



# BERKELEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 981-5900, TDD: (510) 981-5799, [police@ci.berkeley.ca.us](mailto:police@ci.berkeley.ca.us)



## City of Berkeley Police Clarify Reports of Youth Prostitution

### Media Contact:

Sgt. Kusmiss S6  
Public Information  
Officer (PIO)  
(510) 981-5780

Chief of Police  
Michael K. Meehan

City of Berkeley  
Main Line  
(510) 981-CITY

**Berkeley, California (Thursday, December 8, 2011)** Since 2010, the number of juvenile prostitution cases investigated by the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) throughout the City of Berkeley has fallen from seven in 2010 to four in 2011, a decline of over 40%. The population of Berkeley is approximately 112,000.

In 2010, of the seven cases investigated by BPD's Special Victims Unit, three involved Berkeley High School (BHS) students. So far this year, BPD has investigated four cases, and two of those cases involved BHS students. None of these investigations involved prostitution on the BHS campus.

While the numbers appear to be low, even one case is too many and BPD and BHS work collaboratively to investigate criminal activity that may occur on campus as well as those that could affect the safety of the student community. Due to laws pertaining to the confidentiality rights of juvenile victims, not all investigative information can be shared between BHS and BPD. However, these investigations are taken very seriously and steps are taken to ensure that victims are safe and receive support.

Sergeant Jennifer Louis, of the BPD Special Victims Unit credits the decline in statistics, "in great part to community efforts and collaboration surrounding the prosecution of those who exploit women, as well as the extensive referral and support systems in place for these young victims." One such BPD collaboration is the HEAT (Human Exploitation and Trafficking) Watch program which is administered by Alameda County. HEAT Watch is a joint effort of several agencies to combat human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It includes law enforcement, non-government victim advocates, probation, social services, local businesses and other community agencies. More information regarding HEAT Watch as well as county wide statistics is available on the Alameda County District Attorney website.

The Special Victims Unit receives approximately one to two reports a month regarding possible youth prostitution activity throughout the City. They come in a range of forms from a call from a community member who sees a young-looking woman they suspect may be engaged in criminal activity to Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals regarding children who may be endangered. Periodically, it may be a youth victim who reaches out. BPD reviews each of these circumstances and initiates a criminal investigation when appropriate.

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