



COALITIONS' ROLE IN ENDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Within the past decade, the issue of human trafficking has become more recognized as media, victim rights movements, law enforcement, and communities grapple with the definitions of trafficking, the needs of survivors, and strategies around awareness and prevention. It affects people of all ages and genders and can occur both domestically and internationally. Victims are often targeted due to social inequities and poverty.

Coalitions have long been aware of and have worked to address the issue of trafficking as it intersects with sexual violence. Some coalitions are still developing tailored plans to effectively serve trafficking survivors, and others are already well on their way. As a movement, we continue to struggle to integrate trafficking survivors into mainstream services created for sexual assault victims. Coalitions understand this issue but are struggling to keep up with the evolving legislative trends and the demand from system partners to fill the service gaps. Many of us continue to struggle to fit trafficking into our scope of work. Local service providers don't always have ways to identify survivors of trafficking or have the capacity to provide effective resources for them. Many coalitions, as discussed at the RSP Topical Meeting on Human Trafficking in June 2015, have identified a clear need to train our member programs so that we can better recognize, be accessible to, and serve trafficking survivors.

The Maine Trafficking & Exploitation Network has said, "We can't think of trafficking as separate from other challenges—such as response to child sexual abuse and early trauma, mental health needs, or drug use and addiction—and we have to acknowledge that the infrastructure that prevents and responds to those challenges is the same one that will address trafficking needs."

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is currently broken into two specific categories: labor trafficking and sex trafficking. However, there is so much overlap between the categories that our advocacy often cannot address one without the other.

Labor trafficking is an exploitative employment scheme in which individuals perform labor or services through use of force, fraud, and/or coercion. Bonded labor, or "debt bondage," exists when labor is demanded of a victim as repayment of a loan. An example of this may occur when an immigrant is charged a fee for help to migrate to the United States, only to be forced into labor in order to pay off the debt. Bonded labor is the least visible but most widely used method of trafficking. Forced labor occurs whenever a victim is forced to work against his or her will under threat of violence or punishment—which often takes on the form of sexual assault,

beatings, or another type of violent behavior. A degree of ownership is then exerted over the victim as the trafficker purports to control the victim.

In contrast to labor trafficking, sex trafficking involves the obtaining of a person for the purpose of (not always, but usually) a *commercial* sex act oftentimes coerced by force or threat, or in which a minor under the age of 18 is forced or coerced to perform the commercial sex act.

THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As coalitions and advocates come together to fight against oppression and sexual violence, it's important that we find a way for trafficking, in all its various and complex forms, to fit into these larger issues. Many of our member programs already serve victims of human trafficking.

An overarching history of sexual violence and trauma exists within the human trafficking system. Many survivors who are trafficked have already experienced trauma outside of the labor and/or sex trafficking that's taking place. This creates a very long history of sexual victimization which can contribute to a person's ongoing involvement in human trafficking and can normalize the experience, which can effectively decrease a survivor's ability to eventually seek help or identify outside of "the life."

Trafficking survivors oftentimes won't identify as a trafficking victim, and we cannot define that for them in the same way we can't define rape for those who have been sexually assaulted. Every experience is different and each survivor copes in ways that are unique to them. We also need to understand the parallels that exist when talking about survivors' experiences. There are many intersections of oppression and marginalization with trafficking. Statistics on the scope of the problem, demographics, and risk factors are inconsistent. As with sexual assault, trafficking is underreported.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR THE FIELD

Philosophical divergence

The anti-sexual assault movement grew from a survivor-centered, survivor-driven foundation whereas anti-trafficking work has had a large criminal justice-centered impetus. Where we used to push law enforcement to investigate rape, they now push us to, for example, shelter trafficking victims. Many of the organizations doing anti-trafficking work in our states and territories were founded with strong criminal justice support and involvement. This affects the service needs and puts pressure on sexual assault providers to respond to their law enforcement partners in different ways, although the requests are often outside the scope of defined work, program capacity, or approach to services.

We also see anti-sex trafficking momentum from religious affiliated groups and organizations. Many church groups have made this a central issue of their charity work or, sometimes, evangelism. Nationally, we have seen a growth of religious-based human trafficking organizations applying a rescue and restore model which can be in conflict with the empowerment-based models of the anti-violence field.

As a movement we know where we stand on the issue of sexual violence, we have developed and instituted best practices, and we continue to evolve from a common foundational philosophy. We know we disagree with some of the emerging responses, but have we fleshed out our philosophy regarding trafficking and the natural intersections therein?

