

BUYING SEX:

A survey of men in Chicago



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CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 23, 2004 staff of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) and 42 volunteers conducted one-on-one interviews with 159 men in nine popular Chicago bars, on the streets of high volume 'bar-areas' in scattered neighborhoods throughout the city, and at Chicago's Union Station.

The Prostitution Alternatives Round Table (PART), a project of the CCH decided to make contact with some men who may pay for sexual services in Chicago to determine their characteristics, the frequency with which they paid for sex acts, their interactions with law enforcement, their knowledge of the plight of women and girls involved, and their attitudes about the sex trade industry.

Why interview customers? Strategies to combat both legal and illegal aspects of the sex trade seldom focus on the demand that fuels this industry. Research in Chicago indicates that many women and girls in the sex trade experience homelessness and are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation, and that some male customers are violent and exploitative. Yet, there is little research on the customers of women in the sex trade industry. Only two researchers, Martin Monto and John Lowman, have done research with men in North America who buy sex. The reasons are obvious: It is difficult to determine and construct a representative sample of sex trade customers due to the clandestine nature of the industry. It is also likely that many male customers will be reluctant to admit that they pay for sex for a variety of reasons, including the fact that it is against the law.

KEY FINDINGS:

- A large percentage, 81 percent, of all men surveyed admitted to having been to a sex trade venue at least once in their lifetime.
- There were no significant differences between users and non-users of the sex trade industry based on marital status, age, ethnicity, and race. Users in this sample are younger, on average, than non-users, but frequent users are older. Frequent users are more likely to be older and married.
- On average, users of the industry visited 2 sex trade venues. The majority visited two or more.
- Over 50 percent of men who said they had visited strip clubs have done so 6 or more times in their lifetime.
- Men find out about sex trade venues primarily through word-of-mouth referrals.
- The majority of users in this sample frequented indoor sex trade venues, rather than street-level venues. Based on the men's responses, illegal sex trade activity appears to be occurring in legal, regulated indoor sex trade establishments such as strip clubs.
- Only 4 of the 129 men who are users admitted they had any contact with law enforcement.
- Large numbers of the men appeared indifferent to the plight of the women from whom they are purchasing sex-acts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Increased community focus must be placed on the customers of the sex trade industry. Given the high usage of indoor venues in which sex is traded for money, community groups should work with law enforcement officials to identify and hold accountable customers and the establishments that provide illegal paid-for sexual services to men.
- ✓ Law enforcement agencies in Chicago should conduct research into establishing court-mandated programs that offer treatment to men for paying for sexual services. Community groups should develop education-based prevention and intervention programs that take into consideration the level of information customers have about the plight of prostituted persons, and whether this knowledge has any bearing on their subsequent actions.
- ✓ Conduct further in-depth research, including focus groups, to determine what strategies may work to prevent men from accessing the sex trade and to determine if arrest is a deterrent.

BUYING SEX: *A survey of men in Chicago*

I. INTRODUCTION

Little research has been done with men who pay for sexual services. Staff and volunteers of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless conducted 159 one-on-one interviews with “bar-going” men on Friday, April 23, 2004. The interviews were undertaken to gauge respondents’ participation in the sex trade industry. The data collected reveals demographic information about the men who pay for sexual services, the frequency with which they paid for sex acts, their interactions with law enforcement, their knowledge of the plight of women and girls involved, and their attitudes about the sex trade industry.

DEFINING THE SEX TRADE INDUSTRY

For purposes of this survey the sex trade industry is defined as street level prostitution, strip clubs (with or without physical/sexual contact), escort services, massage parlors where sexual services are an offer, private parties (such as a bachelor party) where lap dancing or sexual contact is an offer, and the solicitation of sexual services (for money or things of value) in non-street, indoor venues such as drug houses. Consideration is made for illegal and legal forms of the industry.

ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-PROSTITUTION LAWS IN CHICAGO

According to the Chicago Police Department arrest records, in 2003 there were 5306 classifiable prostitution-related arrests within city limits. Sixty-five percent of those arrests were of women in prostitution, 19 percent were of male patrons, and less than 1 percent were of pimps. Between 2001 and 2002, the imposition of prostitution felony charges for women more than doubled from 168 to 382. In 2003, 333 women were charged with felony prostitution. According to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, no patrons were convicted of prostitution-related felonies between 2000 and 2002. In descending order the top arrests of customers occurred in the following police districts and neighborhoods: District 25 (Grand Central), District 11 (Harrison), District 17 (Albany Park), District 9 (Deering) and District 14 (Shakespeare). This does not necessarily mean that these areas of Chicago have the highest prostitution activity. The Washington, D.C.-based Sentencing Project estimates that approximately \$9 million is spent per year in the enforcement of anti-prostitution laws in the City of Chicago.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE SEX TRADE INDUSTRY

Research conducted by the Center for Impact Research (CIR) in 2001 determined that over the course of a year there are approximately 16,000–24,000 women and girls in prostitution in Chicago. These women and girls participate in many legal and illegal aspects of the industry: strip clubs, massage parlors, street-level and escort services. Many more uncounted men, transgendered persons, and male youth are involved in prostitution as well. Interviews conducted with 222 women in all levels of the sex trade industry by CIR in Chicago in 2002 found that the majority of women and girls experience homelessness, enter the industry at young ages, often as teenagers, and experience high levels of violence in the form of sexual and physical assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. This research also found that they are often victimized by pimps and patrons while engaged in all forms of the sex trade industry. Women interviewed reported having between 4–20 customers per night.

WHY STUDY THE SEX TRADE INDUSTRY BY INTERVIEWING MEN?

Men are the primary customers of the sex trade industry and fuel its existence. Many community residents are negatively impacted by this industry. Among other concerns, street-level prostitution in their neighborhoods often brings outside men who cruise up and down the roadways or harass women on the streets and conduct sexual acts in public places. The existence of venues of prostitution such as massage parlors, drug houses and strip clubs also attracts unwanted men into neighborhoods and may also fuel illegal drug sales. Policy-makers, law enforcement officials, community residents, activists and social service agencies are also concerned with the violent impact that the sex trade industry has on the lives of the women and youth who largely service male customers. However, the primary focus at corrections, community, and treatment levels has been on street-level prostituted women.

Much research has been done in Chicago and elsewhere on women in prostitution. Scarce research exists on the customers of this wide-spread industry: where they access both legal and illegal aspects of the industry, and how they hear about opportunities to avail themselves of paid sexual services. The findings of these surveys and resulting subsequent research may provide sound and accurate tools for intervention, prevention and deterrence strategies for law enforcement, community groups and social service agencies for men who access illegal and legal aspects of the sex trade industry in Chicago.

II. METHODOLOGY

On April 23, 2004 staff of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) and 42 volunteers conducted one-on-one interviews with 159 men in nine popular Chicago bars, on the streets of high volume ‘bar-areas’ in scattered neighborhoods throughout the city, and at Chicago’s Union Station. Men were approached by volunteers working in teams of two. Of the 348 men approached, 159 agreed to be surveyed. The majority of men were randomly approached by volunteers. Some men who approached the volunteers out of curiosity also agreed to be surveyed.

Interview locations were determined by CCH staff who analyzed areas in which the most number of arrests of customers occur in Chicago, in consultation with an official of the Chicago Police Department’s Vice Control Section. Community residents and survivors of prostitution claim that many bar-going males also patronize the sex trade industry. The surveyors thus targeted popular areas of the city with high concentration of bars. The surveys were conducted on a Friday night between 5:30pm–7:30pm (“happy-hour”). The majority of surveys were completed on the streets in these areas. Interviews were also conducted in nine bars in the city (three on the South-Side, three near-northwest, and three on the North-Side). Prior permission was obtained from the owners of the establishments. The South-Side bars are primarily patronized by African Americans, the near-northwest and North-Side bars and areas are generally frequented by young post-college white males, and are in gentrifying, wealthy areas of the city. The date and time of the interviews also coincided with a home game of a popular, local, professional sports team in Chicago, resulting in a large congregation of men of varying ages in that area.

The questions asked were initiated by women formerly involved in prostitution. The survey instrument was then developed by staff of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. It was then reviewed and critiqued by members of the steering committee of the Prostitution Alternatives Round Table of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Each interview took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete using a written questionnaire. Surveyors included Chicago Coalition for the Homeless staff, college students, staff of social service agencies, community activists, and women formerly involved in the sex trade industry. All surveyors received prior training on the

AREAS OF SURVEY



survey procedures instrument. Prior to agreeing to be interviewed, the men were read a statement informing them of the voluntary nature of the survey, that the information recorded could not be traced back to them specifically, and that it is a survey about the sex trade industry. Interviewers did not ask for or record participants’ names. Men were not given any remuneration for participating.

