

Overview of John Schools and Justification for Further Research in Ohio

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Since 2012 Ohio has made marked progress in its efforts to address human trafficking, including policies aimed at reducing the demand side of the market. In 2014, new legislation increased penalties for purchasers of commercial sex.¹ While increased penalties are one approach to reducing demand for commercial sex, another means to deter the illicit purchase of sex is through educating purchasers, often called johns, through programs about the risks and realities of the commercial sex industry. These programs are often referred to as “john schools,” defined as education or treatment programs for men arrested for soliciting illegal commercial sex.²

This paper seeks to provide a review of john schools currently operating in Ohio, as well as a brief evaluation of their effectiveness in reducing demand. The report provides an overview of characteristics of current programs within the U.S. that continue to educate offenders regularly, as well as those that have been unable to maintain services. Although data collection measuring effectiveness of these programs is currently limited, this paper analyzes existing information about john school effectiveness within Ohio and from other states to provide cursory recommendations to practitioners and policymakers interested in the use of john schools to curb the crime of human trafficking in Ohio.

Generic Logic Model, Curriculum and Structure of John Schools

Within the United States, john schools tend to follow a similar logic model with content and curriculums based on early successful programs. The key components of the model are motivated by the overall goal to decrease demand for prostitution and fund services for victims.² Program goals are met through pro-social shifts in attitudes, increased levels of knowledge, specific deterrence, program sustainment and restorative justice. As a result of programmatic activities, john schools are intended to decrease the demand for prostitution, and hence, reduce the amount of human trafficking and sexual exploitation that occurs.²

Standard john school curriculum includes discussions around the health and legal consequences of engaging in commercial sex, the negative impact of prostitution on prostituted women, girls and communities, discussions about healthy relationships, anger management, sexual addiction, pimping and pandering, human trafficking, and johns’ vulnerability to criminal victimization while engaging in commercial sex. The majority of programs are single session, full-day classes.² Fifty-two percent of those programs evaluated by Shively et al. (2013) are diversion programs, allowing those individuals convicted of soliciting commercial sex to get their conviction sealed from their record upon completion of the course; and 29% serve as conditions of a sentence. The average fee to participate in a program is roughly \$400, ranging from \$0 to \$1,500.

¹ End Demand Act of 2014, Am. Sub. H.B. 130, 130th General Assembly (2014) Retrieved from Ohio General Assembly Archives 1997-2014.

² Shively, M., Kliorys, K., Wheeler, K., & Hunt, D. (2013) *An Overview of John Schools in the United States*. Rep. Cambridge: Abt Associates.

Summary of John School Programs in the United States

Table 1 provides a comparative chart of the primary components of four john schools across the United States that have been previously evaluated. Factors compared include curriculum focus, criteria offenders must meet to participate in the program, length of the program, cost of the program for participants, recidivism rates based on program-reported data, and incentives for participation. While there remain to be many recommendations and necessary improvements in the curricula and structure of the john school programs, programs like those in Table 1 have provided the foundation for evaluation of the effectiveness of such demand reduction efforts.

Table 1. Sample of John School programs in the United States.

Program	Curriculum Focus	Eligibility Criteria	Length	Cost to Participant	Recidivism Rate	Incentive
San Francisco's First Offender Prostitution Program ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitution law and street facts • Health education • Effect of prostitution on prostituted women • Dynamics of pimping and trafficking • Recruiting and trafficking • Effect of prostitution on the community • Sexual addiction 	<p><u>Excludes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men with a prior violent offense, sex offense, or domestic violence offense. • Perpetrators who were attempting to purchase sex from a minor or have such offenses on record. 	1 day	\$1,000	< 1%	Case dismissal (avoid prosecution)
Nashville John School ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral/psychological motivations • Health education • Effects of prostitution on prostituted women • Legal implications • Sex addiction • Commercial sex and sexual exploitation 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders charged with patronizing prostitution and associated charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Charged with soliciting or hiring another person with the intent that the other person engage in prostitution..." <p><u>Excludes:</u> Perpetrators who were attempting to purchase sex from a minor or have such offenses on record.</p>	1 day	\$300	Assessment Unavailable	Case dismissal In some instances cases may be expunged from participant records.
Psychoeducation Program for Men Arrested for Soliciting a Prostitute (Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN) ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for changing behavior • Health education • Examination of emotional and relational contributing factors • Sex addiction • Information about the damage that prostitution causes to women and society 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders convicted for soliciting a prostitute.</p> <p><u>Excludes:</u> Perpetrators who were attempting to purchase sex from a minor or have such offenses on record.</p>	1 day	\$325	0.43% (3/700+)	Record expunged
Project Respect (Brooklyn) ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on survivors • Health consequences • Legal consequences • Negative community impact 	<p><u>Excludes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defendants with violent criminal records • Men tried to purchase sex from a minor. 	1 day (5 hours)	\$250	< 1%	Record expunged

³ Summary Table: Key Traits of John School Programs in the United States. Abt Associates, National Assessment, 2012.

⁴ Valenzuela, R. M. *The Nashville John School: Risk Deterrence and the Reintegrative Shaming Approach.* (2013). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1480.

⁵ Pisarcik, K. *Inside a Brooklyn "John School"*. ABC News. 20 Mar 2007. <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488623&page=1>

Challenges of Operating John Schools in the U.S.

As of 2013, 50 cities within the United States were operating some form of a john school, a number that has decreased from 2000 due, in some instances, to a lack of government support, low attendance and inadequate funding. For example, programs in Buffalo, New York and Tampa, Florida ended due to an insufficient flow of participants as a result of an absence of reverse sting initiatives, ultimately stemming from the current challenge of police budget cuts.¹ Additionally, programs have shut down from a lack of support by local government agencies, as well as the courts that stopped referring men to the program. Once such program is the Sexual Exploitation Education For Project (SEEP) in Portland, Oregon (1995-1997). This project lost government support due to disagreements between program staff and government sponsors, causing a decline in participants, and complaints that the program was based on ideological views rather than an educational program.² And another john school based in Portland was no longer able to stay in operation given that it was not financially self-sustainable. More specifically, the program's source of funding came from the \$83 fee charged to participants to attend to program, while the national average was roughly \$400.²

While many programs have been suspended due to a lack of support from the communities and government agencies, there are several programs such as Portland's Sex Buyer Accountability Diversion (SBAD) program, and San Francisco's First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP), which have reached a sustainable status. These classes serve as diversion program, where meeting all of the requirements results in a case dismissal. Although there are limitations to the evidence-based nature of the programs' curriculums (outlined in Table 1), preliminary studies have shown support that these program models decrease recidivism.⁶ In addition to decreasing recidivism, the programs are financially self-sustainable as they are supported by a \$1,000 fee for the class, with a sliding scale based on ability to pay. In addition to the benefits to participants, excess revenue also supports services for victims of sex trafficking.

If these programs are accurate representations of a wider cause-and-effect model for john schools, then they present a lesson for Ohio's own programs. Several recommendations from Shively et al. (2008) to achieve a john school's purported goals while remaining sustainable over time are:

- Law enforcement must proactively conduct operations designed to arrest men for soliciting in order to identify eligible participants of the program;
- City ordinances and/or statutes must be in place to support john schools as a diversion program or as a sentencing option;
- A educational curriculum must be established, presented by qualified individuals; and,
- The program must be financially self-sustainable, generally achieved through fines levied on participants themselves.³

With these basic conditions met, the likelihood of operating an effective john school and ultimately decreasing instances of human trafficking and prostitution may be higher.

⁶ Shively, M, Jalbert, S., Kling, R., Rhodes, W., Finn, P., Flygare, C., Tierney, L., Hunt, D., Squires, D., Dyous, C., & Wheeler, K. (2008) *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program*. Rep. Cambridge: Abt Associates, Print.

Overview of John Schools in Ohio

In Ohio, four john schools are currently operating in Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Cincinnati. The Ohio programs operate independently from one another, yet under similar structure with the common goal of educating purchasers of commercial sex on the negative impacts of prostitution, and an emphasis on the newfound awareness that prostitution is not a victimless crime. Table 2 provides a characteristic overview of the four Ohio programs.

Table 2. Overview of Ohio John School Programs

Program	Curriculum Focus	Eligibility Criteria	Length	Incentive
Columbus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health education • Negative community impact • Legal consequences of solicitation • Human trafficking and pimping • Sexual addictions 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders charged with patronizing prostitution and associated charges.⁷</p> <p><u>Excludes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men with a prior violent offense, sex offense, or domestic violence offense. • Perpetrators who were attempting to purchase sex from a minor or have such offenses on record. 	6-8 hours	Diversion; Record expunged
			Cost	
			\$0	
			Recidivism Rate	
			< 1%	
Cincinnati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health education • Negative community impact • Legal consequences of solicitation • Human trafficking and pimping • Sexual addictions 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders charged with patronizing prostitution and associated charges</p> <p><u>Excludes:</u> Those convicted of felonies, violent crimes</p>	Length	Diversion; Record expunged
			6-8 hours	
			Cost	
			Up to \$500	
			Recidivism Rate	
Assessment Unavailable				
Dayton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health education • Negative community impact • Legal consequences of solicitation • Human trafficking and pimping • Sexual addictions 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders convicted for soliciting a prostitute.</p>	Length	As an alternative, or in accordance with jail sentence
			6-8 hours	
			Cost	
			\$250	
			Recidivism Rate	
5.5%				
Toledo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health education • Negative community impact • Legal consequences of solicitation • Human trafficking and pimping • Sexual addictions 	<p><u>Includes:</u> First-time offenders convicted for soliciting a prostitute.⁸</p>	Length	Diversion; Dependent on the jurisdiction program used: in lieu of jail time, to reduce disorderly conduct charges, and expungement
			6-8 hours	
			Cost	
			\$300	
			Recidivism Rate	
Assessment Unavailable				

⁷ Allbritain, Michael. "Columbus John School." Interview by Maria Marballi.

⁸ Blake, Erica. "'John School' Offers New Perspective." *The Blade* [Toledo] 4 Apr 2011.

<http://www.toledoblade.com/local/2011/04/04/John-School-offers-new-perspective-2.html>

Justification for Further Research in Ohio

Although the sustainability of john schools has proved difficult to maintain, additional research of their efficacy is recommended given their potential to reduce demand for commercial sex. According to a 2012 overview of demand reduction efforts throughout the nation, anti-trafficking initiatives will yield more successful outcomes if purchasers are targeted as well.⁹ When criminal entities supplying trafficking victims are taken out of the equation, they are quickly replaced as the demand remains, due in large part to the highly profitable nature of sex trafficking and low start-up costs for potential pimps and traffickers.¹⁰ In light of this, rigorous assessments providing support for many common demand reduction strategies—such as john schools, public shaming of johns, etc.—remains inconclusive.

Toward that end, with Ohio currently operating four john schools, there is an identified need to determine the overall performance in achieving Ohio’s goals of finding long-term solutions to ending human trafficking through demand reduction. Though the Ohio john schools do not follow a standardized curriculum, the rate at which the Ohio john schools have reduced recidivism within the last several years provides an encouraging and compelling case for determining the most influential factors of the courses in decreasing or preventing recidivism in sex purchasers. Identifying these factors would assist the state to more strategically marshal resources to reduce demand and target purchasers with effective evidence-based approaches.

⁹ Shively, M., Kliorys, K., Wheeler, K., & Hunt, D. (2012) A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts. *Report submitted to U. S. Department of Justice by Abt Associates.*

¹⁰ Ohio Department of Public Safety, The Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, *Human Trafficking Prevention Plan for Ohio’s State Agencies 2013-2014*