



# Safe Spaces: Combating Human Trafficking in Recovery Housing



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

# Learning Objectives

1

Understand the intersections of substance abuse and human trafficking, as well as the unique vulnerabilities faced by individuals in recovery.

2

Implement best practices for creating safe and supportive recovery housing environments, including trauma-informed care and effective referral systems for trafficking victims.

3

Enhance services for trafficking survivors, drawing on insights from lived experiences and collaborative approaches to combat trafficking in recovery settings.

# The Ohio Human Trafficking Initiative

- Reconstituted in 2019 by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost
- Builds awareness
- Empowers Ohioans to take action in their communities
- Strengthens victim services
- Ensures that traffickers and sex buyers are brought to justice
- Oversees the Human Trafficking Commission and seven subcommittees
- Survivor leaders – the Ambassador Advisory Council

Request a training, get involved, or contact us: [HTI@OhioAGO.gov](mailto:HTI@OhioAGO.gov)



# Before We Begin...



**Remain non-judgmental**



**Take care of yourself**

We are here to debrief and support as needed



**Time for questions at the end,  
but feel free to ask  
throughout!**

## Human Trafficking

This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against their will.

**Force, fraud or coercion need not be present if the individual engaging in commercial sex is under the age of 18 years of age.**

## Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the act of individuals performing a commercial sex act by force, fraud or coercion.

## Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking is when individuals are forced to perform labor or services by force, fraud or coercion. Labor trafficking includes situations of debt bondage, forced labor and involuntary child labor.

# “Compel”

Established if the state proves that the offender overcame the victim's will by:

- Force
- Fear
- Duress
- Intimidation
- Furnishing or offering a controlled substance to the victim
- By manipulating the victim's controlled substance addiction

# The Reality of Human Trafficking

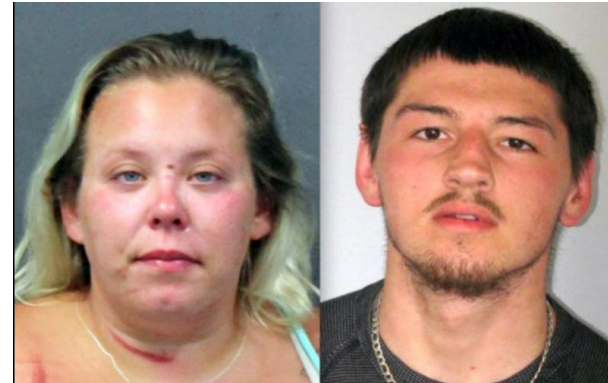
Multi-billion-dollar  
global industry

Traffickers treat  
people like goods

Someone forces  
another person to  
engage in sex for  
money or to work for  
little or no money

The force the  
trafficker uses can be  
physical, mental,  
emotional, etc.

# Who are the Exploiters?





# Vulnerable People

Traffickers may look for certain vulnerabilities to exploit in their victims, including some of the following:

- ▶ Mental health concerns
- ▶ Alcohol or drug use
- ▶ Involvement with the child welfare system
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Risk of deportation
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Prior sexual abuse
- ▶ Unstable home environment/separation from a parent



# Where Do Traffickers Recruit Victims?



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# Human Trafficking & Substance Abuse

## Polaris – National Survivor Survey, 2023

- Of 457 survivors surveyed:
  - 93% reported experiencing substance abuse and mental health challenges
  - 93% lived with someone who experienced substance abuse and mental health challenges
  - 62% reported that at some point in their childhood, they struggled with substance abuse, including alcohol or illicit or prescription drugs
  - “Clearly there is a need for increased prevention efforts targeted at youth, especially youth who regularly experience food or housing insecurity, substance abuse, or household instability.”

# How Substances are Used in HT



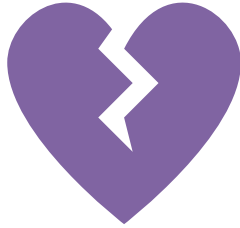
Recruitment

Control

Familial  
trafficking

Coping  
mechanism

# HT in Recovery Housing



People in recovery housing  
may already be victims

How can we support?



People may be recruited in  
recovery housing

How can we prevent?

# Primary Prevention

Ensuring basic needs  
are met

Connection to positive  
social supports

Human  
trafficking/exploitation  
training for staff

Safe reporting and  
communication options

Fostering multi-  
disciplinary  
relationships

# Primary Prevention

Ensuring access to comprehensive, appropriate training on healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, sexuality, and exploitation

Providing financial literacy education

Providing education on rights and resources

Giving online safety tips

# Trauma-Informed Care






# Suggestions for Professionals

Consider the survivor's behaviors, choices and mental health condition/diagnoses within the context of the cycle of violence and trauma



“Resistance” or “non-cooperation”

- Reframe as protection for self and others
  - Explore: “what is safer about doing that?” (i.e. staying or not reporting)
- 

Respond appropriately to disclosures



Documentation that accurately reflects pattern of abuse by the perpetrator and impacts on the survivor



Advocate for survivors by helping them and others understand the dynamics of abuse

# Specific Questions to Consider

How did you become involved in substance use?

Who is your primary contact in the drug trade?

Do you have access to your finances and identification documents?

Are you able to freely come and go as you please?

Do you feel safe in your current circumstances?

Have you been threatened or physically harmed by anyone involved in the drug trade?

# Addressing the Specific Needs of HT Survivors

## Immediate Needs

- Medical attention
- Safe housing
- Food, water, clothing
- Translation services
- Legal guardianship
- Safety plan

## Short-Term Needs

- Transitional housing
- Financial assistance
- Legal assistance
- Victim's advocacy services
- Transportation
- Medical & dental care
- Childcare
- Case management
- Mental health counseling

## Long-Term Needs

- Stable housing
- Consistent form of income
- Education
- Life skills / employment training
- Advanced trauma therapy

# Importance of Collaboration



Learn from other community partners



Increase of knowledge of local resources



Smooth systems for survivors

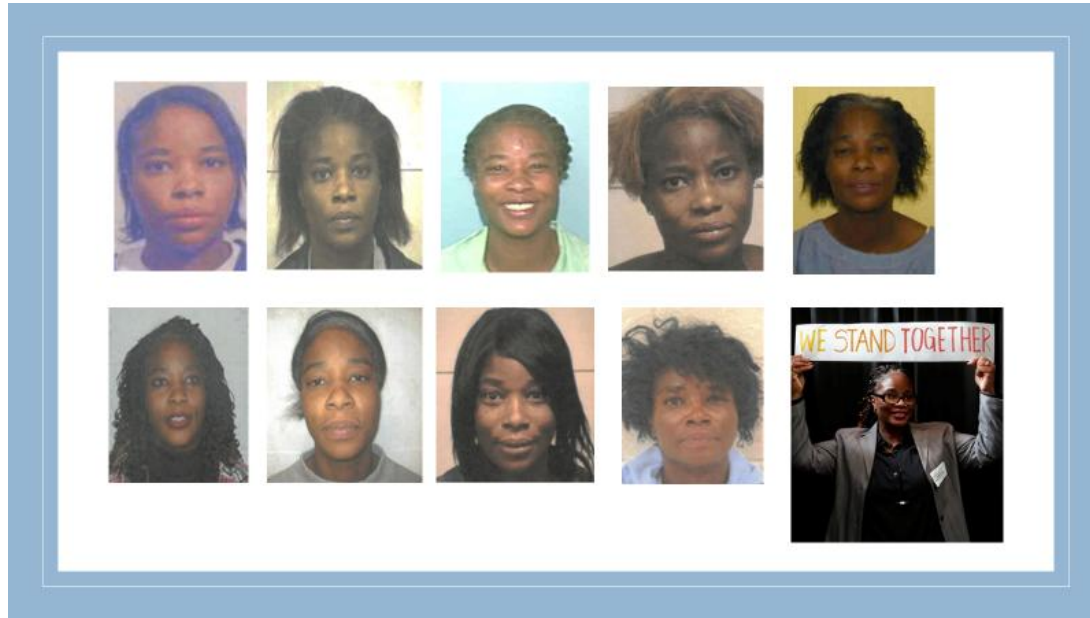


Learn best practices in serving the population



Promote healthy boundaries by operating within role and limits

# Enhancing Support Strategies: Annette's Experience



(Owner: A. Mango, 2023)

# Ohio's Human Trafficking Coalitions



# The NEW Ohio Statewide HT Hotline 844-END-OHHT (844-363-6448)

This hotline is helpful  
when...

Someone wants to  
report potential human  
trafficking occurring in  
Ohio

Someone wants their  
report to be referred to  
local law enforcement  
handling human  
trafficking cases

# National HT Hotline

## 888-373-7888 or text 233733

This  
hotline is  
helpful  
when...

- Someone wants to report potential HT that has occurred in multiple states and/or outside of Ohio
- Someone does not need an immediate law enforcement response
- Someone needs assistance or resources outside of state-specific boundaries or when traveling
- A victim needs emotional support or resources





# How to Contact Us

Human Trafficking Initiative

[HTI@OhioAGO.gov](mailto:HTI@OhioAGO.gov)

Our Website

[www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/humantrafficking](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/humantrafficking)



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