

CANDACE,
PLEASE CALL ME



Please, **call me.**

469-345-7643

Every child needs an adult who's paying attention, who worries and cares what's happening, who misses them.

Not every child has one.

And when they don't, there are bad things that can happen.

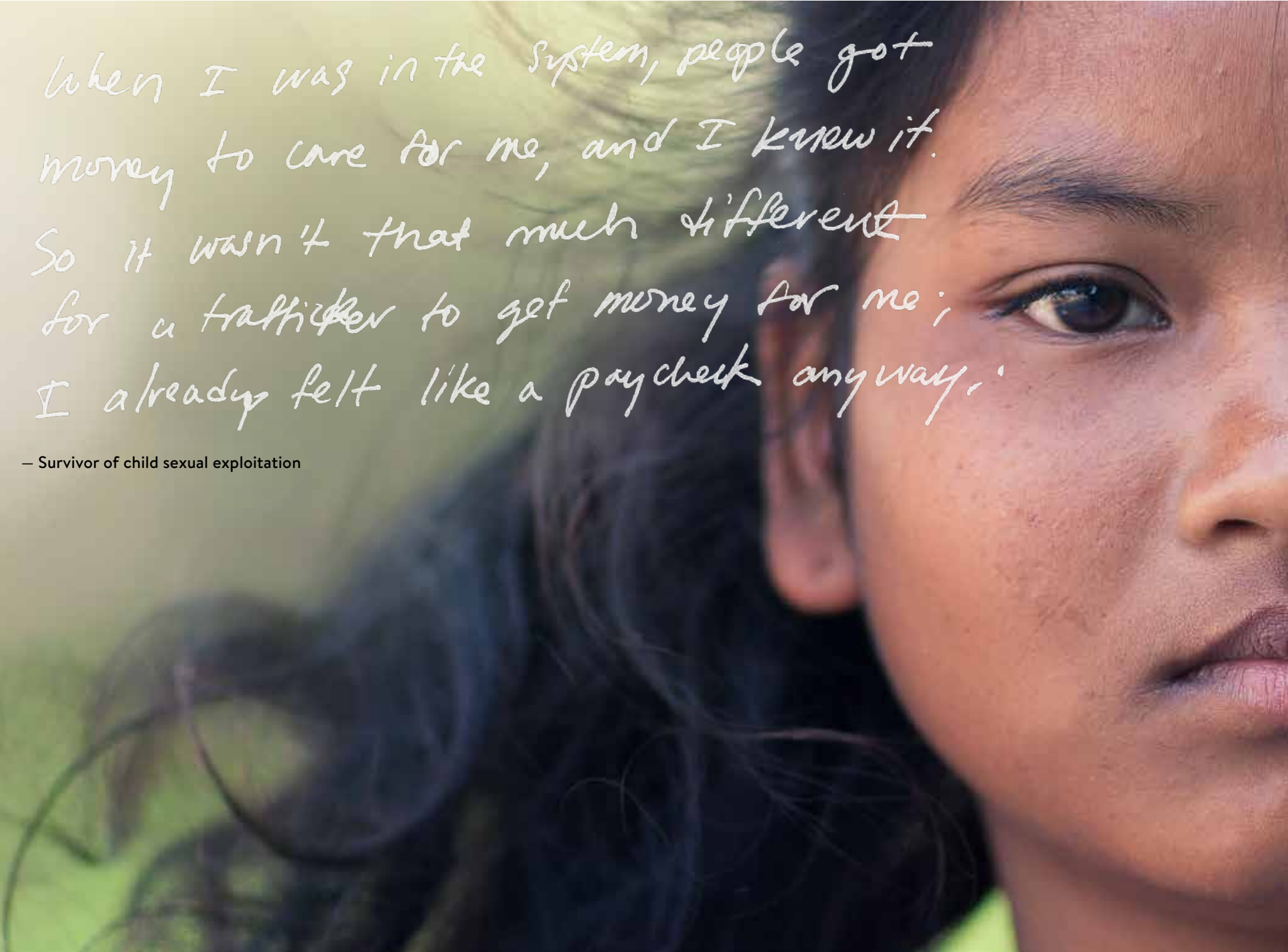
One of those things is being sexually exploited, either for money or for something else of value.

It's called trafficking, and each year in this country, more than 100,000 children are identified as victims. The actual number is higher; tens of thousands of children are exploited without anyone noticing or reporting it.

