

FOREVER FOUND

Forever Found's focus areas are direct services to at-risk youth and community training and education with our top goals related to human trafficking that include: develop infrastructure to accommodate youth referrals and educational demands; enhance communication and education through our website, social media, and online platforms; expand our mentor program beyond Ventura County with Forever Found Chapters; and expand holistic therapies, including adding a licensed therapist.

In September 2014, we expanded to address human trafficking locally in Ventura County, California. Forever Found became the first agency in Ventura County to begin a human trafficking program, remaining the only agency specifically dedicated to fighting human trafficking.

Forever Found serves youth ages 12-25 and focuses on trafficking prevention, victim recovery, survivor restoration, training and awareness, and community collaboration. Currently, they serve as the primary resource for commercially exploited children (CSEC & labor) in Ventura County. Their direct services include S.A.F.E visits, 24-Hour R.E.A.C.H. crisis response team, case management, mentor program, holistic therapies, and prevention and restoration curriculum. All programs are voluntary for the youth, allowing them to have a voice, which is the first step towards recovery and finding their value and worth.

While using a trauma informed approach, Forever Found Case Managers work with the youth to create a personalized plan with short and long-term goals. The Case Manager advocates for the youth, provides court support, and encourages them to use their voice while providing one-on-one, wraparound and relational care.

Survivor Mentor Program: This program builds supportive relationships with high-risk youth, current victims, and recovering survivors ages 12-25. A trained volunteer mentor aims to provide support and an invitation to community to vulnerable youth who have a history of abusive and dysfunctional relationships. Mentors meet regularly with their matched youth and focus on modeling wholesome relationships, encouraging a positive self-identity, teaching life skills, and introducing healthy choices.

Holistic Therapies: Forever Found has partnerships to provide equine-assisted learning and life coaching, mindful movement, faith discussion groups, and art classes. Due to the complexity of the trauma, alternative therapies are a way for trauma survivors to express their numb and hidden emotions when they are unable to verbalize them.

Youth Prevention and Restoration Curriculum: Trained facilitators use strategic discussion, multimedia, and journals to teach youth to recognize the signs of potential exploiters and to build a support group of trustworthy adults and peers. They teach the following curriculums: "Word on the Street" The curriculum educates, equips, and empowers teenage girls who are most at risk for trafficking on the topic of commercial sexual exploitation; "Ending the Game" is survivor created, and survivor informed for youth that are in "the life" and coming out of sex trafficking. It is a first-of-its-kind "coercion resiliency" curriculum that reduces feelings of attachment to traffickers and/or a lifestyle characterized by commercial sexual exploitation, thereby reducing the rate of recidivism among sex-trafficking survivors.

Becoming Me Curriculum: The Becoming Me curriculum is a trauma-informed intervention curriculum designed for youth and young adults impacted by sexual abuse and/or commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). The curriculum supports their healing and helps them establish a strong sense of identity.

CSEC Mentoring: Forever Found has reevaluated its performance measures and has thoroughly trained its staff on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT), provided by the Westcoast Children's Clinic. By utilizing this tool, we aim to reduce vulnerabilities, with markers measured by case managers every six months in the following areas: Housing and Care Giving, Physical Health and Appearance, Environment and Exposure, Relationships and Personal Belongings, Signs of Current Trauma, Coercion, and Exploitation.

Outcomes: In FY 2024-2025 Forever Found Served 122, of these, 3 received Equine Therapy. In 2025, 9 new youth have been referred by VC Probation and expect to serve 20 by the end of the year. In previous years (2019 and 2023) approximately 77 have been referred by VC Probation.

Results of the Program Partnership: Ongoing mentorship with individual youth, establishing relationships for regular participation in holistic therapies.

Holistic Therapy Results Noted by Quotes from the Youth:

Equine Therapy: *"I love equine sessions so much. Learning about each horse's mannerisms and learning about how intuitive they are is so fascinating. Being around them is so exciting, and it brings such a calming effect, taking care of them, brushing them, and petting them. Sometimes I even get a little love back from them, and they will put their head on me. I'm so grateful to Forever Found for connecting me to this equine assisted learning program."*

Art Therapy: *"Art serves as a Teacher - reminding us to practice patience and gentleness with ourselves, to trust the process, to ask for help when "stuck", and that beautiful things can come out of big messes."*

Self-Defense Therapy: *"I didn't know if I could do it! I did it! We did it! I'm so proud of myself. When can we go again?!"*

Drop-In Center Event: *"The time and space felt light, bright, and safe."*

Additional Partnership Support: Forever Found offers in-person and webinar training and education for VC Probation Staff Members, especially for new staff members as part of their orientation to our partnership.

Connie Shelton
Executive Vice President
Forever Found