

**National Expert Roundtable Discussion:**

**Understanding and Improving Law  
Enforcement Investigations of  
Human Trafficking:**

**Focus on Sex Trafficking**

**July 2023**



**MONTCLAIR STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Global Center on Human Trafficking**

Sponsored by:

AEquitas

Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation

Fermata Discovery

The Woolf Group Strategic Solutions



**THE WOOLF GROUP**  
STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS



# National Expert Roundtable Discussion

## Understanding and Improving Law Enforcement Investigations of Human Trafficking: Focus on Sex Trafficking

*July 2023*

This report was convened by the Global Center on Human Trafficking in partnership with the Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation, and Fermata Discovery.

### **Written by:**

Alison Boak  
Dr. Daniela Peterka-Benton  
Donna Meeker-O'Rourke  
Dr. Francesca Laguardia  
Christabelle Robinson

### **Edited By:**

Erin Trostle

### **Published by:**

Montclair State University  
Global Center on Human Trafficking

### **Designed by:**

Christabelle Robinson  
Sibel Doko

---

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Disclaimer</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introductions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part I: Law Enforcement Challenges in Identifying Potential Victims Guiding Thoughts/Questions</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Lack of Training	6
1.2 Bad or Ineffective Training	6
1.3 Need for Community Outreach	7
1.4 Trust Building During Initial Encounters	8
1.5 Fear of Law Enforcement	9
1.6 Need for Standardized Screening Tools	10
1.7 Negative Effect of Raids and Operations	11
1.8 Importance of Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach	11
1.9 Impact of Law Enforcement Leadership/Structure	12
1.10 Negative Influence of the Media	13
1.11 Need for Increased Collaboration among Law Enforcement Agencies	13
1.12 Forced Crime	14
<b>2. Importance of Initial Actions in Investigations</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Location and Timing of Initial Meeting	16
2.2 Language and Culture	17
<b>3: Challenges Involving Service Providers</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Importance of Partnership between Law Enforcement and Service Providers	19
3.2 Building Trust between Law Enforcement and Service Providers	21
3.3 Need for Rapid Referral to Service Providers	21
3.4 Importance of Peer Mentorship for Victims	22
3.5 Lack of Clarity regarding Service Provider Role	22
<b>4: Tools, Resources, and Training for Investigations</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Lack of Training	23
4.2 Key Characteristics of Successful Training	24
4.3 Need for Training Standards	24
4.4 Need for Access to Technical Assistance	25
4.5 Collaborating and Networking	25
<b>5. Prosecution Challenges and Best Practices</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 Lack of Responsiveness by Prosecutors	27
5.2 Need for Survivor Resources and Support During Prosecution	28
5.3 Pre-Trial and Trial Strategies	28
5.4 Victim Testimony	39
<b>Part II: Summary of Best Practices and Recommendations</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Best Practices for Successful Investigations and Prosecutions</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix A: Report Conveners</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix B: Participant Contact Information</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendix C: Literature Review</b>	<b>40</b>

# Acknowledgments

---

**The Global Center on Human Trafficking at Montclair State University** (GCHT) extends its grateful acknowledgments to the many experts and dedicated professionals who helped make this report possible.

Thank you to our co-conveners and partners: Richard S. Kendall, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, and the Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation; and Matthew Jack, Strategic Advisor Subject Matter Expert, and Fermata Discovery, Inc. Your leadership in the anti-trafficking field is critical. Thank you to all the expert participants from across the country who generously shared their time and expertise. A complete listing of participants and their contact information is in the appendix of this report.

A very special thank you to the lived experience experts who shared their experiences and insights. Your participation is invaluable and helped us move past our current thinking to discover new approaches. Finally, thank you to the wonderful staff and interns at the Global Center on Human Trafficking for assistance in organizing the roundtable and in preparing this report, including Dr. Daniela Peterka-Benton, Academic Director, GCHT; Dr. Francesca Laguardia, Associate Professor, Justice Studies; Donna Meeker O'Rourke, Program Specialist, GCHT; and Christabelle Robinson, Communications Specialist, GCHT.



*Ali Boak*

Director, Global Center on Human Trafficking



*Mimi Feliciano*

Founder, Global Center on Human Trafficking

# Disclaimer

This report contains summaries of discussions among roundtable participants that are intended for informational and educational purposes only. The statements and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the Global Center on Human Trafficking at Montclair State University, the Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation, or Fermata Discovery, Inc.

Notwithstanding anything in this Report to the contrary, the statements contained herein shall not be construed as legal advice or the provision of legal services for or on behalf of any person. The provision of this report shall also not establish an attorney-client relationship.

This report is made publicly available for use by the reader, but the copyright is retained by the creator. This report may not be redistributed or publicly displayed by others without providing credit to and the advance consent of Montclair State University through its Global Center on Human Trafficking, the Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation, and Fermata Discovery, Inc.

**For Accessibility Issues with this document please contact Christabelle Robinson at [robinsonchr@montclair.edu](mailto:robinsonchr@montclair.edu)**

# Introductions

---

Human trafficking is a community issue that affects urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States. Data show that human traffickers disproportionately target those in positions of socioeconomic or political vulnerability, often people of color or members of racial minority groups. The extent of human trafficking is notoriously difficult to measure, and statistics are often unreliable. Despite a substantial upsurge in awareness and efforts to address the problem of human trafficking over the past ten years, traffickers continue to operate with impunity in every part of the world including the United States.

Human trafficking has always happened in our communities, but due to many systemic and societal barriers, it has largely gone unrecognized. The number of investigations and prosecutions across the nation represents only a tiny fraction of actual cases of human trafficking. Due to a lack of systemic data collection and research, we don't know if recent upticks in the number of human trafficking cases represent an actual increase in the incidence of human trafficking or are the result of increased education, awareness, and training efforts. Given the dearth of research and data, the Global Center on Human Trafficking at Montclair State University (GCHT) took the lead in convening two expert roundtables—one focusing on sex trafficking and the other on labor trafficking—to shed light on the current state of law enforcement investigations of human trafficking.

The purpose of this roundtable was to provide a space for dialogue and sharing and reimagining the way investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking are conducted in the United States.

This roundtable brought together the following stakeholder groups from across the United States:

- survivors who have interacted with law enforcement local, state, and federal law enforcement
- agents with demonstrated experience, in investigating and/or prosecuting cases of sex trafficking
- service providers who have managed the care of and service delivery to survivors through the investigation and prosecution of their case
- attorneys who have represented victims of human trafficking during the prosecution of their traffickers
- advocates who have supported survivors during the prosecution of their
- traffickers
- other subject-matter experts, including national providers of training and
- technical assistance providers

While this report is not a formal study or research project, it is our hope that the insights, expertise, and lived experience shared here will inform the work of others in the field and will increase survivors' access to justice by improving the identification, investigation, and prosecution outcomes of human trafficking cases across the United States.

**Please be aware that the proceedings contained in this report are discussion summaries only, not transcripts.**

**Note about terminology:** The terms *victim*, *survivor*, and *individual with lived experience* are all used in this report. Each term serves different needs. The term *victim* typically refers to someone who recently has been the victim of a crime, and triggers certain rights in the context of the criminal justice process. Additionally, the word *victim* is commonly used when discussing a crime or referring to the justice system. The terms *survivor* and *individual with lived experience* often refer to someone who is currently undergoing or who has already gone through a recovery and/or healing journey. Additionally, the terms *survivor* and *individual with lived experience* are used by those who have been trafficked when referring to others who have also been trafficked.

# Part I: Law Enforcement Challenges in Identifying Potential Victims

---

## Guiding Thoughts/Questions

- What challenges do law enforcement agents face in determining if an individual is a potential victim of sex trafficking?
- What are the current challenges in initiating and conducting sex trafficking investigations?
- Are there additional challenges with specialized populations such as minors, LGBTQ individuals, ethnic and racial minority populations, and/or persons with disabilities?

## Summary

The discussion focused on public distrust of the law enforcement community and the impact of this distrust on identifying and working with victims and survivors. There was general agreement that the priority in investigations should be victims and survivors, both in how they are approached and cared for and in trust building. Survivors shared the view that how victims and survivors are approached is vital to how they respond to investigations and to law enforcement overall. However, the issue of distrust is not always rooted in bad experiences with law enforcement alone; it may also stem from frustrations with other systems such as the foster care system, the education system, the health care system, and so on.

Many participants agreed there was a general lack of understanding among law enforcement agents regarding how to identify victims and cases of human trafficking and regarding how to proceed following identification. Some other recurrent themes included the impact of race and other demographic factors on the bias toward victims, media perpetuation of misinformation about human trafficking, and the lack of cooperation among victims and survivors because of fear of law enforcement or poor handling by law enforcement.

***“Survivors are more than happy to help and give their perspective for training law enforcement, as long as they’re provided resources, support, and safe environments to do so.”***

**- Survivor of human trafficking**



## 1.1 Lack of Training

There was widespread agreement among many participants, including survivors, law enforcement agents, and social service representatives, that training in how to identify human trafficking cases and victims is often inadequate. Survivor participants expressed the need for law enforcement agents to learn how to recognize red flags. One survivor noted that although she shared with law enforcement agents why she ran away from home, they failed to identify her vulnerabilities and her situation as red flags for human trafficking. Survivors emphasized that traffickers find their targets by looking for vulnerabilities such as isolation from or lack of family and friends, or unmet basic needs like lack of housing, clothes, and/or food.

All law enforcement participants expressed support for training law enforcement agents to recognize victims and to initiate proper and swift referrals to victim-centered services. Several law enforcement participants pointed out that training by survivors is especially effective and also motivates law enforcement agents to take a personal interest in combatting human trafficking.

Several service providers stated that the best way for law enforcement to be effective in victim identification and to ensure that victims get service referrals is to partner with service providers directly to provide on-site assistance with identification and referral.

## 1.2 Bad or Ineffective Training

Many participants expressed concern about the pervasiveness of bad or ineffective training of law enforcement agents. Participants pointed out that law enforcement agents often do not recognize the need to vet trainers and/or curricula and do not have the expertise to do so. It was also mentioned that some training on human trafficking is offered by rogue/vigilante-type agencies that could unintentionally misguide law enforcement. All participants thought it was important for training to be provided by reputable and experienced organizations and trainers, and many expressed the need for universal standards for human trafficking training to be established to ensure quality and effectiveness.

Many participants expressed concern about the pervasiveness of bad or ineffective training of law enforcement agents. Participants pointed out that law enforcement agents often do not recognize the need to vet trainers and/or curricula and do not have the expertise to do so. It was also mentioned that some training on human trafficking is offered by rogue/vigilante-type agencies that could unintentionally misguide law enforcement. All participants thought it was important for training to be provided by reputable and experienced organizations and trainers, and many expressed the need for universal standards for human trafficking training to be established to ensure quality and effectiveness.

Some participants indicated a need to rethink the red flag/indicator approach to identifying trafficking victims. As one survivor reported above, red flags are often overlooked, in part because currently recognized red flags/indicators may also indicate various other crimes and lack specificity for those without sufficient knowledge of human trafficking.

### **1.3 Need for Community Outreach**

As mentioned previously, public distrust of law enforcement may be the endpoint of life-long journeys involving negative encounters with social workers, family court judges, children's services lawyers, law enforcement officers themselves, etc. When a law enforcement officer approaches a victim for the purpose of building a human trafficking case, that officer may represent the entire system (and its historic abuses) in the eyes of the victim.

Though many law enforcement agents working on human trafficking investigations are caring and competent, participants pointed out that an officer's ability to identify a potential case of human trafficking and a victim's ability/willingness to disclose exploitation/abuse may be influenced by community perceptions of law enforcement. One participant mentioned that many communities have historical trauma with law enforcement that needs to be addressed. Consistent and sustained community outreach is needed to build and rebuild trust.

Many participants emphasized the importance of proactively building trust on an individual level and in communities at large. Law enforcement agents pointed out that they have greater success in identifying victims in communities where they routinely conduct outreach.

A survivor participant shared that introducing officers and community members to one another in safe environments is key because community members will trust officers they have met previously and have seen in a positive light.

It should be noted that in some communities, individuals may feel abused, ignored, or left out by law enforcement and thus avoid outreach because they view it as pointless or potentially harmful to themselves or their communities. In some communities, where reaching out to law enforcement is seen as “snitching” or “ratting,” individuals who choose to reach out risk being ostracized or even harmed.

Some participants expressed the view that it is unreasonable to expect victims to disclose what’s happening or has happened to them immediately. Widespread mistrust of the law enforcement community means that many victims fear that they themselves will be treated as criminals or charged despite their cooperation.

## 1.4 Trust Building during Initial Encounters

Survivors agreed that how victims and survivors are initially approached is critical and lays the foundation for how they will respond to investigations and to law enforcement overall. Survivors highlighted the need during the initial encounter to be treated as human beings not as criminals. One survivor discussed the negative impact and traumatizing experience of being placed in a juvenile facility while her trafficker was investigated.

Law enforcement officers need to understand that while they may not be responsible for such placements, they will be held responsible in the eyes of the victim. Both survivors and law enforcement officers shared experiences involving victims who were put off or lost trust when questioned in a leading, manipulative, suggestive, or triggering way. Survivors also agreed that when law enforcement officers focus on assisting victims by removing them from harm and assisting them with service referrals, victims are far more likely to trust and collaborate with law enforcement.

*“Show victims and survivors that you care and have their best interests in mind. Expedite the investigations and show victims/survivors you are taking the case seriously and proactively pursuing the case.”*

— Federal law enforcement agent

Participants emphasized that it is crucial for law enforcement officers always to be transparent with and truthful to victims, as lack of transparency and broken promises undermine trust. Survivors noted that because trafficking typically involves lies and manipulation, those qualities often cause victims to shut down or to refuse to cooperate with law enforcement. It is worth noting that even when the truth is less than ideal, delivering it in a compassionate manner is appreciated and leaves the door open for further communication down the line.

## 1.5 Fear of Law Enforcement

Victims shared that fear of their traffickers played a role in their lack of interest in cooperating with law enforcement. Traffickers portray law enforcement as the enemy and tell victims that law enforcement officers will arrest, prosecute, persecute and abuse them. This is a strategy intended to prevent victims from seeking help or making disclosures if they do encounter police. Traffickers are adept at reprogramming their victims through fear, and sadly law enforcement officers often confirm these fears by arresting and criminalizing victims for acts they are forced or coerced into performing. We cannot change what the traffickers say, but we can avoid playing into traffickers' narratives if we model better handling of potential victims and communicate this approach publicly.

Traffickers may also use various other strategies to keep their victims in line. For example, victims are often controlled by fears related to deportation, immigration status, or the possibility that they themselves, significant others, or family members will be arrested. Despite the common myth that undocumented victims are here illegally, most come legally and become "undocumented" when traffickers take their papers taken from them.

*"There are other key vulnerabilities/risk factors for sex trafficking including broken, unstable homes; missing, absent, abusive parents; sexually active at a young age; and runaways/homeless."*

—Survivor of human trafficking

Common threats involve deportation, immigration status, harm to family members back home, and weaponizing law enforcement by filing missing persons reports. Traffickers also use the us-versus-them mentality to keep victims or witnesses from speaking with police. In many economically disadvantaged communities, especially those where gangs are prevalent, it is a social crime to talk to or to cooperate with police. Being caught speaking with police often leads at best to social isolation and at worst to violence or death.

Law enforcement professionals must ensure when encountering victims that they do so from a trauma-informed approach. Because victims often fear law enforcement for a variety of reasons, it is vital to approach them in a compassionate and ethical manner. Reaffirming to victims that they are not in trouble will help them feel safer and tends to promote a more cooperative relationship with law enforcement. A law enforcement officer's first priority should be making sure that the victim is removed from the situation and receives proper care, both mentally and physically.

## **1.6 Need for Standardized Screening Tools**

Law enforcement participants discussed the need to improve screening for potential human trafficking. While there are dozens of screening tools available to law enforcement to identify victims, many are not effective because there is no standardization. Many of these tools are nonspecific, blurring the lines between human trafficking offenses and other crimes. Several participants mentioned that there is often overreliance on screening tools as well. Because human trafficking is a complex crime, in-depth knowledge of the crime and its victims is necessary for the proper identification of victims and investigation of cases.

One survivor participant noted that many trafficking victims are arrested on charges such as petty theft, drug possession, or intent to distribute and that law enforcement officers often don't pick up on indicators that victims are being trafficked or recognize that they are being forced to commit these crimes.

## 1.7 Negative Effect of Raids and Operations

Several service provider participants and victim advocate participants suggested that law enforcement field operations such as sweeps, stings, or raids are not helpful in rooting out trafficking. While an operation may identify a few victims, the long-term loss of trust in law enforcement far outweighs any short-term gains. Alternatively, raids backed by carefully verified information originating from community-based reports (from citizens, victims, or service providers) can be incredibly productive, because the information provided is targeted. Undercover operations can be extremely valuable as well. They often help build cases that are evidence-based, and not entirely reliant on victim testimony. The key is to reimagine operations in a way that does not target or criminalize survivors and thus to minimize the chance of further traumatizing victims.

Immediate improvements can be made by involving service providers in field operations so that next steps are clear if operations detect victims. Translators are another key support, particularly when dealing with immigrant trafficking victims. Victims often report fearing the police because they have been convinced that cooperating with the police means they will automatically be deported. Several service provider participants and survivor participants noted that immigrant trafficking victims often fear individuals who speak or look like their traffickers, not knowing whom to trust.

Having translators on call helps law enforcement officers communicate with victims, enabling victims to understand their situation and to assist law enforcement with investigations. One survivor participant suggested not engaging with immigrant victims or witnesses altogether unless a translator is present.

## 1.8 Importance of Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach

While victims should not be the only means of driving a trafficking investigation, they are central to these cases. Consequently, there was universal agreement on the need for a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to identifying and working with victims.

Ensuring that victims' basic needs, such as clothing, food, and rest, are met before investigating further or requesting testimony is vital to building rapport. Several survivor participants pointed out that even after being identified, most victims and survivors do not realize that they are victims of human trafficking. Partnering with service providers to help victims identify as victims of trafficking can help with working through the guilt and shame that comes from being trafficked and empower victims to feel better prepared to testify against their traffickers.

Successful investigations and prosecutions depend on victim specialists and service providers to stabilize victims and to assist with their immediate needs and their trauma. While investigators should build a case from many angles, victim testimony often provides the best (or even the only) source of probable cause to obtain search warrants. As a result, evidence established throughout the investigative process is often obtained to corroborate victim testimony.

## **1.9 Impact of Law Enforcement Leadership/Structure**

The priorities and support of law enforcement leadership were highlighted as impacting law enforcement's ability to address human trafficking. When the leadership of a law enforcement agency receives education and training about human trafficking and supports the officers working on these cases, outcomes are better. The need to change the mindset of law enforcement leadership and to increase support from leadership was cited as being critical to universal adoption of anti-trafficking approaches. Participants also pointed out the need for law enforcement officers to be empowered to act when they recognize signs of human trafficking instead of fearing repercussions from supervisors who value numbers over impact.

There was a discussion about whether human trafficking investigations are properly placed within existing structures and units of law enforcement, such as vice squads. All participants agreed that prostitution arrests of human trafficking victims are inappropriate and unhelpful. Some participants expressed concern that if victims can't immediately self-identify as human trafficking victims, they are likely to be charged with prostitution. Other participants felt that this scenario was unacceptable and that vice squads needed to be properly trained.

Still, other participants argued that vice squads can be valuable partners. One participant in particular argued that the key to recognizing the capacity and expertise of vice squads is to view them as one tool in the toolbox. Retraining them to refocus their covert skills on traffickers instead of victims would be an effective strategy for utilizing vice squads effectively. Their focus needs to shift away from the individuals who are offering services and toward the traffickers who are monitoring and transporting victims, renting rooms, communicating directives, etc.

Vice squads shouldn't target victims; the focus should be on getting them to safety and following up with medical and service provider referrals, rather than subjecting them to arrest and intensive interrogation.

## **1.10 Negative Influence of the Media**

Several participants mentioned that media portrayals of victims are often inaccurate and thus negatively impact both the general public's and law enforcement's understanding of human trafficking. Biases and assumptions about what victims of human trafficking look like or how they act are harmful, and participants pointed out the need for the media to change how they report on human trafficking. When a case goes to trial, jury members' preconceived notions about how a victim should look or behave can have devastating effects. One survivor participant in particular noted that media portrayals of how trafficking occurs and who the victims are has serious implications for law enforcement's and the public's response to victims.

It was also mentioned by law enforcement participants that media portrayals affect law enforcement's image and public willingness to work with law enforcement.

## **1.11 Need for Increased Collaboration among Law Enforcement Agencies**

Several law enforcement participants highlighted the need to strengthen collaboration among local, state, and federal law enforcement. Joint training of task forces and law enforcement leadership is one way to promote communication and cooperation.



Some participants suggested having jump teams from federal law enforcement agencies, in addition to consultative assistance from experienced state and federal prosecutors, to assist in human trafficking investigations. It would be much easier to investigate human trafficking cases if more law enforcement agencies had access to teams with specific training.

Many participants noted that resources dedicated to investigating trafficking end up being poorly utilized by law enforcement due to pressure from local communities to “do something about the issue.” Such pressure often manifests in broad operations that are performative but ineffective, more often than not alienating local communities. Law enforcement practices need to evolve to be more targeted, and community relationships need to be nurtured so that people feel more comfortable cooperating with law enforcement.

Law enforcement leadership should consider human trafficking units to be premier units and should provide more training, set higher standards, and be more selective in assigning personnel.

## **1.12 Forced Crime**

Victim advocates highlighted the increase in the number of human trafficking victims being forced by their traffickers to commit crimes and consequently being arrested rather than identified as victims. Law enforcement agents, prosecutors, and defense attorneys should view these cases through the lens of existing legal defenses of necessity, compulsion, or duress, which are on the books in most states. A national survivor survey found that sixty percent of trafficking victims had criminal records related to trafficking that were not crimes of prostitution, loitering, or drugs. Of the 130 people who responded to the survey, only seven trafficking survivors responded that they had never been arrested.

Victims of human trafficking are often forced or coerced by their traffickers into committing crimes. Some of the crimes they are most often forced to commit include the following:

- Arson
- Auto theft
- Drug possession and delivery
- Fraud-related theft
- Holding guns or other weapons
- Homicide
- Loitering/solicitation
- Panhandling/begging
- Physical assault
- Production/possession/distribution of child pornography
- Prostitution
- Residential burglary
- Retail theft
- Robbing johns
- Sexual assault
- Transportation of minors

Law enforcement participants also pointed out that many youths are recruited specifically for the purpose of committing crimes on behalf of adults, because minors are less likely to be punished than adults and when they are punished, more likely to receive lighter sentences. Traffickers often use this tactic, exploiting minors to avoid criminal punishment.

# Part 2. Importance of Initial Actions in Investigations

---

## Guiding Thought/Question

- How are initial actions in an investigation crucial to ultimate success or failure in the prosecution of traffickers and the protection of survivors?

## Summary

This discussion focused on how the initial actions of law enforcement agents can impact the ability to identify potential cases of human trafficking. Factors such as timing, location, dress, language, and culture can all affect the ability of law enforcement agents to build rapport and trust with potential victims. This section discusses strategies for successful initial actions and interactions by law enforcement agents.

## 2.1 Location and Timing of Initial Meeting

Participants discussed the importance of careful planning by law enforcement personnel before meeting with or interviewing a potential victim of human trafficking. One survivor emphasized the importance of a non-threatening and safe location for the initial meeting with law enforcement. Guns and handcuffs should not be visible. Ideally, the law enforcement officer should be wearing plain clothes (no uniform or visible badge).

