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Foundation at 702-229-3438

**S.T.O.P.**  
**Stop Turning Out Child Prostitutes**  
**A Community Program**  
**Assisting Those Trapped in the Sex Trade**

**Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department**

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# Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department S.T.O.P. Program

## History of the S.T.O.P. Program

Juvenile prostitution has grown dramatically within the United States since the mid 1970s. In the past, most children arrested for vice related crimes seldom faced prosecution and instead were sent back to the streets.

In the early 1990s, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Vice Section began seriously interviewing children engaged in prostitution to learn why they were involved in the sex trade. As officers were able to physically separate offenders from their pimps and began to gain their trust, it became apparent that these children were victims themselves, manipulated by unscrupulous individuals who worked them relentlessly and ruled every aspect of their lives. Pimps were rarely arrested and almost never faced convictions for their crimes. Armed with this knowledge, detectives sought new approaches to investigate and prosecute pandering cases and rehabilitate juvenile victims.

## Two Goals

In 1994, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Vice detectives established two goals associated with every child prostitution case:

*Goal 1: Immediately remove the child victim from the sex trade environment and offer them a way to leave permanently.*

*Goals 2: Locate, arrest and prosecute any individual responsible for pandering a child.*

These goals required that police collaborate with several governmental agencies and private groups. This initiative evolved into the S.T.O.P. Program, an acronym for Stop Turning Out Child Prostitutes.

## Five Step Program

The LVMPD Vice Section has developed a five step program to address juvenile prostitution in Southern Nevada.



### 1. Arrest the Victim/Offender

The arrest of juvenile prostitutes for criminal offenses or status offenses such as curfew violations allows law enforcement, the juvenile justice system and social workers an opportunity to investigate a crime in which the perpetrator is also a victim - a victim because they are controlled by a pimp, and an offender because the prostitution related acts they commit are illegal.

The juveniles need to be held accountable for their actions, however, the real criminal and crime of pandering a juvenile cannot be ignored and should be vigorously pursued. Panderers are generally concurrently committing other crimes including child abuse, kidnapping, sexual seduction of children and battery.

LVMPD policy now dictates that any officer encountering prostitution notify an on-duty or on-call vice detective in the investigative squad. This squad is responsible for investigating all vice related crimes including pandering, prostitution related grand larceny, drug induced trick rolls, and juvenile prostitution. Team members have specialized knowledge and extensive on-the-job training to address these cases. These detectives are on call 24 hours a day and promptly respond to the location where the child prostitute was taken into custody, or, if more expedient, meets the transporting officer at the juvenile detention facility for booking. The investigative team will then interview the juvenile to gain insight into her situation and identify her pimp. When the pimp is identified, the detectives will immediately attempt to locate and arrest him.



### 2. Detain the Victim/Offender

Investigators have the legal right to hold the victim/offender as a material witness until the preliminary hearing for the pimp. All prostitutes are detained and held as material witnesses. This hold gives detectives a window of opportunity to begin to help the victim/offender. By holding the juvenile:

- Detectives can begin dissolve the physical and psychological bond between the offender and the pimp.
- Detectives can begin to develop a rapport and build trust with the offender
- Detectives can take the time to properly and thoroughly investigate the crime.
- Detectives can conduct interviews and prepare the offender to testify in court.
- Detectives can arrange for supportive and compassionate services to be offered to the victim/offender.

However, if the victim/offender is released quickly:

- She will not discuss her victimization or cooperate with investigators.
- She is more likely to return to her pimp upon release and continue to be victimized.
- She will usually disappear, even if she cooperated with investigators while being held.

Once investigators have gathered the necessary information and evidence, the pimp is arrested and the case is submitted to the District Attorney's office and routed to a team of attorneys specializing in crimes against women and children. Then, because the victim is being detained as a material witness, the case is expedited. A preliminary hearing for the pimp is usually held within 14 days.