

Everyone deserves
to be loved.

Everyone deserves a
life free from exploitation.

We exist to provide pathways to freedom, safety, and hope for victims of sex trafficking and people involved in the sex trade.



Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2020 | July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

A Note on Ethical Storytelling


At REST, we seek to honor survivor experiences and voices through the storytelling process. We are committed to telling survivors' stories in a way that is empowering to them, contributes to their healing journey, and avoids re-exploitation.

We partner with survivors from the start, offering them the opportunity to choose how they want to be represented in their stories. We invite them to consider their own safety, future, and personal preference as they make these decisions.

In this Annual Report, you'll be invited into the unique experiences of four different survivors who have decided to courageously share their stories with you.

Each survivor decided to use a pseudonym that holds a unique meaning that reflects something about themselves.

There is some content in this Annual Report that may be challenging to read, especially for individuals who have experienced sexual assault, physical abuse, addiction, or mental health issues. Please care for yourself while reading.



**In Fiscal Year 2020,
REST engaged with 652
victims and survivors of
sexual exploitation.**



A Note from Amanda

One of our core values at REST is tenacity—a commitment to forge ahead and never give up, even when faced with challenges.

We make this commitment with one another, with survivors who rely on REST for services, and with you, our community of friends and supporters. But we never quite know how deep our value of tenacity runs until it's tested—and 2020 has provided quite the test.

While the pandemic brought overwhelming uncertainty for humanity around the globe, one thing was certain for victims and survivors of trafficking—the barriers to their recovery from trafficking would greatly increase. Jobs were lost. Housing was put at risk. Food access dwindled. Isolation and loss of emotional support set in. These are just some of the increased challenges brought on by the impacts of COVID-19. But survivors have not given up, and neither have we.

Through emergency food deliveries, access to essentials through Drop-in Services, housing financial assistance, virtual connections and emotional support, and virtual trauma therapy—we are finding ways to continue offering pathways

to freedom, safety, and hope—no matter how great the barrier. In fact, at a time when survivors of sexual exploitation are suffering disproportionately from the economic impacts of the pandemic, we were able to launch the REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy, providing additional opportunities for survivors to build a future free from exploitation.

In the pages ahead you will get even more glimpses of the ways REST is working to provide pathways to freedom, safety, and hope for victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. You will find that survivors are fighting against current odds to overcome barriers and reach their personal goals. Thank you, friends and supporters, for making this work possible, and for continuing to show up for REST. These heightened challenges are not yet behind us—but we can forge ahead with tenacity, knowing that we are in this together.

Amanda Hightower
Executive Director

REST Principles of Care

Everyone is worthy of love.

We believe that every person is made in the image of a beautiful Creator, with inherent dignity and worth, and is undeniably deserving of love. Yet, harm meets all of us in different ways and plants seeds of shame that tell us we are unworthy. For exploited individuals, this shame often becomes paralyzing.

However, when met with a non-judgmental, fully accepting and unconditionally caring love, the shame gets unraveled, hopes are restored, and dreams are reactivated. Effective services are essential, but a community that offers authentic, healing love makes all the difference.

Individualized

We understand that each person is different, with unique needs, strengths, and culture. We tailor our services and interactions to the individual so that they feel known and are more invested in the relationships, the programs, and their goals.

Relationship-Based

It is often a harmful relationship that leads to exploitation. Therefore, it often takes a trustworthy and consistent relationship to give someone the courage to walk away from their trafficker. Building trust, safety, belonging, and a supportive community are essential components to the programs within REST.

Strengths-Based

Survivors of sexual exploitation have consistently received the message that they have no value apart from selling their body. Yet, we see incredible strengths that have enabled survivors to endure the harshest of circumstances and navigate constant threats of danger. So rather than focusing on deficits, we celebrate and build off of their strengths, skills, hopes, and dreams.

Trauma-Informed

Survivors of trafficking have experienced many layers of trauma, so the way we interact and care for them must start with an understanding of the effects of trauma. We know that the brain holds trauma responses for a long time and therefore, we may see trauma responses even when someone is no longer in danger.

Knowing this, we craft our services in a way that accommodates for trauma responses and provides an environment that is truly conducive to healing.


Self-Determination and Empowerment

In the world of exploitation, choices are often taken away. We seek to restore choice and build self-efficacy. Rather than choosing for someone, we help uncover their goals and work together to develop a plan that matches their unique strengths and culture. We help survivors think through options, consider possible outcomes, and identify the choices most aligned with their goals. When they believe in their own ability to make positive changes in their lives, they are more equipped to face life's challenges in the future.

Faith Integration

We are a Christian organization that desires to offer respectful services to individuals of all faith backgrounds. Our faith shows most strongly in our values of providing unconditional care, focusing on relationships, recognizing strengths, minimizing barriers, and walking with our clients on their journey to freedom, rather than acting as "saviors," or attempting to proselytize.

We don't require faith engagement at REST. Instead, we simply offer a healing environment where survivors are free to incorporate their own spiritual beliefs or exploration in whatever way is comfortable for them.



On any given night
in King County,
thousands will be
sold for sex.

500–700 of them are youth.

According to new local data from the report *Commercially Sexually Exploited Children in Seattle/King County 2019 Update* by Debra Boyer, PhD, Boyer Research,¹ we know that:

14.4

The average age of entry into commercial sexual exploitation is just 14.4 years old

69%

69% of sexually exploited youth were sexually abused prior to their exploitation

46%

46% were living on the streets, or in temporary housing

66%

66% had faced homelessness

"Youth" is commonly defined in social service demographics as 24-years-old and younger.

Demographics of the Sex Trade

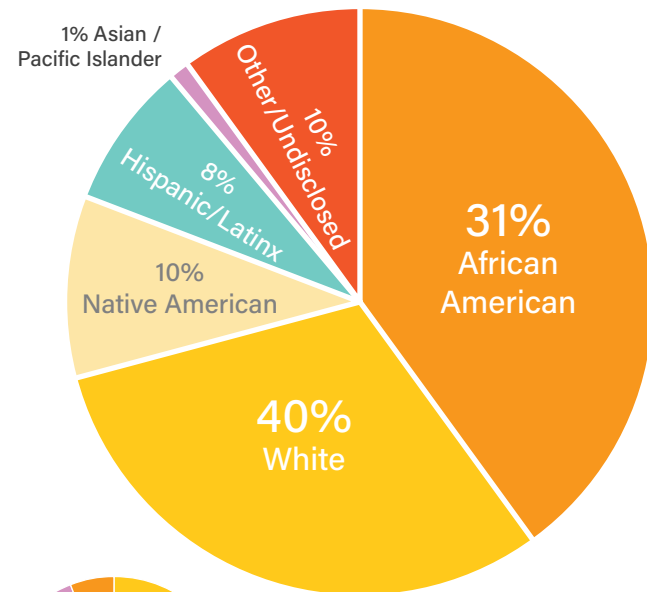
Multiple sources of data continue to show vast disparities between who is being sexually exploited in our community and representation in local demographics. More data on trafficked youth are available locally, but we can extrapolate that data to adults in the sex trade—knowing that trafficked youth often grow up and remain in the sex trade.

Who does REST serve?

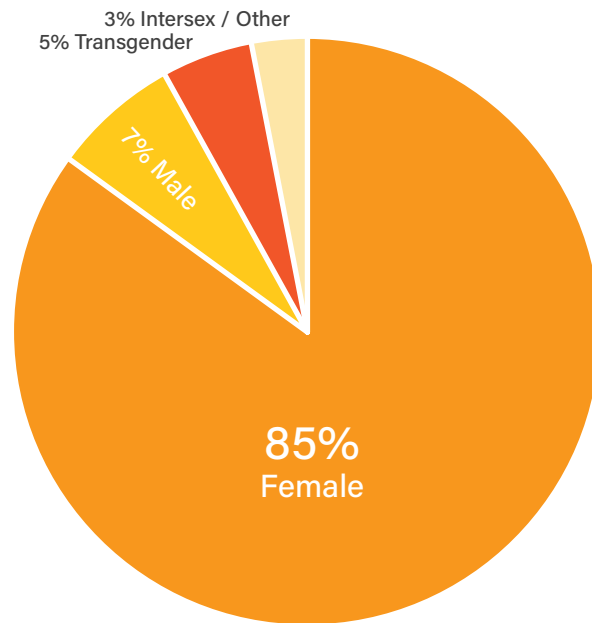
REST serves individuals of all ages and genders who have been trafficked or involved in the sex trade.

We take a proactive approach to improve diverse representation on our team, with the goal that staff would reflect the demographics we serve, creating a comfortable, culturally sensitive, and responsive environment for all clients.

