



Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director 2024 Annual Report

Executive Order 01.01.2018.19 B

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

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Submitted by:
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December 10, 2024



WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor

DOROTHY LENNIG
Executive Director

December 10, 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Executive Order 01.01.2018.19 B (MSAR #11842)

Dear Governor Moore:

As required by Executive Order 01.01.2018.19 B, please find an enclosed copy of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy report, titled *Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director 2024 Annual Report*. This report includes information regarding the progress made in establishing best practices for serving victims of human trafficking, a summary of State and federal funds available to serve victims of human trafficking, and recommendations to further the State's efforts against human trafficking.

Should you have any questions relating to the information provided in this report, please feel free to contact me at 410-697-9338.

As required, five color copies will be sent to the DLS Legislative Library.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dorothy J. Lennig".

Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.
Executive Director

cc: Sarah Albert, Department of Legislative Services (5 copies)

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Introduction

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2018.19 B, the Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director (Director) must submit a report to the Governor by December 1 of each year.

Pursuant to its charge, this *Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director 2024 Annual Report* includes information regarding best practices for serving victims of human trafficking, available State and federal funding to serve victims, efforts to develop anti-human trafficking priorities in partnership with the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center, and recommendations to further the State's efforts against human trafficking. It also provides a follow-up to several reports that were submitted in prior years. To view these reports, please visit the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy's (Office's) website at:

<https://gocpp.maryland.gov/reports-and-publications/>.

Background

As required by Executive Order 01.01.2018.19, in October 2018, the Office hired the first Director to help combat human trafficking in Maryland and coordinate supportive services for victims and law enforcement activities as they relate to human trafficking. Between October 2018 and March 2020, the Director collaborated with public safety partners, victim service providers, the statewide Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, and local task forces to identify and gather information on efforts to address human trafficking; served as a member of the executive review committee that drafted and published the first adapted *Child Sex Trafficking Protocols*, based on the National Children's Alliance standards for Child Advocacy Centers in the nation; and coordinated with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Training and Law Enforcement subcommittees to improve statewide training efforts for first responders.

In March 2020, the Director position became vacant. Shortly thereafter, the State implemented a budget and hiring freeze to recover from the fiscal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the State of Emergency. As the role was vacant, the Office moved funding to support hiring staff in another unit. The Office continues to further the State's effort to combat human trafficking through its Victim Services Unit (*as described in greater detail on the following pages*).

Establishing Statewide Best Practices to Serve Victims

The Office's Victim Services Unit continues to collaborate with various public safety partners, victim service providers, the statewide Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, and local task forces to identify and gather information on efforts within the State to address human trafficking.

Through this process, and in coordination with local, State, and federal partners, the Office provides information on and aids in the establishment of best practices when serving victims of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Regional Navigator Program

The Office administers the Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program Grant (RNPG) to expand programming in jurisdictions to coordinate and provide services for suspected child sex and labor trafficking victims who are age 24 and under.¹ Through this program, jurisdictions develop a network of regional navigators to provide specific services to identified or confirmed child sex or labor trafficking victims, including safety planning, emergency response, basic living needs, trauma counseling and mental health services, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, legal services, victim advocacy, and case management. The program also requires law enforcement and local departments of social services, who have reason to believe a certain child is a victim of sex or labor trafficking, to notify a regional navigator in their jurisdiction to obtain needed services for the child.

The Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019 required the statewide implementation of the regional navigator program. The Office did not receive dedicated funding for implementation and pulled funding from other programs to support it. The Office received dedicated funding for the first time in fiscal year 2024. Maryland's 24 jurisdictions have successfully implemented the program as of February 2024.

¹ Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program (RNPG)*. <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/rnpg/>

The Office awarded \$3,391,869.00 to 14 subrecipients in FY 2024 (as illustrated in **Table 1**). Subrecipients used awarded funds to provide services needed to comply with the Act.

Table 1: Awarded Subrecipients				
Implementing Agency	Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Amount
Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Resource Center (Dove Center)	Garrett Human Trafficking Navigation & Training Initiative	7/1/23	6/30/24	\$14,754.00
For All Seasons, Inc.	Regional Navigator and Comprehensive Human Trafficking Response	7/1/23	6/30/24	\$500,000.00
Rape Crisis Intervention Service of Carroll County, Inc. DBA Care Healing Center	Carroll County CST Regional Navigator Program	7/1/23	6/30/24	\$200,000.00
Life Crisis Center, Inc.	Lower Shore Child Sex Trafficking Navigator Program	7/1/23	6/30/24	\$382,000.00
Center for Children, Inc.	Southern Maryland Child Sex Trafficking Regional Navigator Program	7/1/23	6/30/24	\$499,941.00
Allegany County Board of Commissioners	Jane's Place Stabilization to become designated as the Regional Navigator for Allegany County	7/1/23	9/30/24	\$73,845.00
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center, Inc. (SARC)	Regional Navigator	10/1/23	6/30/24	\$45,120.00
Washington County Department of Social Services	Washington County Regional Navigator Program	10/1/23	6/30/24	\$63,520.00
Cecil County Department of	Regional Navigator Project - Cecil County	10/1/23	6/30/24	\$103,261.00

