

# Identifying and Responding to Juvenile Victims of Human Trafficking in Ohio

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**Department of  
Youth Services**



**ADVOCATING  
OPPORTUNITY**



**Human  
Trafficking  
Task Force**

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# OVC IMPROVING OUTCOMES GRANT

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- In 2017, 2020, and 2023, The Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services was awarded a competitive grant by the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.
- Funds are being utilized for the following:
  - Employing a grant coordinator at the Office of Criminal Justice Services
  - Employing anti-trafficking coordinators at ODYS and ODCF
  - Consultation and training with subject matter experts
  - Employing a Safe Harbor Coordinator at three juvenile courts
- Grant program focusing on:
  - Building Ohio's capacity to implement Safe Harbor law and adopt Safe Harbor protocols
  - Technical assistance to better serve youth victims



# NOTES BEFORE WE START...



Terminology used during this presentation



Note on self care



Questions



# *Understanding* Human Trafficking



# What is human trafficking?



# *Overview of Federal and State Laws*



# FEDERAL LEGAL DEFINITION OF TRAFFICKING

As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, the legal definition of “severe forms of trafficking in persons” is:

a) **sex trafficking** in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age;

-from 22 USC § 7102 (9)(A)

*or*

b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for **labor or services**, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

-from 22 USC § 7102 (9)(B)

-The TVPA of 2000 was the first comprehensive federal law to address trafficking in persons. The TVPA was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, and 2017.



# What is commercial sex?





# MEANS: EXAMPLES & DEFINITIONS

Force: *Physical assault, sexual assault, confinement*

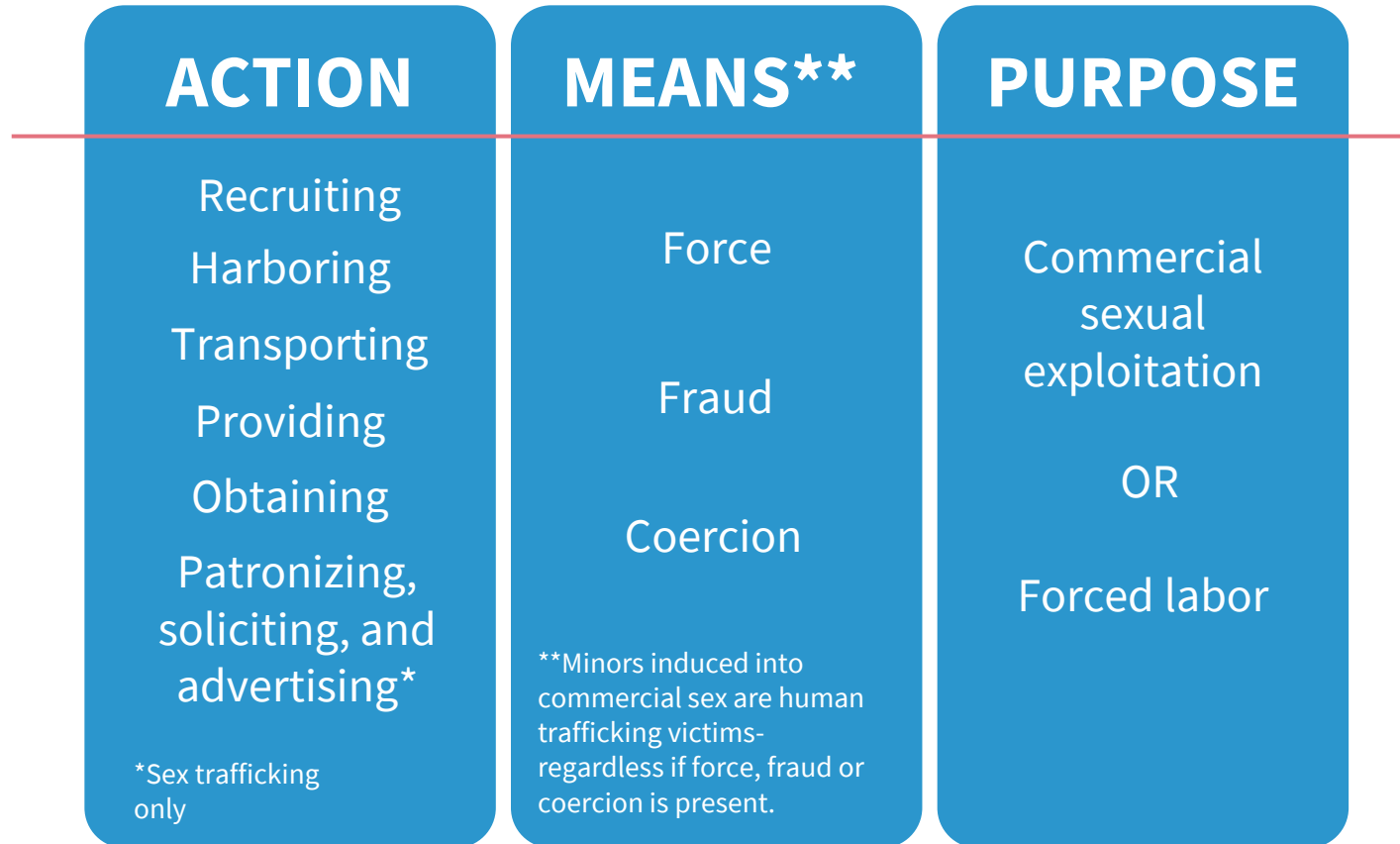
Fraud: *An act of deception with criminal intent*

Coercion: *Threats of serious harm against any person; the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process*

Source: *Salvation Army of Central Ohio*



# HOW TRAFFICKING OCCURS



\*Sex trafficking only

Source: Polaris



# OHIO'S LEGAL DEFINITION OF TRAFFICKING

**As defined by the Ohio Revised Code Section 2905.32 (Trafficking in Persons), Ohio's legal definition of human trafficking is:**

“(A) No person shall knowingly recruit, lure, entice, isolate, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, or maintain...another person knowing that the person will be *subjected to involuntary servitude or be compelled* to engage in sexual activity for hire...”

“...For a prosecution under division (A)(1) of this section, the element "compelled" does not require that the compulsion be openly displayed or physically exerted. The element "compelled" has been established if the state proves that the victim's will was overcome by **force, fear, duress, or intimidation, or fraud, by furnishing or offering a controlled substance to the victim, or by manipulating the victim's controlled substance addiction.**”



# OHIO'S NEW DEFINITION OF SEX TRAFFICKING

- HB 431 – signed into law by Governor DeWine in January 2021
- Eliminates tiered definition of sex trafficking
  - Minors (anyone under 18) and persons with developmental disabilities induced to engage in sexual activity for hire by one person with another person is considered sex trafficking, regardless of evidence of compulsion
- Other additional provisions related to protecting survivors



# Labor Trafficking

- Labor traffickers use force, fraud, and/or coercion
- ANYONE can be a victim of labor trafficking
- Migrant workers—documented and undocumented—are particularly vulnerable to trafficking



WORK HARDE

Source: Polaris

<http://www.polarisproject.org/humantrafficking/international-trafficking>



# *State and Local Data*



# REALITY

Cases reported to National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2021

- California (1334)
- Texas (917)
- Florida (781)
- New York (404)
- Michigan (295)
- Ohio (291)

The National Human Trafficking Hotline only provides a snapshot of trafficking cases, and high reporting can be due to many factors



# PREVALENCE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN OHIO

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- **1,032** minor and youth victims identified from 2014 - 2016
- In addition to known victims, **4,209** at-risk individuals were identified based on youth presenting with common risk factors associated with trafficking
- **1,200** at-risk individuals found within juvenile justice data
- Recommendations from the report
  - The development of a uniform, confidential reporting system
  - Clearly defining “at-risk” of trafficking in reporting

*Findings are based on data collected and analyzed by the University of Cincinnati from 14 distinct data sources from 2014 - 2016. Sources include state and local agencies and newspaper accounts.*



Anderson V., Kulig, T. & Sullivan, C. (2018) *Estimating the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Ohio* a report submitting to the Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force. Accessed at <https://humantrafficking.ohio.gov/data-reports.html>





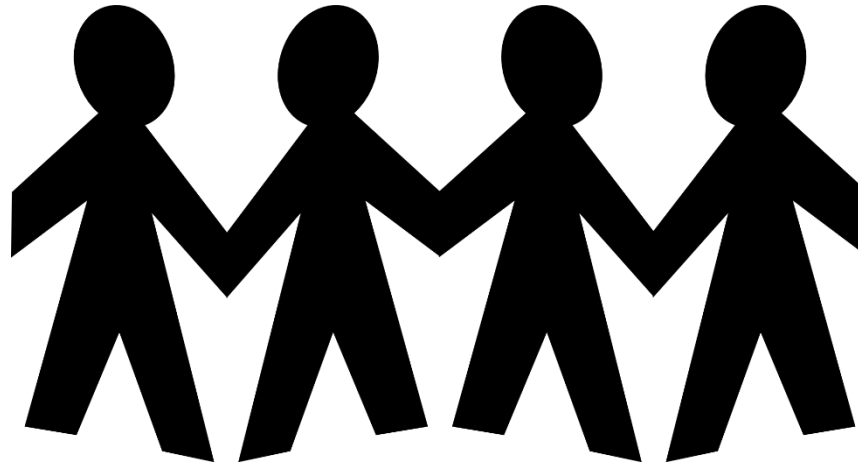
# *Dynamics of Exploitation*



# TRAFFICKING & RELATIONSHIPS

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- Trafficking most often occurs in the context of a relationship that may involve grooming, **force**, **fraud**, and/or **coercion**
- Traffickers may fulfill the following or additional roles in their victim's life:
  - Significant other
  - Friend
  - Parent/caregiver
  - Employer
  - Other?



# Family Members

- Children trafficked by family members are most commonly forced into “sexual exploitation, begging, and domestic work” (UN, 2017)
- Caregivers may compel children to engage in forced labor or commercial sex in exchange for substances or for money
- Complicit vs. active trafficker

United Nations

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/11/637532-family-members-linked-nearly-half-child-trafficking-cases-new-un-backed-data>



# PEERS

- Peer recruiter is often a trafficking victim
- These individuals may develop loyalty to a trafficker as a survival strategy
- Peers have greater access to potential victims
  - Schools, group homes, correctional facilities, families, etc.

Shared Hope

<https://sharedhope.org/2012/03/unavoidable-destiny-the-reality-of-the-bottom-girl-part-i/>



# TRAFFICKING IN GANGS

- Youth may become gang-involved due to elements of force, fraud, and coercion
  - Consider exploitation of needs
- Gang-involved youth may be compelled to engage in activities for the economic benefit of gang leaders
- In some instances, gang-involved youth fit the definition of a labor trafficking victim



Federal Bureau of Investigation

Rizen, C. M. (2015). Are juvenile gang members victims of labor trafficking? *Children's Legal Rights Journal*, 35(2), pp. 162-176. Retrieved from <https://lawcommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1087&context=clrj>



# TRAUMA BONDING

- Occurs in the presence of INCONSISTENT reinforcement
- Intensity + Complexity + Inconsistency + Promises = ideal environment for trauma bonding
- Our brains are chemically inclined to connect with negative sources more strongly than positive sources
  - Dysregulation of oxytocin, dopamine, and endogenous opioids



Burkett, J.P. & Young, L.J. Psychopharmacology (2012) 224: 1.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-012-2794-x>

# POST-IDENTIFICATION: *VICTIM NEEDS*

- A multi-disciplinary approach should be developed with each client's unique needs in mind:
- Safety
- Basic needs
- Medical/mental health
- Trauma-informed response
- Strengths-based approach
- Gender-responsive care
- Culturally and linguistically responsive care
- Harm reduction and safety planning



# SURVIVOR-CENTERED

A survivor-centered approach prioritizes the survivor's:



Consider:

- “nothing about me without me”
- Survivors should be the ultimate decision-makers
- Forward looking stance versus focus on past challenges

Source: *Human Trafficking in Youth-serving Programs: A Blueprint for Organizations Working with Street Youth, Homeless Youth, and Youth at Risk*, developed by Family & Youth Services Bureau, Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center, available at [rhyttac.net](http://rhyttac.net)





# TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Trafficking & exploitation are traumatic

Trauma can cause youth to present with problematic behaviors

TIC focuses not on what is wrong with a youth, but on what happened to a youth



# TRAUMA-INFORMED CONSIDERATIONS



**Incorporate trauma-informed principles in all aspects of daily practice**



**Consider verbal & non-verbal communication**



**Consider strategies to foster positive relational experiences**



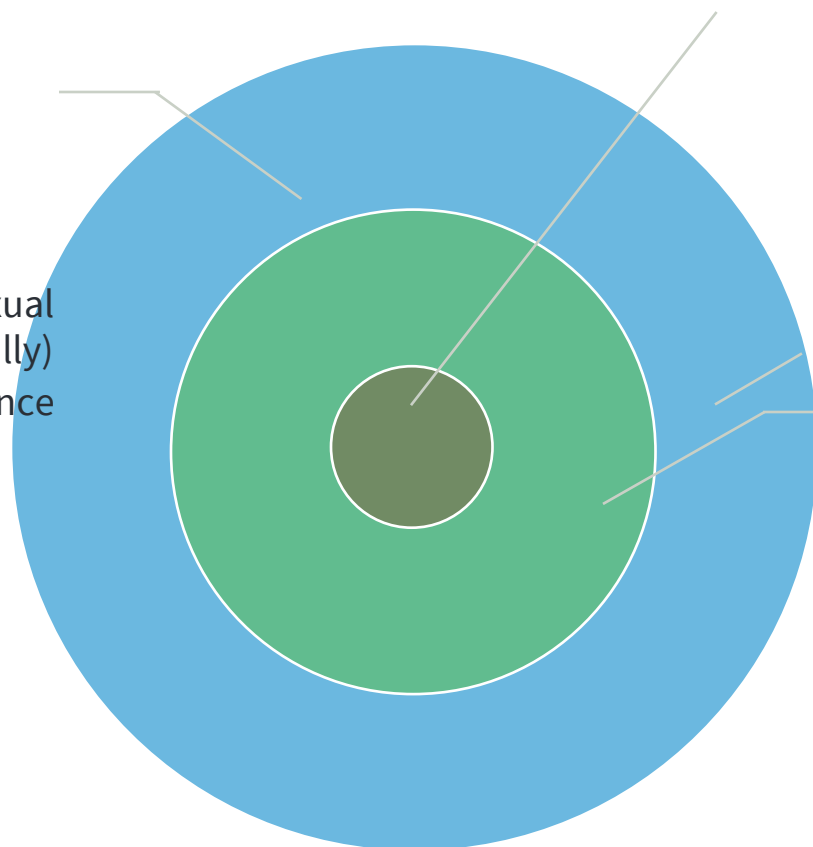
# *Risk Factors for Human Trafficking*



# RISK FACTORS

## Societal & Community Factors

- Economic need
- Minority status (race, gender, sexual orientation, socially)
- Community violence



## Individual

- Mental illness
- Cognitive/developmental delays
- Early contact with law enforcement
- Self-harm behaviors
- Frequent runaway status
- Prior sexual assault

## Familial/Relational

- Family discord
- Child welfare involvement
- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional maltreatment
- Friends/family involved in sex work
- Witnessing family violence



# RISK FACTORS FOR TRAFFICKING

## *MISSING/RUNAWAY YOUTH AND LGBTQ+ YOUTH*

Runaway/homeless/migrant youth are at a disproportionate risk of human trafficking.

Of the more than 28,000 endangered runaways reported to NCMEC in 2023, **1 out of 6** were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

- Up to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+. This population is:
  - 7.4x more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than their heterosexual counterparts
  - 3-7x more likely to engage in survival sex to meet their basic needs

Report all missing/runaway children to local law enforcement and NCMEC (1-800-THE-LOST)



*Identifying*  
**Human Trafficking**



# POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKING

Behavioral Indicators	Mental Health Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Truancy</li><li>• Running away</li><li>• Violent outbursts</li><li>• Withdrawn demeanor</li><li>• High risk behaviors</li><li>• May have vague answers; taught to hide secrets, omitting, deflecting</li><li>• Poor boundaries</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depression</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• PTSD</li><li>• Suicidal ideation</li><li>• Low self-esteem</li><li>• Hypervigilance</li></ul>
Physical Indicators	Financial Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Malnutrition</li><li>• Injuries (sometimes unexplained)</li><li>• Frequent sexual health concerns</li><li>• Substance use/abuse</li><li>• Self-injury</li><li>• Untreated health concerns</li><li>• Appearance inconsistent with age</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unexpected possessions</li><li>• More or less money than expected</li></ul>



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Physical Indicators	Financial Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malnourished</li> <li>• Bruises, scratches, scars</li> <li>• Poor hygiene</li> <li>• Signs of physical health concerns</li> <li>• Appearance inconsistent with age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected possessions</li> <li>• More or less money than expected</li> </ul>

**Not a Checklist!!!**





# IDENTIFICATION

- Prevention: Identify high-risk youth
- Reduce burden of disclosure for victims
- Prepare by assessing gaps and by developing comprehensive resources/services
- Utilize screening tool
- Be aware of risk factors if screening is not possible
- Safety plan to meet needs

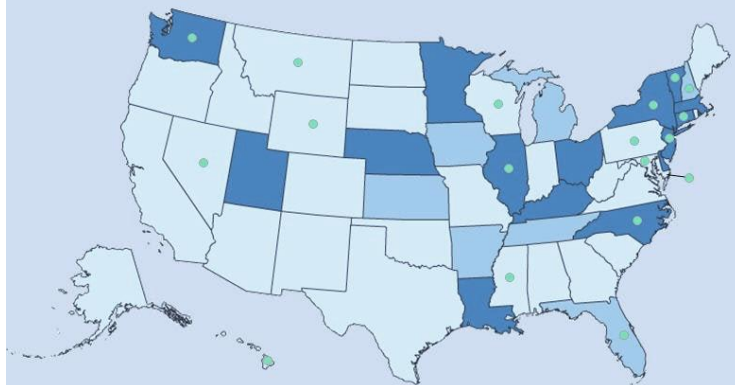


# *Ohio's Safe Harbor Law*



# VICTIM PROTECTION

## Safe Harbor Status by State



- States with no Safe Harbor laws
- States with at least one of the Safe Harbor provisions
- States with Safe Harbor laws
- States with vacating convictions

- SAFE HARBOR (Ohio's law enacted in 2012)
- Intervention in Lieu of Conviction for minors and adults
- Record expungement
- HT first degree felony, mandatory min
- LE and School training
- Amended 2018, 2020

Source:

<https://newrepublic.com/article/120418/underage-sex-trafficking-victims-are-treated-criminals-us>

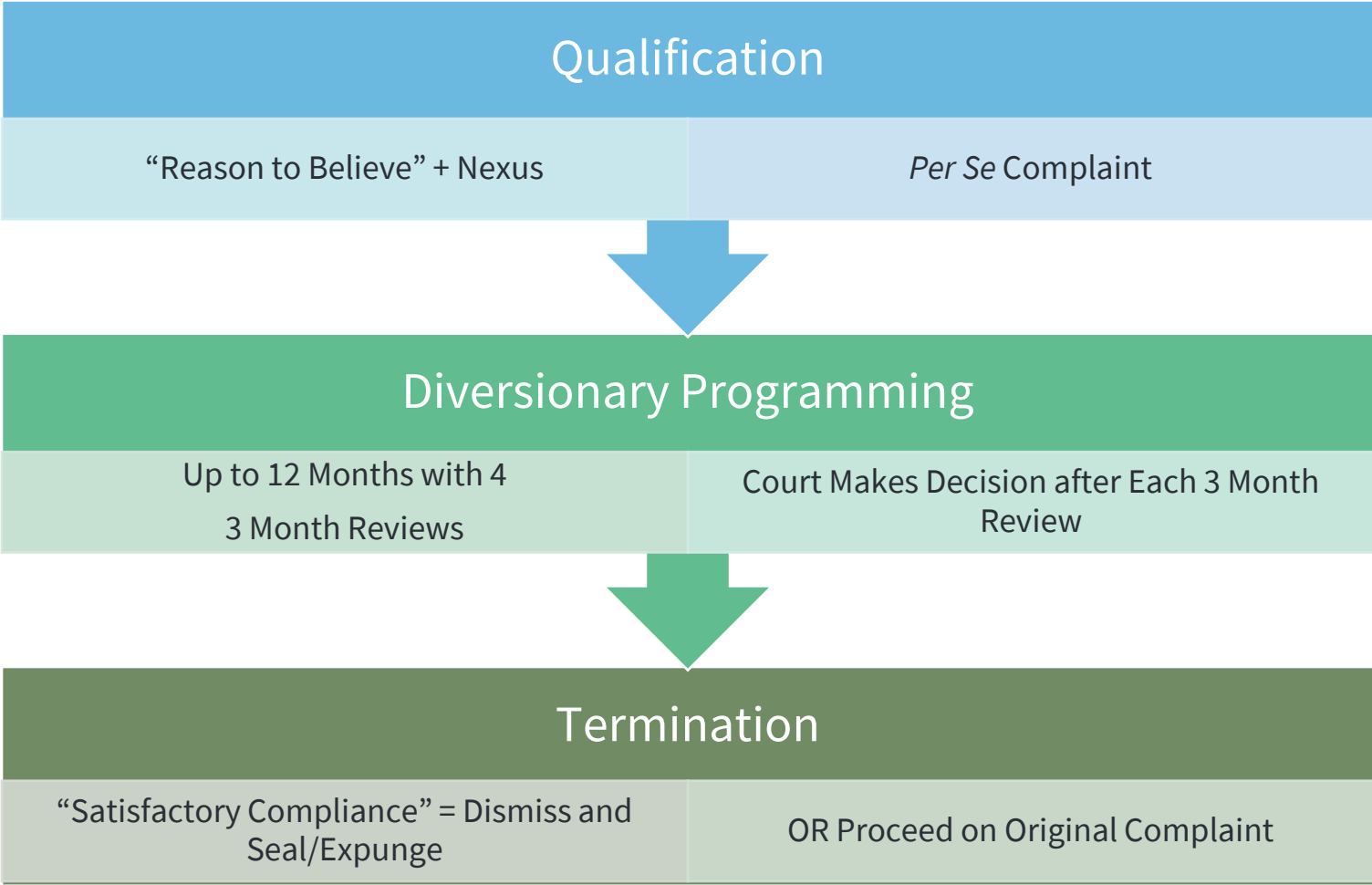


# WHAT IS SAFE HARBOR?

- A way for juvenile courts to intervene when trafficked youth are charged with complaints as a result of trafficking
- Diversion
- Abeyance
- Delinquency/Unruly
  - Statute does not speak to Abuse, Neglect, Dependency cases
  - Relevant AND/DNA cases should be connected to appropriate programming



# SAFE HARBOR DIVERSION OVERVIEW



# *Case Studies*



# CASE STUDY ACTIVITY

Consider:

- Is this a case of human trafficking?
- What indicators have you identified?
- What services needs might this individual have?



# Case Study #1

Jamil is 14 years old and lives with his mother in an apartment. Even though she works two jobs, his mother struggles to make ends meet. Jamil spends a lot of time home alone, and the landlord often asks Jamil to help him with some projects around the building to keep him busy. For the last 3 months, while they are hanging out, the landlord makes Jamil perform oral sex and sometimes takes pictures of him during the sex acts. The landlord told Jamil and his mother that he would not evict them as long as Jamil keeps hanging out with him.

Case studies #1-2 from Capacity Building Center for States. (2015). "Child welfare response to child & youth sex trafficking: Caseworker's curriculum." Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



## Case Study #2

Nelson lives in South America. His home was a place where organized crime, enabled by political corruption, controlled everything. Access to services such as school and healthcare were nearly non-existent. Anxious and exhausted, Nelson heard that some of his friends found safety and good jobs in the United States. His aunt told him about a guide who could help him travel through Central America to the U.S. The guide told Nelson that he would owe just a little bit of money for the trip and that he could pay it back later once he started working.

When Nelson arrived in the U.S. the guide told him that he owed \$20,000 for the trip. Nelson was stunned. The guide took Nelson to a factory where he would work off his debt. After two weeks, Nelson received his first paycheck but his supervisor made him sign it over. She told Nelson he had to do this to repay his debt. The supervisor also charged Nelson for rent and for transportation to and from work, further increasing the debt he owed. When Nelson complained about the high prices, the supervisor threatened to hurt Nelson's family back home. She showed Nelson photos of his younger siblings and said she could get to them at any moment. Nelson continued working for two years, but never knew how much debt he paid off.



## Case Study #3

Ashley is 16 years old. She lives with her 84-year-old grandmother, who also takes care of her four younger siblings. The week before her first day of school, Ashley realizes they don't have enough money to buy her school uniform and supplies. One of her friends suggests she go down to the local gas station and "stand on the corner" to make money. Within 15 minutes of standing on the corner, a man offers her \$50 for an oral sex act. Ashley agrees because \$50 will pay for her school uniform.





## Case Study #4

Lishan grew up in East Africa. Due to political discord and lack of economic opportunity, they did not feel safe at home. Lishan was lured by a broker to accept a “good, well-paying” job working for a family in the Middle East. Lishan paid the broker all the money they had for transportation and job placement. The broker took them to a home where they would work and promised Lishan that they would only be working 40 hours per week, cleaning, and making good money.

That first day, the head of the household took Lishan’s documents. Lishan is ordered to cook, clean, care for the children, and manage the household. Lishan has to work 18 hours a day to complete all the tasks and is not paid for their work. They feel trapped because they do not speak the local language and do not know where they are. When they ask about pay, they are scolded and threatened with deportation. After continued resistance, the head of household tells them they have a new job. Instead of cleaning and childcare, they will take visitors. Lishan is expected to perform sex acts with whoever is sent to them. Lishan believes the head of household is receiving payment from the visitors, but receives no money themselves. When they object, they are hit and locked in a room.

One day, the head of household tells Lishan that they are all going to the United States. Once they arrive, they continue to work in the home without pay, now also having to cook for and clean up after their hosts in the US.



## CASE STUDY #5

Amanda lives with her mother and three younger siblings. They relocate frequently because it is hard for her mother to make enough money to maintain housing. Amanda's mother was in a car accident and struggles with pain management. She was prescribed medication, which she recently started selling to help make ends meet.

One day, Amanda's mother tells her that she gets to take some time off school. She tells her that she needs to make some deliveries, because she is too tired to do it herself. Amanda visits some neighbors and collects money in exchange for the pills. Amanda is nervous, so she just tries to move quickly and brings all the money back to her mother. This continues for a few weeks. Then, Amanda's mother takes her to the store and tells her to hide several items in her pockets. Amanda protests, but her mother tells her that if she does not do what she says, then the whole family will be thrown out on the street and it will be Amanda's fault. They walk out without getting caught. Amanda's mother makes her do this a few times a week, while she turns the items over to her boyfriend so he can re-sell them for cash.

A few days later, Amanda gets caught and is arrested for theft. She is sent to juvenile court and meets with intake staff. Staff notice that Amanda is not attending school, seems nervous to talk to them, and avoids their questions when her mother is nearby.



# *Responding* to Human Trafficking



## IF YOU SUSPECT HUMAN TRAFFICKING...

- If there is someone in immediate danger, call 911
- Follow mandatory reporting protocols for reporting child abuse
- The National Human Trafficking Hotline
  - 24/7 hotline: **1-888-373-7888**
  - [Humantraffickinghotline.org](https://www.humantraffickinghotline.org)





# Tools for Identification

- Available through Ohio Human Trafficking Taskforce at <http://humantrafficking.ohio.gov>:
  - *Vera Institute Tool for the Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking*
  - *Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Screening tool*
- Additional tools available through Shared Hope International, Covenant House, Polaris
- *Ohio Department of Youth Services Human Trafficking Screening Tool*
  - *Virtual training is available on CE Broker or the Ohio Department of Public Safety Training Campus-**See handout for more information!***



# RESPONSE RESOURCES

- To create or strengthen your community response, consult existing resources:

## Child Response Protocol Toolkit

- Assists in developing community partnerships, provides a best practice model, offers strategies for survivor engagement

## Ohio's Standards for Services to Trafficked Persons

- Reviews ethical guidelines for serving survivors of trafficking in multiple capacities

### Protocol for Serving Child Victims of Human Trafficking in Ohio

August 2017



This Protocol was developed in collaboration by Governor Kasich's Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, Attorney General Mike DeWine's Human Trafficking Commission, the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers and the Ohio Network of Anti-Trafficking Coalitions.



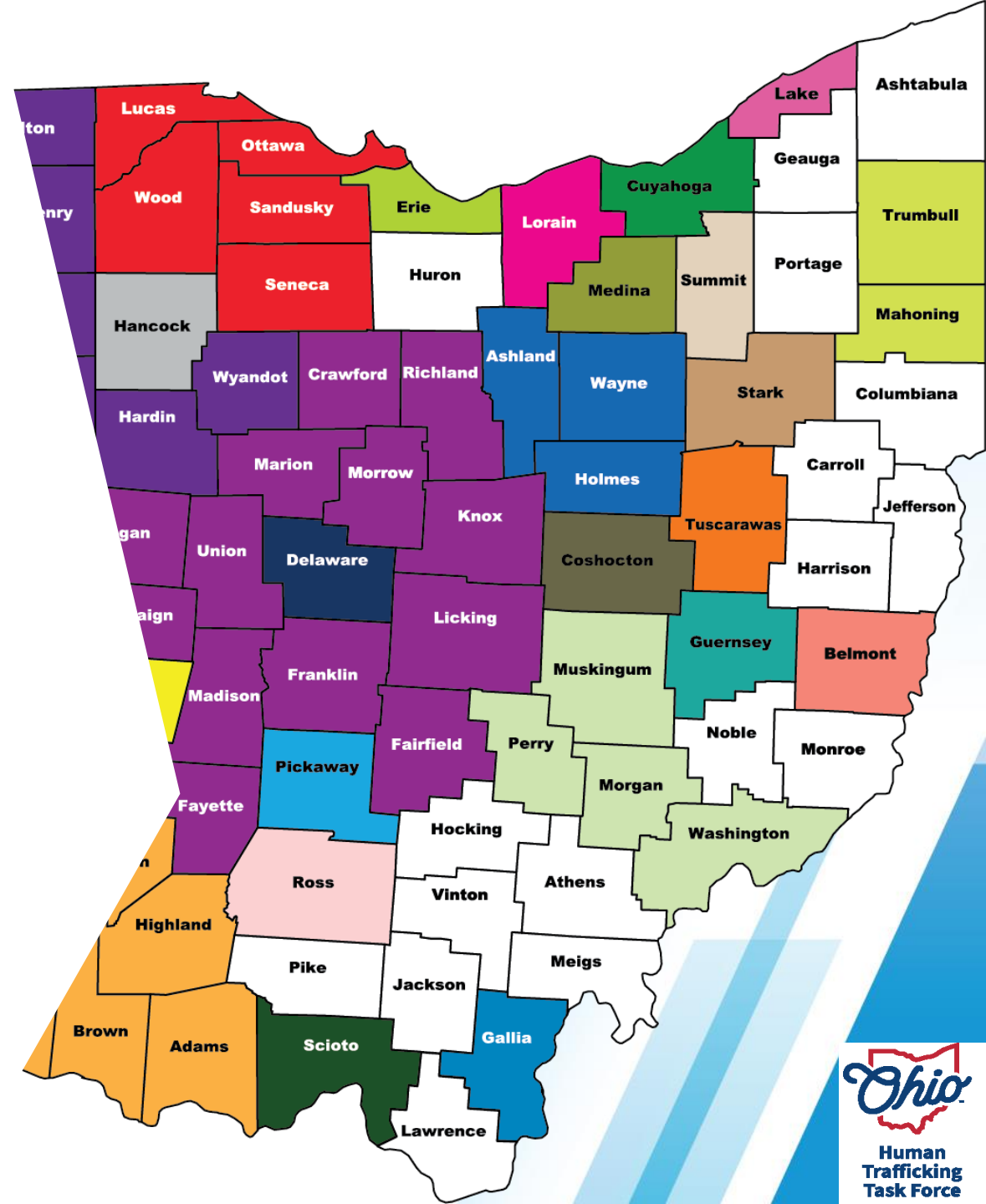
\*Both available at [humantrafficking.ohio.gov/response.html](https://humantrafficking.ohio.gov/response.html)





## Partner with Local Anti-Trafficking Coalition

- Local Coalition:
- Coalitions marshal local efforts to
  - Prevent
  - Protect
  - Prosecute
  - Partner
- [Humantrafficking.ohio.gov](http://Humantrafficking.ohio.gov)
- Publicize the National Human Trafficking Hotline
  - 1-888-373-7888 – 24/7



# Questions?

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