It can be incredibly dangerous for a victim who is currently being trafficked to be seen talking to law enforcement. Consequences could include danger to their lives, sudden forced relocation, or other retaliation. Meeting victims on their own terms is typically the best way to ensure their safety and build trust.

The timing of the initial meeting is another important factor. Investigators need to be cognizant of the need to approach victims at the right time. Unless there are exigent circumstances, such as imminent risk to a person's safety, meetings should take place only after any immediate needs of the victim are addressed. Some victims may want to talk right away, in which case there should be an effort to interview quickly. Other victims may need sleep, food, or medical care. Victims may need time to address issues related to alcohol or drugs, as traffickers often force their victims to use these substances. Many factors may lead a victim to shut down or run away; therefore, investigators should try to obtain only crucial information initially and should work to assure victims that their safety and their ability to exit their trafficking are of the utmost priority. More thorough interviews can wait until after the victim is safe and is receiving services. Meeting the needs of the victim should always come first. Victims are in survival mode and often require time in a safe environment before they are ready to talk.

One service provider participant noted that although service providers recognize the need for justice and are often motivated just as strongly as law enforcement officers are to see traffickers prosecuted, it is often detrimental to victims and investigations to try to force involvement on the victim's end.

When interviewing child victims, it is important to develop rapport with the parent/guardian/social worker/lawyer prior to the initial meeting with the victim if possible. That adult can explain to the child who the interviewer is and why the interviewer should not be considered a threat. Interviewers should never speak to child victims alone if at all possible.

## 2.2 Language and Culture

Law enforcement participants pointed out that language needs must be addressed first in order to assess all other victim's needs. Cultural specificities should be taken into consideration, and it's best to consult culturally competent professionals who can speak to the victims' unique culture when investigating.

Participants agreed that proper training in and awareness of how to work with a translator or interpreter in conjunction with victims and communities is critical. Ideally, trauma-informed translators who are as culturally appropriate as possible should be available to support communication among service providers, law enforcement officers, and victims. Using tools such as "I Speak" cards or Google Translate can be helpful in setting a baseline with victims when trained translators aren't available or if there is a delay in obtaining a translator.

# 3: Challenges Involving Service Providers

---

## Guiding Thoughts/Questions

- What are some of the challenges involved in working with service provider agencies?
- What challenges does law enforcement face in ensuring that sex trafficking victims have access to service providers?

***“Several survivors mentioned that a strong partnership between service providers and law enforcement is key to survivors’ healing.”***

— Survivor of human trafficking

## Summary

A collaborative relationship between law enforcement and service provider agencies is critical to the success of human trafficking investigations. Building trust with service provider agencies is key to successful referrals to law enforcement. Trust can be built when service providers and law enforcement understand one another’s roles and goals. Working to refer victims to appropriate service providers will also help build trust between law enforcement and victims. Survivors noted that being part of a peer survivor community made them feel more supported and better able to participate in investigations.

The process of interviewing potential victims, collecting corroborating evidence, and investigating perpetrators are more effective when survivors of trafficking have immediate access to services and support and when law enforcement and social services providers work collaboratively. It should be noted that services and supports need to be aligned with what victims want to avoid making victims less likely to cooperate with investigations. Survivors noted that victims who are sent to group homes or shelters where they are not comfortable are less likely to cooperate, due to feeling uncared for, unheard, or disrespected.

***Victims who have begun to heal from and process their situations are far more likely to have the capacity to cooperate during investigations.***

It's important that survivors have the tools and support necessary to address triggers, and that they avoid becoming further traumatized. One survivor participant mentioned that being connected with service providers resulted in access to a community of peer support and mentor support that made it possible to confront the trafficking and assist in the case.

Often when service providers fail at providing appropriate services, victims blame law enforcement or vice versa. This is not to fault the victim; however, it is important for law enforcement officers to be aware that unless they develop a partnership with service providers, law enforcement can become a target for victims' frustration and anger that actually stem from service providers' shortcomings.

Furthermore, law enforcement officers should not assume that all service provider staff members are sympathetic to victims. The law enforcement officer may care more about the victim than representatives of the service provider do. One survivor participant recommended partnering with various service providers in order to offer alternatives to victims. Furthermore, taking the time to have an intimate understanding of how various service providers operate and care for individuals of various backgrounds will help law enforcement make the most informed referrals. For instance, in a Christian-operated shelter, a trans victim might not feel safe or comfortable.

### **3.1 Importance of Partnership between Law Enforcement and Service Providers**

***“Collaboration is everything.”***

**— Federal law enforcement participant**

It was agreed by the group that survivors who receive care and support and who begin healing work are in a better position to collaborate during an investigation. Victims receiving services are more likely to serve as witnesses and are more reliable/consistent. Participants agreed that the key to working with victims and survivors is creating strong partnerships between law enforcement and service providers that are built on trust, respect, and communication and that allow for safe, boundary-respecting environments. Service providers offer victims the resources and programs they need to build new lives and help them heal. Participants agreed that the first priority should be helping and supporting survivors who have been trafficked.

Healing is a vital part of the journey. It should not be expected that survivors who suffer from unaddressed trauma or who are struggling to meet their basic needs are in a position to assist law enforcement with investigations.

Survivors shared the importance of mentors in all stages of their journey. Participants felt that victims who have access to peer and mentor support immediately after exiting trafficking are better able to process their experience and to find a sense of community to help guide them toward sustainable healing and stability.

Several law enforcement participants expressed the need for more support and guidance from the service provider community. One law enforcement participant noted that service providers are often community members who share community distrust of law enforcement. This can be a barrier to victim collaboration with law enforcement and may leave law enforcement officers who are seeking collaboration unsure of how best to do so.

Participants observed that many law enforcement professionals believe that service providers should prioritize helping law enforcement build cases by persuading victims to cooperate with investigations. Service providers felt strongly that their role was not to facilitate investigations of human trafficking. Participants agreed that law enforcement and service providers need to understand each other's roles and that more work is needed to strengthen collaboration between law enforcement and service providers.

From the perspective of law enforcement, issues arise when service providers gain information regarding others being trafficked or victimized and do not share it. This creates legal/ethical issues surrounding service providers' role as mandatory reporters. If a victim tells a service provider that there is an active child trafficking situation, and there is an exigent risk to a child's safety, law enforcement must be informed.

## **3.2 Building Trust between Law Enforcement and Service Providers**

A central theme of the discussion was the importance of building trust between law enforcement and service providers. Participants expressed the need for law enforcement and service providers to discuss issues of confidentiality, information sharing, and their distinct roles and responsibilities. Several participants underscored the importance of being able to have an open dialogue between the two groups, noting that when law enforcement and service providers communicate and collaborate effectively, not only is there an increased likelihood that investigations will be successful, but victims are also able to focus on their healing journeys with increased confidence that both law enforcement and service providers have victims' best interests in mind.

One law enforcement participant shared that service providers need to have a reason to believe that law enforcement is truly a safe harbor. Clients won't trust law enforcement unless service providers do. The participant advised spending time with service partners and continuing to build trust and solid relationships that extend beyond the current case.

## **3.3 Need for Rapid Referral to Service Providers**

Both law enforcement and service provider participants emphasized the importance of connecting survivors with appropriate and specialized service providers as soon as possible. Service providers are often equipped to conduct a thorough screening of victims for potential trafficking. Service provider participants mentioned that there is a critical twenty-four-hour window after a victim/survivor is separated from his/her trafficker to offer help. Participants also shared that if a victim's needs aren't met within that twenty-four-hour window, there is a very high risk that the victim will return to the trafficker or end up in another similarly abusive or exploitative situation.



Participants shared that if victims are initially arrested and held in detention centers, many service providers do not want to have contact until after they are released. Introducing service providers while victims are still being held can cause confusion, especially for immigrants and others who don't have a solid grasp of English. They may confuse service providers with law enforcement, and since many traffickers present themselves as helpers, victims often fear that any so-called helpers may exploit them.