Capacity

We know that our member programs are already working with survivors of human trafficking. Advocates have been struggling to fit these survivors into existing services and feeling frustrated when they cannot find appropriate referrals or services to fill the gaps or, simply, find an organization who can provide for the full scope of needs.

Empowerment-based advocacy can be beneficial for trafficking victims but often times, additional intensive case management is necessary and for longer periods of time than we generally provide to sexual violence survivors. For example, trafficking victims may need help to get brands or tattoos removed, may have criminal records that may or may not be able to be expunged, or have other needs that are unique to trafficking victimization. Working with defense attorneys who represent survivors may be a new experience for many local sexual assault programs. Additionally, the multiple traumas experienced over long periods of time by trafficking survivors make for new and complex cases with which advocates may not have had experience. Sexual assault advocates continue to feel unsure of their role working with trafficking survivors and look to their coalition for training, screening tools, best practice guidelines, and funding advocacy. The foundations of advocacy—empowerment, choice, collaboration, safety, trust—and the skills of advocates apply to human trafficking, but advocates may need assistance further developing additional, specific advocacy strategies.

Coalitions have recognized one of the largest service gaps to be housing when working with trafficking survivors. Trafficking survivors often need years of transitional housing while many of our shelters are designed for shorter stays, from 30 - 90 days. Domestic violence shelters' definition (often defined by funders or statute) of who they accept for housing oftentimes does not include trafficking survivors unless there is a primary presenting or co-occurring domestic violence issue. Screening tools used by shelters often assess danger and survivor-defined need to assess eligibility. However, shelters often receive calls from law enforcement defining the need or advocating for shelter with a trafficking survivor who may not want it or qualify for it. This puts the shelter advocates in an uncomfortable position with their system partners and, as

such, domestic violence and dual agencies struggle to fit trafficking victims in their scope of shelter programs. What's more, some programs find that many trafficking survivors who have become traffickers (often by force or coercion) can use shelters for recruitment, drafting situationally disadvantaged women in need of money and protection that can be offered by a trafficker. In some cases, trafficking survivors might be unaccompanied minors. However, many shelters only take minors who are accompanied by an adult guardian. Most minors who are trafficking survivors are not accompanied by a safe adult or legally emancipated .

Community sexual assault programs are trying to find ways to structure coordinated community response teams or use existing SARTs to address trafficking in their communities, and have had mixed results. Often we see trafficking victims being served by a number of organizations in certain niches: youth focused, culturally specific, religiously affiliated, or sometimes law enforcement- or government-driven. Trafficking services become fragmented and yet coordinated community responses can become very large with many players.

Sexual assault coalitions and advocacy agencies often report they are inundated with requests to attend, table, present at, or co-sponsor anti-trafficking forums and film screenings organized by religious associations and youth groups. An influx of volunteers that want to do trafficking work or donate specifically to trafficking victims are not finding a fit at their local rape crisis centers and often forging out on their own, creating more "pop-up" anti-trafficking organizations that might not understand the dynamics of sexual violence or embrace empowerment-based services. With the growing numbers of trafficking groups, centers and coalitions struggle to keep a finger on the pulse of trafficking work in their communities and viable referrals and partnerships.

Legislative challenges

As with local pop-up trafficking organizations, coalitions have been challenged by national groups making the rounds to each state or territory, putting forth legislation without consulting the state or territory-wide coalition. National trafficking advocates are often not aware of a state's or territory's political climate as a whole or the way state and territory coalitions monitor and carefully plan their lobbying efforts.

In addition to national groups, individual legislators might feel called to address trafficking, sometimes causing a chain reaction to neighboring states and passing well-intentioned but toothless or even harmful statutes. Sometimes, because of the conflation that exists between sex trafficking and prostitution, compounded by legislators' own morality, we see legislation targeting and criminalizing human trafficking survivors *and* non-trafficked sex workers. Trafficking survivors themselves will sometimes initiate legislation, which can put our coalitions in a difficult and awkward place. For example, in one state a mandatory arrest bill was introduced that came from a trafficking survivor who felt her arrest was her opportunity for

freedom and healing. Coalitions are put in an uncomfortable position of honoring survivor-led legislation or working against a law harmful to the many other survivors with differing experiences. This challenge isn't a new one for coalitions, as many of us have seen legislation initiated by sexual violence survivors, but the different context of the violence and the stakeholders involved can mean a new strategy is required of us.

CASE STUDIES FROM COALITIONS

At the RSP Topical Meeting on Human Trafficking in June, 2015, several coalitions shared highlights of the work they have done on human trafficking.

Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Maine is a small state with lots of geography but very few people. In fact, its population density is among the lowest in the country. It's overwhelmingly white (97%). Most of the ethnic diversity that does exist in Maine is made up of immigrant and refugee communities.

Through the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the Maine Sex Trafficking & Exploitation Network (Maine STEN) was developed to provide training, technical assistance, and resources to direct service providers engaged in anti-trafficking efforts in that state. Part of Maine STEN's plan also included community awareness and public policy support and was supported by a statewide Sex Trafficking Service Provider Council (also a program of MECASA).

Through MECASA and Maine STEN's efforts, 500 direct service advocates and law enforcement officials were trained on human trafficking. These trainings were built on existing efforts and curricula, and reliant on local expertise and information. The trainings were facilitated by people with different expertise, and were built to be inclusive of survivors. Their initial training efforts have grown into a statewide Training-of-Trainers program, where local anti-trafficking multidisciplinary team members can learn how to present the "Human Trafficking in Maine: Identification and Response" training, which is victim-centered and empowerment-based.

Goals of MECASA's program included:

- Standardizing the victim service and statewide approach response to trafficking by building on existing infrastructure and resources,
- Developing messaging and media guides,
- Building capacity and expertise of local providers.

MECASA benefited from a shared statewide philosophy as it generated a pool of new ideas and wisdom to create locally built best practices around trafficking and its survivors. Most importantly, this philosophy included trauma-informed, evidence-based victim services based on an empowerment model of service provision and recovery to support a survivor's autonomy and self-determination. (Maine STEN's philosophy was adapted from the Wisconsin Human Trafficking Protocol and Resource Manual, 2012.)

CAWS North Dakota

CAWS North Dakota, a dual-service coalition, needed to address trafficking with the influx of the oil boom. With the development and growth of oil, infrastructures across the state have experienced incredible strain. A national spotlight was aimed on North Dakota and the explosion of trafficking that occurred there as oil workers came into the state.

Collaborating with CAWS North Dakota, a statewide anti-trafficking coalition in North Dakota formed called the Force to End Human Sexual Exploitation (FUSE). FUSE identified and created a space for advocates, direct service providers, law enforcement, and allied partners to develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive, and survivor-driven response to the sex trafficking crisis. Law enforcement understood and identified the crucial role of advocates in aiding successful investigations and prosecutions.

In November 2014, FUSE organized a statewide summit on human trafficking in the state capital of Bismarck with over 200 attendees. The summit included survivor stories, breakout sessions with law enforcement, best practices for trafficking survivors, how to provide victim-centered services, policy discussion, and more.

In spring 2015, North Dakota legislators passed a comprehensive bill to provide funding to address trafficking survivors' needs. The funding was used to develop a statewide protocol for intervention and response in human trafficking cases, and to provide training.

North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault

The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) was instrumental in beginning the conversation in its state by co-founding the North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NCCAHT) with the North Carolina Attorney General's office in 2004. NCCASA helped develop a manual on human trafficking specific to North Carolina, in addition to conducting trainings at workshops and conferences across the state for victim service providers and law enforcement. The Human Trafficking Resource Packets that NCCASA distributed during its trainings included brochures, handouts, pamphlets, wallet cards, posters, and was translated to be available in English, Spanish, Russian, Thai, Korean, Mandarin, and Indonesian.

NCCASA'S prevention programs that developed through NCCAHT include:

- Project REVEAL (Reaching and Empowering Trafficking Victims through Education, Advocacy, and Legislation). Project REVEAL educates and provides outreach to vulnerable populations of children and focuses on developing positive self-images and age-appropriate, healthy views of gender roles and sexuality.
- Project Connect. A volunteer coordination program that has enlisted and trained volunteers from numerous disciplines to help expand prevention work into more workplaces and organizations.

NCCASA continues to coordinate and monitor case management and legal services for survivors of human trafficking, and collaborates with law enforcement and others to assist victims and pursue prosecution of trafficking.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COALITIONS

Have the conversation

A good place to start engaging with the issue of human trafficking is through an internal conversation. If your organization hasn't done any trafficking work (and maybe even if it has), you probably have not defined the issue and explored philosophical approaches to the work.

Conversations on human trafficking will eventually lead down some roads we perhaps have not been ready to take yet. Inherent in these conversations are the sometimes controversial intersectional issues like sex work and pornography.

It's difficult to come to a consensus on where you stand regarding sex work and pornography. This is sometimes a point of contention, and conflation of adult sex work and sex trafficking can occur. Begin with exploring some definitions before you deliberate a position.

- How you define sex trafficking?
- Adult sex work?
- Domestic minor sex trafficking?
- Child exploitation?
- Online commercial sex trade?
- Arranged marriages?

Philosophically, many of us who believe in personal agency as a foundation for advocacy and survivor healing struggle with this issue as we parse out whether or not people involved in sex work ever actively make the choice to be a part of sex work or if they are forced into it due to social, economic, or other reasons. Your coalition will be faced with making a decision, taking a position, and/or navigating a gray area. Coalition staff don't always all agree on an issue, so it may be helpful as you discuss to parse out individual positions from the coalition's position.

- Do we see adult prostitution as inherently sex trafficking or not? Where does the anti-sexual violence movement intersect with sex work and pornography?
- Where is your coalition's stance on sex work?
- What other intersections do you find with trafficking?

As we move into more nuanced conversations approaches and opinions continue to diverge and cause some contention, even among our coalition staff. Provide space for staff members to discuss and explore their personal perspectives and opinions, as this supports staff and enhances

our intersectionality knowledge and approach. However, in the end, it is critical to have a conversation about the coalition perspective and strategy.

- How do we support all of our staff as they become invested and committed in this work?
- How can we have disagreements that remain respectful and are productive for the coalition and our work with survivors?

Having these framing conversations will set the stage to move into more meaningful work and relationship building. If you do not know where you stand as a coalition, pop-up organizations will put you to the test.

- How do you finesse relationships with partners that will have a different perspective from your agency or you personally?
- How do we work with people who are opposed to the philosophy of our organizations?
- How do we do this work without alienating others who have similar missions but completely different philosophies?

Ultimately, advocacy teaches us that each individual has a right to decide how to approach, define, and heal from their victimization. We may have defined it in our organizations or the state/territory may have defined it, yet fundamentally our job is not to decide or define what happens to a survivor or how they name their experience. We provide the resources a survivor asks for or find someone who can. This can be a place to come together with system partners, our member programs, and organizations serving trafficking survivors.

Coalitions and local programs have to be a part of this work because there are too many intersections between human trafficking and sexual violence and too many survivors going unserved for us to stand on the sideline. So instead of “Do we have the capacity to do this work?” we ask ourselves, “How much can we take on now, where might it be a natural fit, and what is our plan for building our capacity?”

Build capacity

As part of our collective mission to promote a society free from sexual violence and all forms of oppression, it’s important that we recognize the varying needs that exist for trafficking survivors. Advocates find many challenges serving human trafficking survivors are related to the capacity of their rape crisis organization. We understand already overwhelmed rape crisis centers cannot be all things to all people.

- How can we help define the scope of work that includes support and systems for trafficking survivors without putting a strain on the centers?
- What training and support do member programs need to adapt their advocacy techniques to the unique needs of human trafficking survivors?
- What other parallels in our work are a good fit for trafficking survivors?
- When we revisit our basic foundations of sexual assault advocacy, what do we find there for trafficking survivors?

As coalitions, we know our member services are seeing victims of human trafficking but haven't necessarily collected concrete data to illustrate this. Rape crisis centers have been approaching trafficking survivors from a sexual assault standard when there may be additional (known or unknown) factors on the table. We as coalitions need to be working with our member services to develop systems to identify trafficking survivors. Data can lead to more successful grant applications and appeals for funded services.

- Are there existing systems that might be modified or lend themselves to tracking more of this data?
- How can we collect the information we need with the smallest impact to programs?

VOCA and VAWA dollars are both avenues for trafficking services funding and new funding sources will be presenting themselves as this issue garners more public interest.

- In conversations your coalition is having around the VOCA cap raise, is there a place or a need for trafficking services that would be a good fit?
- Are there restrictions to current funding streams in your state that define sexual assault strictly and inadvertently disqualify trafficking victims?

As much as possible, we can work to develop more comprehensive resources and help define the scope of work our member programs have the capacity to address. It can be difficult for us to "sell" the advocacy piece of human trafficking to our agencies if we don't know what model to present as best practice and programs feel alone or burdened in their work.

Outreach work can mirror approaches our movement has taken with many underserved populations, such as the "know your rights" outreach done with migrant farm workers. Having conversations about legal rights and ways we can support trafficking survivors with civil and legal remedies bolster more opportunities and space for self-identification. These approaches open the door for conversations and disclosures of debt bondage, forced labor, forced sexual servitude, ongoing sexual harassment and rape within their place of work and/or place of living, and other concerns. Outreach is about making sure people know their rights so they can make decision for themselves around sex and labor.

Consider the intersections with oppression

While awareness of human trafficking has grown exponentially, many of its survivors remain largely invisible to the general public. The image that often moves the general public to action is a young, 13-year-old white girl who has been sold into the sex trade. This does exist within the umbrella of trafficking; however, we know the issue is much more complex and diverse. We have seen trafficking awareness approaches highlighting white victims over victims of color. This approach effectively capitalizes on white supremacy, moving white people in power to action on the issue that affects *their* children. Race valuing has been a conspicuous issue in the movement to end commercial minor sex trafficking. This fragmentation of trafficking excludes many more

victims of color in labor trafficking and global as well as domestic sex trafficking. It limits the holistic social justice approaches to indeed address trafficking and intersecting risk factors like poverty and immigration.

“Modern Slavery” is a common phrase meant to impress the severity of trafficking to the general public and to define a situation for victims. However, this language tends to be problematic because it is not nuanced enough. It brings to mind different concepts for different people and carries with it different cultural relevancies based on cultural histories. African people stolen and brought to the U.S. were slaves; their victimization was codified and institutionalized by the state. Now, the state has laws against human trafficking and is active in investigation and prosecution. Additionally, uses of this terminology can obscure the complexity of the dynamics between traffickers and trafficking victims to both survivors and the public at large.

In addition to racial disparities, there are cultural norms that must be considered in how we define trafficking. For example, arranged marriages are considered trafficking by some or may be defined through law or policy as such. There may be some examples where an arranged marriage might be trafficking, but it is also a cultural practice for many. Culturally specific organizations have been helpful in pointing out these mistaken assertions and creating strategies that are culturally appropriate, empowering, and respectful.

- How can we be inclusive and culturally relevant in our trafficking work?
- What culturally specific organizations are already doing this work and how can we honor it as we move forward to address gaps?
- How can we be intentional with our messaging and outreach that is meaningful to survivors?
- What are the important intersections between anti-trafficking and anti-oppression work?

Come to the table

Coalitions and member centers want to come to the trafficking table but, in some cases, may be coming a bit late. While many sexual assault coalitions are making strides to become a part of government taskforces addressing human trafficking and the needs of survivors, again, there can be a lot of new people at the table with differing agendas or divergent plans to achieve similar goals. Trafficking is complex and the work requires us to navigate systems that we oftentimes disagree with at our most fundamental levels.

- Who are the key stakeholders in your state or territory?
- Which of them do you have existing relationships with?
- Who is operating in a more closely related field or philosophy? Who is not?

Getting a handle on pop-up organizations and rescue and restore models of service should be a priority. Help to steer the new attention and passion for this issue to a constructive place. If you want to know who is working on these issues in your area, attend a human trafficking committee or sub-committee in your state or territory.

It can be helpful to identify systems where there are natural intersections with trafficking victims and the inherent opportunities for earlier intervention, like foster care and juvenile detention. Additionally, particular locations are rife with trafficking and coalitions should get to know what they are in their state/territory (i.e., large interstates, ports of entry, border states, agriculture, large national events, industries with increased labor needs, etc.) and how that might impact specific member programs and communities.

It's sometimes effective to navigate legislation "behind the scenes," so your coalition doesn't have to publicly oppose something that would appear at face value to be counterintuitive to your mission or goals as an anti-sexual violence organization. Additionally, in some states or territories, sexual assault legislation and services are lacking and it can feel challenging to address trafficking when you haven't been able to move your state/territory on sexual violence issues.

- Are there legislators with anti-trafficking agendas that you can meet with before session starts?
- Are there legislative ways to couple the needs of sexual assault services and survivors with trafficking services and survivors?
- How can you use your trafficking work to highlight sexual assault survivor advocacy?

SUMMARY

As coalitions and advocates come together to address the critical needs of trafficking survivors, it's important we acknowledge the fact that many of us are coming into this from varying perspectives with different levels of knowledge. Advocates are eager to find solutions and to take more meaningful ownership with partner programs to provide tailored services.

While coalitions have much to do working on behalf of sexual assault advocates and survivors in their states or territories, the issue of human trafficking has pushed its way to the forefront and coalitions must decide how they will approach this work. There are many ways we can address the specific needs of trafficking survivors with or without having to make trafficking a central issue to our coalitions. Coalitions need to consider how to frame the issue and the divergent philosophies addressing human trafficking in our respective communities. Coalitions can help lead conversations to bring agencies and systems together, to find a common language and goals, call attention to the capacity issues facing member programs, and collaborate on comprehensive legislative approaches to human trafficking.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES:

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North Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force (2007). *North Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force: RIPPLE (Recognition, Identification, Protection, Prosecution, Liberation, and Empowerment)*.

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This publication discusses human trafficking from the perspective of a criminal justice professional, outlining the realities of human trafficking, the laws that exist both in Texas and nationally, and the victim-centered approach to combating trafficking.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2011-TA-AX-K054 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.