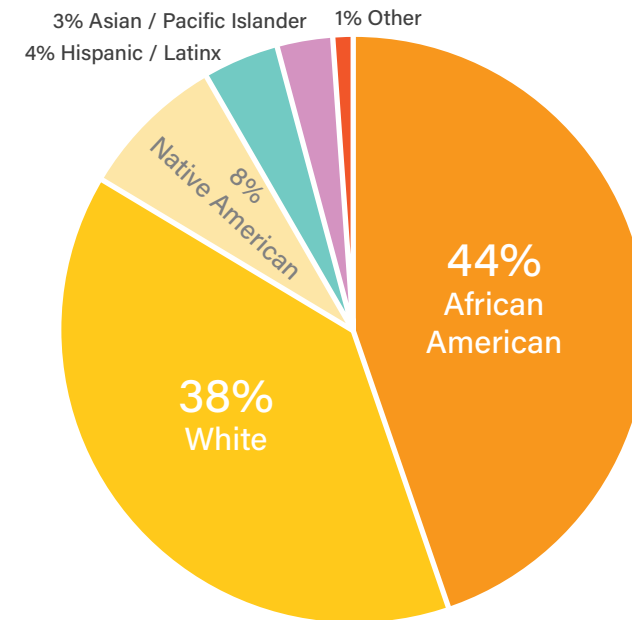
Minor Victims by Race ¹



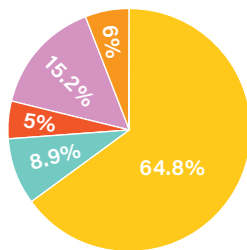
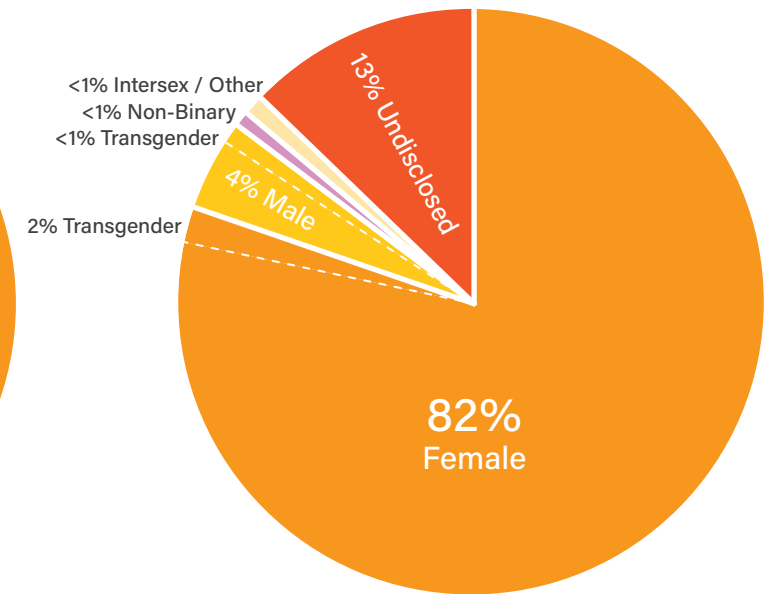
Minor Victims by Gender ¹



REST Clients by Race*



REST Clients by Gender



King County Racial Demographics

At the same time, King County data ² reveals that local sex buyers are disproportionately white men with above-average education. When we compare the disproportionalities in the race and gender of those who are exploited, and those who are exploiting—we see the harmful effects of racism and misogyny.

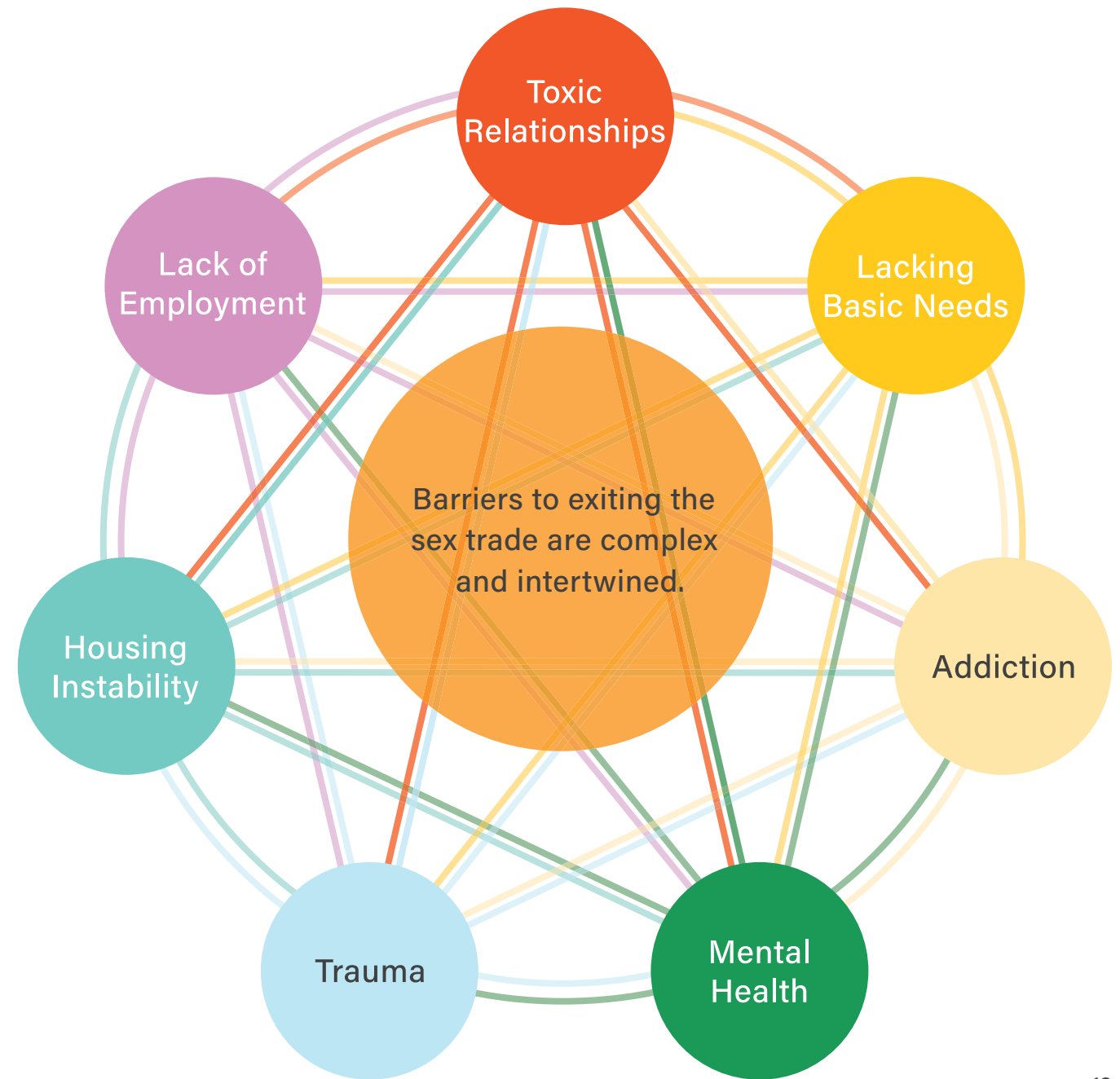
*Chart based on voluntarily disclosed ethnicity information. 19% of clients who disclosed their ethnicity identified also as multiracial.

On average, it takes a survivor 5.8 attempts³ at leaving the sex trade to finally, fully exit.



I want out. But I don't think I can kick my addiction, find a job with my record, which means I can't pay rent... and no one will help someone like me.

When an individual decides they want change, there are many barriers they often face to leave the sex trade. These barriers are seldom independent of one another—how does one leave a toxic relationship, if one doesn't have a home, or a job to pay rent or buy food? Or, how can one keep a steady job while moving from homeless shelter to shelter while struggling with addiction?



It can take one toxic relationship to lure someone into the sex trade.

As you read the stories of survivors throughout this report, you'll notice a common theme. In each story, there is hardship accompanied by a lack of positive, loving relationships—and then—the turning point into sexual exploitation, involving one or more toxic, abusive relationships.

80%

Over 80% of women in the sex trade reported having been subjected to physical violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence. ⁴

While this theme can take on different forms—

- ➔ perhaps a child is exploited by a parent
- ➔ or a teenage boy faces abuse at home, and meets a man who treats him well for a time, earning his trust before the abuse and exploitation begins
- ➔ or an adolescent girl comes from an unstable family background, runs away from a foster home, and is offered a place to stay by a new boyfriend—and finds out later there's a catch
- ➔ or a transgender teen is rejected by their family and kicked out of their home, but is taken in by an individual who appears to be kind and loving, but becomes abusive and demands the teen sell their body—

at REST we see this theme in countless survivors' stories as we walk alongside them on their pathways to freedom, safety, and hope.

These toxic and abusive relationships often leave survivors bound up in shame, feeling as if they're unworthy of love or help on their journey.

80–95%

of women involved in the sex trade reported being under the control of a pimp or trafficker at some point. ⁵

There are many different types of traffickers, also known as “abusers” or “pimps.”

Boyfriend or Romeo Pimp: Uses a romantic relationship to manipulate or coerce their victim to trade sex for money

Guerilla Pimp: Uses violence from the outset to condition their victim to “obey”

Peer: A “friend” shows the victim the “rules of the game” and teaches them how to trade sex

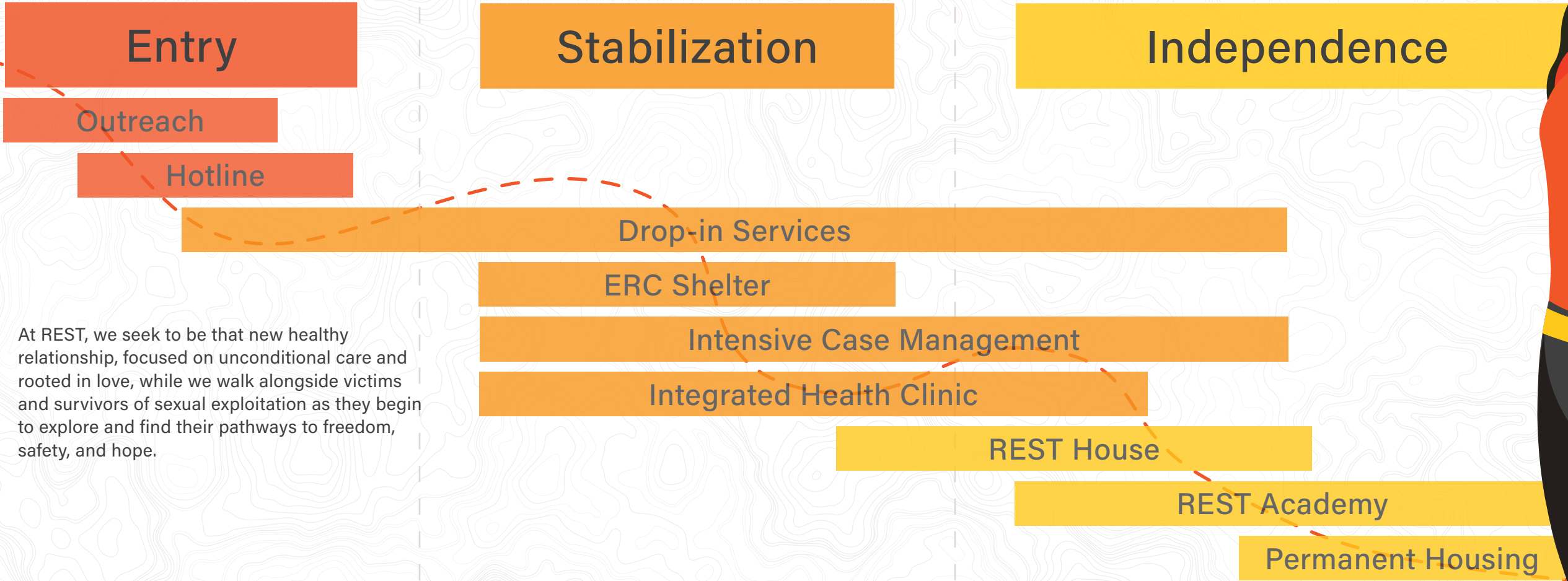
Parent or Family: A parent or family member, possibly with ties to a cult or pedophilia ring, trafficks the child