### 3.4 Importance of Peer Mentorship for Victims

Survivors highlighted the importance of peer mentorship throughout the entire investigation/prosecution process. They shared that peer mentorship for victims is vital because it makes them feel safe and provides support. It's hard to work with survivors who don't feel safe or secure, and the majority of survivors don't feel safe or secure after exiting their trafficking situation. Survivors underscored how empowering support and protection are and how much these things help with the healing journey.

One survivor mentioned that programs like Safe Harbor, which offers peer mentors to help build trust and a support network for survivors, are "game-changing," providing survivors with a lens to envision what is possible in the future. Traffickers ingrain in their victims the belief that they cannot survive without their traffickers. Victims and survivors usually believe this, due to being arrested, lacking job opportunities, and being dependent on traffickers for housing, food, etc. It is a powerful motivator for survivors to see that others in their situation have successfully exited trafficking,

### 3.5 Lack of Clarity regarding Service Provider Role

While it is the role of a service provider to support and assist victims/survivors in meeting their diverse needs, it is not their role to make victims better witnesses. However, many participants from various disciplines commented that when victims' needs are met, they are inherently better prepared to participate in and to benefit from the criminal justice process.

*"Partnerships are built on trust. Trust is built on respect. Respect is built on knowing each other's perspectives and attitudes...which only comes from spending time and working together, before, during, and after times of crisis. It takes more than meetings and promises."*

- Lou Longhitano, Attorney Advisor, AEquitas

# 4: Tools, Resources, and Training for Investigations

---

## Guiding Thoughts/Questions

- Many cases of human trafficking go undetected because law enforcement agents do not have access to the information and tools needed to screen for potential trafficking or to initiate investigations.
- What kinds of tools, resources, or training are necessary for the kind of rapid, sustained response required of sex trafficking investigations?

## Summary

The discussion focused primarily on the need to improve training for law enforcement. Participants pointed out many issues such as lack of training, ineffective training, and outdated training, as well as lack of consistency or standards among various curricula. Participants had many suggestions for ways to improve training, including making training more interactive, incorporating the lived experience of survivors, and developing national standards for law enforcement training in the area of human trafficking.

### 4.1 Lack of Training

A consistent theme throughout the roundtable was the lack of training on the law enforcement side. Several participants pointed out that there are many inconsistencies in law enforcement training. While various training programs are available to law enforcement, the curricula vary immensely, which can result in different approaches to the same task.

There are also inconsistencies in the depth of training, with the result that some law enforcement professionals feel well-equipped to investigate human trafficking and others feel unable to distinguish between human trafficking and crimes such as prostitution, domestic violence, and wage theft.

## 4.2 Key Characteristics of Successful Training

There was broad consensus that training should be victim-centered, trauma-informed, and survivor-led. Participants agreed that training should be interactive and survivor-inclusive.

There are tried-and-true investigative steps that have historically developed substantial amounts of documentary evidence to aid in prosecution. Participants discussed the need for training to be more interactive and scenario-based so that frontline professionals can visualize what they are being asked to identify and respond to. Law enforcement participants requested that training be more hands-on and immersive. Many participants underscored the need for survivors to lead or be heavily involved in training. Roleplay was highlighted as an effective training strategy.

One service provider mentioned that training that engages survivors enables them to identify the tools and procedures that worked for them, making the training far more effective. Survivors can also share with law enforcement agents and prosecutors what they experienced as (inadvertently) harmful or traumatic.

Participants tended to agree that one formula for a successful training is a multidisciplinary team that includes a law enforcement member who is working on a case or who has experience working on a case, a survivor, and a service provider. Pairing such teams with engaged cadets and officers promotes effective training.

## 4.3 Need for Training Standards

It was noted that many trainings are inconsistent or outdated and don't incorporate best practices. There was general agreement among participants that training standards should be developed, and there was an immense amount of interest in using such standards to address the inconsistencies in training across the country.

In the context of human trafficking-specific units, it is important to identify investigators who are motivated and eager to work human trafficking cases and who have the temperament, patience, and empathy to work with victims. Not all law enforcement personnel appreciate the victim-centered, trauma-informed approach.

The development of a national program that is consistent and that is informed by all stakeholders in human trafficking cases would be useful in educating law enforcement more broadly about human trafficking.

## 4.4 Need for Access to Technical Assistance

It was noted that smaller jurisdictions, which may encounter a trafficking case only a few times a year, may need access to technical assistance when a case arises. Law enforcement officers need contacts to fall back on for guidance and support if they are not sure how to proceed.

Law enforcement participants expressed the view that entry-level law enforcement agents often aren't aware of the service providers and other resources that are available. Trainers should provide resources and local contact guides for law enforcement officers to refer to during investigations.

## 4.4 Need for Access to Technical Assistance

Participants noted there are many ways to improve investigations. One is being willing to step out of personal silos and collaborate with partners in the community. Technology can help with investigations, but it isn't a good substitute for collaborating with other professionals in the field and building relationships with the community. As has been stated throughout this report, human trafficking investigations are complex, and there will always be necessary steps that investigators may be unsure how to approach. Having a large network of connections will not only make investigations more efficient but will also incorporate multiple perspectives to ensure that the investigation is being led in a trauma-informed, survivor-supported manner that will mitigate further trauma and avoid further alienation from law enforcement.

However, such collaboration sometimes requires individuals to be willing to get past office politics, which often interferes with collaborative processes. It's important to be willing to forgo politics when necessary for the sake of the case.

Several law enforcement participants agreed that having real human trafficking case scenarios, both successful and unsuccessful, would help law enforcement professionals learn best practices, as well as the "do nots" of investigating human trafficking cases. Specially trained jump teams could be deployed all over the United States to support law enforcement professionals working on human trafficking cases. This would allow those with little or no prior experience to understand the fundamentals of investigating human trafficking cases.

# 5. Prosecution Challenges and Best Practices

---

## Guiding Thought/Question

- During the prosecution phase, what are the primary challenges and best practices of sex trafficking cases?

## Summary

Participants from across the country shared experience of unresponsiveness by county prosecutors' offices. Survivors and service providers discussed the importance of regular consistent communication during investigations. The importance of educating survivors about the criminal justice system and the prosecution process and providing them with mentors, support, and resources was highlighted.

*“Communicating along the way with survivors is really helpful. As a provider, I can share that this is a pretty big topic for survivors and even just taking ten minutes to check in is a good thing.”*

— **Service provider**

Law enforcement, however, must be cognizant that help should not be a bargaining chip to incentivize cooperation. Several participants acknowledged the need for resources, or perhaps a resource guide, that they could offer survivors as a way to support them and help them feel confident about participating in prosecutions, but said they felt insufficiently trained on the resources available to survivors.

## 5.1 Lack of Responsiveness by Prosecutors

Several law enforcement participants shared frustration at lack of effort by county prosecutors to prosecute cases of human trafficking. Several participants expressed the view that unless cases were handed to prosecutors “on a silver platter,” there was resistance to prosecuting them.

Some participants argued that human trafficking statutes are likely relatively new, and that therefore there is less case law for prosecutors or judges to look to in human trafficking cases than in other types of criminal cases. One participant noted that prosecutors are less likely to have mentors in their offices who have tried human trafficking cases. Moreover, prosecutors typically do not have access to as much training as law enforcement professionals do, nor are they encouraged to join or given access to task force meetings or other capacity-building opportunities. Also, many prosecutors’ offices have high turnover, so efforts to provide training or experience are often undermined by staff departures. Some prosecutors believe that “good” cases are handed to federal prosecutors, leaving little opportunity for county prosecutors to gain experience in prosecuting human trafficking cases. Several participants suggested that providing local prosecutors’ offices with access to experts or other resources would be useful, as there are often few experienced attorneys on staff to learn from.

Prosecutors are often risk-averse. Concerns about being judged on conviction rates discourages them from going forward on cases they are unsure they can win. This is often a factor in the prosecution of intimate partner violence and sexual violence cases. Prosecutors need training to develop the skills required for confidently presenting effective cases. Key areas where training should focus include jury selection, jury instruction, the use of experts, trauma-informed examinations, forfeiture by wrongdoing, and arguments to combat common defenses.

