

M I L W A U K E E C O U N T Y  
H U M A N T R A F F I C K I N G  
T A S K F O R C E

*Final Report 2012*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESENTED TO:

Judiciary, Safety and General Services Committee



---

Community members working together to eliminate human trafficking through awareness and prevention.





## Formation of the Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force (MCHTTF)

The Core members of the task force decided to start with organizing public meetings to gain insight on what the rest of the community would like to see happen to address the issue of human trafficking in Milwaukee. The first meeting was an information session that ended with community feedback. That feedback ranged from a new sense of awareness that left some attendees with concerns about how to handle potential signs of human trafficking. The group began communicating more frequently around assessing situations that bear signs of trafficking. With this new heightened awareness the members committed to the issue decided to form sub committees to address the concerns that task force members were voicing more frequently. There were 3 issue areas that arose as the most pressing areas to address:

### Public Awareness Committee

Early in its formation several non profit organizations that provide services to trafficking victims were uncomfortable with the portrayal of victims in the media, and the irresponsible messaging that resulted from the buzz around the trafficking issue. Many of these leaders requested that the task force core leadership determine some best practices for media response when there is a new development in which victims are called on to testify, share their story, or provide information that they may not be ready to share. This committee worked on addressing a responsible messaging campaign that did not re-victimize survivors.

### Service Provision Committee

Service providers that attended the meetings ranged from experts in emergency response to curious organizations that wanted to be equipped to recognize the signs in case they come across people that may be victims of trafficking. Everyone was hoping to feel more prepared in case they come across victims, but several organizations were looking for support to become stronger service models that included services that were culturally competent to the survivors. They were also looking for tools to create prevention models both for domestic and international victims. The service

committee formed to provide guidance for those in the task force, as well as to assess the readiness of the community through a survey of organizations.

#### Legislative Action Committee

The legislative action committee worked to create some strong suggestions to improve legislation for those affected by the crime of human trafficking. This committee included leadership working on legislative action for both sex and labor trafficking and continues to provide guidance on the best possible changes to help victims to eliminate some of their economic hardships as a result of trafficking.

## Appropriate Service Models / Cultural Competency

### Existing Collaborations on Human Trafficking: A Community Survey

The Service Provision Committee of the Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force completed a survey to identify existing collaborations on human trafficking and explore the potential to establish a coordinated service model for survivors of human trafficking. Because the service providers were seeking to provide stronger coordinated services it was in the group's interest to identify what each organization was doing so those new to the work could meet needs that were not being met in the community. 35 organizations participated in this survey and provided information about their knowledge about serving human trafficking victims and ways they would like to improve their service provision. In this survey we learned that over 62% of the organizations were not using any screening tools to identify victims of human trafficking. At least 72% reported their level of training to be very basic, minimal or none at all. 85% of agencies wanted training. Only 4 respondents were not interested in training but had years of expertise providing specific services to foreign national victims of trafficking and did not need training. Additionally one church was untrained and uninterested in training.

The majority of services are open to both people with legal status and undocumented individuals. Less than 10 programs noted being only open to people with legal status. And two services are specifically for foreign nationals. 10 programs were open specifically to people who had been sex trafficked. The majority of programs were open to both survivors of labor or sex trafficking as well as those cases that involved both sex and labor trafficking. Capacity was a challenging question for most programs. A few programs with large capacity were open to 10 or more referrals a month. Most needed more information before committing to an estimate. Most programs did not answer as to the number of trafficked clients they may have worked with in the past year; often stating more information would be needed. Only three programs responded and each stated the number was over 20: Northern Tier Anti-Trafficking Consortium, The Healing Center and Pathfinders.

### Cultural Competency

Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations. 'Culture' refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. 'Competence' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities. (Office of Minority Health, US Department of Health and Human Services)

Culture and language may influence:

- health, healing, and wellness belief systems;
- how illness, disease, and their causes are perceived; both by the patient/ consumer and
- the behaviors of patients/ consumers who are seeking health care and their attitudes toward health care providers;
- as well as the delivery of services by the provider who looks at the world through his or her own limited set of values, which can compromise access for people from other cultures.

When organizations were surveyed about their cultural competency there was a great deal of response about serving communities of color, but not enough organizations expressed that they felt culturally competent. The task force leadership sensed a strong need for cultural sensitivity training to increase the competence of all organizations. Cultural awareness trainings in a tier system need to be introduced for progressive skill development for all service providers as well as first responders and those that come in contact with victims after their trauma. Local colleges and universities offer such training and education, but we need to also enlist the advocacy specialists in dealing with both domestic and international victims of human trafficking. As we move towards collaborative service models in the city of Milwaukee, it would be extremely valuable to include cultural sensitivity trainings for all organizations interested in improving their cultural sensitivity.

## Policies and Practices

### **Legislation/policy changes specific to human trafficking**

The legislative committee created a list of possibilities and there was strong support for the following suggestions:

- Vacating Convictions of people who've been trafficked of the crimes they committed as a part of being trafficked – as new statute or amend existing Wisconsin trafficking laws (Human Trafficking and Trafficking of a Child)
- Stop arrests/ convictions of minors for prostitution (some states refer to this as Safe Harbor legislation and change laws so minors are referred to community programs or child protective services)
- Make it so minors who might be trafficked receive a forensic interview like the ones children 12 and under who are sexually abused receive (videotaped, by a professional trained in trauma response, done only once to reduce re-traumatization)
- Asset forfeiture of traffickers and use proceeds to fund services
- Adequately fund services by statute
- Make sure trafficking victims are not coerced into law enforcement investigations but still qualify for assistance
- Commit to specific training for law enforcement on trafficking
- At a minimum, collect and produce reports on a statewide level of the number of law enforcement investigations, prosecutions and convictions of traffickers and aggregate data on people who've been trafficked
- Support voluntary services for people who've been trafficked that aren't dependent on having to identify as a trafficking victim, work with law enforcement, or solely connected to arrests/ involvement in the criminal justice system

tem (i.e. support alternatives to incarceration but also set up voluntary services available before any arrest happens)

## Job Training and Recovery

Job training and recovery were issues that were mostly discussed in service provision and legislative action committees. Legislative suggestions such as making it easier for anyone who've been convicted of non-violent crimes to get records cleared (expungement/expunction) after completing a sentence or program, and legislation that increases wages and/or jobs like Milwaukee Jobs Act were suggested to address a road to recovery and economic security for victims. Fully implementing legislative policies that are in effect but not utilized enough such as pursuing civil damages, and crime victim compensation funds are avenues that could be explored that would improve the experience of those seeking recovery. Victim compensation funds are not generated from tax payer dollars, they are funds recovered from high profile crimes. This is a responsible answer to improving the road to recovery that would receive support from the entire community.

## Transitional Living / Safe Housing

The organizations that provide transitional living and housing options participate in the Milwaukee Human Trafficking Task Force, Eastern District. Within this task force there is a service providers group that often discusses the barriers to transitional living and safe housing. While attending these meetings on behalf of the task force we learned that there are some barriers to housing in relation to HUD funding requirements. These barriers are still in the process of being assessed and discussed with service providers, HUD leadership and members of the Federal Human Trafficking Task Force of Southeastern WI. There are funding opportunities to assist international human trafficking victims, but there are limitations in the funding available for domestic trafficking victims. Many organizations are working on a collaborative approach when assessing the eligibility of victims, and this approach has been strengthened by their participation in the task force. Moving forward the members of the task force are working to apply for collaborative funding to address the needs of victims, and are doing their best to house victims with programs that do not have funding source limitations. The task force has been working with private funders, such as foundations that provide grant opportunities in social justice to include human trafficking as a funding issue to help organizations create programs to include the special set of needs for trafficking survivors.

# Moving Forward

On September 20, 2012 the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault established a subcommittee on human trafficking. This subcommittee will focus on moving the identified issues forward so we can reach a state of community wide coordination to keep victims safe. The Commission will be scheduling meetings starting in October and will maintain the momentum generated by the monthly meeting for the Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force. Members of the task force will still receive updates on milestones reached, resources for the community, and will be welcome to continue to participate in the task force as we move forward. We have designed a public awareness campaign to ensure that we are checking in on progress. We need to ensure that when members of the community detect the signs of trafficking they have the proper resources to help in ways that keep them safe. We look forward to continuing our advocacy in a way that serves the whole community.