Men surveyed were those in the neighborhoods to which the surveyors went on the specified date the surveys were administered. This sample by no means represents all male bar-goers in Chicago on April 23, 2004, nor is it a random sample. However, we believe the collective results present a reliable snapshot of certain aspects of the sex trade industry in Chicago-and some men’s participation as customers of that industry. Although great effort was made to ensure high validity of the survey through its administration by trained volunteers and staff, the possibility still exists that some questions were interpreted differently by some participants than by others.

III. DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Men Surveyed

RACE

- 68 percent of respondents self-identified as white or Caucasian; 17 percent as African American; 7 percent Hispanic; and 6 percent self-identified as either Asian or multi-racial.

MARITAL STATUS

- 70 percent of respondents stated they were single and never married. Of these 12 percent are African-American. Nineteen percent of respondents reported being married, 27 percent of these are African-American.
- 5 percent of all men surveyed reported being divorced or separated; and 6 percent said they were co-habiting with a partner.

AGE

- At the time of survey, respondents were as young as 14 and as old as 73. Seven respondents were under 21 years old. Only one was under age 18. The mean age of those interviewed is 32.

IV. FINDINGS

A. "Users" v. "Non-Users"

129 men, or 81 percent of all men surveyed, said they had patronized at least one sex trade venue in their lifetime and are classified as "users". Twenty-nine men, or 18 percent, said they had not patronized any part of the sex trade industry and are classified as "non-users". These men stated that they had never been to a strip club or exchanged anything of value for sexual services.

RACE

- 67 percent of all users were Caucasian and 15 percent of all users self-identified as African-American. There were no significant racial differences between users and non-users.
- 70 percent of African-Americans surveyed were users. Eighty-four percent of Caucasians were users.

MARITAL STATUS

- 19 percent of all users surveyed said they were married. Seventy-one percent of all users stated that they were single and never married.
- 80 percent of all married men in this sample were users. Eighty-four percent of all single men in this sample were users. Half of all divorced men were users. All co-habitors surveyed admitted to being users.

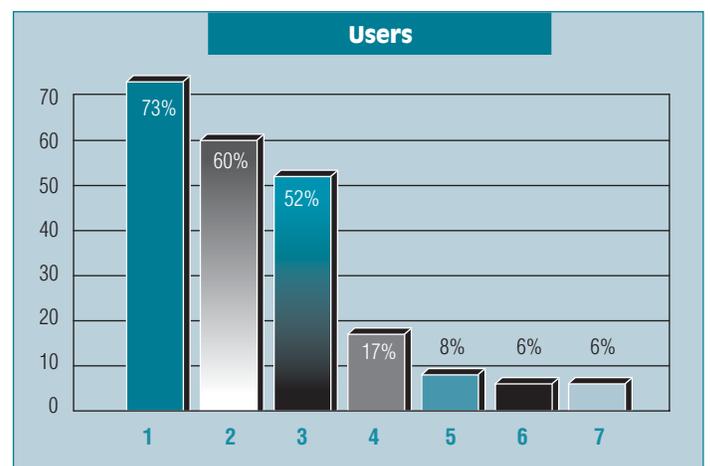
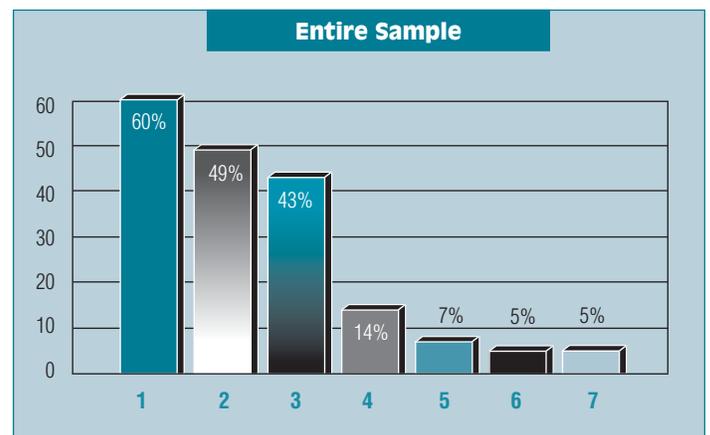
AGE

- The mean age of reported users is 31. The mean age of reported non-users is 33.

