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Utah Human Trafficking Response Assessment

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Executive Summary

The Utah Human Trafficking Response Assessment evaluates the current state of human trafficking efforts in Utah and makes recommendations to advance a comprehensive action plan that strengthens prevention initiatives, protects victims of trafficking through victim services and intervention, holds traffickers and buyers accountable through prosecution, and identifies impactful investment opportunities. Safe House Project interviewed 40+ individuals representing nonprofits/NGOs, state and federal law enforcement, state agencies, and trafficking survivors to provide insight on the current response. The report brings particular attention to opportunities to prevent trafficking through education and early intervention for at-risk populations, protect victims through residential programs and human trafficking specific services, while also dismantling trafficking networks and holding offenders accountable. The success of a comprehensive action plan is dependent on a multi-disciplinary approach in which government agencies, nonprofits, lived experience experts, and private-sector stakeholders collaborate to strengthen the overall efforts of the state.

Prevention

Current State: Deployment of actionable, survivor-informed, trauma-informed trainings to educate key stakeholders on human trafficking is limited. Many trainings implemented by the Utah Trafficking in Persons (UTIP) Task Force are only available in person and on a limited basis. Furthermore, the lack of education is leading to a misclassification of trafficking survivors within the Department of Family and Children Services and the Juvenile Justice System. Victims are not connected to key services that address their complex trauma. Increased education on trafficking, especially for agencies supporting at-risk or vulnerable populations, would allow for early detection and intervention.

Recommendations: Education is a critical component to early intervention, prevention, and identification of trafficking victims. A recurring trauma-informed, survivor-informed, victim-centered training needs to be deployed (online and in person) to law enforcement, Department of Family and Children's Services staff, Juvenile Justice System staff, guardian ad litem, educators, and healthcare workers.

Protection

Current State: Interviewees reported that the greatest need is for trafficking-specific residential programs that provide survivor-centered and trauma-informed services. The breadth of services required includes crisis intervention, transportation assistance, medical and mental health care, substance use disorder treatment, adequate and safe housing, employment services, job training, education, legal support, financial counseling, English language learning and translation, cultural and religious support, and transition assistance. Currently, minor victims of trafficking are being sent to the juvenile justice system, mental health facilities, drug treatment centers, foster care system, group homes, or privatized homes for youth in crisis. None of these programs



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offer trafficking specific programming to address the complex trauma of these minors. Currently, there are no emergency or long-term residential programs for adult survivors. Identified victims who want to enter a residential program are moved out of state. For those who remain in Utah, the victims piece together community services, straining key systems like medical, mental health providers, foster care, juvenile justice, etc. Finally, without services survivors do not stabilize and heal, meaning they are unable to effectively support investigations that aim to prosecute the traffickers and buyers.

Recommendations: Utah needs to establish emergency residential programs to stabilize and assess identified victims. This will provide victims with crisis intervention, stabilization, medical and mental health evaluations, and substance abuse support. Meeting these immediate care needs will support enforcement by providing law enforcement opportunities to collect valuable intelligence and/or evidence. Furthermore, Utah needs a long-term residential program to provide education, life skills development, job skill training, therapeutic services, and other necessary services for trafficking victims. The investment into their holistic well-being and long-term success will help them achieve independence and economic empowerment.

Prosecution

Current State: While the Utah statutes in regards to trafficking have notable areas of needed improvement, there are current laws in place for basic prosecutorial response. However, a consistent report from those involved in the prosecutorial process noted a lack of law enforcement funding and investigative financial resourcing, centralized reporting for law enforcement between state and federal agencies, and case coordination processes. All of these reported issues lead to a lack of trafficking cases investigated on the local level and lack of clarity on jurisdictional responsibility. Ultimately, prosecutorial breakdowns lead victims of trafficking to establish and maintain a distrust of law enforcement and their ability to prosecute traffickers and buyers effectively.

Recommendations: The State of Utah needs to enhance coordination for human trafficking efforts across the state. This includes the establishment of a centralized data collection system and a statewide coordinator. Additionally, advanced training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, must be made available. This training would develop and deploy innovative investigative techniques to disrupt and dismantle human trafficking networks while reducing reliance on victim testimony for successful prosecutions, while being victim-centered, survivor-informed, and trauma-informed.

Three Opportunities for an Impactful Investment

1. Coordinated and Certified Survivor Support System
2. Secure Trafficking Database and Analytics
3. Transformational Policing and Prosecution



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Background

The [Government](#), along with subject matter experts and other stakeholders in the field, have reaffirmed that a collaborative strategy is essential to have true impact on the fight to end human trafficking. Collaboration and coordination is not limited to the operational aspects of various initiatives, but begins with a solid, cohesive funding strategy. In order to understand the full landscape of efforts to address human trafficking in Utah, Safe House Project interviewed government organizations, survivors, nonprofit organizations, and foundations to assess Utah's current strengths and weaknesses in serving trafficking survivors. At the request of one of the largest foundations supporting anti-trafficking efforts in the State of Utah, Safe House Project was able to compile anecdotal and empirical data to make recommendations for a comprehensive funding approach based on current needs.

In 2020, Utah ranked [28th](#) in the country for victim identification per 100k people. The [Asian Association of Utah](#), a leading provider of trafficking services in Utah, reported serving 144 survivors in 2020: 19% of those were minors, 38% were male, and 49% were U.S. citizens. In addition, the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) received 64 reports of suspected human trafficking cases in Utah.

In alignment with the strategy set forth in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), this Utah landscape assessment is divided into three sections: Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution, the pillars of a comprehensive approach to combatting human trafficking.

