



# **An Overview of Anti-Demand Public Education in the United States**

**Summary Based Upon  
Research from the Study,  
“A National Assessment  
of Prostitution and Sex  
Trafficking Demand  
Reduction Efforts”**

**Supported by  
National Institute of Justice  
Grant # 2008-IJ-CX-0010**

July 7, 2012

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Justice**

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## An Overview of Anti-Demand Public Education Efforts in the United States

For the purpose of gathering information about public education and awareness programs addressing demand for commercial sex, we have defined the terms broadly. We have counted as an awareness program any broadly-targeted attempt to focus attention on the role of the buyers of sex in contributing to problems associated with prostitution and/or sex trafficking. In some communities, such efforts involve posting signs or billboards informing johns about police activity or penalties for buying sex. For example, Rochester, New York placed billboards in the city which read, “*Dear John, you're not welcome in our community.*” In Cleveland, there was a neighborhood-initiated campaign targeting johns in which residents took turns carrying signs in troubled neighborhoods stating, “*Dear Johns, your plate number is being recorded. Yours truly, the neighbors.*” This kind of approach is designed to deter buyers, and secondarily, to send a general message to the public about police action to address the problem, rather than to educate about demand in real depth.

Another approach is to aim awareness efforts at the general public, rather than to actual or potential johns. This usually involves placing signs or posters for the public to see, or brief presentations about demand at meetings of community groups. We have considered an education program to be a more intensive and sustained effort to convey a larger amount of information. An example would be a curriculum developed to teach high school students or employees of a company about how buying sex drives prostitution and sex trafficking, and the negative consequences of commercial sex.

While most experts agree that public education and awareness are critical to combating prostitution and sex trafficking, there are relatively few examples of programs designed specifically to address demand for commercial sex, when compared to the number of programs addressing supply and distribution. We have found some form of anti-demand awareness or education activity to have occurred in at least 67 cities and counties. The earliest known efforts, which were awareness efforts rather than more intensive education programs, occurred in the 1980s (Table 1). The primary means of raising awareness and providing education include:

- Posters
- Billboards
- Brief presentations at community meetings
- Interviews appearing in print and electronic media
- Education programs, involving a curriculum and a sustained presentation to target audiences that conveys substantial amounts of information

Table 1: Sites with Earliest Known Use of Public Education Programs Targeting Demand		
Year	City or County	State
1980	Roanoke	VA
1982	Portland	OR
1985	Tampa	FL
1988	Pawtucket	RI
1988	Miami	FL
1995	San Francisco	CA
1995	Oklahoma City	OK
1996	Wichita	KS
1997	Tucson	AZ
1998	Kissimmee	FL
1998	Athens	GA
1999	Orlando	FL
2000	Baltimore	MD
2000	Fitchburg	MA
2000	Travis County	TX

The best-known and most ambitious public awareness campaign focused on demand is the “Dear John” campaign implemented in the greater Atlanta area, and discussed in more detail below. Most other communities have engaged in less extensive campaigns, and have used simpler methods such as the aforementioned use of billboards and signs in Rochester, New York and Cleveland, Ohio.

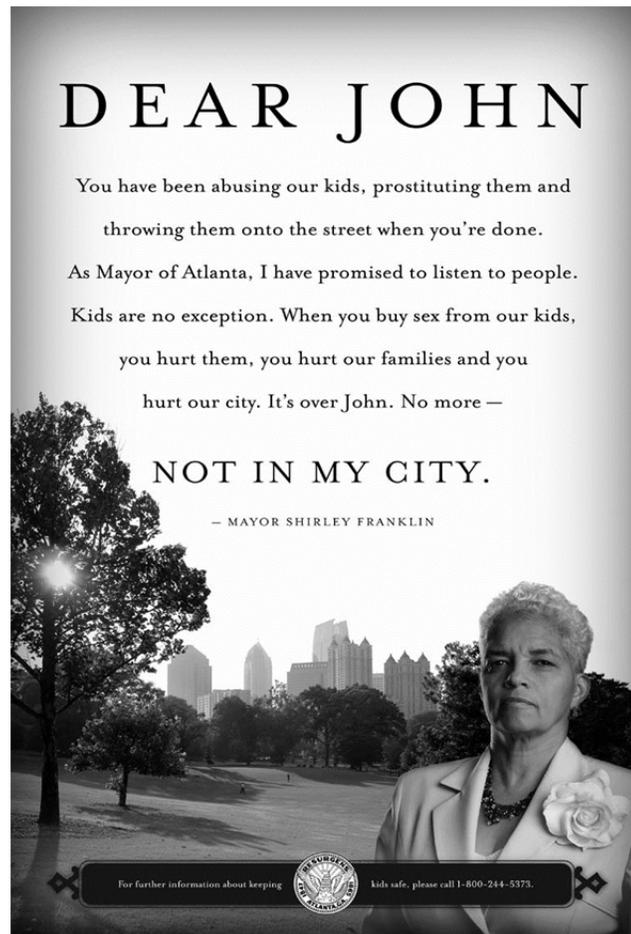
Of the cities and counties that we know have engaged in some form of education or awareness intervention targeting demand, the vast majority are designed to raise awareness. There are very few efforts that would meet more rigorous standard of programs with substantial educational content. A set of curricula or “toolkits” developed by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), and a program developed by the U.S. Department of Defense are among the few true education programs we have found. These programs are discussed below.