B. Experiences with the Sex Trade Industry of Users and the Entire Sample

Strip clubs were the most common venues that men admitted going to. Seventeen percent of users revealed they had picked up a person on the street with the intent to engage in sexual activity. Forty-five percent of these men also admitted to having exchanged things of value such as money, drugs or shelter, for sexual services.

TABLE I: ENTIRE SAMPLE V. USERS: EXPERIENCES WITH THE SEX TRADE



Percent of all men / users stated that they:

- 1. had been to strip clubs.
- 2. had been to a private party where lap-dancing or sexual favors were on offer.
- 3. had physical contact with the dancers at strip clubs.
- 4. had picked up a person on the street with the intent to engage in sexual activity.
- 5. had solicited sexual services in exchange for money or things of value in an indoor venue, such as a club, drug house or bar.
- 6. had used escort services.
- 7. had used a massage parlor where sexual favors were on offer.

C. Where Users Go

Men’s access to sex trade venues is not limited to one geographic location. Large percentages of the users engaged in these activities in Chicago as well as in locations outside Illinois, including foreign countries. Escort services were not used in Chicago by this sample.

Strip clubs were the most common venues that men admitted going to.

TABLE II: LOCATIONS MEN WENT FOR PAID SEXUAL SERVICES BY TYPE

Where?	1. Strip Club	2. Private Party	3. Strip Club with Physical Contact	4. Picked up Woman on Street	5. Exchanged Money or Things of Value for Sexual Services	6. Solicit in Indoor Venue	7. Massage Parlor	8. Escort Service
City of Chicago	57%	48%	41%	55%	29%	70%	13%	0%
Chicago Suburbs	21%	23%	23%	23%	29%	40%	13%	14%
In IL, Outside Metro Chicago	20%	14%	12%	14%	14%	30%	13%	29%
In U.S., Outside IL	59%	36%	49%	27%	36%	40%	25%	29%
Foreign Country	13%	5%	12%	18%	14%	10%	13%	14%

Percentages = percentage of respondents who said yes to those questions.

D. Frequency of Use

Significant numbers of men stated they have frequently patronized sex trade venues. Repeat users are found in both indoor and outdoor venues.

TABLE III: FREQUENCY OF USE OF SEX TRADE VENUES BY TYPE

# of Times	1. Strip Club	2. Private Party	3. Strip Club with Physical Contact	4. Picked up Woman on Street	5. Exchanged Money or Things of Value for Sexual Services	6. Solicit in Indoor Venue	7. Massage Parlor	8. Escort Service
1-5	47%	79%	60%	50%	50%	25%	88%	80%
6-10	26%	11%	25%	20%	8%	50%	0%	20%
10-20	13%	7%	7%	20%	17%	13%	0%	0%
20+	14%	3%	11%	10%	17%	13%	13%	0%

Percentages = percentage of respondents who said yes to those questions.

E. Frequent Users

- Thirty-three men or 26 percent of users, (21 percent of all men surveyed) stated that they frequented sex trade venues more than 10 times in their lifetime.
- 63 percent of frequent users self-identified as Caucasian; 22 percent as African-American; and 9 percent as Hispanic.
- 64 percent of frequent users stated they are single; 33 percent revealed that they are married. 19 percent of men in the entire sample stated they are married. Married men are significantly overrepresented in the frequent user group.
- The mean age of frequent users is 34.

F. Average Number of Uses

On average, users visited 2 sex trade venues.

- 38 men or 31 percent of users said they visited only 1 venue.
- 36 men, or 30 percent of users said they visited 2 venues.
- 33 men, or 27 percent of users said they visited 3 venues.
- 15 men, or 20 percent of users said they visited 4 or more venues. Of these, four men, or 4 percent of users, visited 7 venues.

G. Knowing Where To Go

Men stated that they learned mainly through word-of-mouth about potential sex trade locations. The Internet was scarcely used by those surveyed. Few people also relied upon print advertisements to find out where to go.