Prevention is key to long-term eradication of human trafficking. However, it is not possible without a deep understanding of the social determinants, as well as existing efforts and ongoing evaluation relative to the effectiveness of those efforts. It is also imperative that any implemented prevention efforts incorporate a solid understanding of how human trafficking business models shift based on external factors. The first step to prevention is educating key community members on how to identify current trafficking victims. Increased understanding of trafficking in their communities leads to increased victim identification. Safe House Project was able to aggregate information from lived experience experts, law enforcement agencies, nonprofits, and government agencies to inform critical programmatic gaps around early intervention, addressing social determinants to health, and other external factors that are perpetuating human trafficking in communities throughout the state of Utah.

Protection of identified victims is required to provide restorative care to survivors, which will break cycles of victimization, end multi-generational trafficking, help survivors integrate into society, and build the trust needed for the victim to participate in the criminal justice process. Effective protection also enables valuable information sharing to inform preventative measures. Protection also goes beyond residential treatment, extending to laws and policies that allow for the survivor to thrive as a free, productive member of society without being impacted by legal ramifications of their trafficking and repercussions of their traffickers' access to personal identification documents.

Prosecution of both buyers and traffickers is vital to ending trafficking. Currently, human trafficking is seen as a low risk, high (profit) yield crime. Buying commercial sex in many states is still a misdemeanor,



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so the demand is not deterred by current laws. Trafficking is often overlooked by local law enforcement due to a lack of trafficking training and resources.

Prevention

Prevention is a foundational element to the eradication of trafficking in America. Educating students, law enforcement, educators, healthcare workers, and community members on the signs and indicators of trafficking as well as grooming behaviors and recruiting tactics of predators can equip people to identify and report suspected trafficking. Educated with understanding, individuals become empowered to, proactively respond and provide early intervention to *prevent* someone from being trafficked.

Understanding the risk factors, both social and individual, associated with trafficking, as well as the common trafficking business models is critical to informing the prevention of human trafficking in Utah. Safe House Project was able to determine that the following trafficking models were most prevalent in Utah:

Familial Trafficking: This is the act of a family member selling an individual, usually a child, for sex. These victims often experience early childhood sexual abuse, being used in the creation of child pornography, being sold in exchange for drugs or housing, or being sold as child brides within fundamentalist or polygamous communities. This is the largest representation of child trafficking in the state.

Survival Sex: The [National Center for Missing & Reporting Children](#) reports that 1 in 6 runaway and homeless youth are victims of trafficking. According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2020, [3,131](#) people on any given night were experiencing homelessness in the state of Utah. There is large population of runaway and homeless youth engaging in survival sex in exchange for housing, food, and other basic necessities. Oftentimes these youth have run away from home due to reported “religious differences” from parents, drug use, sexual orientation, or to escape reported familial trafficking or sexual abuse.

Drug & Sex Trafficking: There is a clear intersection point between adults trafficking children for drugs, children trafficking each other or themselves for drugs, and traffickers forcing drugs on children to create dependency. The opioid crisis in the state has created a larger population of caucasian, conservative, lower/middle class individuals vulnerable to or experiencing trafficking. Due to the intersectionality of drugs and sex trafficking, law enforcement training on how to identify trafficked individuals in a drug bust is critical to proper identification of victims.

Gangs/Organized Crime: Victims trafficked through gangs and organized crime often have already experienced another form of trafficking or sexual abuse, like the ones previously stated.



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With a history of abuse or trafficking, some trafficking victims end up sold to larger organized crime syndicates that operate throughout the state and into regional markets. St. George is the southern hub for organized trafficking activity within the state with the I-15 running through it, connecting Las Vegas and Salt Lake City.

*Boyfriend Trafficking*¹: This is an unhealthy romantic relationship, even within the context of marriage, that escalates to domestic violence and then trafficking. Recruitment for this form of trafficking is common in schools, religious institutions, workplaces, and through dating apps. Online recruitment by traffickers through a “boyfriending scenario” increased by [97%](#) in 2020.

Safe House Project was also able to determine specific risk factors (societal and individual) that increase vulnerability to trafficking in Utah. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Socioeconomic Status
- Homeless Individuals
- Special Needs/Disability Status (Adults and Children)
- Foster Children/Wards of the State
- Sexual Orientation
- Immigration Status
- Tribal Communities
- Individuals with Adverse Childhood Experiences, especially child sexual abuse²
- Race/Ethnicity

Safe House Project conducted a comparative analysis of the landscape of Utah contrasted against national statistics regarding the race of victims:

Race & Hispanic Origin (Population Data - U.S. Census)	Utah	United States
White alone	90.6%	76.3%
Black or African American alone	1.5%	13.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.6%	1.3%
Asian alone	2.7%	5.9%

¹ In August 2020, Utah’s Domestic Violence Link Line received 189 calls. Abuse was reported by 28% by a (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend; 20.6% by a spouse; 11.6% by a family member; 4.7% by an acquaintance; and, 34.9% were unknown. The number of these cases that are trafficking is unknown because trafficking survivors who call the Link Line are denied services from Domestic Violence and Homeless Shelters, so they do not disclose the trafficking in order to be eligible for emergency services.

² According to the [American Journal of Public Health](#) “ACE composite scores were higher and 6 ACEs indicative of child maltreatment were more prevalent among youths who had human trafficking abuse reports. Sexual abuse was the strongest predictor of human trafficking: the odds of human trafficking was 2.52 times greater for girls who experienced sexual abuse, and there was a 8.21 times greater risk for boys who had histories of sexual abuse.”



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Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	1.1%	.2%
Two or more races	2.6%	2.8%
Hispanic or Latino	14.4%	18.5%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	77.8%	60.1%

Statistically, African Americans are disproportionately impacted by human trafficking due to a number of factors, including systemic racism and racial injustice nationally. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, [40%](#) of trafficking victims in the United States are African American. The demographics of victims identified in Utah, however, indicate a majority of victims are Caucasian, this is due to Utah’s population being disproportionately white compared to the rest of the United States.

Safe House Project also conducted an analysis of social determinants of health to identify vulnerabilities amongst populations in the state of Utah, with poverty being one of the strongest determinants. An analysis of economic stability of individuals in Utah based on age shows that [18.8%](#) of individuals ages 18-24 live in poverty, and of the females between the age of 18-24, 21.8% live in poverty.

Access to healthcare is also a key determinant. In 2020, [Utah Public Health Data](#) estimated 11.8% of Utahns were without health insurance coverage (BRFSS data). Furthermore, 23.6% of Utahn adults with low incomes reported cost as a barrier to health care. An estimated 4.8% of children in Utah did not have health insurance in 2019. A breakdown of uninsured children in Utah shows that 53.1% of them live over the 200% federal poverty line, 9.4% live between 138-200% of the federal poverty line, and 37.5% live below the 138% poverty line. Only children who are above the 138% poverty line are eligible for Medicaid and CHIP, leaving 37.5% of Utah’s uninsured children without access to health insurance.

Each of the factors above can contribute to someone’s likelihood of being trafficked. Prevention requires understanding individual, relational, community, and societal factors that increase someone’s vulnerability to trafficking, and then creating a multi-pronged approach to sustained prevention efforts.

Current State of Prevention

Education is a key component to effective prevention. Safe House Project conducted a comprehensive evaluation across all sectors to determine the current landscape of baseline human trafficking education deployed to groups within the community:

Department of Children & Family Services(DCFS): DCFS reports a lack of human trafficking training, and cites that current large caseloads restrict their opportunity to identify trafficked youth. In 2019, DCFS issued its [Training Plan within the CFSP for FFY20 to FFY24](#). Human trafficking was not considered a core training and there were no direct hours of required training



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assigned to human trafficking. Human trafficking training is considered a short-term goal and only prescribed to direct care staff.

In the [DCFS 2020 Annual Report](#), 14.3% of cases were classified as child sexual abuse. Currently, child sex trafficking is part of the “other” category, which collectively represents only .9% of DCFS cases. DCFS does not currently screen for human trafficking. The [Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative](#) reports that in 45% of child trafficking cases the family member is the trafficker. Additionally, the staff of the Children’s Justice Centers (CJC) in Utah state that many children are sent to the CJs for sexual abuse evaluation and upon further assessment learn that the child has been misidentified by DCFS and is actually a victim of child trafficking. [Kinship](#) care and reunification is preferable for children if the child is not a victim of familial trafficking, but without proper identification of human trafficking you risk a child being placed back into an unsafe home or prolonged involvement of family members who are trafficking a child.

Juvenile Justice System(JJS): The current mandated training for employees of JJS does not address identifying trafficked youth. The JJS [Health Screener and Intake Process](#) does not specifically screen for trafficking either. However, it is valuable to note that the University of Utah Nursing School’s research has identified 126 trafficked children in Utah’s juvenile detention facilities out of 6,000 surveys taken over three years. While these youth are not reporting to be “trafficking victims,” these are juveniles who identify that they were regularly forced into commercial sex acts.

Law Enforcement:

Utah Code § 76-5-608 states

(6) The Office of the Attorney General shall develop and offer training for law enforcement officers in investigating human trafficking offenses.

To date, it does not appear that a specific training has been developed to educate law enforcement. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies report limited focus on human trafficking training.

A Survivor’s Story: A trafficking survivor reached out for assistance to the Safe House Project hotline. Safe House Project’s team reached out to local law enforcement in Logan, Utah to assist with a safe extraction of the victim from her trafficking situation. The first law enforcement officer informed the Safe House Project staff that trafficking does not happen in Logan, Utah. The second law enforcement officer who got involved determined without ever speaking to the survivor that she could not be a trafficking victim because she had lived in the area for too long. The third law enforcement officer drove to the house, knocked on the door, and asked the woman who answered the door if anyone in the residence was being trafficked. That woman was the victim’s handler,



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also known as a bottom³, who is in charge of managing the victim when the trafficker is not present. Due to the poor training of these law enforcement personnel, our team had to send in a private team to extract the survivor.

Tribal: There are 8 federally recognized Indian tribes in Utah. In 2021 the Department of Public Safety reported that [4.4%](#) of the United States' actively missing indigenous women were from Utah. Urban Indian Health Institute's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Report rates Utah in the top 10 for missing women. Although not all cases are trafficking, the FBI cited a higher number of cases surrounding the tribal lands in Southern Utah⁴. The FBI states that there is limited collaboration and trust between federal law enforcement and tribal police. In addition, there are many parts of the tribal lands that are hard to reach rural communities.

Educators: In 2019, Utah passed [S.B. 198 Human Trafficking Prevention Training](#), which requires school districts and charter schools to provide biennial training regarding human trafficking prevention and awareness to school personnel, parents and guardians, and students. In May 2019, the [Utah State Board of Education](#) approved instructional materials on Human Trafficking for adults serving youth, as well as parents and guardians, but still has not identified the instructional materials for youth.

NGOs & Nonprofits: Safe House Project identified a gap in the existence of human trafficking programs addressing all aspects of trafficking, in particular prevention. Many organizations currently serve survivors of trafficking. Even more concerning is that most of these programs are "cross-designated, like domestic violence shelters, homeless youth shelters, church outreach programs, etc., that serve multiple victim populations. This is problematic as the needs of trafficking survivors differ from those other crime victims. Members of these organizations, and their volunteers, often reported feeling ill-equipped to identify and report suspected trafficking, nor did they implement prevention-focused programs.