***Example 1: Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Awareness Program***

The best-known and most ambitious public awareness campaign addressing demand is the “Dear John” campaign implemented in the greater Atlanta area. The involved a series of professionally-produced public service announcements and print media images that were circulated via the web, television, in print media, and signs posted in public areas (such as buses) in Atlanta.

The “Dear John” campaign was initiated by the Mayor’s Office of the City of Atlanta and was designed to provide a platform to raise public awareness on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation (of children in particular, but also more broadly). The objective was to generate public and political pressure to spur state and local agencies (as well as nongovernmental organizations, such as faith based organizations and nonprofit) into concrete action against prostitution and sex trafficking. The substantive focus of campaign was on the buyers of sex and reducing demand.

**Figure 1: Main Print Media Message for Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Education and Awareness Campaign**



The idea for a public education and awareness campaign focusing on demand was built into recommendations of a study of prostitution and sex trafficking in Atlanta (Priebe & Suhr, 2005). After the study’s release in 2005, the Mayor’s Office reached out to a public relations firm (Edelman), which agreed to assist the city in developing the “Dear John” campaign, pro bono. The Edelman firm and the Mayor’s Office developed themes and text for print media messages, and a nonprofit organization, Atlanta Women in Film, produced three 30-second public service announcements (PSAs), pro bono. The campaigns products were released to the public in 2006. A PSA featuring the mayor was taken to local television stations that ran it for free during slow media times, and was also available on the city’s website. “Dear John” print ads were placed without charge in several local publications. Links to the PSAs are provided in this footnote<sup>1</sup>, and print messages used for paper ads, billboards, and elsewhere are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O9erzIB1W4>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRsbo6g21hU>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TzUyySQPlk>

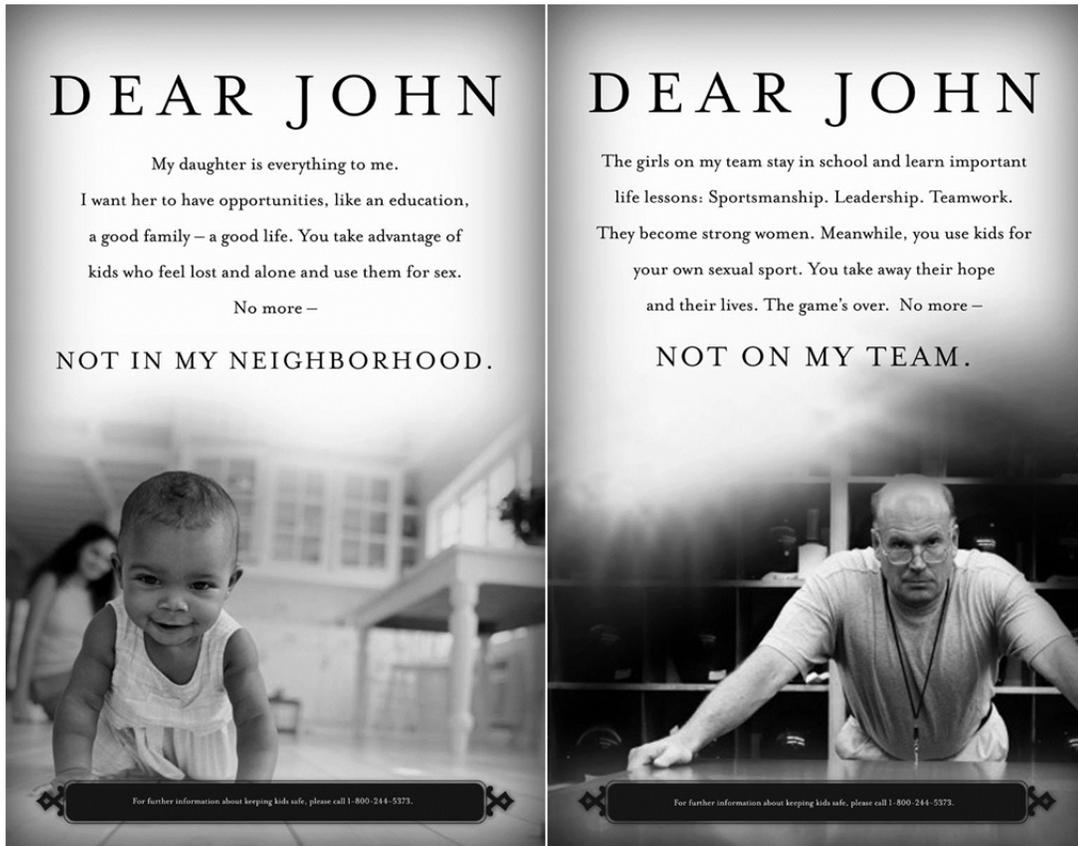
The national press discovered and featured the campaign, and the “buzz” helped the city to secure \$100,000 from a private foundation to extend the reach of Dear John to paid advertising in the city’s major publications. In 2007, one of the public service announcements won an Emmy award for “Best PSA,” which allowed the city to leverage another summer of free air time with public service directors at the three major networks in Atlanta. In 2007, Atlanta was awarded the top prize from the World Leaders Forum in the Law and Order category for the “Dear John” campaign.

The main thrust of the campaign occurred in 2006 to 2008. Most of the initial activity and investment occurred in the first year, when materials were developed and placements were made in electronic and print media outlets. The national attention and awards received by the campaign extended the program's peak activity into 2007 and 2008 by having the materials publicized and circulated by the media, and referenced by other organizations fighting prostitution and human trafficking. The campaign did not have a formal end to date, and could be regarded as still under way since the educational materials remain available online.

The Dear John campaign was not formally evaluated, so its impact on the demand for prostitution or on sex trafficking in Atlanta is unknown. The main stated goal of the project was not to directly impact the behavior of actual or potential johns, although it was hoped that the messages would resonate with them. Instead, the key goal was to inspire action among those in government and nongovernmental organizations who could do something to combat demand for commercial sex. The level of activity in planning and implementing demand-focused interventions in the city increased after the campaign began. Of course, without an evaluation it is difficult to determine whether the activities would have occurred without the campaign, and at this point there is no way to make such a determination. Those who were interviewed in Atlanta for the National Assessment pointed to the “Dear John” campaign being an important element in overcoming inaction or resistance on the part of key players in the city, who later became partners in planning and implementing initiatives focusing on demand. For example, after the campaign was launched many meetings took place and initiatives began making progress that had not previously occurred. Among the initiatives that were launched during the main thrust of the two year campaign included the development of a john school, reforming state criminal codes regarding soliciting prostitution, and conducting a study of male buyers of sex.

City government support for anti-demand efforts appeared to wane after Mayor Franklin left office in 2008. However, activity by NGOs has continued. Studies of sex buyers have continued without government support, through the funding of an NGO “A Future Not A Past” (AFNAP) and executed by The Schapiro Group.

**Figure 2: Additional Print Media Messages for Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Education and Awareness Campaign**



A new campaign was recently announced to revive the pursuit of many of the goals of the original “Dear John” campaign in Atlanta. In 2012, AFNAP intends to focus on deterring men who buy sex with underage girls, and is planning to launch a media campaign called “Take a Stand to End Demand.”

