



CHILDREN'S BUREAU GRANTEE LESSONS LEARNED

Human Trafficking: Coordinating Resources

The Children's Bureau awards discretionary grants for research and program development to State, Tribal, and local agencies; faith- and community-based organizations; and other nonprofit and for-profit groups. This series raises awareness of the lessons learned by various grantee projects on subjects spanning the child welfare continuum.

Responding to human trafficking has become a point of emphasis in the child welfare field due to the high risk of exploitation for children and youth with experience in foster care (See Child Welfare Information Gateway's [Human Trafficking and Child Welfare: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies](#) for more information.) In October 2014, the Children's Bureau awarded [nine 5-year grants](#) to continue the development of their child welfare systems' response to human trafficking through infrastructure development and multisystem approaches.

Grantees have been developing and coordinating an array of specialized resources and services for child and youth victims of trafficking at the State and local levels. The following are examples of collective lessons learned that may help inform similar capacity-building efforts in other States and communities.

LESSON LEARNED

[01]

Focus on broad-based awareness.

In many communities, establishing awareness and understanding of human trafficking remains a critical first step to coordinating services. Grantees noticed that when community members, agency leaders, caseworkers, service providers, medical and school personnel, and law enforcement professionals recognize how human trafficking is happening in their spheres of influence, they are often more inclined to request training, partner as a service provider, and/or route resources accordingly.

Grantees utilized multiple methods to raise awareness, including media campaigns, presentations at community events, police academy trainings, and school assemblies. Grantees noted that the most effective presentations included specific and relevant information that challenged the audience to consider how human trafficking may be occurring in their own schools, neighborhoods, or places of employment. It was helpful to understand that many different kinds of professionals have contact with victims, but young people rarely identify themselves as such. Grantees shared that young people do not always exhibit behaviors that are commonly associated with victimization, such as asking for help or appearing afraid. Grantees found trainings also challenged people's perception of what human trafficking is and how it may differ from what is portrayed in the media and popular culture.

Empower 225 (LA)

In partnership with the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program through the National Criminal Justice Training Center at Fox Valley Technical College, Empower 225, formerly known as Healing Place Serve, helped organize nine regional trafficking summits across Louisiana. These summits brought together relevant stakeholders within each region (known as parishes), including child welfare professionals, child advocacy centers, law enforcement professionals, the court and legal communities, service providers, and educators. Amber Alert staff facilitated the discussion around the gaps in each community's services for minor victims of trafficking to promote understanding and increase collaboration. Empower 225 attributed its progress in developing multidisciplinary teams in each region to these regional summits, which provided an opportunity for local awareness, relationship building, and an investment in next steps.

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Information in this brief was gathered in 2018 via in-person site visits, phone calls, and a review of grantee materials and does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement of any program or practice. This series is offered for informational purposes only and the information presented does not represent an endorsement by the Children's Bureau or Child Welfare Information Gateway.

LESSON LEARNED

[02]

Establish regional and statewide multidisciplinary teams (MDTs).

Many child and family service providers are already familiar with the MDT model to ensure coordinated and comprehensive support services and information sharing across the service provision, law enforcement, child welfare, juvenile justice, education, medical, victim advocate, and court and legal communities. Many grantees had leadership or advisory MDTs at the State level to help support legislative changes and develop capacity at the systems level. Grantees also worked to develop local MDTs within each region of their State. By helping involve the right decision-makers in a young person's case, an MDT helps maintain connections to a wide array of services and a wealth of information about a child's or family's background to help inform next steps and avoid duplicating services. Grantees also found the collaborative nature of the MDT model can help provide a forum to identify potential victims of trafficking who are not part of a formal system.

Grantees shared that collaboration is the most distinguishing feature of a well-functioning MDT and that nurturing those partnerships requires time and good relationship-building skills. One grantee developed an interagency agreement to define each member's role during the MDT staffing. Depending on State resources and structure, existing systems of child advocacy centers, many of which already have functioning MDTs, worked as the coordinating body.

Below are some key activities of successful trafficking-specific MDTs that were shared by the grantees:

- Providing education and training to agencies on how they will benefit from participating in an MDT
- Sharing successful trafficking-specific MDT protocols, participant lists, and lessons learned with other communities
- Establishing a regular, set meeting schedule, which leads to better participation
- Establishing a dedicated, full-time MDT coordinator to focus on coordinating the logistics of these meetings and ensure follow-up on cases
- Making meetings purposeful and organized, which helps partners realize they are getting useful information out of the meetings and be more motivated to continue to participate
- Allowing for participation by phone for those with heavy caseloads to encourage continued participation
- Periodically assessing the effectiveness of the collaboration, such as by using the free [Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory](#), and making improvements as necessary so that participants find the meetings to be valuable

[03]

Build service capacity through information sharing.

While States and jurisdictions have begun to develop policies and practices to identify human trafficking victims, many grantees reported that they do not have sufficient providers who have received trafficking-specific training to meet the needs of victims once they are identified. As a result, many grantees and their partners have developed specialized trainings to increase service capacity. While national curricula were found to be useful, some grantees adapted or created their own to incorporate State laws, targeted demographics, and/or specific language.

Several grantees identified the need for a centralized place to house trafficking-related services and information to meet the needs of their community. For some, this led to the development of a statewide, searchable website that includes selected providers, a list of their services, and their contact information so that anyone can locate resources for victims of trafficking. The benefit of a website is that the information resides in an accessible, designated location rather than having the information only being known by a select set of individuals. Grantees that developed a website learned through the process that the services needed by child and youth victims of trafficking, such as education remediation or addressing substance use, do not have to necessarily be specific to trafficking. It is important that service providers are known to deliver quality services and receive training about human trafficking and how to work with victims in a trauma-informed way. Grantees learned that many service providers have been working with unidentified victims of trafficking for many years.

Arizona State University and King County, WA

As part of its grant activities, Arizona State University (ASU) developed a [website](#) to present information about trafficking-specific resources and services throughout Arizona. ASU surveyed all of the child- and adult-serving agencies (healthcare, mental health, and housing) in Arizona and identified 48 providers that received training about human trafficking and reported that their services were victim centered and trauma informed.

King County followed Arizona's model to develop its own statewide [website](#), which includes relevant services for victims of both sex and labor trafficking. The website was developed by two individuals in King County who knew many of the service providers serving victims of trafficking across the State. They utilized a low-cost, user-friendly website builder and recruited interns to send out surveys to collect information about each agency's services, target population, and contact information. Searchable by service type and location, both Arizona and Washington's websites aggregate information on a comprehensive array of services—including housing, employment, survivor care, and substance use services—to meet the needs of victims of trafficking. King County found that survivor input was valuable when vetting which service providers would be added to the website.



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