Community Services				
TurnAround, Inc. (Baltimore County)	TurnAround, Inc. Continuation 2023-2024 Regional Navigator Program	10/1/23	9/30/24	\$500,000.00
Heartly House, Inc.	VOCA HT Regional Navigation	10/1/23	9/30/24	\$200,000.00
Board of Child Care of the United Methodist Church, Inc.	Child Sex Trafficking Regional Navigator Program, Anne Arundel County	10/1/23	9/30/24	\$159,428.00
University of Maryland, Baltimore	Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program FY24	10/1/23	9/30/24	\$500,000.00
Center for Hope, Inc. (formerly The Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Inc.)	FY 2024 Baltimore City Child Sex Trafficking Screening & Services Act Regional Navigator Program	10/1/23	9/30/24	\$150,000.00
				\$3,391,869.00

Based on the quarterly submission of performance measure data, subrecipients surveyed willing participants and reported the following outcomes in State FY 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024):²

- 4,263 victims served³
- 2,442 victims felt safer⁴
- 2,382 victims felt more self-sufficient
- 2,426 victims felt more informed of their rights
- 2,499 victims felt more aware and informed of available victim services and resources
- 888 confirmed human trafficking victims served

² It is important to note that performance measure data was extracted from the Office’s Grants Management System (GMS) on November 4, 2024; however, only State fiscal 2024 data was used. For this reason, and given the start date for some grant awards (October 1, 2023), several grants included a partial year of reported measures. Further, the Office is working to improve performance measures to ensure they accurately capture the impact of State funding on services provided to trafficking victims.

³ This is a reflection of the "suspected" victims of trafficking that the navigators encounter. The 'number of HT victims served' are confirmed victims but the navigators also serve high risk populations that either won't acknowledge being a victim of trafficking or will acknowledge other types of victimization but not trafficking. The total number of victims includes all victims provided services but the confirmed trafficking numbers are broken out.

⁴ Not everyone the grantees encounter or serve also completes a post-service survey. Encounters with survivors tracked as “served” range from brief encounters to longer service relationships.

Regional navigators have reported anecdotally to the Office that housing and shelter assistance are among the greatest needs of child trafficking survivors. The Victim Services Unit continues to meet with regional navigator jurisdictions to identify gaps in services in each jurisdiction. The Victim Services Unit seeks to partner with a research institution, such as the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC), to determine the program's effectiveness, including a comparison of children served in each jurisdiction before and after program implementation. Additionally, the Office developed a standard operating procedure manual to help programs implement best practices and promote consistency across the State in providing services.

Human Trafficking Training

In 2024, the Victim Services Unit conducted several human trafficking and regional navigator training sessions at the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Professionals Seminar, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Investigators Seminar, local departments of social services, and the Maryland Center for School Safety. Additionally, in partnership with the University of Maryland Baltimore's School of Social Work's Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative (PARI), the Office applied for and received an Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking grant. With these funds, the Office partnered with PARI to provide further training support for the regional navigators.

Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and Related Partnerships

The Office continues to work with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and related partners to identify best practices and gaps in services for human trafficking survivors. The Office works directly with the Maryland State Police Child Recovery Unit and provides support on anti-child sex trafficking initiatives. The Office also supports the Maryland State Police with Spanish interpretation when needed in outreach efforts.

The Human Trafficking Data Collection Project

The Human Trafficking Data Collection project is a Maryland Statistical Analysis Center (MSAC) effort to examine human trafficking throughout Maryland. The project will allow a better understanding of the nature and scope of human trafficking within the state. Partially funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics State Justice Statistics grant program, the project's goal is to create a resource the Office can use, in collaboration with law enforcement, prosecutors, and service providers, to develop a comprehensive approach to combat human trafficking and offer financial support to address identified needs.

In completing this project, MSAC examined human trafficking through three focus areas: prosecution, law enforcement, and victims. Data from several sources, ranging from individual,

agency, county and statewide levels, were collected to develop a comprehensive understanding of human trafficking in Maryland and its evolution over time. An interactive data dashboard will summarize the results of this project.

Innkeepers Bill

Required by § 15–210 of the Business Regulation Article, which requires the Office to approve training materials for hotel employees to recognize the signs of human trafficking and to provide employees with training on how to respond to suspected incidents of trafficking, the Office has approved three training protocols. For more information regarding the approved training, please refer to the Office’s website at <http://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/human-trafficking/>.

To coordinate victim services at the State level, the Office will continue to:

- Develop and make accessible a statewide resource map for victim service providers and law enforcement across jurisdictions with help from victim service partners and data collected from the RNPG-VOCA program;
- Research and develop strategies to provide emergency and long-term housing for adult and minor victims;
- Seek opportunities to train substance abuse counselors on what human trafficking is and the needs of victims with single or co-occurring disorders that may contribute to their trafficking;
- Continue to partner with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force steering committee to sponsor and coordinate quarterly meetings with the heads of local human trafficking task forces around the State to promote a uniform statewide standard of care to human trafficking victims, and troubleshoot jurisdictional issues that arise;
- Research outcomes of specialized programs targeting individuals who have been trafficked or are at high risk for trafficking to include, but not limited to:
 - Involvement in commercial sex work;
 - Homelessness;
 - Substance use disorders;
 - Domestic violence victimization; and
 - Youth who have experienced trauma; and
- Create a master list of all of the hotel, motel, and inns in the State to ensure all establishments comply with § 15–210 of the Business Regulation Article.

Because a statewide database containing the required training and guidance for hotel, motel, and inn employees does not exist, the Office, in collaboration with the Department of Labor, will continue to monitor establishments to ensure they are up to date with certification.

Safe Harbor

With the passage of Safe Harbor legislation (Chapters 686 and 687 of 2023), child victims of sex trafficking will be protected from prosecution for certain offenses such as trespass, theft, prostitution, CDS possession, and other offenses that the child may have committed as a result of being a victim. Chapters 348 and 349 of 2024 expanded the Safe Harbor legislation to include child victims of labor trafficking in RNPG funding requests and added housing to the services regional navigators must provide.⁵ It also altered the statutory provisions that govern child in need of assistance (CINA) proceedings and the reporting and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect, and the definition of “abuse” to include “labor trafficking” of a child by any individual.

Available State and Federal Funds to Support Victims

The Office continues to provide funding for human trafficking victims to receive direct services such as emergency shelter, 24-hour talk-line, trauma-informed therapy, peer groups, support services (housing assistance, job training, life skills, economic empowerment, GED, and vocational training), assistance obtaining a driver’s license or transportation to and from appointments and court appearance, legal advocacy, victim advocacy and system navigation, and street outreach. The Office also encourages direct service providers, nonprofit organizations, and law enforcement to apply for any open and available State and federal grant funding source, including the following grant programs:

- Children’s Justice Act Committee (CJAC)
- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)
- Maryland Victims of Crime Fund (MVOC)
- Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program (RNPG)
- Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Center Grant Program (SARC) (limited to certified....)
- Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP)
- STOP (Services * Training * Officers * Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (STOP VAWA)
- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

For more information regarding these grant programs as well as additional funding sources, please visit the Office’s website at: <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/programs/>.

⁵ It is important to note that labor trafficking means knowingly (1) taking, placing, harboring, persuading, inducing, or enticing a child by force, fraud, or coercion to provide services or labor or (2) receiving a benefit or thing of value from the provision of services or labor by a child that was induced by force, fraud, or coercion.

Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center

In November 2024, the Victim Services Unit met with the Director of MCRIC to develop a plan to partner on anti-human trafficking priorities. A meeting to discuss existing data and future projects will be scheduled for early 2025.

Recommendations

The Office recommends maintaining programs, including the Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program, that fund critical services for trafficking victims and continuing to offer training to individuals and organizations that directly support or may encounter trafficking victims.

Conclusion

Given the State's proximity to three major airports (Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, Dulles International Airport, and Reagan National Airport), inexpensive bus transportation, train service along the East Coast, large sporting events, casinos, large concert and event venues, and pockets of both poverty and disposable income, Maryland is a destination of interest for traffickers. Because of this, the Office will continue to coordinate human trafficking efforts across the State by:

- Improving **enforcement** efficacy through best-practice policies, supportive technologies, key partnerships, and data sharing;
- **Preventing** future cases of human trafficking by addressing risk factors, as well as root causes of victimization, and working with law enforcement to reduce recidivism of traffickers;
- Uplifting **victim services** that utilize best practices, trauma-informed care, and a research-based approach to meet the unique needs of human trafficking victims and to increase the safety, self-sufficiency, and access to information of victims; and
- Ensuring that our regional navigators and other victim-serving partners have access to the tools, funding, and **resources** needed to help victims overcome and recover.

The Office remains committed to furthering the State's effort to combat human trafficking. Although the Director position remains vacant due to the lack of a required PIN, the Office will continue to further the State's effort to combat human trafficking through its Victim Services Unit.