***Example 2: Education and Awareness Programs in Chicago and Cook County***

Over the past several years, the area would be highest level of activity focused on combating demand for commercial sex is, arguably, the Cook County and Chicago areas of Illinois. An “umbrella” organization or coalition called End Demand Illinois (EDI) is comprised of over a dozen partner organizations that have launched a wide range of initiatives targeting demand. Some of these organizations had been in focus initiatives in place before EDI existed, and some of the activity has been collective action organized or facilitated by EDI. For illustrative purposes we will discuss some initiatives of a few of the key partners of EDI. More information about EDI’s composition and activity, and of its key partners, is available through the links in this footnote<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The website for EDI is: [www.enddemandillinois.org](http://www.enddemandillinois.org). Key partners include the Women’s Services Department of the Cook County Sheriff’s Office and the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE): [www.cookcountysheriff.org/womens\\_justice\\_services/wjs\\_HumanTrafficking.html](http://www.cookcountysheriff.org/womens_justice_services/wjs_HumanTrafficking.html)

EDI has engaged in a number of education and awareness activities in the past few years. For example, a collaboration of Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), the Women of Power Alumni Association (WoPAA), the Polaris Project, the Voices and Faces Project (Voices), and the Schiller DuCanto and Fleck Family Law Center of DePaul University College of Law (Schiller), and the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, launched a new website and coordinated events in the Fall of 2009. For example, an EDI volunteer (Katie Feifer, also affiliated with the Voices and Faces Project) of San Francisco-based research group KGF Insights, conducted 31 interviews with a group of Illinois residents to gather feedback about statistics, beliefs and slogan statements, and the philosophy and messaging employed by EDI's public education efforts. The conclusions and recommendations from the study served as the basis of campaign outreach materials. At the same time, Larissa Malarek, a volunteer documentarian, conducted 23 on-camera interviews with policymakers, law enforcement officials, service providers, and survivors throughout the state about prostitution, sex trafficking and demand in Illinois. These interviews were conducted to form the basis of the production of short documentary vignettes used for EDI public education initiatives. An initial clip of the documentary was released at EDI's launch event in September, 2009.

CAASE, a Chicago-based nonprofit organization that is a member of EDI, is one of the few organizations in the United States with demand reduction as a primary focus. Many of the organization's activities are designed to prevent prostitution and sex trafficking by increasing public awareness and knowledge about of the risks and negative consequences inherent in commercial sex. CAASE has created educational curricula designed to encourage boys and men not to participate in, and to work against, sexual exploitation. The organization has also developed toolkits for nonprofits, faith-based groups, schools, businesses, and other communities and organizations to provide methods people can use to prevent sexual exploitation. Their descriptions of some of these awareness and education tools are presented in Figure 3.

***Example 3: U.S. Military Program to Combat Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking***

There is a long history of the military contributing to prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., Bolkovach, 2010; Malarek, 2009). Relatively recently, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has taken substantial action designed to reduce or eliminate the historic contributions (whether government agencies, large corporations, or others) of military personnel to prostitution and sex trafficking. Their approach is multifaceted, and features a focus on combating demand for commercial sex. While the scale of the military and the level of control over personnel are atypical of most organizations, the objectives and basic steps they have taken can prove instructive to other large organizations or agencies.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has taken substantial action over the past decade designed to reduce or eliminate the historic exacerbations of prostitution and sex trafficking due to the actions of military personnel. Their approach is multifaceted, and features a focus on combating demand for commercial sex. While the scale of the military and the level of control over personnel are atypical of most organizations, the objectives and basic steps they have taken can prove instructive to other large organizations or agencies.

**Figure 3: CAASE Descriptions of their Education Resources**

**For Parents and Guardians:**

“Engaging High-School-Age Sons to Stop Sexual Harm” is a resource for families, role models, and any other person involved in the lives of young men. It provides background information on issues surrounding sexual exploitation, tips on initiating conversations about the issues, and other resources for parents and guardians.

**For High School Coaches:**

Coaches often play a key role in helping shape the behaviors and attitudes of the young men they work with throughout the sports season. Understanding the significance of the coach/student relationship, CAASE and Coach for America created five short lesson plans that coaches can use with their athletes. Each plan is ten minutes long with an optional writing assignment.

**For High School Teachers:**

This toolkit offers activities and resources for educators of high school students. These activities focus on the pressures your students may face to engage in sexually exploitive acts or sexual activities that make them feel uncomfortable. The three main topics are gender roles, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. The goal of this activity guide is to provide assignments, ideas, and classroom discussions to help educators facilitate interactive, informative, and moving interpersonal and peer-group discovery about the difficult issues their students may be facing.

