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## **Increase in sex trafficking of minors getting local, state attention**

**Department of Children and Families to hold forum Wednesday on problem**

By [Karen Florin](#) Day Staff Writer

Human trafficking sounds like a crime that takes place in a big city or exotic country, but police and child welfare experts say it occurs right here in Connecticut in increasing numbers.

**In December, the state police Casino Licensing & Operations Unit charged a 24-year-old Providence woman with bringing a 16-year-old girl to the Two Trees Inn on the Mashantucket Pequot reservation for a prearranged sexual encounter.** Kaieema E. Gadson, charged with trafficking in persons and promoting prostitution, posted a \$5,000 bond and is due back in court on Feb. 4.

The case reached the major crimes docket in New London Superior Court around the same time the state Department of Children and Families announced a forum to raise awareness about domestic minor sex trafficking in Connecticut. On Wednesday, more than 200 people, including judges, law enforcement officers, medical providers, hospital administrators and school officials are expected to attend the day-long forum at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford.

**During the past few years, 130 girls and boys in Connecticut have been identified as child sex slaves, according to DCF, and the agency has recently experienced a substantial increase in reports of suspected or actual human trafficking of children.** At the forum, state and national experts will discuss the scope of the crime as well as legal and forensic treatment issues and how the state is working to combat what the agency describes as "the egregious victimization of children."

**Gov. Dannel Malloy and DCF Commissioner Joette Katz are scheduled to speak, and key supporters of the event include the Judicial Branch, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, the Mohegan Tribe and the Department of Consumer Protection.**

A preliminary police report in the Mashantucket human trafficking case does not identify the relationship between Gadson and the teen-age victim, who was detained at the scene and taken to a hospital for a medical evaluation. But according to the DCF, traffickers often are friends or family members who employ a number of techniques, including physical and emotional abuse, to keep their victim in bondage.

In December, a joint task force of local, state and federal law enforcement agents conducted an investigation into prostitution at Foxwoods Resort Casino after receiving information about the pervasive use of online sites such as backpage.com to arrange paid sexual encounters. Participating agencies included the state police, Department of Homeland Security, FBI and Mashantucket Tribal Police Department.

**On Dec. 19, agents identified "several individuals knowingly engaged in prostitution," at Two Trees, which is a tribe-owned hotel located near Foxwoods Resort Casino on the Mashantucket Pequot reservation.** Gadson, who had been previously targeted for trafficking minor females and promoting prostitution, was arrested for delivering the teen-age girl to a prearranged locations "with intentions of waiting for the individual to fulfill a sexual encounter for a fee," according to the report.

Gadson, who was arrested without incident, had only been charged with motor vehicle offenses in the past, but could face additional charges. State police said they are preparing an arrest warrant application based on a previous sex trafficking/prostitution incident involving a minor.

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