Healthcare Providers: Safe House Project identified no mandated trafficking training for Utah healthcare providers. This is a substantial missed opportunity since 88% of victims intersect with healthcare providers during their exploitation. This substantial gap in training needs to be addressed since trafficked individuals often seek services outside of the normal scope of trafficking, when trafficking-specific services are not available.

³ A female appointed by the trafficker/pimp to supervise the others and report rule violations. Operating as the trafficker's "right hand," the [Bottom](#) may help recruit and instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments.

⁴ St. George is a key hotspot for trafficking because it sits on the I-15 corridor between Las Vegas to Salt Lake City and then onto Montana, is a college town, and is in proximity to the tribal strip.



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Prevention Recommendations:

Effective prevention initiatives require accurate and up-to-date research to inform education and training, consistent guidance from key decision makers, the adoption of legislation and policies to reinforce best practices, and continued analysis to address trafficking trends. Therefore, the following are recommendations for improving Utah's readiness/preparedness to handle human trafficking.

Department of Children & Family Services & Juvenile Justice System:

- Mandate human trafficking training for all DCFS & JJS employees with a strong focus on familial trafficking and traffickers' grooming techniques.
- Implement a human trafficking screener to help identify potential victims and their specialized needs. If the child screens as a victim of trafficking, assess whether kinship care is a safe option for this child, which will depend on who was trafficking the child. Furthermore, it will help determine if reunification is possible and how to involve the family in the child's care plan.
- Create a trafficking-specific classification within DCFS to provide children in foster care with holistic, wraparound services and/or referrals for an identified victim to a state-licensed restorative care home (when available).
- Children who are at risk of being trafficked that are returned to their family should be monitored in order to prevent abuse from escalating to familial trafficking.
- Mandated training for all foster parents and caregivers to identify red flags of at-risk youth and how to implement preventative intervention strategies.
- Develop a prevention curriculum to be delivered to all youth involved in DCFS and JJS system.
- Establish a help-line specifically for youth who may be being groomed into exploitation.

Law Enforcement:

- Law Enforcement training should be deployed annually to all officers with increased training for the SECURE Strike Force⁵ and Utah Opioid Task Force⁶. Critical topics for the state, include:
 - The intersection of drugs and human trafficking
 - Victim-Centered Prosecution Training
 - Trauma-informed Interview Techniques
 - Data-driven Investigations
 - Victim Identification
- Develop a community outreach initiative among law enforcement which accomplishes the following:
 - Build trust between law enforcement and the community

⁵ **SECURE Strike Force:** Targets major fraud, organized gun, drug and human trafficking, detect creation of fraudulent government identification and other documents, and prosecute these crimes with specialized investigators and resources and a dedicated Assistant Attorney General prosecutor.

⁶ **Utah Opioid Task Force:** A voluntary task force made up of representatives from partner agencies and organizations across the state. The mission of the task force is to take action against opioid abuse through law enforcement, prosecution, proposed legislation, and innovation.



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- Increase reporting of suspected illegal activity, including trafficking
- Educate the community of the realities of trafficking and proper response
- Reassure the community of a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach
- Identify societal contributors and work collectively to mitigate the impact
- Collaborative intervention strategies that build relationships with police so that youth can turn to them when needed

Tribal:

- Develop and deploy culturally appropriate prevention education for tribal schools
- Equip tribal law enforcement to better respond to trafficking
 - Training on victim identification and response
- Develop a culturally appropriate awareness campaign

Educators: Educators are mandatory reporters who are usually more aptly positioned to identify child sex trafficking, such as familial trafficking⁷. They have a unique role in a child's life which allows them to help connect them to services and bring context to behavioral and mental health challenges children are facing throughout Utah, including suicide.

- Validate the effectiveness of current solutions and expand options for training curriculum.
- Identify and implement age-appropriate training for youth.
- Provide healthcare-based human trafficking training to school nurses.
- Enhance training and reporting protocols for educators who work with at-risk youth populations on trauma-informed practices and mental health challenges facing this population.
- Empower and equip educators to engage in "outside the classroom" activities such as starting clubs in the schools, conducting outreach and awareness campaigns. This engages the whole community and encourages a sense of community responsibility amongst peers which has been proven to prevent human trafficking.

NGOs, Nonprofits, & Religious Organizations:

- NGOs and nonprofit organizations serving at-risk populations or youth should complete at least one hour of human trafficking training annually to help them understand trends in the trafficking industry, how to identify suspected victims, and effectively refer trafficked individuals to organizations that can provide human trafficking specific services.
- Ensure that all hotline staff and volunteers, like [Huntsmen Mental Health Institute](#) (previously UNI) who runs the Utah Crisis Line, which provides mental health crisis management and suicide prevention services, is trained to identify, report, and/or provide human trafficking specific resources to suspected victims.

⁷ The Washington County Schools in St. George trained 418 staff and faculty using [OnWatch](#). Of the 164 who answered the pre- and post-training survey questions, 89% felt more educated on signs and indicators of trafficking to identify potential trafficking victims.



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- Religious outreach organizations or hotlines, like the LDS hotline, should be trained to identify and report suspected trafficking, and offer resources to victims.
- Implement a trafficking screener that can be used when someone suspects trafficking.
- Equip NGOs to provide accurate, community-based training like *OnWatch* to better understand, identify, and respond to human trafficking

Healthcare Workers:

- Mandated healthcare training for all healthcare workers through a survivor-informed, patient-centered, trauma-informed training with knowledge checks. Training must be accredited to provide CE's through recognized accreditation for any healthcare provider.
- Increased access to mental health providers, especially for adults who have never been treated for childhood trauma.
- Human trafficking protocols implemented for healthcare facilities, as well as knowledge of available resources available to victims who are identified.

