

# Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials

Welcome!

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# Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials

## Presented by the Center for Court Innovation

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# About the Center for Court Innovation





# Origin of the Materials

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- Child victims/witnesses must interact with adult-oriented systems, which can cause re-traumatization and distress
- Need for trauma-informed and child-friendly support
- Inspired by OVC's 'Vision 21' Initiative and frequent requests for 'BJ Goes to Court'

# Need for Trafficking-Specific Materials



- Unique experiences of young trafficking survivors:
  - Dynamics of exploitation + relationship with exploiters
  - May interact with the justice system as a victim-defendant
- General child witness materials do not address the needs of this population



# Development of the Materials

- Formation of Stakeholders Group
- National Needs Assessment
- Developing Content and Style
- Pilot Testing
- Expert Peer Review
- OVC & Federal Reviews





# Partners & Stakeholders

- AEquitas
- Saving Innocence
- Rights4Girls
- Freedom Network
- New York Legal Aid Society
- Collective Liberty
- Multnomah County District Attorney's Office
- International Rescue Committee, Sacramento
- National Center for Youth Law
- Los Angeles County, Office of the Public Defender
- Safe Horizon
- Manhattan District Attorney's Office
- Life Span
- Advocating Opportunity
- Ascent Connection & Consulting Solutions
- Kids in Need of Defense





# National Needs Assessment

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- August–October 2019
- Reviewed existing publications + materials
- Facilitated 33 interviews and 3 focus groups
- Conducted online practitioner survey
- Compiled a report with findings and recommendations



# Content Development

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- Partnered with design agencies—Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) & Alternate History Comics (AH Comics)
- Convened discussions with stakeholders, partners, and expert practitioners
- Survivor-led content creation and review of character sketches and draft storylines



# Pilot Testing

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- November 2020–January 2021
- 17 young survivors in one-on-one sessions
- 17 practitioners in focus groups
- Representation from California, New York, Utah, Arkansas, Florida, Washington, D.C., and Texas



# Expert Peer Review

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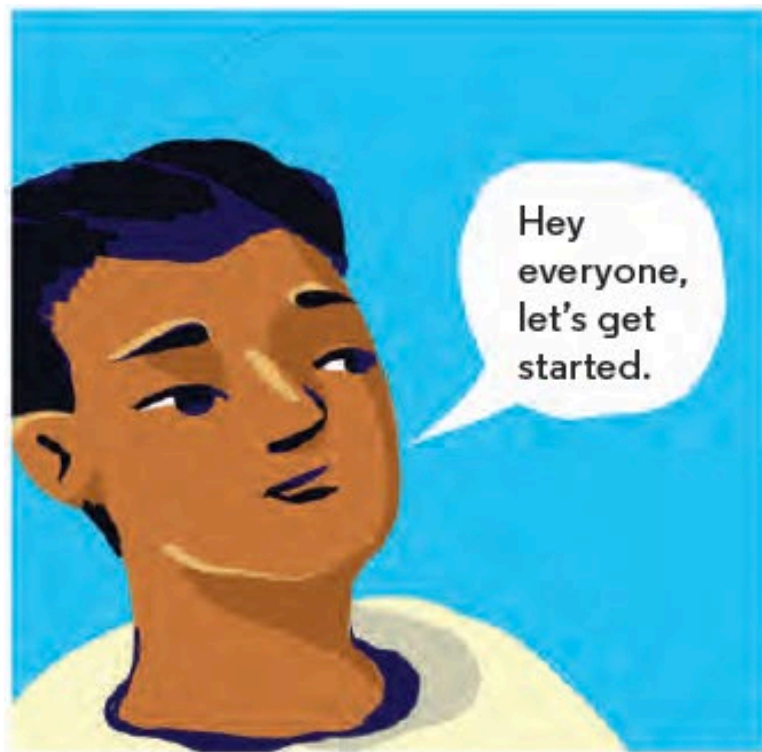
- November 2020–January 2021
- 17 expert practitioners completed online review
- Representation from all regions
- Over 82% said they would recommend these materials to colleagues and peers

# Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials

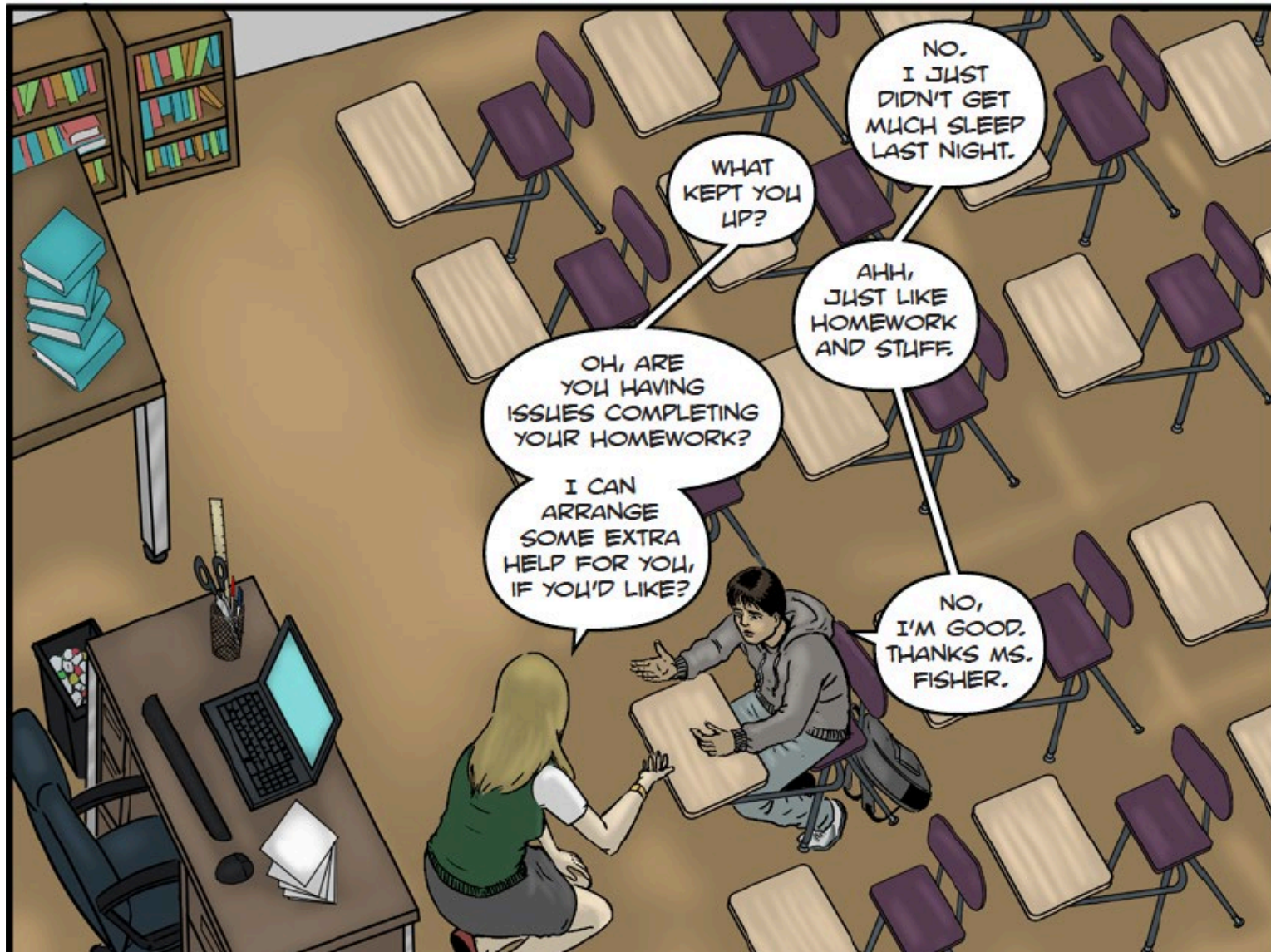
Presented by

Melanie Thompson, Lived Experience Expert









NO. I JUST DIDN'T GET MUCH SLEEP LAST NIGHT.

WHAT KEPT YOU UP?

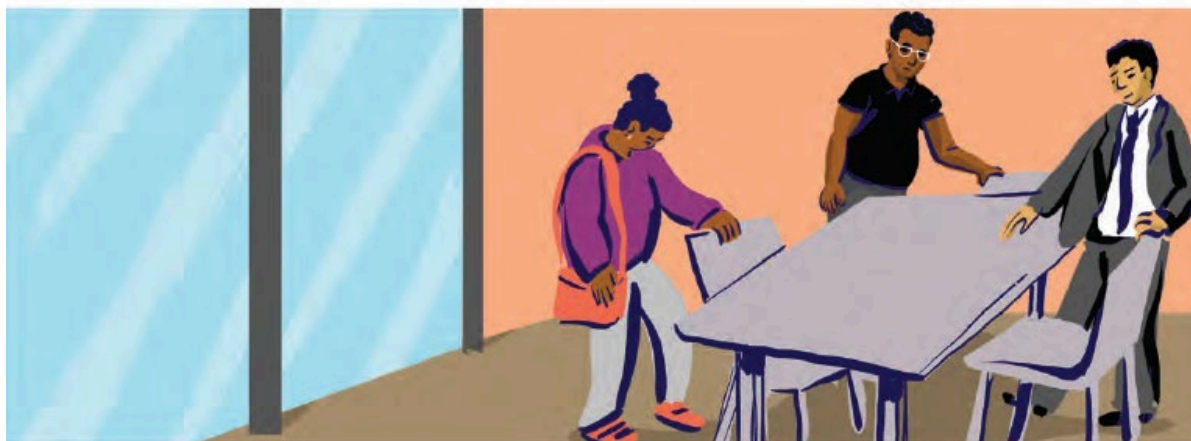
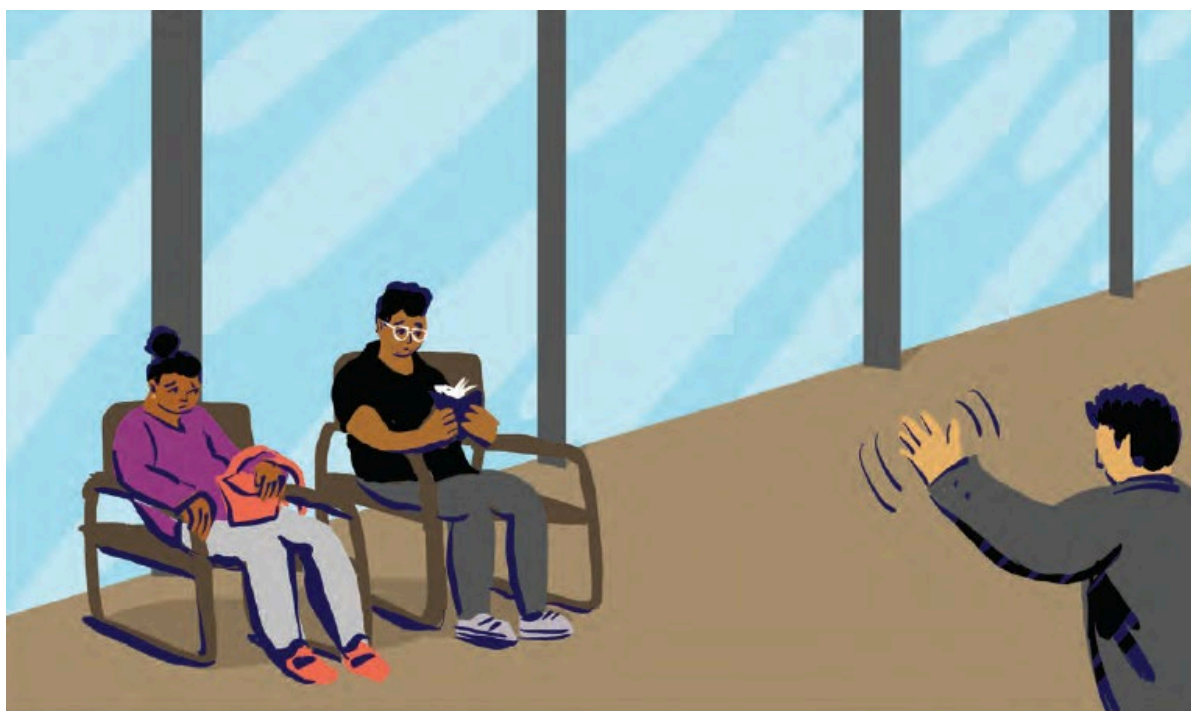
AHH, JUST LIKE HOMEWORK AND STUFF.