It happens in big cities and rural counties, and in privileged communities and poor ones.

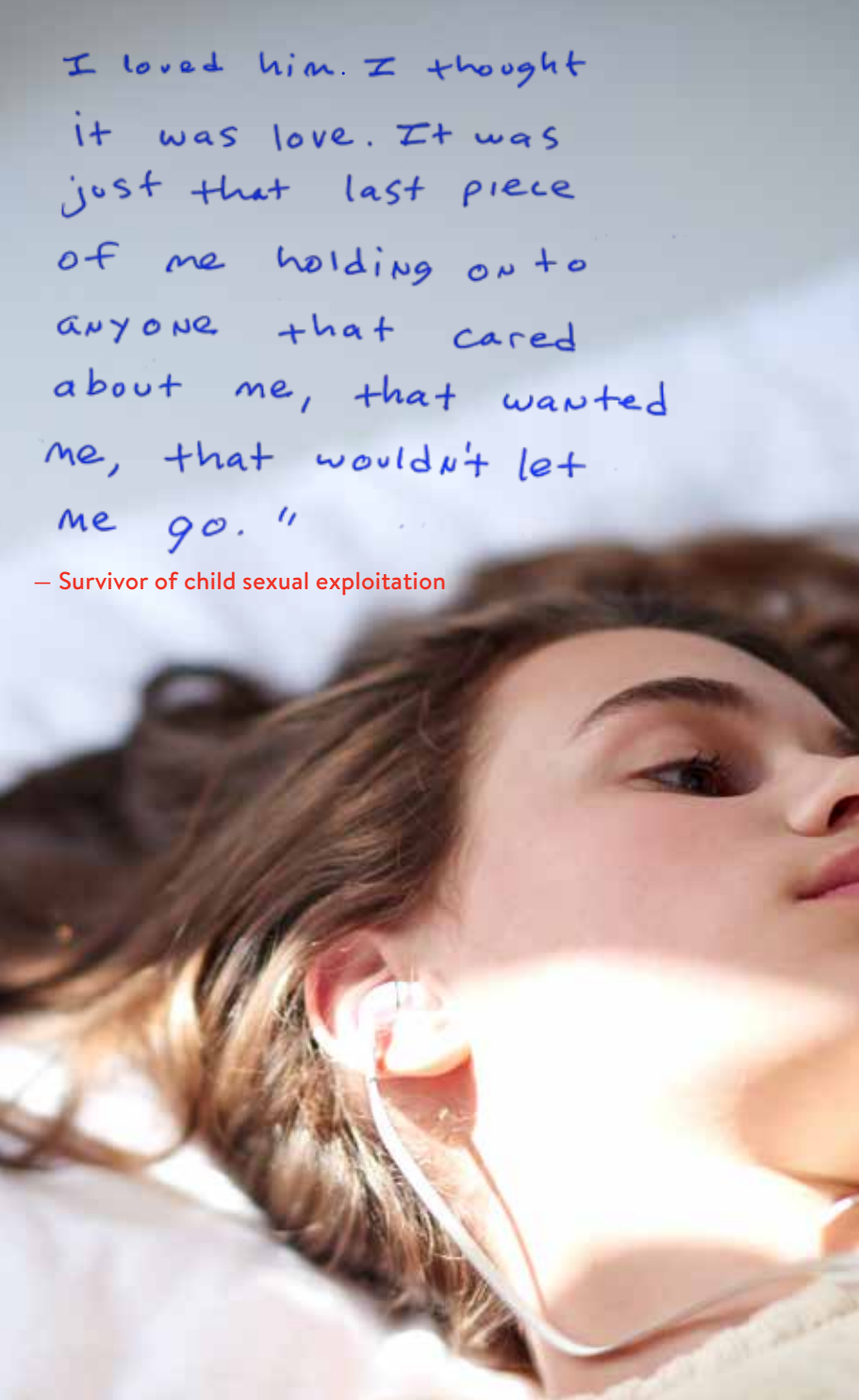


And most times, it happens to children between the ages of 12 and 14.



When I was in the system, people got
money to care for me, and I knew it.
So it wasn't that much different
for a trafficker to get money for me;
I already felt like a paycheck anyway.'

— Survivor of child sexual exploitation



I loved him. I thought
it was love. It was
just that last piece
of me holding on to
anyone that cared
about me, that wanted
me, that wouldn't let
me go. "

— Survivor of child sexual exploitation

As many as 4 out of 5 children who are sexually exploited have spent time in the child welfare system.