Gang: To be part of the gang, the victim must trade sex to contribute to the financial status of the gang

Organized Crime (business): Recruits potential “employees” for work, then forces them to trade sex, often withholding personal documents like birth certificates and passports

It can take one healthy, positive, supportive relationship to begin the journey out.

I deserve to be loved.
I deserve a life free from exploitation. I survived for a reason, and I make the world more beautiful.



At REST, we seek to be that new healthy relationship, focused on unconditional care and rooted in love, while we walk alongside victims and survivors of sexual exploitation as they begin to explore and find their pathways to freedom, safety, and hope.



Jovie means joy.

“My family tells me they love me, but that’s not the same as showing it.”

Jovie had a good childhood. She had dreams of growing up to be a chef. When she was 15, tragedy struck and her mother suddenly passed away. She was left in the care of her older siblings, who were engaged in some destructive behaviors and her life became chaotic.

Jovie took time off from school after her mother passed, and during this difficult time, she met a man. He saw that she was struggling at home, and offered to help her “do some things” to get out of that situation. Knowing that she wanted to return to school, she told him no.

Jovie’s guardian, her sister, took a calloused approach to her newfound parental role. She fed Jovie cold food, told her she was stupid, and told her that she didn’t care if Jovie ran away—she would get the social security payment just the same. Angry over her sister’s remarks, and feeling like nobody loved her, Jovie called the man she had met to talk and figure things out.

“If you’re gonna be with me...”

At age 16, she left home to be with this man—but his “help” came with a catch: she needed to earn money for him.

She began stripping in a local strip club as a minor—and made good money. Then, he asked her to do private shows for his friends—so she did. Then, he asked her to sleep with a friend for money—and she was reluctant, so he threatened to leave her. She didn’t want to go home, so she did it.

“So I did it the first time, and then that’s... it’s all over from there. I don’t really know how to explain it, ‘cause I don’t really like talking about it... but that’s basically the gist. Then I started doing meth, and it was all down from there.”

Once she was addicted to methamphetamines around age 17, her “boyfriend” trafficker used that against her—telling her if she wanted to get high, she’d have to sell sex by posting online ads or walking the streets.

“I didn’t want my life to go that way.”

Jovie continued to struggle with addiction and homelessness—bouncing from hotel to hotel, sleeping in tents, and trading sex to survive and feed her addiction. When Jovie found out she was pregnant at age 21, she realized she needed to get clean for the sake of her baby—and she did.

She went to treatment and met another woman there. This woman was 67, had been through treatment many times, and was open about her intention of returning to her drug habit as soon as she was released. Jovie, already beginning to think she wanted something else out of life, realized she didn’t want her life to follow that trajectory.

“I just woke up. I don’t know how to explain it. I just woke up feeling different one day and said, ‘I don’t want to do this shit anymore.’”

Her baby was born healthy, though Jovie was still struggling with homelessness and her relationship with her trafficker.

“You can come to REST.”

Jovie first heard of REST back in 2016 through a close friend who was also engaged in the sex trade, and has since passed away. Jovie had gotten in trouble at the shelter she was staying at, and her friend invited her to come with her to REST.

Reluctantly, and with a large dose of skepticism, Jovie joined her friend at Thrive, REST’s survivor support group. At first, she just sat and listened to the other survivors around her—but eventually grew to enjoy the group, and began engaging with REST’s services at a deeper level. She started coming to REST’s Pathways Services Center for naps in the resting room (it’s hard to find a place to sleep when you’re homeless) and wound up staying for dinners.

Then, Jovie took a major risk. Having decided to leave the sex trade altogether, she began saving money—which required lying to her trafficker. She would only give him half the money she was earning—and knew that if he found out, he would beat her. One day, she just didn’t go back. She changed her phone number and began the hard work of breaking a trauma bond—convincing herself that she didn’t need him, and she could break free.

Her grandma supported her in this process.

“Oh, I love myself.”

Jovie is a gregarious and joyful person, with an unabated directness and sense of humor that will leave the room rolling in laughter.

She left the sex trade at age 26, and has been doing the hard work of change—both within herself, and in the more outward-facing parts of her life, all the while with REST supporting her on her journey. She now has her own apartment, a job at a fast-food restaurant, and is working on learning to drive. Slowly but surely, she’s rebuilding relationships with her family where she can.

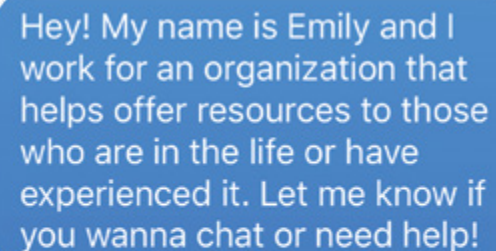
Jovie still dreams of being a chef—she enjoys her fast-food job for now but has bigger aspirations of one day opening her own food truck.

“Oh, I love myself.”, she declared with a laugh. “I love me. I actually like myself, too—which is hard to do. You can love yourself, but to really like yourself... some days, I’m just not there. I have to tell myself to shut up all the time. Be like, ‘You can’t say that [to yourself]!.. it takes a long time, but you got to be prepared to do the work... you have to do the work, and you’re gonna cry a lot... change is real and it’s scary.’”

And she wants you, the reader of her story, to know this: You can change, too.

The relationship often begins through our Outreach Team, or through our 24/7 Emergency Hotline.

The REST Outreach Team reaches out to survivors in two primary ways: through text messages, and through a feet-on-the-ground team that goes out into the streets of Seattle.



Hey! My name is Emily and I work for an organization that helps offer resources to those who are in the life or have experienced it. Let me know if you wanna chat or need help!



In FY20, we sent 900 texts to potential victims of trafficking through Freedom Signal—a software that scrapes numbers from sex ads online and was developed out of a partnership with Microsoft Hackathon volunteers and Seattle Against Slavery.

Each text message contains an offer of services and a message of hope for potential victims.

Our Street Outreach team had over 100 contacts with individuals being exploited on the streets of North Seattle, offering relationship, food and hygiene items, and information about available services. Most importantly, they showed that victims are seen and that someone cares.

The REST Hotline

The hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Skilled team members respond to calls, texts, or emails from individuals who are in need of assistance, or service providers and law enforcement who would like to make a referral. Through the hotline, we can provide emotional support and safety planning, and help survivors connect to the services they need.

322

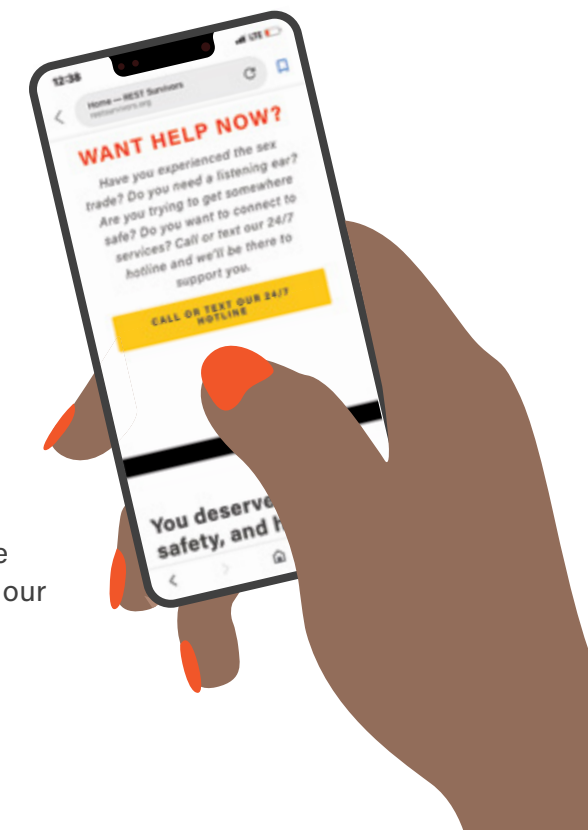
322 unique survivors served through the REST Hotline

1,569

1,569 calls received

406

406 texts received



Through the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we experienced an increase in people reaching out through our hotline for help.

What do you do when your basic needs go unmet?



I am tired. My friend was letting me couch surf, but she threw me out last night after we got in a fight. I can't go back to get my things. I just want some food and a nap.

For many survivors, a major barrier to beginning the journey out of the sex trade is a lack of basic necessities—food, shelter, personal items.

And because many survivors have been engaged in the sex trade since they were teenagers—and have often never known a different way to provide for themselves—when their basic needs go unmet, they turn to what they know.

When someone trades sex to meet basic needs, it's known as "survival sex."

Welcome to the Pathways Services Center

The Pathways Services Center (PSC)—formerly known as the REST Drop-in Center—opened in 2015, providing a place for victims and survivors to come to get food (a hot meal or some snacks to go), “shop” the resource closet for clothes and hygiene items, find a safe place to rest for a little while, attend workshops, and connect with other services and a community of survivors.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to shift how we provided drop-in services. To keep both survivors and staff safe, we made the provision of basic needs a “grab-and-go” model, while keeping other resources available at a lower capacity.

In addition to meeting basic needs through the PSC, our Community Advocate team has been continually meeting survivors where they're at—prior to the pandemic this might have looked like meeting a survivor at a coffee shop up on Aurora, in a hospital on First Hill, or at the jail downtown. Right now, it looks more like delivering groceries to immuno-compromised clients or meeting over FaceTime for emotional support.

209 survivors visited the PSC to access Drop-in Services **2,870** times.

Since opening, we have expanded our programming in the space to include our Integrated Health Clinic and REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy.

Addiction & Mental Health

Substance abuse, addiction, and mental health issues are major barriers that are common among victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. The long-term and persistent trauma that is prevalent in the sex trade can often cause mental health issues and lead to extraordinary levels of PTSD. Substances are frequently used as a coping mechanism by survivors or are introduced by traffickers as a means of control.



68%

68% of survivors meet the criteria for PTSD ⁶

54%

54% of survivors of human trafficking have been diagnosed with a mental disorder ⁷

84%

84% of sex trafficking survivors reported substance abuse during their victimizations ⁸

In one study of female drug users in treatment, over half reported having engaged in the sex trade in their lifetime. ⁹

The Integrated Health Clinic

After recognizing the need for on-site holistic care, and through a grant from the Pacific Hospital Preservation and Development Authority (PHPDA) Health Equity Fund, REST was able to launch the Integrated Health Clinic (IHC) in January of 2019. The IHC offers mental health therapy, medical advocacy, and chemical dependency referrals. It gives REST clients low-barrier access to critical health services with confidence that they'll receive non-judgmental, trauma-informed care.

50

50 unique clients served

72% demonstrated improvement in overall mental health

72%

50%

50% reported a reduction in substance use

100% demonstrated improvement in physical health

100%

The IHC adapted the way we met with clients when the COVID-19 pandemic began, but we've continued to provide services through virtual meetings, and taken precautions to allow for face-to-face meetings at the PSC as needed.



Hope

\ 'hōp \ (noun) desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment

“Confusion. Scared. Disgusting. And self-hatred.”

Hope was five when she remembers being sexually abused for the first time. Her parents were separated, and while she was with her father, he showed her pornography and then sexually abused her. She’s unsure if this was the first time, but it’s the first time she has a clear memory of it. When she told her mother about the abuse, her mother told five-year-old Hope that they needed the money, and sent her back to her father’s house. Then, her mother realized that she could sell Hope for sex. The familial sexual abuse became familial sex trafficking.

As a kindergartner, Hope already viewed herself as an object to be used.

“[I felt like] there was something wrong with me. I couldn’t figure it out. I knew what was happening was not right, especially as I got older, but I didn’t really understand how they’re telling me to be. And so I just started hating myself... I’m not really sure what love felt like. I know I didn’t feel loved... I started realizing what they were doing wasn’t love, ‘cause it was always painful.”

The abuse and trafficking went on for years. As a middle schooler, Hope’s mother would call the school to tell them that Hope was sick and would not be attending that day—but the truth was she was being trafficked.

“When I was 14, right before high school, I decided I’d rather live on the street.”

At age 14, Hope came out as gay—and after an extremely negative response from her parents, on top of the lifetime of abuse, she ran away, hoping to find her older sister who ran away three years earlier. Early on in her time on the streets, a man offered her food—and she accepted, going with him to his apartment. He held her captive for 14 days while he and his friends sexually assaulted her.

To cope with the years of abuse and the fear she experienced as a young homeless woman living in encampments and under bridges, Hope turned to drugs like heroin and methamphetamine.

"I lived in the city jungle—and, that place was really scary... I just hear women cry at night, and people would come into your tent whenever they felt like it. So then I moved under the bridge, and it was just like piles of syringes and garbage... and at night you'd hear people screaming and crying... so then I decided to go into the woods, and lived out there for the last four years of my homelessness... I was just thinking... kill myself."

"Um, to be honest, I never really knew what feeling loved felt like until I came here."

Three years ago, Hope finally found stable housing. For the last year, she's continually and tenaciously fought for her sobriety. In January of 2020, when she was in a psychiatric hospital, she met a social worker who was a former employee at REST. Upon hearing her story, the social worker promptly put Hope in contact with REST.

"I can't believe I didn't find this place sooner. [At first] I was really scared and nervous. My first interaction with [REST Community Advocate] Hanna—I met her at a coffee shop, and I was having a psychotic breakdown, and she ended up taking me to the psych ER, and that was our first session. My second time here, they were doing beauty stuff—and then I've never, like, had my haircut or eyebrows done or nails done by anyone before... I felt really special. Happiness."

The years of abuse, trafficking, drug use to cope, PTSD, fear, and shame have, of course, exacted a toll on Hope. She endured and survived homelessness for 20 years—and has survived suicidality, psychotic breaks, institutionalizations, and constant sleepless nights because of extreme night terrors. Adapting to the "square" world has been a challenge.

"I feel like I'm not alone anymore."

With a year of sobriety under her belt and a stable home, Hope is making progress—fighting for herself, one day at a time. When she's struggling to fight for herself, she finds support at REST through her Community Advocate, and REST's Integrated Health Clinic.

"[Hanna] saved my life. I see Mary [Mental Health Therapist at REST's IHC] or I talk to her on the phone. Everyone here has just been so nice... and, like, Hanna texts me and prays for me and it's all these things that no one's ever done for me before and even though I'm still really struggling and stuff, like, I feel like I'm not alone anymore."

Hope is an astoundingly talented artist and often paints her way through her sleepless nights and struggles. She has been able to sell some of her art—but wonders if she'll ever be able to hold a steady job, given her mental health struggles. She's exploring her faith and spirituality, thinking about pursuing higher education, and hopes to own a dog one day. She still struggles with intense loneliness and self-hatred—but knows she's loved and knows where she can turn for support.

"No matter how scary or dark it gets, rise up, and try again. And just keep trying. Keep trying until you find something that works for you. What I'm trying to say is... I want to be able to heal."

Housing Instability

Having a safe, stable, home is absolutely a basic need. Unfortunately, many victims and survivors of sexual exploitation have experienced homelessness, and struggle with housing instability. Even after a survivor decides to leave the sex trade, issues such as criminal history, eviction history, poor credit or lack of credit, or missing personal documents can contribute to difficulties finding stable homes. It is not uncommon for an abuser or trafficker to steal a victim's identity, destroying their credit, and withhold the victim's personal documents as a control tactic.

84%

84% of survivors have endured homelessness ⁶

74%

74% have endured extreme poverty ¹⁰

I have no place to go.

I don't have a job, so I can't pay rent. Plus, my eviction history and credit are bad. Who is even going to consider renting to me in this city?

A Safe Place

As survivors stabilize, they often move from emergency housing solutions like shelters, into temporary housing situations such as long-term recovery programs, then into more permanent housing solutions—their own apartment or home.

At REST, we provide services along this entire continuum through our low-barrier emergency shelter, the REST House, and housing assistance and support in finding long-term, safe, and stable housing—including financial support for deposits and rent.



The REST Emergency Shelter

Our low-barrier Emergency Shelter provides individual rooms for seven women to stay for 30–90 days. This is a place for women to rest, stabilize, and identify the next steps on their healing and recovery journey. For our shelter guests, we provide food and hygiene supplies, and assistance in accessing resources like medical care, mental health, and chemical dependency services. Shelter guests also have access to Community Advocates and services offered through the Pathways Services Center, including the Integrated Health Clinic and Drop-in.

In FY20, the REST Emergency Shelter provided:

2,232 bed nights to **61** unique guests.

On average, guests stayed 35 days.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we created an extensive plan to keep our guests and staff safe in the shelter. We adhere to strict cleaning guidelines, have implemented rules to uphold social distancing, and conduct regular health screenings. In addition to that, we have a “back up” shelter staff team, made up of staff from across the organization, who have agreed to step in and keep the shelter open in the event of on-site exposure and mandated quarantine. So far, we have not had to implement the team.

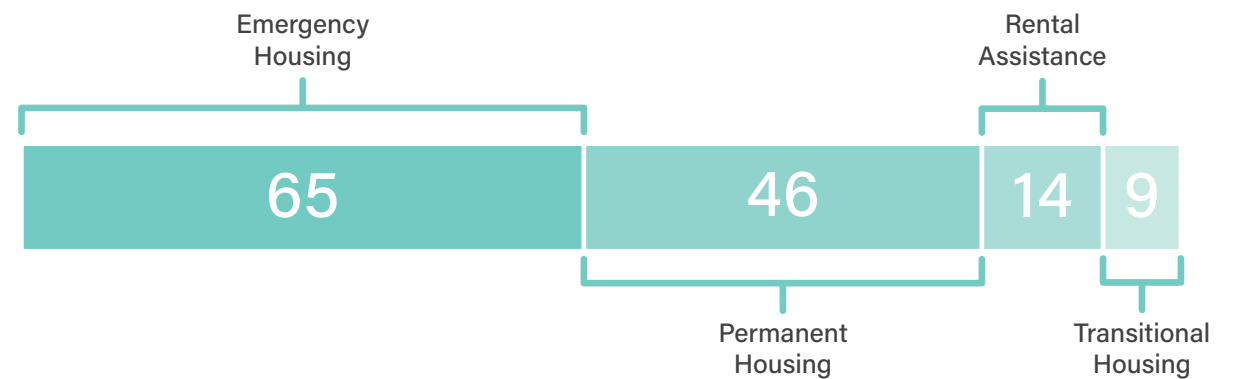
Housing Assistance

Between the REST Emergency Shelter and the REST House, we have 13 beds available for survivors of sexual exploitation. On any given night in King County, thousands are exploited for sex. We know that each one of those 13 beds is necessary—but also insufficient to serve our community.

With this in mind, over the last two years REST has expanded our ability to provide two new housing services. The first includes providing short-term rental assistance to support survivors with accessing or maintaining permanent housing.

In FY20, we also launched our Transition-In-Place (TIP) housing program. This program gives survivors an opportunity to live in their own apartment while they build economic independence, enhance life skills, and continue to make progress toward their personal goals with the support of a Community Advocate. TIP housing provides one year of graduated rental subsidies where REST pays 100% of the survivors’ rent for the first three months, 75% for the next three months, 50% for the three months after, and 25% for the final three months. When a participant graduates, they can remain in their home, allowing them to transition-in-place and continue to move forward with their life outside of the sex trade.

REST helped survivors find housing solutions 134 times.



The New REST House Program

In the last year, after seeing the increased success of independent living housing programs, we made the decision to adapt the REST House program model.

Prior to making changes, the program only served female-identified survivors of the sex trade, ages 18–30, and had 24/7 on-site staff supervision. At REST, we are constantly striving to create and refine programs to maximize long-term impact for survivors. We wanted to adapt the model of the REST house to provide opportunities for survivors to gain independent living skills during their stay.

After our final guests under the former program graduated, we took a season to do some much-needed maintenance (and decor updates!) on the house, adapt the model, and relaunched the REST House in June of 2020.

This new model is a two-year independent living program, serving up to six adults at a time of any gender, ages 18 and older, from any human trafficking background (sex trafficking or labor trafficking) in a recovery-oriented, safe environment. Guests still have access to all of REST's services including Community Advocacy and intensive case management, employment services, and more. While income is not required to participate in the program, residents who do have income contribute 30% of their monthly earnings to a fund that will be returned to them when they move out for a future deposit on their next safe and stable home.



Lexie

her previously chosen pseudonym for when she begins publishing her own works, a dream of hers.

Lexie was three.

From an extremely early age, Lexie's family was complicated. Her biological parents were never married, and her mother married her stepfather before she was born. All three of those adults in Lexie's life belonged to a cult that engaged in ritual sexual abuse and the trafficking of minors. Lexie's biological father was an international trafficker—and her mother and stepfather assisted in her trafficking.

"The pornography started when I was about three, and then prostitution when I was about six. Sometimes it was, like, in a hotel room where there'd be several men coming in and out every night. And sometimes it was where I would be sent to their homes for like, a weekend or something like that."

The abuse she experienced went well beyond the pornography and trafficking. The criminal cult organization dealt in mind-control tactics, extraordinary levels of programming and manipulation, and physical torture.

Lexie would spend the summers with her father—and he would traffick her. Then, she would go home to her mom and stepfather—and they would abuse and traffick her, too. There was no physical safe place for Lexie, so her mind began to create them in response to her traffickers' manipulation and control tactics.

Disassociation and splitting are survival skills.

The extreme abuse and manipulation caused Lexie's brain to adapt for the sake of survival. She developed what she refers to as "parts" or "alters" and "the system" and "subsystems" to describe dissociative parts of herself—no one alter has a full recollection of her life, but when you add the knowledge of each alter together, the story becomes more clear.

Lexie was confident the point of splitting was intentional—people who have dissociative identities can be easier to manipulate or control because their brains compartmentalize the abuse to such an extreme degree that one alter may not know the other is being abused. Often the "front" parts emerge during times of "safety" to handle daily life, whereas the other deeper parts emerge during times of emotional or physical danger. A particular alter may emerge during abuse to protect the "front parts" from experiencing the pain and suffering.

Lexie left home and her first abusers when she got older, but continued to be exploited by other traffickers because abusers love to take advantage of vulnerable individuals—and Lexie's dissociation and connection and history with traffickers made her vulnerable. She often wouldn't realize that she was being trafficked again until long after the abuse began because her brain was so effective at separating the abuse to protect her whole self.

"It's really frustrating because the [mind] programming is so strong, and I've gotten to the point where I used to have alters who would go and report, who'd call my abusers and report to them what had happened. It's a pretty big accomplishment that I'm not doing that right now. But... if an abuser shows up, then I'm like... I'll just go, too... I just become a little kid and go along with them."

Between being trafficked, or being homeless—she chose homelessness.

When Lexie realized that the owners of the low-income housing where she was staying had figured out how to exploit her dissociative alters and were taking her to the basement of the building to be sexually exploited, she decided she'd rather be homeless. She chose homelessness instead of abuse and trafficking many times—beginning a decade ago.

At that time, services for survivors of sex trafficking were extremely limited. She had encountered REST, but back then, even REST's services were limited. Lexie was also hesitant to engage with REST, because REST is a Christian organization*—much of her early abuse had been done at the hands of ritual abusers under the guise of religion.

The homelessness, sexual exploitation, and abuse continued for the next seven years.

"I have a real hard time with religious organizations because a lot of the ritual abusers infiltrate religious organizations. I was really leery about trying REST again, but, I got to OPS [Seattle Organization for Prostitution Survivors], and OPS isn't religious—and they just really encouraged me to give REST a try so I came and really just kind of felt things out and stuff. And I was so glad, because, when I finally decided I was gonna take a risk and trust REST, I called, and they had a bed, and that was just a huge relief."

The journey is long and hard—but there's hope.

This year, Lexie reconnected with REST, and moved into her own room at the Emergency Shelter with her service dog.

"[My realization that I could get out] has just been real gradual. I think when I first came [to REST], I was really nervous to trust anybody. I didn't tell a lot of people what was going on—staff or anything like that. It's just been real gradual. I think the staff has proven that they could be trusted, and so I felt a lot more comfortable... just that I can sleep and not worry that someone's coming in the middle of the night for me, and [my dog] isn't going to be hurt or separated from me, that's huge."

Lexie has made a lot of progress in understanding herself, her needs, and creating a plan to stay safe. At the same time, there's a lot of uncertainty in her life, and decades of conditioning to understand and undo. While Lexie still struggles to feel loved by others around her, she loves herself—and her self-described "internal family" that has fought for her and kept her alive throughout it all.

"I just love them so much... [now] more therapists are willing to acknowledge that there's multiple people living in one body—and that just works better for me. I'm a lot more functional when I remember that there's more than one of me, and I can love myself—help myself, you know? I have a lot more resources when I think of myself that way. That's been really important to me—but, yes, I love my [internal] family."

*REST is a Christian organization. We serve everyone regardless of faith, and do not proselytize or require faith engagement to participate in our services.

Joblessness increases the likelihood of relapse.

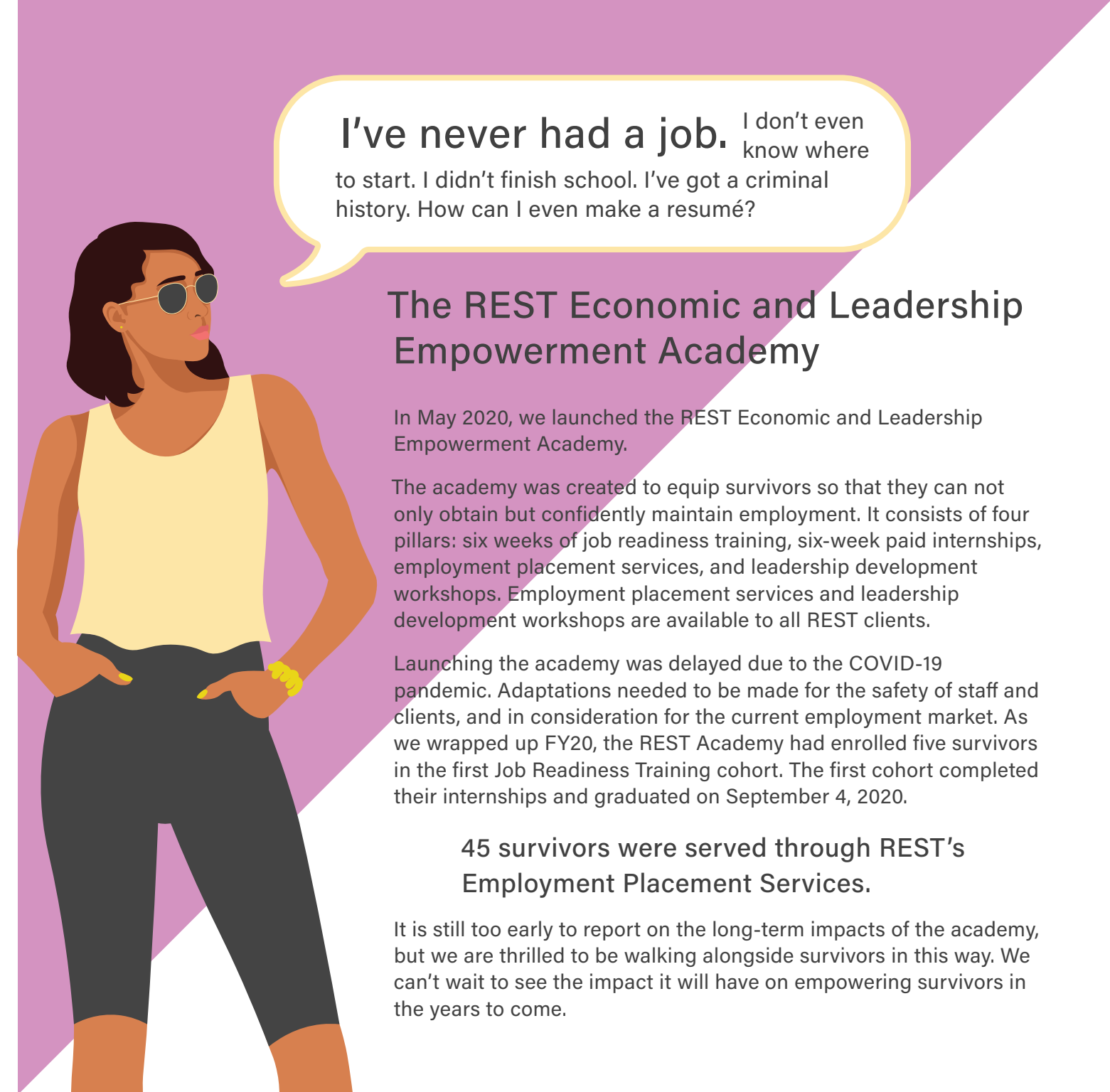
At REST, we know through over a decade of experience walking alongside survivors that relapse back into the sex trade is more likely for survivors who are unable to secure and maintain a reliable, living-wage job that allows them to sustain housing and meet their own basic needs.

Over a three-year period, REST helped 150 survivors secure employment. Less than 30% of those survivors maintained their employment for a year.

The barriers that survivors face to achieving stable employment are complicated.

Getting a job can be challenging. For many survivors, it may be their first “square” job, or they may have a large gap in employment history. Many may face a lack of education or training. On top of that, they may have a criminal history or lack access to their personal documents needed during the hiring process.

When a survivor gets a job, it can be hard to maintain. A lack of soft skills that most people learn in their early adulthood employment, such as professional communication, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution can create problems at work. Trauma responses, mental health issues, and substance use can exacerbate these problems. And many of these problems are cyclical—it’s hard to maintain a job without stable housing, and hard to maintain stable housing without a job.



I’ve never had a job. I don’t even know where to start. I didn’t finish school. I’ve got a criminal history. How can I even make a resumé?

The REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy

In May 2020, we launched the REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy.

The academy was created to equip survivors so that they can not only obtain but confidently maintain employment. It consists of four pillars: six weeks of job readiness training, six-week paid internships, employment placement services, and leadership development workshops. Employment placement services and leadership development workshops are available to all REST clients.

Launching the academy was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adaptations needed to be made for the safety of staff and clients, and in consideration for the current employment market. As we wrapped up FY20, the REST Academy had enrolled five survivors in the first Job Readiness Training cohort. The first cohort completed their internships and graduated on September 4, 2020.

45 survivors were served through REST’s Employment Placement Services.

It is still too early to report on the long-term impacts of the academy, but we are thrilled to be walking alongside survivors in this way. We can’t wait to see the impact it will have on empowering survivors in the years to come.



Meet Tiffany Davis

Tiffany Davis is the Academy Coordinator at REST. She started at REST as a Community Advocate, and now leads our recently-launched REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy.

Tiffany's journey toward working at an anti-trafficking organization, specifically REST, is a deeply personal one—and one a long time in the making. A little over a decade ago, while she was fresh out of high school, Tiffany joined a missionary organization, where she first learned about the issue of sex trafficking. While she couldn't possibly imagine the long path she'd take to get to REST, she felt God calling her into this work.

Over the next decade, Tiffany earned an undergraduate degree in business and a master's in community development with her thesis on social enterprise. She worked in the insurance industry, and returned to India as a missionary. And while all of this moved her closer to the work she does today, it was her experience with her family—specifically caring for her sister through addiction—that built her advocacy skills.

"God brought you back to save me." - Sylvia, Tiffany's sister

Tiffany comes from a large family, and one that has experienced marginalization in many ways, facing many of the same barriers that survivors of sexual exploitation do—homelessness, substance use, sexual abuse. In 2016, Tiffany returned home to Idaho, and learned that her sister had relapsed into substance addiction badly, and was struggling with homelessness and mental health issues.

"I ended up tracking her down one day after work. I was able to get her to tell me where she was, I picked her up, and was like, 'you're gonna come live with me.' So I took her home with me—and it was a lot. I was sharing a bed with her, while she was detoxing—all the mental health stuff, spiritual stuff. And now she's doing great! One of her goals for years has been to be a dental hygienist, and she just finished school, and she's doing her internship now. But it was that experience that got me the job here at REST."

Tiffany had been doing the work of a community advocate for her sister. Just after Thanksgiving in 2018, she was hired as REST's South King County Community Advocate, and moved to Seattle to take the position.

"For my sister, that was really redeeming. When I got the job, she was like, 'God is even able to use me and my addiction and the things I've been going through to bring what He wants—to bring His will about.' And that was really powerful and redeeming."

Tiffany was in that role until January of 2020, when she transitioned to lead the REST Academy, a soon-to-be-launched program that REST had been dreaming about for years. While she loved doing the work of an advocate, Tiffany's passion is for economic stability and independence—this is why she pursued that course in her degree work. She views her training and experience as an advocate as preparation for her current role, guiding survivors through job readiness training, internships, leadership development, and ultimately finding and maintaining stable employment. She believes in the academy wholeheartedly.

"[The academy] impacts survivors in so many ways. If you don't have income coming in, then there's instability in your housing, which is a big point of the academy. Although it is about economic stability, even beneath that is the need for housing stability. If they don't have economic stability, and if they don't have any money coming in, and they have a lack of job experience, a lack of education, a lack of self-confidence... all of that... what other choices do they have than to continue doing what they know, which is sex work?"

The academy, led by Tiffany, seeks to reduce the barriers to economic stability and empower survivors to pursue those pathways to freedom, safety, and hope—and a life free from exploitation.

"We can often dehumanize survivors or people who've experienced certain things, and begin to view them separately—this is me, and that's them—but remembering that everyone deserves to be loved helps me reframe the way that I'm seeing or interacting with people who come from different experiences than my own. It's a reminder that includes myself—and helps me be a more caring and loving person—remembering that whether it's other REST staff, or clients, that God loves us all. And it's my job to, as best as I can, embody that love as well."

We had the joy of celebrating the first cohort of survivors graduating from the REST Economic and Leadership Empowerment Academy in September of 2020—and Tiffany was instrumental in helping us reach that milestone. We look forward to many more cohorts to come.

COVID-19

When a global crisis strikes, it impacts us all—but it often disproportionately impacts those who are most vulnerable.

A collaborative study¹¹ of local agencies serving sexually exploited adults that included REST reported that:

- ➔ **80–100% of the women they serve lost their jobs, and were ineligible for unemployment**
- ➔ **Of the 70% of women contacted who had a place to live, 81% were at risk of losing their housing**

When REST surveyed clients in April 2020, 25% of them reported having less than three days worth of food at home.

"I have COVID. What resources do I have? I have to isolate, and I have no food. I can't feed my daughter. I can't get food stamps. I got a job and then was laid off. I can't get unemployment. I can't get work. I need food for my nine-month-old daughter." - Survivor, REST Client

Over the six-month period prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, REST had 135 unique hotline callers. Through those calls, 239 unique needs were identified—68% of them were for emergency housing.

In the two-month period at the beginning of the pandemic (March – April 2020), the request for emergency housing increased 175% compared to the six months prior.

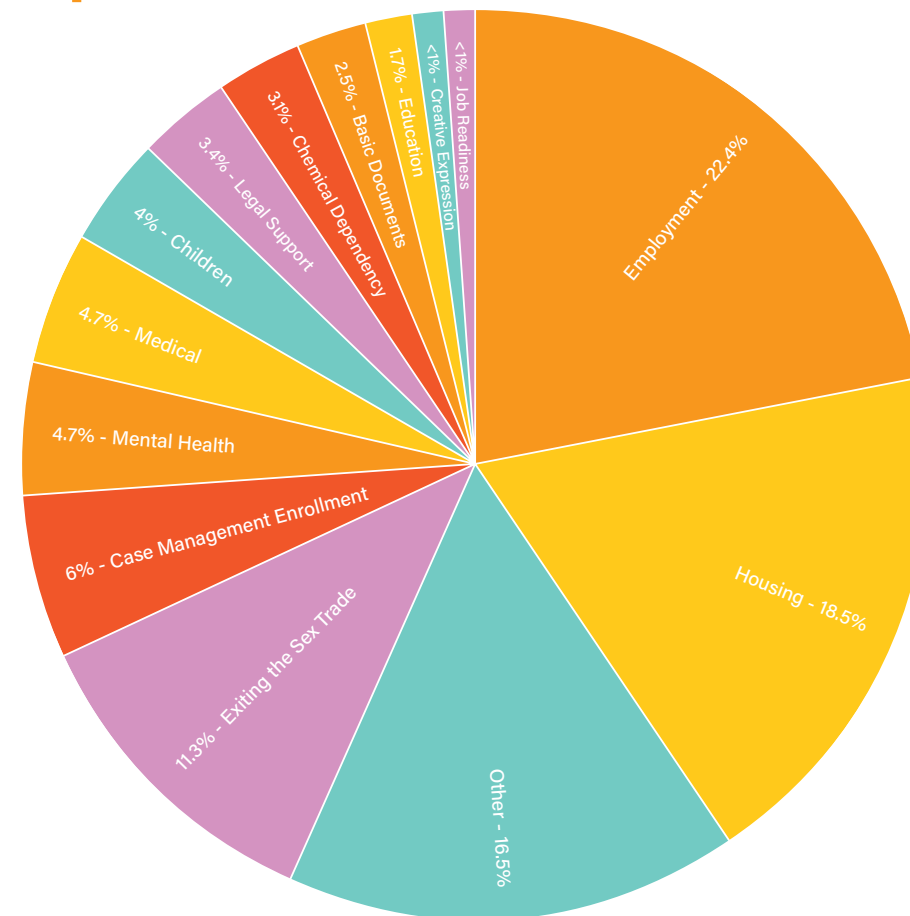
We are not without hope.

Throughout this Annual Report, you've seen some glimpses of how REST has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have had to adapt some programs, create safety protocols, and increase our awareness of health standards—but through it all, we've continued to offer pathways to freedom, safety, and hope to victims and survivors of the sex trade.

Throughout the pandemic...

- ➔ REST's Emergency Shelter has remained open with additional safety protocols.
- ➔ Our Community Advocates continue to meet survivors where they're at—though sometimes this is done through virtual means.
- ➔ The Integrated Health Clinic continues to provide services through telehealth.
- ➔ Drop-in Services are available with safety protocols in place.
- ➔ The REST House, under the new model, currently has five residents.
- ➔ We launched the REST Academy, and the first cohort has graduated.

Despite all the barriers...



In FY20, 153 REST clients achieved 1,152 self-identified goals, furthering their journey on their paths to freedom, safety, and hope. 110 of those clients were enrolled with a Community Advocate, and engaged in Case Management services.

Experiencing REST

As survivors seek their paths to freedom, safety, and hope, they often start by experiencing “interruptions” (1-29 days out of the sex trade). Then, those interruptions last a little longer—and eventually, as they stabilize, they’re more empowered and equipped to maintain a life outside of the sex trade.

In FY20, even amidst a pandemic, REST helped 64* individuals experience rest from the sex trade, with 12 clients reaching one full year out.



*Because REST collaborates with multiple local agencies to both serve clients and track this data, we know some contributing data are missing, and this number is likely underreported.



Meet Joe Register

Many years ago, Joe Register reached out to a local author who had written a book about recovering from sexual abuse. He'd never met the author, but respected him, and inquired if that author knew of any organizations serving sex trafficking survivors in Seattle. That author, at the time, happened to be a board member at REST, and helped Joe get connected.

For the last eight and a half years, Joe has been quietly, humbly, and faithfully walking alongside REST as a volunteer and donor.

When asked about why he's so passionate about serving victims and survivors of sexual exploitation, Joe lists a few reasons.

"I think it would be that I'm no better than those I serve, and why my life isn't their life doesn't seem to have a whole lot to do with me. I think God has shown me how he loves me through the way he has kept me, despite my own defiance. And in what ways I'm able to, I want to show that love to those who don't know his love is there. I think it also matters to me because it matters to God, more so than I know."

Joe had just relocated to Seattle when he began volunteering at REST, and found a sense of belonging.

"REST welcomed me when I first got up here, and they were kind to me and looked out for me. REST genuinely cares about me—apart from my contributions. When I say "REST", though, I'm referring to the people—there's just really solid people all around from board members, to leadership, staff, and volunteers. There isn't a person who I regret meeting and getting to know in some way since I've been at REST."

Joe sees the same sense of belonging that he experienced extended to the survivors REST serves.

“I appreciate the care and thoughtfulness and intentionality that goes into everything they do. It’s something I’ve consistently seen and learned from since I’ve been up here. What seems to be a non-negotiable is the care for the people, because REST believes it’s about the people. The fact that they’re still around and still strong and their plans for the future are about how to better provide for the people they serve.”

Currently, Joe serves at REST’s Pathways Services Center (PSC), helping our Drop-in Services staff connect survivors with basic necessities like food, hygiene items, and a safe place to rest. He describes his presence there as something of a “friendly ghost”—simply seeking to serve, without being alarming or causing fear for the survivors who enter the PSC, who often have had bad experiences with men in the past. Joe seeks to provide a kind and gentle presence for everyone who enters the space.

Tiffany Davis, REST’s Academy Coordinator, wrote this about Joe when nominating him for our annual Volunteer of the Year Award in 2019 (which he received):

“Joe has a servant’s heart. He is someone who is selfless and willing to help however he can. Whether it’s playing handyman to Drop-in or hosting game nights for clients. He creates a warm and inviting environment that encourages our clients to feel safe. Joe, by nature, is a shy guy, but he accepted with confidence the role of co-facilitating Celebration Night. He’s honestly a superstar and we at Drop-in are blessed to have him as a part of our team.”

When asked why he’s engaged in this work—and why he thinks others should get engaged, too—Joe’s answer is astoundingly simple, yet astoundingly powerful:

“I think, more than anything one day I would like to hear, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ If that appeals to you at all, then this kind of work is for you.”

Joe preferred not to use an image of himself for this story.

Financials

In all that we do, REST seeks to steward the resources we’re entrusted with well—maximizing the impact we’re able to make for and with survivors of sexual exploitation.

Profit and Loss

Revenue	
Donations	\$955,355
Events	\$564,980
Grants	\$1,261,578
Other	\$2,615
Total Revenue	\$2,784,527

Expenses	
Programs	\$1,953,385
Fundraising	\$547,169
Management	\$237,301
Total Expenses	\$2,737,855

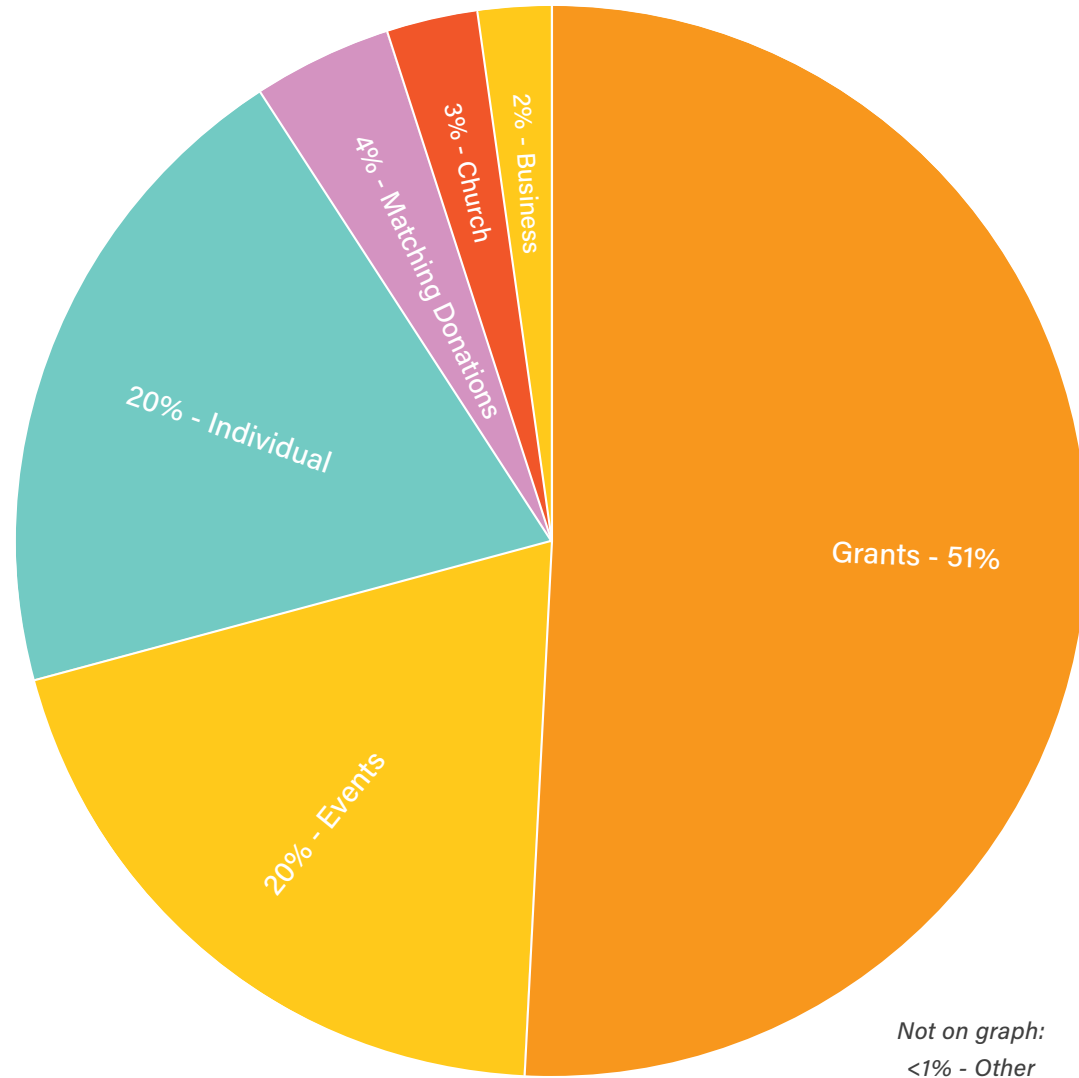
Statement of Financial Position

Assets	
Current Assets	\$634,499
Fixed Assets	\$45,143
Total Assets	\$679,642

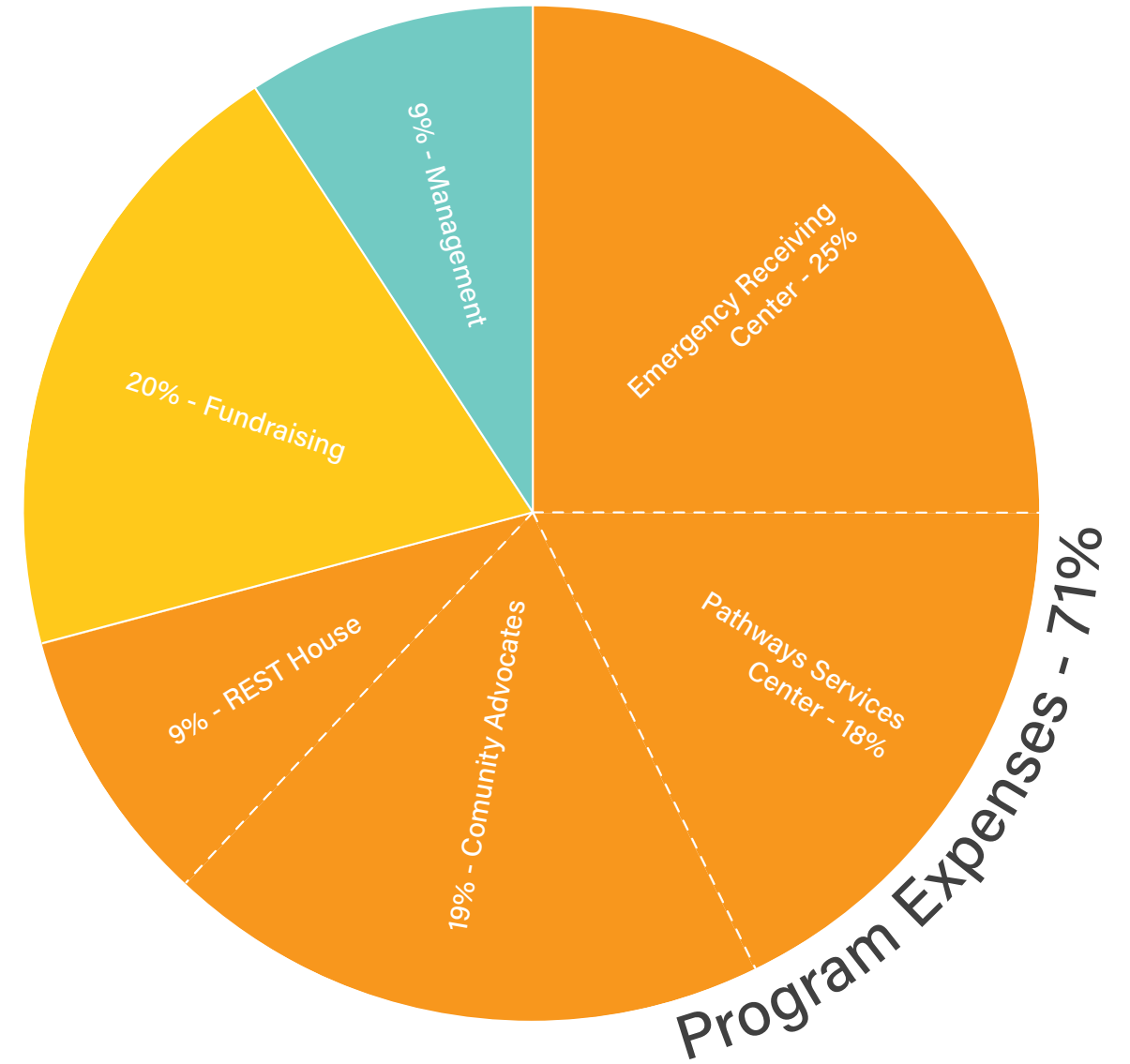
Liabilities and Net Assets	
Current Liabilities	\$314,506
Net Assets	\$365,136
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$679,642

Information reflects REST’s 2020 Fiscal Year, which ran July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, at time of printing.

Funding Sources



Functional Expenses



Evanna

means “brave fighter.”



“I didn’t have nowhere to go.”

Evanna grew up amidst chaos. Her mother struggled with addiction and was involved in the sex trade. When she was 13, she and her brother were separated and placed into foster care. About a year after that, Evanna and her brother were adopted by a kind family friend—but the chaos didn’t stop. There were 13 children in that house, and it was difficult to be seen, known, heard, and feel loved. Evanna wound up on the streets.

She found a lot of community among other kids on the street who had endured similar lives, and—like her—were just trying to survive. While she was not yet trading sex at this point, she knew other kids who were, and between that and her earlier childhood experiences with her mother—the sex trade just seemed to be a part of normal life.

When Evanna was 15, she met an older girl who began recruiting her into the sex trade, introducing her to “bad people” who participated in her exploitation.

“You almost go completely numb.”

Her mother had been exploited. Her brother had been exploited. Friends around her were being exploited. Evanna did what she knew—and what everyone else around her was doing.

*“If you’re already going through tragic stuff in your own personal life, like with your parents and your household, it’s more easy to be like, ‘f**k it’ and just go do what everybody else is doing—you know—because you need to survive, too. I need food. And being so young at that age, you want the stuff that everybody else got, too—so your mind is set on that. You’re like, hey—my parents and I never had nothing, you know, so I might as well go get it myself. I think also when your mindset is so young like that, people are easy to manipulate you.”*

Evanna will turn 30 soon, and she was in the sex trade on and off from the time she was 15 until she was 29—over half her life. Over those 15 years, she experienced prolonged periods of homelessness, violence, robberies, and, as a biracial woman, racism and discrimination.

“I need support.”

Evanna knew about REST for a while but connected at a deeper level more recently through her Community Advocate Hanna. She also began getting involved at REST’s Pathways Services Center. As a fiercely independent person who learned to take care of herself from a young age, choosing to be around people and find a supportive community was a big step.

“Every time I need a hand, Hanna is there. If I need to talk about something, or even seem like I want to talk about something and I don’t say nothin’, Hanna [is there]. I just have fun talking to Hanna... Support. I need support. Because if people are putting energy into me, I need that.”

Evanna has been out of the sex trade for almost a year now—yet the bulk of the time she has been discovering her next path and in recovery has been during the tumultuous times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last year of life has come with ups and downs. She has stable housing, but is also still dealing with a domestic violence situation. She lost one job due to the pandemic, but is about to start another. She is developing new, positive behaviors and thoughts—but also still struggles with isolation and the familiarity of her past way of life.

“I’m still dealing with a lot of negative energy that I have towards men in general. So I’ve been with a female for the last few years—and I’m questioning a lot of my stuff, like how I was when I was in the trade, and also when I was growing up. Like, I’m learning more of me. Who I should be—and how I feel like, and what I need help on—I think that lifestyle is always gonna have a scar on me.”

Through it all, REST has been a support and resource for her.

She often faces the scars of her past, including old mindsets, but also holds onto hope for her future. She looks forward to the career and relationships it might hold, and the version of herself that will emerge as she grows, heals, and builds her pathways to freedom, safety, and hope.



Looking Toward the Future

As always, REST is looking to improve and expand our services and programs to reflect what is needed by survivors. As we begin Fiscal Year 2021, we have our eyes set on two major projects that will both improve services to the survivors REST serves, and survivors across the country.

TIRA™ - Trafficking Interruption Resource Agent

When a victim of human trafficking is in need of services, it is difficult to know exactly what resources are currently available. Even large scale referral centers have to call through a list of providers to see if there are openings. Since the mix of active victim service providers and their available resources is constantly changing, it is seemingly impossible, or at least prohibitively expensive, to maintain an accurate view of what organizations and resources are active and available at a given point in time.

In partnership with the Microsoft Hackathon, Microsoft volunteers, interns from Boston University Spark!, and the National Trafficking Sheltered Alliance (NTSA), we are working on developing a web-app platform that provides real-time information on availability of services and allows survivors to connect securely and discreetly with services that have openings and match their unique needs and preferences. Currently, to find an open shelter bed, survivors may have to repeatedly call multiple shelters—waiting for an opening, hoping to dial the phone at the right moment. With TIRA™, survivors will be able to find services that meet their needs at that moment—whether it's an open shelter bed, an agency that serves all genders, or an organization that currently has an opening for case management. It will lower the barrier for survivors to access critical services across the country.

With reduced wait times, reduced placement times, and a higher quality of matching with services, thousands more victims each year will have the opportunity to increase safety, stability, and healing after victimization.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

For years now, REST has known that Black and African American women are disproportionately impacted by commercial sexual exploitation. Compared to local demographics, we serve a disproportionately high number of Black and African American individuals.

REST has made efforts over the last several years to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization in hopes of creating an environment that feels safe and welcoming for people of all races and ethnicities. We have realized, however, in light of our current cultural moment focused on the experiences of Black and African American people, that we simply have not done enough to address systemic racism.

The leadership at REST, including the Board of Directors, is committed to listening, learning, and taking action to integrate anti-racism work throughout our organization, starting with ourselves.

Some immediate actions we are taking:

- ➔ Implement an ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative including organization-wide training in partnership with LTHJ Global
- ➔ Grow and diversify our Board of Directors
- ➔ Disaggregate our service data, which will show us where our services may be resulting in disproportionately positive or negative outcomes for people of different races or ethnicities

Leadership Team

Amanda Hightower | Founder & Executive Director

Julie McNamara-Dahl | Director of Engagement

Gina Cittadini | Director of Operations

Tasha McCoy | Finance Manager

Audrey Baedke | Programs Manager

Christina Reid | Impact Manager

Kim Merrikin | Media & Communication Manager

Yasminda Dorrough | Pathways Services Center Supervisor

Jacquelynn Loos | Community Advocate Supervisor

Victory Tualatai | Emergency Receiving Center Supervisor

Jessica Sandoval | Operations Associate

Board of Directors

Brent Turner, Board Chairman | Chief Operating Officer, Rover.com

Will Little, Board Member | Managing Director, Prota Ventures

Renee Wallace, Board Member | Health Care Access Advocate, YWCA, Survivor

Jesse Bryan, Board Member | Founding Partner & Creative Director, Belief Agency

REST is looking to grow our board of directors.

We're seeking members who bring unique perspectives and competencies, align with our beliefs, and are passionate about seeing people move toward freedom, safety, and hope after a life of sexual exploitation. These are volunteer roles. If you are interested, please visit iwantrest.com/jobs to see open board positions and learn more.

Thank You

To the four survivors who bravely shared their stories for this annual report.

To Joe Register and Tiffany Davis, who also shared their stories.

To every single donor, volunteer, and supporter who helped create pathways to freedom, safety, and hope for victims and survivors of sexual exploitation during our 2020 Fiscal Year.

You deserve to be loved.

For a fully cited version of this annual report, visit iwantrest.com/annual-report.

REST Fiscal Year: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Photography & imagery information: The illustrations of the survivors were done by Betsy Cauffman. Photos of the REST House were taken by Gina Choi - Gold & Brave Photography. The photo of Tiffany Davis was taken by Kim Merrikin. The photo representing Joe Register is stock photography, and features a model used for illustrative purposes only.

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2020 Annual Report

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