OH, ARE YOU HAVING ISSUES COMPLETING YOUR HOMEWORK?

I CAN ARRANGE SOME EXTRA HELP FOR YOU, IF YOU'D LIKE?

NO, I'M GOOD. THANKS MS. FISHER.

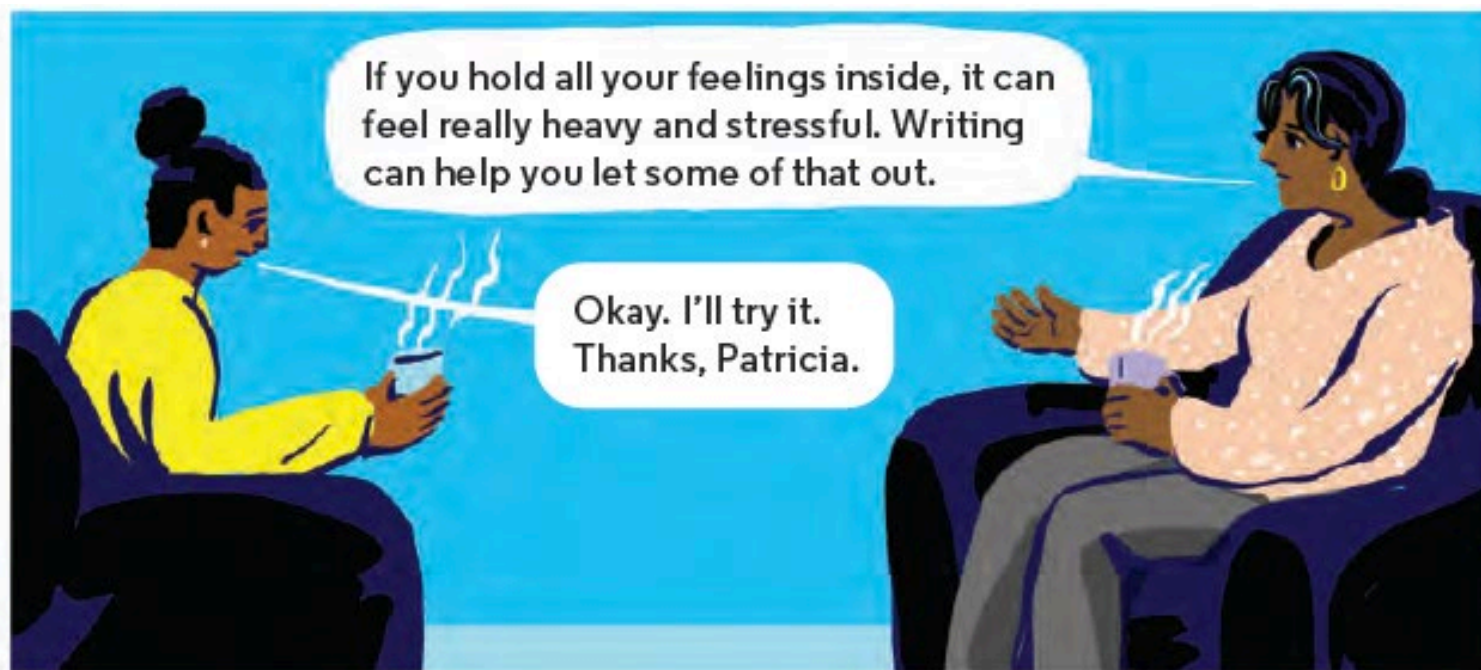


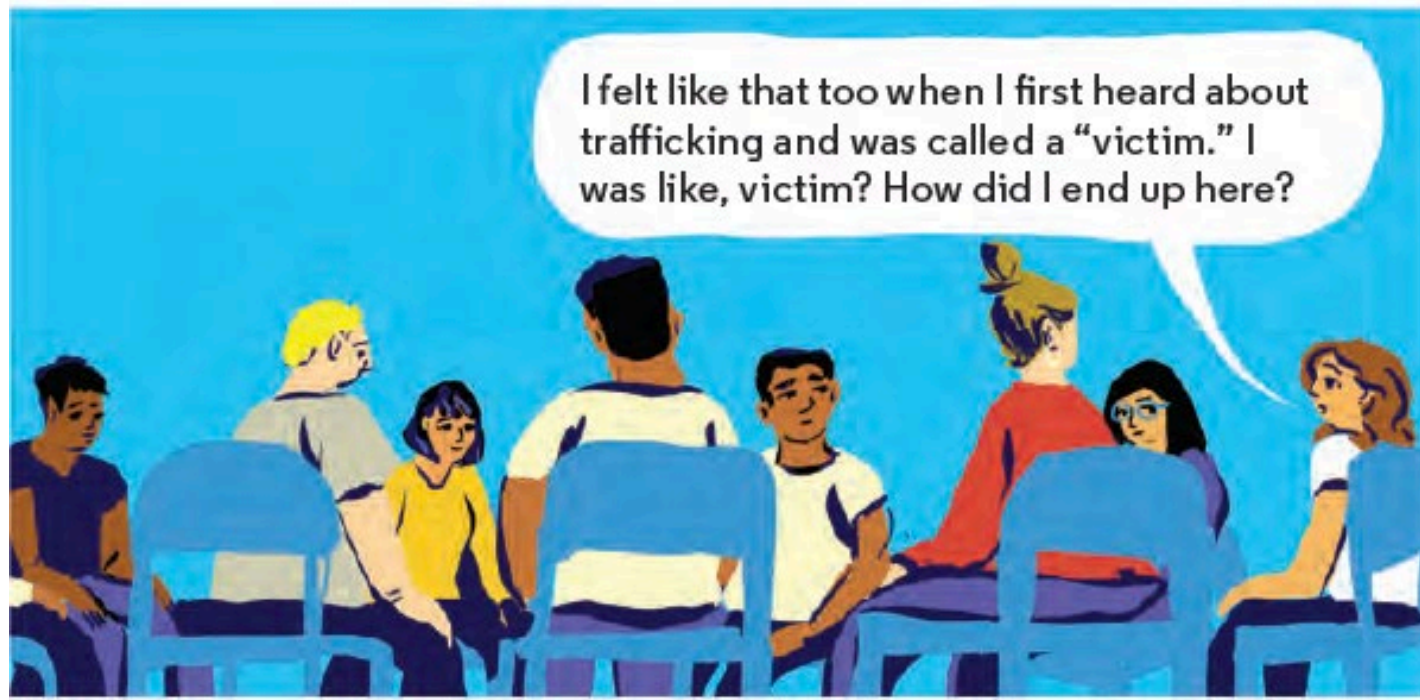














# Overview of the Materials

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- 3 graphic novels: *Zoe's Story*, *Jamie's Story*, and *Sergio's Story*
- Coping activities
- Survivor quotes
- Rights, roles, resources booklet: *What's Going On?*
- Practitioner and caregiver guides

# Feedback from a Young Survivor

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*“I was able to relate to all three stories surprisingly a lot. Like whether it was now or back when I was younger. And I wasn’t expecting that.”*





# Graphic Novel: *Zoe's Story*

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- 14 year old female young person
- Experiences sex trafficking by her “boyfriend”
- Arrested and placed in a juvenile detention facility—interacts with probation, lawyer, and social worker
- Attends support group and shares her experience
- 3 coping activities: *Take a breather, Making some space, Taking care of me checklist*

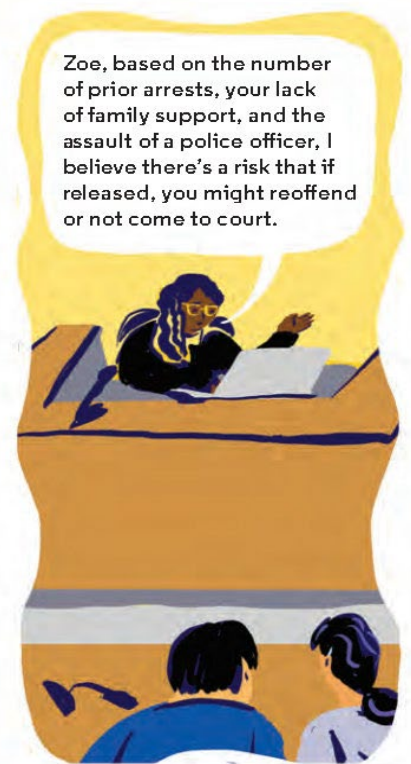
# Zoe's Story



# Zoe's Story



# Zoe's Story



# Zoe's Story



# Zoe's Story



Zoe, I know this is a lot to hear. We can get you support.

I wanted to talk to you about this right away because if this is what's happening, I can talk to the prosecutor about other options.



But what if I chose to do those things?



You're 14 and the law says that anyone younger than 18 can't choose to do those things. And if someone asks you to, it's illegal.

# Zoe's Story

PRESENT DAY,  
BACK AT THE  
SUPPORT GROUP



# Coping Activities Example



## TAKE A BREATH

It may seem obvious but taking deep breaths can help you feel calmer. You can do this anywhere. Try it the next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed. If you like it, repeat this three times.



Put your hands on your stomach to feel your breath.

Slowly take a big breath in, counting 1-2-3 as you fill your stomach with air.



Then hold your breath while you count 1-2.



Then, slowly count 1-2-3-4-5 as you breathe out and you feel your stomach empty out.



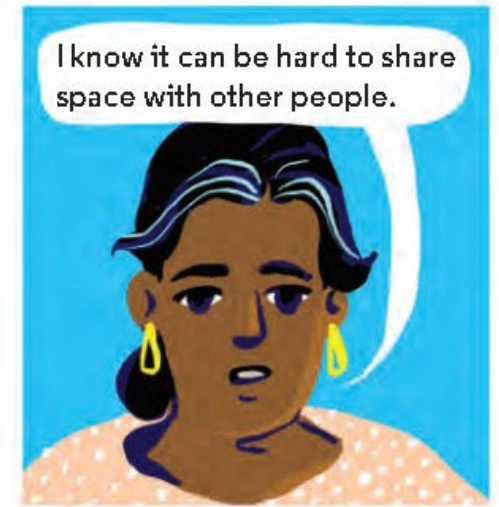
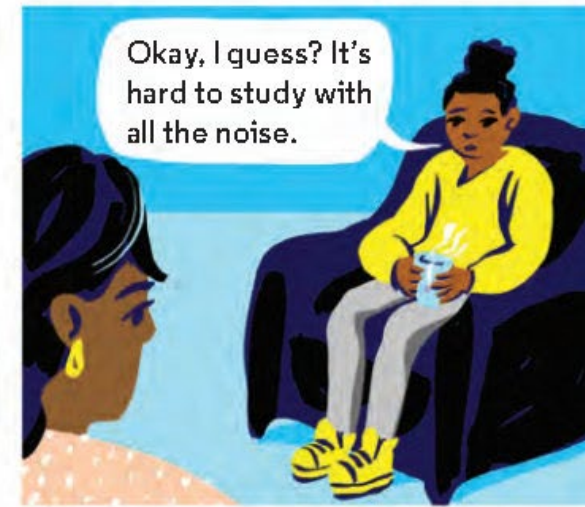
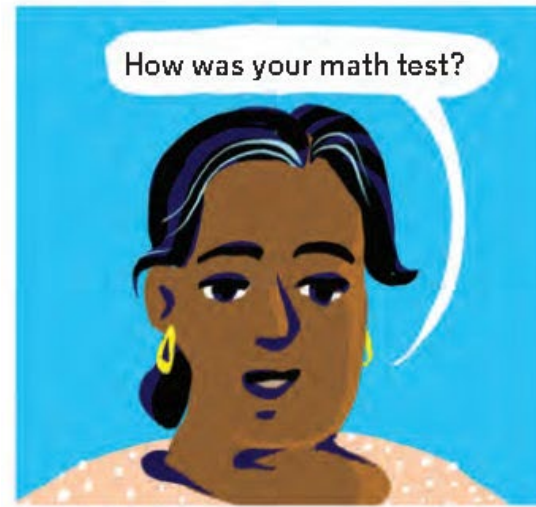


# Graphic Novel: *Jamie's Story*

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- 16 year old non-binary young person
- Living in group home and connected with therapist
- Peer recruited into sex trafficking
- Interacts with police, prosecutor, victim advocate
- Victim-witness in criminal case
- 3 coping activities: *Getting it out, Moving your body, Taking care of me checklist*

# Jamie's Story



# Jamie's Story



# Jamie's Story



# Jamie's Story



# Jamie's Story



He pointed to where everyone would be and where I'd sit. He said I could look at him or Joseph if I got nervous.



# Jamie's Story





# Feedback from a Young Survivor

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*“I've always been the one growing up that's like, oh, deep breathing doesn't help, therapy doesn't help. So when I finally did get into, like, the residentials and stuff and my therapist, she taught me things like breathing, grounding, and those are things that actually help. So it would've been beneficial to learn it at a younger age.”*



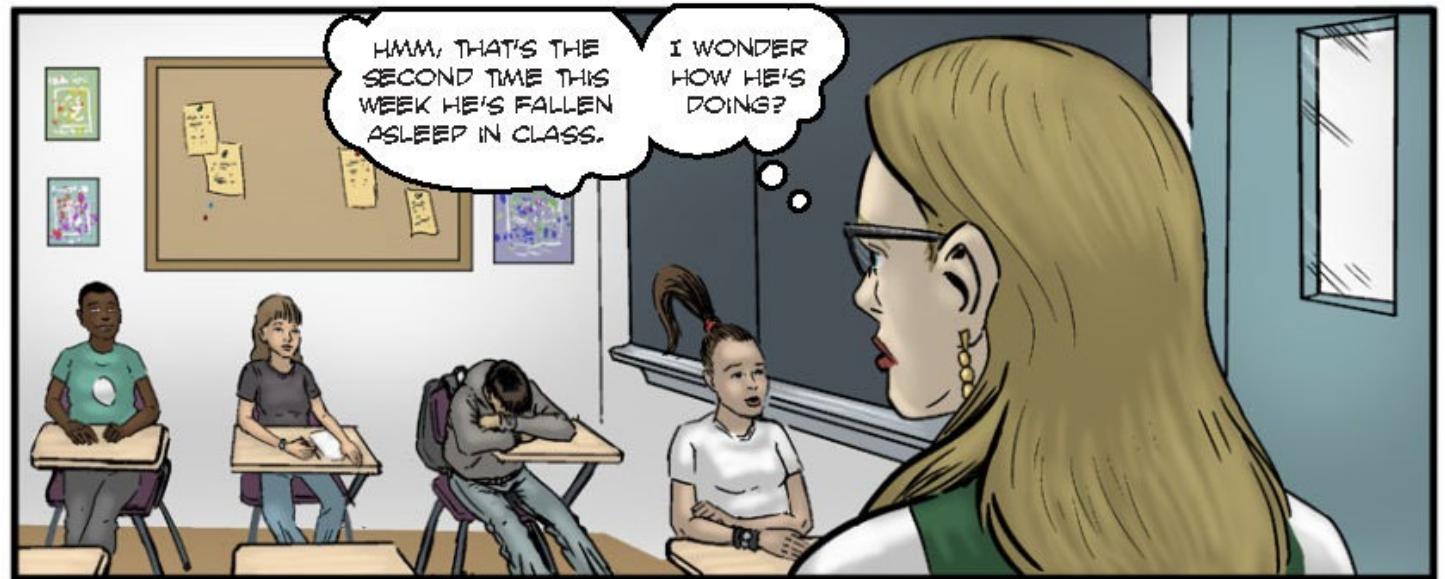


# Graphic Novel: *Sergio's Story*

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- 15/16 year old male
- Foreign national, experiences familial labor trafficking
- Interacts with teachers and victim advocate
- Victim-witness in a potential criminal case
- 3 coping activities: *Mindfulness meditation, Taking a breather, Taking care of me checklist*

# Sergio's Story



# Sergio's Story



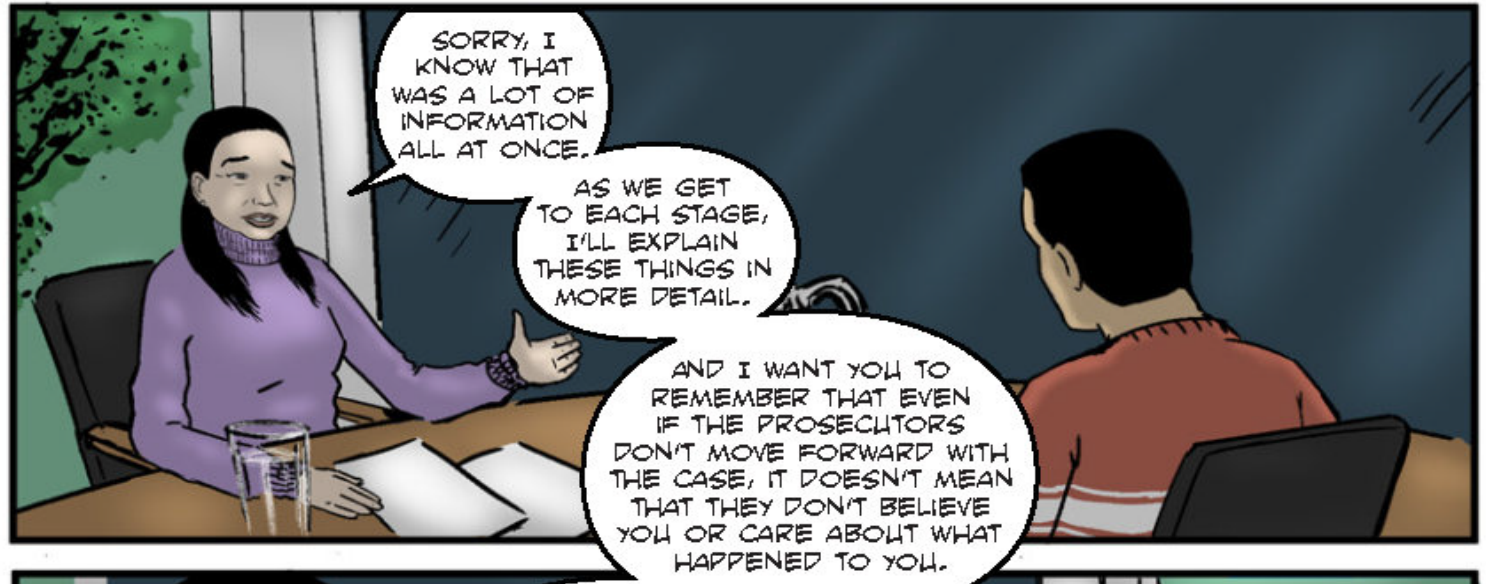
# Sergio's Story



# Sergio's Story



# Sergio's Story



# Sergio's Story



# Survivor Quote



Advocate for yourself because your voice is powerful. If you ever feel uncomfortable, express that discomfort. Don't just keep it in because you feel like these officials are telling you what you have to do.

I was uncomfortable a lot of times, but I never said anything because I thought, "This person works with the government and the government is right," instead of saying, "*Can I take a break?*" or "*This is making me sad,*" or "*I'm scared.*" Advocate for yourself and ask any question you have.



- Melanie T., *Lived Experience Expert*



# Feedback from a Young Survivor

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*“I liked them [the quotes]. ‘Cause you know reading a story is one thing, but you can't just say that the story's real. But to have a quote from somebody saying that hey, it's gonna be okay, pretty much, and that I've been where you're at, that feels good. That is reassurance.”*



# *What's Going On? Booklet*

- Trafficking definitions
- Different court systems
- Victim-witness and defendant rights
- Roles of justice system practitioners
- Resources and support
- Additional information for foreign national minors





# Feedback from a Young Survivor

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*“At the end of the books putting in, like, hotlines or resources to call when you're in trouble. I think that would be a good thing to put in your book.”*

# What's Going On? Booklet



## What supports are available?

The people and places that can  
support you along the way

# What's Going On? Booklet

## If you're a victim of a crime, you have the right to:

### ...be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

This means that all your rights should be considered when going through the legal system, and you should be treated fairly and respectfully by all people working in the system. This includes not being discriminated against because of what happened to you, or for anything else such as your race, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

### ...feel safe and be protected from harm.

Nobody has the right to scare you into saying (or not saying) something in court, or to convince you not to call the police or go to court. It's against the law and there are consequences if someone does that.

If this happens, or if anyone tries to talk to you about your case outside of court in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your advocate or another adult working on your case right away.

For more information on specific protections that you might be able to ask for, see **page 50**.

### ...have your voice, needs and wishes heard by the system.

This includes talking with a police officer, prosecutor, advocate or therapist as much as you want about what happened, how you feel, and what you would like to happen with the case.

This can also include making a **victim impact statement**. This is a written or verbal statement about how the crime has affected your mental health, physical health, and financial situation, and what consequences you would like to see for the defendant. A victim impact statement is made during the defendant's sentencing hearing.

# What's Going On? Booklet



## JURY

The jury is made up of members of the community who listen to all of the information presented in court and decide if there is enough proof that a defendant committed the crimes they're charged with ("guilty") or not ("not guilty"). If you testify in court, they will listen to what you say to help them decide.

It's important to remember that if the jury decides the defendant is 'not guilty,' it doesn't mean that they didn't believe you. It means that they didn't think there was enough evidence to prove that the person is guilty. Your testimony is just one piece of a big, complicated puzzle.

# What's Going On? Booklet

If you have cases in both the juvenile and child welfare courts, you're in a special category sometimes called **cross-over or dual-status youth**. This means you have cases in both courts. Some states have special rules and services for cross-over youth.

One of these rules is called **one court, one judge**. Instead of having two lawyers and two judges, you have one judge and one lawyer that work on your cases, which makes the court process simpler and can feel less frustrating. Not all states have this option, but you can talk to your lawyer to see if this applies to you.

For more information on the child welfare system check out these [materials](#). And, for more information on the criminal legal system check out these [materials](#).



# Thank you!

## Contact us at:

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## Visit us at:

[www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org)




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## Presented by

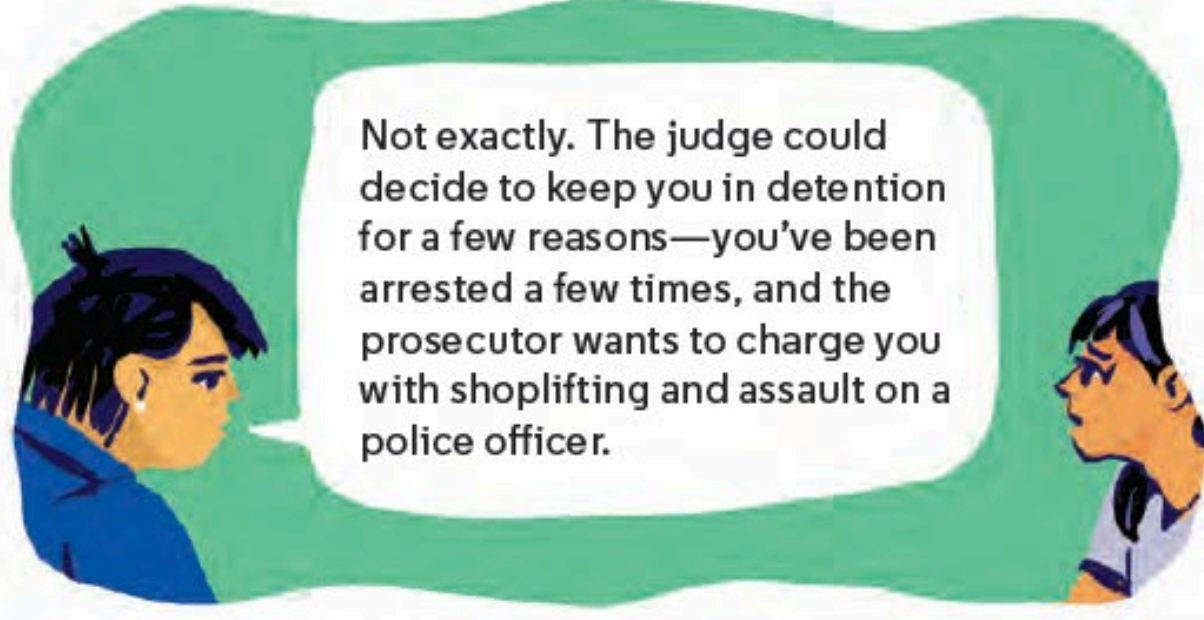
Melissa Milam, Victim Services Program Manager,  
DOJ Civil Rights Division Criminal Section's  
Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU)







A few days? Don't we just have to go to court today and then I get out?



Not exactly. The judge could decide to keep you in detention for a few reasons—you've been arrested a few times, and the prosecutor wants to charge you with shoplifting and assault on a police officer.









Speaking of that...how are things in the house?

I know you were saying last time that you haven't felt like you found your place yet.

The same, I guess. I talked with this girl, Gigi, last week. She was cool.

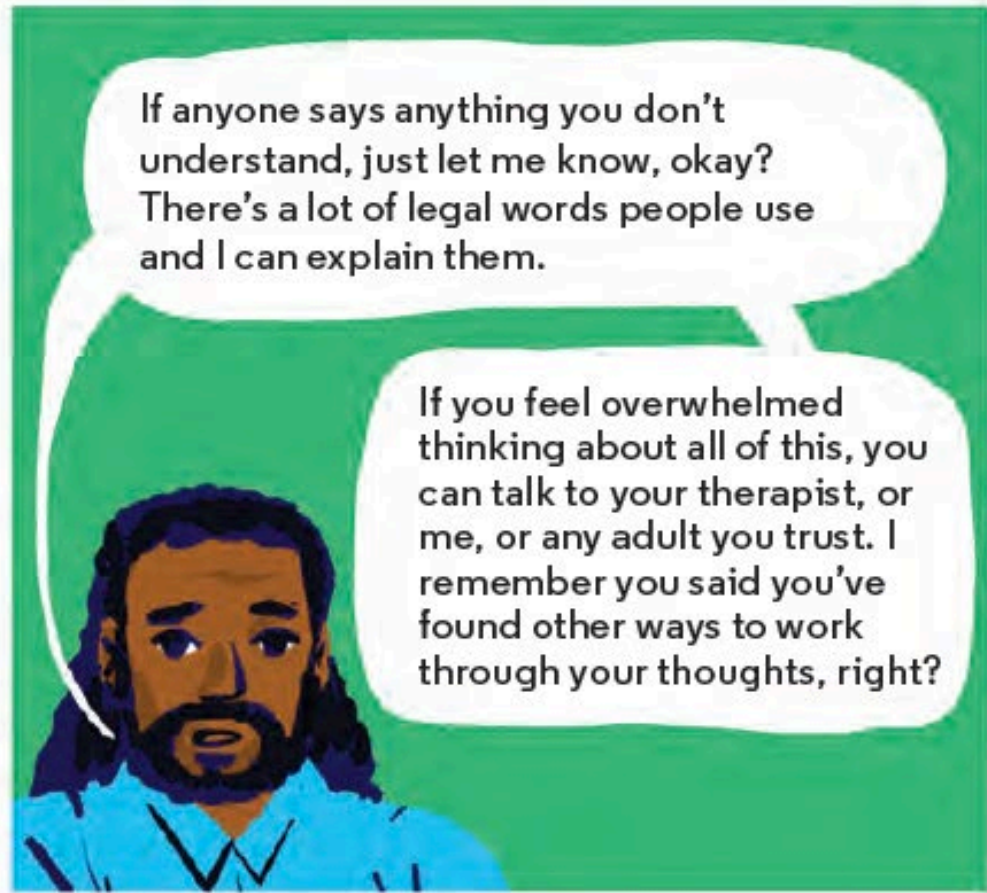


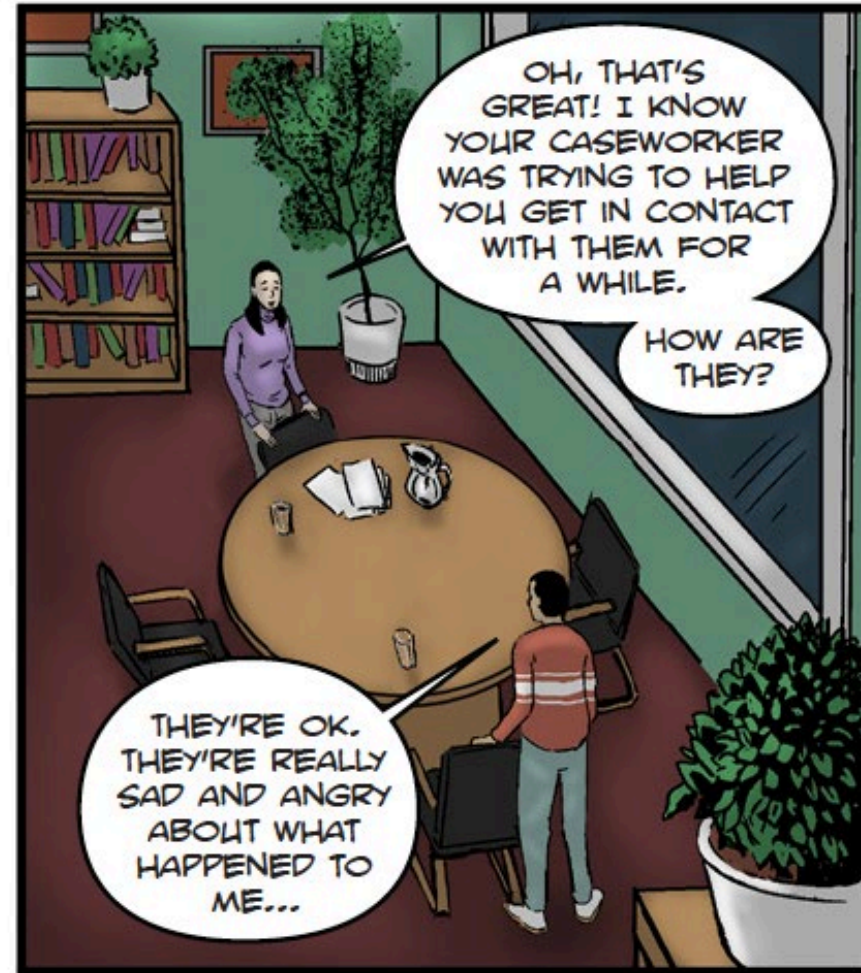
The week of testifying, Kareem took me to see the courthouse.















# Download, Read, Share

- Free download from OVC's website: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/>
- Coming Soon:
  - Translations: Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, French (African locale), Portuguese (Brazilian), Vietnamese
  - Audiobook Recordings



# Questions?

Enter in the **Q&A** section, selecting **All Panelists**

Thank you!

