

Human Trafficking Task Force Guide

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How to Use This Guide

This Guide serves as a resource to assist in the formation of new task forces as well as provide guidance and support for existing Task Forces. The Guide provides a step-by-step outline, beginning with the basics of human trafficking and progressing to task force formation, operation, and guidance on how to carry out a victim-centered response, deliver victim services, and build strong cases for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking.

Established Task Forces can use this Guide to enhance existing operations or as a tool to assist in the revitalization of Task Force efforts and operations. Task Forces that are currently restructuring or rebuilding will also benefit from reviewing the Guide to evaluate strengths and weaknesses as well as identify creative and promising practices in task force operations that will ultimately contribute to ideal case outcomes.

This Guide does not provide OVC or BJA programmatic or grant-specific information as it is intended to be a tool for all anti-trafficking task forces, regardless of funding source. While this Guide was designed for task forces, it is a tool that can be used by anyone in the anti-trafficking field looking for guidance on laws and legislation on trafficking, collaboration between law enforcement and victim service providers to promote victim-centered responses to trafficking, and more. The Guide focuses on the U.S. response to human trafficking. However, it also may be useful to counterparts in other countries seeking to initiate or strengthen their multidisciplinary anti-human trafficking efforts.

Throughout the Guide, you will find resource links and call out boxes with additional information. They are categorized in different ways:

Smart Tips and Practices	Examples and Case Studies	Tools	Key Terms and Concepts	Additional Resources, Information, and Training
These include smart practices in task force management, victim identification, victim service provision, and investigation and prosecution of human traffickers.	These include news articles and documents on human trafficking cases, as well as real-world Task Force examples.	These include fillable forms, outlines, websites, search tools, videos, and posters.	These include definitions of key terms, laws, and concepts in the anti-trafficking field.	These include research articles and links to other websites for additional information and training opportunities.

OVC TTAC neither endorses, has any responsibility for, nor exercises any control over the organization's views or the accuracy of the information contained in those pages outside of OVC TTAC's website.

Introduction—Human Trafficking Task Force Guide

Developed in partnership by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), this Guide is a resource to support established task forces and provide guidance to agencies that are forming task forces. Its purpose is to assist in the development and day to day operations of an anti-human trafficking task force and to provide fundamental guidance for effective task force operations.

First used in 1941, a "task force" is a *temporary grouping under one leader for the purpose of accomplishing a definite objective*. The U.S. DOJ has used this term to describe grant-funded multidisciplinary anti-trafficking teams since 2004 when BJA and OVC first funded local law enforcement agencies and local victim service providers (VSPs) to work collaboratively to combat human trafficking. Nationwide, human trafficking task forces are multidisciplinary teams established with the goal of providing the broadest range of services and resources for victims and the most wide range of investigation and prosecution options in response to the perpetrators of this crime. Local law enforcement agencies and victim service providers are partnered with federal and state investigative, enforcement, and regulatory agencies and resources in pursuit of the most comprehensive response to the crime of human trafficking. This multidisciplinary task force response model (i.e., of agencies from various disciplines working together) is encouraged by the U.S. DOJ, and is considered worldwide as a "best practice" in the response to human trafficking.

This Guide refers to all multidisciplinary, collaborative, anti-human trafficking efforts as "task forces." Multidisciplinary teams may also be referred to as coalitions or networks. **For the purposes of this Guide, task forces are those which focus on identifying human trafficking, serving victims and investigating and building cases.** These are the primary activities; however, others such as training, technical assistance and community awareness/education are viewed as activities that contribute to a task force's ability to perform the three core functions. The principles and advantages of the task force model apply to all multidisciplinary teams, regardless of funding sources or government affiliation.

The content has been carefully screened and evaluated by anti-human trafficking victim service providers, law enforcement officials, and prosecutors. It is a living document. As new practices and resources that have proven helpful to these Task Forces become available, OVC's Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC) will incorporate them into the document to enhance the effectiveness of this Guide.

If you have questions regarding this Guide, please contact OVC TTAC at ttac@ovcttac.org.

If you have questions regarding the OVC-funded human trafficking task forces, contact Project Roadmap at projectroadmap@icf.com.



Resources: Report Human Trafficking

In case of an emergency, please call 911. Report suspected human trafficking activity to federal law enforcement at the numbers below or reach out to these agencies for assistance, resources, and technical assistance.

- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI): Submit an [FBI Tip](#) online or call your local [FBI field office](#).
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) HSI: Call 1-866-347-2423 (toll free) or [report online](#).
- For additional referrals, call the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), a multilingual, toll-free, 24-hour anti-trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888.
- Referrals can also be made to [Polaris](#) via text message to BeFree (233733).

1. Understanding Human Trafficking

Taskforce members and service providers should have clear understanding of the definition of human trafficking, relevant laws and policies, risk and protective factors, and victim centered approaches. For training on these items, consider the following resources.

The OVC TTAC Understanding Human Trafficking Training Series

The Understanding Human Trafficking training is a series of five interactive online modules that offer foundational learning on trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches to human trafficking. Understanding Human Trafficking is unique in equipping participants to think critically about human trafficking using reliable resources, both locally and from across the United States. Some of the skills offered include—

- Implementing trauma-informed approaches to victim identification and outreach.
- Assessing victims for comprehensive service needs.
- Employing a collaborative victim service delivery model by connecting with local partners.
- Identifying accurate data and research on human trafficking.
- New strategies for researching and analyzing laws and policies that impact human trafficking, victim services, and victims' rights.

SOAR Online

SOAR Online is a series of self-paced CE/CME training modules. SOAR Online is designed to educate health care providers, social workers, public health professionals, and behavioral health professionals on how to identify and respond appropriately to individuals who are at risk of or who have experienced trafficking. The target audience includes physicians, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, registered nurses, dentists, psychologists, social workers, case managers, school counselors, public health professionals, health education specialists and allied health professionals.

OVC Funded Training and Technical Assistance Providers

Through its cadre of training and technical assistance (TTA) providers, OVC provides practitioner-driven, evidence-based TTA that is responsive to the particular needs of victim service providers and system stakeholders, their communities, and the victims they serve.

2. Purpose & Focus

A multidisciplinary anti-human trafficking task force encourages a collaborative effort among local and federal law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers to provide a comprehensive and victim-centered response to human trafficking.

In a broad context, task force efforts should pursue:

- Identification of victims of trafficking and effective delivery of comprehensive services.



Smart Practice:
Creating a coordinated and consistent response to trafficking is a major purpose of task forces.

- Identification of offenders through proactive investigations and prosecutions at both the local and federal levels when appropriate.
- Training law enforcement and victim service personnel on trauma-informed practices and coordinated responses.
- Raising awareness of the response efforts and service gaps within the community served by the task force.
- A Shared Understanding of all aspects of human trafficking to include all types of trafficking and victim identities.

Task forces may also incorporate a forum for other community organizations to become involved in the response to trafficking by offering additional services to victims

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.1: Forming a Task Force](#)

2.1 Forming a Task Force

A task force should have a mission, a clearly defined purpose, goals, and objectives

Legislatively mandated task forces often prescribe the membership, duties, and other characteristics based on the state laws that enact the task force. A state-mandated task force, however, should not be used in lieu of a local task force. In many cases, state-mandated task forces are administrative in nature and may not deliver the same results as local multidisciplinary collaborations.

Regardless of individual leadership or financial resources, **a key responsibility of task force efforts should include the development of protocols, MOUs, and decision-making practices to ensure the sustainability of the task force efforts in the future**. This is vital as, over time, personnel involved in the task force's efforts and the organizations responsible for key activities may change.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 4: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#)

The task force has a responsibility to avoid prioritizing one type of trafficking over another, as all victims have the right to protection from their traffickers and support in rebuilding their lives. Identifying how all victims can be served is important, as members will have varying experiences in supporting different victim populations. Ensure that task force members are sharing information about trends and potential victims.

Task forces with effective collaboration find partners to be the greatest strength in fighting this crime and supporting its victims, and a valued resource rather than an impediment.

Each task force is uniquely structured to meet local needs and accommodate local dynamics. With any model outlined below, members share the initial responsibilities to:

- Research and analyze the feasibility of forming a task force.
- Develop the framework for task force structure, operations, roles, and membership.

- Serve as champions and advocates for the formation of the task force.
- Seek out funding and other support for task force operations.
- Ensure that clear, reasonable, and achievable initial goals are set.
- Select a task force leader/coordinate.
- Meet regularly to steer task force development.
- Plan and coordinate the initial training sessions.

At the start, agencies that will make up the task force may not have direct experience in human trafficking. All initial task force members should at least:

- Have some expertise in working with potential victim populations.
 - To include adequately licensed and trained to work with such victims.
- Recognize why the complexities of this problem demand a multidisciplinary, collaborative, and victim-centered response.
- Be committed to working in that way to address the issues.
- Develop a shared understanding of human trafficking, and relevant laws and policies.

Choosing where to house the criminal investigative unit is an important decision for law enforcement. Investigating human trafficking is best centered within an investigative unit that broadly focuses on the collection, aggregation, and analysis of criminal operations. The broader the view of the possibilities, the broader the net casted to draw in human trafficking operations. Task forces are encouraged to dedicate law enforcement personnel by assigning and funding one or two full-time investigators who are supported by patrol officers and an intelligence function. The core team member from local law enforcement may be that dedicated investigator, or it may be someone higher up the chain of command. Vice units tend to focus on the area of investigation for which they are trained, resulting in many of those units' human trafficking investigations to focus on sex trafficking. Investigation of human trafficking in bureaus or units that have a broader crime focus and are linked to the collection and analysis of more broad streams of criminal and suspicious activity, may increase the likelihood of discovering all forms of human trafficking, including sex and labor trafficking in all its forms.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.1: Forming A Task Force](#)

2.2 Advantages of a Task Force

There are several advantages of the task force model:

- **Develop Collaborative Relationships:** Agencies involved in local anti-trafficking efforts, or seeking to become involved, can learn the roles and capacities of the other agencies.
- **Improves opportunity to meet the needs of victims:** It is impossible for any single agency or organization to comprehensively meet all needs of victims of human trafficking. A successful taskforce can create a stronger, collaborative response to victims' needs. Responding to the victims' needs and conducting the criminal investigation are not mutually exclusive.

- **Leverage Resources:** Task forces can create a directory of all member organizations so that everyone on the task force can easily identify the capacity of the other members.
- **More Effective Response:** As task force members learn about partner capacities and limitations, and gain experience working together, authentic collaboration on everyone's part makes responding to incidents of human trafficking more successful.
- **Greater Agency Buy-in and Support of Anti-trafficking Efforts:** Task force partners can leverage their success to gain greater agency support of anti-trafficking efforts. For example, the chief of a local police department may offer more resources toward anti-trafficking operations when she/he learns that victim service providers are willing to assist identified victims or take up the cause of promoting a regional anti-trafficking response protocol along with other chiefs of police.
- **Funding Opportunities:** Successful task force collaboration can assist in the application and obtaining of grants. For example, under the BJA/OVC grant program, the Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force program, existing collaborations between law enforcement and victim service providers must be documented in the grant application.
- **Joint Training Opportunities:** Task force partners can model how they respond to trafficking and promote all the partners' capabilities through coordinated training.
- **Promote a Unified Message on Human Trafficking:** Member organizations can promote a consistent and unified message on human trafficking to the community, along with advocating for needed changes in laws or funding related to the response to human trafficking.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.1: Forming A Task Force](#)

2.3 Assessing the Problem

Task force conducted assessments may help task forces determine where human trafficking may be occurring.

Training to organizations who may encounter victims, such as law enforcement, service providers, and emergency room doctors and nurses, can also help to anecdotally determine frequency that providers are encountering potential victims of human trafficking.

When assessing the problem through existing data like the examples below, the following parameters should be considered. Consider other potential parameters and sources of data that may help to identify areas of vulnerability and exploitation.



Key Concept: State vs. Federal Law

State laws often differ from the federal definition of human trafficking. It is important for Task Force members to have a strong understanding of all the legal tools that could be employed to address trafficking. [Click here for more information about state anti-trafficking laws](#)

Parameters	Sources of Supporting Data
Magnitude of the area's susceptibility (socioeconomic and demographic factors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data on population growth in immigrant communities • Data on migration patterns and labor issues • Geographic indicators (e.g., highways, borders) • Data on presence of low-wage work within the area (e.g., manufacturing, agricultural, industrial, domestic worker, and hospitality settings) • Federal and state labor department data
Documented cases of human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human trafficking cases • Media reports • Victim testimonials • National Human Trafficking Resource Center • OVC Human Trafficking Grantees • HHS Anti-trafficking Program Grantees • Human Trafficking Diversion Courts
Proximity to other federal Task Force groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map OVC-Funded Human Trafficking Services & Task Forces • Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams (DOJ/DHS/DOL) • Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces • FBI Innocence Lost Initiatives • U.S. Attorney's Offices
Historical crime indicators determined from preliminary assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, State and Tribal law enforcement intelligence on criminal group dynamics • Local, State and Tribal law enforcement intelligence on vice activities • Truancy arrest data • Visa fraud and other • Booking data from local jails and other correctional institutions • Data involving populations with Continued Presence, T or U visas
Presence of populations vulnerable to human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on runaway and homeless youth • NGO data on existing communities in the area, including immigrant populations and other groups • NGO data on providing services to victims of crime (domestic violence, sexual assault, complex trauma and local health departments or emergency rooms, legal providers, etc.)

Data Considerations

- Arrest data may not reflect current or significant levels of trafficking. A lack of arrests should never be construed as evidence that human trafficking is not occurring in a jurisdiction.
- Data collected from law enforcement entities and victim service organizations regarding human trafficking tips, potential victims, and cases often look very different from one another. Both forms of data can add up to a quality assessment.
- Human trafficking can occur under conditions that go unnoticed and be significantly underreported and underserved, leading to gaps within some data sources. Analyze information with a broad view of the full scope of human trafficking in all its forms.
- There may be linkages between trafficking operations and other criminal offenses. Examples include domestic servitude, assault and battery, intimate partner violence, truancy, money laundering and tax evasion, among other crimes.

Conducting a community meeting with community service providers and stakeholders during the assessment phase can assist in data collection and provide an opportunity to assess strengths and challenges related to investment, interest, and other potential resources. Invitees may include representatives from points of entry and identification into the services system. These may include providers from the following arenas:

- Child/adult protection
- Courts (state and/or federal)
- Churches/Faith-Based organizations
- Defense attorneys
- Domestic violence/sexual assault
- Immigrant-specific advocacy and services
- Immigration services
- Criminal and civil legal services
- Emergency or low-income medical clinics
- Youth services
- Homeless services
- Substance abuse treatment centers
- Low-income mental health clinics
- School social workers/counselors
- Food banks
- Social service agencies

A community meeting allows attendees to hear a clear message regarding the assessment goals, while also gaining feedback about the need for a task force. Survey information can be collected on:

- The identification of human trafficking victims within each services arena.

- Agency interest and investment in committing time and energy to the development of a task force.
- Suggestions on how to engage absent organizations.
- Outstanding questions on the federal and state definitions of this crime.

The meeting should explain the assessment plan and steps to move forward once the data are collected and analyzed. It might also be helpful to come prepared with ideas for how community partners can become involved in pursuing next steps, as enthusiasm and interest may increase in a community meeting atmosphere. Alternatively, key task force partners may choose to discuss in advance where the community groups can be most effective.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.3: Assessing the Problem](#)

2.4 Gaining Support for a Task Force

To gain task force support, you can present the results of the assessment to different law enforcement and victim service leaders. Most commonly, the support for the task force will come from the following offices:

- Chiefs of police or sheriffs
- Executive directors of various victim and social service agencies offering both comprehensive and specialized services
- Child welfare and child protection agencies
- Immigrant advocacy and service organizations
- Juvenile justice and diversion programs
- Legal service providers with human trafficking victim specializations or services
- State attorneys general and district prosecutors' offices
- Supervisory agents of federal law enforcement agencies
- Local U.S. Attorney's Offices (USAO)

The role of the USAO can be a significant factor in the success of task force operations. The USAO is in the unique role of responding to requests from federal, state, and local law enforcement to prosecute federal crimes. The USAO can mobilize a coordinated victim-centered law enforcement response and advocate for an array of victim services in the jurisdiction. Each USAO was directed in 2012 to establish or participate in human trafficking task forces. Since 2005, including the USAO is a requirement of DOJ's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force program. **Community groups appreciate it when task force leadership offers direction or, at least, engage with them to ensure everyone's efforts are aligned.** While this may appear to go beyond the scope of some task force responsibilities, community groups—when left out of this discussion—may launch efforts that are well meaning but are of little value to the community's response to trafficking, or even disruptive in the response to trafficking.

Some task forces will create a sector for community organizations that advocate for victims but are not involved in providing direct services to victims. These organizations may have tremendous social capital that can help in the creation, sustainment, or growth of a task force's capacities. While some may provide victim services (or fund agencies that provide services), others may focus on mobilizing action against human trafficking and advocating for victims, survivors, and policy changes in support of anti-trafficking activities.



Resources for Community Outreach:

- [Outreach Methods & Resources |](#)
- [Collaboration, Transformation, and Impact:](#)
- [20 Years of OVC's Anti-Trafficking Efforts Commemoration Guide \(ojp.gov\)](#)
- [Outreach Toolkit \(refugees.org\)](#)
- [Outreach to U.S. Minors Takeaways Sheet \(frameworkta.org\)](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.1: Forming A Task Force](#)

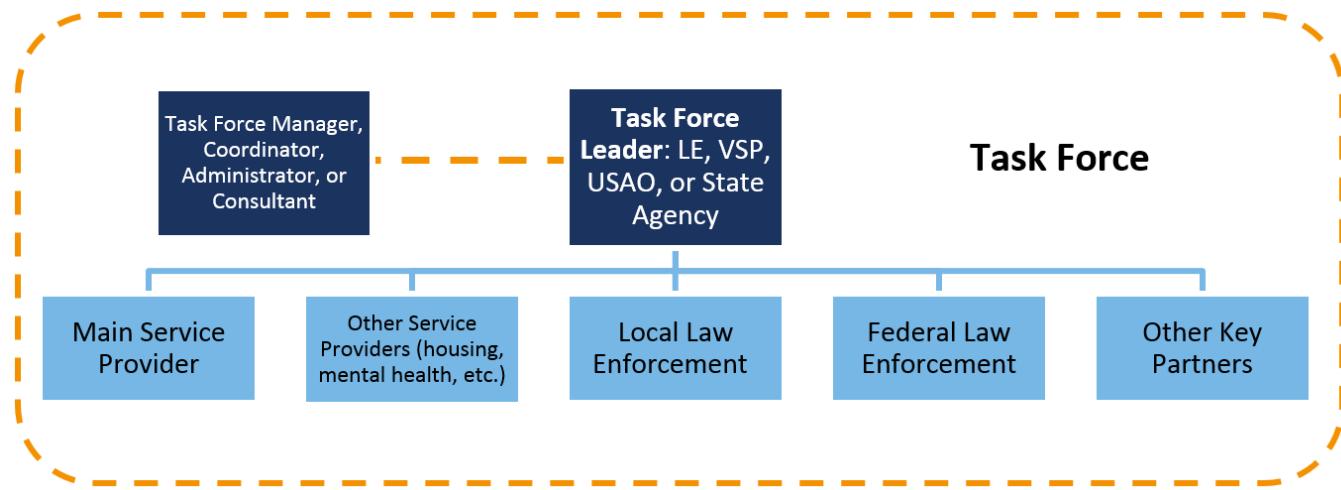
2.5 Task Force Models

Some taskforces may be co-led by senior representatives from multiple agencies, such as the U.S. Attorney's Office, the local police department, and a victim service agency, with additional core team members from FBI, HSI, the local legal aid bureau, and a workers' rights advocacy and services organization. Task force members should have equal responsibility, even if leadership responsibilities are delegated to one group over another. This sends the message to the larger task force membership, community partners, and potential funders that this issue involves mutual respect and trust in the division of leadership and responsibility between law enforcement and victim service providers, as well as equal investment in the task force and equal responsibility in its operations and outcomes.

The Bifurcated Team Model: includes two teams under the task force umbrella. This bifurcated model allows task forces with a high proportion of specialized members to expand their focus, engage all members, and utilize resources more effectively. Service providers are then directed to the relevant team. This also helps to keep your law enforcement partners engaged. Issues that are relevant to both teams are shared by the task force leader. For example, one team focuses on investigating and assisting foreign national victims. The other team focuses on investigating and assisting U.S. citizen victims.

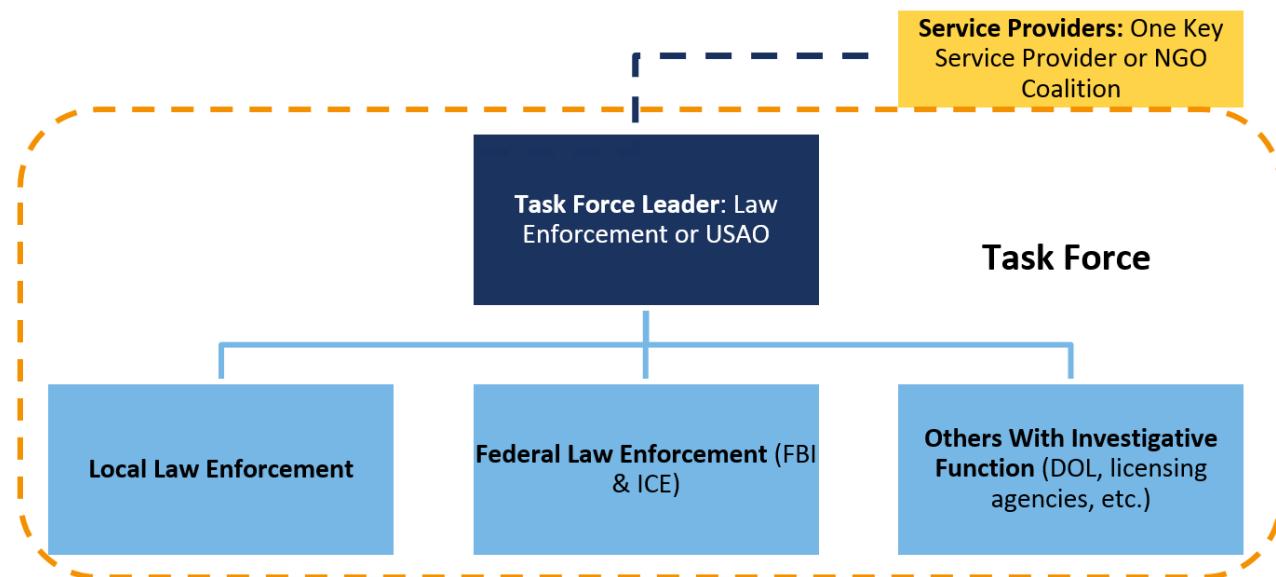
The Single Leader Model: The leader could be a federal or local law enforcement agency, prosecutor, USAO, or a victim service provider. Oftentimes, leadership responsibilities rest on an individual who is responsible for both conducting services and leading the task force, a situation that makes it difficult to find time to accomplish both objectives. Typically, these task forces bring together all members to discuss coordination of ongoing cases and cooperate to provide training to groups outside of the task force. They may be a relatively small group so that additional committees are not required. In this model, task forces often assign or hire part-time or full-time project managers to support information sharing, schedule trainings, convene meetings and provide meeting minutes, and manage the grant. Some task forces hire outside consultants to generate state and local law enforcement agency commitment on human trafficking and help bridge the gap between law enforcement and service providers

A typical **single leader task force model** is depicted below.



The **intelligence task force model** is a law enforcement structure that includes only the investigative and prosecutorial functions. The task force leader calls upon a service provider whenever it has a case that requires services for victims. Although it has advantages of more focused meetings and fewer risks of case or client confidentiality breaches, this model is not as effective in building partnerships and trust between law enforcement and service providers. In lieu of attending task force meetings, service providers will establish their own meetings to coordinate services and discuss issues that are pertinent to service provision, outreach, and training.

A typical **intelligence task force model** is depicted below.



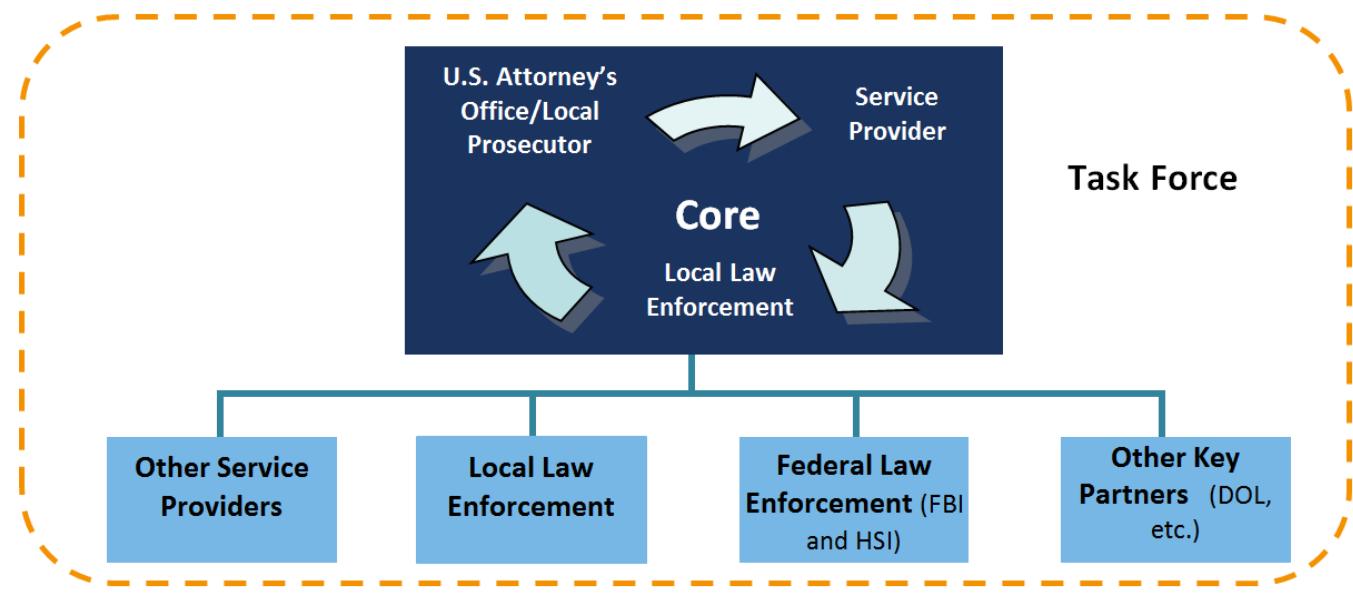
The **Core team model** is a task force structure in which, typically, law enforcement, service providers, and a prosecutor comprise the core team that guides other members. Members of the core team assess results, stay aligned with the mission, and have the authority to commit the organization and

themselves to a long-term relationship with the task force. A reasonable size for a core team is generally five to seven participants.

Depending on the mission and purpose of the task force, the core team may include representatives from the following professions:

- State or federal court systems
- Defense attorneys
- Local, regional, or state law enforcement
- Victim service providers, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), social service agencies, and/or legal service agencies already working with victims of trafficking
- Prosecutors (U.S. Attorney's Office, state and/or district prosecutor's office)
- Federal law enforcement (FBI, ICE, Homeland Security Investigations)
- Child welfare or child protection agencies
- Juvenile justice and diversion programs
- Social service agency, legal service agency, and/or NGO working with runaway and homeless youth or at-risk youth
- Social service agency, legal service agency, and/or NGO working with domestic violence or sexual assault victims
- Social service agency, legal service agency, and/or NGO working with immigrants

A typical **core team task force model** is depicted below.



For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 2.1: Forming a Task Force](#)

3. Operating a Task Force

The operations of an anti-human trafficking task force demand effective leadership and a unified commitment to the mission and the team. The formation of such a task force is a pursuit of justice, justice for the victim through an attempt at restoration of freedom and well-being, and justice for society through a successful prosecution of perpetrators.

This section presents strategies to establish a task force, including membership and management, information sharing, task force activities, and how to address common challenges.

For additional information, visit the [General Resources page](#).

3.1 Task Force Membership & Management

Membership recruitment and expansion efforts should look at what capacities and resources are necessary in order to be successful with the mission and core purpose of the task force. This section discusses the types of partnerships and members that are required to run a successful task force and how to outline roles and expectations, create committees, and develop protocols that will help leaders manage and set guidelines to run the task force.



Tips To Strengthen Task Force Focus

- Continually train task force members, both new and veteran, so that everyone stays abreast of the crime and protocols for response.
- Review case studies with the group. Assemble small groups to discuss a case, the elements of the crime, and appropriate responses.
- If a task force decides to have a narrow focus, make sure the task force name clearly indicates that focus to allow other entities to organize accordingly. (See [Chapter 3.1 Task Force Management & Membership - Task Force Operational Protocol - Memorandums of Understanding](#))
- If investigative focus is an issue, consider a bifurcated model. While some task forces choose to specialize in an investigative focus, an appropriate plan for response to all victims should be in place and ready for implementation.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Members

Members of any task force should possess the following characteristics:

- **Visionary and practical skills:** Have the capacity to plan for a goal and implement reasonable steps to achieve it.
- **Decisionmaking authority:** Possess the authority of the agency or organization to make reasonable commitments.
- **Organizational development skills:** Have the capacity to form a new collaboration that fosters nontraditional relationships, bring wide range of perceptions of human trafficking, use a variety of skills, and draw on varying disciplines.
- **Resourcefulness:** Tap into human and other valuable resources.
- **Commitment:** The most important credential of members of the task force is a commitment to developing an effective community response to human trafficking. Many task forces are formed out of local or regional interest without external funding because the members believe in the necessity of a coordinated task force response.

 **Tools: Find Victim Service Providers and Coalitions Near You**

[Runaway & Homeless Youth Grantees \(HHS\)](#)

[ATIP Grantees \(HHS\)](#)

[Rescue and Restore Coalitions \(HHS\)](#)

A task force will benefit from including representatives from a variety of agencies and organizations to expand its capacity to provide services to victims and bring investigations to successful prosecution.

This broad range in membership also can be beneficial in ensuring that the task force remains balanced in its efforts to combat all types of trafficking, without allowing local political or media pressures to skew the reality of human trafficking in all of its forms.

Wide membership also ensures that while some resources are devoted to case-specific needs, additional energy can go toward outreach to vulnerable populations, training for professionals on victim identification and appropriate service delivery, and effective public awareness campaigns, as described in [Section 3.1 on Committees](#). The goals of the task force will be accomplished far more efficiently and effectively if all members understand their roles and share a common vision and mission regarding the work.

Looking for agencies or organizations that have experience working with the target victim populations can be a way to identify experts in the community who do not identify as such. For example, in prioritizing identification of labor trafficking victims and the subsequent victim assistance response needed, a community-based provider with strong ties to the local immigrant community may be an excellent member for victim services. A different agency might offer an expertise in working with runaway and homeless youth or juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system, contributing significant expertise when it comes to serving minor victims of trafficking.

Not all groups have the capacity or resources to dedicate full-time staff. When full-time staff are not available, assigning formal roles and responsibilities to members of the task force increases the likelihood of effective and consistent operations.

As awareness of the task force grows within the community, other individuals and organizations of varying capacity and knowledge will desire to join, or collaborate with, the task force. It is important that

those performing a leadership role within the task force recognize and prepare for this and develop a plan to recognize these possible opportunities. Some of the organizations asking to be involved can be very helpful to growing and sustaining anti-trafficking efforts through fundraising activities, public awareness events, and working with local, state, and national political leaders.

Recruiting and Screening of Potential Task Force Members

Having an operational structure for membership and varying levels of participation can be effective for task force efforts. Some groups systematically screen members for participation, while others operate in a relatively open forum.

Some task forces limit their membership because not all organizations add significant value to the mission. Membership in these task forces is limited to those who will actively contribute to the mission and strategies, not just those who attend meetings. Such conditions serve to enhance the focus of the group, develop and build on key working relationships, and enhance trust and confidence among essential responder agencies and organizations.

Others choose to have wide membership; they may open the entire task force to all interested parties, or create a public awareness or other committee that is open to all interested community groups. This allows all interested parties to learn about trafficking, spread awareness, and contribute to the task force, while the direct service providers, law enforcement, and prosecutors remain focused on identified victims.

The appropriate size of a task force depends on the group's ability to work together efficiently and accomplish established goals. Expanding the group should be a deliberate move to strengthen the task force. Every participant should be expected to contribute actively to meet the goals of the group.

Potential Task Force Partners

Task forces should consider including representatives from regulatory agencies, social service agencies, victim service providers, community-based organizations, and criminal justice system-based victim assistance components.

Potential Task Force Partners

Law Enforcement

Criminal

- Local and state law enforcement agencies
- Local and state prosecutors
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Potential Task Force Partners	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) • U.S. Attorney's Office • Department of State, Diplomatic Security Section
Civil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division • Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) • National Labor Relations Board • Internal Revenue Service • State labor agencies
Victim Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-human trafficking organizations • Domestic violence, sexual assault, and teen dating violence shelters and programs • Homeless shelters and programs • Youth-focused shelters and programs • Local homeless, anti-violence, and youth-based coalitions • Legal service providers (civil, immigration, and criminal defense) • Immigrant community programs and service providers • Workers' rights programs and services
Other Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) (required for OVC-funded task forces) • U.S. Attorney's Office Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees (cooperation and coordination among federal, state, and local law enforcement offices) • National Network of Fusion Centers • Law enforcement associations (e.g., state associations, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Sheriffs' Association) • Security team and/or management from local shopping areas and malls
Criminal Justice System-Based Victim Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local law enforcement and/or prosecutor victim advocates • Federal victim witness coordinators/victim assistance Specialists (HSI, FBI, USAO) • Juvenile justice representatives (judges, detention facility managers) • Probation or juvenile diversion programs
Social Service Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Protective Services

Potential Task Force Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protective Services or Department of Child and Family Services • Child Advocacy Centers • Child welfare system • Department of Health and Human Services • Social Security Administration • State welfare agencies 	
Allied Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical professionals including doctors, nurses, and dentists, particularly those working in clinics or emergency rooms • Law firms • Victim impact/survivor consultants • Professors, academics, or researchers with specialized knowledge of human trafficking • After-school programs, local school principals, guidance counselors, school board members
Community Based Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-wage workers' rights and sex-workers' rights groups • Immigrant advocacy groups and immigration legal service providers • Faith communities
Regulatory Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives • Alcohol and Beverage Control • Department of Public Safety • Equal Employment Opportunity Commission • Food and Drug Administration • Local government licensing departments, regulating bodies (for massage parlors, nail salons, etc.) and code inspectors

While reviewing allied professionals listed in the chart above, consider creating a survivor board in your task force. Experienced victim impact/survivor consultants can support key task force functions, particularly in getting feedback on activities at a local level.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Community-Based Partnerships

Community-based organizations ([CBOs](#)) can provide a link between law enforcement and vulnerable populations that may otherwise be inaccessible because of a fear of law enforcement and government authorities. CBOs are private or public agencies that engage with the local community on a much more direct level to address the social and economic needs of individuals and groups, typically in a defined geographic area. Many of these CBOs were also formed to help bridge the gap between services and specific communities that may feel they are facing additional barriers to receiving services, whether based on income level, national origin, religion, language barrier, age, disabilities, health issues, or other factors.

Within task forces, there is often the idea that collaboration between governmental agencies and one or two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or nonprofit groups is sufficient. However, some NGOs or nonprofits that are engaged and interested in anti-trafficking work may not have the same community ties that the CBOs do. These ties enable the CBO to be instrumental in victim identification and referrals to the task force. CBOs also have more knowledge about appropriate messaging and strategies for working with vulnerable populations that have suffered from negative experiences in the past.

Many task forces neglect to involve CBOs in their initial efforts or find it difficult to convince CBOs to participate or engage with the task force. When CBOs are invested partners with, or members of, a task force, this can have a positive effect on the task force reaching vulnerable communities, establishing appropriate protocols, and accessing valuable resources for long-term survivor support. Some CBOs may play a more interactive role in supporting survivors and may be key partners in task forces while others can provide expertise on the communities represented but not necessarily participate in task force meetings.

Task forces can use the following tips to establish partnerships with CBOs:

- 1. Prioritize engagement with CBOs.** A task force should prioritize which CBOs it needs to engage based on the task force's assessment of the nature of human trafficking in the community. They need to become knowledgeable about the CBO's constituency, including demographics, background, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with efforts by other outside groups to engage the CBO in various programs.
- 2. Build trust by considering the CBO's perception of the task force and individual task force members, particularly law enforcement agents.** Understanding these perceptions will help the task force identify potential barriers to collaboration as well as strengths that it can build on in cultivating partnerships. For example, CBOs that work with migrant laborers may be hesitant to work with law enforcement for fear that the connection may put their community in danger of deportation. The task force should use informal meetings and targeted training to correct



Examples of CBOs

- Churches, mosques, temples
- Youth development groups
- Services for elderly individuals
- Faith-based organizations
- Domestic violence and sexual assault agencies
- Immigrant and day labor groups

misperceptions and develop a relationship with the CBO before it's incorporated within the task force.

3. Understand the incentives for the CBO to participate in task force efforts. Simply stating that human trafficking is a heinous crime does not guarantee CBO participation. It is important to communicate why CBO participation in the task force is worthwhile to the CBO, even if it seems obvious. The CBO's mission may prioritize issues such as jobs, immigration reform, public safety threats, and reduction of incarceration. The task force should identify and communicate to the CBO how participation in the task force will support the CBO's mission, thus engaging the CBO and its constituents.

4. Assess the CBO's understanding of the impact of human trafficking on its constituents. Many CBOs may not recognize or want to acknowledge that human trafficking is a topic of concern for their constituents. A good starting point is to learn about the CBO's work on related issues (such as domestic violence, child abuse, prostitution, immigration, or workers' rights). Examining how these issues are dealt with in the community will help the task force in building engagement around human trafficking.

5. Establish parameters that clearly outline the role of the CBO in the task force.

Negotiations between the CBO and task force leadership should define the role of the CBO. The task force should be clear if it is looking to involve the CBO because it seeks data, information, advice, and feedback on task force activities or wants to leverage the CBO for additional resources for survivors or for collaboration on outreach activities. Many CBOs are underfunded and overextended. The task force should explain how collaboration with the task force will be "worthwhile" to the CBO's activities, which will go a long way toward creating meaningful partnerships. Informal meetings and clear protocol proposals can also allay fears.

6. Invest in a long-term and mutually beneficial relationship between the CBO and the task force. Relationships with CBOs require a long-term investment. It may take years to build trust within a CBO and its community before they become interested in engaging more formally with the task force. The task force should plan for periodic training, meet-and-greets, mentorship with victim service organizations, and task force leadership participation in the CBO's outreach activities. Translated pamphlets, single events, and one or two outreach events are not sufficient.

For additional information and tools, see the Resource page for Section 3.1, Task Force Membership & Management.

Criminal Enforcement Partners

Local and state criminal trafficking investigations may include the local police department, sheriff or state police department, specialized state police investigators, local district attorney's office, and the state attorney general's office. Civil local and state investigations may consist of a much broader range of agencies, from the local city attorney's office to agencies that investigate wage and labor violations, address health violations, conduct building and safety inspections, provide child protective services,

and protect older individuals and people with disabilities. Federal criminal trafficking investigations usually include the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) HSI (one or both), the local USAO, and sometimes the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit in the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. DOJ. Federal civil trafficking investigations may include the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), EEOC, and other agencies. For all local, state, and federal cases, civil agencies may be brought into a criminal investigation to assist; moreover, civil agencies may refer a case to criminal agencies for further criminal investigation. Successful investigations will include one or more social service providers that offer critical support to the victim. Some victims will be represented by a civil attorney, immigration attorney (if they are foreign nationals), or both.