The military code of justice and policies have been strengthened, clarifying the language and imposing substantial penalties on any military personnel (including civilian staff and contractors) engaging in commercial sex. The Law Enforcement Policy and Support office of the DoD has established the Trafficking in Persons Program, which has developed a series of trainings for military staff. A key component of their effort is training about commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and a key message in the training materials addresses demand.

Most of the following is taken directly from the DoD training materials, available online.<sup>3</sup> One of the training presentations required of all service members before deployment begins with survivor anecdotes, photos, and an overview of how human trafficking is a large, global criminal enterprise. It says that the “bad guys” are “not just the people who operate the trafficking enterprise – they are also their customers,” who can be contractors, government civilians, or military personnel. They stress the message that there is “zero tolerance” in the Armed Forces of contributing to commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking, and that involvement in trafficking jeopardizes their careers:

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<sup>3</sup> Source: [http://www.combat-trafficking.army.mil/documents/training/TIP\\_20Feb09.ppt](http://www.combat-trafficking.army.mil/documents/training/TIP_20Feb09.ppt)

- In 2002 the President signed a National Security Presidential Directive mandating a “zero tolerance” policy toward trafficking among members of the US armed services, civilian employees and civilian contractors.
- In 2004, the Deputy Secretary of Defense expressly forbade involvement with trafficked people by U.S. troops, government civilians and defense contractors, and called for commanders at all levels to ensure their units are trained to understand and recognize indicators of this serious crime

The training contains definitions and several messages about the nature of human trafficking, and includes a focus on an anti-demand messages, such as: “Don’t assist the perpetrators: You aid and encourage trafficking in persons without engaging in it directly by:

- Hiring prostitutes
- Attending nightclubs or strip clubs
- Patronizing businesses that are heavily guarded
- Not reporting cases of suspected trafficking
- Patronizing establishments that use forced labor”

Military personnel are informed of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) Military Personnel Legal Prohibition on Prostitution. Trainees are also told that DoD Contractors are subject to the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation (DFAR) TIP rule. Contractors have a trafficking clause in their employment contracts which stipulates they are responsible for following UCMJ prohibitions on buying sex, and that this responsibility applies to any and all subcontractors of a given company working for the DoD.

We have included this brief discussion (and additional detail in Appendix D) about the DOD training for a number of reasons. First, the change in the DoD’s approach is a sign that organizations that have historically tolerated (and sometimes encouraged) men buying sex can adopt an aggressive, proactive approach to education designed to combat demand. This suggests that here is little reason to believe that change cannot also occur in corporations, universities, other government agencies, and elsewhere.

Second, the DoD training is example of an educational intervention that it is not simply a generic “awareness” exercise, reciting the horrors of human trafficking and urging unspecified action. The DOT training specifically focuses on the root cause of sex trafficking – consumer-level demand for commercial sex – and urges very concrete action: not buying sex or tolerating others doings so.

Third, the general outline of the content can serve as a model for corporations or organizations wishing to develop a training program. Obviously, non-military organizations would not train about the military code of justice, etc., but the basic outline is probably transferable. The training starts with general issues and definitions, then quickly focuses on actions that individuals can and must take, and why. It makes the general appeals that are made in virtually all “john school” programs: (a) an appeal to self-interest, discussing the consequences for them personally if they are caught engaging in prostitution, and (b) an appeal to altruism, discussing the harm to those providing commercial sex in hopes that empathy will serve as a deterrent.

One of the reasons for communities to be interested in implementing public education and awareness programs is that they are among the few types of interventions that are designed to be truly preventive, rather than to react to known offenders. As can be seen in the typology we have presented about tactics used to combat demand, most are directed toward arresting men attempting to buy sex, and then applying post-arrest interventions such as community service or john schools. Such tactics are necessary and can be considered efficient because they expend energy only on those known to be involved in commercial sex. However, in the words of many people interviewed for this project, there is a need to intervene “further upstream,” before men become sex buyers. That is where broadly targeted education and public service announcements come into play.

### **References**

References for the materials cited in this summary can be found in the bibliography of the National Assessment final report, and in each site’s webpage at DemandForum.net.