*One man stated that he was
“ENCOURAGED BY CULTURE
TO BE A MAN”*

TABLE IV: HOW MEN FOUND OUT ABOUT WHERE TO ACCESS SEX TRADE VENUES BY TYPE

How Heard?	1. Strip Club	2. Private Party	3. Strip Club with Physical Contact	4. Picked up Woman on Street	5. Exchanged Money or Things of Value for Sexual Services	6. Solicit in Indoor Venue	7. Massage Parlor	8. Escort Service
Print	15%	3%	12%	5%	14%	20%	25%	43%
Word of Mouth	69%	77%	55%	14%	36%	50%	38%	14%
Internet	4%	3%	2%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Percentages = percentage of respondents who said yes to those questions.

In their own words men heard of or experienced paid-for sexual services at:

- BACHELOR PARTY
- FRATERNITY PARTY
- JUST WALKING DOWN STREET
- PASSED PLACE FREQUENTLY ON WAY TO WORK
- THOUGHT ABOUT IT—ADVERTISEMENTS IN FREE MAGAZINES UP & DOWN MILWAUKEE AVENUE [IN CHICAGO]
- LAS VEGAS
- WATCHING OTHERS WHEN GROWING UP IN NEIGHBORHOOD
- RADIO

“If you knew that the majority of persons in the sex trade experience homelessness, are victims of violence, and start at very young ages, would that change your attitude about paying for sex?”

H. Attitudes

Users were asked two questions about their knowledge of prostituted women. When asked, “If you knew that the police were arresting female prostitutes in greater numbers than customers, and it can be a felony for them, would that change your attitude about paying for sex?” Thirty-five percent of respondents said “yes”, and 49 percent said “no”. Seventeen percent did not respond to this question.

When asked, “If you knew that the majority of persons in the sex trade experience homelessness, are victims of violence, and start at very young ages, would that change your attitude about paying for sex?” Forty-two percent said “yes” and 44 percent said “no”. Fifteen percent did not respond to this question.

All 159 men interviewed were asked whether they believe prostitution should be legal. 42 percent of the users and 40 percent of non-users stated that they believe it should. When asked if they knew that women in prostitution could be charged with a felony, 65 percent of the users and 70 percent of the non-users said they knew that they could.

I. Interactions with Law Enforcement

Only 4 men, or 3 percent of users, admitted that they had come into contact with law enforcement as a result of their participation in the sex trade industry.

V. SUMMARY OF DATA

- A large percentage, 81 percent, of all men surveyed admitted to having been to a sex trade venue at least once in their lifetime.
- There were no significant differences between users and non-users of the sex trade industry based on marital status, age, ethnicity, and race. Users in this sample are younger, on average, than non-users, but frequent users are older. Frequent users are more likely to be older and married.
- On average, users of the industry visited 2 sex trade venues. The majority visited two or more.
- Over 50 percent of men who said they had visited strip clubs have done so 6 or more times in their lifetime.
- Men find out about sex trade venues primarily through word-of-mouth referrals.
- The majority of users in this sample frequented indoor sex trade venues, rather than street-level venues. Based on the men's responses, illegal sex trade activity appears to be occurring in legal, regulated indoor sex trade establishments such as strip clubs.
- Only 4 of the 129 men who are users admitted they had any contact with law enforcement.
- Large numbers of the men appeared indifferent to the plight of the women from whom they are purchasing sex-acts.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although our sample is small and cannot claim to be a random or representative sample of men, we believe that the information presented by the men provides us with some valuable information that can inform efforts to curb the sex trade industry.

1. RECOMMENDATION:

Increased community focus needs to be placed on the customers of the sex trade industry. Given the high usage of indoor venues in which sex is traded for money, community groups should work with law enforcement to identify and hold accountable the customers and the establishments that provide illegal paid-for sexual services to men in Chicago.

The majority of men surveyed participated in in-door sex trade venues. Twenty-one percent of all men surveyed have been to sex trade venues more than ten times in their lifetime. The majority of users visit two or more types of venues and hear about locations from others.

Law enforcement and community based strategies to curb sex trade activities that solely focus on increased prosecution of street-level prostituted women do little to curb the industry.

These interviews indicate that usage of sex trade venues by men is very prevalent among male bar-goers in Chicago and that the majority of illegal activity is happening in legal, regulated sex trade establishments. The sex trade industry is fueled in large part by the demand of these men for access to paid-for sexual services. As the industry continues to exist-so will the exploitation of women and girls involved. Many communities and neighborhoods in Chicago are currently attempting to rid their neighborhoods of illegal sex trade activities. These strategies rely primarily on pressuring police departments to increase arrests, and public prosecutors towards increasing prosecution of prostituted women. Little focus is on the male customers of this industry. Law enforcement and community based strategies to curb sex trade activities that solely focus on increased prosecution of street-level prostituted women do little to curb the industry—at most it may move the visible street-level activities to a different neighborhood. As enforcement in one neighborhood increases-and men hear about this through word-of mouth, they may simply go to another or a different venue. Enforcement activities should reflect data that shows the majority of prostitution actually occurs indoors. Resources should be provided to the Vice Control Section of the Chicago Police Department to increase efforts to target illegal indoor sex trade venues.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

Law enforcement agencies in Chicago should conduct research into establishing court-mandated programs that offer treatment to men for paying for sexual services. Community groups should develop education-based prevention and intervention programs that take into consideration the level of information customers have about the plight of prostituted persons, and whether this knowledge has any bearing on their subsequent actions.

A majority of married and single men in this sample are users. Frequent users are generally older and may have been going to sex trade venues for a while. These men may not be single-time or casual users of the sex trade. Furthermore, a large percentage of men interviewed admitted to being indifferent to the plight of women who they pay for sexual services. Male access to women in the sex trade industry, either patronizing a strip club, or paying for sexual contact and services seems to be accepted by many. This notion is also reinforced by the fact that 129 men were willing to talk about their legal and illegal experiences to the surveyors. Perhaps this is why when one interviewee was asked about his participation in the sex trade he said, “[I was] encouraged by my culture to be a man.”

These data and responses have implications for prevention efforts. A lot of men are paying for sexual services a lot of times. Many of these men patronize bars in Chicago. As a beginning effort, it would appear that drinking establishments are good places for educational activities geared to deter men from being involved. However, campaigns designed to prevent men from availing themselves of paid sexual services that rely on educating potential customers about the plight of prostituted persons may work for some men, but not for all.



3. RECOMMENDATION:

Conduct further in-depth research, including focus groups, to determine what strategies may work to prevent men from accessing the sex trade and to determine if arrest is a deterrent.

Although the results of these 159 interviews provide valuable information, further research is needed and more importantly can be conducted. The survey process indicates that men will answer questions regarding their involvement in both legal and illegal aspects of the sex trade industry. Future survey instruments can be created that ask more detailed and “street-friendly” questions.

Focus groups of men who access different parts of the industry in Chicago need to be conducted with groups of men of varying ages and races to gain further in-depth insight into their motivations for paying for sexual services. Questions can be asked about what strategies may work towards preventing men from accessing the sex trade and if arrest is a deterrent. Focus groups can also be conducted of men who do not patron the sex trade industry to ask why not.

Men in this sample were not asked whether arrest is a deterrent to participation in illegal sex trade activities.

They were, however, asked whether prostitution should be legal, and the majority of all men surveyed said “No.” Further research should also be conducted to determine whether arrest is a deterrent and if perceptions of legality about the concept of buying sex has any bearing on deterrence.

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Project Director/Author:
Samir Goswami, Senior Policy Analyst
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Volunteer Coordinator:
Jill Kress, Policy Intern, CCH

Logistics Coordinator:
Andy Kim, Policy Associate, CCH

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MEN WHO WERE INTERVIEWED

VOLUNTEERS WHO DEDICATED THEIR TIME TO
CONDUCT THE INTERVIEWS

TAVERNS THAT ALLOWED INTERVIEWS TO BE
CONDUCTED IN THEIR ESTABLISHMENTS

PROJECT HISTORY

In response to the overwhelming connections between homelessness and prostitution, in August of 2001, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless convened the Prostitution Alternatives Round Table (PART). PART is a network of city, state, county, private non-profit organizations, and survivors of prostitution dedicated to addressing the many issues of prostitution and homelessness in Chicago. PART has an active steering committee and committee of survivors of prostitution.

The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless was founded in 1980 to respond to the growing number of homeless individuals and families in Chicago and the lack of resources to meet their needs. Today CCH's core principles remain unshaken: that decent, safe, and affordable housing is a basic human right and solutions to homelessness lie in addressing root causes such as the shortage of affordable housing and living-wage jobs, and the effects of violence which can cause homelessness and poverty.

www.chicagohomeless.org