Task forces need to think creatively about other investigative partners. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service can be a partner when passport or visa fraud is involved; the Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations in the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S. DOL can be a partner in cases involving labor racketeering and labor recruitment fraud (guest worker cases); the IRS can be a valuable partner when financial crimes are implicated; and the Social Security Administration can be a partner if social security cards are fraudulently procured or if lawfully assigned numbers are misused. For additional information, [see Chapter 3.1 Civil Enforcement Partners](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

[Civil Enforcement Partners](#)

Collaboration with civil enforcement agencies on a human trafficking task force is crucial. Local, state, and federal civil enforcement agencies may encounter human trafficking cases that have not yet been identified by law enforcement or victim service providers. Such enforcement agencies also may detect trafficking during investigations of other crimes or regulation violations.

Civil agencies work together with criminal enforcement agencies, providing their expertise and knowledge of employment and labor laws to investigate labor violations related to the trafficking situation and to calculate restitution more accurately. This accurate assessment of restitution is particularly important in labor trafficking cases. For more information on restitution, see [Chapter 5](#).

In addition to addressing wage and hour legal remedies, sexual assault and harassment, and discrimination, some of these agencies [sign U visa and T visa law enforcement certifications](#). Some trafficking survivors may choose to explore their options as victims of workplace crimes, which are intertwined and related to trafficking-related crimes.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Federal Agencies

Relevant federal agencies include the U.S. DOL, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

U.S. [DOL, Wage and Hour Division](#) (WHD)

The goal of the U.S. DOL is to protect the benefits and rights of (and advance the welfare of) job seekers, workers, and retirees; improve working conditions; and advance opportunities for profitable employment.

WHD investigates complaints to enforce compliance of labor standards on behalf of workers. Workers may [file a complaint](#) with WHD, which will then launch an investigation and help make a decision on whether wages are owed to a worker. Further investigation may be able to uncover more than simply wage violations, including whether the worker is being subjected to trafficking or other crimes.

WHD has designated [regional coordinators](#) to assist with applications for [U and T visa law enforcement certifications](#). See the [Resource page of Chapter 4.4, Comprehensive Victim Services](#).

[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#)

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws barring discrimination against a job applicant or employee based on “race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information.” For example, if the trafficking survivor was sexually assaulted, harassed, or raped by the trafficker (in either sex trafficking or labor trafficking cases), the EEOC may investigate under laws regulating discrimination based on sex and sexual harassment under Title VII.

The EEOC has been actively litigating human trafficking cases to recover damages on behalf of trafficking survivors and exploited workers. They are also able to certify U visas so long as the crime is related to the unlawful employment discrimination investigation.

[National Labor Relations Board \(NLRB\)](#)

The NLRB is the administrative agency that enforces the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which was enacted in 1935 to protect the rights of workers to “form, join or assist labor organizations” and to “bargain collectively.”



Examples of DOL Cases

- H-2A: [temporary employment of workers in agriculture](#)
- H-2B: [temporary employment of foreign workers with seasonal skills in areas other than agriculture](#)



Case Examples: EEOC Work on Labor Trafficking Cases

- [Judge orders John Pickle Co. to pay \\$1.24 million to 52 foreign workers in “human trafficking” case](#)
- [EEOC Resolves Slavery and Human Trafficking Suit Against Trans Bay Steel for an Estimated \\$1 Million](#)
- [Federal Judge Finds Global Horizons Liable for Discriminating, Harassing, Retaliating Against Hundreds of Thai Farm Workers in EEOC Suit](#)
- [Signal International, LLC to Pay \\$5 Million to Settle EEOC Race, National Origin Lawsuit](#)

The NLRB has [regional offices](#) around the country that investigate unfair labor practices as defined under the NRLA. Regional offices [investigate charges](#) filed by workers and, if there is merit to the charges, will issue a complaint. NLRB remedies include reinstatement and back wages, cease and desist orders, notice postings, and other remedies that are adjudicated by an administrative law judge. The immigration status of a worker affects the processes, procedures, and legal remedies. The NLRB has guidelines for what to do in these cases, including its capability to sign law enforcement certifications for U and T visas.

For additional information and tools, see the Resource page for Section 3.1, Task Force Membership & Management.

State Agencies

Each state has its own [labor office](#), which is responsible for state labor law compliance. In addition to detecting and investigating human trafficking, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, these agencies may investigate other workplace crimes and refer them for criminal prosecution if appropriate. For example, under California law, if an employer threatens to report immigration status or suspected immigration status to obtain the worker's property, it may constitute criminal extortion, a qualifying crime for a U visa.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provides links to [state labor laws](#), including those that address minimum wage and child labor laws. Because there may be some intersection between task force and state activity.

Task forces should become familiar with their state labor counterparts that can investigate and file complaints on behalf of victims. Some examples of state agencies that enforce labor trafficking laws but also have U visa or T visa law enforcement certification policies include the New York DOL ([Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs](#)), [Illinois DOL](#), [California Department of Fair Labor Employment and Housing \(DFEH\)](#), and [California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement](#).



**Example of State Agency
Enforcing Labor Trafficking Laws**
[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

For additional information and tools, see the Resource page for Section 3.1, Task Force Membership and Management.

Leadership & Decisionmaking

Leadership structures of existing task forces vary widely, from a single individual within a police department or sheriff's office to leadership teams composed of individuals from the major agencies on the task force. Successful task forces can be led by a variety of agencies or organizations, and it is up to each task force to determine the leadership structure that best suits its needs.

Regardless of which agency the individual(s) who lead the task force comes from, it is important to select leadership the membership will respect and follow. In many cases, the individual or individuals will be a ranking law enforcement officer or an experienced Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA). Often when law enforcement is involved in a task force, having another law enforcement officer or prosecutor in a leadership role is crucial to ensuring his/her engagement.

Ideally, the task force leader(s) work full-time on human trafficking, such as an AUSA who also serves as a lead prosecutor on trafficking, a law enforcement officer who leads trafficking investigations, or a service provider who works primarily (or exclusively) with trafficking victims. The leader(s) should give sufficient time to maintain continuity of task force operations and understand the work of the task force.

Key Skill Sets for a Leader

Being an effective leader within any collaborative effort requires the leadership skills to allow everyone involved to feel their input is heard and considered. The leader must foster an environment that is supportive of all staff who want to contribute, and promote these practices by exhibiting strong collaborative skills.

Leadership and decisionmaking within a task force environment differs from expertise in responding to human trafficking, and therefore requires specific skills. Leadership within a task force should not be conferred solely because of expertise regarding human trafficking, but rather for specific leadership and collaboration skills that will lead to the growth and sustainability of the response to human trafficking.

Centralized and Decentralized Leadership

Experience shows that task forces routinely develop into one of two leadership models: centralized or decentralized. One example of a centralized leadership model could be where two organizations are funded through federal or state grants, perhaps a local law enforcement agency and a victim service provider that are large enough to offer comprehensive victim services under one roof. In this case, the two organizations may elect to create a leadership team composed only of individuals from these two



Example: Leadership and Decisionmaking in Task Forces

The **South Bay Coalition (Task Force)** has four working committees – Law Enforcement, Victim Services, Legal Services, and Community Outreach and Education. The Executive Board consists of the four heads of committees, the Coalition chair, and the Coalition coordinator. Each committee is tasked with creating 1-year plans and reporting back to the general body as well as the Executive Board. The Executive Board makes decisions about membership, visitors to Coalition meetings, funding, policy, collaborative requests, etc. Other topics addressed by the Executive Board include formal terms of office and voting/nonvoting membership rules, as well as more comprehensive data (case and training) tracking.

The **Western New York Human Trafficking Task Force** uses consensus between Task Force co-facilitators and subcommittee chairs to make decisions. If consensus cannot be reached, the opinion of the chair with the most experience in that area is weighted more heavily.



Training: [Build your leadership skills through OVC TTAC Web-based Leadership Institute](#)

The Leadership Institute is designed for victim service administrators and leaders who wish to enhance their leadership skills and abilities. Participants will learn theoretical concepts and practical skills to lead their organization, team, or work group more effectively.

organizations. Other agencies or individuals may be invited to collaborate with these organizations, and these organizations may even seek input or guidance on issues affecting the broader collaborative, but ultimately, decisions will come only from these two organizations or their representatives on the task force.

One example of a decentralized leadership model could be where several organizations are funded via grants and subgrants so each has a financial role within the task force, or where the organizations prefer to promote a broader decisionmaking process in which several (or all) stakeholders have a voice in decisionmaking. A decentralized leadership model is most commonly found in task forces where no agencies are receiving grant funding specifically for anti-trafficking efforts, or where the task force was formed through the organic efforts of several persons or organizations.

It should be noted that these illustrations are only examples of centralized and decentralized models, and in practice, task forces can significantly vary in how they are organized for purposes of leadership and decisionmaking. **One model is not inherently better, or preferred, over the other.** What is important is that regardless of the leadership/decisionmaking model used, the model supports the overarching goals of the task force: identifying victims and delivering comprehensive services; investigating and prosecuting cases; and raising knowledge and awareness within professional sectors and the community at large through a collaborative and victim-centered response.

The designation of the following four key leadership roles can be sufficient to meet most task force management needs:

- **Group Leader:** Provides overall coordination; coordinates service providers and law enforcement; and conducts meetings.
- **Group Administrator:** Provides administrative and logistical coordination; and may provide grant management support and support to task forces seeking funding.
- **Victim Services Coordinator:** Provides primary liaison and coordination of various victim services that may originate in several organizations.
- **Outreach Coordinator:** Coordinates and leads in the development and delivery of outreach efforts. This may include individuals who can serve as community liaisons who are connected to target communities and have appropriate training and outreach capacity for the community being served.

Management and Coordination of Activities

To maintain a balance in workloads and responsibilities, it may be effective to **rotate task force roles and responsibilities** on an annual basis. In an ideal situation, one where funding and personnel resources are available, it is highly recommended to have a full-time task force leader or administrator. Some task forces have designated administrators or managers who support the routine functions of the collaborative efforts, such as coordinating meetings; coordinating the work of various subcommittees; ensuring that identified victims of trafficking are cross-reported to all the necessary agencies; maintaining accurate records related to the type and number of victims identified (without personal information) that can be used in press releases; or coordinating trainings or public presentations made by task force members.

Supporting Roles

Depending on the size, capacities, and needs of the task force, additional leadership roles may be useful. Many task forces form committees focused on outreach, training, public awareness, advocacy, and other issues, which members can preview. Sharing membership and leadership roles on these committees is one way to engage a variety of community partners in building and sustaining the task force. For more information on task force committees, see [Section 3.1 on Committees](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Buy-in & Participation

Both external and internal buy-in and participation of leadership can be a challenge for task forces. Without support from internal senior leadership in participating agencies, task force members often find they are not able to dedicate the time needed to the task force. Without support from city leaders, many citywide agencies will be limited in their abilities to support a task force. Several task force leaders attribute the lack of buy-in to:

- Limited resources (staff and time);
- Conflict or general difficulty with other service providers;
- Fear of unfavorable reputation among clients (for example, concern about the perception by their clients that they are supporting federal immigration enforcement efforts);
- Competing priorities (leadership may prioritize addressing other crimes);
- Prioritization of one vulnerable population over another; or
- Concern that participation on a task force may conflict with their primary mission.

It is essential to have and maintain the buy-in and participation of the members themselves through meaningful agendas and committee activities. One member reported continuing to attend the monthly meetings because of excitement and hope for what could be done through the task force's efforts; then, after a year of the group seemingly meeting for the sake of meeting, the member resigned because a perceived lack of productivity. One way to avoid this problem is to conduct regular surveys or general discussions with the entire group to ensure that individuals are getting what they need to participate meaningfully and that core objectives of the task force are being met.



Tips for Increasing Buy-In and Participation

- Conducting surveys and training among law enforcement entities and social service organizations provides an opportunity to discover the perceived or known extent of the local problem from the perspective of first responders, and helps to form a training strategy for increasing awareness and buy-in based on the results.
- High-level meetings are also important. Through the MOU process, one task force committed its executives (U.S. Attorney, NGO executive director, sheriff, police commissioner, regional FBI/HSI/Special Agent in Charge) to meet twice yearly to discuss overarching goals of the task force.
- Data obtained from community assessments or internal trainings can help to raise leadership's awareness of the crime in their jurisdiction. Internal leadership must believe in the urgency of response and necessity of the task force.
- Task forces have increased internal leadership buy-in and support through the work they do. Often, once cases are prosecuted successfully, internal buy-in increases.
- Continue to reach out to external partners. External buy-in from agencies that refuse or are reluctant to actively participate with a task force can be gained through routine calls to "check in" or through casual coffee meetings with team members intending to build confidence and rapport.
- There is always a need for training, outreach, and public awareness efforts. While establishing cases may be slow-going, membership buy-in can be maintained by concentrating efforts to set goals in the subcommittees.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Committees

For some task forces, committees provide a way to accomplish a wide variety of tasks, manage group interest and time, and better coordinate and highlight individual skills and interests. For instance, some task forces have upward of 40 members at any given meeting. Separate committee meetings with fewer people allow work to be conducted more efficiently with a greater degree of accountability among individual committee members.

Many task forces are organized into functional committees, the most common of which are a Law Enforcement Committee and a Victim Services Committee. The former focuses on sharing intelligence and discussing current cases; the latter focuses on coordination of the various efforts of service providers who are part of the task force. **It is very important that both committees engage in creating resource or asset maps to identify tools and existing gaps in services, referral agreements, and critical services.**



Tool: Asset Mapping

To learn how to mobilize local assets, build your task force capacity and build community asset maps, check out this tool from the [School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University](#).

Some task forces found a key challenge can be having too many interested parties. In order to retain public interest, other committees may focus on community outreach and public awareness, professional training and curriculum development, policy and legislation, strategic planning, and protocol development, while limiting the law enforcement and victim services committees to members who take an active role in direct service provision.



Note: Committees that become too exclusive or separate from the rest of the group run the risk of leaving other members of the task force feeling marginalized. It is important to have multidisciplinary representation on committees or to include a method of regularly reporting back to the larger task force so that everyone remains informed and engaged.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Law Enforcement Committee

The law enforcement committee is often composed of “law enforcement only” agencies that meet regularly (usually once a month) to develop data-informed human trafficking risk assessments, share intelligence, identify potential targets, and strategize ongoing or future investigations and prosecutions. Usually these committees are led by a prosecutor. In each meeting, the prosecutor runs through a list or case log of matters at various stages in the legal process in order to de-conflict and coordinate investigations, and follow up on cases already pending in court or the grand jury.

Local partners at HSI and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) can obtain access to other, more secure, forms of intelligence.



Tools: Law Enforcement Risk Assessments and Criminal Intelligence:

[The National Fusion Center Association](#)

[National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#)

[National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#)

[High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program](#)

By pooling assets among its membership, the law enforcement committee improves case results. Federal agencies working human trafficking cases get access to more criminal intelligence and potential case leads from local law enforcement. Local police departments get help with investigative resources and federal tools to support victims and witnesses, including immigration relief, out-of-state subpoena power, and complex analytics or linguistic services. Another strategy to increase resource collaboration is through the designation of state or local law enforcement as task force officers with federal law enforcement. Both ICE’s HSI and the FBI can cross-designate state and local officers as federal law enforcement. This can help remove potential jurisdictional barriers and allow law enforcement to work more efficiently through local, state, and federal statutes in their criminal cases.

Joint leadership of the law enforcement committee by both the state and federal prosecutor remains an essential factor in success. While some task force models perform extremely well under the leadership of a single police department or a small group of investigative agencies, such configurations often run the risk of discouraging full investment by other investigative entities that remain reluctant to subject themselves to the supervision of another police department. All investigators, however, must already submit their case referrals to the state and/or federal prosecutors for charging approval, so the law enforcement committee model fosters law enforcement cooperation not only between law enforcement agencies but also with the state and federal prosecutors who can serve as mediators and advisors for the group as a whole.

The law enforcement committee gains significant advantages by employing the guidance of both state and federal prosecutors at the outset of investigations. This structure allows multiple investigative agencies to resolve turf disputes, share criminal intelligence and informants, allocate resources to the most promising leads, and assess investigations. Consider cross-designation of local prosecutors as federal Assistant U.S. Attorneys. That way you have options for prosecuting that can pull from both state and federal laws. During the investigation, there may be advantages to going state or federal. By cross-designating, you have the option of either, without having to bring on another prosecutor from a different agency.



Smart Tip: By involving prosecutors in the law enforcement committee from the outset, you front load institutional buy-in by these prosecutors, hopefully resulting in more cases being charged. In the end, no task force model will be fully effective in the absence of successfully charged case referrals.

The collaborative framework of the law enforcement committee helps to bridge the common gaps between investigators and prosecutors and between federal and local authorities. When working properly, the collaborative approach of the law enforcement committee sends defendants for prosecution in either the state or federal system (or both) based on the facts and needs of each case. As such, federal prosecution is not considered a preferred result and state prosecution is not considered merely a fall-back outcome. With this approach, the work of human trafficking task forces can and should remain vital in both the state and federal systems. This is important now that all 50 states have made human trafficking a serious criminal offense.

By complying with the rules regulating the disclosure of grand jury and other law enforcement-sensitive materials in each case, the law enforcement committee sessions encourage frank conversations among the various agencies. Plus, the law enforcement committee can pool the members' resources to work against the human trafficking targets in the area (including using administrative partners to pursue non-criminal remedies as needed).

Another benefit of the law enforcement committee concept lies in its ability to **avoid "meeting burn-out" (the discouraging sense of “meetings for the sake of meetings”) for those law enforcement professionals who work trafficking cases over a long period of time.** By limiting the number of law enforcement committee sessions to approximately 6–12 per year, and by focusing the meetings, the law enforcement committee keeps its members energized by maintaining a case-directed, law enforcement purpose for each session. Issues more relevant to organizational leadership, such as building collaborative outreach and education initiatives, can be addressed at other meetings.

Law enforcement committee members can complement criminal investigations with civil actions by including partners such as the U.S. DOL's Wage and Hour or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigators. Additionally, by producing and consuming criminal intelligence on a regional rather than national level, the law enforcement committee remains large enough to “connect the dots” on multijurisdictional cases, but local enough to act on intelligence effectively, in a timely manner, and with ownership.

Establish a clear referral process between law enforcement and victim service providers. The law enforcement committee should be able to work closely with the victim services committee (see next section) to ensure that all identified human trafficking victims receive the full range of needed services. Through the law enforcement committee, it should be clear whom to contact and how to bring forward a potential victim who is identified by a victim service provider. Likewise, when working a case through the task force, identifying the lead point of contact for the victim service provider within the law enforcement team will help avoid miscommunication and enhance results that further support a victim and their participation in a criminal investigation.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that the law enforcement committee identify and provide appropriate introduction and **ongoing internal law enforcement training to fellow officers, agents, and cadets.**

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Victim Services Committee

The goal of the victim services committee is to ensure that high quality, appropriate services are available to all victims of trafficking, regardless of background. The committee should implement procedures that ensure smooth referrals and collaboration among involved agencies. The victim services committee is made up of agencies and nonprofit groups from a variety of fields. **The committee should engage in creating resource or asset maps or referral lists (sometimes referred to as a Coordinated Service Referral Network) to identify go-to organizations and existing gaps in services, referral agreements, and critical services.** All members of the committee should be transparent about what services, at what capacity, and which victim types can be served by their respective agencies so that gaps are clearly identified and met.

No wrong door. Victims identified through task force activities should be able to enter through any organization, law enforcement, victim service provider, or other engaged member and be connected with the most appropriate service provider based upon their needs. While task forces do this differently, the key is to identify the providers who can provide intensive case management to victims. They may have specialization or limited capacity. Task Force members refer victims they encounter through their work to the appropriate case manager. The case manager is then responsible for conducting an individual needs assessment and assisting the victim in accessing the services and supports needed to attain her/his goals. One organization cannot meet all the unique needs that a victim of human trafficking may have, but through collaboration and partnerships of the victim services committee, and other resources in the community, regardless of how they come into contact with the task force, their needs will be appropriately assessed and met. Creating a referral mechanism that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various service organizations is critical to streamline the process to ensure a victim does not fall through the cracks based on miscommunication or lack of coordination among victim service providers.



Key Concept: Coordinated Service Referral Network (CSRN)

CSRN is a membership-based network of service providers and others who are currently providing legal and social services to victims of human trafficking. CSRN recruits and identifies organizations that provide different services and organize those services into "pathways" to accommodate the various needs of clients. This information is collected and made available through a dynamic online resource. Social service providers who become members of the CSRN system are trained on human trafficking and receive a certification of training before acceptance into the network. Since law enforcement entities often lack the resources or expertise to find the right placement for recovered human trafficking victims, the core victim service providers within the task force may overcome this obstacle by taking responsibility for the social service referrals through a CSRN. By maintaining the CSRN, the core victim service providers can outsource the specialized services they cannot supply, and they can do so from a certified list of providers appropriately trained to handle human trafficking cases.

Victim service partnerships are driven by the needs of the victims. Through the victim services committee, service providers should regularly review the resources available based on the needs victims identify. As gaps are identified, committee members should work to leverage partnerships and resources. For example, if a task force's only trafficking cases involved U.S. citizen victims, but it is expanding to address foreign national victims, then the victim services committee must strategically identify local, state, and federal resources available for foreign national victims, and proactively identify organizations that should be invited to join the victim services committee. Likewise, if a task force only worked with adult victims, it may need to identify providers with programs that specialize in meeting the

needs of youth. The victim services committee may even develop working groups that focus on particular subpopulations of human trafficking victims.

Strategic and informed partnerships with the community and pro bono resources. Human trafficking victims have a broad range of needs, many of which may be outside the scope of services available through the task force members. Developing relationships with key professionals, such as doctors, dentists, or attorneys who are willing to provide pro bono services to trafficking victims, is a common strategy employed by the victim services committee. Through these relationships, a victim can receive access to much more comprehensive services. It is critical that any pro bono professional is properly vetted; receives training on what to expect when working with human trafficking survivors given the nature of the victimization and the related trauma; and learns some practical strategies for adapting the way they interface with the survivor to be more trauma informed. For example, attorneys may need assistance in understanding that victims may provide inconsistent statements and may be unclear about when things happened, or may be unwilling to disclose the details of their victimization. Attorneys may offer to help without realizing the complexity of the work, time involved, and length of time some processes take.

For example, one task force noticed that pro bono immigration attorneys were frustrated by the constant calls from their victim clients wanting an update on the status of their T visa application. The victim services committee was able to explain that victims of trauma, particularly those who experience situations involving lack of power and control, often exhibit behaviors that appear unreasonable to others, but are actually appropriate responses to trauma. The committee was able to give the attorney some practical tips in setting expectations and boundaries and redirecting the client to their case manager.

Task forces also may need to examine the use of interpreters. For example, while volunteer interpreters may have years of interpreting experience and a strong command of English and the victim's native language, they may not have worked with a highly traumatized population, like victims of human trafficking. In these situations, interpreters may feel tempted to offer emotional or monetary support outside of the interpreting assignment. Again, the victim services committee can offer practical tips and strategies on setting boundaries and redirecting the client to their case manager.

Victim service providers should work with pro bono attorneys to reduce turnover in client representation, build trust and rapport, and coordinate support and mental health care with legal appointments to ensure that victims are supported in processing their trauma.

Foster communication between law enforcement and other service providers in the region.

Victim service provider task force members should work to broker relationships and channel communication among law enforcement and the larger group of organizations and victim advocates doing human trafficking work within the region. By serving as designated points of contact for questions, disputes, and requests, the task force members can become the trusted brokers who prevent much of the confusion, misunderstandings, and negative experiences that often arise from untrained, multi-lateral interaction between individuals on both sides of the victim service provider–law enforcement divide. Most critically, law enforcement will need to know whom to contact when they encounter a victim of human trafficking—at any hour or any day. Organizing this response through the victim services committee and memorializing it in a formal protocol means that the collective resources of all the various victim service provider members can be used. For example, maybe one victim service provider has the resources to staff a full-time case manager, but that case manager is limited in the hours she/he can work that are outside the traditional work week. But another victim service provider

has a hotline that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and has staff who can respond to emergency calls. Strategizing this coordination among victim service providers in a way that ensures there is always someone available to respond to law enforcement's referral is key. Creating a formal protocol allows the members to discuss the referral options openly and fully, without the pressure of a client in crisis.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Other Committees

Below are short descriptions of other key committees that you might organize within your task force:

Training committee. The training committee aims to strengthen both task force members' and the community's capacity to address human trafficking. Commonly, this is a very active committee in task forces. This committee creates a common training using an agreed upon look and feel. This committee should involve experienced trainers from a variety of fields, including law enforcement, victim services, victim impact/survivor consultants, and other specialized service providers such as legal assistance or mental health. Activities should include planning for training opportunities for each member, train-the-trainer events, and organizing training opportunities for new members attained through outreach activities. When training requests arise, there should be clear guidance or approval from the committee as to when to use task force generated materials vs. materials from an individual member agency or organization. Task forces often train groups across various sectors, including local law enforcement, businesses, hospitals, transportation companies, health service providers, faith-based groups, social workers, civic groups, housing facilities, hotel and motel management, and more.

This committee should also work with the entire task force to determine guidelines for language used with the public and in a training capacity, common terminology and definitions, and descriptions for victim populations. (See [Section 3.3 on Outreach & Awareness](#) for more information.) Task force leaders can conduct joint training sessions with service providers and law enforcement personnel to offer a place to gain greater understanding of the other's perspectives and build a stronger relationship. In a case when a joint opportunity was not possible, one task force created several PowerPoint slides that all members agreed to use when conducting trainings. These slides described the task force, identified the vulnerabilities of the geographic location and scope of trafficking, as well as the process of reporting tips. This collaboration ensures that a consistent message is presented to all who receive training, while also solidifying the message to the community that a multidisciplinary approach is required for a successful response to human trafficking. Partnering on these types of activities helps to build understanding and professional relationships among task force members.

Strategic planning and Task Force protocol committee. The protocol committee is responsible for making recommendations for standard operating procedures and protocols for the task force. This committee should involve members across all sectors who have historical knowledge of their respective agency policies and procedures. This will help ensure that whatever procedures are developed will align and intersect with each member's existing protocols. This committee is accountable to the task force and should work with all members to develop procedures and processes that ensure orderly functioning across key tasks. Some examples of protocols to be developed include: procedures for conducting investigations, emergency response and safety plans, victim identification, victim intake and

care planning, and engaging in outreach and education. Note that while this committee is particularly important at the start-up of a task force, once functioning and agreed upon protocols are created, the committee may lose its purpose and dissolve. It can also reform if new protocols are needed or existing ones need to be revisited.

Additionally, this committee can be charged with regular strategic planning. This may include setting annual goals for the task force, reviewing data from task force members to analyze differences in the work of various members, or conducting periodic needs assessments.

Public awareness and outreach committee. The public awareness and outreach committee takes the lead in coming up with language/messaging and media to be used when coordinating public interfacing activities for the task force. The committee integrates the look and feel of the message into all advertising, print materials, event promotions, and Web presence. This committee also focuses on developing partnerships and involving additional community members and organizations in task force activities. The outreach committee works to collaborate with local groups and organizations to promote anti-trafficking awareness, education, training, and victim identification.

Policy and legislation committee. The policy and legislation committee discusses the gaps and impediments to addressing human trafficking and identifies policies and legislation that can address those challenges. The committee might also brief the task force on any pending legislation that might impact its work in addressing human trafficking.

Collaboration as Force Multiplier

Task force members might host regular meetings for all victim service provider and law enforcement professionals to learn how to work together more effectively. In these broader meetings for professionals in the community, task force law enforcement agents and victim advocates can lead discussions designed to increase human trafficking prosecutions and better serve human trafficking survivors, and also make individual presentations to the group as a whole to foster common ground and a better understanding of one another's role and functions.

Building collaborative relationships between state and federal players and between law enforcement and victim service providers constitutes a force-multiplier in the fight against human trafficking. Collaboration not only expands the scope of capabilities and expertise within the task force itself, but also casts a more comprehensive net for developing criminal intelligence and collecting requisite data.



Task Force Example: Cook County Task Force Meetings Help Foster Mutual Understanding

In one of its quarterly meetings, the group dispelled some NGO misconceptions about cooperation with law enforcement, and discussed the many different ways in which law enforcement can use even anonymous tips from human trafficking survivors, and why law enforcement may not always be able to give NGOs immediate feedback on the leads they provide.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Task Force Operational Protocol

A task force operations protocol is an essential tool to guide a collaborative response to human trafficking. The protocol may include guidelines for information exchange between task force members, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of individual task force members when responding to incidents, investigative and prosecutorial guidelines, conflict resolution policy, joint training documents, and a resource directory, among other things.

Discussing and agreeing on protocols prior to a case or at a time other than when a crisis arises will assist in smooth progression of a case while maintaining positive relationships among task force partners.

The following are common questions that will require attention prior to a case breaking. Having clear protocols to address these questions will ensure an efficient and well-coordinated response.

- Which law enforcement agency should I call when a victim is ready to talk? Does it depend on the type of trafficking, citizenship status of the victim or the trafficker, number of potential victims, where the crime took place, or other factors?
- Which victim service provider should law enforcement refer a possible victim to? When and how? Does it depend on the type of trafficking, citizenship status of the victim or the trafficker, number of potential victims, where the crime took place, or other factors?
- If law enforcement is planning a potential rescue, are they expected to coordinate with the victim services committee in advance? What about after? How?
- Where does a potential victim stay after he or she is rescued by law enforcement? How does that differ depending on the age or sex of the victim?
- Will a potential trafficking victim be charged with prostitution? If a victim is not identified as a victim until after charges are filed, what can be done? Does it depend on the sex, age, or immigration status of the victim?
- What kind of information does law enforcement share with the victim service provider at the point of referral? What about as the investigation evolves? Is this shared only with the provider serving the victim or with the entire victim services committee?
- How can we secure an interpreter for an arraignment, victim interview, or other meeting or proceeding? Who pays for that?
- Who will request short-term immigration relief or a law enforcement certification for a T or U visa application for foreign national victims?



General Protocol Example:

- [Elder Justice Initiative \(EJI\)](#)
- [Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams](#)

Law Enforcement Protocol Examples:

- [NENA Protocol for Handling 911 Calls Regarding Trafficking](#)
- [Human Trafficking | ICE](#)
- [The U.S. DOL's approach to human trafficking | U.S. DOL](#)

Service Provision Protocol Example:

- [Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Service Standards](#)

Response Protocols

Response protocols formalize the responsibilities of both law enforcement and victim service providers; sometimes these protocols can be combined in one document, other times it may be more efficient to create one protocol for law enforcement and another for victim service provider case managers and other service providers. If this is the case, both protocols should contain, at a minimum, the basic responsibilities of the other sector and contact information. Remember to assess the safety of your staff as well as that of the victim. Training from professionals with expertise in conducting [Danger Assessments](#) is a useful resource for working with victims whose trafficker is also their intimate partner. Protocols then become a useful tool to gain support and involvement from other agencies, as they show an existing model of response and leadership's support of the model. Most importantly, it ensures that victims will receive services more quickly and both providers and victims will be protected.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Memorandums of Understanding

In addition to response protocols, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) are signed by two or more organizations and lay out the common intentions and responsibilities of the signatory organizations. Some MOUs can be legally binding contracts, but more often (particularly as used by anti-trafficking task forces) they represent a formal declaration to work together as a collaborative team and to provide the stated capacities for the agreed-upon timeframe. As an example, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)/Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) ECM to Combat Human Trafficking grant program requires MOUs showing a commitment between the grantee agencies while receiving funding from the Department of Justice.

Defining Expectations and Commitment

Having formal MOUs among participating agencies and organizations is the first step in defining and understanding expectations. The MOU is a public statement of commitment and a guide for accountability. It also helps define fiscal responsibilities for task forces that receive funding from any source. The MOU should clearly define roles, responsibilities, and responses to human trafficking that are within the agency's or organization's normal capacity.

It may be tempting to use the MOU to outline the perfect anti-trafficking response, but it is best to develop a realistic and achievable response based on the resources and capabilities of each organization.

When There is Resistance to Signing an MOU

Many agency leaders hesitate to sign an MOU because the formality of the document may seem to imply a level of commitment with which they are uncomfortable. Some organizations require that MOUs and other agreements be approved by a larger oversight body, such as a city council, a board of directors, or an organization's headquarters, before they can be accepted.

When there is resistance or discomfort with signing an MOU, invite the agency executive to point out those areas of the MOU that present challenges to a successful sign-off and attempt to agree on language and conditions that meet mutual needs.

If an agency or organization is unable or unwilling to sign a formal agreement, and their cooperation with the task force is essential, determine if there are other ways to include their participation on the task force. Consider either a more general statement of commitment or an unsigned document that describes the type of involvement that is expected from their participation.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management.

Conducting Meetings

Task force meetings are the cornerstone of the group's development. The meeting is the basis for relationship building, training, exchange of ideas, problem solving, resolving conflicts, innovation, recovering from shortfalls, and celebrating successes.

The meeting environment should be welcoming, safe for expression of thoughts and concerns by individual task force members, and offer protection from inappropriate or personal attacks. The meeting should be conducted to achieve its intended purpose, yet not so rigid as to discourage a newly discovered and beneficial area of discussion.

Typically, task forces convene all members on a regular basis and immediately after, the various committees meet separately (if applicable). Task force meetings can be convened in one location (public space offered by community centers or libraries) or at member organization's office on a rotating basis. Often, there is a feeling that the larger meeting is not as important or useful, but it is important to acknowledge that these meetings serve as an opportunity for all to come together and be aware of and learn from each other's work.

The fundamental purpose of the task force meeting is for participants to leave more equipped and enabled to combat human trafficking. Meetings, therefore, should be planned and purposeful.

Key Considerations for Your Task Force Meetings

- 1. Conduct roundtable name, role, and organization introductions at every meeting.** This is particularly important in the startup period of the task force. The ritual validates and honors the individuals and the agencies they represent.
- 2. Meet with consistency.** Meeting attendance is more consistent when participants routinely anticipate it at a set time, space, and environment. In a newly formed task force, it is recommended that a meeting be conducted at least once per month for the first 6 months, with



Task Force Example: Roll Call Traditions

Law enforcement has a tradition of "roll call" training sessions that last 10–20 minutes before deploying a team to duty. This is a good model for the task force. Rotating "roll call" training sessions among the task force members gives them the opportunity to share their expertise.

a focus on relationship building. Later, meetings may take place quarterly or semi-annually if committee meetings are conducted more regularly.

3. **Meetings are facilitated by an agenda.** A member of the task force or a meeting facilitator is recommended for the initial meetings. In time, skilled members from the team may take this role in rotations. Agenda items should be solicited in advance of the meeting.
4. **Preservation of confidentiality is critical.** The level of disclosure among task force members is dependent upon the strength of the relationships, the necessity of disclosure, and the purpose of disclosure. Routine reminders of respect for confidentiality as a team value are essential, particularly if discussing current cases. See [Section 3.2 on Confidentiality](#) for additional information.
5. **Ongoing training is an integral aspect of the team interaction.** When the task force is envisioned as a continuous learning organization, members look forward to what they will learn at each meeting. “I learn something every time I come here” should be commonly heard.
6. **Sharing information is an integral responsibility of the team members.**
Everyone was brought to the table for a reason, so it is important to include everyone in discussions where relevant. For instance, victim service providers working closely with victims may have important knowledge or evidence for the investigation. While it is understood that law enforcement cannot share sensitive details of a case, some level of information needs to be shared on all sides so that everyone remains informed. Information sharing should take place at the committee level or at meetings of agencies directly involved in a specific case.
7. **Time set aside for networking is time well spent. Setting a time for informal team building is important.**
8. **The organization that institutionalizes feedback is destined to improve.** Asking “How are we doing?” frequently, with an intent to refine and develop based upon the feedback, is the hallmark of a learning and improving organization. One way to do this is to keep data on the number of victims identified, types of investigation, training audiences, and analyzing data together to identify gaps and any indicators of where more attention and resources are needed.
9. **Ensure project and special task accomplishment through committee assignments based on an action plan and a scheduled report-back period.** The level of experience and expertise among task force members becomes an asset to the team’s development and capacity. Training, outreach, and other tasks and projects developed out of an annual action plan typically show progressive improvements over time.



Additional Resource:

Searching for Technical Assistance for Your Task Force? Contact OVC TTAC

The [Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center \(OVC TTAC\)](#) maintains a consultant database of subject matter experts who are available to provide consultation, training, and technical assistance to task forces, law enforcement, and victim service agencies. OVC TTAC also delivers training by request to support specific needs or issues your task force may be facing. Training and technical assistance is available in person, or via Webinar and phone.

3.2 Information Sharing

Participation in a multidisciplinary task force does not mandate open and indiscriminate communication about investigations, suspects, victims, witnesses, tactical operations, or other sensitive information. Finding a balance with information sharing and gathering can be a matter of contention among task force members.

It is not uncommon for survivors working with their attorneys to share details about their trafficking situation that may be relevant to the investigation, but they may not yet be ready to share this information with law enforcement. Similarly, law enforcement may be working actively on an operation that has the potential to affect victim service partners, but any level of disclosure about the operation may compromise the operation or place individuals in harm's way.

While sharing too much information can compromise victims and witnesses, agencies and organizations, cases and operations, and individual members, a failure to create a safe and effective information-sharing network is counterproductive to the formation of a task force.

A Balance of Protecting and Sharing Information

Efforts to keep the group informed and likewise gather and share information within the group is a core function of the task force. Efforts should be made to strike the needed balance of protecting and sharing case information (see next section on confidentiality). Common questions to address when clarifying expectations about information sharing may include:

- What type of lead time might a victim service provider expect prior to a raid being conducted?
- Is a victim service provider expected to contact law enforcement whenever a potential victim is referred for screening? Is law enforcement expected to contact a victim service provider each time a potential victim is interviewed?
- What information might a victim service provider need from law enforcement to prepare adequately prior to law enforcement action?



Examples: How Some Task Forces Manage Information Sharing

- **Case logs:** The Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force developed a Human Trafficking Case Log as a means to track, organize, and collaborate on cases worked by multiple law enforcement agencies on the Task Force.
- **Explaining need to know:** The Western District of New York Task Force struggled in its early stages to strike the correct balance of information sharing related to potential law enforcement action. The NGO partner was able to critically assess what specific information was imperative to readying itself for an appropriate response to victims in crisis. The NGO requested a general timeline (end of next week vs. an exact date or time), estimated number of victims, their sex and language, and whether or not any minors would be identified. When explained, it was easy for law enforcement to understand the need to pre-plan for shelter, language, and needs specific to minors. This sharing of information resulted in a less traumatic experience for survivors, thereby building trust from the beginning of the case and making the investigation move more smoothly.
- **Background checks:** One task force requested that the victim service provider undergo a background check so that law enforcement would feel comfortable sharing sensitive case information with this individual.

- When the victim service provider learns information relevant to the safety of the victim, do they inform law enforcement? If law enforcement learns information related to the safety of the victim, how much do they share with the victim service provider?
- What is the media policy for all task force members regarding a specific case?
- How will task force members communicate regarding data related to victim identification and prosecutions?
- In what forum will discussions about ongoing cases be held? Is there a committee dedicated to this? Are ad hoc meetings to address specific cases limited to those individuals working on the case? When do those meetings begin, how often will they be held at different stages of a case, and when will they cease?



Tips for Information Sharing

- Ensure clear communication among task force members about organizational confidentiality policies and procedures early in the process. This is crucial and helps to further clarify member roles and responsibilities.
- Establish a clear protocol for handling tips made to task force members. Identifying one point person to evaluate and disseminate this information can assist in maintaining confidentiality, protecting victim safety, and ensuring lack of duplication of work. For example, one task force funneled all tips through the USAO victim-witness coordinator, who sent out an e-mail with the identified potential trafficker's name to all Core Team members. Any member who had information on that individual met within the week to establish a lead agency and open an official task force case.
- Establish understanding and agreement about what type of information is appropriate for open sharing and what is not.
- Hold key information exchanges and discussions in task force meetings on topics that should be developed and vetted by the group, such as:
 - Human trafficking trends and developments in the region;
 - Debriefs of closed cases;
 - Issues concerning laws and resources to combat trafficking;
 - Suspicious behaviors or practices in the community for which there is not yet a response underway;
 - Lessons learned from successful or not so successful operations;
 - Ways to improve cooperation and collaboration;
 - Information provided by victims, clients, witnesses, or suspects that may serve as training materials;
 - Rumors that tend to divide or create barriers among the team;
 - Concerns expressed to individual members of the community to which the group may be able to offer a more comprehensive response;
 - Issues with the media including the use of victim names, photos, and information about current cases; and
 - Confidentiality agreements and whether to have task force members sign one.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.2 Information Sharing](#).

Maintaining Confidentiality

Human trafficking victims have pronounced interests in privacy as do the organizations and task forces that serve them. For human trafficking victims, the need for autonomy and control over her/his body, the private details of her/his life, and the decisions that must be made relative to the crime (including whether and how to assist with a criminal prosecution of their trafficker) are often essential to recovery. Safety from future exploitation is also a real concern.

Laws designed to protect confidentiality and/or establish privilege are complex. Federal confidentiality laws and state confidentiality laws vary. Protecting victims requires understanding relevant privacy rules and regulations, evidentiary privileges, state and federal statutes, state and federal constitutional rights (including crime victims' rights amendments), and the unique status of minors, persons with disabilities, or other potential classes of victims.

The Importance of Privacy and Confidentiality

The concept of privacy is broader than either confidentiality or privilege. All people have an interest in protecting their own privacy. People choose what personal information they reveal to their friends, neighbors, and professional acquaintances on a daily basis. Privacy laws (such as the Fair Credit Reporting Act) limit access to private information, such as banking and tax information, and apply broadly.

Confidentiality is a more limited concept that describes the laws, rules, and regulations that prohibit certain professionals from disclosing information that can be used to identify the individuals they serve. Confidentiality protects a broad range of information, including the identity of clients, medical records, immigration status, and other information. Confidentiality rules can be found in professional ethics requirements (for attorneys, medical professionals, social workers, and law enforcement among others), grant funding requirements, and agency policies and procedures, among other places.

Privilege is a very specific legal protection that limits what information can be shared within a court proceeding. Each state specifies which professionals or relationships have privilege protections (most common are spouses, lawyers, doctors, and therapists), what information can be protected by privilege, and how privilege can be waived.

Sharing personal information without informed consent can be a violation of professional ethics for the provider and traumatizing for the victim. Confidentiality helps the victim feel safe when reporting crimes to police, receiving medical attention, or working with a service provider. It encourages victims to



Key Terms

Privacy: It is a victim's right to control disclosure of his or her story and personal information. Maintaining privacy may directly reduce the chances of revictimization.

Confidentiality: The rules prohibiting the disclosure of victim information.

- Limits the disclosure of information without the victim's consent.
- Requires victim service providers to disclose any limits to confidentiality to the victim.

Privilege: Communications between certain professionals and victims as defined by statutes.

- Is generally not privileged if overheard by a third party.
- Varies by state.

disclose information that may make them uncomfortable, embarrassed, or fearful; however, confidentiality is limited by policies and practices that are unknown to the victims. Victims often disclose their experiences to a victim service provider because of presumed confidentiality; however, there are several exceptions to confidentiality, which need to be taken into consideration before discussing the scope of confidentiality that can be guaranteed to a victim. It is very important for a task force to have clear outlines as to how confidentiality of data will be managed and maintained on all levels, and for all members of the task force to understand the policies, procedures, and ethical requirements that guide the other members.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are limited exceptions to confidentiality and privilege protections. They are briefly noted below, but providers and law enforcement need to understand the specific rules, policies, and procedures that apply to their position within their organization. Revealing confidential information should never be done lightly and without a clear intention. Improper releases can be a violation of state or federal law.

- **Signed release.** Victims can choose to permit the release of confidential and/or privileged information. Service providers and law enforcement should work to create Release Forms that allow limited information sharing that will be beneficial for the victim. Forms should include notification to the victim that the release can be revoked at any time and should describe the type of information to be shared and the purpose.
- **State mandatory reporting laws for child or vulnerable adult abuse.** If you are a mandatory reporter of abuse of children and vulnerable adults in your state, there is no requirement to obtain a release when reporting information. It is necessary to notify the victim at the onset of your service provision that you are a mandated reporter and what areas require a report. If you have questions about mandatory reporting, check with your supervisor or your agency's attorney.
- **State laws requiring a Duty to Warn.** Some states require service providers to report a client's detailed and specific plans to harm themselves or another person to the police or the intended victim of a threat of harm. In that case, the report would be an exemption to the confidentiality requirements.



Additional Information and Training Resources:

To find more information about mandatory reporting laws in your state, visit our [Resource page \(3.2 Information Sharing\)](#).

OVC TTAC offers a [module on Confidentiality in the Victim Assistance Training \(VAT\) Online](#).

Module lessons include: maintaining confidentiality, safely disclosing information, exceptions to confidentiality, and other laws and considerations.

The [National Crime Victim Law Institute](#) also provides training on protection of victims' rights.

- **Subpoenas.** Subpoenas are often used by defense attorneys to try to get confidential victim information from a victim directly or through a service provider. Recipients have a right to challenge and may be able to terminate the subpoena. Service providers should have an established policy and procedure for responding to subpoenas regarding trafficking victims. Task Forces may want to share best practices and work collectively to identify attorneys who could represent task force member organizations that receive a subpoena.
- **Warrants.** Cross-training between law enforcement and victim service providers can help both groups better understand their roles and confidentiality requirements. Using a warrant to try to force a victim service provider to breach confidentiality can have a chilling effect on many victims in a community, causing some to be afraid to talk to the victim service provider. Warrants can be challenged in court, literally putting law enforcement and service providers in an adversarial position. Often, law enforcement can get the information they need from another source, such as a neighbor, a hospital, or another party, without involving the victim. Task forces that develop protocols for information sharing are less likely to face these issues.
- **Funders, researchers, evaluators, stakeholders, and others viewing non-identifying demographic and aggregate information.** Funders, researchers, and other individuals, such as stakeholders, may be allowed to see non-identifying compiled data, redacted records, policies and procedures, or a sample training victim folder, as long as it is aggregated or the victim gave specific, time-limited, written informed consent. Task forces should discuss any evaluation or research projects to ensure that all members understand the confidentiality protections in place and ensure that victim privacy is maintained. See [Section on 3.2 Data Collection & Analysis](#).



Additional Resources: For more resources regarding subpoenas and the Motion to Quash, review the National Network to End Domestic Violence's [Technology & Confidentiality Resources Toolkit](#) for Nonprofit Victim Service Agencies & Advocates Working to Provide Safe & Effective Services to Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault & Stalking.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.2 Information Sharing](#).

Professional and Legal Responsibilities

Professional and Legal Responsibilities of Law Enforcement and Prosecutors

For law enforcement and prosecutors, the primary focus is to protect the integrity of the investigation and the individuals involved. Law enforcement operates primarily on a right-to-know and need-to-know approach to information sharing. The first question to be asked and answered before sharing information is, "Does this person have the right to know the information I am about to share?" If the answer is "yes," the next question must be, "Does this person need to know the information I am about to share?" This two-step approach should be used whenever confidential information is shared. Typically, in law enforcement settings, it is required to meet both criteria before information is shared, but in collaborative settings, information may be limited in scope to what is required for effective task force collaboration.

By law, law enforcement are not permitted to disclose a variety of matters (grand jury, tax, wiretaps, etc.) and other matters cannot be disclosed in order to protect case integrity, officer safety, victim safety and privacy, or otherwise protect sensitive means and sources that would lose their effectiveness if targets learn about them. For example, telling people about an upcoming search warrant could hurt actual case operations and lead to the flight of suspects or the destruction of evidence. This is critical in understanding what law enforcement can and cannot share with anyone else involved in the case.

Law enforcement must be honest about what will happen with the information that a victim provides because of the nature of the criminal justice system, but law enforcement can discuss what steps they will take at different stages of the process to protect the privacy of the victim and their family. Often, law enforcement members will do presentations at the larger task force meetings to victim service provider partners to describe law enforcement functions (without going into law enforcement-sensitive or covert matters) in order to help promote understanding.



A Right-to-Know and Need-to-Know Example

A common example regards what information needs to be shared between task force members prior to a law enforcement operation in which trafficking victims may be identified, such as an operation against a suspected brothel where foreign national women are being victimized. If the law enforcement partner expects proper support from their victim service provider partners, the law enforcement agency must inform them far enough in advance of the operation to allow them to fully prepare. The information provided should not include the location of the suspected brothel or other law enforcement-sensitive information, because the victim service provider does not have the right to know this information.

The victim service provider does have the need to know certain information, for example, the number of potential victims, sex, age, and the language they speak. In this example, this information, along with the estimated timeframe for the potential victim assistance needs, is the only information that needs to be shared. More importantly, this information should only be shared with those task force members who will provide these immediate services. Other task force partners can be notified after the fact, or on an as-needed basis.

Victim Service Providers and Other Service Provider Responsibilities

Victim service providers must disclose any and all limits to confidentiality when a victim first accesses those services. A strong case management system and plan should respect the rights of its clients to confidentiality (and explain limitations of that confidentiality) and freedom of choice. Victim service providers often have several staff or external partners that may interface with the victim in the course of their work, and it is important that the victim understands how confidentiality may differ depending on the role of that staff person. For example, some states extend an evidentiary privilege to qualified case managers, and social workers must adhere to the ethical duties required for their certification, while lawyers and medical and mental health professionals have separate confidentiality and privilege protections. It is essential that one victim service provider knows and understands the confidentiality limits of other service provider organizations within the community.

Clients should receive an explanation about confidentiality and privilege, otherwise they may be reluctant to make full disclosure, which is critical to treatment.

Between Task Force Members and Victims

Any task force member with direct contact with victims must clearly and directly communicate with victims what they can and cannot ensure in terms of confidentiality and privacy. Providing this information up front empowers the victim to make informed choices about what they will share.

Responding to the victim's questions about confidentiality and privacy, and explaining the reasons behind it, are critical steps in building rapport with the victim for both law enforcement and victim service providers. Empowering the victim to make their own decisions about what kind of information they want to share is an ongoing process. Most importantly, task force members with direct contact with victims must be up front with the victim and not make promises that they cannot guarantee when it comes to confidentiality.

Between Task Force Members

One of the more common misunderstandings among task force members is about the sharing of information. Conflict can arise from misinformation about the legal or professional responsibilities that individual task force members must maintain with regard to confidentiality.

It is important for task force members to recognize that responsibilities and obligations regarding confidentiality depend significantly on the type of organization or government agency the individual is affiliated with and the professional obligations of the individual. Each member, old or new, should have a clear understanding of their confidentiality requirements prior to formally engaging with the task force on direct victim casework. This will not only help bring an understanding of each other's confidentiality requirements, but will help decide what are the minimum requirements for the group operating as a whole. A good place to begin outlining the scope and required confidentiality is in a formal Memorandum of Understanding. (See [Section 3.1 on committees](#) and [task force operational protocols](#).)

The level of disclosure among and between task force members is dependent on the strength of relationships, the necessity of disclosure, and the purpose of disclosure. Routine reminders of respect for confidentiality as a team value are essential, particularly when discussing current cases.



Best Practices for Disclosure Waivers and Releases

- **Use a uniform, detailed release form.** You should apply all confidentiality policies equally in your organization. Check with your organization to review the confidentiality policies currently in place.
- **Encourage your community partners to use similar release forms.** Have a release for each community partner that receives information. A release that checks off a list of community partners and is not specific as to what information is going to be shared, or the consequences of sharing, does not provide victims with a clear understanding of what he or she agreed to.
- **Do not rely on releases provided by another agency.** Always obtain a signed release that was provided by your organization to the victim to ensure that the victim understands what information is being shared and why.
- **Use written releases even if you have a Memorandum of Understanding with a partner agency.** An agreement between two organizations does not equate to a waiver from the victim. The victim must be in agreement with each and every release of his or her personal information. Do not use a verbal release. Completing a signed document gives the provider and the victim an opportunity to review what was agreed to and to refer to it later if there are any questions.
- **Releases should be time limited.** The release should state an expiration date and explain the process for a victim to revoke or withdraw consent at any time. Generally, a 30-day release could be reasonable and appropriate in a situation. If needed, an extension of the release could be authorized by the victim.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.2 Information Sharing](#).

Data Collection & Analysis

Because human trafficking is a dynamic and emerging crime, it is crucial for task forces to present and maintain a clear picture of how human trafficking affects their communities and how traffickers are changing their tactics.

It is recommended that task forces maintain data on investigations and characteristics of trafficking victims, and commit to reviewing this information regularly, either quarterly or biannually as needed. Analysis does not have to be time consuming, but good data will help to improve operations.

Types of Data to Collect

Data should include characteristics of perpetrators (country of origin, age, sex, methods for recruitment, etc.) and characteristics of victims (country of origin, age, sex, type of trafficking, etc.). This information can help task forces identify appropriate community partners such as migrant worker outreach groups, translators, or street outreach organizations (see [Section 2.3 on Assessing the Problem](#)). Data presentations to local leaders can also help to increase buy-in and support for the task force efforts.

Hotline Information

Task forces can also reach out to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) to request data about the task force's area that is obtained from the national hotline, such as call volume, caller demographics, cases identified, and more.

Local hotlines, including those from member organizations and allied professionals, may also be helpful in this instance.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.2 Information Sharing](#).

3.3 Other Task Force Activities

Though human trafficking task forces focus on identifying human trafficking, serving victims, and investigating and building cases, task forces often engage in other activities as well, such as outreach, awareness, and state advocacy. These types of activities can serve a role in supporting the core work of identifying, serving, and building cases. This section outlines a few of these activities and offers examples from various active task forces in the field.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.3 Other Task Force Activities](#).

Outreach & Awareness

Increased public awareness of the existence of human trafficking within communities often generates the interest and the benevolence of nontraditional supporters of law enforcement and service provider partnerships. Members can increase human trafficking case referrals from, and improve public awareness within, local faith-based groups, homelessness organizations, migrant farm worker groups, pro bono and immigration attorneys, sexual assault and domestic violence advocates, civic and community groups, restaurant and hotel employees, school and medical officials, as well as regulatory inspectors, routine patrol officers, truck drivers, and utility workers, among others. By providing outreach specifically tailored to the needs and circumstances of each group, the stakeholders learn how to contact the task force for help.

The primary goals of outreach and awareness-raising should be to increase victim identification, identify new resources, and generate political will and support for the issue.

Within many communities, there are networks, coalitions, and groups that can be approached to share information, create new partnerships, and identify resources, skills, and good practices for enhancing a community response to human trafficking. Task forces can collaborate with such groups to create effective communitywide strategies to combat human trafficking. Participation in a network of supporting partners does not necessitate participation in the primary task force group. Consistent with the necessary vetting of all task force partnerships, these relationships should be evaluated for conformance to the task force's core mission and purpose. For example, ensure that partners are supporting one or more of the core task force functions in a victim-centered manner and are not engaged in practices that may put a victim in harm's way, like underground rescue missions or any rescue missions that are not coordinated with law enforcement.

Between traditional, grassroots, in-person outreach and online and social media marketing, there are limitless possibilities and combinations of techniques you can use toward outreach and awareness for your task force. It is important to select outreach and awareness strategies that align with your mission, vision, goals, and target audience. Being clear about these things will ensure that any effort you put into outreach will be as productive as possible.

A task force may find it beneficial to develop or design a logo to symbolize its efforts. Creating a brand or logo creates a representation of the group's existence, strengthens recognition of the group's efforts, and



Smart Tip: It is necessary to **manage the public interest** and create parameters of involvement to help ensure that interested community members are not engaging in dangerous behaviors by attempting to conduct their own investigations or victim rescues.

Vetting of outreach and awareness partners, trainers, and train-the-trainer events can be very helpful to ensure that people do not engage in unsafe activities.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 8: The Victim-Centered Case](#)



Public Service Announcement (PSA) Examples:

PSAs are one tool that task forces and their partners use to raise awareness in their local community. Examples include:

- [Clearwater Task Force: Forced Labor](#)
- [Clearwater Task Force: Brothels](#)
- [Clearwater Task Force: Servitude](#)

provides an easy way for people to connect with the group's mission. See the [San Jose Police Human Trafficking Task Force Logo](#) as an example.

Web Presence

Note: OVC and OVC TTAC do not recommend or endorse any software, technology, or products mentioned in this section. Any services listed are samples of the products and services available.

Today, it is very common to see innovative uses of the Internet and social media to promote a task force. The first step to building an online presence is to create a task force website. Creative use of a task force website can range from being a source of information to offering a reporting mechanism for members of the community who are suspicious of certain activities they observe but are hesitant to contact authorities.

Be sure to include a list and links to all task force member agencies and organizations. **Creating a diagram of how your task force works, and the scope of the work will also help your audience understand the role you play in the community.** If your task force is open to additional membership and has an application procedure in place, include that on your website. Once your site is launched, share it with colleagues and friends, and put it in your e-mail signature so it's readily available to anyone you write to.

An easy way to establish a website is to develop a blog using a service such as [Wordpress](#) or [Blogger](#). These services allow you to set up a free website and include easy-to-use publishing software. Social media sites, such as [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Twitter](#), also offer free and easy-to-use accounts that can assist task forces to publicize and disseminate information to a wide audience. Use hashtags—for example, #humantrafficking or #city—so that your posts and tweets are picked up by search engines and others who follow social media on those topics. If you decide to incorporate social media into your outreach and awareness strategy, make sure you have a dedicated task force member or volunteer regularly posting content and responding to inquiries. The general public may come to learn about you via your social media and report useful information to you via those profiles (in private message functions). Please note these are just some of the tools you can use. Each of these products has potential risks, and best practices should be used.

Link to other resources on your website such as [MyNeighborhoodUpdate](#). You can embed a city- or state-based version of crime reports on your own website to share with your target audiences.

Alternatively, if you would like to create one of your own, you can easily use [Google Maps](#) or [Ushahidi](#), which are free mapping platforms that allow you to categorize and visualize data. Something to keep in mind is that human trafficking is still an under-identified and under-reported crime, and using these maps may lead some viewers to think that trafficking is not occurring if it is not on these maps. Task Forces should review if these are helpful to your particular jurisdiction. You can also create a page on your site that lists links to news articles or videos that are useful to the public. They can be vetted by task force members to ensure an accurate portrayal of human trafficking that the task force wants to be associated with.

If one of the key goals of your task force website is to be a source of information, you can also consider creating an e-mail or text message (SMS)-based listserv. An e-mail listserv can be set up easily through



Examples of websites

successfully used to inform the public:

- [The Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force](#)
- [Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force](#)
- [San Jose Police Human Trafficking Task Force](#)

Google Groups, and sign-ups can be taken via your website. For a text message-based listserv, you can use online gateways such as [Clickatell](#), [Twilio](#) or [FrontlineSMS](#) to send and receive blast messages at minimal cost. You can set up a phone number and a key word (e.g., SignUp). If a community member texts “SignUp” to your number, they will be automatically enrolled to receive text alerts from you (e.g., upcoming meetings, local events, resources, and other information) and can also text back with questions. Both e-mail and text-based listservs are a useful and cost-effective way to conduct outreach and awareness activities and engage your audience in a unique way that keeps all your members and supporters on the same page.

Awareness Handouts & Materials

Some of the more traditional forms of outreach, such as fliers, t-shirts, billboards, handouts, panel presentations, workshops, tabling at training and awareness events, film screenings, and run/walk events, remain effective means to reach a wide audience. Some organizations and task forces use volunteers and abandoned shop windows (with the proper permissions), public transportation ad space, such as bus shelters or taxi top signs, and billboards to create awareness displays about trafficking, which can be an effective way to do outreach.

Press Releases and Public Presentations

Press releases and public presentations should be used to promote the successes of involved agencies. They should include success stories and mention all of the agencies involved.

It is important when drafting press releases or public presentations (see [Section 3.1 on committee activities](#)) that commonly agreed upon terms and descriptions are used when discussing human trafficking in the community. PSAs can be played in movie theatres and on the local radio and TV stations.

Presentations should include the types of services provided and the collaborative engagement, but need not disclose any information regarding specific clients or cases. Drafting and distributing a press release during National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month (currently each January) that outlines how many victims were served and by which task force member organizations, and the collaborative response, can help gather and sustain support for the task force.



Case Study: Lessons Learned From Task Force Outreach Efforts

One task force worked with 75 county transit buses to place anti-trafficking awareness ads, which equaled approximately 38 million impressions. Though the campaign reached many people, it was very costly and not as effective as they hoped. In addition, the outreach campaign took place during the early stages of their efforts, when people did not understand the term “human trafficking.” They also used their own hotline number at the time, which was not monitored 24/7. Task force members recommend that the National Hotline be used in such campaigns. Plus, the amount of money saved could go toward targeted training of other stakeholders, such as nurses, emergency room staff, or law enforcement, resulting in a greater return on investment. Through the raised awareness, the task force did obtain referrals and initiate cases through bus ads.

The task force also created posters in multiple languages, pocket information cards, and t-shirts. The task force explained that the best method was its moving billboard campaign that involved giving people well-made t-shirts and totes with awareness messaging; however, the people only received these items after they completed at least an hour of training or attended an hour-long presentation by the task force. As a result of the training, individuals can explain human trafficking and refer others to the task force.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.3 Other Task Force Activities](#).

State Advocacy

Building a sound foundation for success also depends on the enactment of effective human trafficking legislation on the state level. In order to address human trafficking, state and local law enforcement officials not only need a well-crafted set of felony criminal offenses, including racketeering and forfeiture (as found in the federal criminal code), but also the well-established tools used in organized crime investigations. This includes the legal authority to: (1) conduct consensual overhears and judicially approved wiretaps, (2) employ investigative grand juries or similar compulsory processes, and (3) provide use immunity, witness protection, and cooperation plea agreements.

State human trafficking legislation may also include the adoption of some form of “safe harbor” provision (and appropriate child welfare regulations) to move underage victims of sex trafficking out of the juvenile justice or criminal justice process and into the child abuse and neglect system. In order to treat commercially sexually exploited children as victims rather than offenders, states across the country are currently experimenting with different variations of safe harbor legislation based on local conditions. In sum, these statutes create affirmative defenses to, rebuttable presumptions against, or outright bans of the prosecution of children as prostitutes.

Finally, a comprehensive state statutory framework should include provisions that help suppress customer demand for all types of human trafficking and place suspected human trafficking on the mandatory reporter list of child abuse incidents under state law.

Regarding any political measures or advocacy activities, it should be understood that some task force agencies may not be able to endorse political measures as a matter of policy; for example, many municipal police departments cannot endorse specific legislative advocacy efforts. Recipients of federal funds and nonprofits are also restricted in activities that constitute lobbying, particularly with federal funds. In this case, one recommendation is that the endorsement comes from the task force itself, with the police department accepting that the task force is a collective voice. The other option is for member agencies to individually endorse the measure, while stating they are members of the task force (e.g., “The Hometown Human Trafficking Shelter, a member of the Hometown Human Trafficking Task Force, announced its endorsement of...”).



Example: Task Force State Advocacy in Illinois

[Illinois Safe Children's Act \(2010\)](#)



Resource: National Conference of State Legislatures

The [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) provides technical assistance on human trafficking to state legislators in order to educate and inform their efforts to address the various aspects of human trafficking policy that support specialized services for trafficking victims, reduce the crime's demand, and punish the perpetrators appropriately.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.3 Other Task Force Activities](#).

3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges

Operational challenges are very common across multidisciplinary collaborations. Challenges can arise due to agency protocols that inhibit certain forms of collaboration, while others are about communication or sustainability. Some common barriers to collaboration that seem insurmountable at first can be solvable. Effective collaboration is built over time. Regardless of the specific issue causing trouble, other practitioners have been there before and have overcome these barriers successfully. This section covers the most commonly found challenges, including membership conflict, sustainability, and media relations.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 4: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Interpreters

Trained and qualified interpreters should be provided to every victim who does not speak English well. There are some key considerations when identifying and selecting an interpreter. Interpreters should be **neutral**. Task force members should never use an interpreter who is another victim, a family member, or someone who has a relationship with the victim. Interpreters should have a complete grasp of the two languages they are translating as well as training in the skill of interpreting. The interpreter must not have ties to the trafficker, either in the United States or in the home country; to the victim; or to anyone else involved in the case. A victim may prefer an interpreter of the same or different sex (or from the same or a different national origin or religious community). Victims may not trust interpreters to maintain confidentiality and may prefer an interpreter who works over the telephone and is not able to see the victim or who may be from a distant location.

Task force members should meet with the interpreter before an interview is conducted. Questions that get to the heart of exploitation are often very difficult, invasive, and probing. An interpreter should be prepared for the potential need to ask difficult questions. Expectations of confidentiality must be reviewed before the interview starts. Confidentiality must be explained at the beginning of the interview, right after introducing the interpreter to the victim.

The interpreter can be a valuable resource to the interviewer. The interviewer should take the time to ask the interpreter to explain any particularly relevant dynamics related to the individuals national origin, language, or religion that may impact



Smart Tips

The use of nongovernmental organization (NGO) interpreters for investigative interviews risks the following potentially negative consequences:

- The investigation information can later be considered “tainted.”
- NGOs and service providers can be accused of providing “misinterpretation.”
- Confusion can be created if an advocate is also an interpreter for law enforcement, creating trust issues.
- NGOs can potentially be subpoenaed because of their role in interpretation.

communication with the victim. The following important ground rules must be established between the interpreter and the interviewer:

- The interpreter translates exactly what the interviewer states and what the victim states. No summaries or euphemisms are used. The interpreter does not elaborate beyond what either the interviewer or the victim states.
- The interpreter is not to translate side conversations or chatter. The interpreter is solely a conduit for communicating between the interviewer and the victim. If the victim asks the interpreter a question, the interpreter must translate that question to the interviewer and let the interviewer respond, interpreting that response.
- If there is a need to clarify the victim's response, the interpreter will stop the conversation, explain to the interviewer what is unclear, and have the interviewer ask clarifying questions that the interpreter then translates.
- Time for a break must be scheduled if the interview is expected to last more than an hour. Interpreting is an intense and tiring activity, and accuracy will degrade over time. Interpreters need breaks, and victims are likely to appreciate them as well.



Example

The [Asian Women's Shelter](#) program in San Francisco developed an innovative program, the [Multilingual Access Model](#), to recruit and train volunteers from almost 30 different Asian as well as other communities. These trained interpreter advocates complete a 74-hour training course to be certified as a California Domestic Violence Counselor who is trained in human trafficking language advocacy. The interpreter advocates provide appropriate advocacy and peer support to women in their own languages and also offer support to victim service providers. The huge success of the program has led to its replication in several other agencies in the Greater Bay Area as well as nationwide.

For additional information on working with interpreters to interview victims, see [Chapter 5.3, Working with Interpreters](#).

Overcoming Language Barriers

Human trafficking survivors speak many different languages. The ability to communicate can be a significant barrier when a task force is working with foreign national trafficking survivors. People also forget that many U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and American Indians also have limited English proficiency (LEP); that is, they do not speak English as their primary language, and they identify themselves as having a limited capability to read, write, speak, or understand the English language. Many observers forget that language access includes working with individuals who have disabilities, including those who may require the assistance of sign language interpreters. For additional information, see [Chapter 4.5, Victims with Physical, Cognitive, or Emotional Disabilities](#).

Task forces have legal obligations to establish language access plans and offer access to interpreters. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating based on national origin by, among other things, failing to provide meaningful language access to individuals who have LEP. In addition, many state and local ordinances mandate language access, and task forces need to comply with such requirements. It is important for task forces to plan how they will ensure that trafficking victims with LEP can properly access services and can accurately and safely report their cases to law enforcement.

It is particularly important for task forces to develop language access plans that detail how to access interpreters for their work. Aside from legal obligations, it is important that the information gleaned from trafficking survivors and other witnesses is obtained through a neutral interpreter so that there can be no confusion (or later arguments) that the information obtained was inaccurate because of inaccurate or misleading interpretation.

Developing a language access plan beyond a telephonic language line is important. While telephonic language lines are helpful and useful, they limit the ability of the interpreter to assess facial and body language as well as connect with the trafficking survivor using nonverbal cues to facilitate the most accurate form of interpretation.

For additional information and tools, see [Resources Chapter 3.4, Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Managing Conflict

As in any relationship, presumptions, misperceptions, and prejudgments are the central elements of discord and dysfunction. Generally, the origins of this friction can be traced to past experiences and to a lack of understanding of and appropriate regard for the other's roles and responsibilities. These challenges can exist within the same sector, e.g., different law enforcement agencies, and certainly across sectors. With groups that have a history of conflict and distrust, specifically among local, state, and federal law enforcement and victim service providers, a systematic way must be found to overcome prejudgetments, build trust, and work together as a team.

The challenges to collaboration are usually found in the group dynamics. Conflict will arise among agencies and organizations as well as among individuals. It is a predictable interpersonal human dynamic and organizational reality. Multidisciplinary groups can be very susceptible to conflict, with passionate individuals working together in intense, emergency situations.



Resources

- API-GBV's program, [Interpretation Technical Assistance and Resource Center](#), provides assistance in developing language access plans.
- The [Overcoming Barriers: Solutions for Law Enforcement](#) report provides strategies enabling law enforcement to effectively communicate with LEP individuals.
- The [Sample Law Enforcement Language Assistance Policy](#) provides a planning tool for law enforcement.

When building a task force, it's important to expect a level of conflict. Some of the more routine examples of conflict within a human trafficking task force include:

- Conflict between victim service providers when there is a difference in opinion about how a victim may receive services;
- Misunderstandings related to who does what for which victims;
- Conflict between law enforcement agencies, particularly around jurisdictional issues and who is the lead on a particular investigation;
- Conflict between law enforcement and victim service providers that may disagree on who is a victim and under what definition a victim may or may not meet the legal standard; and
- What information can be shared between law enforcement and victim service providers.

Before a task force can become an interdependent team responding to human trafficking, the members have to invest in responding appropriately to each other. Conflict is not unhealthy as it tends to keep a group sharp. Failure to manage conflict, however, can destroy a group. This fact also is an endorsement of the need for formal task force leadership. Conflict does not manage itself, nor does it just eventually work itself out.

Building Trust Takes Time

All great relationships are built on trust. It is not readily given nor should it be presumed to exist until it has been earned. The safest presumption that can be made in successfully convening a group to serve as a task force is that all members are there to have a role in achieving the mission and purpose of the task force.

Building trust is recognized by current task force leaders as a necessary part of effective collaboration that takes time. Task force meetings, joint trainings, open discussions, challenges to existing practices, productive debriefings of encountered experiences, and other interactions among task force members all provide opportunities for effective teambuilding.



Tips to Enhance Mutual Understanding

- Begin by working to understand the purpose and mission of the represented organizations and how the representatives carry out their role within their organizations, including their limitations.
- Work toward identifying and confronting lingering past and current issues that continue to erect relationship barriers.
- Focus on the issue; do not attack the person, organization, or agency.
- Accept responsibility for past failures when it is appropriate.
- Attempt to bring new understanding about organizational dynamics where it is lacking, and work to reach a resolution of differences.



Searching for additional support and resources?

For additional resources on conflict resolution, check out the [Community Tool Box Training for Conflict Resolution](#).

OVC TTAC also offers a [module on Conflict Management & Negotiation through Victim Assistance Training \(VAT\) Online](#). Module lessons include: sources of conflict, conflict management styles, and negotiation methods.

For more specialized and tailored support, [OVC TTAC also offers Customized Training & Technical Assistance](#) on task force conflict resolution, which is available upon request.

Focus on the Mission and Core Purpose

With a focus on the mission, the core purpose, and how issues will impact the ability of the task force to meet that mission, well-intentioned and respectful input among members of the group can help to resolve the differences and strengthen the group relationship. The common adage “focus on the issue, not on the individual” holds true. In a task force setting, that may need to be expanded to “focus on the issue, not on the agency or organization.”

Assume good intent. Typically, if someone seems unreasonable, it is often due to a misunderstanding of another member’s mandates or limitations. One victim service provider task force member was surprised at the pressure the case agent put on the case manager and the victim to meet and get a solidified statement. When the case agent explained the legal timetable associated with impaneling a grand jury, the case agent and case manager (with the victim’s input) were able to work together to establish a schedule that worked. The unreasonable expectation seemed much more reasonable when the process was understood. Likewise, one law enforcement task force member became increasingly frustrated at the lack of availability of a case manager after hours. Once the case manager explained that she was paid hourly and had to receive permission to flex her hours, the two worked together to plan a weekly schedule and the seemingly unreasonable behavior of the case manager was understood and seemed reasonable.



Tips on Conflict Resolution

- Look to task force leadership to confront and manage conflict. Many leaders are trained in basic conflict resolution techniques. The process of conflict resolution can raise tensions, so it is important that the discussions are carefully facilitated and not avoided.
- Ask a neutral member of the team who has conflict resolution skills to act as facilitator.
- Consider bringing in outside conflict resolution mediation professionals when needed to facilitate these difficult conversations. Several task forces have done this, and it may only require one meeting between a limited number of involved persons and a facilitator.
- Seek advice from another task force that already resolved a similar conflict.
- Always emphasize accountability and commitment to task force values.
- Discuss the issue by trying to understand what happened before drawing conclusions. When there is enough clear information about what happened, hold those responsible for repairing any damage.
- Success is usually based on personal relationships and personalities and a willingness to communicate openly and overcome obstacles. The best organizations grow from a respectful and purposeful confrontation of differences, not the avoidance of them.
- Establish a conflict resolution process in your operational protocol.

Conduct post-case reviews. Some task forces conduct “post-case reviews” within 1 month of a case closure. Closure may be defined by the conviction of a trafficker, an investigation that is turned down for prosecution, or the decision of a victim not to assist with the investigation. It is important to review all types of cases, not just those that result in a criminal trial, so as to identify areas of effective collaboration with victim service providers and among task force members, as well as areas in need of further energy and improvement. Each member involved in the case should be included in this review,

which can serve not only as an opportunity to learn more about the process, but also as a mechanism for clarifying and improving case protocols and procedures.

Some common results and responses from task forces include:

- “I was surprised that the victim was subpoenaed to testify when he had been cooperating all along. Can you explain that process?”
- “What was the reasoning behind charging [crime type] rather than human trafficking?”
- “I wish I had known that the victim was hospitalized. Was there a confidentiality issue there that you can explain?”
- “We were really spinning our wheels in the beginning stages of this case. I wonder if it would be helpful next time for the case agent and case manager to speak each morning to review upcoming appointments, victim needs, and case progression?”
- “We brought in DOL way too late. How can we invite them on to the task force and involve them earlier in case strategy?”

Finally, a post-case review might serve as an opportunity to recognize how much a task force grew in its ability to collaborate and be reason for celebration.

Find nonthreatening ways to facilitate conflict resolution.

In one task force, the team leader routinely received phone calls, during the first year of the group's formation, from members with complaints about each other and about other organizations' performances. After a period of weaving those complaints into the meeting discussions in a nonthreatening way that focused on the problem, the leader observed that the members began bringing up their concerns on their own in a similar manner. The group's discussions became more productive, and trust among the membership increased.

Develop a process for addressing conflicting opinions about who is a victim. Task forces should develop a standing procedure to specifically address a common and recurring issue of conflicting opinions concerning the status of an individual as meeting the definition of “victim.”

For example, one task force experienced a situation where a foreign national over-stayed her/his visa and claimed they were a victim of domestic servitude. This individual was simultaneously brought to the attention of local law enforcement and the task force's immigration



Task Force Example: Ask a Neutral Team Member to Mediate a Discussion

One task force that faced conflict between a local law enforcement representative and a victim service provider relied on a member who worked well with both individuals to mediate a discussion.

This mediator called for a meeting between the organizations' leaders and simply created an environment for them to discuss their differences frankly. That management of a serious conflict preserved the involvement of both organizations and perhaps assured the successful continuation of the task force.



Smart Tip: Trust is established over time through the shared experience of working together on one trafficking case at a time, and by communicating or debriefing about the experiences of that case, regardless of whether there was a successful outcome.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 4: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#)

attorney. The attorney believed the individual was a victim. The task force contacted their ICE/HSI partner; HSI knew the person and had moved to deport before the person claimed to be a trafficking victim. Based on HSI's prior investigation and the odd way the victim related the story to law enforcement (i.e., self-identifying as a trafficking victim), both HSI and law enforcement believed the person was trying to circumvent the T visa process. The attorney, law enforcement official, and ICE (those directly involved in the "victim or not victim" discussion) met to discuss the case. They could not reach agreement on the individual, so as a group they decided to refer the individual to another human trafficking/immigration attorney whom the task force knew and trusted. This decision best served the interests of the individual and the collaboration of the task force, and ultimately resulted in submission of a T visa.

This process (outlined in the blue box Emergency/Special Case Review example below) is extremely helpful in ensuring that all parties have all the available information regarding evidence of each aspect of the crime. Of course, victim service providers and/or attorneys must have written consent to share information at this meeting. Task force members identify evidence under "process," "means," and "end" aspects of the definition of human trafficking and then identify next steps. There are cases where not everyone is able to share all evidence they possess, so it should be acknowledged and decided what to do instead in those situations. Task force members must also understand that organizations and offices may continue to hold different opinions and develop procedures that respect the different roles of each organization. A service provider does not have the same evidentiary standards as a prosecutor, and not all cases will be brought to trial no matter how much the victim suffered. These practicalities should be understood and respected by all members of the task force.

Oftentimes, task forces have information-sharing protocols that do not endorse a single definition of victim because a one-size fits all definition can actually be counterproductive. Each task force member has differing duties and functions, and the meaning should be driven by the context in which the word is used. For example, law enforcement might not be able to count a particular individual as a victim per a specific legal standard, but a victim service provider may still wish and need to do so in order to properly capture their efforts for funding purposes. Both definitions are in good faith and correct in context, even though they are not exactly the same in scope. Mutual respect between parties recognizes such differences in role and function, and it can be a good topic for dialogue at a large task force meeting.



Emergency/Special Case Review Example from the International Institute of Buffalo

The emergency meeting is designed to facilitate discussion toward addressing concerns about an investigation, prosecution, or victim issue. Other task force participants, as identified by the lead law enforcement official (LEO) and prosecutor, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) representative to address the concerns in the case, will attend these reviews. These special case reviews will be called on an as-needed basis.

The USAO representative of the steering committee will make the determination of the need for such meetings. The meeting will include the lead investigative agency, prosecutor, and any other agency involved in the criminal investigation. Members of the task force are encouraged to have open lines of communication in order to meet task force requirements. The USAO representative of the steering committee will chair the meeting.

1. Requesting Party

Any task force participant involved in a case investigated or served through the task force may call a special or emergency meeting for the purpose of case review at any point in the case process.

2. Meeting Procedure

- Contact USAO steering committee member.
- Provide verbal justification for emergency review.
- Specify who needs to attend.
- Schedule and review case as soon as practicable.

3. Information to be Presented

In addition to information presented in a regularly scheduled steering committee case review meeting, the person calling the emergency meeting should be prepared to present information regarding why an emergency meeting was required, along with any exigent circumstances present in the case.

4. Final Review

At the conclusion of a task force case, the lead LEO, NGO, and prosecutor will meet to critique the case from the start of the investigation to its conclusion. NGO participation in final case reviews will be specific to services they provide to victims of human trafficking.

The case critique will serve as a training tool and establish best practices to be shared with other members of the task force, as well as to identify and correct shortfalls. The USAO task force member will track and promulgate best practices for both LEO and NGO participation. The sharing of any information by members of the task force will comply with existing agency policies and will be subject to pertinent agency legal restrictions, as well as applicable state and federal laws.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Limited Resources and Personnel Turnover

Many victim service provider and law enforcement organizations are challenged by their capacity to release personnel to participate in operations that remove them from their core responsibilities. Victim service providers often have personnel fulfilling multiple responsibilities, with large caseloads, in addition to being organizational experts on human trafficking. Likewise, law enforcement officers carry large caseloads and, in some instances, operate as generalist investigators across multiple crime categories, including human trafficking.

Time is a large constraint on task force members, due to the length of time needed for a successful trafficking investigation and the constraints of non-task force work obligations. Time pressures can leave members feeling overwhelmed and pulled in competing directions. High rates of turnover can greatly set back a task force, particularly when an active and engaged member leaves and there are no written protocols in place for a new person to easily assume those responsibilities. Loss of team members is disruptive to rapport and relationship building. It also affects other members' confidence in the agency's commitment to the task force. Organizations must make every effort to avoid burnout and turnover of personnel who participate on the task force.



Tools: The [Community Tool Box](#) is a practical, step-by-step tool in community-building skills. There are action models, tools, and templates to guide, assess, plan, evaluate, and sustain your community efforts.

Some ways to address issues around retention of task force leaders and members include:

- Develop detailed member contingency plans and protocols for any necessary member replacement. Turnover is a challenge in the fields of law enforcement and victim services in general, and that must be anticipated from the outset.
- Create strong MOUs that outline specific roles and responsibilities (see [Section 3.1 on Memorandums of Understanding](#)) to ease transition of new task force members. Consider appointing someone to orient or mentor any new members.
- Ensure that task force meeting minutes are accessible to new members through a task force website or electronic document-sharing system as a means of sharing institutional knowledge.
- Request transition memos from outgoing committee chairs to facilitate new and effective leadership.
- Consider making leadership roles time-limited (1–2 years), which may be more manageable and increase interest from others in taking on tasks.
- Encourage member organizations to assign more than one person to the task force. These personnel should play a strong liaison role within their own organizations about the activities of the task force.
- Provide written protocols to help explain the role that the agency or individual is to play when new task force members are needed. Always keep in mind the mission and purpose of the task force. Several task forces report that having a dedicated staff or a trusted team to share the work helps ease the burden of limited resources and time.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Financial Support

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the question, “How will we fund our task force?” When discussing financial support, it is important to remember that it is not simply about money. A financial sustainability plan will include other types of resources you might obtain, such as in-kind support, volunteers, or shared resources from other organizations. It may even include convincing another organization to take on leadership roles whether it is in a committee or on a case.

Below are some different ways to obtain resources that could pertain to your task force:

- Leveraging shared positions and resources;
- Becoming a line item in an existing budget;
- Applying for grants;
- Using existing personnel resources;
- Soliciting in-kind support;
- Sponsoring fundraisers;
- Using third-party funding;
- Acquiring tax revenues; and
- Securing endowments and giving arrangements.



Tips From Task Force Members on Financial Support and Sustainability

- Keep your task force members informed about what is going on financially.
- If formal fundraising is required, you can often work with a tax-exempt member as the lead agency to receive funds. If you enter this type of agreement, ensure that a relationship is established beforehand, roles and responsibilities are made clear, and MOUs are signed.
- Make connections with local community groups, even those that are not trafficking related.
- Collect data on victims identified and served through your task force, outreach efforts accomplished, individuals trained, perpetrators identified and prosecuted, and other impacts on the community. This can help with justifying re-allocation of tax revenue or help in preparing funding proposals.
- Make connections with local politicians so they understand your issue and its importance.
- Be consistent. As a task force, be clear and stick to your mission to help build your base and public understanding of your work, and why you should be supported with funding.

Many of these ideas are activities individual task force member organizations will perform on their own to raise money; however, in the task force setting, it is important to work together to reach common goals. Different groups have different resources available that might be shared.

Fundraising

Organizations operating on a local, national, or global level can also be a direct source of financial support, or take on the role of fundraising in support of the task force. Engaging the community for financial support is particularly important for task forces that are not funded by state or federal agencies. Task Forces in this situation are encouraged to create realistic projected budgets for each

area of services or capacities provided (or needed) so that potential funders can see the cost of providing assistance for victims of trafficking.

There are also task forces throughout the country that operate with very little, if any, additional funding. Task forces are successful because they have built-in methods of creating buy-in, have political will, strong leadership, and their collaborative strength and relationships with one another.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Media & Public Perception

Public Media Partnerships

A common challenge for task forces (and anti-trafficking organizations in general) is managing public media partnerships. Public media partnerships can be useful for marketing the task force's efforts and in raising public awareness of trafficking. Cultivating a working relationship with interested journalists through frequent personal contact may result in improved coverage of task force events, public awareness campaigns, or other efforts.

It is important to note the limitations of these resources or partnerships. Dedicated resources and a strong and clear protocol should be put in place for what information is shared on a website or how to engage media partners. Regular reviews of this protocol should be conducted to ensure that information shared with the public does not jeopardize the victims' safety, the safety of victim advocates, investigations, or prosecutions.

The Media and Human Trafficking Cases

The media can be either extremely helpful or detrimental to a human trafficking legal case. When helpful, the media may draw attention to a case and gain the sympathy of the public, including influential individuals who may be in positions to assist the trafficking survivor. The media may help to educate the public on trafficking and to create interest in, and the political will for, support for task force operations. When detrimental, the media may be extremely harmful to a case and can create safety issues for the trafficking survivor and other witnesses. If the information released is incorrect or controlled by the trafficker, the false or harmful information may be more traumatizing for the trafficking survivor and negatively change public perception. In addition, if media stories are released early in the process, without proper time and resources devoted to investigation of the case, such stories can alert the traffickers to dispose of evidence and align their story with that of others. Because of these issues, it is important to develop a concrete [media plan](#) for task force partners that revolves first around the safety of the survivor and the second, integrity of any investigations.

Working with Survivors

Task forces may often work with the media to share survivor's stories with the general public. Task force members should help in detracting against survivors just telling stories. Awareness is important, but empowering survivors to be more than their story is more important, for all parties involved. Task forces can help keep the media from sensationalizing the issue (whether for ratings or funding) and from using a victim as the face of the issue, while empowering survivors to apply expertise in certain other ways or

choose to avoid the media and the public eye. Simply being a survivor does not equal being an expert, and survivors should be encouraged to develop their skills in any/all ways, whether human trafficking-related or not.

Media organizations, conferences, or other events asking survivors to speak publicly should provide or offer a safety person or law enforcement escort to assist.

Managing Public Interest in Human Trafficking

It is necessary to manage the public interest and create parameters of involvement to help ensure that interested community members are not engaging in dangerous behaviors, such as attempting to conduct their own investigations or victim rescues. The public should not engage in surveillance or rescue efforts, nor should non-law enforcement coordinated groups such as nonprofits. When possible, the task force's public awareness and outreach committee should take opportunities to educate reporters on the topic fully. See more in [Section 3.3 for Information about Outreach & Awareness](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

Vicarious Trauma and Burnout

Given the emotional drain and intensive nature of human trafficking cases, everyone involved should take extra care in defining clear boundaries in assisting victims and taking sufficient time to maintain personal health.

Without proper sleep, exercise, nutrition, and occasionally time off, individuals working human trafficking matters can suffer a high degree of burnout. In short, in order to properly help victims, law enforcement and NGOs need to take care of themselves as well. Task force members can share protocols and training materials that will help partners to maintain their boundaries and their health, while still supporting trafficking victims.



Training Resources:

[OVC TTAC offers customized TTA](#) on a variety of topics related to vicarious trauma including *Mitigating the Impacts of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma and Promoting Resiliency*.

[The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#) This is an online resource to assist professionals in addressing vicarious trauma needs for organizations and their staff.

For additional information and tools, visit the Resource page for [Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges](#).

4. Supporting Victims

When quality care, compassionate responses, and essential services are provided, victims will be more empowered to meet their individual goals along their healing journey.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 5: Effective Victim Services](#)



Smart Practice: Key Characteristics of a Skilled Provider Working With Trauma Survivors

- Understands that certain survivor behaviors are a response to trauma.
- Is knowledgeable regarding the mental health [and substance abuse] effects of violence and in particular, sexual violence.
- Is skilled and knowledgeable regarding trauma and trauma treatment.
- Is responsive to emergency mental health issues of clients.

Source: [Helping Sexual Assault Survivors with Multiple Victimization and Needs: A Guide for Agencies Serving Sexual Assault Survivors](#) (Davies, 2007)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Chapter 4 Supporting Victims](#).

4.1 Using a Trauma-Informed Approach

All task force members should understand how trauma affects victims' response to services and the criminal justice process, and the individual task force members' response to victims. [A trauma-informed approach](#) begins with understanding the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the individual, as well as on the professionals who help them. It incorporates four elements:

1. **Realizing** the prevalence of trauma.
2. **Recognizing** how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce.
3. **Responding** by putting this knowledge into practice.
4. **Resisting** means to actively seek to resist re-traumatization of victims you serve.



Training Resources on Trauma-Informed Care

OVC TTAC offers a [module on Trauma-Informed Care](#) through [Victim Assistance Training \(VAT\) Online](#). Module lessons include: definitions, how to develop trauma-informed programs, and more.

Trauma-informed approaches place priority on restoring the survivor's feelings of safety, choice, and control. Programs, services, agencies, and communities can be trauma-informed.

Trauma affects how victims see themselves, their worldview, and relationships. These beliefs affect how victims respond to services and the criminal justice system and underscore the importance of task forces taking a trauma-informed approach, not only through service delivery but also throughout the investigation and prosecution process.

Both the criminal justice and victim services systems can inadvertently **re-traumatize**. Taskforce member responses that can lead to re-traumatization include—

- Not having time to consider options; arrests, lack of choice in housing or service provision can create a feeling of a lack of control for victims.
- Not providing accurate or timely updates on events, not returning phone calls; not providing transparency on timelines can accelerate stressors for victims with ongoing unexpected changes.
- Enforcing power dynamics; not allowing victims to make their own choices related to services, engaging with law enforcement and/or prosecution. This can cause victims to feel threatened or even attacked.
- Being asked to share story multiple times; not knowing victim rights; not knowing that working with law enforcement is not always a requirement or services are optional.
- Using wrong terminology or terminology that does not align with the client's identified experiences.

OVC Model Standards Definition

Trauma-informed—Approaches delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in staff, clients, and others and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.



Key Concept: Trauma-informed Care

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

Summary from Harris, M. & Fallot, R. (2001). Using trauma theory to design service systems. New directions in mental health services, Jossey-Bass, 89, Spring.



Smart Tips for Building and Utilizing a Trauma-Informed Lens in Your Task Force

- Review agency policies and procedures to identify and remove any that are potentially unsafe and harmful to trafficking victims with histories of trauma.
- Provide education and training to task force members and agency staff, including those working directly with trafficking victims as well as other providers in relevant systems of care.
- Ensure safety and meet basic service needs, as identified and outlined by the victim, are consistently met and available.
- Build long-term, sustaining relationships with your community stakeholders and partners.
- Provide access to trauma-specific treatment services.
- Understand how an individual's background plays a role in resiliency and the importance of community resources as potentially mediating the trauma experience.
- Make peer models and supports available for all taskforce members and victims served.
- Engage survivors in programming and seek additional guidance from subject matter experts who have lived experience.

Source: ["Treating the Hidden Wounds: Trauma Treatment & Mental Health Recovery for Victims of Human Trafficking" \(March, 2008\)](#) by Heather J. Clawson, Ph.D., Amy Salomon, Ph.D., and Lisa Goldblatt Grace, LICSW, MPH.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.1 Using a Trauma-Informed Approach.](#)

4.2 Victim Service Provider Intake & Needs Assessment

During the initial intake and assessment, case managers should expect to:

- **Discuss the services program, including the survivor's rights and responsibilities** under the program and, specifically, the right to not engage in services and/or with law enforcement.
- **Work together to create a safety plan.** Note, it is not uncommon for victims to express the desire to return to their trafficker, or to do so. Discussing a safety plan is even more important in this situation.
- **Review common responses to trauma** to normalize reactions, such as sleeping too much or too little, forgetfulness, and hyper-vigilance, and review possible interventions if these responses occur.

Safety Planning

The safety and well-being of the victim is the primary concern of the victim service provider. Service providers convey pertinent information to victims so that they can make informed choices about services they wish to obtain, working with law enforcement, legal and immigration remedies, peer

support resources, and much more. While respecting the victim's right to make choices about their life, working together, task force members can help ensure that victims make informed decisions.

Remember: safety should be defined by the victim, with support from the service provider and task force members as applicable.

Conducting a Needs Assessment

A thorough assessment of needs takes place throughout service provision, allowing the victim to identify and prioritize their needs. Emergency needs should be addressed first, as well as safety planning until the next meeting with the service provider. Remember that needs assessment is not a static step, but rather an ongoing process of engagement. As one set of needs are met, another may be identified.

Needs of victims of human trafficking may include:

- Case management and/or victim advocacy
- Childcare, transportation and/or public assistance benefits
- Food, clothing, and hygiene items
- Crime victims' rights and benefits
- Religious/spiritual community support
- Dental, medical, substance abuse, and/or mental health care (emergency and long-term)
- Disability assistance
- Education/GED classes or financial literacy
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Family contact/reunification
- Identification documents
- Job preparation and placement
- Legal representation (immigration, criminal, civil)
- Repatriation assistance
- Housing (emergency, transitional, permanent)
- Sexual assault or domestic violence services
- Translation and interpretation

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.2 Victim Service Provider Intake and Needs Assessment.](#)

4.3 The Vital Role of Case Management & Service Planning

The case manager performs multiple roles as point person, victim advocate, and facilitator of communication to help the victim navigate complex criminal justice and social service systems. Task forces should ensure that any strategies for providing services include case management, as it is vital to ensure that victims do not fall through the cracks of the multiple systems involved in their treatment and care.

Identification of primary case manager. There may be different agencies involved in case management based on the characteristics and needs of an identified victim. It is helpful in these situations to identify a primary case manager for each victim to streamline communication between various victim service providers and with law enforcement partners.

Protection of victims' rights and informed consent. It is important to review documents related to these concepts on a consistent basis. Even when a consent form is signed, it is useful to remind the victim verbally of this fact prior to sharing a new piece of information with an outside agency. This reminds victims of their choices and control over their personal information.

Goal setting and individualized service planning. The best service plan is in the survivor's own words and is not standardized. Quality service plans are survivor-driven because each survivor is different.

Initial and ongoing assessments. These assessments are necessary to identify each victim's accomplishments and strengths and current or new service priorities in need of support.

Locating appropriate resources and services. Make sure that any referrals offered to victims espouse a similar commitment to client-centered, trauma-informed support services.

Review of roles and responsibilities. Keep in mind that many new people have just been introduced to the victim. It is important to regularly review the roles of the case manager, attorney, investigator, prosecutor, and others.

Monitoring circumstances that may impact the victim's safety. Safety planning should be conducted at every meeting with a victim.

Clinical case conference reviews. Case conferences should be held to review the progress, needs, and impediments to safety or self-sufficiency experienced by victims. The case conference may involve the victim.

Communicating and following up with professionals within criminal justice and/or social service systems. Advocate on behalf of the victim as needed to help reduce barriers and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in meeting the victim's needs and achieving the client's goals.

Identification of service gaps. Case conferences can provide the opportunity to identify service gaps and strategize possible referrals to new providers to ensure comprehensive victim assistance. These issues also may be broached more broadly by the victim services committee to increase the investment and solicit the expertise in creating a more comprehensive response by the task force to any and all victims.



Training Resource:

[Victim Assistance Training \(VAT\)](#) [Online](#) has four sections: Basics, Core Competencies and Skills, Crimes, and Specific Considerations for Providing Victim Services.

Regular case coordination meetings. Depending on the complexity of the case and the needs of the victim, the case manager, along with the victim's attorney, and other individuals providing different services to the victim, may meet on a regular basis. These meetings can help ensure that the victim's needs are being met and provide accurate updates about the case status to everyone involved. This may include various nongovernmental victim service providers and system-based individuals, as well as child protection and/or law enforcement officers. In such cases, it is critical to clearly define limitations on what can and cannot be shared among the different participants to protect victim confidentiality.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.3 The Vital Role of Case Management & Service Planning](#).

4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) [crime victim compensation](#) programs are available in every state and territory and reimburse victims for such crime-related expenses as medical costs, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, and lost wages or loss of support.

Both U.S. citizens/legal permanent residents and foreign national victims are eligible; however, there are limitations based on residency, reporting of the crime, and time elapsed since the crime occurred, which makes it important to connect with the local VOCA administrator to learn more.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 5: Effective Victim Services](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services](#).

4.5 Victim Populations

Victims of trafficking have broad and distinct needs that may require specialized responses. Victims' needs may differ depending on their age, sex, national origin, background, language skills, type of trafficking experienced, history of victimization, and a host of other factors.

Developing a coordinated response to human trafficking in any area requires the development of a protocol with multiple options to address all the different types of subpopulations. Existing task forces address these challenges in a variety of ways. See [Sections 3.1 on the Victim Services Committee](#) and [Task Force Operational Protocol](#) for further suggestions on how to formalize these types of referral mechanisms.

Tips for Meeting the Needs of All Victims

- As a task force, commit to **addressing all types of human trafficking** and all types of victims. Evaluate task force statistics and honestly evaluate why the Task Force may be identifying one type of victim or crime more frequently.
- **Allow victims the opportunity to express a preference** for a male or female officer when sharing their story. An effort toward nonjudgmental interactions, while acknowledging the difficulty in talking about such intense topics, may be helpful in decreasing the male victim's feelings of shame and increasing their sense of safety.
- **Work with survivor advocates** so that their experience and expertise can support the goals to deliver appropriate and supportive services.
- Ensure that all **training and outreach materials** created and distributed by the task force address all types of trafficking and all types of victims.
- **Increase public awareness of the various victim populations**, including minors and men. Often media outlets focus disproportionately on women and girls. The public awareness committee can strategize on presenting the media with an understanding of victimization and highlight different types of cases.
- Help **fill the gaps in quality services** for all victims, particularly regarding safe and emergency housing. Filling these gaps in creative ways should be a priority for task force victim services committee work.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).



Resources:

[HTR3](#). A framework from the Family and Youth Services Bureau on how to recognize, respect, and respond to victims and survivors of human trafficking (sex, labor, DMST, CSEC, and other variants)

[National Runaway Safeline](#). The Safeline supports families and youth by providing confidential assistance and resources. Safeline provides runaway youth with support and information to make safe decisions for themselves.

Minors & Adolescents

Due to their dependence on or attachment to traffickers, minor victims may be less likely to self-identify and may have difficulty providing information about the circumstances of their trafficking. Minors are damaged by psychological trauma at deeper levels than adults and may find it even harder than adults to confide in authorities about painful and intimate events.

Specific vulnerabilities of minors make them targets of traffickers. Those include:

- Emotional vulnerabilities (feeling lonely, desperate to belong, needing love)
- Poverty (need to migrate in order to work, take care of family, pay for education)
- Aspects that make minors "different" and an outcast within their community (disability, new to a setting)
- Limited support and violence in the home (runaway or throwaway, lack of parental supervision, neglect, physical or sexual abuse at home)



Additional Resources: Read [Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States](#) (No Date) from the Department of Health and Human Services. The Child Welfare Information Gateway also contains other resources on human trafficking of children with state and local examples.

Other useful resources include the [National Children's Alliance](#), [The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#), and the [Capacity Building Center for States](#)

There are significant intersections between child maltreatment, delinquency, and human trafficking. Victims of trafficking are often involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Service providers have identified that the same risk factors that contribute to child maltreatment make these children vulnerable to the power of traffickers. It is also increasingly recognized that children who have been maltreated have a greater risk of juvenile delinquency, particularly when their trauma is left untreated and unresolved, making youth in the juvenile justice system also vulnerable to the power of traffickers. Youth may present to various systems as compliant or participatory in criminal acts when, in fact, they are victims of human trafficking. Additionally, minors are often compelled by traffickers to engage in criminal behavior such as drug dealing and prostitution. Given the complicated legal and custodial issues related to minors, it is advisable to invite representatives from child protection, child advocacy centers, and the juvenile justice system to be involved in the task force.

Support for Foreign National and U.S. Citizen Juvenile Victims

[Child Protective Services \(CPS\)](#) programs operate in every state, providing services for children who are abused or neglected, offering case management, establishment of a legal guardian, and housing options including foster families and group homes. For foreign national juveniles, it is important to note that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) administers the [Unaccompanied Refugee Minor \(URM\) program](#). The program establishes legal responsibility, under state law and in coordination with state-level CPS, to ensure that unaccompanied refugee and immigrant minors, including human trafficking victims, receive the full range of assistance, care, and services that are available to all foster children in the state. A legal authority is designated to act in place of the child's unavailable parent(s).

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 6: Focus on Youth](#)

The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#), Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), HHS, provides a clearinghouse for child welfare professionals and serves as a first stop for organizations that work on child protection/abuse, family and domestic violence, foster care, health, mental health, and substance abuse.

It is important to remember that **regardless of citizenship, children are not required to cooperate with law enforcement** to receive assistance. For minor victims who are foreign nationals, there are several forms of short-term and long-term immigration relief; cooperation is not required.

Below are some key considerations when working with minor and adolescent victims:

- **Identify an appropriate guardian.** In some cases, it is possible to reconnect and build positive ties to family and/or community (which may include family support and reconciliation, if appropriate), while in other cases it may be connecting minors to placement programs such as foster care builds new ties.
- **Utilize the child welfare and protection system.** Identify key personnel at your local child welfare office who can assist in navigating the system and obtaining services.
- **Become familiar with the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) in your area.** CACs are child-focused, facility-based programs in which representatives from many disciplines, including law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, medical and mental health, victim advocacy, and child advocacy, work together to conduct interviews and make team decisions about investigation, treatment, management, and prosecution of child abuse cases.
- **Advocate for a forensic interviewer** or law enforcement professional trained in interviewing children and adolescents to conduct the investigative interviews. See [Section 5.3 on Building Rapport with the Victim As your Witness](#) to learn about federal law enforcement resources and forensic interviewers.
- **Explore sealing, expunging, or vacating criminal records.** A criminal record can create difficult downstream consequences whether the child was arrested, convicted, or both. For example, employers or landlords often ask about criminal offenses, which can lead to roadblocks in obtaining services. Expunging refers to the process of sealing arrest and conviction records, while vacating deletes the records as if they never existed. It is important to check your state and county criminal court or the law enforcement agency in the task force to determine how offenses are expunged.
- **Identify programs that are unique and interesting for minors.** Many service providers have developed programs that help minors self-identify, avoid risky behavior, develop new skills, and use peer-to-peer groups to foster new healthy relationships. These may include after-school programs, homeless and runaway outreach teams, and youth drop-in centers.
- Most communities have **multidisciplinary coalitions focused on issues affecting youth**, which can be an excellent source of information when creating a comprehensive services web, as well as many additional trained eyes and ears for identifying trafficked youth.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 6: Focus on Youth](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

Foreign National Minors

Immigrant minors are at risk of being trafficked in their home country, in transit, and within the United States:

- In the home country: Due to poverty, gang violence, and civil and political unrest, minors may grow up in environments that make them vulnerable to trafficking exploitation. They may experience child abuse, violence based on the individuals sex, sexual or domestic violence, lack of educational opportunities or be forced into drug trafficking or labor trafficking, such as domestic servitude. Many minors are also trafficked for sex prior to entry into the United States, especially by gangs.
- In transit: On route to the United States, many minors pass through other countries and dangerous territories, sometimes alone. Some immigrant minors are used for forced labor and sex trafficking by drug cartels and organized crime, particularly in the areas surrounding U.S. border states. Some minors are kidnapped or fraudulently coerced into becoming drug mules or forced to work for the drug industry in other ways. Some, who have had their money stolen along the way, are forced to work in dangerous conditions to earn money to continue their journey. Other minors have reported being coerced to work on fishing boats as they tried to make their way into this country.
- In the United States: Like adult migrants, minors are charged heavy fees by the people who smuggle them into the United States and are expected to earn the money to pay back the fees or pay additional expenses for their housing and food. This can lead to peonage and/or debt bondage. Minors may also be victimized by family members upon their arrival. Instead of providing care and better opportunities, minors may be treated like domestic servants and forced to work long hours with no time off, or be pressured to work in commercial sex, to pay their debts.

Eligibility Letters and Interim Eligibility Letters

HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) helps foreign children who are trafficking victims become eligible for benefits and services in the United States. The first step is to issue an Eligibility Letter followed by an Interim Assistance Letter that will allow the child to receive benefits for 90 days. Once local, state, or federal law enforcement identifies a minor victim of trafficking, they are required to notify HHS for assistance within 24 hours. Likewise, if HHS identifies a potential victim of trafficking via another referral, HHS will issue an Interim Assistance Letter and will consult with the US DOJ and Homeland Security within 24 hours of the determination. Additionally, HHS may consult with nongovernmental organizations with expertise in trafficking before determining the



The HHS/ORR Eligibility letter provides access to a variety public benefits, including:

- Medical screenings
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Medicaid
- State Children's Health Insurance Programs
- Substance abuse and mental health services
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children
- Public housing programs

Submit an [application](#) to ORR to request assistance for a child trafficking victim.

To access the URM program for a child trafficking victim, call an HHS/ORR Child Protection Specialist at [202-205-4582](#).

[Status and Documentation Requirements for the ORR Refugee Resettlement Program | The Administration for Children and Families](#)

child's continued eligibility as a victim of trafficking. Children are not required to cooperate with law enforcement or to have been granted immigration status to receive assistance.

A child trafficking victim with an Eligibility Letter who has no available parent or legal guardian in the United States is eligible for ORR's [Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#) (URM) program. Children are placed in licensed foster homes or other care settings according to individual needs. An appropriate court awards legal responsibility to the state, county, or private agency providing services, to act in place of the child's unavailable parents. Children in the URM program receive the full range of services available to other foster children in the state, as well as special services to help them adapt to life in the United States and recover from their trafficking experience. Safe reunification with parents or other appropriate relatives is encouraged when appropriate.

Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC)

Unaccompanied Alien Children (UACs) are individuals under the age of 18 with no lawful U.S. status and no parents able to provide care and take physical custody. Most often, UACs arrive at U.S. ports of entry or are apprehended along the southwestern border with Mexico. They are apprehended in the interior of the country less frequently. Children are especially vulnerable to various forms of trafficking and exploitation if they are in the process of escaping violence, poverty, or political repression. Many of these children also have to navigate complicated legal immigration systems and the challenges of reunifying with their families and/or integrating into new communities in the United States. Task forces should consider the potential impact of an influx of UACs into their communities and provide services that make these children less vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.



ORR's data on UACs placed with sponsors can be found [here](#) by state and county.

Required Responses to Unaccompanied Alien Children

The DHS and the HHS share responsibility for the processing, treatment, and placement of UACs. DHS's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apprehends and detains unaccompanied children arrested at the border, while DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) handles custody transfer and repatriation, apprehends UACs in the interior of the country, and represents the government in removal proceedings. Any minor identified by ICE or CBP must be transferred to HHS custody within 72 hours after determining they are UACs. [HHS/ORR](#) coordinates and implements the care and placement of unaccompanied children. Both CBP and ORR are required to screen each UAC to determine if 1) the child has been a victim of trafficking, 2) there is credible evidence that the child would be at risk if returned to the country of origin, and 3) the child has a possible claim to asylum. UACs have access to legal counsel and HHS appoints independent child advocates for child trafficking victims and other vulnerable UACs.

It is possible that a UAC [may not disclose a trafficking experience](#) during an initial screening, so it is important for task forces to look for other indications that trafficking has taken place and conduct further screening if appropriate.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

Foreign National Victims

Foreign nationals have specific vulnerabilities tied to their immigration status, which traffickers exploit. Task force members will benefit from understanding the real fear of jail and/or deportation that prevents foreign-born victims from coming forward to admit their abuse. Foreign-born victims often lack documentation to prove their identity, fear they will be deported, fear threats to family members back home, do not understand that there are support services available to them, or are intentionally isolated geographically or through lack of language access. Foreign-born victims also may have experienced corrupt or violent law enforcement officers in their home countries, furthering their fears of seeking assistance. Additionally, eligibility for many public benefits is limited for foreign nationals. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) created a new system of services and support for foreign national trafficking victims to address this gap. See the [Certification for Adult Victims of Human Trafficking Factsheet](#) (May 2016).

Below are some key considerations when working with foreign-born victims:

- **Include an immigration attorney trained in human trafficking** as part of your task force.
- **Ensure that appropriate interpretation services are available** at all times, particularly at times of crisis. Although it might seem that a victim does not require an interpreter, most victims can express themselves more accurately in their language of origin when they are in crisis or speaking about traumatic events; however, be aware that interpreters are often from the same community as the victim or trafficker, which may make the victim more fearful. It is important to review the ethics of interpreting with the victim and the interpreter at the beginning of each interpreting session, and to ensure that the victim feels comfortable with the interpreter provided. All task force members will benefit from training on how to work effectively with interpreters. See [Section 5.3 on Victim Interview and Preparation](#) for more information on working with interpreters.
- **Involve law enforcement victim assistance specialists early in the course of the investigation** to review the rights of the victim and to request their assistance in obtaining immigration relief.
- **Be clear on the limitations of various organizations and ensure services** in assisting non-English-speaking victims or delivering appropriate or sensitive services. Assess whether a potential partner organization is unable or simply inexperienced in providing services to limited English speakers or undocumented victims. There may be an opportunity for training and collaboration. Understanding the victim's background will prepare task force members to better understand the victim's mindset, behaviors, approach to services, and approach to law enforcement, enabling the task force members to develop rapport with victims and more effectively provide services. For example, many service providers encounter foreign-born survivors who may be resistant to individual counseling, but are much more open and invested in group support sessions. Consider recruiting community-based organizations with an expertise in working with particular immigrant populations that the task force identifies as high risk.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 3: An Introduction to Labor Trafficking](#)

- **Be aware that not all services are available to undocumented individuals.** Undocumented victims are not immediately able to access some public benefits or to work. Be transparent about these time lags and collaborate with victims to work toward long-term goals while they await this documentation. Many English as Second Language, general literacy, employment training, and educational training programs are not dependent on status and are free of charge. Undocumented victims who receive an HHS letter of eligibility or certification are eligible for federally funded, means-tested public benefits; however, public benefit workers may be unfamiliar with these documents and the associated benefits. Federal welfare and immigration reform laws passed in 1996 severely restricted access to federally funded public benefits for foreign nationals, including lawful resident immigrants. The TVPA, therefore, included a mechanism for trafficking victims to become eligible for these benefits and specialized services for refugees, asylees, and trafficking victims. The ORR, part of the HHS Administration for Children and Families, is responsible for issuing Certification Letters to adults and Letters of Eligibility to minors who are victims of human trafficking. Minors can request a Letter of Eligibility from ORR with a showing that they are a victim of human trafficking. Victims over 18 must also show they are willing to cooperate with reasonable requests from law enforcement (or that they are unable to do so because of physical or psychological trauma) and were issued Continued Presence or filed a bona fide T visa application. It is helpful to include a Department of Social Services representative on local task forces to address any challenges to accessing public benefits.
- **Become familiar with reunification and repatriation assistance.** Foreign-born victims may need assistance reuniting with family members who are located in foreign countries through the T visa process or in repatriating to their home country. Victim service providers should be familiar with these processes and benefits afforded to derivative family members upon arrival. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has resources available to help secure documents for family members overseas and pay the cost of travel for family members to the United States.



Task Force Example: One service provider created a Memorandum of Understanding with the public benefits agency, which allowed the provider to e-mail available documents prior to the victim attending the public benefits appointment. This allowed any impediments to be addressed prior to the victim's appointment and minimized re-victimization.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

Male Victims

The lens through which first responders understand the face of human trafficking greatly affects their process of screening and identifying victims. There is often a presumption that victims are female. There is a false perception that male victims are only trafficked for labor or that their involvement in commercial sex is always voluntary. These assumptions impede proper screening and adequate protection for male victims of human trafficking.

Below are some key considerations when working with male victims:

- **Be sensitive to the victims sex in all aspects of victim identification, advocacy, and service delivery.** It can often be difficult for male survivors to seek help for fear of how others will react. Sometimes male survivors find it easier to tell an impartial staff person rather than friends or family. Males may also protect their self-image as a strong and resilient person and thus be reticent to admit feelings of fear, danger, or abuse. It is important when working with any victim to consider whether he has a preference for a male or female officer, case manager, or interpreter (if applicable) when discussing his victimization.
- **Be aware of heightened privacy concerns.** Many male survivors do not wish to share what happened to them publicly, and fear that disclosing or reporting what happened may require them to talk publicly about their experience. Ensure that, throughout the case management process, they are provided with confidentiality, privacy, and choice. An effort toward nonjudgmental interactions, while acknowledging the difficulty in talking about such intense topics, may be helpful in decreasing the male victim's feelings of shame and increasing his sense of safety. Also ensure that everyone in your task force is sensitized and trained to male victimization and the unique needs of male survivors.
- **Ensure understanding of victimization and mental health outcomes.** As with other populations of trafficking victims, the sense of self and concept of reality are disrupted. Survivors can experience concern about anxiety, depression, and fearfulness. Psychological outcomes can be severe for men socialized to believe that they are immune to sexual violence or fraud; that they are responsible for providing financial support to their families; and because societal reactions to these types of experiences can be isolating. They may feel they are "less of a man" or fear they were targeted because of a perceived characteristic. Their existing relations can also be disrupted by the victimization and the reactions of others (e.g., lack of belief or support by their community).
- **Give special consideration to housing options for male victims of trafficking.** If the individual's victimization and sex are not taken into account, male victims may be inadvertently placed in a housing situation that can cause more harm. Work with the client to identify what he prefers.
- **Allow for self-selection into support services.** Always work with your client to identify the best programs and support services for males. Survivors should always be empowered to self-select.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 2: An Introduction to Sex Trafficking](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

Victims with Physical, Cognitive, or Emotional Disabilities

Victims of human trafficking may develop disabilities from abuse at the hands of their traffickers, and individuals with disabilities may be targeted by traffickers because they are vulnerable. Many human trafficking task forces miss identifying this risk factor or fail to make provisions for people with disabilities.

People with physical disabilities, cognitive or intellectual disabilities, sensory disabilities, and mental illnesses all need special attention and protection.

There are several factors that make people with disabilities vulnerable to trafficking.

- People with disabilities often rely on others to meet their basic needs. These caregivers have opportunities to traffic them as a result.
- People with disabilities may become submissive to their caregivers and comply with their caregivers' wishes because they are so dependent upon them. This learned response makes the unequal power dynamic in relationship with a trafficker, even if the trafficker is abusive, seem normal.
- People with disabilities may lead isolated lives and crave friendship and human connection. Because of this need, they may be persuaded to perform sexual acts if they are promised friendship or money as a reward. Isolation can also make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to make contact with people who could help them.
- Some people with disabilities cannot speak clearly or require communication devices or interpreters to make their needs known, so they, also, cannot ask for help.
- Because of the level of touching that accompanies intimate care and medical procedures, people with disabilities can become desensitized to touch and/or may be unsure about whether they have the right to object to and report unwanted touch, sexual abuse, and sexual acts. They lack information about and understanding of what constitutes a crime and what their rights are as victims of crimes. This is also true of trafficked workers.
- People with disabilities may not be believed if they report abuse and violence. If they are believed and their cases are prosecuted, their abusers may be given shorter sentences than abusers of able-bodied people. Task forces should promote awareness of these trends when training service providers, police, prosecutors, and judges.

There are societal and structural barriers that keep people with disabilities from contacting the justice system, so task forces should have access to sign language interpreters, plain language specialists,



Case Examples

- [Ohio man was sentenced to 30 years in prison](#) (2014) for labor trafficking a woman with cognitive disabilities due to a traumatic brain injury. The woman was forced to perform domestic labor, animal care, and purchase items with her benefits card. The trafficker used violence, threats, and humiliation to control the victim and her child.
- The [U.S. v. Kozminski](#) case concerned two farmworkers with mental disabilities who were exploited for their labor on a dairy farm. This case ultimately led to the TVPA, which was passed in response to the limited decision that was made

Other Examples

- [U.S. v. Lemus](#)
- [U.S. v. Kaufman](#)
- [EEOC v. Henry's Turkey Service](#)
- [U.S. v. Callahan et al](#)

and assistive communication devices. They should also remove physical barriers to and within their offices.

Below are some key considerations when working with victims with physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities:

- **Establish relationships with expert psychiatrists and counselors.** As with all victim populations, background-specific and developmentally appropriate trauma treatment is an essential aspect of any quality comprehensive services response. Establishing relationships with psychiatrists and counselors who understand the unique needs of people with disabilities (e.g., mechanics of communication, physical interaction, using service animals) is an excellent strategy to meet these needs. Victims presenting with severe trauma or mental illness may refuse assistance and may be unable to comply with program requirements or to follow service plans and instructions. Service providers may need specialized support to provide the best possible services to these victims.
- **Use a forensic interviewer to conduct law enforcement interviews.** Forensic interviewers conduct non-leading, victim-sensitive, neutral, and developmentally appropriate investigative interviews that help law enforcement determine whether a crime occurred and what happened. They can be particularly critical when interviewing victims with cognitive or developmental disabilities, which might require extended interviews. See [Section 5.3 on federal law enforcement resources for more information on forensic interviewers](#).
- **Accommodate for unique needs.** When working with victims with disabilities, speak directly to the victim utilizing simple language that is not filled with organizational jargon. Give time to ask questions and repeat them when necessary. Also, be prepared to give extra time for the victim to respond to questions, particularly victims with cognitive disabilities. Try to create a unified process for delivery of services. Also, ensure that you have reasonable accommodation for access, furnish auxiliary aids when necessary, and remove structural and architectural communication barriers in existing facilities where readily achievable, or provide alternate measures if barriers cannot be removed. Organizations may need to modify organizational rules or requirements (such as arriving on time for appointments, completing specific requirements, or attending regular appointments) for clients who are unable to comply with those requirements due to their disabilities.
- People with disabilities should be referred to as people with disabilities, not disabled people. Refer to a person's disability only if necessary and if the disability directly affects the problem you are discussing. For instance, a lawyer who uses a wheelchair will not have problems arguing a case in court, but may have difficulty entering the courthouse or finding a bathroom that accommodates the wheelchair.



Training Resource:

[OVC TTAC offers customized TTA](#) on a variety of topics and can connect organizations with experts specializing in working with people of all abilities, including cognitive, physical, and Deaf or hard of hearing populations.

[Activating Change](#) has resources and trainings on improving access to and support for victims with disabilities.

OVC resources on supporting [victims with disabilities](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

Communicating with Individuals with Disabilities

Task forces need to make sure that people with disabilities are taken into account when they develop protocols for victim outreach, conduct investigations, and provide services. For example, outreach materials should be made available in alternate formats like Braille, e-mail, rich text, and large print for trafficking survivors who are sight-impaired. Service animals should be allowed to stay with the person to whom they belong in all areas of the facility where clients normally go. Someone with a service animal may not be segregated from other clients or agency activities. Do not touch a service animal without the permission of its owner.

Hearing Impaired

- Face the person with the hearing loss and speak directly to them instead of facing and addressing their interpreter.
- Use your normal tone of voice and speak at normal volume.
- Greet the person verbally first and wait for them to put their hand out before you reach out to shake their hand.
- If others can see the individual or interpreter sign, they can listen or eavesdrop, so make sure you have visual privacy.
- Not all hearing-impaired foreign nationals know American Sign Language (ASL) and may know another form of sign language. Make sure you have an appropriate interpreter.
- English is often a second language for people who cannot hear, even if they were born in an English-speaking country. Concepts such as “human trafficking” may not be easy to translate into ASL, so use simple language and ask questions to make sure the survivor understands what you are saying.



[OVC TTAC offers customized TTA](#) on a variety of topics and can connect organizations with experts in working with victims who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

[Activating Change](#) has resources and trainings on improving access to interpretive services for Deaf victims.

Vision Impaired

- Identify anyone (including yourself) who enters or leaves a room or begins a conversation with a person who has vision problems. Watch for cues that the individual is uncomfortable when others enter the room.
- If a person asks for assistance getting to a bathroom or performing another task, tell them you are going to touch them, then use the back of your hand to contact the back of their hand. This helps orient the individual to your body position. Someone who cannot see will usually hold a guide's right arm just above the elbow and walk a half step behind the guide. If you are guiding someone, move slowly and quietly because sudden movements may trigger a trauma response, especially in sex trafficking victims.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 4.5 Victim Populations](#).

5. Building Strong Cases

Human trafficking cases are time consuming and difficult, and they pose a challenge to prosecutors, investigators, and victim service providers alike. Successful criminal investigations and prosecutions flow from positive partnerships and collaboration among criminal investigators and prosecutors, a myriad of service providers (depending on the victim's needs), and civil and immigration attorneys (depending on the victim's national status).

Human traffickers work across jurisdictions; therefore, task forces need to be positioned to do so as well. Navigating complex jurisdictional dynamics often involves a multitude of investigators and prosecutors at the federal, state, and local levels who may not have worked together before or who have a complicated past history. Successful human trafficking investigations depend on overcoming such barriers to create practical and functional cooperation.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 8: The Victim-Centered Case](#)

Law enforcement task force members need to be mindful that human trafficking investigations are purposely victim centered. However, victims must be stabilized both mentally and physically and must feel safe before any indepth interviews begin. Service providers and civil attorneys can provide essential support. Productive interviews are more likely when a victim feels safe and is ready to talk, but creating that environment of trust can take time. In some instances, investigators may need to conduct early and brief victim interviews to obtain facts that are key to seeking, obtaining, and executing a search warrant for evidence that could be destroyed during any delays.

For additional information and tools, visit the [General Resources page](#).

5.1 Victim-Centered Investigations

Victims are crucial to human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. In many human trafficking cases, only the victim can explain the coercion and control that is a basic element of the crime of human trafficking. A victim-centered investigation respects the dignity of the victim and adapts, wherever possible, to meet the needs and wishes of the victim.

Victim-centered means—



Smart Practice: Full access to victim services should always be provided, regardless of a trafficking victim's decision to work with law enforcement.

- Victims need to be safe and supported.
- Victims should know and understand their rights.
- All task force members must ensure victims receive services to rebuild their lives.

The task force structure affords law enforcement access to critical resources that can help them in supporting the victim, which allows law enforcement to focus on investigating the crime.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 4: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#)

Law enforcement should note the following information from the [Multidisciplinary Collaborative Model for Anti-Human Trafficking Task Forces: Development and Operations Roadmap](#) related to the different stages of victim-centered and trauma informed approaches to investigations. Please take a look at the Investigations section related to victim-centered and trauma-informed approach.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.1 Victim-Centered Investigations](#).

5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach

Proactive cases do not present to law enforcement at all; instead, they result from operations that are pre-planned, over time, through the use of more advanced investigative methods and criminal intelligence. All cases should involve close coordination with victim service providers in anticipation of encountering potential victims. Some examples include—

- **Labor trafficking identification and investigations:** Unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking investigations are less clear cut. It is an emerging and dynamic area that takes creativity to address. One strategy to consider is partnering with key stakeholders, such as labor or code compliance inspectors, who may have more access and the ability to identify cases if given proper training.
- Tips About Proactive Case Strategies
- Note that many task forces conduct "John" or decoy operations, which support anti-trafficking efforts by targeting the demand side of the sex trade. Undercover officers post online ads for adult services and arrest the suspects. Note that this strategy does not uncover actual victims of trafficking. Decoy operations are often accompanied by publication of perpetrators, which can be more dangerous. It is important for the task force to review priorities and decide what is most effective for the operation.



Proactive Investigative Tools

Beyond the proactive methods listed here, there are many more that cannot be shared publicly but are available in a variety of law enforcement sensitive trainings.

The BJA funds the training arm of the [National Association of Attorneys General](#) for a 2-day human trafficking prosecutor course, and the Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute for a 3-day advanced investigator course. DOJ, DHS, and DOL partner on ACTeam trainings for federal human trafficking task

Every task force needs to work both labor and sex trafficking cases effectively. Task forces that are more advanced are able to conduct a larger number of proactive investigations. Using proactive techniques in reactive cases often leads to the intelligence that later forms the basis of longer term "spin-off" investigations. Proactive case leads also often arise from red-flag trainings, street outreach, task force relationships, and partnerships. It all works in concert—bringing public awareness of human trafficking and doing direct outreach to stakeholders, such as utility workers, hotel employees, emergency room staff, school personnel, and others, can help build cases for law enforcement.

A human trafficking investigation entails three phases: pre-operational, operational, and post-operational.

- The pre-operational phase involves the foundational portions of the investigation that pose little to no risk of discovery by the targets.
- The operational phase begins once the investigators actually engage the targets with covert actions or tools, and continues through the arrest and takedown of the human trafficking operation itself.
- The post-operational phase includes all post-arrest aspects of the case.

Even though the three phases are sequential in nature, no case develops exactly as planned, and different aspects or targets within a single proactive case can fall within multiple phases at the same time. Therefore, using the "three-phase" proactive terminology allows investigators and prosecutors to explain the status of pending cases to their chains of command and provide more accurate estimates.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach](#).

Pre-Operational Phase

Proactively identifying and investigating trafficking cases requires institutional will and a commitment from law enforcement agency leaders because these cases are time consuming and challenging. Cases can be identified through intelligence stemming from sources such as 911 calls, hotline tips, community partners, analysis of guest worker applications, and complaints from various employment sectors. Courts often interact with trafficking victims, particularly immigration and state courts, including diversion and drug courts. Medical providers, particularly clinics and hospital emergency rooms, often treat trafficking victims. Task forces should consider how they can develop training to extend their reach into these allied



Tips About Proactive Case Strategies

Note that many task forces conduct "John" or decoy operations. Note that this strategy does not uncover actual victims of trafficking. Decoy operations are often accompanied by publication of perpetrators, which can be more dangerous. It is important for the task force to review priorities and decide what is most effective for the operation.



Smart Tip: Using your task force structure, make sure your protocols clarify roles and responsibilities about when and how law enforcement and victim service provider task force members refer potential victims to each other.

If this is not clearly defined, it can be a source of tension on task forces. See [Chapter 3 to learn more about developing a Task Force Protocol](#) that will help avoid potential misunderstandings.

agencies and fields, as well as how representatives from such agencies and fields can be included into [task force committees](#).

The following steps help to clarify the role of human trafficking investigators in the early stages of a case.

- **Undertake a threat assessment in your community for sex and labor trafficking.** Work with your partners on the task force to assess the vulnerabilities in your community to identify threats.

Sex Trafficking Threat Assessment	Labor Trafficking Threat Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Where is commercial sex prevalent or tolerated?▪ Which businesses have contact with prostitution activity?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strip clubs, massage parlors, tattoo parlors▪ Hotels, motels, cantinas▪ Nearby stores, bodegas, clinics▪ Where are concentrations of male customers?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conference centers, casinos, hunting lodges, oil fields, military bases, migrant labor camps▪ Where are concentrations of vulnerable victims?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Halfway houses, rehab centers, youth detention facilities, shelters, foster homes, runaways, youth drop-in centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Which industries have adverse working conditions?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Harsh work environments, onerous hours▪ Substandard or controlled living arrangements, isolation▪ Where are there vulnerable workers?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Undocumented migrants, visa overstays, guest workers▪ Juveniles, individuals with drug dependencies, individuals with cognitive disabilities▪ Discrepancy in guest worker applications▪ Are there coercive terms or practices?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Debts, quotas, company stores▪ Wage kickback schemes▪ Controlled access to earnings and documents

- **Select potential targets for investigation.** Build on the threat assessment and identify potential targets for investigation by building an initial case file based on law enforcement-sensitive and open source databases. This process can include a comprehensive review of social media and key Internet sites used by traffickers and commercial sex customers or partnering with labor or code inspectors.
- **Deconflict initial case file with other jurisdictions.** The assigned task force investigators should deconflict the initial file with other jurisdictions to identify any other pending matters against the targets. If any exist, connect and coordinate with the officers working those investigations.

- **Begin case planning with investigators and prosecutor.** After this initial work-up, the investigators and human trafficking prosecutor should engage in proactive case planning and assess the use of specific investigative tools. Task force investigators also should find investigative partners within other agencies (as needed) and partner with specific human trafficking prosecutors to begin the preliminary grand jury work, including gathering financial information, FinCEN data, extra-territorial evidence, and public records via subpoena or other official process.
- **Establish case-specific goals.** Some cases require only short-term investigations, while others require a more significant response. Based on this assessment, the investigative team can establish case-specific goals for the investigation, brainstorm potential operations, tools, and measures, and consider the sequence and resulting consequences of each course of action. This step should include an evaluation of the relevant legal and practical concerns, available resources, officer safety, and other logistical issues.
- **Follow the money.** In almost all cases, human traffickers are financially motivated. As soon as possible, begin to build your financial investigation. Track and understand how money is being earned and spent and who is involved.
- **Discuss and identify opportunities and procedures for recovering victims.** During the pre-operational phase, law enforcement should discuss opportunities and procedures for recovering victims during the pendency of the covert investigation. In human trafficking cases, law enforcement needs to discuss a plan to address the safety of victims once they get to the operational phase. A common problem arises when law enforcement develop leads against criminal organizations actively engaged in violence or human trafficking-related offenses, and are forced into an untenable choice between: (1) acting quickly (short-term) to stop acts of violence or exploitation (particularly acts directed against or involving children); or (2) working the case fully with a long-term covert investigation. Law enforcement should always choose to prevent harm first (prevention before prosecution), but in the process of acting immediately to intervene, law enforcement can often lose the ability to use effective tools (like RICO) to target the group as a whole or to hold its leadership/key players and outside facilitators accountable. The cost to victims and the public of this untenable choice is high; law enforcement members need to do their best to rescue victims but still keep the case as covert as possible.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach](#).

Operational Phase

After concluding the initial phase of the human trafficking case, proactive investigations move to the operational phase of covert operations. If they are not already involved, the prosecution and victim service members of the task force begin to become more involved. **Note: Anyone in imminent danger requires an immediate response by law enforcement, even if that may hinder the investigation.**

- **Use informants and undercover agents to gather evidence.**
- Covert operations against the targets of the investigation require the comprehensive use of informants and undercover agents, physical and electronic surveillance, and consensual overhears, as well as a variety of specific tools, such as cell phone and Internet data, polecams, and tracking devices.
- **Obtain audio and video recordings.** Audio and video recordings (even still camera shots) capture many important aspects of criminal conduct that a human observer misses, forgets, or cannot recreate in court through live testimony. In many cases, key portions of evidence lie in the silence or body language of an offender or the unique quality of their words or actions, and technology allows the fact-finder to see and hear this evidence. By allowing the offenders to show their own words and actions on tape, technology alleviates reliance on the suspect credibility of informants and eliminates defense arguments of police mistakes or misconduct. Given the increasing power of television's CS/effect, many jurors expect this type of evidence at trial, and there is little reason to fail to provide it in a proactive case.

- **Ascertain the state of mind of both the victim and the trafficker.** This is an important consideration that is not always relevant in other crime types. Ascertaining state of mind refers to determining what elements are coercing the victims: are they in love with the trafficker; do they feel inferior or indebted to the trafficker due to the norms and practices based on their background; does the trafficker believe they are offering a better life to the victim than they could have in their native country? (See [Section 5.3 on Building Rapport with the Victim as your Witness.](#))
- **Identify and establish the relationships of the offenders and the patterns of their criminal conduct.** As evidence develops, the investigative team must constantly reevaluate the initial summary of the criminal predicate and work "pressure points" to move the case forward.
- **Use "pressure points".** Under a proactive model, the identified persons, items (e.g., cars, phones, computers), or locations in a case constitute "pressure points" or opportunities where focused action can open new avenues of inquiry for reenergizing stalled investigations.



Smart Tip: Victim-Centered Enforcement Action Planning Check List

- Plan for all potential types of victims based on investigation (males, females, minors, adults, U.S. citizens, foreign nationals)
- Coordinate with NGOs
- Start with assessing victims' needs and concerns
 - Assess medical conditions and medications
 - Arrange for shelter/housing and other immediate needs
 - Provide information and answer questions
- Assess language capacity
- Explore immigration relief for foreign nationals
- Know your legal authorities (foreign nationals, U.S. citizens, minors)
- Locate non-detention setting for interviews
- Determine who is best suited to conduct the investigative interview (agent, prosecutor, or forensic interviewer)

Who does what? Establish points of contact, define responsibilities for each agency, and identify a mechanism for coordination and communication strategies.

- **Plan and coordinate a multi-staged takedown of the case.** The investigative team updates surveillance and obtains legal process that allows them to execute search warrants, arrest multiple offenders simultaneously, and secure the seizure of criminal proceeds (including bank accounts, vehicles, and real estate) before offenders become alerted to the investigation.
- **Partner with victim service provider task force members before and during law enforcement operations where potential victims are anticipated.**
- Coordinate with the victim service providers on the task force to agree on what information will be shared among different members in advance of any raid/rescue. Victim service providers should not be present at the location of the enforcement action, but should be available immediately afterward to meet with a victim, develop a safety plan, assess her/his needs, and begin providing services. This requires pre-planning and notification in advance. Providing private space and time for victim service providers to speak with a victim and begin assisting immediately following an enforcement action, or promptly after a reactive arrest, establishes that law enforcement and victim service providers are working on the victim's behalf. Clear boundaries should be defined in order to protect the integrity of the criminal investigation and preserve the victim service provider's client consent and confidentiality rules. These goals can be accomplished with an open discussion or a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). See [Section 3.1 on considerations in developing a task force operational protocol](#).
- **Conduct individual interviews but assess group interactions.** After an enforcement action, interview each person alone, but observe reactions when victims and unidentified suspects are in a group in order to carefully sort out the victims, the key traffickers, and the enforcers. Make efforts to keep victims separated so those who may talk to law enforcement can do so without the knowledge of other victims who may still be aligned with the offenders. Take precautions to ensure that traffickers are separated from the victims and are not posing among the victims. It is critical to understand the dynamics of trafficking, that some victims may have bonded with the traffickers or refuse to reveal the extent of their victimization, in order to determine accurately who is a victim. See [Section 4.1 on Using a Trauma-Informed Approach](#) and [Section 5.2 on Victim Interview and Preparation](#).



Smart Tip: Corroboration Through Physical Evidence

A picture is worth a thousand words – photograph all locations that are part of the victims' statements

- Tools and paraphernalia of the labor or services (trash runs, condoms, lubricant, lingerie, medications, tickets, business cards, client lists)
- Journals and personal photos
- Travel documents
- Financial documents (bank accounts, credit card accounts, receipts, wire transfers, leases, registrations linking subjects, financial logs, debt ledgers)
- Medical records
- Letters to family
- Text and phone records

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach](#).

Law Enforcement Action

Anytime a task force is planning a law enforcement action where potential victims of human trafficking might be encountered, particular planning and thought should be given to ensure the integrity of the trafficking case. When task forces understand that this action may be the first encounter that a potential victim has with the investigative team, they use proactive planning to apply a trauma-informed approach, which is key to the long-term success of the investigation. See [Section 4.1 Using a Trauma-Informed Approach](#), for more information.

Useful Strategies for Law Enforcement

- **Partner with victim service provider task force members before and during law enforcement operations if potential victims are anticipated.** Victim service providers should not be present at the location of the enforcement action, but they should be available immediately afterward to meet with any victims, develop a safety plan, assess each victim's needs, and begin providing services. This approach requires pre-planning and advance notification. When the task force arranges private space and time for victim service providers to speak with victims and begin providing assistance immediately after an enforcement action (or promptly after a reactive arrest), the task force demonstrates that its members are working together effectively and further secures victims' rights.
- **Establish clear boundaries for all task force members involved to protect the integrity of the criminal investigation and to preserve and adhere to the victim service provider's professional obligations, client consent, and confidentiality rules.** These goals can be accomplished with an open discussion or a written memorandum of understanding (MOU). See [Section 3.1 on Task Force Operational Protocol](#) for considerations in developing a task force operational protocol.
- **Ensure that all victim service providers clearly understand the information they need to collect to deliver appropriate services.** Social workers and service providers should only ask a victim for information that is essential to deliver the respective services. Victim's attorneys should work with victims to protect their attorney-client and work-product privilege, as well as other confidential information obtained to assist the client. For additional information on potential issues related to information gathering, see [Section 3.2 on Information Sharing](#).
- **Conduct individual interviews but assess group interactions.** After an enforcement action, law enforcement officers should interview each person alone but observe the reactions of both victims and unidentified suspects when they are in a group to carefully sort out the victims, the key traffickers, and the enforcers. All interviews should be conducted privately so that those people who might talk to law enforcement officers can do so without the knowledge of others who may still be aligned with the trafficking offenders. To determine accurately who is a victim, it is critical to understand the dynamics of trafficking; for example, some victims might have bonded with the traffickers or might refuse to reveal the extent of their victimization. See [Section 4.1 on Using a Trauma-Informed Approach](#), and [Section 5.3 on Victim Interview and Preparation](#).



Smart Tip: Victim-Centered Enforcement Action Checklist

- Establish roles to determine who does what; establish points of contact, define responsibilities for each agency, and identify a mechanism for coordination and communication strategies.
- Coordinate with task force members, sharing information on a need-to-know basis only.
- Plan for all potential types of victims, based on the investigation (e.g., males, females, minors, adults, U.S. citizens, foreign nationals).
- Explore immigration relief for foreign nationals.
- Know your legal authorities (e.g., for foreign nationals, U.S. citizens, minors) and how they impact victim service options.
- Locate a nondetention setting for interviews.
- Establish a system to separate potential victims from conspirators (i.e., low-level to mid-level managers who are loyal to the principal traffickers).
- Determine who is best suited to conduct the investigative interview (e.g., the investigator, prosecutor, or forensic interviewer).
- Before any investigative interviews, assess victims' needs and concerns (e.g., medical needs, shelter options, food, safety, and language capacity).
- Provide information to, and answer questions from, potential victims.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resources page for Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach](#).

Post-Operational Phase

After the case becomes public, the investigative team moves into the post-operational phase of the investigation.

- **Interview victims and witnesses.** One of the most important aspects of this coordination lies in the proper interviewing of victims and witnesses with sensitivity. It remains critically important that such questioning be done in a victim-centered manner that places equal value in protecting both the criminal case and the needs of any potential victims. See [Section 5.3 on Victim Interview and Preparation](#).
- **Support access to immigration relief.** When investigating a human trafficking case involving foreign nationals, make sure to access the resources available to law enforcement through short-term immigration relief, including Continued Presence, in the immediate aftermath of identification. Once you continue the investigation, victim service providers and victims may come to ask for a letter of certification to support a T or U visa application. For law enforcement officers inexperienced with the procedure of signing a law enforcement endorsement form (I-914B) who may have questions about their obligation to sign, determine which officer or

supervisor in their agency has experience with these procedures. For example, domestic violence units typically have experience in assisting victims with immigration-related law enforcement endorsements. A typical concern among law enforcement officers and agencies when signing the endorsement form (I-914B) is that the officer or agency is conferring or granting immigration relief directly to the victim. This is not the case. Signing the I-914B merely states that the signing officer believes the foreign national is a victim of human trafficking or other type of violent crime and can be considered for immigration relief by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Law enforcement officers should be aware that if, after signing the I-914B form, new evidence arises that shows the individual is not a victim of trafficking or other violent crime, the law enforcement endorsement can be rescinded by the signing agency. This area of responsibility is typically unknown unless investigators are working in these units. If this knowledge cannot be found within your department, look to larger agencies in your region or contact your local U.S. Attorney's Office if you have questions. Also, work with your task force immigration attorney to learn more about these procedures. This is a very important topic to include in training for all task force law enforcement representatives.

- **Develop a case that helps corroborate the victim's account.** Ultimately, the goal of this process is to develop an independent case against the offenders by finding non-victim witnesses and physical and documentary evidence that corroborate the victim's account. Such evidence helps to dispel traditional myths about human trafficking victims, underscore victim vulnerability, or explain the forensic effects of human trafficking on its survivors (e.g., explanations of a victim's prior inconsistent statements, unusual courtroom demeanor, or the trauma-bonds that keep victims from leaving abuse or that make them return to it). In addition to evidence of force, fraud, and coercion, investigators collect corroborative evidence to establish the offenders' use of seduction, indoctrination, isolation, confinement, and surveillance to manipulate and control their victims.
- **International investigations.** When investigating a case involving foreign national victims who were recruited overseas, much of the evidence to support your investigation may be found overseas. Focusing on corroborating the circumstances of the recruitment, the victim's background, and threats against family members are important aspects of the case. Collecting documentation about visa applications, money remittances, birth certificates, and other identifying documentation is also important. Many corroborating witnesses can be found overseas, including victims' family members, outcry witnesses, prior or subsequent victims, or co-conspirators. Federal law enforcement task force members and the U.S. Attorney's Office have counterparts in their respective agencies located in these countries and can offer assistance in complex investigations.
- **Continue investigations post-arrest.** Many of the key portions of an investigation occur during the post-operational phase, so investigators must continue their commitment even though the offenders have already been arrested. The work of the investigative team includes the following activities:
 - Using overt means of investigation (such as canvassing relevant areas for new witnesses).
 - Taking post-arrest statements from offenders.
 - Executing secondary search warrants.

- Conducting forensic exams of computers, cell phones, and other documentary and physical exhibits (including DNA testing where useful).
- Debriefing informants and victims.
- Preparing discovery for court.
- Supporting trial and sentencing proceedings.
- Coordinating with core victim service providers.



Key Concepts: Social service providers may not have the same privilege as attorneys or mental health professionals, and relevant regulations vary by state. Consider whether the involvement of a victim service provider in an interview may entail [confidentiality](#) issues.

There are more opportunities to learn trafficking-specific activities toward investigation in various online and in-person trainings. See the [resource page](#) to learn more. It is important that the agency's leadership encourages officers to attend human trafficking-specific training.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach](#).

5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation

Victim interviews should be thoughtfully and strategically planned. The physical location where a victim interview is conducted and who will be present are both important. All of the people at the interview should introduce themselves and explain their roles in the investigation. Investigators and prosecutors should not overpromise any results, especially access to benefits. Any needs that the victim

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 8: The Victim-Centered Case](#)

Interviewing Environment

Selecting a location that makes the victims feel most comfortable and safe is important because this environment is more likely to result in a productive interview. In general, this consideration precludes the use of immigration agent offices or police stations, whenever possible. Fewer participants at an interview are preferable because a smaller group is more conducive to making a victim feel comfortable and not overwhelmed. If more than one case investigator or local officer is present, only one investigator should take the official notes and write the report on the interview. All investigator notes are turned over to the defense counsel if the case is charged. If more than one investigator writes notes on the interview and the investigators record facts differently, the defense attorney will use the contradictory facts to cross-examine and possibly impeach the victim. Impeachment occurs when, on cross-examination, the testimony of a witness is called into question by a previous inconsistent statement. [Forensic interviewing](#) addresses potential inconsistencies due to trauma and strengthens the information obtained from the victim.

Victim Rights

Federal victims' rights laws and most state victims' rights laws, as well as Constitutional rights allow for victims to be represented by an attorney. Many victims will have civil or immigration attorneys who will ask to be present at the victim interviews. Victims' attorneys and law enforcement should work together

so that information can be gathered from the victim in an appropriate way. Investigators and prosecutors should know the respective state and federal rules on victims' rights. When actions are subsequently filed in other parallel criminal, civil, immigration, family law, and other legal proceedings, this information can be consistent and will not impeach the victim's credibility nor impact the integrity of the criminal case.

Potential Barriers to Cooperation

Victim fear of law enforcement is common because many foreign national and U.S. citizen victims may have had negative experiences with law enforcement and consequently are afraid to trust and cooperate with them. Moreover, traffickers often use the fear of law enforcement to control victims, setting up law enforcement as the adversary. For additional information on building rapport, see [Section 5.3 Building Rapport With the Victim as Your Witness](#).

Safety and Awareness

At the outset of a victim interview, the interviewer should check with the victim about concerns for personal safety and the safety of loved ones. Even after a victim is removed from the trafficking situation, safety concerns can evolve over the course of the investigation and can increase significantly as a case approaches trial. Victims also need an explanation of the criminal justice process and the next steps in that process. In initial interviews, a victim often may not be ready to discuss certain topics. The interviewer should encourage victims to say whether they are comfortable sharing information at that time. Showing understanding and patience and offering time will build trust, avoid untruthful answers, and pay off in consistent statements.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

Building Rapport With the Victim as your Witness

Building rapport with victims can be challenging. Setting the tone of that engagement from the outset is critical. The more law enforcement understands the factors that may influence a victim in their initial interactions, the more they can effectively partner with other task force members to address these factors in advance an interview, and respond in a supportive and comforting way.

The Victim's Reality is Your Reality

Sometimes, when law enforcement first meets with a victim of trafficking, the victim may not act in a way law enforcement expects. Many victims do not identify as victims of anything, let alone as a victim of human trafficking. Other victims will protect their traffickers. Some victims are initially combative with law enforcement. Other victims are completely shut down and withdrawn and will not speak at all. It is important for law enforcement to expect the unexpected and not conclude that because an individual acts in a certain way, they are not a victim of human trafficking (See [Section 4.1 on the role of trauma and using a trauma-informed lens](#)).

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 6: Focus on Youth](#)

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

Personal History

Who someone is, where they come from, and what they experienced in their life before they became a victim of human trafficking may significantly impact how they respond to law enforcement when they first come into contact with them.

Victims that come from abusive families may be more vulnerable to a trafficker who promises a relationship that initially appears better than what is at home. For victims of sexual abuse that become trafficking victims, they may feel that at least in the trafficking situation, they are getting paid something for the abuse, which they experienced at home with no recourse or compensation. Victims may be seeking opportunities to get away from the abuse in their families, and the trafficker can exploit that need to escape.

For some victims, the needs of their family—whether it is funds for school for their children or siblings, or medicine for a sick parent—all contribute to why a person might be vulnerable to the promises made by a trafficker for a new opportunity.

Where victims come from and how law enforcement is regarded in their home community can also be an influencing factor. Many victims come from places where law enforcement is not trusted. Others may come from places where their status as a woman, or other characteristic, made them more vulnerable in their home communities. All of these will contribute to victims' perception of law enforcement when they come in contact with you.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

Trafficking History

Scheme Used by the Trafficker. How a victim was initially brought into the trafficking situation, and the strategies that the trafficker used to control the victim, can significantly impact the way a victim feels about sharing information with law enforcement. Below are several ways traffickers coerce their victims, with some suggested approaches for law enforcement to take in countering these in advance of, or during, an interview.



Smart Tip: Creating Boundaries

Establishing clear boundaries between the roles of law enforcement and victim service providers is critical in stabilizing a victim, ensuring they receive access to necessary services while not jeopardizing the law enforcement investigation.

Physical and sexual violence. Many victims of human trafficking, both labor and sex trafficking, endured extensive physical violence. Some have a history of prior abuse and victimization that created a vulnerability to trafficking and an acceptance of violence as unavoidable. Individual backgrounds and beliefs may influence victims to accept violence or defer to the trafficker. Ensuring proper medical screening and treatment for all victims prior to any interview with law enforcement is critical. Law

enforcement should also express interest and concern in the physical condition of the victim to demonstrate an interest in the safety and comfort of the victim as a human being.

Poor living conditions. Traffickers often restrict access to food, medical care, sleep, and physical comfort in order to control their victims. Victims may be tired, hungry, or lack access to appropriate clothing. Specifically, when victims are identified through a law enforcement action and removed from the situation of exploitation, allowing time for them to have access to clean clothing, food, and rest in a safe place before an interview is important.

Drug or alcohol addiction. More and more trafficking victims are describing the extensive use of drugs and alcohol by their traffickers as part of their means of control. As soon as this is identified, work through the task force to ensure placement with a drug and alcohol treatment program. Investigators will need to plan their interviews strategically, understanding the impact of withdrawal on victims, and coordinate with any treatment or services that the victims receive.

Trauma bonding. Some traffickers develop a romantic relationship with the victim. The trafficker promises romance, nice clothing and other material goods, a better life, and in some instances, actually marries the victim. Some traffickers have children with the victim prior to, or entwined with, the trafficking exploitation. This type of recruitment can create strong ties between a trafficker and their victim, called a trauma bond. Trauma bonding can also occur in a non-romantic context when the victim has emotional ties to the trafficker due to their dependent status. They may feel appreciative for being fed, receiving some payment, or not being violently treated. In some cases, victims say that one trafficker was better than their last because he did not beat them. Some victims may look to their trafficker as a parental figure who is in a position of power they admire. See [Section 4.1 on Using a Trauma-Informed Approach](#) for more information.

The sooner that law enforcement recognizes the victim has an emotional bond with the trafficker, and that is part of the trafficker's coercive scheme, the sooner law enforcement and victim service providers can collectively respond. It is important to remember that a victim's loyalty may initially be to the trafficker. Victims are often combative with law enforcement and focused on protecting their trafficker, even at their own expense. They do not identify as a victim, but rather see themselves as willing participants.

In an interview, it is important not to talk about the trafficker in a negative way or allude to them being a potential target of an investigation. Connecting the victim to victim service providers and mental health experts with experience in trauma bonding and domestic violence relationships can be very helpful. Most importantly, do not make assumptions that because a potential victim is acting in this way that they are not a victim. Give it time and allow the victim to come to her/his own conclusion about the trafficker.



Federal Law Enforcement Resources:

Federal law enforcement agencies have emergency funds available when victim service providers may need time before they can assist. They can cover:

- Emergency housing, food, transportation to victim assistance services
- Emergency medical care or mental health assessments
- Payment for sexual assault forensic exams

Having federal law enforcement victim assistance service providers as part of your task force helps ensure additional emergency victim assistance resources are available when needed. See [Section 3.1 on Task Force Members](#).

Fear of law enforcement. Victims may be conditioned to fear law enforcement and thus not seek help. They may come from countries or communities that believe law enforcement will never help them. Victims may have been forced to engage in criminal activity by their trafficker, and were arrested and treated as criminals instead of victims, reinforcing their negative perceptions and fears of law enforcement.

From the first contact, setting a tone of respect is critical in building rapport. Ensuring that the victims' basic needs are being met before you interview them, connecting them to victim service providers, and keeping them informed throughout the criminal investigation and prosecution are all excellent strategies to mitigate fears about law enforcement.

Fear of deportation. Foreign nationals may be inherently fearful of law enforcement and immigration, particularly those who entered the United States illegally, fell out of legal status, or are dependent on their trafficker for their legal status. Of course, traffickers promote and reinforce that fear through their own coercive strategies, threatening to have the victim deported for noncompliance with the trafficker's demands.

Luckily, law enforcement can take immediate and effective action to address this issue, further developing rapport with the victim and encouraging the victim to share information. See the [Resource page for Section 4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services](#) for tools to provide immigration relief to your victim.

Threats against family. Traffickers routinely threaten to harm the victim's family members. If the victim knows that the trafficker is well regarded in their family or community, has influential relationships with local law enforcement, or knows where the victim's family lives, these threats are particularly effective. There are numerous cases of human trafficking in which the threats against families are a significant factor controlling a victim and coercing them to remain in terribly exploitative and abusive conditions.

Visit [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) to view related materials and to watch the [Faces of Human Trafficking Video 6: Focus on Youth](#)

Law enforcement must be very clear about what can be done as well as what cannot be done to address these concerns. Accessing resources to relocate a victim's family members can be critical in securing a victim's cooperation, but it is expensive and complex. For victims whose families overseas are being threatened, partnering with federal law enforcement agencies with offices overseas will be critical.

Law enforcement should immediately raise these concerns with the prosecutor to protect the name and identify of the victim whenever possible throughout the investigation and prosecution. Be honest with the victim about what you can and cannot do.

Shame. Many victims blame themselves for being tricked, thinking that they should have stopped the trafficker or not believed the trafficker's promises. Others feel shame because of the types of exploitation they endured. For example, traffickers may have threatened to share photos with family members of the victim doing things that they do not want their family to know about.

Keeping the interview team small and explaining why each person is in the room can be helpful in building rapport with the victim may make them feel more comfortable discussing things about which they are ashamed. Talking with victims about how the information they share will be protected and what will happen with it is also very important. Make sure you are honest about what you can and cannot do

to protect their privacy. Work with the prosecutor to use all the tools available to protect the victim's name and identify, such as rape shield laws.

Debt bondage. One common reason victims are initially vulnerable to a trafficker's recruitment scheme is their desire for a better life. Many victims come from communities with limited economic opportunities. Others become vulnerable because of their family's needs for education, shelter, or medical care. Traffickers exploit these vulnerabilities by promising good pay, but first requiring victims to pay significant fees. The traffickers may continue to charge fees to the victim for housing, immigration documents, transportation, or other charges, leaving the victim with mounting debt or an income that is inadequate to ever repay the initial debt and interest, essentially creating a debt bondage situation.

Connecting victims to victim service providers who can help connect them to job training and placement is important so they can continue to support themselves and their families. Likewise, for foreign national victims who are unable to work in the United States legally, securing short-term immigration relief can go a long way in assisting the victim. Law enforcement should be mindful of the victim's schedule, once she or he is employed, when scheduling interviews or other meetings. See the [Resource page for Section 4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services](#) for information on short-term and long-term immigration options available for foreign national victims.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

Tools for Law Enforcement

Key Law Enforcement Resources and Tools for Rapport Building

There are a number of important resources available to law enforcement and prosecutors to assist in addressing the barriers discussed above. These resources are in addition to the invaluable role that partnerships with local victim service organizations through your task force provide.

Law enforcement-based victim advocates. All federal law enforcement agencies, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, and many state and local law enforcement and prosecuting agencies have victim specialists on staff who are available to help in responding to the needs of victims and their families identified through that agency's investigative activities. Systems-based victim service professionals are a valuable asset within law enforcement agencies. Most commonly, systems-based victim service professionals are responsible for the following:

- Operational planning and assistance for law enforcement actions, including coordination with victim service provider organizations
- Onsite emergency response
- Mobilization of community, victim assistance services, and other agency resources
- Assistance in building trust, rapport, and relationship with victims
- Immigration relief coordination for foreign national victims
- Maintaining contact with victims/witnesses throughout the investigation and prosecution

- Notification of victims' rights throughout the criminal justice process
- Onsite support of victims at trial
- Access to federal victim assistance emergency funds and Emergency Witness Assistance Program funds

Immigration relief. Imagine that a victim of human trafficking is been told over and over by their trafficker to be afraid of law enforcement; and all law enforcement will do is arrest and deport them. Instead, a victim comes into contact with law enforcement, an officer takes the time to listen to them, treats them with respect, provides them with referrals to victim service providers, and requests short-term immigration relief like Continued Presence so they can stay in the United States legally. Immigration relief becomes a game changer in building rapport between law enforcement and foreign national human trafficking victims.

Continued Presence is a law enforcement tool that allows a victim who is a potential witness to remain in the United States for the course of the investigation, prosecution, and any civil legal action. Cooperation is not required in order to receive Continued Presence; in fact, Continued Presence can be a valuable tool in building rapport between law enforcement and victims of human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking can only access Continued Presence through a law enforcement agency. The investigator or prosecutor should proactively review options internally and make a determination about what they will request in terms of short-term relief.

It is important when exploring immigration relief options that law enforcement never promise specific immigration relief. Keep in mind that all immigration relief is granted by another agency, which could deny the request. Any questions from a victim about their immigration status should be directed to their immigration attorney. Immigration attorneys will be able to assess the victim's best options for short-term and long-term immigration relief or safe repatriation if the victim prefers to return to their home country. This also further insulates law enforcement from a defense attorney's claim that the victim was promised immigration benefits in exchange for testimony. If an immigration attorney is not available, direct the victim to the agency's victim



Smart Tip: Breaking Down the Myth – Immigration Relief in Exchange for Testimony

Some law enforcement and prosecutors are hesitant about sponsoring short-term immigration relief like Continued Presence or providing certification for longer term relief for the T or U visa for victims of trafficking. The concern is that this could be used against the prosecution by the defense as a benefit offered in exchange for someone's testimony, and thus the victim has incentive to not tell the truth in order to obtain the immigration relief. This has been proven over and over again in human trafficking trials as a fallacy. The simplest counter argument is that the immigration relief allows the individual to remain in the United States legally so that they can participate in the trial.

DOJ's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit has prosecuted many cases, and successfully countered this and many other defense tactics. Visit [their website](#) to access resources on how to counter this argument in trial, along with many other defense strategies that are common in human trafficking trials.



Smart Tip: Immigration relief can often be a source of tension between law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers. The bottom line is that immigration relief creates stability for victims—both as survivors and as potential witnesses in a criminal case. Task force members should discuss this issue generally as part of developing task force protocols. [See Section 3.1 on task force operational protocol.](#)

assistance specialist or a victim service provider to strategize on how to connect with an immigration attorney.

The timing of longer term immigration relief is something that task forces may also want to explore. As part of a T or U visa application, a victim is required to provide a personal statement about what happened to them. This application—once it is submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)—may be discoverable. Law enforcement officials, and prosecutors in particular, should be aware that certifying an application for a T visa could be construed by the defense on the trafficking case as conveying a benefit upon the victim "in exchange for" their cooperation and testimony. This should not stop them from doing the right thing and taking an important step to stabilize a victim and critical witness. In practice, there are several ways to minimize concerns.

First, you (or your office) do not have the authority to grant/approve a visa. Your role as law enforcement is merely to certify that the applicant is a victim of trafficking (assuming your investigation shows that) and explain how the victim cooperated or was helpful. USCIS reviews the application, conducts a series of security and background checks, makes the decision, and ultimately grants or denies the application based on many factors and other evidence (of which your certification is only one). In this way, you are essentially a fact-checker for the USCIS because you know the facts of your case.

Secondly, law enforcement does not prepare the application for the victim, because they are not an advocate within the T visa process. Instead, one of the task force partners prepares the application or makes a referral to an attorney who offers such services. Law enforcement does review the statement of facts (for accuracy) before the attorney/advocate has the victim swear to it, in order to avoid mistakes and unnecessary impeachment at trial. When the time comes for your agency to review and certify the application, the trial prosecutor does not make the decision or sign the certification itself. If the defense makes an issue of the certification, someone can testify and explain that all she/he did was review the case and certify the fact that based on the evidence, they believe the victim to be a true victim of human trafficking. This centralized review process promotes consistency, undermines false claims of unwritten promises to the victims, and helps law enforcement agencies ensure a particular designee who certifies all T or U visa applications.

This does not have to become an issue during trial, but the most important strategy is to recognize this potential and coordinate through the task force to make sure everyone understands the issues and the responsibilities of each agency. Visit the [Resource page for Section 4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services](#) for more information on Continued Presence and other forms of long-term immigration relief, such as the T or U visas available to human trafficking victims.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

Trauma-Informed Victim Interviewing

Building rapport is the first step in interviewing victims in a trauma-informed way. It is critical to keep in mind that a victim's reality is your reality when preparing for and conducting investigative interviews with potential trafficking victims.

Remember, do not be surprised if a victim...

- Denies they are a victim
- Is fearful of what will happen to them
- Is fearful of you and what you will do to her/him
- Is distracted, angry, reluctant, or concerned about her/his own needs
- Has fears around safety and privacy, particularly if the interview is in front of others
- Has unmet medical needs, including nutrition or lack of sleep
- Be information on how to consider the victim's reality in advance of an interview.

Interviewing Victims of Human Trafficking

Any approach to the victim should be a gradual and nonthreatening process. Be sure the victim has some control in the situation (breaks, water, seating placement). Avoid interrogation methods and refrain from physical contact with victims. The screening interview should take place in a comfortable environment and be conducted by someone who was not directly involved with the victim in the raids or arrest. Due to fear and possible trauma on the part of victims, it is best to use a conversational approach rather than a rapid series of questions in order to obtain preliminary information. Remember that open-ended questions may elicit more information from victims than yes or no questions.

Do not expect victims to go into detail about their trafficking experiences during the first interview. In fact, it might take many interviews to get the victims comfortable enough to share details of their trafficking. It will take time and trust to develop the facts of a case. Victims need to feel safe at all times. Interviewers should introduce themselves and explain their role at the beginning of every interview.

Effects of Trauma on Victims' Behavior

The effects of trauma can influence behavior of a victim during an interview. Memory loss, lack of focus, emotional reactivity, and multiple versions of a story can all be signs of trauma exhibited during interviews. Interviewers should be familiar with the signs of trauma and not assume the victim is evading the truth. For example, lack of linear memory is often a sign of trauma, so it may be helpful during initial interviews to ask "What else happened?" instead of "What happened next?" This will allow law enforcement to focus on the elements of the crime while the victim is able to recover from the trauma of the trafficking. The timeline can be the focus of later interviews.



Additional Resources: The following documents provide information on the **victim perspective**:

[The Mindset of a Human Trafficking Victim, HHS](#)

[Human Trafficking Power & Control Wheel](#)

Read the **World Health Organization (WHO) Ethical and Safety Considerations for Interviewing Trafficked Women**. Intended mainly for researchers, media persons, and service providers unfamiliar with the situation of trafficked women, this document aims to build a sound understanding of the risks, ethical considerations, and practical realities related to trafficking of women.

Project REACH has also developed a useful chart with tips on how to understand victim behavior, case scenarios, and how to utilize trauma-informed approaches.

Community and language needs must be ascertained and reasonably accommodated to avoid shutdown due to offensive or inappropriate approaches. Be aware of sex, background, subject matter, and narrative style. Some communities reveal a story in a circular rather than linear manner, and law enforcement must exercise patience and understanding. It may be helpful to meet with a service provider who has expertise working with specific communities to review considerations of the potential victim prior to an interview.

For [trafficking survivors with disabilities](#), an investigation or legal case may include questioning whether the survivor's disability played a factor in how they were trafficked, and the survivor's mental capacity to be trafficked. These questions can all create hostile interviewing environments for trafficking survivors with disabilities, and investigators must take the time to explain the reasons for the questioning.

Forensic interviewers

A forensic interview is a non-leading, victim sensitive, neutral, and developmentally appropriate investigative interview that helps law enforcement determine whether a crime occurred and what happened. The goals of a forensic interview are to minimize any potential trauma to the victim, maximize information obtained from victims and witnesses, reduce contamination of the victim's memory of the alleged event(s), and maintain the integrity of the investigative process.

In many cases, a forensic interview is appropriate for an adult victim of human trafficking, particularly when the victim endured severe trauma, when the victimization occurred when the individual was a minor, or the victim may have cognitive or developmental disabilities.

In addition to federal forensic interviewers, child advocacy centers train many of their forensic interviewers to work with human trafficking victims. It is important to note that there may be some distinct differences between interviewing a potential human trafficking victim and a potential victim of child or sex abuse that is not related to human trafficking.



Example: Utilizing the lens of trauma-informed care, one service provider took a new approach after speaking with a victim over several months. The victim was referred from a farm worker outreach agency, and despite having escaped from the trafficker, feared speaking to law enforcement about their victimization. As the victim gained trust in the service provider, he disclosed his fear of being jailed and deported, something his trafficker had insisted would be the result of his speaking out. The service provider contacted a fellow task force member from HSI who agreed to meet with the victim to review his role as an agent and his commitment to the investigation, without asking the victim's name. The victim was able to build rapport with the agent and eventually cooperated fully in the investigation.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).



Additional Resources: Both the FBI and HSI have forensic interviewers who will travel throughout the United States and internationally to conduct forensic interviews with individuals identified through an investigation by their agency. They are also available for consultation and training.

Working with Interpreters

Trained, qualified interpreters should be provided to every victim who does not speak English very well. There are some key considerations when identifying and selecting an interpreter. Interpreters should be **neutral**. Never use another victim, family, or someone who has a relationship with the victim. Interpreters should have a complete grasp of the two languages they are interpreting, as well as training in the skill of interpreting. Make sure that the interpreter does not have ties to the trafficker, either in the United States or in the home country, to the victim, or to anyone else involved in the case. A victim may prefer an interpreter of the same or different sex, or from the same or a different background or religious community. Victims may not trust interpreters to maintain confidentiality, and may prefer a telephonic interpreter who is not able to see the victim or who may be from a distant location.

One critical step in working with interpreters is making sure to meet with the interpreter before conducting an interview. Prepare an interpreter for the potential of asking difficult questions. Questions that get to the heart of exploitation are often very difficult, invasive, and probing; it is important to prepare the interpreter for the topics that may be covered and ensuring they can handle it. The importance of confidentiality should be reviewed with the interpreter before the interview and then described at the beginning of the interview, right after introducing the interpreter to the victim.

The interpreter can also be a valuable resource to the interviewer. Take the time to ask the interpreter to explain any particularly relevant dynamics based on their background that may impact communication with the victim. Other important ground rules to establish between the interpreter and the interviewer include:

- Interpreter interprets exactly what the interviewer states and what the victim states. No summaries or euphemisms. No elaborating beyond what either the interviewer or the victim states.
- No side conversations or chatter that is not interpreted. The interpreter is solely a conduit for communicating between the interviewer and the victim. If the victim asks the interpreter a question, she/he is to interpret that question to the interviewer and let the interviewer respond, interpreting that response.
- If the interpreter needs to clarify the victim's response, she/he will stop the conversation and explain to the interviewer what needs clarification and get the interviewer to ask clarifying questions that the interpreter then interprets.
- Schedule time for a break if the interview is expected to last more than an hour. Interpreting is an intense and tiring activity. Accuracy will degrade over time. Interpreters need breaks, and victims are likely to appreciate them as well.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution

Prosecutors and law enforcement can experience challenges in successfully bringing human trafficking cases to closure. Working closely with local and federal law enforcement partners and victim service providers will play a role in overcoming challenges, making it more likely that perpetrators are brought to justice. This section will describe how to build a strong prosecutorial team, as well as how to work with victims as your witnesses, various intelligence sources, and forensics.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution](#).

Corroborating Evidence

A jury's confidence in the victim's testimony recounting personal experience can be buttressed by careful corroboration of the victim's storyline. Each storyline has multiple opportunities for corroboration. No detail is too insignificant to corroborate. For all trafficking survivors, socioeconomic factors, home conditions, family life, any disabilities, and previous forms of trauma and victimization are all important factors to consider.

For foreign nationals and certain legal permanent residents, the prosecutor should discuss the victim's home country situation and vulnerabilities (e.g., economic, social, and educational status) that made the victim susceptible to leaving the home country for an opportunity in the United States. The prosecutor should ask about recruiting enticements, such as promises of employment, relationships, or success. If the victim was unable to earn a livable wage in the home country and was very poor, photographs of the living conditions, including housing where the victim resided, are useful. If the victim came via air, the prosecutor should obtain all documents related to the entrance, such as passports, visas, plane tickets, and arrival information. These documents can be introduced through a government or third-party neutral witness. If the victim entered the country on a temporary work visa, all applications and documents related to the employment-based recruitment should be sought. The prosecutor should consider using [an expert witness](#) to corroborate home country facts. For legal permanent residents and U.S. citizens, it may be especially important to address previous encounters with the government systems and how they have affected the individual, ranging from child welfare, foster care, and education to the criminal justice system.



Case Example: In 2014, [Andrew Fields](#) was sentenced to more than 30 years for sex trafficking and using drugs as a method of coercion to compel victims into prostitution.

Increasingly, human traffickers are using preexisting substance abuse addiction as a way to identify and recruit victims. This affects both foreign national and U.S. citizen victims. The prosecutor should consider using a medical expert witness to corroborate withdrawal symptoms. The home environment, relationships with family members, past domestic violence and abuse, and other forms of trauma and past victimization can be covered.

Witnesses

Witnesses are key sources for obtaining evidence and corroboration. Neighbors, friends, and customers may have information and are probable witnesses at trial. Investigators should interview all of these people immediately to avoid the possibility that they might coordinate their stories to discount

the victim's experience and might destroy evidence. Prosecutors often issue grand jury subpoenas for all of the following potential witnesses to nail down their statements under oath and to avoid surprises at trial:

- *Traffickers' Family and Friends.* Most of the traffickers' family members and friends will be defense witnesses, but some may still be able to corroborate details of the victim's story, such as employment in the household and timeframe when they knew the trafficker. In domestic servitude cases, prosecutors should identify and interview every person who lived or visited the trafficker's house while the victim lived and worked there.
- *Neighbors.* Witnesses who are neighbors almost always provide important corroboration for significant facts and may also receive a subpoena to testify before the grand jury, at trial, or both.
- *Other Victims.* In multiple-victim cases, the testimony of other victims allows the jury to see the similarities between the victims, to the extent that each victim's testimony provides a slightly different perspective of the same event.
- *Customers.* Testimony from customers can corroborate the victim's story.
- *Cooperating Defendants and Co-Conspirators.* The testimony of cooperating defendants and co-conspirators is also helpful because these individuals offer an insider's view of the trafficking situation.

Depositions

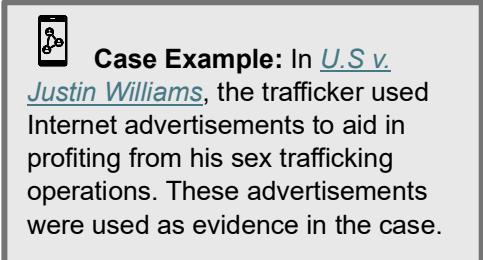
Taking witness depositions, including those from victims, is rare in federal criminal practice and is limited to cases when the witness may be unavailable for trial because of extraordinary circumstances. A few states allow depositions of victims in criminal cases regardless of their availability as witnesses. If the standard is met, a video deposition will be taken, with all counsel present and stating objections as if the testimony were being presented at the trial. Before the video testimony is introduced at trial, the presiding judge will rule on the attorney's objections, and the video will be redacted pursuant to the court's rulings.

Other Corroborating Evidence

Many foreign national victims enter the United States via air, so there may be documentation of their entry, but not their departure, in a federal database at the Department of State (DOS) or the DHS. DOS maintains the [Consular database](#). If there are no federal data indicating that the victim entered the United States, the victim could have entered by using another name and fraudulent documents, so prosecutors should think creatively about names that likely would tie the victim to the trafficker and should seek assistance from DOS.

Examples of corroborative evidence include the following:

- Immigrant records, including visa applications
- Contracts
- Recruitment correspondence
- Paystubs, checks, or money deposits



- Internet advertisements, social media posts, and online communication
- Ledgers that can establish profit and daily monetary quotas that victims must earn and can be used to monitor income or customer contact information
- Financial records such as MoneyPak or prepaid debit cards used by the victims to send earnings to the trafficker
- Data from cellular phones, tablets, and computers that can include telephone numbers called or those that called the device; text messages to and from victims, potential recruits, fellow traffickers, and sex customers; photographs (of victims or places where the trafficker visited); an Internet search history; and even historical data regarding a phone's location)
- Hotel records because many "no-tell motels" photocopy the drivers' licenses of guests ("No-tell motels" generally offer increased anonymity, and can be used as a place for commercial sex.)
- Medical records that document victims' injuries, overdoses from forced drug ingestion or self-medication, exhaustion (and sicknesses that result from exhaustion and unhealthy living), venereal diseases, and forced abortions
- Victim arrest records
- Jail calls and visitor logs or bail bond records that substantiate the connection between a victim and a trafficker
- Journals and diaries.

Multiple-Victim Cases

The good news about multiple-victim cases is that there are many witnesses. The bad news is that the victims must be located and interviewed.

Multiple victims also provide options for choosing trial witnesses based on who can best present the facts at trial and best handle cross-examination.

When making decisions about charges, a prosecutor should identify the victims who can best tell the entire story to be included in the indictment. Each of the other victim witnesses can describe unique facts or events observed only by that witness.

Multiple victims can corroborate each other, but they also can contradict each other. However, seemingly contradictory statements may not be a significant problem if the different recollections are not about important events or facts. Multiple victims may also have conflicts of interests that require careful coordination among service providers and law enforcement managing multiple interests.



Case Example: *U.S. v. Kil Soo Lee*, a sweatshop factory case in American Samoa, involved more than 250 Vietnamese and Chinese victims, but only about 13 victims testified. Only a few victims could describe all of the events during the entire conspiracy period, but other victims' testimony corroborated specific elements, including a 72-hour lock-in at the factory and a severe beating at the factory directed by the defendant, resulting in serious injuries to some of the worker victims and trauma to all present on that day.

For additional information and tools, see the [Resource page for Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation](#).

The Victim As a Witness

The participation of a victim as a witness in the criminal justice system is always complex, often placing additional pressure on the victim and resulting in retraumatization. Victims of human trafficking may have extensive exposure to violence and psychological trauma. They suffered under conditions that left them with a sense of hopelessness that is further complicated by the trafficker's success in convincing the victims that they are responsible for their own suffering.

Personal safety and self-preservation are the primary concerns of the victim. Despite the good intentions and expertise of the first responder, victims are likely to be preoccupied with basic matters of self-protection and survival, and thus may seem reluctant or nonresponsive. A law enforcement action, for instance, does not automatically signal to a victim that all is well. Victims need to feel safe and know that their traffickers are not nearby. Victims are usually fearful about facing their traffickers (and/or turning on them) and testifying against them, and they will require a great deal of support through the process. See [Section 5.3 on Victim Interview and Preparation](#) for more information on rapport-building strategies and trauma-informed victim interviewing considerations.

Maintaining confidentiality is a complex issue. Criminal investigations can often be a one-way information flow that often frustrates victims, service providers, and victims' civil and immigration attorneys. Investigators and prosecutors ask victims many questions, but, for many reasons (e.g., statutes, regulations, and policy), the investigators and prosecutors cannot share all of the information that they obtain from other people and sources. Criminal investigations can be compromised if confidentiality of certain information is not maintained. It is important that the victim explains what is known from personal experience but not what was learned from others. Maintaining the integrity of the victim's recollections is important to avoid defense counsel's objections on evidentiary grounds. However, information should be shared among task force partners to build safety and trust, and these parameters need to be discussed and worked out between law enforcement and social service providers. Information that is protected by state and federal victims' rights laws must also be adhered to, such as informing and involving victims in the process of trafficker sentencing. Task forces need to know the confidentiality laws, regulations, and policies that govern the actions of different task force members during human trafficking investigations.

Both law enforcement and prosecutors must understand and account for trauma and its impact on victims when working a human trafficking case. Prosecutors and law enforcement must expect that many victims will fail to self-identify as victims, may initially make statements that would seem to protect the offenders, and may even run away from law enforcement and victim service providers who are trying to assist them.

Such realities require a greater investment in time and patience by law enforcement and prosecutors than in traditional cases. Too often, an investigator or prosecutor rejects a potential human trafficking case because it involves a victim who may seem uncooperative or makes inconsistent victim statements. Proper training and expertise in trauma and its impact on victims can ensure that what would otherwise be perceived by some prosecutors as insurmountable hurdles are actually opportunities that a trauma-informed prosecutor can use to support their prosecution (see [Section 4.1 for more information on the trauma-informed approach](#)). Partnering with victim service providers and mental health practitioners through your task force to understand why a victim may act in such a way can be critical to building a human trafficking case. Asking why and working with professionals to understand the psychology around victim actions will contribute immensely to building your case.

Prosecution and law enforcement should always collaborate with victim service providers in supporting victims, particularly in the development of safety plans, accessing victim assistance, the protection of victim's privacy (including the redaction of names from official documents and the use of rape shield laws), and the empowerment of the victims themselves to build their own future with the help of a case manager. Collaboration with a victim's attorney is also crucial to ensure that a victim is able to achieve the most comprehensive recovery from the crime. Civil actions may need to be filed before or during the criminal prosecution to ensure that the statute of limitations does not run out. A follow-on civil action may be another forum for a victim to recoup the full measure of her/his losses. Victims' attorneys can also help ensure that the victims' rights are protected throughout the process and that the prosecutor is able to consider the full scope of restitution. Criminal prosecutions are complex, and not even the best prosecutor will be successful with every case. Collaborating appropriately with the victim's civil attorney will improve the measure of justice for every victim, regardless of the outcome of the criminal case.

Likewise, both prosecutors and investigators should consider the best interests of human trafficking victims, even when those interests conflict with the pursuit of a criminal arrest or prosecution. For example, a prosecutor may need to dispense with calling an important trial witness because he or she cannot safely undergo courtroom proceedings. Law enforcement may uncover facts during an investigation requiring an immediate rescue of child trafficking victims, even though such a recovery may compromise an otherwise covert operation. While steps should be taken to protect the interests of both the victims and the criminal case alike, a victim-centered approach to a criminal investigation and prosecution requires that the needs of the victim must come first in the final analysis.

The criminal justice process can be lengthy and frustrating. At a federal level, it is not uncommon for human trafficking investigations and prosecutions to take 1 to 2 years or more. Many victims, wanting to move on with their lives, become frustrated by the criminal justice system process. Maintaining contact and providing updates to the victim throughout the process can help to alleviate this frustration.

A good practice of a task force is to have one victim service provider serve as the coordinating victim service organization. Clear agreements, trusting relationships, and a proven track record of mutual reliability make this relationship invaluable to all involved and give law enforcement strong confidence about the control of information and how it is shared. See [Section 3.1 on Task Force Operational Protocol](#) for more information on how to establish processes and procedures that further support collaboration between law enforcement and victim service provider task force members on behalf of victims.



Tips for Prosecutors Working With Victim-Witnesses

- Be aware that for a human trafficking victim, recounting the victimization, participating in any court process, or even hearing the trafficker's name may trigger re-traumatization. Prosecutors and other investigators should give victims and their advocates as much notice as possible regarding trial preparation or trial dates. This will allow victims and their advocates to create a safety plan and emotionally prepare for the experience.
- Discuss constraints and timelines with victim service providers and law enforcement in task force meetings so that everyone can respond to the victims efficiently.
- Stay in close communication with victims, making certain that they remain informed about the process, the actions being taken on their behalf, and the duration of time they should anticipate between actions. This is best accomplished by service providers and case managers so that it does not appear to be coaching.
- Remember that the victim needs time to heal. An untimely encounter with the perpetrator in court could be disastrous for the victim's mental and emotional well-being, as well as for the case. Unfortunately, legalities may not offer an alternative if a perpetrator is in custody or under arraignment, but preparation can reduce the impact. This is a significant factor to be considered in completing an investigation and bringing the matter before the court. Victim service providers are essential at this stage of the case and should work in partnership with the prosecutor to identify when victims might encounter the trafficker and provide support before, during, and after these events.
- Utilize other task forces across the country to create a prosecution strategy and think outside the box regarding victim protection.
- Focus on building strong evidence-based investigations that support the victim-witness and corroborate testimony.
- Be prepared to provide additional support to victims post-trial. While the end of a trial often signals closure for investigators and prosecutors, many victim service providers notice deterioration in victims' emotional and physical wellness after a verdict or plea. Service providers are wise to be aware of and prepare for this possibility by engaging additional supports for victim-witnesses.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution](#).

Building a Strong Prosecution Team

Prosecutors should adopt a proactive and prepared approach to each case referral in order to land a successful prosecution.

Create an Infrastructure for Prosecutors to Handle Human Trafficking Cases

Human trafficking constitutes a new and developing area of the criminal justice system that employs recent statutes and a limited body of appellate case law. As a result, the "best practices" playbook for charging and trying human trafficking matters in court remains largely a work in progress across the country. Here are some steps for creating an appropriate infrastructure for prosecutors to handle human trafficking cases in their own jurisdictions.



Smart Tip: Consider cross designation of local prosecutors as federal Assistant U.S. Attorneys. That way you have options for prosecuting that can pull from both state and federal laws. During the investigation, there may be advantages to going state or federal. By cross designating, you have both options without bringing on another prosecutor from a different agency.

- **Designate staff to handle human trafficking cases.** At the outset, prosecutors should designate specific staff to handle human trafficking cases on an ongoing basis. Even though many offices cannot afford to devote prosecutors solely to human trafficking cases, the intake of cases should flow to a relatively small set of prosecutors in order to develop the continuity of service and expertise necessary to address the unique issues arising in human trafficking matters.
- **Establish an internal protocol.** Prosecutors should create an internal protocol within their office to ensure that human trafficking cases are recognized and transferred to the human trafficking staff for review. Too often, human trafficking matters move through the legal system without being properly identified.
- **Collaborate with other prosecution offices.** Prosecutors should foster a collaborative relationship with other prosecution offices, both state and federal, within their own region. Given the cross-jurisdictional nature of human trafficking offenders, a variety of law enforcement players in the relevant area should be engaged and trained to recognize and address cases in conjunction with the prosecutor's trained staff.
- **Seek out human trafficking expertise and training.** Beyond regional connections, the prosecutor's office should also avail itself of the insights of experienced human trafficking task forces on a national level.

Consider an Organized Crime–Domestic Violence Approach

The proper investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases requires a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach that entails both the case theory and investigative tools used in organized crime and racketeering operations, as well as the victim-centered and trauma-informed case work arising from the modern evidence-based prosecution of domestic battery and sexual assault matters. The Organized Crime–Domestic Violence (OC–DV) approach, in use by several leading jurisdictions across the Nation, can help prosecutors maximize the strength of their human trafficking cases for prosecution.

Over the years, particularly beginning in the 1970s and onward, state and federal prosecutors and investigators developed more effective approaches to domestic violence (DV), sexual assault cases,

and organized crime (OC) investigations. For example, in DV cases, the best practices approach (often called "victimless-prosecutions" or an "evidence-based prosecutions" approach) works to make a case knowing in advance that the victim may be unwilling or unavailable to testify when the case comes to trial. Likewise, in sexual assault matters, the best practices approach now requires investigators and prosecutors to work in a victim-centered and trauma-informed manner that tries to avoid retraumatizing the victim during the criminal justice process (e.g., use of rape shield statutes, specialized interviews, and other tools). Lastly, OC investigations developed a series of advanced techniques for obtaining non-testimonial evidence (financials, social media, telephone records, electronic surveillance, etc.) and for using other nonvictim-based tools (such as the use of informants, immunity, plea agreements, and witness protection) to make enterprise cases targeting criminal businesses with Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and other high-end offenses. All three of these traditions (DV, sexual assault, and OC) evolved into effective models of case work, and all three should be employed together in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking matters. Making proper modifications for their own local conditions and available resources, human trafficking prosecutors can employ this model as one of the roadmaps for success.

Take the Burden off the Victim Witness

The traditional tools and techniques long-employed in organized crime and sexual assault investigations help take the weight off victims' shoulders. Investigations should be victim-centered, not victim-dependent. The victim's story is important in every case of human trafficking. Nevertheless, to the degree possible, law enforcement should build an independent case against the defendants, and thus see the victims as corroboration of other types of evidence, rather than cast them as the star witnesses at trial. This proactive approach to human trafficking not only helps to overcome a victim's potential lack of credibility, unavailability, or uncooperative nature, but also to avoid the prospect of retraumatizing a victim within the criminal justice process itself.

Support Partnerships With Law Enforcement Agencies Early in the Investigation

Collaborate in victim interviewing early on in the investigation. Involvement of the prosecutor from the outset when interviewing victims of human trafficking is more common than in other types of criminal investigations. Given the importance of the victims' statements to the success of many human trafficking cases, early and regular involvement of the prosecutor in the investigation can be critical.

Working through your task force, make sure your law enforcement committee includes the key federal and local law enforcement agencies that can handle the full spectrum of human trafficking cases occurring within the prosecutor's territory. In order to be effective, this list of agencies must cover both labor and sex trafficking matters and include both federal and state/local police departments. At a minimum, this list usually includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), HSI, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the U.S. DOL, the state police, the local sheriff's office, and the police departments of each of the major municipalities covered by the prosecutor's authority. This will help ensure a strong team to prosecute trafficking cases. See [section 3.1 on the task force law enforcement committee](#).

Include Victim Service Providers

Building strong cases for the successful prosecution of human trafficking cases requires multidisciplinary collaboration and bridging the gap between the law enforcement and victim service providers or other relevant nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) serving human trafficking victims/survivors within the prosecutor's jurisdiction.

Partner early with local victim service providers on the task force. From the outset, victim service providers should be working cases together with law enforcement and prosecutors. Often, victims of human trafficking have immense need for services, and having an iron-clad relationship with service providers helps ensure a strong victim and ultimately contributes to successful case outcomes. For a variety of reasons, many organizations initially hesitate to work closely with law enforcement, but targeted outreach by the prosecutor's office itself can help to overcome this tendency by emphasizing common ground and doing so in a way that is consistent with each partner's mission and ethical responsibilities. Additionally, the prevention of additional people being victimized in the future serves the goals of both victim service providers and law enforcement.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution](#).

Relying Upon Data-Driven Intelligence

Through ongoing collaborative relationships within and outside the task force, human trafficking prosecutors can funnel information concerning target offenders and at-risk populations into the intelligence cycle. By centralizing the collation and evaluation of these leads with the law enforcement members of the task force, prosecutors and their investigative partners can convert this information into actionable intelligence and disseminate that product for further analysis and investigation by specific law enforcement members or other requisite parties.



Task Force Example: Co-location Brings Advantages to Team

Consider co-locating victim service provider personnel in the prosecutor's office. Prosecutors and core victim service provider task force members can explore the possibility of placing "in-house" victim service provider personnel within the prosecutor's physical office space.

A human trafficking task force in the Chicago area tried co-location with good results. The Salvation Army's STOP-IT Program works as an embedded NGO for the law enforcement operations of the task force, and it maintains personnel within office space of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

In order to be effective, this process requires formal or informal institutional agreements to define which types of information can be shared and under what circumstances, and to establish efficient methods of pulling different data points together from various sources subject to a variety of different legal and technical constraints. See [Section 3.1 on the law enforcement committee](#) for further information on working within a task force structure to coordinate exchange of intelligence across agencies.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution](#).

5.5 Strategies for Prosecutors & Law Enforcement

Prosecutors and law enforcement can work together in creative ways to bring perpetrators to justice successfully.

Using the guidance in this section, prosecutors and law enforcement can improve the outcomes of their human trafficking cases. Techniques include: using victim sensitive and trafficking-specific language, engaging in open charge selection, ensuring proper defendant and informant sequencing, engaging in motion practice, adapting structural presentation and using three-dimensional corroboration, and presenting trafficking experts.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Use Victim Sensitive & Human Trafficking-Specific Language

Prosecutors know that in any adversarial proceeding, the party that successfully frames the question usually wins the debate, and human trafficking cases are no exception. When writing investigative reports or presenting a human trafficking case in court, investigators and prosecutors should use victim-sensitive language and choose themes in their case that convey an understanding of the control that the defendants exert on their victims.

- During the investigation and prosecution of sex trafficking cases, investigators and prosecutors should prepare in advance of an interview to understand terms to which the potential victim responds or with which the victim identifies. Terms within the sex trafficking arena are loaded; "prostitutes," "commercially sexually exploited," and a variety of other terms have different connotations and use of one over another can either help build rapport or create barriers in establishing rapport with a potential victim.
- Likewise, references to "slavery" or the term "human trafficking" itself should be used with caution. The word "trafficking" unfortunately implies movement, which is not an element of most human trafficking offenses. The word "slavery" often conjures up images of physical rather than psychological restraints, and physical control may or may not be a part of the prosecutor's evidence (e.g., the offenders did not use "chains" to control their victims). In a very real way, the

use of words matters in human trafficking cases, and law enforcement must recognize this fact in their work.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource Page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Engage in Open Charge Selection

The prosecutor should engage in open charge selection and not limit the matter to human trafficking-related offenses alone. Charge selection concerns how you choose among provable charges, not how you decide if a charge itself is supported by the evidence. To the degree you have evidentiary issues (such as the victim's credibility or state of mind), you may be inclined to include a safety-net charge to ensure the offender is convicted of at least one felony.

In the end, each count in the indictment must "carry its own weight" in the case; that is, each count must create a tactical or strategic advantage for the prosecution. Just because the elements of an offense might meet the facts adduced during the investigation, it is not enough to justify the presence of that offense in the charging instrument.

Examples of proper "charge advantages" include:

- Helping to establish the admissibility of key evidence
- Overcoming potential procedural bars, such as the statute of limitations
- Supporting the joinder of different defendants or charges within a single proceeding
- Avoiding compromise verdicts or ensuring the felonization of the defendants with "safety-net" charges (i.e., the inclusion of less serious but easier to prove violations)
- Increasing the ultimate sentence of the defendant or the availability of other remedies post-trial



Resource:

[Prosecuting Image Exploitation](#) (2015), an article from AEquitas, covers various examples of image exploitation crimes that can be charged against an offender that are closely related to HT, such as sexting, revenge porn, stalking, cyberstalking, cyber harassment, video voyeurism, invasion of privacy, child pornography, blackmail, and extortion.



Case Example: [Louisiana Motel Owner Pleads Guilty in Sex Trafficking Case, 7-1-15](#) motel owner pled guilty in connection with a sex trafficking operation that utilized his motel for prostitution. The defendant admitted to knowingly profiting from the trafficking of multiple victims.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Ensure Proper Defendant & Informant Sequencing

The success of a case often lies in the proper sequencing of informant development and defendant charging. Selecting the right time and offender for "flipping" and knowing how best to lock-in and memorialize that offender's cooperation require a careful fact-specific analysis. The factors for identifying potential flips and case planning a sequence of investigative tools are not available in this public Guide; however, there are law enforcement-specific trainings that cover the topic. See the Resource page to learn more on how to obtain trainings.

The grouping of defendants with a single case or multiple indictments can affect the subsequent success or failure of defense motions to suppress, motions for severance, or motions to address inconsistent defenses or defense attorney conflicts.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource Page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Engage in Human Trafficking Motion Practice

Due to the intrinsic nature of human trafficking offenses and their relatively new presence within the criminal law, prosecutors should engage proactively in pretrial litigation to focus the case for trial.

Examples of such motion practice include:

- Filing a bench memorandum to educate the court on the elements of the offense and key evidentiary standards.
- Filing a motion to pose human trafficking-specific questions during jury selection.
- Filing motions to narrow issues at trial and thus "smoke-out" or preclude unlawful defense theories or improper lines of cross-examination.
- Filing motions to pre-admit particular pieces of evidence, such as recording transcripts, co-conspirator statements, or foreign-based translations or documents.
- Filing motions to maintain court security or victim protection in a manner that will be sustained on appeal, including, when appropriate, the use of rape shield provisions, an anonymous jury, or a sealed courtroom for specific testimony.
- Filing motions to identify, seize, and protect assets for future recovery by victims. In practice, it is important to "arrest the money" first



Example of "Smoke-out"

You can often smoke out or "see his hand" by moving to litigate part of the case on a pretrial basis, even if your motion is denied. For example, the defense gives part of its plan when it opposes the prosecutor's: (1) motion to admit translated transcripts of recordings; (2) motion to admit 404(b) evidence; or (3) motion to admit coconspirator statements. Prosecutor's motions to limit cross-examination (rape shield), or preclude defense evidence, can also serve this same function. For example, if you bring a motion to bar any evidence, the judge will force the opposing lawyer to reveal what he or she is planning to use and under what basis.

because you do not want offenders to drain bank accounts as multiple offenders get arrested in a law enforcement take down.

- Filing motions to stay any pending civil litigation. This should ideally be done in coordination with the victim's attorney so that they understand that you are not hostile to the victim being made whole through civil litigation, but that this is necessary to protect the prosecution. Working collaboratively, where possible, with the victim's attorney will help ensure that the victim is protected throughout the process and is most likely to feel that justice is achieved.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Adapt the Structural Presentation and Use Three-Dimensional Corroboration

The forensics of victim trauma often leads to the unique presentation of human trafficking cases in court. Many victims lose the ability to recall events in a linear fashion, and thus prosecutors may need to adopt a thematic rather than chronological structure to their presentation of the victim's story.

Human trafficking cases frequently involve numerous incidents over long spans of time, and veteran prosecutors will use visual landmarks to anchor the memories of judges and jurors during specific portions of testimony.

Knowing the importance of primacy and regency (the primacy effect means that people remember the first thing they read or see, while regency effect means people remember the last, or most recent, thing they read or see) for judicial fact-finders, experienced human trafficking prosecutors file motions in the right cases to bifurcate parts of the proceedings, or seek to recall certain witnesses multiple times to enable them to testify in an incident-specific, rather than witness-specific, manner.

Human trafficking prosecutors maximize the available corroboration of victims and informants in the case by presenting such evidence in three-dimensions, before, during, and after the "suspect" testimony. In this way, jurors are trained to believe the key witness as to certain facts in advance of the witness's appearance, receive other facts as reliable during the testimony itself, and are rewarded for believing still other facts after the witness leaves the courtroom.

Human trafficking prosecutors must always "own" the realities of their victims and informants and, when appropriate, explain victim sensitivities and concerns to the jury early in the proceedings, but through careful presentation of the corroborative evidence, prosecutors can still succeed.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

Present Human Trafficking Experts

Do not underestimate your victims' capacities to tell the story in a meaningful way, with corroboration from other witnesses. In many instances, with proper preparation of victims who receive support

through victim service providers, victims are the most compelling witnesses. Through an investigation that focused on collecting corroborating evidence and witnesses, you will have more than enough to lay a proper foundation for the case, but if you believe there may be challenges for the jury in understanding the scheme of coercion and control and the victims' reactions to the circumstances, then consider using experts. The proper use of human trafficking experts permits jurors and judges to better understand the unfamiliar actions of victims in context to support and enhance the credibility of their testimony at trial. Prosecutors can consider the use of experienced agents to testify as experts in the common practices of traffickers and the use of medical or mental health experts to explain the symptoms and effects of human trafficking trauma on its victims.

There can be a battle of the experts between the prosecution and the defense; by using experts, you may open the door for appeal. A good strategy can be having an expert on call and ready to testify, if you have concerns about how a jury may respond to victim and witness testimony. Based on how the case is evolving in court, you can elect to put your expert on the stand or not.

For additional information and tools, visit [Resource Page for Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement](#).

5.6 Case Proceedings

Understanding the criminal justice process is important for everyone involved in a human trafficking task force even when they are not directly involved in the prosecution. It is crucial to understand their role in the process and support victims who interact with the criminal justice system as witnesses or as defendants.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.6 Case Proceedings](#).

Pre-Trial Proceedings

Federal criminal charges can be brought in one of three forms: indictment, criminal complaint (followed by indictment), or information.

Grand Jury Indictments

Grand juries hear evidence presented by the government to determine whether there is probable cause that a crime has been committed. Typically, grand juries convene to consider an indictment presented by a prosecutor and to vote on it after hearing testimony given under oath by an investigator and sometimes witnesses. However, a grand jury can also be called as an investigative grand jury that, over a period of time, will hear testimony and consider evidence from various witnesses, supporting both the government's case and that of the defense. Investigative grand juries are almost always used in federal human trafficking cases. Although victims may not be called to testify before a grand jury, the prosecutor typically will call any potential witness who is unpredictable or inclined to be untruthful to lock in testimony under oath.

Grand jury proceedings are conducted in strict secrecy. Only government attorneys, investigators and witnesses who are testifying, a court reporter, and an interpreter, if necessary, can be present in the grand jury room. Anyone who makes an unauthorized disclosure of information from grand jury proceedings is subject to contempt charges. However, the court may authorize disclosure at any time, including imposing conditions pursuant to a judicial proceeding and other specified purposes.

Criminal Complaints: Initial Appearance and Preliminary Hearing

Criminal complaints are typically sought when an arrest must be made immediately. A complaint and arrest warrant can be obtained quickly whereas an indictment requires a grand jury to be seated, with an indictment and evidence presented. A preliminary hearing is held when a defendant is arrested on a criminal complaint. A preliminary hearing involves a prosecutor presenting sufficient evidence to establish probable cause that the alleged crimes were committed. Such a hearing may involve a victim testifying, but more often a law enforcement investigator can present the essential facts.

Resolution of Criminal Charges

Criminal charges are resolved by pleas, usually through a written plea agreement, trial, or dismissal of charges. Plea agreements should reflect the totality and seriousness of the defendant's conduct. Prosecutors should consider having the defendant plead guilty to the crime but require restitution to ensure that victims are able to receive support.

Arrest and Arraignment on Indictment

When a grand jury returns an indictment, the court will issue an arrest warrant for each defendant. Once arrested, a defendant will be brought before the court for an initial appearance. Subsequently, the defendant will be brought to the court for an arraignment (a public hearing), when the judge will ensure that the defendant has a copy of the indictment, read it to the defendant, and then ask how the defendant pleads.

Bail or Detention

Judges can detain or release a defendant, with or without conditions. Control and manipulation of the victim through violence, threats, intimidation, and various coercive means are inherent in trafficking and do not end with the trafficker's arrest. Physical, mental, and emotional separation of the trafficker and the victim is critical to breaking the enormous control that the trafficker maintains over almost all victims. Moreover, if a victim is expected to testify at the trial, this separation is imperative so that the victim feels some level of comfort and safety. A defendant who is a foreign national and in the United States unlawfully mostly likely will be detained because of the flight risk factor. Victims may present testimony to the court, but more typically, an investigator will testify about the nature of the crime, particularly if violence or threats are involved. In these instances, the prosecutor probably will prepare and argue for detention.



Smart Tip: Detention helps the victims feel safe because the defendant is physically removed from direct access to the victims. Even when the defendant is detained, the prosecutor should also seek a restraining or protective order that includes a provision that the defendant cannot have any direct or indirect contact with the victim by any means, including third parties or social media.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.6 Case Proceedings](#).

Trial

Criminal trials are emotionally challenging for both victims and witnesses. The standard of proof for criminal cases required is "beyond a reasonable doubt". This standard does not mean beyond all possible doubt, only beyond all "reasonable" doubt. Nonetheless, this is a very high standard, and all of the jurors must be unanimous in their determination.

Before the trial, prosecutors and investigators will rigorously prepare victims and witnesses. Trials are difficult for U.S. residents and citizens but may be even more challenging for foreign nationals who are unfamiliar with the U.S. criminal justice processes. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors should take time to explain the trial process and review the testimony, cross-examination, and redirect testimony, considering the anxiety that the trial presents to the victims. Investing such time pretrial is essential to a successful prosecution and cannot be underestimated.

Some useful tips when preparing victims include the following:

- Walk the victim through the trial process. Take the victim to the court room and explain who will be there and where they will sit.
- Explain in detail to the victim how to enter the courtroom, where to sit, and the oath process.
- Explain what and how objections are made, that an objection does not mean the victim did anything wrong, and that the victim should wait for guidance from the judge.
- Review in advance how documents or physical evidence will be identified and introduced through the victim.
- Stress that the victim's only job at trial is to tell the truth no matter who asks the questions. Time invested pretrial in explaining the process and reviewing testimony always pays off at trial. A victim who at least understands what will happen at the trial will be more prepared to focus on telling the story.
- Have a safety plan for the victim during the trial. Prosecutors, investigators, attorneys, and service providers should work collaboratively on this plan. The victims should be housed at a location unknown to the defendants and their attorney and never near the courthouse, which would allow the defendant or a representative to follow them. Investigators should escort victims to and from the courthouse unless another secure plan is arranged. Separate and safe rooms for the government's witnesses must be planned and secured in advance of the trial. Under no circumstances should a victim be unescorted while at court.
- Have a support plan and prepare for all outcomes. Although a conviction is the best-case scenario, ensure that the victim has support if there is an undesirable outcome in the case. In addition, the victim should be aware that following a conviction by the jury, the judge either can order a defendant who has been out on bail to proceed to jail or can allow the defendant to remain on bail pending sentencing.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.6 Case Proceedings](#).

Sentencing

Sentencing hearings are public, and the court must give any victim who is present the right to be heard. Victims are allowed to participate in the sentencing process regardless of whether or not the case went to trial, and whether or not they testified during the trial. In federal cases and most states, victims are allowed to address the court verbally or through [written form](#). Usually, victims have the right to submit a written impact statement to discuss how and why their trafficker affected their lives. This statement is usually submitted to the prosecutor or county probation officer to be presented to the court at sentencing. The victim's impact statement will be considered alongside information about the offender that the judge reviews (such as the offender's past criminal history) and may have a significant impact on how the judge decides to sentence the offender. A trafficking victim may want to consider submitting the restitution calculation to the prosecutor at the same time as the victim impact statement to include in the pre-sentencing report. While this information is not admissible during trial for a criminal case, this information may be admissible in a subsequent civil case that the victim may bring against their trafficker.

Most sentences for crimes have time ranges and conditions, and the victim impact statement can affect whether the offender receives the permissible minimums or maximums within that range. The [Trafficking Victims Protection Act \(TVPA\)](#) outlines sentencing terms as well as provisions for asset forfeiture. For information on sentencing and forfeiture guidelines in different states, check [VictimLaw](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 5.6 Case Proceedings](#).

6. The Role of Courts

Trafficking victims encounter and engage with the court system in a variety of different ways. Some become witnesses against their traffickers in a criminal prosecution. Others enter the system as a defendant for a crime that they committed during their trafficking experience. Each interaction presents an opportunity for the court staff to support victims of human trafficking, play a part in the identification of unidentified survivors, and intervene in a trauma-informed way.

Tools to Create Victim Impact Statements

- [Victim Support Services](#) provides information on victim impact statements, including examples.
- [Texas provides a packet](#) to inform and assist victims in developing a victim impact statement.

Key Term: Victim-Defendant Paradigm

Victims may come into the court system as defendants when they commit crimes in the context of their trafficking. These unidentified victims may not receive assistance and may suffer additional trauma in the criminal justice system.

Courts have a particular role to play in establishing processes and procedures that ensure victim safety and apply a [trauma-informed response](#) to all victims rather than a punitive response that punishes victim-defendants for actions taken not of their own free will. This approach is not only about linking victims to services but also about adopting practices throughout the court system to emphasize attention to safety over fear and punishment.

Human trafficking task forces need to strategize about how to collaborate and partner with the courts in their jurisdictions to enhance their community response to human trafficking and to provide an integrated approach. This section discusses court stakeholders who can play an important role in task forces and may benefit from task force resources and training, ethical considerations related to court stakeholder involvement, and an overview of current innovative court practices.

Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials | OVC

For children and youth, participating in the justice system as a victim or witness can be especially confusing, distressing, and even re-traumatizing. [Child Victims and Witnesses Support Materials](#) was created to support children and youth during their involvement with the justice system as a victim or witness to a crime.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Chapter 6 The Role of Courts](#).

6.1 Court Stakeholders

Collaboration among task forces and court stakeholders is essential to developing a successful response to human trafficking, whether the collaboration is the product of formal task force membership or coordinated support. Some court stakeholders, such as prosecutors and victim service providers, generally can play an active part in most roles within the task force. Other court stakeholders, such as judges and defense attorneys, can also provide a needed perspective in the task force but need to refrain from any case-related task work. These roles within the task force should be clearly defined to cultivate buy-in from all key parties.

Jurisdictions across the country are developing new and different court-based responses to human trafficking. Some courts use enhanced traditional case processing to improve outcomes for victim-defendants, while others have developed specialized dockets that provide comprehensive assessments, judicial monitoring, and an array of social services. Many initiatives prioritize juvenile delinquency cases, focusing largely on commercial sexual exploitation of children and sex trafficking. Other projects work with adults and tackle a broader range of relevant criminal charges, such as prostitution, loitering, and drug possession.

Some courts even have the capacity to convene and lead multidisciplinary committees that aim to foster collaboration among stakeholders and generate new responses to the problems associated with human trafficking. While these responses may vary, in general, they all rely on multidisciplinary collaboration among key court stakeholders—the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, probation officers, and victim service providers.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.1 Court Stakeholders](#).

Key Court-Based Task Force Participants

Some court representatives and partners can be an essential part of task force operations. With the often complex intersection of criminal and civil dynamics of trafficking cases, court representatives may be an important voice when task forces provide a coordinated response to trafficking cases. These representatives may encounter victims as witnesses or as defendants.

Prosecutors

Prosecutors work with trafficking victims and law enforcement on criminal cases to build a strong case against traffickers. Furthermore, prosecutors are the gatekeeper to diversion. If a victim-defendant is identified, they have the discretion to defer or decline prosecution and instead link the victim-defendant to crucial services. The role of the prosecutor is critical and might involve the following functions:

- **Support victims.** Prosecutors can ensure that victim-witnesses receive support during the entire trial process, including preparation for testimony, safety needs, and emotional support.
- **Divert victim-defendants.** Prosecutors can identify human trafficking victims in other cases (once individual cases are identified), by case type, paper screening, or individual interviews. Prosecutors have the discretion to drop charges or recommend diversion options to avoid the possibility of jail, criminal conviction, or both. As a condition of diversion, victim-defendants are supposed to be linked to a comprehensive array of services, including housing, drug treatment, trauma counseling, civil legal services, and medical services. Brokering partnerships with high-quality community-based providers ensures that service provisions are available for diverted trafficking victims and that the court can effectively monitor such services.
- **Prosecute traffickers.** In most cases, building a strong case means relying on victim testimony, which can be challenging because of victims' inherent fear and mistrust of institutions. Prosecutors should work to develop strong collaborative relationships with task force members and other court stakeholders to facilitate the process if victims choose to come forward. For more information, see [Chapter 5 Building Strong Cases](#).

Within a task force, prosecutors can collaborate with organizations that may identify victims who do not come through law enforcement, potentially coordinating case-related needs. A prosecutor's perspective may be essential in ensuring that task force policies and protocols help build strong cases rather than producing potentially negative impacts.

Probation Officers

Probation officers may interact with victims at multiple points of the court process:

- **Identification.** Probation officers may be the first to identify victims of trafficking who interact with the court system as defendants. This possibility is particularly salient in juvenile probation cases, where victims may come into the court system for charges of prostitution.
- **Intervention.** As part of court interventions, probation officers may monitor victims to ensure that they are able to access and attend treatment.



Example: The County of Los Angeles Probation Department has a [Child Trafficking Unit](#) that works collaboratively with social service agencies to develop intervention and prevention strategies for youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

- **Prevention.** Probation departments can work with victim service providers to assist vulnerable populations that are at risk of being trafficked.

Victim Service Providers

In some states, victim service providers are considered court personnel because they are co-located within the district attorney's office. Although this is not the case for all areas, victim service providers may be key partners that have integrated roles within the court system, such as:

- **Court advocacy.** Service providers may accompany victims to court, provide emotional and moral support during the trial process, and help victims after the verdict. This role is important, whether the survivor is going through the court process as a victim-witness or as a victim-defendant.
- **Court-mandated treatments.** Service providers may supply services, such as treatment and counseling, as required by the courts.
- **Victim advocacy.** Service providers can assist with victim rights advocacy, victim impact statements, notification provisions, and other key needs.

Victim service providers are noted in previous chapters as essential participants in task forces. However, it is important to recognize that their role within the court system enables them to integrate a victim advocacy perspective throughout the criminal justice process as well as the social services process.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.1 Court Stakeholders](#).

Court Personnel with Limited Task Force Roles

The court stakeholders discussed on this page may be more likely to participate in non-case-related tasks such as training, victim response, and leadership. Because of ethical and procedural considerations, these stakeholders may participate in a limited capacity within task forces. It may be more important for them to participate in specific subcommittees, such as those for outreach and public awareness and for training, and to avoid case-specific and legislative task force activities.



Example: [Chicago Prostitution and Trafficking Intervention Court](#)

In Cook County, IL, home to Chicago, the State's Attorney's Office created a specialized deferred prosecution program that diverts victim-defendants away from traditional prosecution and incarceration and toward treatment and services. This new response to prostitution-related cases, the Chicago Prostitution and Trafficking Intervention Court, offers graduated levels of trauma-informed services provided by the local [Christian Community Health Program](#). A single judge in the Domestic Violence Court monitors all cases, and all charges are dismissed upon successful completion of the court mandated program.

Judge: Convene and Lead

In the courtroom, the judge (or other judicial officer) is expected to lead the proceedings and ensure procedural equality. During the hearing, the judicial officer will ensure that all sides are afforded the same rights and subjected to the same evidentiary limitations throughout the court proceedings. In addition, judges can play significant leadership roles in legal education, community outreach, and public service activities. Judges preside over cases involving human trafficking victims in criminal prosecutions, juvenile court, family administrative hearings, and civil court proceedings. Judicial leadership can have a strong impact on case outcomes, particularly in cases involving human trafficking. The role of the judge goes beyond bench activities and might include tasks such as the following:

- **Identify victim-defendants.** The judge can be a final opportunity for victim-defendants to be identified as trafficking victims and thus receive appropriate consideration and assistance.
- **Create a trauma-informed courtroom.** A key component of an effective court response to human trafficking is [creating a trauma-informed courtroom](#), led by the judge and implemented through all aspects of court operations.
- **Convene stakeholders.** The judge can be a catalyst and a convener, providing leadership and encouraging other court stakeholder to participate. Judges may establish court-specific task forces or working groups, creating an opportunity to clarify and understand everyone's roles in the enhanced response to human trafficking; construct a trauma-informed courtroom; identify and assist victims; and coordinate activities with the jurisdiction's larger task forces.

Defense Attorneys: Identify and Advocate

Defense attorneys and public defenders work with victims of human trafficking who have been accused of crimes. Because these attorneys may be the first court personnel to intercept victim-defendants, they play a vital role in identifying signs of trafficking and advocating on their behalf in court. Specifically, the role of the defense attorney might include the following functions:

- **Identify victim-defendants.** During initial client interviews, it is important to observe any verbal or behavioral indicators of trauma, past victimization, and trafficking. Consider adding a brief screening tool or informal questions to the standard interview to explore possible elements of force, fraud, and coercion. Sample questions might include: *How did you become involved in this work/world? Who introduced you to this type of work? How old were you when you started doing this type of work? Have you ever worked for anyone and, if so, what was that like?* Most important, use this encounter to engage the victim, offer support, and build trust.



Example: District of Columbia Multidisciplinary Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

In Washington, DC, the presiding judge of the Family Court convened and led the commercial sexual exploitation of children committee to address court-involved youth at risk of sex trafficking. This collaborative group—composed of the court, probation officers, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, child welfare officers, and service providers—developed the District of Columbia Multidisciplinary Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children that outlines the specific roles each member agency plays in identifying, screening, and monitoring cases involving trafficked youth. Click here for more information about [DC Protocols](#).

- **Advocate.** If there is reason to believe that an individual is being trafficked or is at risk of being trafficked, defense attorneys can advocate on their client's behalf for a noncriminal disposition. Established collaborative relationships with prosecutors are key to diverting victims from the criminal justice system. Defense attorneys can work with the local prosecutor if the victim-defendant chooses to file charges against the exploiters.
- **Victim-centered referrals.** Defense attorneys can help ensure access to wrap-around services (such as civil legal services, social services, and medical services) to meet the needs of their clients. If the law permits, defense attorneys also can work to vacate or expunge previous criminal convictions that are a result of being trafficked.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.1 Court Stakeholders](#).

6.2 Ethical Considerations

It is important to ensure that court stakeholders are able to participate in task forces. However, it is equally important to understand their role in the judicial process and the potential ethical and procedural boundaries that may create issues.

Participation in Human Trafficking Task Forces

Task force leaders should ensure that their activities avoid potential interactions (such as the following) that may affect a case if court officials, such as judges and defense attorneys, are part of the task force:

- *Ex parte* communications
- Receipt of nondiscoverable materials
- Case-specific information
- Provision of legal advisement
- Any compromise of the neutrality of separate proceedings.

To prevent a conflict of interest, court representatives must remove themselves from any sensitive task force activity where case-specific information (e.g., name, date of birth, identifying characteristics, history, and current or past events of a specifically identified victim or the target of an investigation) is being shared or divulged. Judicial officers shall avoid *ex parte* communications and nondiscoverable information. Any information that is offered to a magistrate or judge is subject to the discovery process and must be made available to both the defense attorneys and the prosecutors during a hearing.



Example: Exploitation Intervention Project

In New York City, the [Legal Aid Society](#) created the [Exploitation Intervention Project](#) within the Midtown Community Court to assist trafficking victims. This defender-based project provides direct representation, comprehensive services, and legal advocacy support.



Key Term: *Ex Parte* Communications

Ex parte communications are any oral or written communications relevant to the adjudication process that are directly conveyed to the judge by a party to the case, without the knowledge of the other parties. This maneuver is usually an attempt by one side of the case to give the court "exclusive" information, but such information may be received from a third party.

A standard prohibition on all members of the court disallows judges and magistrates from giving legal advice, and this applies as strongly during a court proceeding as it does at a speaking engagement or task force meeting. For example, judicial officers should not make a definitive statement with regard to how the court would sentence a human trafficking perpetrator to a maximum sentence. This type of statement would be considered prejudicial and would potentially place the judicial officer (or the court in general) at risk of a conflict of interest on a particular case.

Avoiding Conflict of Interest

Although there may be some barriers to a court stakeholder's participation in task forces, potential ways to mitigate these issues include the following:

1. Isolate case-specific information to a separate subcommittee, with membership determined on a need-to-know basis.
2. Assign task force members who may have conflicts of interest (such as judges, magistrates, and defense attorneys) to participate solely in general meetings and on specific committees to avoid potential disclosure issues. For example, such court officers can participate in outreach and public awareness and in training but might avoid the victim services and law enforcement committees, which are more likely to have case-specific communication.
3. Include all task force members in a formal protocol (or [memorandum of understanding and protocols](#)) that delineates specific agency roles and establishes the rules under which information will (or will not) be shared. In particular, the creation and maintenance of a list of victims or high-risk individuals could result in the court receiving case-specific information or information that might be considered inadmissible or prejudicial.
4. Ensure that all [essential stakeholders](#) are represented at task force case coordination meetings to protect the best interests of victim-defendants. For instance, in addition to the prosecutor and victim assistance providers, defense attorneys or child advocates representing potential victims in criminal or juvenile delinquency matters should be included to collaborate on possible victim assistance responses (including diversion or treatment interventions).

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts](#).

6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts

The court plays a significant role in the criminal justice process as the venue where traffickers are tried and where victims can seek justice and find resolution, whether they encounter the court system as victim-witnesses or victim-defendants. Through trauma-informed procedures, courts can enhance the victim's belief in procedural justice, decreasing the potentially negative experiences they may have in court, regardless of the outcome of the case. If the courts are to be effective in their delivery of justice, they need to be aware of the underlying trauma of many



Resource: [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#) has a [bench card](#) on what it means to be a trauma-informed judge. Judicial officers often rely on bench cards, which are very brief summaries of law or recommended best practices that they literally keep in the courtroom (i.e., "on the bench").

individuals with whom they will interact within their courts. Very often, individuals in cases involving domestic violence or abuse, civil or criminal child abuse, truancy, and juvenile and adult crimes all have one common trait—their own undiagnosed and untreated trauma.

In an effort to create a trauma-informed court, task forces can consider either approaching an individual courtroom or the chief judicial officer of the jurisdiction. In larger jurisdictions, a small number of judicial officers might preside over the cases most likely to involve trauma-affected individuals; in smaller jurisdictions, only one or two presiding judicial officers may handle all case types.



Additional recommendations for creating a trauma-informed courtroom include the following:

- **Encourage Suggestions from Other Court Stakeholders.** Encourage parties to cases, attorneys, and guardians *ad litem* to make specific requests for any possible and reasonable adjustment to the proceedings.
- **Step Down and Leave the Judge's Robe at the Bench.** On a limited basis, if no one's personal safety is compromised, a judicial officer may consider sitting at the victim's table with the pro se party, especially if the victim does not have legal representation, or with any minor child and the child's *guardian ad litem* or *court-appointed special advocate*. If a judicial officer elects to join the parties at the tables, the officer might consider literally leaving the judge's robe on the bench and thus appearing more "normal." The intimidation factor perceived by pro se parties and children in a courtroom when interacting with an authority figure (dressed differently and seated in an elevated location) can invoke trauma triggers or otherwise discourage interaction.
- **Adjust the Lighting in the Courtroom.** Often courtrooms have multiple lighting options, and decreasing the lighting may feel more comfortable to individuals who are light sensitive or have certain sensory limitations. Discuss this with the victim, victim's case manager, or representative to ensure that dimming the lights is not potentially triggering.
- **Provide Simple Conveniences Like a Box of Tissues or a Bowl of Snacks.** Aside from providing an energy boost for anyone in the courtroom, a piece of candy or fruit can often help victims feel calmer and more welcome.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts](#).

Promoting a Paradigm Shift Within the Court

Not all court personnel need to participate in task forces; however, developing targeted training and coordination between task forces and court stakeholders (such as the following) will help enhance the overall results of a task force to respond proactively to human trafficking in their community:

1. **Provide training.** Provide multidisciplinary training for all court stakeholders on topics such as understanding the needs of trafficking victims and achieving effective court-based responses. More information on training opportunities is available from the [Center for Court Innovation](#).
2. **Engage in multidisciplinary collaboration to support victims.** When [taking inventory of community assets](#), consider the following questions: *Which agencies currently serve victims of*

domestic violence and sexual assault? What specific resources exist? What types of services are provided? What information is needed, and how will it be shared? The answers to these questions can help the courts refer victims to the most appropriate providers.

3. **Reduce collateral consequences.** Collateral consequences include legal sanctions and restrictions that human trafficking victim-defendants experience daily as a result of a criminal arrest or conviction. These records have lasting impact on a victim-defendant's capability to secure housing, find a job, and seek other forms of assistance. Consequently, effective human trafficking responses should eliminate or significantly reduce the number and impact of criminal convictions and the use of jail or detention of victim-defendants.
4. **Support trauma-informed practices.** Use resources within the task force (such as mental health partners and victim service providers) to ensure that court procedures become as trauma informed as possible so that the victim feels safe and ultimately is more likely to participate in the criminal justice process.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts](#).

Procedural Justice

In some cases, interactions with the court can become blurred for victim-defendants, at times supportive and other times punitive. Courts can enhance their response by adopting a trauma-informed approach, including incorporating procedural justice.

Every justice system stakeholder—from an arresting officer first identifying a trafficking victim to a judge presiding over a criminal, juvenile, or civil court case—is in a position to send a message to human trafficking victims that the justice system is trustworthy, fair, and a place to seek help. Research strongly supports the conclusion that enhancing procedural justice also improves a victim's experience and long-term recovery, regardless of a particular outcome (e.g., conviction or acquittal). When they perceive fairness and respect from the court, victims are also more likely to engage meaningfully in the court process. This perceived fairness can lead victim-defendants to self-identify to trusted members of the court.



Key Concepts: What Is Procedural Justice?

Procedural justice refers to the fair application of justice procedures and evenhanded interpersonal treatment of defendants and victims. Procedural justice includes the following critical dimensions for victims and defendants:

Voice: the opportunity to be heard.

Respect: preservation of dignity and self-respect in interactions with law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, attorneys, and court staff.

Trust and neutrality: view of the decision-making process as trustworthy.

Understanding: full comprehension of the case process and outcomes as well as what is expected to comply with court orders.

Helpfulness: belief that the justice system players have an interest in victims' and defendants' needs and their personal situation.

The following recommendations support incorporating procedural justice into court systems:

1. **Train stakeholders.** Work with court stakeholders to build capacity around trauma-informed practices.

2. **Increase access.** Collaborate with courts to ensure that victims have a safe place, whether at the precinct, prosecutor's office, or the court. Instruct court advocates to assist victims in navigating the court process.
3. **Ensure understanding.** Task force members who work directly with victims should ensure that they understand the court process and how it will impact them. Work with courts to have written materials available in multiple languages, and provide interpretation services for victims with limited English proficiency. If the case is disposed of, explain (in plain language) how the decision was made and what is expected of the victims going forward. Task forces offer the resources—such as expertise, translators and interpreters, and victim advocates—for courts to implement these changes.
4. **Promote helpfulness.** Justice system stakeholders are uniquely positioned to be the first people to identify trafficking victims. Task force members can assist victims in understanding and responding to the courts and can provide emotional support. Ensure that all agency personnel—such as law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and court staff members—are familiar with available resources and can cross-refer potential victims.



[The Center for Court Innovation](#) offers practical tips to enhance procedural justice within court systems.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts](#).

6.4 Innovative Court Responses

Different models of response for the victim-defendant are appropriate in a specialized court setting. Given the differences in court structure and victim-defendant needs, no universally applicable model can be applied across jurisdictions. Court-based human trafficking interventions rely on a set of common strategies and goals that aim to identify and divert trafficking victims (both sex and labor trafficking), promote interagency collaboration, and educate criminal justice practitioners on the dynamics of human trafficking and the associated trauma.

Court systems can investigate different ways that trafficking is addressed in their jurisdictions and can develop ways to enhance that response in a trauma-informed way. Such an approach may be through specialized courts and dockets or through the application of a trauma-informed approach within a traditional court structure. These changes may have a significant impact on how trafficking victims experience the court system, increasing their willingness to come forward as victims, cooperate with the criminal justice system, and promote their long-term recovery.



Resource: The Center for Court Innovation provides indepth information on different court models that address human trafficking, including community courts, specialized dockets, and human trafficking courts. A brief overview of the [Center for Court Innovation](#).

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.4 Innovative Court Responses](#).

Human Trafficking Courts

Specialized courts take into consideration the needs of victim-defendants and seek to address such needs as a way to intervene in and prevent further trafficking exploitation. It is important to acknowledge that diversion and court-mandated services are not appropriate for all victims and that some stakeholders oppose requiring victims to receive services in order to receive lesser charges or sentences. Task forces should work with courts in their jurisdictions to respond in a trauma-informed and victim-centered way that does not punish a victim-defendant. To date, specialized courts are only addressing sex trafficking, so it is also important to consider how other types of human trafficking cases could be identified in the court system.

Most human trafficking courts take key principles from the problem-solving court model to address trafficking. Task forces can be an essential part of the conversation in developing procedures, addressing special considerations, and providing resources to respond to identified victim-defendants. Specialized human trafficking courts have the following general characteristics:

1. **Case identification and assessment.** Cases are first identified by case type or arrest charge. For sex trafficking, the arrest of an individual for prostitution-related charges is typically a red flag that can create an opportunity for identification. However, many victims of sex trafficking are also arrested for truancy, drug-related charges, shoplifting, and a wide range of other crimes. For labor trafficking, victim identification may be more difficult because there is no single arrest charge that raises red flags, but relevant arrests could involve truancy, assault, panhandling, shoplifting, lack of legal status and drug-related charges. Therefore, it is helpful for judges and court personnel to investigate trafficking issues during all forms of court proceedings and not presume a narrow focus on a single type of arrest charge. During a bail hearing, for instance, a judge can assess the person's connections to the community, living conditions, and financial situation—all factors that may indicate trafficking activity. Once cases are flagged, research-based screening instruments are used to identify victims, reveal their needs, and determine program eligibility. Planning questions for the court can include: *Who will be responsible for identifying cases and conducting a screening? What type of tool will be used? When and where will it be administered?*
2. **Trauma-informed courtroom protocols.** Judges and courtroom staffs adopt practices that recognize the needs of victim-defendants, promote safety and procedural justice in the courtroom, and reduce criminal convictions and jail sentences. A single presiding judge to handle all the cases, working with regularly assigned prosecutors and defense attorneys, creates a consistent response. Planning questions include: *How can the judge take a leadership role? What training is needed for the courtroom staff? How can courtroom communication be improved? How will cases be resolved without convictions or jail sentences?*
3. **Linking victim-defendants to services.** Identified victim-defendants (regardless of current trafficking status) are referred to community-based services, such as counseling, housing, legal services, and drug treatment. Depending on the nature of the case, the court can use its leverage to craft a meaningful mandate that serves to connect victims to these crucial services. According to the [Center for Court Innovation](#), mandates should be proportionate to the worth of the case. For example, an individual arrested for prostitution and facing up to 90 days in jail may instead receive 90 days of counseling services. Planning questions include: *What community-based services are available? What is their language capacity? How will referrals be handled? What is the length of the program?*

4. **Judicial compliance monitoring.** Victim-defendants have regular and frequent court appearances in front of a consistent judge who is trained in the dynamics of human trafficking and trauma and who adheres to the principles of procedural justice. Tracking cases through to disposition and regular updates to the court and prosecutor assist in enforcing the system. Graduated interventions are also available to allow room for failure. Planning questions include: *How frequently will cases be on the calendar for compliance, and who will be involved? What information is required by the court, and how will it be shared by service providers? What happens if victim-defendants are noncompliant or are rearrested?*
5. **Collaboration and capacity building.** Court system participation in task forces helps to build relationships, improve communication, and cultivate buy-in to support the successful implementation of any human trafficking court. Onsite or conveniently located service providers can offer vital support to victims.
6. **Evaluation and performance indicators.** Clear goals and realistic performance measures are established to effectively monitor the success of the human trafficking court, assess goal achievement, and identify areas for improvement. Metrics can include victims identified, services provided, type of trafficking, compliance with court-mandated programs, and short-term and long-term outcomes for victim defendants (e.g., improved education levels, job placement, family reunification if children were removed, and no recidivism). Stakeholders meet regularly to review outcomes and collaborate on course adjustments if needed.



Example: New York State Human Trafficking Intervention Courts

In September 2013, New York launched the Human Trafficking Intervention Courts, which include 11 specialized courts across the state that seek to identify and divert sex trafficking victims arrested for prostitution-related offenses. These courts treat defendants as victims in need of critical services. With the collaborative support of the court's stakeholders and service providers across the state, they work to connect individuals to meaningful court-mandated interventions.

All cases with misdemeanor prostitution or related charges that continue past arraignment are transferred to a Human Trafficking Intervention Court; once transferred to that specialized court, victim-defendants are evaluated by onsite staff. The court connects victim-defendants to tailored counseling and case management services, which range from shelter and health care to immigration assistance, drug treatment, and counseling. These counselors and social workers also screen for indicators of trafficking. A victim-defendant's charges may be dismissed or reduced contingent on compliance with these court-mandated services and programs.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.4 Innovative Court Responses](#).

Problem-Solving Courts

The response to trafficking victims can be incorporated into existing problem-solving courts. Many jurisdictions already have problem-solving courts where victim-defendants may appear, so it is important for task forces to engage with their local problem-solving courts to help inform and enhance victim-defendant identification and coordination of trauma-informed services.

Problem-solving courts invoke the power of the court to help leverage a more informed response across a multidisciplinary team. Judicial officers serve in a neutral role as leaders and collaborators, helping to enhance collaboration among the multidisciplinary team members, including:

- Prosecutors
- Defense counsel
- Law enforcement officers
- Probation and parole officers
- Child Protection Services or Department of Human Services staff members
- Treatment providers
- Case managers.

Community Courts

Community courts focus on reducing crime and incarceration and improving the public perception of the court system. To address human trafficking, community courts may identify alternative treatment as a way of addressing underlying social issues as well as reducing jail time.



Example: The Cleveland Municipal Court has a [specialized human trafficking docket](#) that screens potential victims for referral to recovery support services.

Specialized Dockets

Rather than specific courts, some jurisdictions may have specialized dockets, with a dedicated staff to provide a specialized and trauma-informed response to identified victim-defendants. These dockets may rely on a trauma-informed screening method throughout the entire court to ensure that victim-defendants are identified and referred appropriately.

For additional information and tools, visit the [Resource page for Section 6.4 Innovative Court Responses](#).

Resources

General Resources

Many federal agencies are involved in the effort to combat human trafficking. The Attorney General's [Annual Report to Congress and Assessment of U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons Report \(FY2021\)](#) provides a review of federal efforts to address human trafficking. The [Federal Strategic Action Plan \(FY2013\)](#) promotes the coordination of federal agencies to respond to human trafficking. Below is a diagram depicting the variety of agencies and their respective capacities. [The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking \(2021\)](#) promotes the coordination of federal agencies to respond to human trafficking. [The National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking](#), from the DOJ, summarizes the actions that different components of the DOJ are taking to investigate and prosecute human trafficking and provides further background on other Department anti-trafficking efforts. Below is a diagram depicting the variety of agencies and their respective capacities.

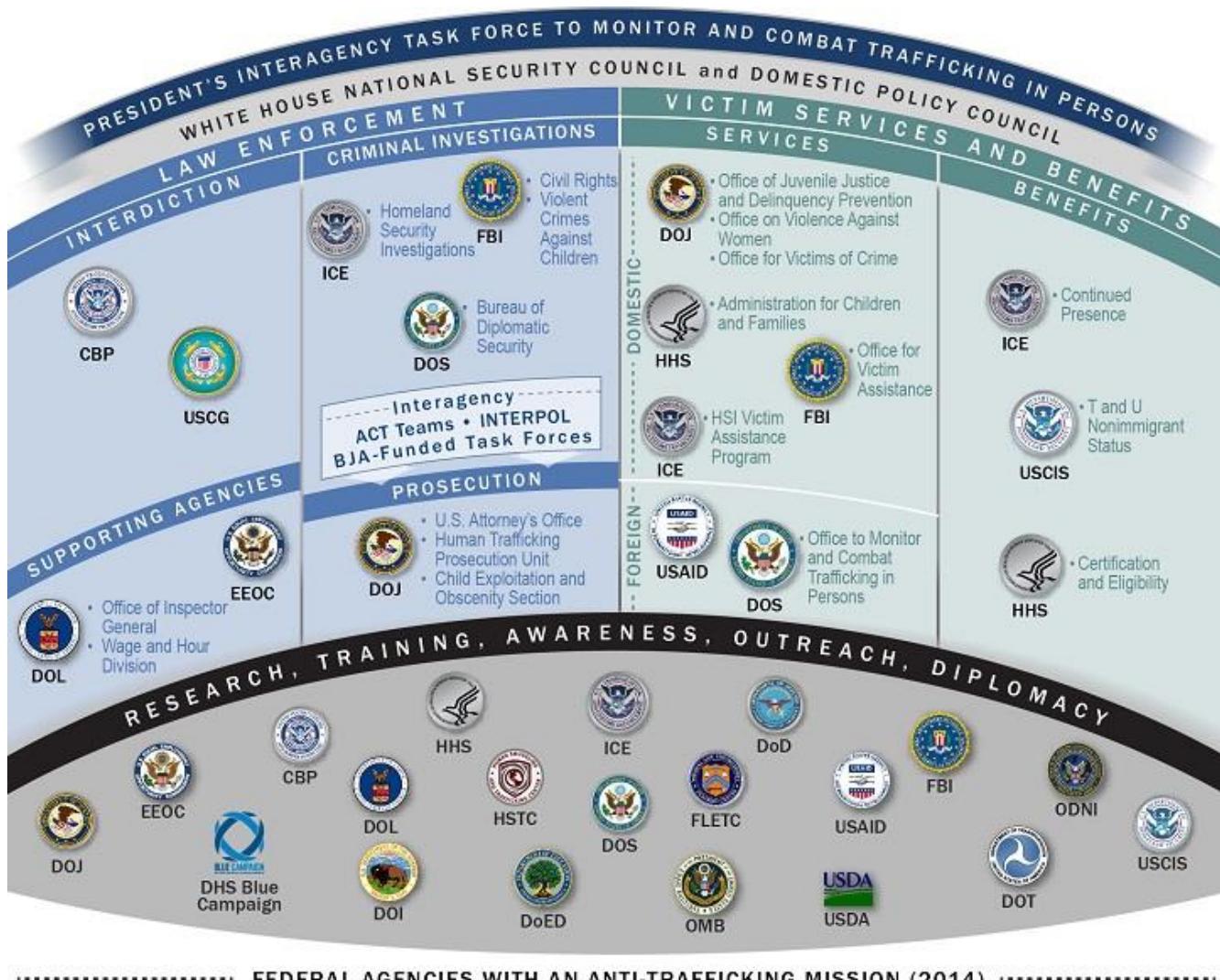


Figure created by the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center as part of the National Human Trafficking Assessment, 2014.

The [United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Annual Report 2022 - United States Department of State](#) provides recommendations from the US Advisory council on Human Trafficking. Access the [President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons - The White House](#) fact sheet.

Non-Federal Resources

In addition to federal resources, there are many state, local, and non-governmental organizations that provide a variety of training and technical assistance resources, victim identification, service and prosecution tools and resources, as well as outreach materials. The sites below were selected because they have various resources and information about human trafficking from different disciplinary perspectives. OVC TTAC neither endorses, has any responsibility for, nor exercises any control over these organizations' views or the accuracy of the information contained in those pages outside of OVC TTAC's website. Though not an exhaustive list, they include:

- [**American Bar Association**](#). The American Bar Association is one of the world's largest voluntary professional organizations, with nearly 400,000 members and more than 3,500 entities. It is committed to doing what only a national association of attorneys can do: serving its members, improving the legal profession, and advancing the rule of law throughout the United States and around the world. Founded in 1878, the ABA is committed to supporting the legal profession with practical resources for legal professionals while improving the administration of justice, accrediting law schools, establishing model ethical codes, and more. Membership is open to lawyers, law students, and others interested in the law and the legal profession.
- [**Child Welfare Information Gateway**](#). The Child Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the general public to electronic publications, websites, databases, and online learning tools and other resources and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more. Child Welfare Information Gateway consolidates and builds upon the services formerly provided by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information and the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse.
- [**Human Trafficking Collective \(HTC\)**](#). The OVC's HTC provides support for OVC-funded victim service grantees. Join the listserv to stay up to date on current trainings and offerings.
- [**International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\)**](#). The IACP works to advance professional police services; promote enhanced administrative, technical, and operational police practices; foster cooperation and the exchange of information and experience among police leaders and police organizations of recognized professional and technical standing throughout the world. IACP is a membership based organization that conducts trainings and conferences as well as maintains an extensive resource and publication library. IACP's publications-aimed at helping law enforcement executives do their jobs better-are available in a variety of formats – e-mail, print, and Websites – and cover a variety of topics, including professional development, leadership, management, and supervision, as well as hot topics such as ethics.
- [**The Freedom Network**](#). The Freedom Network is a national coalition of anti-trafficking service organizations and advocates. Freedom Network membership is open to individuals and

independent NGOs that provide services to or engage in advocacy on behalf of persons trafficked into or within the United States. The Freedom Network also hosts annual conferences, training events and outreach and awareness resources.

- **The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC)**. NCTIC provides on-site training and technical assistance to nearly every state in the country to develop and improve trauma-informed environments across the spectrum of public health programs. Training and technical assistance is provided to residential programs; criminal justice and homeless programs; networks of training, educational, and learning collaboratives; community-based agencies; and less formal gatherings of people seeking trauma support.
- **National Human Trafficking Hotline**. The hotline is a national anti-trafficking hotline and resource center serving victims and survivors of human trafficking and the anti-trafficking community in the United States. This toll-free hotline is available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year in more than 200 languages. The NHTRC is available for reporting tips, connecting with service providers in your area, as well as various anti-trafficking resources and tools. The NHTRC can be accessed by calling 1-888-373-7888.
- **National Sheriffs' Association**. Chartered in 1940, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) is a professional association dedicated to serving the Office of Sheriff and its affiliates through police education, police training, and general law enforcement information resources. NSA represents thousands of sheriffs, deputies and other law enforcement, public safety professionals, and concerned citizens nationwide. NSA serves as the center of a vast network of law enforcement information, filling requests for information daily and enabling criminal justice professionals, including police officers, sheriffs, and deputies, to locate the information and programs they need.
- **Polaris Project**. Polaris Project's mission is to provide human trafficking victims and survivors with access to critical support and services to get help and stay safe, and to equip the anti-trafficking community with the tools to effectively combat all forms of human trafficking. From working with government leaders to protect victims' rights, to building partnerships with the world's leading technology corporations, Polaris Project focuses its efforts on identifying, reporting and eliminating trafficking networks. Polaris Project offers a national information, reporting and referral service that can be accessed via text message by texting BeFree (233733). They also provide innovative anti-trafficking trainings, technical assistance, and capacity building support.
- **Project Roadmap**. Project Roadmap delivers a wide range of TTA services to local, state, Tribal jurisdictions, and service providers receiving funding under the ECM Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking Program, and others as identified by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). All efforts support task forces with capacity building and implementation strategies to develop and sustain a high functioning collaborative task force. Project Roadmap manages and facilitates a peer liaison program, conducts site assessments, assists with strategic planning, and convenes events to explore and identify gaps in emerging issues to recommend training solutions for multidisciplinary task force teams.
- **Shared Hope**. International Shared Hope International strives to prevent the conditions that foster sex trafficking, restore victims of sex slavery, and bring justice to vulnerable women and

children. Shared Hope offers an extensive library of resources, including films, fact sheets, training materials, and other tools focused on child sex trafficking.

- **Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute**. The mission of the Trauma Center is to help individuals, families and communities that have been impacted by trauma and adversity to re-establish a sense of safety and predictability in the world, and to provide them with state-of-the-art therapeutic care as they reclaim, rebuild, and renew their lives. The Trauma Center works on development, adaptation, careful evaluation, and advancement of innovative and proven approaches to trauma recovery and personal growth for children and adults.

Chapters, Sections, and Topic-specific Resources

Chapter 2 Resources: Purpose & Focus

Section 2.1 Forming A Task Force

Task Force Planning

- [City of Houston Human Trafficking Strategic Plan](#) plan provides an example of how Houston aims to effectively combat and end human trafficking within the city.
- [Strategic Planning Toolkit](#). Developed by the Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC), this guide provides direction for victim service organizations at the state and local level looking to assess future organizational direction.
- [Wisconsin Human Trafficking Protocol and Resource Manual \(2012\)](#). This is a manual assisting Wisconsin-based service providers in addressing human trafficking. It includes useful information about working with victims, the ways in which victims may come into contact with different local and state systems, and procedural ideas for response.

Section 2.3 Assessing the Problem

Evaluation & Assessment Tools

- [Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects \('Common Rule | HHS.gov\)](#). This website provides information about the federal regulations that protect the privacy and confidentiality of persons involved in research (i.e., human subjects) and explains how they pertain to your needs assessment or program evaluation.
- [The National Fusion Center Association](#) These centers analyze information and identify trends to share timely intelligence with federal, state, and local law enforcement, including the Department of Homeland Security, which then further shares this information with other members of the intelligence community.
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#). A national toll free hotline, available to answer calls and texts from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Call 1-888-373-7888. The Hotline is available for reporting tips, connecting with local service providers, as well as various anti-trafficking resources and tools.

- [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) (NCMEC). Established in 1984, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is the leading nonprofit organization in the United States working with law enforcement, families, and the professionals who serve them on issues related to missing and sexually exploited children. As part of its Congressional authorization, NCMEC created a unique public and private partnership to build a coordinated, national response to the problem of missing and sexually exploited children, establish a missing children hotline, and serve as the national clearinghouse for information related to these issues.
- [High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program](#). The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, created by Congress with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug trafficking regions of the United States.

Needs Assessment Guides

- [Creating a Human Trafficking Strategic Plan to Protect and Heal Native Children and Youth](#) This fillable worksheet, from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Courts, walks through several questions that assess the needs and abilities of a community to address child victims of human trafficking in the Native American community.
- [Needs Assessment - Center for Victim Research](#) Developed by the Center for Victim Research, this website provides information on conducting community needs assessments.

Chapter 3 Resources: Operating a Task Force

- [Project Roadmap](#)
- [Development & Operations Roadmap for Multidisciplinary Anti-Human Trafficking Task Forces](#)

Section 3.1 Task Force Membership & Management

Task Force Members

- [U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Annual Report 2016](#) This report, created by a survivor-led U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, presents recommendations for addressing human trafficking and areas where survivors can be included in the response.
- [Combating Human Trafficking \(2011\)](#). This webinar provides an overview of how the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Wage and Hour Division combats human trafficking through investigations and awareness. The webinar also covers creative partnerships with law enforcement, prosecutors, and consulates to address the needs of human trafficking victims.

Sample Task Force Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- [Cyber Task Force MOU between Arlington Police Department and FBI](#)
- [MOU between ATF and Minot Police Department](#)

Sample Law Enforcement Protocols

- [NENA Protocol for Handling 911 Calls Regarding Trafficking \(2009\)](#) This resource, developed by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), details a model protocol on 911 call taker response to human trafficking.
- [Human Trafficking | ICE](#) This is an ICE protocol on its response to potential cases of human trafficking.
- [The Department of Labor's approach to human trafficking | U.S. Department of Labor](#) This is a protocol of the U.S. DOL Wage and Hour Division on its role in the response to potential cases of human trafficking.

Sample Task Force Models and Protocols

- [Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force | Office of the Attorney General](#) This is a task force protocol created by the Texas Human Trafficking Task Force.

Sample Service Provision Protocols

- [Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Service Standards](#) These standards were developed by anti-human trafficking advocates in Ohio as a tool to assist communities in developing an effective network of services for victims of human trafficking. The purpose of the Standards is to encourage continuous quality improvement in trafficking-specific services, foster the sharing of effective practices, and ensuring that trafficking survivors have access to effective services that help them heal from trauma and rebuild their lives.

Protocol Development

- [Elder Justice Initiative \(EJI\) | 1: Introduction to Multidisciplinary Teams | United States Department of Justice](#) The development and use of protocols to introduce predictability and accountability into the case review process, including protocols for conflict resolution.
- [Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams](#) The document that follows is intended to serve as a model for communities to use in drafting a protocol and building their own multidisciplinary team.

Evaluation Tools

- [Guide To Hiring a Local Evaluator \(2010\)](#) Part of OVC's Technical Assistance Guide Series, this Guide contains useful tips on what to consider in the decisionmaking and selection processes of hiring a local evaluator. This Guide can help determine whether you have the resources and expertise within your initiative to plan and implement a needs assessment and program evaluation, or if it is best to hire a local evaluator to help you conduct these activities.
- [Guide to Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation \(2010\)](#) Part of OVC's Technical Assistance Guide Series, this Guide provides information on how to define goals and objectives, identify performance measures and program outcomes, identify evaluation questions, create a program planning or logic model, select an evaluation design, decide on data collection methods, analyze and present data, and use evaluation data.

- [The Evidence Project \(2013\)](#) This Centers for Disease Control and Prevention project proposes a comprehensive framework for understanding evidence and evidence-based decisionmaking that includes three types of evidence (best available research evidence, contextual evidence, and experiential evidence).

Section 3.2 Information Sharing

Confidentiality

- [Caseworker Privilege Fact Sheet: The Benefits and Limitations to Human Trafficking Victims-Caseworker Privilege](#) Developed by the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST), this resource details what information is protected by caseworker privilege and what is not, while answering several frequently asked questions and providing best practices.

Mandated Reporting

- [Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect \(2014\)](#) This resource provides information about mandatory child abuse reporting and specific laws in your state.
- [Reporting Requirements: Provisions and Citations in Adult Protective Services Laws, By State](#) This chart from the American Bar Association outlines information about mandatory reporting of abuse of older adults.
- [Laws in Your State: Mandatory Reporting Elders and Disabled](#) This chart summarizes mandatory reporters by state for elders and those with a disability.

Task Force Developed Tools

- [Building the Global Safety Net for Victims of Human Trafficking: A Toolkit for Hotlines \(2015\)](#) Polaris developed an in-depth toolkit for organizations or agencies that want to start or enhance their current hotlines. The toolkit provides examples and activities along with learning modules that address survivor involvement, responding to calls, staffing, and data evaluation. The guide also details establishing partnerships with law enforcement and other responders.

Section 3.3 Other Task Force Activities

Task Force Logos and Mission

- [San Jose Police Human Trafficking Task Force Logo](#) The San Jose Police Human Trafficking Task Force provided this example of a task force logo.

Outreach Tools

- [Faces of Human Trafficking Video Series](#) The Series is intended for use in outreach and education efforts of service providers, law enforcement, prosecutors, and others in the community. The series includes information about sex and labor trafficking, multidisciplinary approaches to serving victims of human trafficking, effective victim services, victims' legal needs, and voices of survivors.
- [Human Trafficking in America's Schools \(Jan. 2015\)](#) is a guidebook released by the U.S. Department of Education and includes trafficking indicators and a sample school protocol.

- [DHS Blue Campaign Resource Library](#) The Blue Campaign provides information on training and outreach, how traffickers operate, and victim assistance to help keep the public informed. The resource catalog includes general awareness trainings, indicator cards, posters in various languages, fact sheets, and more.
- [Human Trafficking Awareness Video for First Responders \(2012\)](#) The Office of Health Affairs and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's U.S. Fire Administration collaborated on a public awareness video to help first responders to disasters identify possible victims of human trafficking.
- [Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States \(2013\)](#). This report shows how schools, police, victim services, businesses, the legal system, and health care systems can play a role in preventing, identifying, and responding to these crimes. For more information and other resources from the report, including an animated video and myths and facts sheet, visit their resource [page](#).
- [Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Screening Tool](#) This document provides each state agency's identified training officer(s) with a simple, straightforward, and easy-to-adapt guide to train staff on how to administer the standardized screening tool for identifying trafficking victims. The purpose of the tool is to identify potential victims of human trafficking for referral to appropriate victim services. While the screening questions, suggestions, and indicators are not exhaustive or cumulative in nature, a positive response to the questions may result in a referral to an external organization for a more comprehensive assessment.

State Advocacy

- [Identifying Effective Counter-Trafficking Programs and Practices in the U.S.: Legislative, Legal, and Public Opinion Strategies that Work \(2016\)](#) This study examines the impact of various relevant state laws, the effectiveness of prosecutorial strategies for obtaining convictions of traffickers under these laws, and ways to increase public awareness and expectations regarding the countering of human trafficking.

Section 3.4 Addressing Common Operational Challenges

Community Building Skills and Conflict Resolution

- [Community Tool Box](#) This is a practical, step-by-step tool in community-building skills. There are action models, tools, templates to guide, assess, plan, evaluate, and sustain your community efforts. The Community Tool Box is a service of the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas.

Collaborating Effectively

- [The Collaboration Toolkit for Community Organizations: Effective Strategies to Partner With Law Enforcement \(2010\)](#) This toolkit is designed to help community organizations strengthen partnerships between the community and law enforcement agencies; further the community's role as a partner in crime-reduction efforts; identify and address social issues

that diminish the quality of life and threaten public safety in communities; and link those in need to services and resources in the community.

- [Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A call for Multi-System Collaboration in California](#) This report by the California Child Welfare Council discusses the need to create a CSEC Action Committee to plan, develop, and oversee action steps toward improving California's response to the growing number of children who are being sexually exploited. The report discusses identification, intervention, prevention, legislation, and recommendations.
- [Bridging the Systems: Child Welfare, Trafficking, and Law Enforcement Working Together for Trafficked Children \(2012\)](#) This is a list of policy recommendations based on a roundtable discussion meeting on the issue.
- [WARN Approach to Collaborating With Law Enforcement](#) The Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network provides a sample program review and description of law enforcement collaboration.
- [Department of Justice Language Access Plan \(2012\)](#) This document outlines the policy based on the principle of DOJ's responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure that communications between the Department and the limited English proficient person are not impaired because of the individual's limited English proficiency.
- [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs \(2011\)](#) The goal of all language access planning and implementation is to ensure that an agency communicates effectively with limited English proficient (LEP) individuals. This guide provides useful models for providing meaningful access to LEP individuals.

Media

- [A News Media Guide for Victim Service Providers \(2009\)](#) This paper provides guidance on facilitating media interactions with crime victims and building positive agency relationships with the news media.
- [Media Guide for Crime Victims & Survivors](#) Developed by the Crime Victim Services (Ohio) Office in Allen County, this document provides guidance on frequently asked questions by the media and strategies for survivors and victims engaging with media.

Chapter 4 Resources: Supporting Victims

- [Your Money, Your Goals: A financial empowerment toolkit for workers \(April 2015\)](#) This toolkit enables service providers to assist clients with budget assessment and the development of budget plans and goals.
- The [SANE Program Development and Operation Guide](#) provides a blueprint for nurses and communities that would like to start a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program.

- [Pennsylvania Sexual Violence Benchbook \(2015\)](#) Benchbook provides best practices and critical information regarding procedural requirements for trial judges to address sexual offense cases.
- [HHS Toolkits for Social Service Providers](#) Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), these toolkits provide background information and guidance for social service providers to identify and communicate with victims of human trafficking.
- [Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Screening Tool](#) (June 2013) This document provides each state agency's identified training officer(s) with a simple, straightforward, and easy-to-adapt guide to train staff on how to administer the standardized screening tool for identifying trafficking victims. The purpose of the tool is to identify potential victims of human trafficking for referral to appropriate victim services. While the screening questions, suggestions, and indicators are not exhaustive or cumulative in nature, a positive response to the questions may result in a referral to an external organization for a more comprehensive assessment.
- [Providing Meaningful Access for Limited English Proficient Individuals](#) This video series from the Department of Justice, designed for federal personnel, notes appropriate responses to limited-English proficient (LEP) individuals. The training provides case scenarios that guide the viewer to determine the most appropriate ways to interview and respond to LEP individuals.

Section 4.1 Using a Trauma-Informed Approach

- [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#): This paper provides guidance on developing a trauma-informed approach within justice systems.
- [Systemic Self-Regulation: A Framework for Trauma-Informed Services in Residential Juvenile Justice Programs \(2013\)](#) Most youth detained in juvenile justice facilities have extensive histories of exposure to psychological trauma. This resource provides an overview of the barriers to successful provision of mental health services for youths in juvenile justice facilities, including those involving youth, parents, and juvenile justice residential facility staff and administrators.
- [Utilizing Trauma-Informed Approaches to Human Trafficking Related Work \(2014\)](#) Project REACH developed this useful chart with tips on how to understand victim behavior, case scenarios, and how to utilize trauma-informed approaches.
- [Trauma-Informed Domestic Violence Services Special Collection \(April 2013\)](#) Building on more than 20 years of work, the [National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health \(NCDVTMH\)](#) put into practice a framework that integrates a trauma-informed approach with a DV victim advocacy lens. This three-part Special Collection, developed by NCDVTMH in collaboration with the [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#) (NRCDV), brings together the resources on trauma and trauma-informed work that are most relevant to domestic violence programs and advocates, along with commentary from NCDVTMH to assist in putting this information into practice.
- [Is your work Trauma-Informed? A Self-Assessment Tool \(Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, Klinik Community Health Center, No Date\)](#) This tool is for providers and advocates to evaluate

their own practices and understanding of how trauma affects individuals seeking services. The assessment can be completed in one sitting and provides an action plan to assist individuals and organizations in developing a customized training and technical assistance plan. The assessment should be completed by all staff within the agency, in order to assist agencies in their efforts to incorporate trauma-informed work in every part of their organization's services and practices.

- [Considerations for Victim-Centered Presentations \(2019\)](#) The purpose of this document is to provide tips and guidance to ensure that the language, terms, and images used in presentations are victim centered and survivor- and trauma-informed.

Section 4.2 Victim Service Provider Intake and Needs Assessment

- [Illinois Department of Children & Family Services Policy Guide](#) The Child Protective Services' intake and investigation requirements involving allegation of human trafficking of children.
- [Caseworker Privilege Fact Sheet: The Benefits and Limitations to Human Trafficking Victim-Caseworker Privilege \(2019\)](#) Developed by the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST), this resource details what information is protected by caseworker privilege in California and what is not, while answering several frequently asked questions and providing best practices.
- [Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims \(2003\)](#) This document reports the findings from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) National Needs Assessment of Service Providers and Trafficking Victims. The needs assessment was designed to answer the questions of what services exist for trafficking victims; how responsive these services are to victims; what barriers there are to providing services; and what assistance/support service providers need to serve trafficking victims.

Section 4.3 The Vital Role of Case Management & Service Planning

- **Safety Planning Standards for Trafficked and Enslaved Persons: A Guide for Service Providers and Attorneys**. This manual was published and funded by a grant from OVC. Portions of this manual were adapted from materials in Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence and Anti-Stalking Programs and the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence. The content in this guide should not be posted publicly to the Web. In order to obtain this resource, contact Safe Horizon at 212-577-7700 or e-mail at info@safehorizon.org.
- [Services to Victims of Human Trafficking: A Resource Guide for Social Service Providers \(2012\)](#) This guide, published by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division, provides information about the resources available for both pre-certified and certified victims, including children with letters of eligibility. It describes the many community- and state-funded resources available for victims, including options for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, legal assistance, and job training. In addition, the guide provides information on how adults and children can obtain Certification and Eligibility Letters.
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline Safety Planning Information](#)

Section 4.4 Comprehensive Victim Services

Translation and Language Assistance

- [Working With Interpreters Outside of the Courtroom: A Guide for Legal Services Providers \(2016\)](#) Created by Ayuda, an organization that works directly with victims, this resource provides tips and direction for legal service advocates working with interpreters.
- [Providing Language Access in Courts: Working Together to Ensure Justice \(2012\)](#) This one pager includes successful DOJ and court outcomes, National Center for Access to Justice Index, ABA standards for language access in courts, and more.

Safe Housing Options

Reports and Studies

[National Colloquium 2012 Report \(2013\)](#) This is an inventory and evaluation of the current shelter and services response to domestic minor sex trafficking, written by Shared Hope International.

[Finding a Path to Recovery: Residential Facilities for Minor Victims of Sex Trafficking \(2007\)](#)

Funded in fall 2006 by the U.S. HHS, this 12-month exploratory project and subsequent report provide information on how HHS programs are addressing the needs of victims of human trafficking, including domestic victims, with a priority focus on domestic youth.

Tool for Providers

[Housing Choice Voucher Program: Family Unification Program \(January 2017\)](#) The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created a new program for youth aging out of foster care; this is a priority for HUD and is in its strategic plan through 2018. This program allows youth who are leaving foster care and could become homeless to receive housing vouchers and wraparound services for 18 months. There are demonstration sites now looking at expanding support for up to 5 years.

[Online DV Shelter Finder: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) An online directory to easily find a nearby DV shelter.

[Housing Concepts for Anti-Trafficking Programs: Coordinated Entry \(2021\)](#)

[Collaboration Toolkit for Anti-Trafficking & Housing Programs \(2022\)](#)

[Center for Countering Human Trafficking \(CCHT\) Continued Presence Resource Guide](#)

[Guide for Anti-Trafficking Programs Working with Domestic Violence Shelters](#)

Mental Health Needs

Reports and Studies

[Report of the Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls \(2014\)](#) From the American Psychological Institute, this report aims to raise psychologists' awareness of trafficking and make recommendations for practice, research and training.

[Treating the Hidden Wounds: Trauma Treatment & Mental Health Recovery for Victims of Human Trafficking \(2008\)](#) This is the third in a series of Issue Briefs produced under a contract with the HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) to conduct a study of HHS programs serving human trafficking victims. The purpose of this exploratory project is to develop information on how HHS programs are currently addressing the needs of victims of human trafficking, including domestic victims, with a priority focus on domestic youth.

Tools for Providers

The [SANE Program Development and Operation Guide](#) provides a blueprint for nurses and communities that would like to start a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program.

[Asking About and Responding to Survivors' Experiences of Abuse Related to Mental Health \(2012\)](#) The National Center on Trauma, Domestic Violence, and Mental Health produced this list of resources to educate domestic violence advocates on best practices in assisting victims with mental health concerns and to promote understanding to better serve this community.

[Polyvictimization Assessment Tool Resource Guidebook](#)

Medical Health Needs

Reports and Studies

[Identification of Human Trafficking Victims in Health Care Settings \(2011\)](#) This project aims to characterize trafficking victims' encounters in U.S. health care settings since it has been found that some victims are known to have received medical care while under traffickers' control.

[American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children's Practice Guidelines: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: The Medical Provider's Role in Identification, Assessment, and Treatment \(2023\)](#) These guidelines provide medical professionals with an overview regarding the current understanding of the commercial sexual exploitation of children. They focus on the epidemiology of CSEC, the impact of exploitation on victim physical and mental health, and the role of the medical provider in identifying victims, assessing their needs, and securing appropriate services.

Tools for Providers

[Modern-Day Slavery in America: Recognizing & Responding to Human Trafficking in a Health Care Context](#) This 37-minute PowerPoint presentation on human trafficking in the health care context was developed by Polaris and was made possible in part through a grant from HHS/ORR. It is also listed on the landing page of Polaris' Resources. The topics include understanding trafficking and potential health impacts for victims.

[Helping Foster and Adoptive Families Cope With Trauma: A Guide for Pediatricians](#) The purpose of this guide is to support foster and adoptive families by strengthening the abilities of pediatricians to identify traumatized children, educate families about toxic stress and the possible biological, behavioral, and social manifestations of early childhood trauma, and empower families to respond to their child's behavior in a manner that acknowledges past trauma but promotes the learning of new, more adaptive reactions to stress.

[Caring for Trafficked Persons: Guidance for Health Providers \(2009\)](#) Published by the International Organization for Migration, this document aims to provide practical, nonclinical guidance to health care providers working with victims of human trafficking. This is a tool for health care providers unfamiliar with the topic who wish to further research how they can best serve victims of human trafficking.

[HHS Toolkits for Health Care Providers](#) Published by the U.S. HHS, ACF, these toolkits provide background information and guidance for health care practitioners in identifying and communicating with victims of human trafficking.

[DHS Victim Identification Pamphlet for Law Enforcement, First Responders, and Health Professionals](#) (No Date) This pamphlet provides information for law enforcement, first responders, and health care professionals on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking, how to report suspected trafficking, and how they can collaborate with experts in their area. Available in English for free download on the Department of Homeland Security website.

[Health Professional, Education, Advocacy & Linkage](#) HEAL Trafficking brings together physicians, advanced practice clinicians, nurses, dentists, psychologists, counselors, public health workers, health educators, researchers, clinical social workers, administrators, and other health professionals who work with and advocate for survivors of human trafficking. The HEAL Trafficking website serves as a centralized place to share resources and publications. They also manage the Human Trafficking and Health Care Listserv.

[National Immigration Law Center - Health Care for Immigrants](#) NILC provides various resources for accessing health coverage for immigrants. It includes a Medical Assistance Program table, which describes state policies for providing health coverage to certain immigrants, under federal options to cover lawfully residing children and pregnant women, regardless of their date of entry into the United States, or to provide prenatal care to women regardless of status, using Children's Health Insurance Program funds. It also describes immigrant coverage under programs using exclusively state funds.

Legal Needs

Guides and Tools for Attorneys

[Ensuring Full Restitution for Trafficking Victims: An Overview of Mandatory Restitution Awards Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act \(2013\)](#) This article, from the National Crime Victim Law Institute, reviews laws related to obtaining restitution, as well as methods to calculate the amount to request.

[No Wrong Door: A Comprehensive Approach to Safe Harbor for Minnesota's Sexually Exploited Youth](#) This document provides an overview to Minnesota's Safe Harbor law and the policies that affect sexually exploited youth in the state.

[Assisting Human Trafficking Victims With Return of Property and Restitution \(2014\)](#) This article covers issues that arise in the retrieval of a victim's property and provides strategies for the use of restitution as a means of relief.

[Identification and Legal Advocacy for Trafficking Survivors, 3rd Edition*](#), [New York Anti-Trafficking Network \(2009\)](#) Created by the New York Anti-Trafficking Network, this manual provides guidance to attorneys on issues that arise in the context of representing trafficking survivors. The manual is designed for practitioners who are familiar with basic legal terms and concepts, to offer some insight into the process.

[Legal Services Assessment for Trafficked Children - Cook County, Illinois Case Study \(2013\)](#) This project focuses on assessing legal needs for child trafficking victims in Cook County, as well as challenges and best practices in other regions of the United States. It includes a preliminary assessment of legal services for child trafficking victims offered by various organizations around the country.

[Know your Rights Videos](#) DOL's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) developed the "Know Your Rights" video series in English and Spanish to provide workers with useful basic information in different scenarios. The nine videos provide information on the federal minimum wage, when overtime pay is due, when an employer has to pay an employee, whether off-the-clock work is compensable or not, who is an employee and who is an independent contractor, rights of young workers, whether or not seasonal workers are subject to wage and hour laws, and how and what is needed to file a complaint with WHD.

[Civil Litigation on Behalf of Human Trafficking Victims \(2008\)](#) Created by the Southern Poverty Law Center, this resource is an introduction to basic litigation tools for attorneys representing trafficked clients.

[Prosecution at any Cost? The Impact of Material Witness Warrants in Federal Human Trafficking Cases \(April 2020\)](#)

[Human Trafficking Legal Center Publication Resource Guide](#)

Victims' Rights

[Crime Victims have the Right to Retained Counsel's Presence During Investigative Interviews \(2014\)](#) This document, from the National Crime Victim Law Institute, details the right of victims to retained counsel present during investigative interviews. Due process requires informing victims of this right and then accommodating counsel's presence.

[VictimLaw](#) VictimLaw is a user-friendly searchable database of victims' rights legal provisions including federal, state, and territorial statutes, Tribal laws, state constitutional amendments, court rules, administrative code provisions, and summaries of related court decisions and attorney general opinions, developed by OVC TTAC.

[National Crime Victim Law Institute \(NCVLI\) Victim Law Library](#) The NCVLI victim Law library contains crime victim law publications and recorded trainings. Materials are organized by topic and may be accessed by selecting the relevant right, victim type, or procedural posture. All information is educational and intended for informational purposes only; it does not constitute legal advice, nor does it substitute for legal advice.

NCVLI Protecting Victims' Privacy: Moving to Quash Pretrial Subpoenas Duces Tecum for Non-Privileged Information in Criminal Cases

Crime Victims' Rights Act of 2004 (18 U.S.C. § 3771) The CVRA of 2004 was enacted to ensure that crime victims are notified of their rights (notice of court proceedings, right to be present and to be heard at public proceedings, right to restitution, etc.).

Crime Control Act of 1990, Child Victims' Rights (18 U.S.C. 403 §3509) This act authorizes alternatives to live in-court testimony of child victims, competency examinations, protection of privacy, victim impact statements, use of multidisciplinary child abuse teams, and more.

Immigration Options for Victims of Crime U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security created this brochure to inform law enforcement agents, social service providers, and others about the Violence Against Women Act, U nonimmigrant status, and T nonimmigrant status.

Mandatory Restitution to Victims of Certain Crimes (18 U.S.C. § 3663A (a)(2)) This right ensures that victims may be reimbursed for treatment for physical injury or pecuniary loss incurred in the course of the criminal activity.

Victims' Rights Clarification Act of 1997 (18 U.S.C. § 3510) This amendment to Title 18, U.S.C. gives further assurance to the right of victims of crime to attend the trials of those accused of the crime.

Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. § 10601-10603) This 1984 legislation established a crime victims fund from fines collected from convicted offenders. The funds are distributed through state victim assistance and compensation programs.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Provides Protections for Immigrant Women and Victims of Crime (2019)

Immigration Relief

National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project Resource Library This resource contains hundreds of resources on the legal rights of immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and other crimes.

NLRB Memo: Updated Procedures in Addressing Immigration Status Issues that Arise During Unfair Labor Practice Proceedings (2011) This memo provides updated procedures that will apply when immigration status issues are raised during the National Labor Relations Board investigations and proceedings.

National Immigration Law Center The NILC website provides information about eligibility and other rules governing immigrants' access to federal and state public benefits programs.

T & U Nonimmigrant Visa

A New Understanding of Substantial Abuse: Evaluating Harm in U Visa Petitions for Immigrant Victims of Workplace Crime (2015) This article, from the University of California Davis, provides a

comprehensive examination of abuse and mental health of labor trafficking victims in the context of qualifying for U visas.

[Evidence Checklist: For Immigration Victims Applying for the Crime Victim Visa \(U Visa\)](#) This checklist is a sample tool to assist immigration practitioners with providing evidence and documentation required for a U visa application.

[US Citizenship & Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) - T & U Nonimmigrant Visa Information and Forms USCIS helps protect victims of human trafficking and other crimes by providing immigration relief. This site explains the two types of immigration relief provided to victims of human trafficking and other crimes.

[U.S. DOL U and T Visa Process and Protocols Q&A](#) Questions and answers provided by the U.S. DOL about U and T visa processes and protocols.

[EEOC Procedures: Requesting EEOC Certification for Immigration Classification \(U Visa\) Petitions in EEOC Cases \(2013\)](#) This guide provides an overview of procedures that apply to requests for EEOC to certify petitions for U Nonimmigrant Status pursuant to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000.

[U Visas for Victims of Crime in the Workplace: A Practical Manual \(2014\)](#) This National Employment Law Project practice manual describes the U visa and its application to workplace crimes.

[U and T Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide](#)

Section 4.5 Victim Populations

Minors and Adolescent Victims

Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Minors

[Justice for Juveniles: Exploring Non-Criminal Response Mechanisms for Child Sex Trafficking \(2015\)](#) Report details potential factors that affect the community's response to juvenile sex trafficking victims. The main issues noted were the lack of resources and need for coordination. The report also provides recommendations in forming state responses, including coordination with the child welfare system as a key partner.

[Homelessness, Survival Sex, and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York \(2013\)](#) This report presents one of the largest human trafficking studies of homeless youth in New York history. The study looks at the incidence of trafficking and survival sex through interviews with the youth at Covenant House. Contrary to other studies, the incidents of introduction into commercial sex fell at around 18 years old.

[Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Sex Trafficking \(August 2014\)](#) OJJDP's brief overview and introduction to the topic.

[Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States \(2013\)](#) This resource examines commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents of the United States under age 18. The report recommends increased awareness and understanding, strengthening of the law's response, strengthening of

research to advance understanding and to support the development of prevention and intervention strategies, support for multi-sector and interagency collaboration, and creation of a digital information-sharing platform.

[Human Trafficking Protocol for Minor Victims of Trafficking](#) (No Date) Developed by the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force.

[Youth Involvement in the Sex Trade \(2016\)](#) This study discusses ethnographic findings concerning the lives of youth in the sex trade in several selected research sites and presents findings relevant to outreach to and services for potentially trafficked youth.

[Toolkit: Trauma-Informed Case Management with Foreign National Children and Youth Survivors of Trafficking](#)

Foreign National Child Victims

[Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking Fact Sheet \(2016\)](#) This fact sheet provides a summary of services available to minor foreign national victims of trafficking.

[Guide for State Courts in Cases Involving Unaccompanied Immigrant Children \(2015\)](#) This guide, a collaboration from the Center for Public Policy Studies and the National Center for State Courts, aims to increase understanding of federal immigration laws and unaccompanied immigrant children in state courts. The guide focuses on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status as one of the options for unaccompanied minors.

[Requesting Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking \(July 2021\)](#) This webpage by the U.S. HHS provides the steps on how to request assistance with a child victim of human trafficking.

[Flores Settlement Agreement of 1997](#) After two organizations filed class action suits against the Immigration and Naturalization Services for the detention, treatment, and release of unaccompanied immigrant children, the Flores Settlement imposed several obligations on the immigration authorities.

General Resources

[Human Trafficking and Child Welfare: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies \(2017\)](#) This guide from the Child Welfare Information Gateway identifies how child welfare agencies can support child victims of human trafficking and vulnerable youth.

[Human Trafficking and Child Welfare: A Guide for Caseworkers \(2017\)](#) The guide provides tools and resources to assist caseworkers in identifying and supporting potential victims of human trafficking.

[Outcome Measurement System](#) The National Children's Alliance Outcome Measurement System conducts surveys of nonoffending parents/caregivers in child abuse cases and multidisciplinary team members to determine the strengths of Child Advocacy Center (CAC) services, as well as gaps. CACs may have a key role in identifying and assisting victims of trafficking.

[Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States \(September 2013\)](#) This guide discusses the nature of child trafficking, understanding

the needs of victims, coordinating services, meeting needs and responding, and additional assistance available to child victims.

[Trying for a New Life: Trafficking Victims in Maternity Group Homes \(September 2020\)](#) Young women who were trafficked are a regular presence at maternity group homes. Their trauma and its effects can pose obstacles to a program's effectiveness, and also make these young women feel unworthy of motherhood. But a child can also be very motivating for trafficking victims, provided that treatment helps them overcome their emotional trauma.

Male Victims of Trafficking

[Overlooked for Too Long: Boys and Human Trafficking \(2023\)](#) Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

[Safe Harbour: NY Fast Facts: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys](#)

[The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Male Minors in the United States: A Snapshot with Strategic Implications for Prevention Education \(2014\)](#) Published by Love146

[Sexual exploitation of young men: Background characteristics and needs from a life-course perspective - ScienceDirect \(2024\)](#)

Victims with Disabilities

[Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities](#) This 3-day training offered by OVC TTAC is designed for victim service providers, advocates for people with disabilities, self-advocates, and allied professionals. Using case studies and small group discussions, participants examine the prevalence of crime against people with disabilities, perceptions of the criminal justice system, tenets of the disabilities movement, and the impact of disabilities on daily life. Through collaborative activities you will identify ways the various agencies, organizations, and systems can work together to better serve crime victims with disabilities.

[Crime Victims with Developmental Disabilities \(2001\)](#) Criminal Justice and Behavior. Vol. 28 No. 6 655-694. The author offers several conceptual models to explain differential victimization risk, including routine activities theory, dependency-stress model, stereotyping, and victim-learned compliance. This article summarizes the research evidence on crimes against children and adults with developmental disabilities. It is divided into four sections. The first section describes the nature and extent of crimes against individuals with developmental disabilities. The second reviews the literature on risk factors associated with victimization. The third discusses the manner in which justice agencies respond to these crimes. The final section enumerates what research and policy initiatives might address the problem.

["Laws in Your State"](#) This chart summarizes mandatory reporters by state for elders and those with a disability.

[Human Trafficking of Youth with Disabilities \(2020\)](#)

Native American Communities

[American Indian Adolescent Girls: Vulnerability to Sex Trafficking, Intervention Strategies](#) This article discusses factors that increase American Indian youth's vulnerability to sex trafficking, as well as providing practices to mitigate these factors.

[A Healing Journey for Alaska Natives \(October 2016\)](#) This video series discusses how domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking impact the Alaska Native community, and considers community and geographic factors. The series also highlights programs that assist survivors within these communities.

[Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota \(2009\)](#) This comprehensive report on sexual exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls also includes issues of trafficking, school, drug abuse and suicide.

[Human Trafficking & Native Peoples in Oregon: A Human Rights Report \(2014\)](#) This report includes an overview of jurisdictional issues as well as recommendations.

[Essay: Sex Trafficking of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota \(2008\)](#) This article from the University of St. Thomas Law Journal presents evidence from the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center concerning sexual violence against Indian women and sex trafficking in Minnesota. A response from the state is included.

[Identifying Domestic and International Sex-Trafficking Victims During Human Service Provision \(2012\)](#) This article from the University of St. Thomas Law Journal presents evidence from the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center concerning sexual violence against Indian women and sex trafficking in Minnesota. A response from the state is included.

Chapter 5 Resources: Building Strong Cases

Section 5.1 Victim-Centered Investigations

- [U Visa Basics for Law Enforcement](#) This Immigrant Legal Resource Center document, aimed at a law enforcement audience, outlines what a U visa is, what it provides, and general guidelines for the application.
- Protocol for Agents working with Victim Specialists during Human Trafficking Investigations [The Civil Rights Unit & Office for Victim Assistance](#) (FBI) developed a unique protocol for agents working with victim specialists during trafficking investigations. The protocol is not for the public, and cannot be provided to anyone other than law enforcement. Please contact the Civil Rights Unit & Office for Victim Assistance for additional information.
- [IACPlearn: Prosecuting Human Trafficking Cases: Going Forward Without a Victim](#)
- [National Action Plan to Combat Human \(whitehouse.gov\)](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking: A State of the Field in 2019 - Office of Justice Programs](#)
- [Alternative Forms of Justice for Human Trafficking Survivors](#)
- [DHS Takes Victim-Centered Approach on First Anniversary of Center for Countering Human Trafficking](#)

Section 5.2 Taking a Proactive Approach

Law Enforcement Specific Tools

- [National Action Plan to Combat Human \(whitehouse.gov\)](#) PILLAR 4: CROSCUTTING APPROACHES AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, Enable Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution through Collaboration. Effectively combating human trafficking requires lines of effort that complement and support achievement of the other three aims of prevention, protection, and prosecution, in addition to enhancing collaboration. Aiming to improve the United States Government's institutional capacity to combat this crime will lead to improved outcomes across multiple goals. In the 20 years since human trafficking became a federal crime, the United States Government has made significant progress in adapting its institutions to combat this threat effectively. This whole-of government approach will enhance opportunities to better partner together in this effort. In particular, information gaps persist that hinder progress toward human trafficking prevention, survivor protection, and enhanced prosecution. As a result, government agencies are seeking to strengthen research, data collection, and integration. In order to enhance human trafficking enforcement efforts, government agencies are also seeking ways to deliver strategic analysis, generate actionable leads, and uncover evolving human trafficking trends. This goal presents 19 priority actions organized under five principles related to strengthening understanding of human trafficking; enhancing information sharing; incorporating survivor input; conducting outreach to external partners; and evaluating authorities and resources to combat human trafficking.
- [The Importance of Trauma-Informed Lawyering - Human Trafficking Institute](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Lawyering Resources - CAST Training and Technical Assistance](#)
- [Law Enforcement's Role in Supporting Victims' Needs Through Pretrial Justice Reform \(2015\)](#). This paper, from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, highlights the detention of a defendant during an investigation as a promising practice to ensure victim safety and a stronger case.
- [The Civil Rights Unit & Office for Victim Assistance](#) developed a unique protocol for agents working with victim specialists during trafficking investigations. The protocol is not for the public, and cannot be provided to anyone other than law enforcement. Please contact the Civil Rights Unit & Office for Victim Assistance for additional information.
- [Youth Victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking in Clark County Juvenile Court: Implementing an Identification and Diversion Process \(2011\)](#). This resource was published by the Division of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Portland State University. It summarizes an intervention by the Clark County Juvenile Court in Vancouver, Washington, to identify and divert youth victims of DMST from juvenile detention to advocacy and appropriate community resources.
- [HHS Toolkits for Law Enforcement](#). Published by the U.S. HHS, ACF, these toolkits provide background information and guidance for law enforcement officers to identify and communicate with victims of human trafficking.

Reports & Studies

- [Creating & Sustaining a Local Response to Human Trafficking: Compendium of Promising Practices, FYs 2008-2011](#)
- [Identifying Domestic and International Sex-Trafficking Victims During Human Service Provision \(2012\)](#) This article from the University of St. Thomas Law Journal presents evidence from the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center concerning sexual violence against Indian women and sex trafficking in Minnesota. A response from the state is included.

Training

- [IACP: Anti-Human Trafficking Webinars and Training](#)
- [IACPlearn: Effective Strategies to Investigate and Prosecute Labor Trafficking in the U.S.](#)
- [IACPlearn: Defining Justice Beyond Arrest and Prosecution](#)
- [IACPlearn: Working with Experts to Combat Common Defenses in Human Trafficking Cases](#)

Section 5.3 Victim Interview & Preparation

- [Interviewing Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation: Techniques and Tactics \(2013\)](#) This webinar highlights the importance of preparing for an interview by collaborating with community-based programs and allied professionals. It explores a variety of interview techniques and provides tools to develop open-ended questions and protocols.
- [Messages for Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking](#) Created as part of the Department of Health and Human Service's Campaign to Rescue and Restore Campaign Toolkit, this resource provides tips for individuals working directly with victims of human trafficking on how to build rapport and gain trust.
- [Tips for Identifying and Interacting with Victims of Human Trafficking](#) This U.S. HHS document was developed in 2008 as part of the Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking Tool Kits and focuses victim identification and response.
- [Utilizing Trauma-Informed Approaches to Trafficking-related Work](#) Project REACH developed this useful chart with tips on how to understand victim behavior, case scenarios and how to utilize Trauma-Informed Approaches.
- [Find A Court Interpreter or Translator \(National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators\)](#)

Section 5.4 Landing a Successful Prosecution

Tools for Prosecuting Human Trafficking

- [Labor Trafficking: Exploitation for the Sake of the Bottom Line \(2014\)](#) This training highlights the importance of collaboration with allied professionals to support a victim-centered response and offender-focused approach by exploring best practice strategies.
- [From Barriers to Solutions: Investigating and Prosecuting Human Trafficking \(2013\)](#) This webinar highlights key findings from the report and offers solutions for overcoming barriers

to victim identification and safety, and increasing offender accountability through investigation and prosecution.

- [Integrating a Trauma-Informed Response in Violence Against Women and Human Trafficking Prosecutions \(2015\)](#) This article, written by Kristiansson & Whitman-Barr and published by AEquitas, discusses the consideration of a trauma-informed response in investigations and prosecutions and presents useful tips for prosecutors.

Resources for Judges

- [Bureau of Justice Statistics Releases Human Trafficking Data Collection Activities for 2021 and 2022 - The Administration for Children and Families](#)
- [Maximizing OVC's Survivor Assistance in Court Settings \(MOSAICS\) - The Justice Programs Office, American University](#)

Section 5.5 Strategies for Prosecution and Law Enforcement

Prosecution and Law Enforcement Strategies

- [AEquitas Library](#). AEquitas publishes the STRATEGIES newsletter and monographs on complex topic areas, emerging issues, and promising practices related to the prosecution of violence against women cases. AEquitas staff also regularly contribute to other publications. Additionally, AEquitas develops and maintains resources including statutory compilations; case law digests; and sample motions, briefs, protocols, and predicate questions.
- [Human Trafficking and RICO: A New Prosecutorial Hammer in the War on Modern Day Slavery \(2011\)](#). Written by Kendal Nicole Smith, this Comment explores the use of RICO as a means of prosecuting human trafficking in the United States. Part I defines human trafficking and surveys its scope within the United States as it exists today by explaining the differences between trafficking and smuggling and by emphasizing the international nature of the problem. Part II examines the development of current trafficking legislation, culminating in the TVPA and its subsequent amendments.

Section 5.6 Case Proceedings

- [Orange County Human Trafficking Investigations Flow Chart \(2009\)](#) Provided by the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force, this resource provides a visual representation of how tips are followed up and investigated in Orange County, California.
- [Criminal Justice Sequence of Events](#) Developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), this resource provides a visual flow map representation of the criminal justice system.

Chapter 6 Resources: The Role of Courts

- [Maximizing OVC's Survivor Assistance in Court Settings \(MOSAICS\) - The Justice Programs Office, American University](#)

Section 6.1 Court Stakeholders

- [Labor Trafficking](#). This chapter from the National Association for Court Management Guide to Addressing Human Trafficking in the State Courts describes the characteristics of labor

trafficking-involved cases and how they might appear in state courts, and offers strategies for identifying and assisting labor trafficking victims.

- [Human Trafficking: What Judges Need to Know \(2014\)](#) This curriculum, for state trial judges, provides information on the TVPA, state laws, immigration, sentencing, restitution, and forfeiture.

Section 6.3 Trauma-Informed Courts

- [What is Procedural Justice \(2017\)](#) Tom R. Tyler, professor of law and psychology at Yale Law School, presents "Procedural Justice: Why It Matters So Much" at Community Justice 2012: the International Conference of Community Courts.
- [Procedural Justice: Practical Tips for Courts \(2015\)](#) Practical Tips highlights communication strategies that can be used to promote perceptions of impartiality in the court context. This resource was developed as part of a multi-year collaboration involving the Center for Court Innovation, National Judicial College, and the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, with guidance from a national advisory board.
- [Procedural Fairness in California: Initiatives, Challenges, and Recommendations \(2011\)](#) This report, commissioned by the Administrative Office of the Courts in California, describes initiatives in California's civil and traffic courts to improve procedural fairness. The report also contains a brief self-assessment tool that court administrators can use to examine procedural fairness in their local jurisdictions.
- [Human Trafficking Victims as Criminal Defendants \(2013\)](#) This is a one page information sheet that provides information on possible options for dealing with criminal cases in which the defendant is a victim of trafficking.
- [The Impact of the Community Court Model on Defendant Perceptions of Fairness \(2006\)](#) This case study of the Red Hook Community Justice Center in New York discusses the important role all justice system actors play in improving perceptions of fairness.

Section 6.4 Innovative Court Responses

- [A Community Court Grows in Brooklyn: A Comprehensive Evaluation of the Red Hook Community Justice Center \(2013\)](#) This study, conducted by the National Center for State Courts, suggests that improved procedural justice helped reduce recidivism among misdemeanor offenders.
- [Community Courts, Specialized Dockets, and Other Approaches to Address Sex Trafficking](#) This document chapter provides information on different ways that courts are addressing sex trafficking, with regional examples.
- [Problem-Solving Justice Toolkit \(2007\)](#) The National Center for State Courts created a toolkit to provide an outline in using the problem-solving approach, which integrates treatment and social services with judicial case proceedings.