

SNAPSHOT –LANDLORD EDUCATION LEADS TO ILLICIT MASSAGE CLOSURES

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Landlord education programs (LEPs) are one of the most efficient, cost-effective tools for shutting down illicit massage businesses (IMBs) and combatting sex trafficking within our communities. The aim of an LEP is threefold: to inform landlords about possible illegal activity taking place on their property; to educate landlords on their rights and responsibilities as commercial landlords; and, to motivate landlords to terminate or not renew leases for IMB tenants. Time and time again, the evidence has shown that LEPs, when incorporated into a broader strategy focused on aggressive nuisance abatement enforcement, result in a drastic and enduring drop in the total number of IMBs within a given jurisdiction.

ESTABLISHING A LANDLORD EDUCATION PROGRAM

- First, **document suspected IMBs** using online message boards, advertising websites, and business and health inspection reports, as well as information derived from law enforcement investigations and citizen tips/complaints.
- After documenting the IMBs, **identify the property owners and managers** responsible for each storefront location. This data can easily be found in city/county property, tax, and business records. Information can often be gleaned from data aggregators, such as CLEAR.
- Next, law enforcement entities should **contact the landlord and/or property manager via letter or phone call** to arrange a personal meeting, ideally at a police station or other government building.
- During the meeting, law enforcement officers should **inform the landlord and/or property manager about suspected illegal activity** occurring at their property(s), as well as provide additional documentation to support these claims. Such information can include copies of explicit sexual reviews posted by sex-buyers, details of citizen and/or victim-worker tips or complaints, or the results of inspections or law enforcement investigations.
- Next, officers should detail the legal and regulatory framework for massage businesses in the state/locality, as well as the **legal and financial consequences therein for the landlords** should they continue to host an IMB.
- After the meeting, law enforcement entities work to **monitor and track IMB evictions**, as well as initiate legal proceedings in cases where landlords have failed to take appropriate action.
- When possible, LE entities should partner with local service providers to develop a victim-worker response strategy, to include conducting **welfare checks** on victim-workers prior to the IMB's eventual closure.

BY THE NUMBERS

198

The number of IMBs closed in 22 months in San Jose, California following the inclusion of an LEP into the city's counter-IMB strategy.

2

The number of police officers involved in San Jose's LEP.

12

The number of years Washington, D.C.'s IMB population has remained at or near zero after the city incorporated an LEP into its counter-IMB strategy.

\$3.3 million

Judgment levied against a landlord and IMB owner in Washington, D.C. in 2016.

LEP BENEFITS

- LEPs require **far fewer resources** than traditional law enforcement investigations.
- Working with a landlord to cancel or not renew a lease can be **far easier than securing criminal convictions** against an IMB operator.
- Landlords often have many tenants, meaning one LEP can impact multiple IMBs simultaneously.
- LEPs can lead to **increased oversight of personal care businesses**, which are sometimes involved in other forms of human trafficking, as educated landlords begin demanding stricter regulatory compliance by these tenants.
- In some cases, **IMBs will close proactively** because they cannot or will not meet compliance requirements.