## 5.2 Need for Survivor Resources and Support During Prosecution

Survivors shared that they are rarely educated about the prosecution phase, and that there is little to no communication from anyone unless it's specifically related to their testimony. Survivors need to have resources and support during this stressful phase. Some survivors expressed feeling cast aside after they had “served their purpose.” Other aspects of the prosecution process that further traumatize survivors include threats by prosecutors to incarcerate or charge victims unless they perform under the conditions the prosecution sets.

Hands-on education or educational materials are needed to explain the criminal justice process to survivors and to make the legal process less challenging and intimidating for them. Such resources would supplement ongoing support for survivors' mental and emotional health throughout the prosecution phase.

## 5.3 Pre-Trial and Trial Strategies

Participants discussed creative charging decisions and specific pre-trial and trial strategies. For example, the use of expert witnesses can make it possible to build victim-centered cases that are less reliant on victim testimony.

Also, when prosecutors can prosecute co-occurring crimes, there is a better chance that some charges can be proven without victim testimony—for example, money laundering, RICO or organized crime, crimes related to child sexual assault, pimping and pandering, drug-related crimes, and so on. This approach requires law enforcement and prosecutors to work together early on to ensure that necessary evidence is gathered and preserved. Expert witness testimony can be incredibly impactful when the judge and jury are educated about common dynamics in sex trafficking cases.

Expert testimony can serve to demystify trafficking and illustrate what it looks like in the community as well as to explain victim behavior that seems counterintuitive. In fact-specific cases, prosecutions for human trafficking can be successful without victim testimony. This is particularly helpful in cases involving minor victims or situations where documented victim statements can be introduced as non-hearsay or as exceptions to hearsay that do not violate Crawford (for example, statements to medical personnel and other non-law enforcement individuals).

# Part II: Summary of Best Practices and Recommendations

---

## Best Practices for Successful Investigations and Prosecutions

### 1. Victim Testimony

There was a general discussion about victims' fear of testifying in court and confronting their traffickers as barriers to identification. One survivor shared that her trafficker was able to be prosecuted without her testimony because she collaborated with law enforcement regarding the collection of evidence during the investigation.

It was also mentioned that some Enhanced Collaborative Multi-Disciplinary Anti-Trafficking Task Forces are seeing success in building cases without victim testimony. While forgoing victim testimony may not always be an option, most participants seemed open to the idea of moving in the direction of building cases that do not require victim testimony.

Participants reaffirmed the multidisciplinary model for working to address human trafficking by underscoring that no one agency can address the problem alone.

*“You can build relationships from the top down or ground up, but build relationships.”*

— Federal law enforcement participant



## **2. Survivor inclusion in training, awareness campaigns, operation planning, trial preparation, etc. is critical to being trauma-informed and to mitigating trauma in an investigation**

Survivors of trafficking offer a unique and intimate lens through lived experience. Combined with professional experience built on anti-trafficking work and knowledge, they are able to use the information obtained through the field and apply their expertise to offer impactful insight on how best to combat trafficking, build programming, develop and lead training, and collaborate with victims and survivors during identification and afterward.

## **3. Sustained efforts to build community trust are essential to successful investigations**

Consistent outreach by law enforcement to underserved and vulnerable communities is necessary to build the trust required for community members to report human trafficking. Education about how human trafficking impacts these communities is also important. Trust between law enforcement and communities is the foundation for successful identification, cooperation, and investigations.

## **4. Trauma-informed, victim-centered, and survivor-inclusive approaches are all critical to successful investigations and prosecutions**

All participants shared the view that successful investigations and prosecutions occur when victims and survivors are well cared for, respected, and openly involved in their own cases.

## **5. Cross-Swearing in multiple jurisdictions is a valuable tool**

U.S. Attorneys' Offices around the country have the authority to "cross designate" state and county prosecutors as Special Assistant United States' Attorneys (SAUSAs). Doing so facilitates investigative collaboration by encouraging local and federal law enforcement to conduct investigations together, without concern about which prosecutor they will present the case to. State and federal prosecutors can be jointly involved and can both have access to evidence (including confidential grand jury material) and information about the investigation as it develops. They can collaborate to let the case unfold fully before deciding whether it should be prosecuted in state or federal court. For example, if a local police department is assisted on a case by a county prosecutor who is cross-designated, that prosecutor could remain involved even if the case expands to multiple jurisdictions and could participate in prosecuting the case in federal court.

## **6. Mentoring and peer support for survivors not only support survivors in their recovery journeys but are also essential strategies for improving investigations and prosecutions**

Survivor participants recommended that victims and survivors be connected with other survivors for mentoring and peer support during investigations and prosecutions.

## **7. Raids and sweeps can be valuable law enforcement tools, but they should be used with caution**

There are times when enforcement actions, raids, or warrant executions are carried out due to intelligence that victims are present and are being held. These are effective actions that rescue victims. However, raids and sweeps that are routine or that are used as fishing expeditions cause fear and anger in communities and undermine the trust between community members and law enforcement. When there is a lack of trust, community members will not report suspected human trafficking, victims will not disclose, and traffickers continue to operate with impunity.

## **8. Witness intimidation must be identified and countered at the start of an investigation**

It has been noted that witness intimidation is rampant in human trafficking cases. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors should assume that human trafficking is happening and they need to take a multi-pronged approach to combating it, including educating victims on what intimidation may look like (subtle emotional pleas), what to do when it occurs, and how to prevent it. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors need to be proactive in identifying and investigating witness intimidation (the trafficker's tactics during trafficking typically suggest what their intimidation tactics will be), and prosecutors need to be aggressive in addressing witness intimidation with the courts through actions such as moving to revoke/modify bond conditions, filing rules to show cause for contempt of court, filing additional charges, litigating the inclusion of witness intimidation in their cases as 404(b) or consciousness of guilt evidence, and admitting victim statements under forfeiture by wrongdoing.

## **Best Practices for Successful Investigations and Prosecutions**

### **1. Create coordinated service referral networks with monitoring and service satisfaction input from survivors.**

Such networks are key to ensuring that victims and survivors receive high-quality services.

### **2. Create sustained high-quality training that incorporates individuals with lived experience and the data/intelligence aspect of crime.**

High-quality training is critical to improving all aspects of the criminal justice process, from identification through prosecution.

*“No Death by PowerPoint.”*

—Bill Woolf, Executive Director, Woolf Group Strategic Solutions

### **3. Increase awareness of human trafficking and provide more education about human trafficking, both for the public and media.**

Greater awareness and more education are needed to shift perceptions and expectations regarding what human trafficking is and who the victims are.

*“Don’t be blinded by your own assumptions.”*

— Former United States Ambassador Lou deBaca

#### **4. Develop best practices to inform how vice squads address human trafficking.**

Enact policies that address how officers must conduct any undercover operations related to human trafficking, including explicit prohibitions on sexual contact.

Recommend that undercover operations be targeted to identify traffickers or trafficking victims and that no arrests be made for selling sex (or possession of drugs), regardless of whether the individuals involved identify as victims. Law enforcement agents routinely hold the view that they are helping victims of trafficking by arresting them to get them off the streets, but survivors report feeling traumatized by being arrested. Furthermore, arresting victims undermines their ability to trust law enforcement.

Recommend strategies for initial encounters. Survivors shared that an officer's first words to a potential victim could be, "I am the police, but you are not under arrest, and you are not in trouble. I just want to make sure you are okay. I am here to help you, if you choose to let me." Such an approach may identify a trafficker, identify a potential victim, or connect a potential victim with services. Ideally it will also mitigate most of the negative impacts of traditional vice stings

#### **5. Recognize and address the historical trauma of communities of color that are disproportionately affected by human trafficking.**

*"Recognizing historical trauma is important, but recognizing existing data points around the current trafficking epidemic in communities of color is more actionable by law enforcement."*

— Law Enforcement Agent

## **6. Limit the duplication of effort and facilitate more multi-stakeholder efforts to address trafficking.**

## **7. Develop training standards and a certification process for law enforcement training on human trafficking.**

No universal training standards exist for human trafficking training for law enforcement, therefore training standards need to be established.

*“Let’s be blunt—There is more bad training than good training...and then there’s the training that hasn’t been updated since 2006.”*

—Erin Albright, Project Roadmap Co-Director, ICF

## **8. Rethink current approaches to identifying victims to avoid overreliance on the Indicator/red flag approach.**

While participants agreed that screening tools are necessary for identifying human trafficking cases and victims, they also agreed there is overreliance on screening tools. Basic indicators and red flags are often insufficient to identify human trafficking cases, and several basic identification techniques also apply to crimes such as sexual assault and domestic violence.

Due to the complexity of human trafficking cases, law enforcement officers have to rely on a combination of screening tools, in-depth training, and case studies. For the untrained eye, it can be incredibly difficult to recognize indicators of human trafficking.

Law enforcement participants and survivors alike raised concerns that law enforcement officers often feel entitled to information, believing that victims who have information should share it. If a victim has information about the abuse of others, it is necessary for law enforcement to obtain that information, especially if there are children involved. However, law enforcement officers often fail to consider that they are not entitled to require victims to sharing their stories and that the trauma resulting from trafficking makes it difficult for victims to discuss what has happened to them. This is especially true of recently identified victims, whose memories are often impacted by trauma and who have not had time to process their experiences or to exit fight-or-flight mode. Participants recommended connecting victims with service providers and giving them time to be removed from their situations and to begin their healing journeys before intensely questioning them or expecting cooperation.

# Appendix A: Report Conveners

---



## **Global Center on Human Trafficking**

Mailing Address: 1 Normal Ave, Montclair, NJ, 07043

Contact: Ali Boak, Director

Email: [boaka@montclair.edu](mailto:boaka@montclair.edu)



## **Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation**

Mailing Address: 150 East 58th Street, 27th Floor.  
New York, NY 10155

Contact: Ariel K. Grossman, Acting Executive Director

Email: [akg@fehsf.org](mailto:akg@fehsf.org)



## **Fermata Discovery, Inc**

Mailing Address: 116 W 23rd St., Ste. 500, New York, NY 10011

Contact: Matthew Jack, Strategic Advisor Subject Matter Expert

Email: [mjack@fermata.us](mailto:mjack@fermata.us)

# Appendix B: Participant Contact Information

---

**Name:** Abizaid, Guillermo Galarza

**Title:** Vice President

**Affiliation:** ICMEC

**Email:** [Ggalarza@icmec.org](mailto:Ggalarza@icmec.org)

**Name:** Albright, Erin

**Title:** Project Roadmap Co-Director

**Affiliation:** ICF

**Email:** [Erin.Albright@icf.com](mailto:Erin.Albright@icf.com)

**Name:** Anderson, Jane

**Title:** Attorney Advisor

**Affiliation:** AEQUITAS

**Email:** [janderson@aequitasresource.org](mailto:janderson@aequitasresource.org)

**Name:** Boak, Ali

**Title:** Director

**Affiliation:** Global Center on Human Trafficking

**Email:** [boaka@montclair.edu](mailto:boaka@montclair.edu)

**Name:** Boozier, Treia

**Title:** Survivor Advocate

**Affiliation:** The Global Center on Human Trafficking

**Email:** [Tboozier12@gmail.com](mailto:Tboozier12@gmail.com)

**Name:** Cell, Paul M.

**Title:** Chief of Police

**Affiliation:** MSUPD

**Email:** [cellp@montclair.edu](mailto:cellp@montclair.edu)

**Name:** Davis, Estelle

**Title:** Coordinator, Response to Human Trafficking Program

**Affiliation:** NYS OTDA

**Email:** [estelle.davis@labor.ny.gov](mailto:estelle.davis@labor.ny.gov)

**Name:** DeBaca, Luis

**Title:** Professor from Practice

**Affiliation:** University of Michigan Law School

**Email:** [lou.debaca@gmail.com](mailto:lou.debaca@gmail.com)

**Name:** Fernandez, Sabrina

**Title:** Program Manager

**Affiliation:** IACP

**Email:** [fernandez@theiacp.org](mailto:fernandez@theiacp.org)

**Name:** Jack, Matthew G

**Title:** Co-Founder, COO

**Affiliation:** Dolphin Solutions Group

**Email:** [MJack@dolphinsg.com](mailto:MJack@dolphinsg.com)

**Name:** Jones, Dawn

**Title:** Senior Project Manager

**Affiliation:** IACP

**Email:** [jones@theiacp.org](mailto:jones@theiacp.org)

**Name:** Kim, Pearl

**Title:** Senior Project Manager

**Affiliation:** Victim Report

**Email:** [pearlhkim@gmail.com](mailto:pearlhkim@gmail.com)

**Name:** Laguardia, Francesca

**Title:** Associate Professor, Justice Studies

**Affiliation:** Montclair State University

**Email:** [laguardiaf@montclair.edu](mailto:laguardiaf@montclair.edu)

**Name:** Longhitano, Lou

**Title:** Attorney Advisor

**Affiliation:** AEQUITAS

**Email:** [llonghitano@aequitasresource.org](mailto:llonghitano@aequitasresource.org)



**Name:** Lowe, Ashley  
**Title:** Survivor Advocate  
**Affiliation:**  
**Email:** [Lowemarie1221@gmail.com](mailto:Lowemarie1221@gmail.com)

**Name:** Medige, Patricia  
**Title:** Managing Attorney, Survivor Services Unit  
**Affiliation:** Colorado Legal Services  
**Email:** [pmedige@colegalserv.org](mailto:pmedige@colegalserv.org)

**Name:** Meeker-O'Rourke, Donna  
**Title:** Program Coordinator  
**Affiliation:** MSU  
**Email:** [meekerd@montclair.edu](mailto:meekerd@montclair.edu)

**Name:** Powell, Andrea  
**Title:** Director, Co-Founder  
**Affiliation:** Karana Rising  
**Email:** [andrea@karanarising.org](mailto:andrea@karanarising.org)

**Name:** Robinson, Christabelle  
**Title:** Communications and Media Specialist  
**Affiliation:** Global Center on Human Trafficking  
**Email:** [robinsonchr@montclair.edu](mailto:robinsonchr@montclair.edu)

**Name:** Russo, Frank  
**Title:** Director of Field Operations  
**Affiliation:** CBP  
**Email:** [francis.j.russo@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:francis.j.russo@cbp.dhs.gov)

**Name:** Ryan, David M  
**Title:** Project Director  
**Affiliation:** WCDVHRT  
**Email:** [wcdvhrt.director@gmail.com](mailto:wcdvhrt.director@gmail.com)

**Name:** Schmaedick Tan, Agatha  
**Title:** Staff Attorney  
**Affiliation:** Human Trafficking Legal Center  
**Email:** [agatha@htlegalcenter.org](mailto:agatha@htlegalcenter.org)

**Name:** Stegmann, Michelle  
**Title:** Attorney  
**Affiliation:** Volunteer Lawyer for Justice  
**Email:** [Mstegmann1928@yahoo.com](mailto:Mstegmann1928@yahoo.com)

**Name:** Turner, Kevin  
**Title:** Commander  
**Affiliation:** Tarrant County Sheriff's Office  
**Email:** [Kwtturner2@tarrantcounty.com](mailto:Kwtturner2@tarrantcounty.com)

**Name:** Wirsing, Erin  
**Title:** Project Roadmap Co-Director  
**Affiliation:** ICF  
**Email:** [erin.wirsing@icf.com](mailto:erin.wirsing@icf.com)

**Name:** Woolf, Bill  
**Title:** Executive Director  
**Affiliation:** The Woolf Group Strategic Solutions  
**Email:** [bwoolf@thewoolfgroup.com](mailto:bwoolf@thewoolfgroup.com)

# Appendix C: Literature Review

---

## Best Practices for Law Enforcement in Reducing Human Trafficking

*Francesca Laguardia, J.D., Ph.D., Global Center on Human Trafficking*

Human Trafficking is a unique and hidden crime. Federal and local law enforcement are aware that trafficking presents unique challenges, and are interested in developing successful strategies and training officers to use these strategies in their response to trafficking (Comrie, 2018; Mapp et al., 2016). Law enforcement and scholarly literature is in general agreement on best practices to reduce and respond to human trafficking, but this agreement is not widely known or shared. The below brief reviews and summarizes this literature and highlights these areas of agreement.

Victim reporting is essential to reducing trafficking, particularly because police identification of victims is low (Farrell et al., 2019; Mapp et al., 2016). This lack of identification hampers trafficking investigations and prosecutions, even in the face of new legislation designed to facilitate criminal justice responses to trafficking (Mapp et al., 2016; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Renzetti et al., 2015; Farrell et al., 2015). Police often rely on victim reports to pursue crime, but in the trafficking context victims are unlikely to report both out of fear of their trafficker and due to prior negative experiences with police (Farrell et al., 2019; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Farrell et al., 2012; see also Xie et al., 2006; Wolff et al., 2003). In particular, victims may not seek police assistance out of fear of deportation and/or arrest (Dahlstrom, 2021; Dept. of State, 2020; Farrell et al., 2019; Farrell & Feiffer, 2014).

Building trust with victims and increasing positive experiences with law enforcement is essential, both because it results in better outcomes and recovery for victims, and because it encourages victim reporting and (therefore) identification of trafficking cases (Struyf, 2022; Farrell et al., 2019; Department of State [TIP] 2020; Koster et al., 2015).

To facilitate this trust, the following practices are encouraged:

- **Decrease arrests.** Interactions with police can be severely negative, even abusive, and discourage future interaction with police (Lutnick, 2019; Gruber et al. 2016: 35); leading some researchers to suggest policing trafficking and policing prostitution may be contradictory goals (Farrell & Cronin 2015). Arrests also interfere with victims receiving services and other rehabilitative opportunities in the future (Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School et al., 2018; Gruber et al. 2016:32-34). Victims are less likely to report after experiencing arrest (Farrell et al. 2019: 652; Dichter, 2013), and may become more vulnerable to their traffickers once a threat of criminal prosecution or deportation has materialized (Dahlstrom, 2021). Arrest and criminal justice involvement can have other serious negative consequences as well, including trauma caused by the arrest and criminal justice system itself (Farrell et al., 2019; Dank et al., 2017).
- **Increase service provision.** Just as arrest may have a negative effect on reporting, positive experiences make reporting more likely (Farrell et al., 2019). Victims of trafficking prioritize safety, service provision, survival needs, expungement of criminal records, and immigration support (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2021; Nichols et al., 2019; Farrell et al. 2019; Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School et al., 2018; McCann, 2018; White et al., 2017; Gruber et al., 2016; Clawson, 2006).
- **Service provision is an end in its own right. Police must separate duty to aid victims from duty to arrest and prosecute.** Police should understand duty to respond to victims is separate from duty to prevent or respond to crime (Bejinariu et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2010). Positive interactions with police, as well as the provision of services, make recovery from victimization more successful (Farrell et al., 2019; Kunst et al., 2015; Elliot et al., 2013). But conditioning favorable dispositions on cooperation or completing services may reduce cooperation or willingness to report, and mandated therapy is often less successful (Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School et al., 2018; White et al. 2017; Gruber et al., 2016). Service providers, not law enforcement, should monitor how services are provided, and these services should be provided without being conditioned on cooperation (Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School et al., 2018).

- **Increase police training on human trafficking specifically.** Police may be confused about the definition of trafficking, available statutes, non-physical methods of coercion, and general notions of the ways that trafficking victims present (Bracy et al., 2019; Farrell et al., 2014; Farrell et al., 2010). Training is necessary in order to increase identification of trafficking victims, whether to pursue prosecution or to provide services (Bracy et al., 2019; Farrell et al., 2019; Mapp et al., 2016; Renzetti et al., 2015; Farrell et al., 2014; Farrell et al., 2010; Stolz 2010). Increased training can substantially increase police and service provider identification of victims (Shadowen et al., 2021; Farrell, 2014).
- **Increase training on trauma-informed and victim-centered interviewing.** Human trafficking often results in trauma for victims, and interviews with police, prosecutors, and service providers can be difficult and retraumatizing, presenting an additional barrier to reporting (Crisham & Lipez, 2022; Richie-Zavaleta et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2019; Mapp et al. 2016). All members of law enforcement and service providers should be trained in trauma-informed interviewing and victim-centered approaches (Crisham & Lipez, 2022; Richie-Zavaleta et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2019; Mapp et al. 2016).
- **Train law enforcement and service providers on support available for victims, including compensation, criminal records expungement, and visas.** Victims prioritize safety and survival needs over prosecution, and these resources are necessary for their well-being. Obtaining these resources often relies on law enforcement support or service providers' aid (Huff-Corzine, L. et. al., 2017; Mapp et al. 2016; Ross-Sherriff et al., 2015; Grubb & Bennett, 2012, Clawson et al. 2006). Law enforcement and service providers must be trained on these options in order to support them (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018; Huff-Corzine et. al., 2017; Mapp et al. 2016; Ross-Sherriff et al., 2015; Grubb, D., & Bennett, K., 2012, Clawson et al. 2006). Victims may have criminal records because they were forced into criminal activity, or because they used illicit substances as a coping mechanism, or because they engaged in criminal activity such as theft to survive, or because their trafficker used accusations in the criminal justice system as a way to maintain control of them (Richert 2021). Criminal record relief is an important part of the criminal justice response to human trafficking (Coward, 2021). These services must be offered without conditions. (Bejinariu et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2019; Farrell et al., 2010).

- **Increase collaboration between state and federal law enforcement and service providers.** Task forces increasing collaboration have been associated with increased success in pursuing traffickers (Richie-Zavaleta et al., 2020; White et al., 2017; Huff- Corzine et al., 2017; Ross-Sherriff et al., 2015).

## References

- Bejinariu, A., Kennedy, M. A., & Cimino, A. N. (2021). "They said they were going to help us get through this...": documenting interactions between police and commercially sexually exploited youth. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 44(3), 241-257.
- Bigio, J., & Vogelstein, R. (2021). *Ending Human Trafficking in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Bracy, K., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). A four-year analysis of labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics and labor trafficking patterns. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 7(1), 35-52.
- Clawson, H., Dutch, N., & Cummings, M. (2006). Law enforcement response to human trafficking and the implications for victims: Current practices and lessons learned. *Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice*.
- Coward, C. (2021). Breaking Secondary Trauma: Developing Conviction Relief Legislation in the United States for Sex-Trafficking Victims. *University of Baltimore Law Review*, 50(3), 5.
- Crisham, K., & Lipez, J. M. (2022). Developing a Successful Human Trafficking Practice. *Dep't of Just. J. Fed. L. Prac.*, 70, 297.
- Dahlstrom, J. (2021). *Trafficking and the Shallow State*. *UC Irvine L. Rev.*, 12, 61.
- Dank, M. L., Yahner, J., Yu, L., Vasquez-Noriega, C., Gelatt, J., Pergamit, M. R., & Center, J. P. (2017). *Pretesting a human trafficking screening tool in the child welfare and runaway and homeless youth systems*. New York, NY: Urban Institute.
- Dichter, M. E. (2013). "They arrested me—And I was the victim": Women's experiences with getting arrested in the context of domestic violence. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 23, 81–98.
- Elliott, I., Thomas, S., & Ogloff, J. (2013). Procedural justice in victim-police interactions and victims' recovery from victimisation experiences. *Policing & Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, 24, 588–601.
- Farrell, A., & Cronin, S. (2015). Policing prostitution in an era of human trafficking enforcement. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 64(4), 211-228.
- Farrell, A., Dank, M., de Vries, I., Kafafian, M., Hughes, A., & Lockwood, S. (2019). Failing victims? Challenges of the police response to human trafficking. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 18(3), 649-673.

Farrell, A., Dank, M., de Vries, I., Kafafian, M., Hughes, A., & Lockwood, S. (2019). Failing victims? Challenges of the police response to human trafficking. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 18(3), 649-673.