A Survivor's Story: A victim reached out while at a hospital in northern Utah. She recognized that was her best chance of escaping her trafficker. Coordinating with her healthcare team and our emergency response team, we were able to assist this survivor escaping out the backdoor of a hospital and being transported to another facility for her to continue receiving care and start her healing journey. Although her initial support team did not fully understand trafficking, they were trauma-informed and patient-centered in their response, which allowed everyone to work together to support this woman.

“Complex trauma isn’t addressed overnight. We need programs that truly walk along survivors for the long-term. Without proper services survivors end up on a merry-go-round of revictimization that never stops.” – Survivor S.M.

Protection

According to the [National Action Plan](#) to Combat Human Trafficking, effective protection starts with robust outreach and proactive identification efforts through a trauma-informed and victim-centered approach. Protection of victims continues through provision of comprehensive services that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed. These services include crisis intervention, transportation assistance, medical and mental health care, substance use disorder treatment, adequate and safe housing, employment assistance, job training, education, legal support, financial counseling, English language learning and translation, cultural and religious support, and transition assistance.



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The Department of [Health & Human Services](#) human trafficking response outlines three levels of prevention⁸. Tertiary prevention activities are the “long-term responses that occur in the aftermath of violence, such as rehabilitative services that seek to prevent sequelae (revictimization).” These services, provided through effective residential and non-residential programs, include long-term housing, job training, therapeutic counseling, and other supportive services that provide opportunities for victims to heal and live healthy, functional lives. For a state to effectively protect survivors it must have an established continuum of care, which is an integrated system of care that guides and tracks trafficking survivors over time through a comprehensive array of services spanning all levels of intensity of care. For survivors of trafficking, this includes emergency and stabilization services, long-term residential programming, transitional programming, and continued community based services, for both adults and minor victims. It is also important that each program providing residential services to trafficking victims (even if that program is not trafficking-specific) be evaluated by third-party certification to ensure quality and efficacy of trafficking-specific programming, as well ensure the survivor and law enforcement have trust in that care facility.

Without effective aftercare services, [80%](#) of survivors will be revictimized.

Below is an assessment of Utah’s current aftercare landscape. It is important to note that there is not an established continuum of care in the state of Utah which provides trafficking-specific emergency, long-term, and transitional residential programs. In lieu of a continuum, many nonprofit organizations and government entities are filling the gap and/or unknowingly serving survivors of trafficking at various levels with respect to the trauma in which these victims have endured. This piecemeal approach to triaging these situations can be harmful to survivors and cause revictimization.

Current State of Protection

Emergency Services

Children’s Justice Center (CJC): There are 25 CJs in the state of Utah that perform forensic interviews for children who have been sexually abused (or trafficked.) Two out of the 25 centers have the ability to conduct on-site therapy. In an average year, the CJs report serving 15,000 individuals, yet in 2020, they reported identifying only 20 child trafficking victims and one labor trafficking victim. They attribute the lack of identification to the lack of a human trafficking

⁸ Comprehensive efforts to prevent human trafficking include all levels of prevention — primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.

1. Primary prevention stops violence before it occurs. Primary prevention strategies include strengthening and creating healthy relationships, reducing risks within the individual’s environment, and increasing buffers to violence.
2. Secondary prevention provides an immediate response to violence as it occurs. These services include first responses, such as basic services and emergency and medical care that address short-term consequences.
3. Tertiary prevention activities are long-term responses that occur in the aftermath of violence, such as rehabilitative services (e.g., long-term housing, job training, therapeutic counseling, and other supportive services) that seek to prevent sequelae (revictimization).



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screeener. The CJC does not provide services to trafficking victims and will refer them to the Asian Association of Utah for evaluation and non-residential wraparound services.

Asian Association of Utah(AAU): The AAU's primary mission is supporting Utah's refugee and immigrant population through community wellness, ESL and life skills, and social services. In 2015, Utah Trafficking in Persons (UTIP) Task Force through the Utah Attorney General received a grant that selected the AAU as the victim service provider for the state, expanding their services into trafficking. The AAU is still the primary response team for evaluating suspected victims of trafficking. The AAU assessment team liaises with the Utah Attorney General's office, the task force, and other nonprofit service providers when a child or adult is suspected to be a victim of trafficking. Through their program, children are evaluated and, if confirmed as a victim of trafficking, are offered wraparound services and case management, and, occasionally, emergency shelter placement through the Volunteers of America Homeless Youth Shelter. Adults can receive limited rental assistance, wraparound services, and case management through the AAU.

The AAU does not have a residential facility, and many survivors do not realize that the AAU is a resource for trafficking victims because their name and core mission does not suggest a trafficking organization.

Volunteers of America Homeless Youth Shelter: This program provides housing to homeless youth in a 30 bed facility. Access to the program is received through a lottery system. The program reports no trafficking training and no trafficking-specific services provided to clients. The program provides basic essential items, 3 hot meals a day, pantry food, showers, laundry, life-skills groups, housing and employment case management, and dental and medical care assistance, with access to mental health services on-site. Primary focus is case management for sustainable housing and employment for homeless youth, ages 15 to 22.

Salt Lake Behavioral Health Hospital: This is a facility that does not provide trafficking-specific programming but allocates one bed for a minor to receive detoxification services as a confirmed victim of trafficking.

Long-Term Residential Care

There is no trafficking specific long-term housing for adults or minors in the state of Utah. Currently, trafficking victims in need of long-term residential care are placed into foster care, group homes, juvenile detention, state rehabilitation facilities, mental health facilities, or remain with a family member. Each of these placement options offer no trafficking-specific programming.

Department of Children and Family Services: While DCFS is intersecting and working with trafficked youth, there is no current process in place to screen for trafficking, equip foster families to support trafficked youth, or provide a trafficking specific classification for trafficked youth which would allow for higher DCFS reimbursement rates to support the therapeutic, medial and social services needed to heal.



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In-Patient Housing Options (not specialized in trafficking):

- Odyssey House
- The Christmas Box
- SL Behavioral Hospital - Private, For Profit Hospital
- Gemstones - Juvenile Justice Systems
- Milestones - Division of Youth Services
- Draper Program (name unknown): private \$15K per month without insurance

Transition Services:

Currently there are no trafficking-specific transitional programs for minors in the state of Utah outside of traditional services for foster or group home children and those processed out of the Juvenile Justice System.

Dahlia's Hope: This is the only trafficking-specific program in the state of Utah that provides trafficked adults with therapeutic services, medical treatment, education, vocational training and transition into the workplace, and life skills to help adult survivors of human trafficking function independently and successfully in society. Dahlia's Hope provides outpatient services and has a transitional residential facility.

Intersection Points with Victims

Healthcare

While the healthcare providers in Utah are not required to take trafficking training and do not offer trafficking specific services, healthcare workers regularly intersect and serve trafficking victims through an array of services. As many as [90%](#) of minors and 50% of adult human trafficking victims have contact with medical professionals during their trafficking situation. These victims receive medical care for trafficking-related injuries or illness, as well as treatment for mental health, drug addiction, and suicide intervention which manifest as a result of trauma.

It is reported that [84%](#) of trafficking survivors report drug use during their victimization, [42%](#) report attempting suicide while being trafficked, and [78%](#) report mental health challenges after escaping their trafficking situation.

While the [Intermountain Healthcare Community Health Needs Assessment 2019](#) (CHNA), prioritized a focus on improving mental health, followed by suicide and drug use, without an added focus that allows an understanding of the intersectionality of trafficking with these issues, the efforts made to improve these issues in the community will not meet their full potential.

Currently, suicide is the 6th leading cause of death in the state, and the leading cause of death for individuals ages 10 to 24 in Utah. Furthermore, Utah has a high rate of drug use and drug-related deaths. In 2019, an average of 53 adults died in Utah each month of drug poisoning.



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When it comes to trafficking, healthcare workers are trained to treat the symptoms, but do not have the proper training to identify suspected trafficking, which could be the underlying root problem. Trafficking is an interpersonal violent crime that causes long-term health problems for victims. Trafficking victims experience mental health problems, drug addiction, suicidality, in addition to many other physical ailments. Comorbidity can make it challenging to serve these individuals, especially if the healthcare provider does not understand the underlying trauma produced by the trafficking situation. Since Utah does not mandate a trafficking training for healthcare workers, the majority feel ill equipped to properly identify and support trafficking victims. Even when identified, there are limited mental health service providers in Utah who can treat complex mental health disorders, like Dissociative Identity Disorder. Finally, there are no long-term residential treatment facilities specific to trafficking in Utah, which means that survivors who are identified have to be transferred out of state causing more instability and trauma.

Through interviews with trafficking survivors, Safe House Project was able to conclude that the lack of trafficking-specific training for healthcare and response for human trafficking victims in Utah not only limited early identification of victims, but contributed to their revictimization and prolonged their trafficking situation. Furthermore, their extended trafficking situation resulted in repeated use of hospital systems due to trauma, mental health, and illness. Children who do not receive the care they need during/immediately following their trafficking situation cost communities \$5.3 million⁹ over their lifetime.

A Survivor's Story: Safe House Project received a call from a nurse in Salt Lake City on behalf of a deaf survivor. The deaf survivor had previously received emergency services from us and knew that we could provide important details about her situation to the staff. When the nurse called, our team member explained that the survivor was a confirmed victim of trafficking who suffered from severe mental health challenges, was in imminent danger, and was suffering from suicidality. Our team asked the hospital staff to hold her for a few hours, so we could create a response plan. While we were coordinating an emergency plan, she was discharged from the hospital. When the survivor became triggered and tried to stay, the nurse brought in security to physically remove her from the hospital.

Non-trafficking Specific Youth Residential Facilities:

Currently, Utah is home to more than [100 privately funded](#) or for profit residential programs for youth in crisis. These programs report that they provide therapeutic care, life skills and assistance to children exhibiting addiction or behavioral challenges. These programs are not trafficking specific, but often

⁹ Fritz, Gregory K. "A National Perspective on Children's Mental Health." Hampton Roads Community Foundation. Hampton Roads Community Foundation, 15 May 2019, Norfolk



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trafficked youth end up being placed in their facilities. These programs fail to properly identify these youth as trafficked persons. They are often placed in these programs when their behavior, substance abuse and mental health as a result of their trauma and trafficking become too much for the family. Much like healthcare, these professionals are not properly trained to identify the underlying causes, which can be human trafficking. Furthermore, these programs are not equipped to support the needs of trafficking victims and often engage in harmful practices which cause re-exploitation. It is important to note that many allegations have been made in recent years accusing large numbers of these programs of beatings, sexual assaults and misconduct, and other forms of abuse against the youth in their care. Many of these treatment centers house upwards of 50 children in one location. It is these large programs in which we most often see [allegations](#) of abuse arise. Furthermore, these programs which sometimes claim to serve CSEC youth alongside other youth in crisis, have [little governmental oversight](#) as the youth in their care are placed through private parties and not through state agencies which require more rigorous licensing. Additionally, there is no third-party certification process to ensure these programs are adhering to industry standards.

A Survivor's Story: One trafficking survivor spent six months in a large facility for youth in crisis in Utah when she was still an unidentified victim of trafficking, therefore labeled as a troubled youth. This survivor reports repeated verbal abuse, bullying, public shaming, not receiving advertised therapeutic services, and having food forced or withheld as means of control.

Protection Recommendations:

Housing: Increase in Residential Programs that are trafficking specific to support victims as they exit their trafficking situation, seek long-term care, and transition to a place of economic and personal independence.

- **Emergency housing:** Trafficking-specific residential programs for adult and minor victims of trafficking should hold the highest priority for stakeholders to ensure that victims identified receive immediate care to prevent revictimization.
- **Long-Term Housing:** Long-term therapeutic residential facilities also should be available in the state to provide stabilization, education, therapeutic care, life-skills training, and job training for survivors of trafficking.

Certification: The Government should require that programs providing residential services to trafficking victims, even those who are not trafficking specific, be evaluated using a third-party to receive law enforcement and government agency referrals. An independent evaluator evaluates an organization's restorative care programming, compliance, financial sustainability, governance, specialized services, and overall effectiveness to ensure that the program is victim-centered, trauma-informed, and operating using industry best practices.



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- Establishing standards and providing a roadmap for improvement to better serve trafficking victims and meet best practices will elevate the current landscape of care to more effectively respond to the needs of trafficking victims.

Certification - Training and Technical Assistance: Programs currently serving trafficking victims receive training and technical assistance to provide implementation on the roadmap provided by certification outcomes.

- Improved trafficking-specific programming for existing programs serving trafficking victims.

Utah Foster Care Reimbursement Rates & Trauma Training:

- Implement a trafficking screener to be used by DCFS
- Create a trafficking specific designator for trafficked youth that will allow for a higher level of access and per-diem reimbursement for therapeutic and healing services.
- Develop a trafficking-specific therapeutic foster care model

Prosecution

Through this assessment, Safe House Project evaluated the Utah landscape of federal and state law enforcement, investigators, prosecutors, and the Juvenile Justice System, against the framework of the Trafficking Victim Protection Act which outlines necessary policy, procedures and processes to ensure prosecution of traffickers. This section outlines the current status of the prosecutorial landscape and highlights the strengths, weaknesses, barriers and opportunities to a robust prosecutorial response to trafficking.

Current Human Trafficking Laws

Under the framework of the Trafficking Victim Protection Act, an effective criminal justice response to human trafficking should treat the prosecution of cases as seriously as other crimes (like rape or kidnapping,) hold all perpetrators of human trafficking criminally liable, including intermediaries and facilitators, implement appropriate prison sentences, and provide a victim-centered legal framework which provides restitution or compensation to victims in conjunction with the successful conviction of traffickers.

Below is a table that highlights the effective policy for trafficked minors and adults needed to produce these outcomes and a current evaluation of [Utah’s delivery](#) on these policies.

Desired Policy	Pass	Fail	In Process
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The child sex trafficking law is expressly applicable to buyers of commercial sex with any minor under 18	x		
Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) laws specifically criminalize purchasing or soliciting commercial sex with any minor under 18.	x		
Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) laws apply to traffickers and protect all minors under 18.	x		
The trafficking law expressly allows for business entity liability and establishes a business-specific penalty scheme		x	
State law mandates that financial penalties are levied on sex trafficking and CSEC offenders and are directed to a victim fund.			x
The definition of child sex trafficking victim in the criminal code includes all commercially sexually exploited children without requiring third party control.	x		
State law mandates child welfare agencies to conduct trauma-informed CSEC screening for children at risk of sex trafficking.		x	
State law mandates juvenile justice agencies to conduct trauma-informed CSEC screening of children at risk of sex trafficking.		x	
State law prohibits the criminalization of minors under 18 for prostitution offenses.			x
State law prohibits the criminalization of child sex trafficking victims for sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation offenses, including accomplice and co-conspirator liability, committed as a result of their trafficking victimization.		x	
State law provides child sex trafficking victims with an affirmative defense to violent felonies committed as a result of their trafficking		x	



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victimization.			
State law defines child abuse to include child sex trafficking for purposes of accessing child welfare services.	x		
State law provides for a survivor-centered multi-disciplinary team response to child sex trafficking cases.			x
State law requires the juvenile justice system to provide access to specialized services for identified sex trafficked children and youth.		x	
State funding is appropriated to support specialized services and a continuum of care for sex trafficked children regardless of system involvement.		x	
State funding is appropriated to support child-serving agencies with providing specialized services and a continuum of care for sex trafficked children.		x	
State law allows trafficking victims to seek emergency civil orders of protection.	x		
Sex trafficked children and youth may vacate delinquency adjudications and criminal convictions for any offense arising from trafficking victimization.			x
State law provides a child sex trafficking-specific hearsay exception that applies to non-testimonial evidence to reduce reliance on victim testimony.		x	
State law provides child sex trafficking victims with a trafficking-specific civil remedy.	x		
State law mandates restitution for child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) offenses.	x		



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Barriers to Prosecution

Evaluation and interviews of local, state, and federal law enforcement operating in Utah highlight the significant barriers to successful victim-centered, trauma-informed prosecution initiatives in the state.

- *Laws*
 - Utah's trafficking laws do not expressly allow for business entity liability when trafficking occurs on their property.
 - Utah law does not restrict charging child sex trafficking victims with misdemeanors or non-violent felonies committed as a result of their trafficking victimization.
 - Utah law does not prohibit the criminalization of child sex trafficking victims for sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation offenses, including conspirator liability, committed as a result of their trafficking victimization.
 - Utah laws need to be strengthened surrounding the creation and distribution of child pornography. This data will help law enforcement identify trends and infiltrate trafficking rings and arrest both traffickers and buyers.
- *Reduced Prioritization and Funding:* Primary jurisdiction for the prosecution of human trafficking cases lies with the Utah Attorney General's office. However, their office is dependent on case referrals from local law enforcement agencies. This process has been frustrated by significant funding cuts and investigative priorities set by agency leadership. Local law enforcement reported they lacked the resources to proactively investigate trafficking cases, as well lacking funding to receive relevant training on the identification, response, and investigation of suspected trafficking incidents. Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies assign interdiction efforts to vice units, which is not considered best practice and lacks the necessary victim-centered and trauma-informed approach called upon by experts including the U.S. Department of Justice. These units report that their current case prioritization and resource allocation only allows them to conduct follow-up on 1-2 reports per month.
- *Lack of Process:* It was noted that there is a distinct breakdown in information sharing, case coordination, and deconfliction, both inter and intra-departmental; creating confusion and lack of an effective response. There is a need for clear standard operating procedures, referral systems between state and federal agencies, and reporting to better track trafficking cases and ensure effective information sharing.
- *Coordination:* Within the State of Utah there is no effective network amongst stakeholders responding to suspected instances of human trafficking. There is no task force for law enforcement coordination nor is there the ability for law enforcement to coordinate with victim service providers. This creates a huge gap in the holistic approach to dismantling human trafficking networks, that do not respect jurisdictional boundaries, as well as serving victims. Furthermore, there is no statewide coordinator to drive these activities or establish standards.
- *Victim Referrals:* Law enforcement noted a lack of residential placement options to support trafficking victims to heal while cases are being built for prosecution. This lack of stability creates significant challenges to the criminal justice process. Some of these include victims disappearing and refusing to cooperate with prosecutors. Because prosecutors are still dependent on victim testimony, an archaic method of prosecuting human trafficking cases, offenders are often released or their charges pled down to misdemeanor charges where there is



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no true accountability for their crimes. There needs to be an option for emergency or long-term restorative care treatment plans for the survivor during the term of the investigation to improve mental stability of the survivor and prosecution viability.

Prosecution Recommendations:

Establishment of Multi-Disciplinary Task Forces: The Utah Attorney General should spearhead efforts to establish and oversee multi-disciplinary task forces throughout the state of Utah. This would create a mechanism for case coordination as well as ensuring appropriate services are afforded to victims. This would also allow for a scan of available services to better drive resource allocation. *There should also be designated a statewide coordinator for human trafficking response.*

Catch Court or Diversion Court: Establish a Catch Court or Diversion Court to help identify survivors of trafficking that are involved in the criminal justice system. These individuals should be afforded the opportunity to seek restorative care, where they can heal from the trauma. Additionally, this would allow the courts to implement dispositional alternatives that are more appropriate for the survivor. This process would include robust training for members of the judiciary and officers of the court throughout the entire state.

Advanced Training: Law enforcement must be provided with the appropriate tools to effectively interdict human trafficking. This includes training to ensure proper understanding of the drivers of human trafficking, as well as the complex victimization that can serve as a barrier to accurately identifying victims during the course of an investigation. The U.S. Department of Justice has noted that the traditional law enforcement techniques are not effective in addressing human trafficking and therefore new innovative techniques must be deployed. Such techniques include understanding how to target networks and reduce reliance on victim testimony. This training must also teach law enforcement how to conduct victim-centered and trauma-informed investigations.

Centralized Reporting Structure: State mandated reporting to a centralized data collection system to aggregate data relative to human trafficking. This would serve to better understand the prevalence of trafficking within the State, highlight trends, and more effectively understand the overall impact of trafficking on the state of Utah. It would also create a body of evidence-based research that can inform ongoing improvements to address this complex issue.

Housing: Establish an emergency program for minor and adult victims of trafficking to receive stabilizing services while processing next steps with law enforcement to pursue further investigation for prosecution. Also, establish protocols for long-term restorative care treatment plans for the survivor during the term of the investigation to improve mental stability of the survivor.



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Juvenile Justice: Develop new protocols for trafficked youth to receive protection and care outside of the current placement of juvenile detention centers.

“Human trafficking is so large; it is going to break the system. No training, no nothing. If we trip over it, we will deal with it, but the volume would be so significant we can’t handle it. No time, no resources.” – Utah Law Enforcement Officer/Supervisor

Conclusion

Through careful analysis of the full landscape of Utah’s response to human trafficking, Safe House Project was able to identify three impactful investment opportunities. These opportunities would strengthen and support the holistic approach of prevention, protection, and protection - which are all interdependent for true success.

- 1) A high-functioning system for survivor support which includes required programmatic certification. This will ensure that victims/survivors are able to exit trafficking safely, with dignity and financial security. In addition to a certification program for operational programs, this includes funding to enhance responsive survivor identification, referrals, engagement and resourcing systems with financial empowerment and autonomy as a priority.
- 2) A secure data system capable of indicating the scale and scope of the problem set, and monitor progress of survivors throughout the restorative process. Notably, this data system must include data inputs from stakeholders across a variety of industries, including tourism, education, healthcare, and law enforcement.
- 3) A transformational approach shift amongst law enforcement from victim-reliant investigations to network-based investigations that are victim-centered and trauma-informed. This includes establishment of comprehensive training across all levels of law enforcement - from patrol to investigators, as well as prosecutors.

Safe House Project, through its experiences and extensive partnership network, has developed a roadmap for development and implementation of these three key opportunities that will help establish the most comprehensive and effective state-level response model in the United States. Safe House Project also possesses the project management expertise to be able to coordinate the deployment of this roadmap.

Note: Since the launch of this landscape analysis the Malouf Foundation has announced a plan to launch a 12-18 month residential treatment facility that will serve female Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims.