



**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
CRIME PREVENTION, YOUTH,
AND VICTIM SERVICES**

**Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director
2023 Annual Report**

EX ORD 01.01.2018.19 B; MSAR #11842

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December 1, 2023

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Background	2
Establishing Statewide Best Practices to Serve Victims	3
Human Trafficking Regional Navigator Program	4
Human Trafficking Training	5
Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and Related Partnerships	5
Innkeepers Bill	5
Available State and Federal Funds to Support Victims	6
Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center	8
Conclusion	8

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 as it relates to the status of the following:

1. Progress made in establishing statewide best practices for serving victims of human trafficking;
2. A summary of State and federal funding available to serve and support victims of human trafficking;
3. An update on the work of the Crime Research and Innovation Center at the University of Maryland related to human trafficking; and
4. Recommendations for administrative, regulatory, or statutory changes that would further the State's efforts to address human trafficking.

Pursuant to this charge, this *Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director 2023 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 [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#).

Background

Executive Order 01.01.2018.19 created the Director position within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (Office). In this role, the Director shall:

- Serve as the Governor's coordinator for human trafficking issues and provide information and policy guidance to the Governor, the Governor's Cabinet, and the Executive Director of the Office;
- Collaborate with State units, local governments and departments of social services, child advocacy centers and other nonprofit entities, law enforcement agencies, and other appropriate parties identified by the Director to:
 - Promote statewide coordination of:
 - Supportive services and resources for victims of human trafficking;
 - Law enforcement responses to human trafficking;
 - Collect, maintain, and disseminate to stakeholders information about human trafficking and related supportive services in Maryland;

- Map current local supportive services and resources that provide care to victims of human trafficking; and
- Establish statewide best practices for serving victims of human trafficking;
- Monitor and pursue, on behalf of the State, federal funding for efforts to combat human trafficking;
- Serve as the Governor’s liaison to the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force; and
- Serve as the Governor’s liaison to the Crime Research and Innovation Center at the University of Maryland to assist its efforts to provide research to the State about human trafficking, including best practices in collecting data to identify victims of human trafficking.

It also required the Director to submit a report to the Governor by December 1 each year.

In October 2018, and pursuant to Executive Order 01.01.2018.19, the Office hired the first Director to help combat human trafficking in the State of Maryland and to 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 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 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, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the State of Emergency, the State implemented a budget and hiring freeze to recover from the fiscal impact of this crisis. The PIN for the position was reassigned to the Office’s fiscal division leaving no available PIN for the Director role. Although the Director position remains vacant due to the lack of a PIN, the Office remains committed to furthering the State’s effort to combat human trafficking through the Office’s Victim Services Unit (*as described in greater detail on the following pages*).

Establishing Statewide Best Practices to Serve Victims

In the absence of a Director, the Office’s Victim Services Unit continues to fulfill the Director’s responsibilities by collaborating 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

In 2019, the [Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019](#) (Act) established the [Human Trafficking Regional Navigator Program Grant \(RNPG-VOCA\)](#). The primary purpose of this program is to develop a network of regional navigators to coordinate and provide identified or confirmed child sex trafficking victims with specific services, including safety planning; basic living needs, not including housing; trauma counseling and mental health services; drug and alcohol 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 trafficking, to notify a regional navigator in their jurisdiction to obtain needed services for the child. Regional navigator programs are currently operational in the following 20 jurisdictions: Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties.

Although the Act required a statewide roll-out of the program by January 1, 2022, the 2021 Maryland budget bill limited the use of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding available to support this statewide expansion. Similar limitations were also listed in the 2022 Maryland budget bill.

For FY 2023 and FY 2024, the annual State budget provided \$1,750,000 in Crime Victim Compensation funding to expand the RNPG-VOCA program. Based on the provided funds, the Office released an *FY 2024 Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act Regional Navigator Program Grant (RNPG-ARPA) Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)* to invite eligible applicants to apply for grant funding. The Office recently made awards that will bring the total coverage to 23 of the 24 jurisdictions by expanding to Calvert, St. Mary's, and Garrett counties. The Office is currently in communication with a provider in Allegany County and expects that an application will be submitted to allow for full statewide implementation of this program by the end of the 2023 calendar year.

In FY 2023, funds awarded through the RNPG-VOCA program were used to obtain needed services to comply with the Act. Subrecipients reported the following outcomes in FY 2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023):

- 1,720 victims served

- 1,544 victims felt safer
- 1,473 victims felt more self-sufficient
- 1,523 victims felt more informed of their rights
- 1,623 victims felt more aware and informed of available victim services and resources
- 255 human trafficking victims served

In addition, the Victim Services Unit will continue to work with all existing regional navigator jurisdictions to create and implement a method to evaluate and report gaps in services in those jurisdictions; and will compare the number of children served in those jurisdictions, both before and after program implementation, to determine its effectiveness. Additionally, a standard operating procedure will be developed to help all programs implement best practices and promote consistency across the State in providing services. The Office will continue to advocate for the needs of child trafficking survivors that are identified by the regional navigators, such as housing and shelter assistance.

Human Trafficking Training

The Office makes training available to multiple disciplines on various human trafficking issues. In 2023, multiple human trafficking and regional navigator training efforts were conducted by the Victim Services Unit. Some of those efforts included training and support 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, the Office is working with the University of Maryland Baltimore's School of Social Work's Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative (PARI). In partnership with PARI, the Office applied for an Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking grant. Due to changes in the eligibility criteria, PARI was unable to apply for the funding. Because of this, the Office applied for funding and formed a training partnership 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. The Office supports the Maryland State Police with Spanish interpretation occasionally when needed in outreach efforts.

Innkeepers Bill

[Chapter 487 of 2022](#) (House Bill 270) 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. Since its enactment, which took effect on October 1, 2022, the Office has approved three training protocols for use under this mandate. An additional training is currently under review for approved use. For more information regarding the approved training, please refer to the Office's website at <http://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/human-trafficking/>.

In addition, and in an effort 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 co-occurring disorders;
- 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.

Safe Harbor

With the passage of Safe Harbor legislation ([House Bill 297/Senate Bill 292](#)) in the 2023 legislative session, 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.

Available State and Federal Funds to Support Victims

Our Office remains committed to providing funding for human trafficking victims with 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. Our 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:

- [Children's Justice Act Committee \(CJAC\)](#): Improves the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim.
- [Human Trafficking Regional Navigator Program Grant \(RNPG-VOCA and RNPG state funds\)](#): Continues services in the existing 20 jurisdictions and will fully expand to statewide coverage with the recent addition of three newly funded programs. The Office anticipates an application for funding for the remaining unfunded jurisdiction by the close of calendar year 2023. The program requires victim service agencies, law enforcement, and local departments of social services who have reason to believe a certain child is a victim of sex trafficking to notify a regional navigator in their jurisdiction to obtain needed services for the child.
- [Internet Crimes Against Children \(ICAC\)](#): Supports local law enforcement agencies for salaries, training, and equipment to be used for the investigation and prosecution of Internet Crimes Against Children; supports the ongoing operations of the Maryland Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force established by the Maryland State Police; and continues services provided at child advocacy centers.
- [Maryland Victims of Crime Fund \(MVOF\)](#): Provides for advocacy and support services to victims of crime through the creation of new ideas and the enhancement of existing programs in Maryland.
- [Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network \(MCIN\)](#): Focuses on identifying, disrupting, and dismantling gangs and violent criminal networks involved in the distribution of illegal drugs, the use of firearms in crimes of violence, human trafficking, or other inherently violent criminal enterprises through enforcement, prevention, intervention, and information sharing.
- [STOP \(Services * Training * Officers * Prosecutors\) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program \(STOP VAWA\)](#): Encourages the development and strengthening of effective, victim-centered law enforcement, prosecution, and court strategies to combat crimes against women.

- [Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Grant Program \(SARC\)](#): Supports local rape crisis centers to provide services to adult and child victims of rape and other sexual offenses. Services to victims include a 24-hour hotline, counseling, medical accompaniment, and assistance in accessing and using other support services such as legal assistance.
- [Sexual Assault Services Program \(SASP\)](#): Provides intervention, advocacy, accompaniment (i.e., accompanying victims to court, medical facilities, police departments, etc.), support services, and related assistance for adult, youth, and child victims of sexual assault, family, and household members of victims, and those collaterally affected by the sexual assault.
- [Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\)](#): Helps to improve the treatment of victims of crime by providing victims with the assistance and services necessary to aid their restoration after a violent criminal act, and to support and aid them as they move through the criminal justice process. Victim assistance includes services such as crisis intervention, counseling, emergency transportation to court, temporary housing and criminal justice support, and advocacy.

Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center

The Law Enforcement and Victim Services Units housed within the Office are working to continue to develop anti-human trafficking priorities in partnership with the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center. The COVID-19 pandemic and the vacancy of the Director position have contributed to the lack of coordination in this area in the past and continue to be a barrier to adequate engagement between the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center and the Office.

Conclusion

The Office remains committed to furthering the State's effort to combat human trafficking. The Office recommends expanding access to funding and working with legislators to narrow or close the gaps in some areas of the law that negatively impact victims and survivors. This will include allowing regional navigators to assist with housing needs for some victims, requiring appropriate Department of Social Services filing for aging out youth, and working toward the enforcement of existing laws such as the Innkeepers Bill.

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.

While the Office will continue to fulfill the duties of the Statewide Human Trafficking Response Director, there is no PIN to support the role. Moving forward, the Office recommends elimination of this report and capturing all human trafficking data in the Independent Evaluation Report on Services for Victims of Sex Trafficking.