It's easy to understand what makes children in foster care so vulnerable. Opportunities for attachment and affection may be scarce. They are often shuffled from place to place and caseload to caseload with little warning and no say. To survive, children learn to accept what's happening and do what they're told.

One survivor summed up the foster care experience this way: “the perfect training for commercial sexual exploitation.”

That “training,” along with other risk factors common among children in foster care—past physical or sexual abuse, trauma, developmental disabilities, homelessness, running away—make foster and group homes a magnet for anyone looking to turn a child into an income stream.

Children who are exploited—or being groomed for it—usually don't see it as exploitation. They let someone take a few photos in exchange for a place to sleep. They look online and connect with strangers on social media; it's what everybody does. They really believe him when he says they're special and promises love, or they're just doing what their mom or sister does.

They don't understand the danger.

We do.



" One of our kids got placed in Houston and went running. Her CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer freaked out. She drove down there and put signs up in every convenience store within two square miles of the group home, saying, 'Please, call me.' And that kid walked in and saw one of those flyers. She just couldn't believe that someone did that, put flyers up all over a town the size of Houston to find her. She called and came back into care."

— Chad Frymire, Program Director, Dallas CASA



Children in trouble—like all children—need someone who cares enough to be there for them, no matter what they do or what happens to them. They need someone to help them see their inherent value as a unique human being.

In 49 states and the District of Columbia, more than 93,000 extraordinary individuals do just that.

They are trained court appointed special advocate (CASA) or guardian ad litem (GAL) volunteers — who are willing to give a child what she or he needs most: simple caring, day after day, year after year, no matter what.

There are dozens of paid professionals who work with children in the system, but each has their own mandate. They cycle in and out of children's lives, leaving when their work is done.

**CASA and GAL volunteers
work outside the silos to
focus on the child's whole life.**

And they don't do it for money.

They do it for love.

They do it for the child—a child who has already been a victim of abuse or neglect.

Volunteers can tell the child that their body is their own and no one else's. They can show the child what a healthy relationship looks like and tell them that it's okay to say no. They can make sure they know the warning signs.

Care and concern from a trusted figure can prevent a child's exploitation.

**Together, CASA and GAL
volunteers across the country
are a prevention army.**



" It's hard to watch youth struggle this much. It's hard to see them exploited the way they are. You have to figure out how to continue to be a light and a hope and show a place of healing for them over and over again."

— Tammy Barnes, Volunteer Coordinator, Summit County CASA, Ohio

The work CASA and GAL volunteers do for abused and neglected children is hard.

The work they do for children who have been trafficked is even harder.

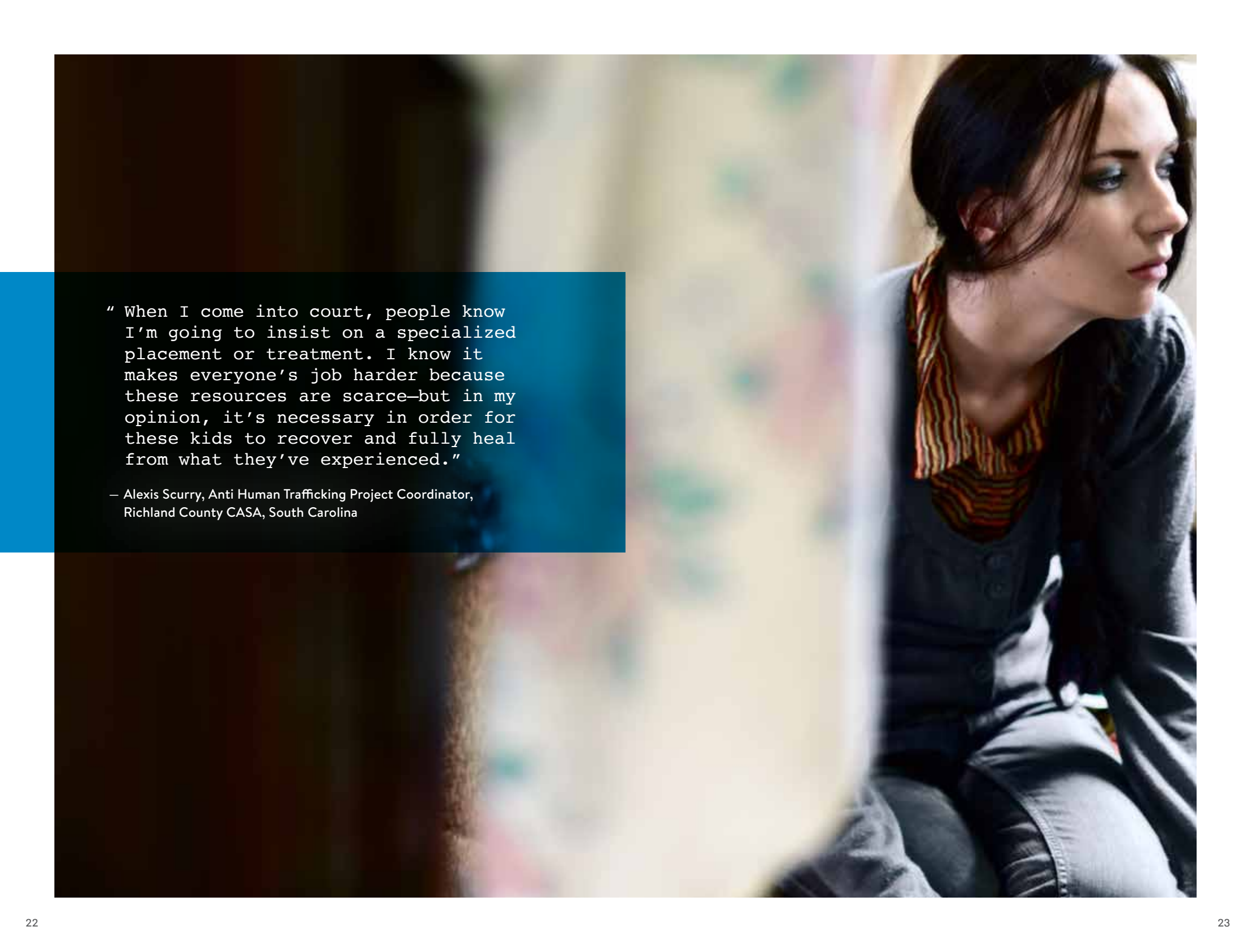
To do their best for every child, the volunteers who work with victims of sexual exploitation need help.

They need deep, specialized knowledge about everything from prevention to signs of trafficking and trauma, how to speak to high-risk children or victims, empowerment and safety planning, recognizing traffickers and buyers, roles and responsibilities, and even self-care.

They need access to the latest research and new resources on sexual exploitation.

They need a comprehensive network of community partners willing to collaborate and communicate across professional boundaries.

And they need the support and supervision of colleagues who understand what it is to lie awake at night hoping for the phone to ring.



" When I come into court, people know I'm going to insist on a specialized placement or treatment. I know it makes everyone's job harder because these resources are scarce—but in my opinion, it's necessary in order for these kids to recover and fully heal from what they've experienced."

— Alexis Scurry, Anti Human Trafficking Project Coordinator,
Richland County CASA, South Carolina

National CASA/GAL is committed to giving every volunteer the training and resources they need to protect and heal every child in the sights of traffickers.


Beyond developing specialized trafficking trainings for distribution nationwide, we're working to create a national resource bank to put the latest research online and on tap for volunteers and others who need it.

We're evaluating what works and what doesn't, sharing best practices, and developing tools that can help volunteers and judges identify children who have been sexually exploited or are likely to be so.

We're stepping up efforts to recruit and train new CASA and GAL volunteers to work with these children.

We're working to increase coordination with local child welfare professionals and courts, and we're developing collaborations between local CASA and GAL programs and other community partners like law enforcement and schools.

It's an ambitious agenda, but we know it can be done.



" If they can't see hope by the time
they leave our system of care, it's
not very likely they will see hope
in their whole lives."

— Foster parent of a survivor of sexual exploitation

What can we do to help a child see hope?

Not all of us have what it takes—in time or temperament—to become a CASA or GAL volunteer, to use our knowledge and skills to mentor and advocate for a child who, until we got involved, had little to hope for.

But each of us, as human beings, has what it takes to really see these children, to feel their pain, and to say, “No more.”

Each of us can and must stand up for them, in whatever way we can.

When we do, every child will have the chance to see—and create—a better future.

If you'd like to learn more about what you can do, contact us. casaforchildren.org/trafficking



Court Appointed Special Advocates
Guardians ad Litem
FOR CHILDREN

NATIONAL CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION