

Collaborating with Youth-Serving Agencies to Respond to and Prevent Sex Trafficking of Youth

Effectively meeting the requirements of the **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act** will require strong collaboration and cross-system coordination between child welfare and other youth-serving agencies. This document provides State and local child welfare agencies with information on partnering with other agencies to address sex trafficking.¹ Ultimately, coordination and collaboration can advance effective identification, reporting, and services for youth who are victims or are at risk of becoming victims. Collaboration may take many forms ranging from brief consultation to the development of coordinated protocols and formation of a cross-sector collaboration or coalition.

What does the law require?

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183), signed into law on September 29, 2014, requires child welfare agencies to address sex trafficking of the population they serve.² Specific requirements for title IV-E agencies include:

- ◆ Consulting with other agencies that have experience with at-risk youth (documentation of consultation is required by September 29, 2015)
- ◆ Developing policies, procedures, and training to identify, document, and determine appropriate services for children and youth who are sex trafficking victims or at risk of becoming victims
- ◆ Reporting identified trafficking victims to law enforcement
- ◆ Developing protocols to locate and provide services to children who run away from foster care

¹ Sex trafficking is also referred to as commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking.

² As outlined in the Children's Bureau's Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-14-03, the population served includes "any child or youth in the placement, care, or supervision of the title IV-E agency who is at risk of becoming a sex trafficking victim or who is a sex trafficking victim (including those not removed from home; those who have run away from foster care and under age 18 or such higher age elected under 475(8); and youth not in foster care who are receiving services under the Chafee Foster Care Independence program (CFCIP) (477)), and at the option of the agency, youth under age 26 who were or were never in foster care (471(a)(9)(C)(i))." (Citations refer to the Social Security Act as amended by P.L. 113-183.)



- ◆ Determining the factors that lead to a child’s absence from foster care, addressing those factors in subsequent placements, and determining the child’s experiences while absent from care
- ◆ Developing and implementing protocols to report information on missing or abducted children to law enforcement

Why should a child welfare agency collaborate to address sex trafficking of youth?

- ◆ **Collective impact**—Multiple disciplines can join forces to collectively address this complex issue and draw on essential expertise to maximize resources, integrate local considerations, and shape effective strategies.
- ◆ **Effective identification**—Research by Northeastern University’s Institute on Race and Justice indicates that jurisdictions with active multidisciplinary anti-human trafficking task forces are more likely to identify human trafficking victims and achieve successful prosecution of offenders.³
- ◆ **Trauma-informed response**—Cross-sector collaboration is essential to a streamlined response that does not create additional trauma for the young person during identification, investigation, assessment, and treatment.

What are the key elements of successful cross-sector collaboration?

Lessons learned from ongoing efforts suggest the following essential elements for a successful collaboration of State and local partners:

- ◆ **Multidisciplinary team approach**—Include a variety of youth-serving professionals and community members to form a diverse collaboration established on mutual understanding and support. Include youth, adult survivors, and other individuals who can provide useful insight into effective strategies.
- ◆ **Common mission**—Align the mission with State or community needs. Given that the focus and mandates of each participating agency may differ, it is important to highlight shared interests and overarching goals.
- ◆ **Respect for varying perspectives**—Build awareness of the different mandates, objectives, and philosophies that partners bring to the collaboration.
- ◆ **Focus on data**—Collect data to identify areas of need. Data provide compelling evidence to support the formation of a collaboration, point to who should participate, identify areas for deeper exploration, inform a plan of action, and monitor the achievement of goals.
- ◆ **Flexibility**—Develop a process that enables the collaboration to adapt to change based on feedback. Remain alert to emerging trends and new data. Accommodate new expertise.

³ See http://www.northeastern.edu/humantrafficking/wp-content/uploads/Understanding_and_Improving_ExecSumm.pdf.

Who should be involved in the collaboration?

In the development of cross-agency collaboration, there often will be a core group of primary stakeholders that form a formal entity, such as a task force or project-focused partnership, as well as periodic involvement of other community members.

As you develop a plan for collaboration, consider:

- ◆ Have some agencies already established a task force or coalition related to trafficking?
- ◆ Does child welfare already partner with law enforcement (e.g., to track youth missing from care or report victims) or with juvenile justice (e.g., to share data)?
- ◆ Which local organizations (e.g., homeless shelters, schools) are already working to identify exploited or vulnerable youth and/or provide services to these populations?
- ◆ How can you modify or build on existing partnership efforts to meet new legislative requirements? What gaps need to be filled?
- ◆ Are there opportunities to involve youth who have first-hand experience with trafficking and are emotionally prepared to discuss the topic and provide insights?

During the early exploration period, your agency can determine what resources already exist in the State, how to build on existing efforts (e.g., by creating new workgroups), what gaps exist, and what key agencies are needed to meet identified objectives related to the new legislation.

Primary stakeholders

The following table lists key stakeholders to consider for consultation on strategic planning, policy and protocol development, and membership in a cross-sector collaboration or coalition. The table highlights services that each group may provide to victims of trafficking and youth at risk; the group's responsibilities for identifying, screening, and responding to sex trafficking; and other potential contributions that may support effective prevention and intervention.

Engage stakeholders in your core group that have:

- ◆ Experience working with vulnerable youth populations
- ◆ An understanding of human trafficking
- ◆ Trauma-informed approaches to intervention

Be sure to include the voice of youth and adult survivors of trafficking.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders/ Organization	Services to Victims or At-Risk Youth	Processes for Identifying, Screening, and Responding	Other Potential Contributions
Child Welfare	Provide safe and stable placement for youth. Offer special supports or referrals to meet the needs of sex trafficking victims, including intensive case management and access to health and mental health care. Provide independent living supports to strengthen protective factors. Engage and empower youth. Talk with youth and caregivers about risk.	Follow Federal requirements for responding to sex trafficking. Identify victims and youth at risk. Implement protocol to report to law enforcement youth missing from care and youth identified as trafficking victims.	Implement policies for ensuring safety, permanency, and well-being. Provide ongoing support to caretakers to limit placement disruption.
Law Enforcement, Juvenile Justice, and Probation	Use diversion protocol (where appropriate) for juveniles involved in commercial sex. Make appropriate referrals for specialized services for victims. Apply trauma-informed responses and techniques to avoid re-traumatizing victims (e.g., using specialized screening questions or conducting screening in settings away from the police station). Implement protocol for protection of suspected victims.	Follow Federal, State, and local priorities and protocols for responding to trafficking and working with victim witnesses in investigation and prosecution. Receive and report information on victims and missing and abducted children. Follow protocol for location efforts.	Provide local and State data on sex trafficking. Consult on coordinated response to locating, reporting, and data-sharing efforts. Report on youth arrested and information about runaway and missing youth.
Runaway and Homeless Service Providers	Provide street-based services for runaway and homeless youth who are victims of trafficking.	Follow protocol for locating runaway youth. Identify victims and youth at risk.	Have knowledge about specialized services and resources. Offer experience and cultural sensitivity working with this population.

Stakeholders/ Organization	Services to Victims or At-Risk Youth	Processes for Identifying, Screening, and Responding	Other Potential Contributions
Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Coalitions	Assess danger and provide protection through safe housing. Offer intervention services. Make referrals for legal services and other supports.	Identify victims and conduct assessment and screening. Use screening tools and reporting protocol.	Build awareness and education. Provide training on violence prevention and specialized response and supports.
Family Court and Juvenile Judges	Ensure that victims are represented by advocates and legal counsel knowledgeable of sex trafficking dynamics. Engage youth in hearings. Respond to youth needs as victims. Engage families, where appropriate. Require victim-centered approaches to treatment and hold responsible parties accountable.	Develop standard questions to engage youth at court hearings. Standardize hearing tools for inquiry of State agency and youth legal representation.	Engage key stakeholders for participation in collaborative response.
CASA, Guardians Ad Litem, Attorneys, and Family Advocacy Centers	Represent and advocate for the interests of youth. Respond to youth needs as victims. Engage youth in hearings. Consult with youth and prepare them to advocate on their own behalf. Engage families, if appropriate.	Develop and follow specialized protocol for youth victims of sex trafficking. Recognize indications of trafficking and identify risk.	Provide perspective on sex trafficking in the community. Encourage normalcy for youth in foster care.
Behavioral and Mental Health Providers	Provide specialized therapeutic treatment for victims and youth presenting with risk factors. Offer trauma-informed responses.	Develop and follow specialized protocol for youth victims of sex trafficking. Recognize indications of trafficking and identify risk factors among youth.	Provide practice-based evidence, including information on the dynamics of exploitation, trauma, and secondary trauma.
Health and Public Health Agencies	Provide health care to victims. Administer forensic assessment. Provide information to youth patients who may be victims or at risk.	Follow practitioner screening, assessment, and examination protocols and tools to identify and treat medical needs of victims.	Offer perspective on prevalence and awareness within the medical field.

Stakeholders/ Organization	Services to Victims or At-Risk Youth	Processes for Identifying, Screening, and Responding	Other Potential Contributions
Housing, Shelters, and Youth Services Providers	Provide safe housing alternatives for victims. Support the needs of trafficked victims in gender- and age-appropriate settings.	Identify, screen, and report on victims of sex trafficking. Develop and follow specialized response protocols. Develop a priority response plan to meet the needs of sex trafficking victims.	Share information on available housing, crisis housing for minors, and transitional living programs. Provide information on qualification criteria, limitations, and the application process.
Labor and Employment	Offer training and employment skills and job placement assistance for victims and coordinated supports. Protect the educational opportunities of youth. Prevent employment in jobs that are detrimental to youth health and safety.	Monitor child labor and enforce child labor laws. Follow reporting protocol on child labor, forced labor, and child trafficking.	Raise public awareness and understanding of child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking and its relationship to sex trafficking. Provide data on forced labor and child trafficking.
Education System	Identify risk factors. Provide specialized intervention protocols. Promote prevention through building protective factors. Provide access to crisis assistance.	Implement identification and response protocol. Develop mandatory reporting and referral protocol.	Share data. Report truancy and include screening for sex trafficking.
Youth, Young Adult Survivors, and Youth Advisory Boards	Strategically share experience, advice, personal perspective, and insight. Encourage, mentor, and support youth victims and prevent victimization.		Offer victim/survivor perspective on what works and what doesn't work to support victims. Participate in policy and product development, panel discussions, and training.
Caregivers	Provide safe and stable placement and support well-being. Recognize risk and indicators of sex trafficked youth. Offer trauma-informed, culturally responsive prevention and intervention through specialized foster care in a variety of settings. Engage youth in positive development and healing.	Report suspected victimization.	Help identify specialty placements to meet needs. Aid in developing supports for resource parents. Offer opportunities for normalcy and healthy youth development.

Extending the involvement of community members

In developing a collaboration to address sex trafficking, reach out to community members, who can provide valuable input. In particular, seek the involvement of representatives of commercial industries in which perpetrators and potential victims are involved in trafficking activity.

Consider the involvement of the following stakeholders or organizations:

- ◆ Public entertainment and park and recreation entities (skating rinks, amusement parks, malls, movie theaters, sports arenas, night clubs, casinos, tourism, and adult entertainment)
- ◆ Commercial businesses where trafficking occurs (such as hotels, convenience stores, truck stops)
- ◆ Faith-based leaders
- ◆ Youth services coalitions
- ◆ Neighborhood watches
- ◆ Military personnel
- ◆ Landlord and tenant associations

What are the initial steps of creating a collaboration?

When a new collaboration convenes, group members will need to develop a set of goals and specific objectives, identify key individuals or positions representing each agency, and craft mutually agreed upon protocols to address the prevention and intervention of sex trafficking among vulnerable youth. A successful collaboration requires a set of written guidelines and duties that clearly describe relationships, processes, roles, and sustainability. A detailed written policy and operational procedures document will leverage resources and enhance the effectiveness of the collaboration's joint response.

Building a network of "Eyes and Ears" against trafficking

Each day, employees in the hospitality and transportation industries may come across young people being trafficked.⁴ If knowledgeable about the signs of sexual exploitation, these employees can help identify and report victims. For example, Truckers Against Trafficking have banded together to identify trafficking "hot spots" across the country, and workers in Ohio hair and nail salons are joining the fight against trafficking in the workplace.⁵

⁴ See *Bright Idea: Prevent Trafficking by Reaching Out to Transportation and Hospitality Providers*, at <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2014/03/bright-idea-prevent-trafficking-reaching-out-transportation-and-hospitality-providers>.

⁵ See the *Truckers Against Trafficking* website, <http://www.truckersagainstrafficking.org>, and *Editorial: Salons Are Involved in Fight Against Human Trafficking*, at <http://www.news-herald.com/opinion/20150518/editorial-salons-are-involved-in-fight-against-human-trafficking>.

Additional resources

Other current and forthcoming Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative products provide information and considerations on collaboration and addressing the requirements of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. For more information, call 844-222-0272, email capacityinfo@icfi.com, or visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov>.

Selected national resources

Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/acyf_human_trafficking_guidance.pdf

Provides child and family service systems across the country with guidance for preventing and countering the traumatic effects of trafficking. Includes a section on coordination.

Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau/Family and Youth Services Bureau, Information Memorandum: Serving Youth Who Run Away From Foster Care

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/fysb-im1401>

Offers guidance on services for youth under age 18 who run away from foster care and encourages coordination between runaway and homeless youth programs and child welfare.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov>

Offers resources on addressing human trafficking, including State and local examples of collaboration among public child welfare agencies, juvenile justice agencies, courts, and mental health services.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

<http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org>

Operated by the Polaris Project, this resource center provides tools, training, technical assistance services, and other resources to meet the needs of the anti-trafficking field. Includes a referral directory of State and local resources, including task forces.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center, HTR3

<http://www.rhyttac.net/technical-assistance/htr3>

Offers a web resource that builds on the National Safe Place Network's approach to recognizing, respecting, and responding to victims and survivors of human trafficking. Includes resources on community coalitions.

U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime and Bureau of Justice Assistance, Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide>

Assists in the development of an anti-human trafficking task force and provides fundamental guidance for effective task force operations. Includes information on recognizing and supporting victims.

Examples of state and local resources

Arizona Partnership to End Domestic Trafficking

<http://endsextrafficking.az.gov/council.html>

This collaborative effort was created to provide a cohesive and comprehensive response to domestic trafficking. The partnership is made up of six organizations within Maricopa and Pima Counties, AZ, that offer training, education, and direct services for survivors of human trafficking.

Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, YES Project! Youth Experiences Survey: Exploring the Sex Trafficking Experiences of Arizona's Homeless and Runaway Young Adults

<http://www.trustaz.org/downloads/rr-stir-youth-experiences-survey-report-nov-2014.pdf>

This 2014 report includes a section on the connection of survival sex and sex trafficking and information on other risk factors for sexual exploitation, including sexual and gender orientation.

King County Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Task Force

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/JuvenileCourt/CSEC.aspx>

This Washington task force is dedicated to developing a coordinated and collaborative response to the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Westcoast Children's Clinic, Research to Action: Sexually Exploited Minors Needs and Strengths

<http://www.westcoastcc.org>

This California mental health services provider conducted research and published a report in 2012 on the specialized needs of a population of sex trafficked victims. The report contributed to the development of a validated screening tool to aid in identifying sexually exploited youth.