

Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM REPORT 2023



OCSSA Waymakers





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## Victim Service & Advocacy

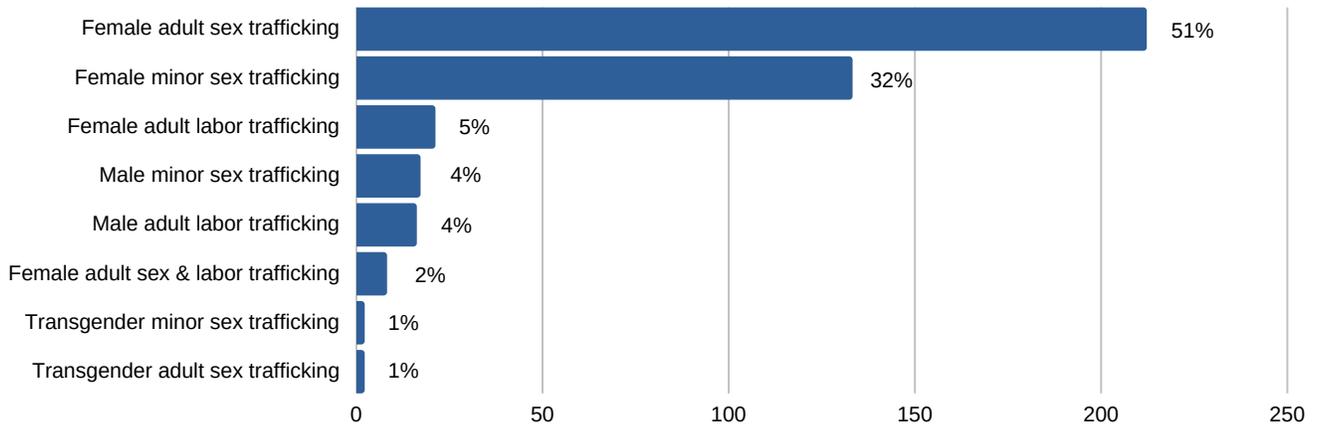
### Victim Demographic 2021 & 2022

	Labor Trafficking	Sex Trafficking	Labor & Sex Trafficking	Total Victim
<b>Female Victim</b>	21	345	8	374
Female Minor	0	133	0	133
Female Adult	21	212	8	241
<b>Male Victim</b>	17	23	2	42
Male Minor	1	17	0	18
Male Adult	16	6	2	24
<b>Trans Victim</b>	0	4	0	4
Trans Minor	0	2	0	2
Trans Adult	0	2	0	2
<b>Total Victim</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>420</b>

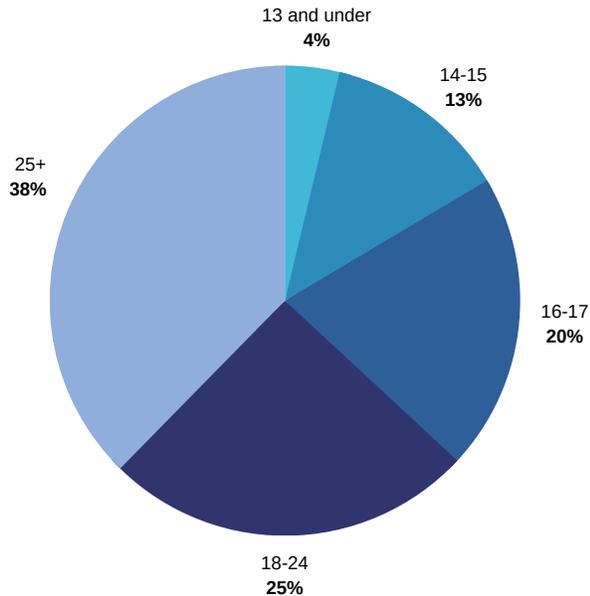
The *Victim Demographic* table above shows the total number of human trafficking victims assisted combined by Waymakers, The Salvation Army, Orange County Social Services Agency, and Public Law Center in 2021 and 2022. Since the first release of the report in 2013, the victim data has come from Waymakers and The Salvation Army as the primary service providers for the OCHTTF. This year's report includes for the first time data from additional organizations to help reflect a broader range of all victims and survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation who received support through other organizations in Orange County. Since 2010, the estimated total number of victims assisted shown in the OCHTTF Human Trafficking Victim Report is 1,490. The total number reflects victims that were new to receiving services in the respective reporting period.



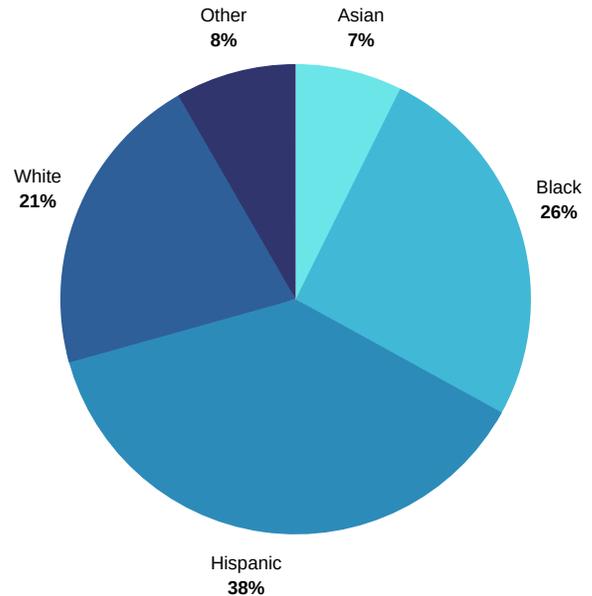
### All Victims - Gender, Age, Type of Trafficking



### All Victims - Age



### All Victims - Race



In the *All Victims - Age* chart above, the age of the victims mark the time when they were first identified as a victim and linked to services. It does not indicate the age of when they first experienced human trafficking or child sexual exploitation. The age of when they were first victimized can range from months to years prior to getting help for the first time. A further breakdown of the age of only the minor victims of sex trafficking show that 10% are 13 years old and under, 35% are 14 to 15 years old, and 55% are 16 to 17 years old.

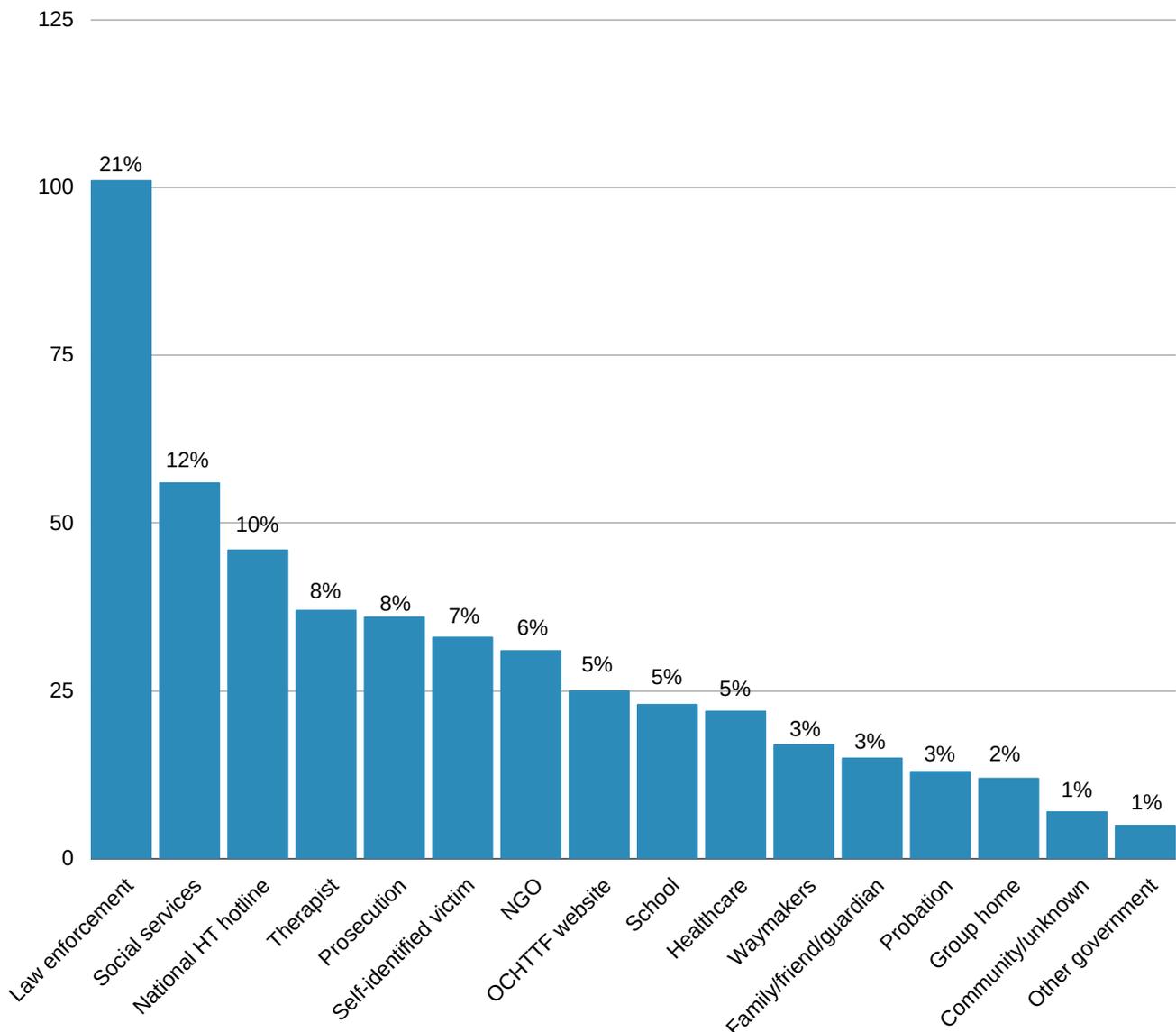
In 2021 and 2022, the cost of emergency services provided by Waymakers was an estimated total of \$75,000. This included transportation assistance which was the most costly service, followed by immigration legal services, food, housing and clothes/hygiene. Due to the limitations in emergency funding, the total estimate does not include the additional resources provided by the volunteers and community donations for longer-term assistance. The average cost of emergency services provided for 1 victim per day is approximately \$500. These costs include food, shelter, clothes, hygiene products, transportation, and stress coping items. Emergency services typically range between 1 day to 1 week. Survivors who want to continue with case management support and services to address mid to long-term physical, mental and emotional stability may continue beyond a crisis response with Waymakers and/or referral to other service providing partners.

## Victim Assistance Referral 2021 & 2022

The *Victim Assistance Referral* chart below shows the source of the original referral received by Waymakers and Orange County Social Services Agency for victim assistance and resources combined in 2021 and 2022. The total number of referrals in the 2-year time period is 479, with 62% received by Waymakers and 38% by Orange County Social Services Agency.

- Law enforcement continues to be the #1 referral source for victim assistance in Orange County.
- 31% of the referrals for support came through the criminal justice system (police, prosecution, probation).
- Self-identified victims category consists of those who called into Waymakers directly.
- 43% of the referrals generated online through the OCHTTF website were self-identified victims.
- Notable difference seen between referrals coming in to Waymakers versus Orange County Social Services Agency is that Social Services is getting referrals from group homes, schools and therapists.

Victim Assistance Referral



## Labor Trafficking Survivor Story

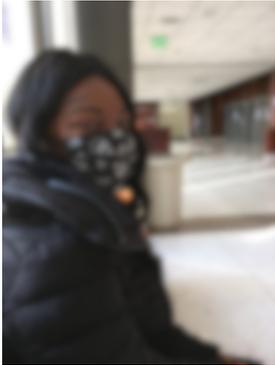
I am from Mexico and am the youngest of six children. Life in Mexico was difficult because my family did not have a lot of money, my parents worked a lot and were therefore unable to provide a lot of care for me. I moved to Mexico City after graduating high school in pursuit of better work opportunities. A friend told me about a job opportunity working as a live-in caregiver for an elderly woman named "Claudia". The type of work I would need to do which included taking out the trash, cleaning the bathroom, doing laundry, and preparing her meals. Claudia seemed nice and I accepted the job. I was only 17 years old. However, the work turned out to be much more than what was initially presented to me. Claudia was 85 years old, depressed, and needed care night and day. Claudia would cry and yell at me all the time and forced me to stay up with her because she couldn't sleep. I would typically only sleep 3-4 hours a day due to her constant needs. Claudia enjoyed putting me down and making me feel stupid. I would hold back my tears because Claudia would become hysterical if she saw me cry. Claudia also had a bell that she would ring whenever she needed something and rang it constantly. I still have nightmares of the sound of her bell and wake up scared. I was afraid of her as she was powerful, had a lot of money, and was well known in Mexico. I was afraid she and her family would use her connections to harm me if I refused to do what she demanded.

Claudia's son informed me that they would be traveling to Miami, Florida to visit Claudia's daughter "Sandra" and asked if I would like to join them in caring for Claudia. I was excited about the idea of being able to travel and visit the United States. Claudia's son arranged for me to obtain a work visa. Part of the visa process was an interview at the U.S. Embassy where I signed a contract that stipulated my job expectations and pay. The contract stated that I would work 8 hours a day, Monday through Friday, and be paid at least minimum wage. However, none of this was followed after my arrival. In the United States, Claudia and I stayed with her daughter Sandra. Not only was I expected to continue to care for Claudia as I did in Mexico, but I was also expected to clean and cook in Sandra's home, as well as for Sandra's daughter's home and care for Claudia's grandchild. Sandra had purposely terminated her house cleaning service. I did not expect all this work. I hardly got a break and was constantly exhausted from the work. I slept on Sandra's living room floor on an air mattress. I was not paid for my work in the United States. I felt like a slave. I felt like I was in prison. While in the United States, I was unaware of my surroundings, didn't have any money, and had nowhere to go. Additionally, I did not have my passport or visa as Sandra took this from me when I first arrived at her home. There was a time when I was not feeling well and expressed this to Sandra. All she did was give me Tylenol. It was clear to me that she did not care about me and I was not important to her.

I knew that if I continued to stay with them the situation would worsen. I decided to reach out to a distant cousin living in the United States for help. One day when Sandra and Claudia were finally out of the house, my cousin arranged for someone to pick me up and I was able to escape. I felt like I had grown wings. As soon as I escaped, Sandra texted me saying that I would regret leaving as I had committed a crime and they would be calling the authorities. I remained steadfast in my decision to leave and did not allow her threats to deter me from my determination. I am now living a happy life. I have a beautiful two-year-old daughter and a supportive partner. I recently obtained my T-Visa which will open more opportunities for me. I have enrolled in an event and decoration course. I hope to one day have my own event/party decorating business. For those living in a human trafficking situation I would like to tell you not to lose faith, stay strong, trust in yourself, and trust in the service providers in your corner. For community members wanting to help, I would advise you to be good listeners, be patient, have compassion and a good heart.



# Victim Impact Statement



## **Criminal Justice System Support**

Waymakers' specialized Human Trafficking Program within the Victim Assistance Programs provides support and resources to victims of human trafficking. One form of assistance is victim advocacy within the criminal justice system. This includes informing victims of their rights under Marsy's Law and the option to make a victim impact statement. The victim impact statement empowers victims to express freely how they feel in their own words to the person who caused harm at the time of sentencing. After the case ends survivors of human trafficking can continue to receive assistance in Orange County. The ability to receive human trafficking victim services is not dependent on the victim's participation in the criminal justice system.

### United States vs. Christian Augustus

The following victim impact statement was written by the minor victim who was unable to read it to the court as she originally wished due to her sad passing shortly after it was written.

"Christian, you've caused me physical and mental pain. You are the son of evil, a demon seed. For you to have children, one of which is a daughter, and still be manipulative and the way you are is sickening. I hope you're getting psychological help in there. You desperately need it. I don't understand how you can live with what you've done to me. You're very, very ill-minded. I'm caught between wanting better for you and wishing horrible things upon you. But, you don't deserve anything good. You beat me, fractured ribs, black eyes... You deserve everything that comes your way. I can hope and pray that you sit and think about what you did to me and feel ashamed. You're a disgusting, heartless figure that's dangerous to children. If you haven't gotten what you deserve, I hope you'll understand what you've done to me. I hope when you get shackled you feel how I felt... trapped, captured, miserable, nasty, unable to move. I hope your daughter won't think this lifestyle is glorious since you let her play in my 8 inch heels. You deserve every year, minute, second, millisecond that this here judge gives you. If it was up to me, you'd never be free because mentally and emotionally I'll never be the same. I have bipolar disorder, PTSD, and severe anxiety. I have to live with this EVERY DAY. I feel you should too. I hate you Christian Alexander Augustus. I hope you burn in hell."

### People vs. Thomas Bridgette

The following victim impact statement was translated from Spanish to English.

"Mr. Judge, I'm writing you this letter to thank you for being part of the system of justice and help victims like me of crimes, so this doesn't continue happening to women or kids. The reason that motivated me to make the complaint is so that this man doesn't continue abusing more people or kids. This is the reason I testified in court. This case has affected my life personally and physically. Every time I see a person with his physical resemblance it affects me a lot. I get a lot of convulsions and anxiety attacks like if it's going to happen again. I'm going to have to get therapy to be able to overcome this and to not let this trauma affect me. This man is a very dangerous person who uses weapons to attack his victims. He is very intimidating. He threatened that he was going to kill me if I called the police or if I yelled for help. He intended to choke me. He pointed his gun at me. He abused me. He threatened to leave me dead in the tub at the motel and that no one would ever know about me. Mr. Judge, thank you very much for reading my letter. I hope that it's useful to make your decision for this criminal for what he did to me. I would like for this man to not continue abusing. I hope you punish him for what he deserves. Thank you Mr. Judge for being part of the system of justice. Thank you for everything. God Bless You."

# Criminal Justice & Protection

## Criminal History of Violence

The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) conducts proactive and reactive investigations. The proactive investigations include monitoring online posted ads and social media, as well as conducting investigations at geographical areas and hospitality locations where commercialized sex work often takes place. The reactive investigations on the other hand come from a variety of sources such as NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children), human trafficking hotline tips, and calls from concerned citizens to name a few. The vast majority of the cases investigated by the OCHTTF begin with the information on the victim, with the identity of the suspect unknown until later in the investigation or at the time of the arrest.

The criminal history data presented in this report was collected by two law enforcement entities and the District Attorney's Office, who all play a vital part in addressing the human trafficking problem in Orange County. The data encompasses a 5-year span of those arrested by the OCHTTF and Santa Ana Police Department Vice. The data from the Orange County District Attorney's Office, referenced in the charts as "other OC agencies", are cases filed from other law enforcement agencies across Orange County within the same 5-year period. All of the data resulted in a combined total of 342 perpetrators, 120 from the OCHTTF, 47 from the Santa Ana Police Department Vice, and 175 from the other Orange County law enforcement agencies. The information was evaluated separately, as well as combined, to assess how a perpetrator's criminal history impacts human trafficking and its victims. The results from all sets of data indicate similar and consistent criminal behavior prior to the perpetrator's arrest from the law enforcement agencies in Orange County and prosecution on felony charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking. The significant history of violent behavior and repeated criminal conduct for the majority of the offenders illustrate who the victims have to contend with and the work by victim service providers to continue to support multiple victims created by the perpetrators.

97%  
Had prior arrest in criminal history



37%  
Arrested 10 or more times previously



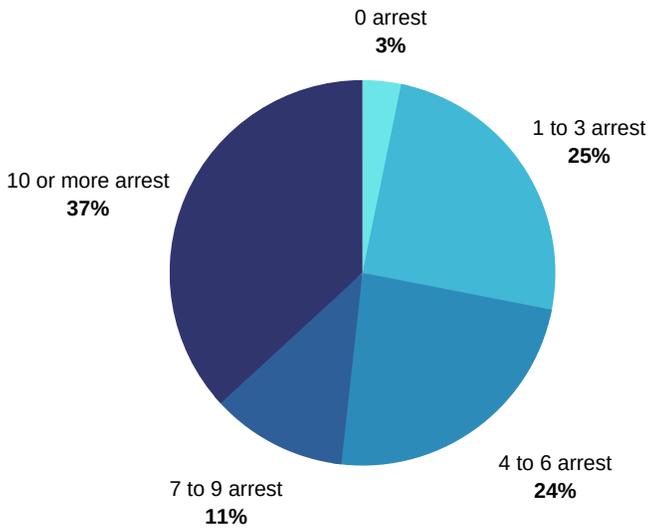
29%  
Served prior time in prison



72%  
Had a criminal history of violence



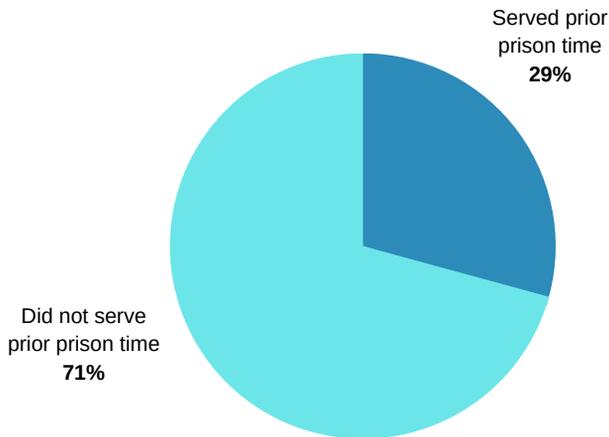
### Frequency of Prior Arrest



Total arrest in criminal history	OCHTTF & SAPD Vice	Other OC agencies	Total
0	0	11	11
1 to 3	48	37	85
4 to 6	49	32	81
7 to 9	18	21	39
10 or more	52	74	126
<b>Total perpetrators</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>342</b>

The *Frequency of Prior Arrest* chart and table show that out of the 342 perpetrators arrested on charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking by the law enforcement agencies combined in Orange County between 2018 and 2022, 97% had a prior arrest in their criminal history.

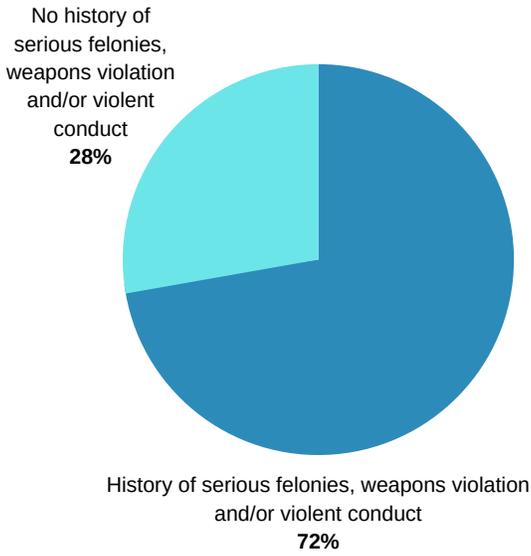
### Sentenced to Prison



Total served time in prison	OCHTTF & SAPD Vice	Other OC agencies	Total
Served prior prison time	55	45	100
Did not serve prior prison time	112	130	242
<b>Total perpetrators</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>342</b>

The *Sentenced to Prison* chart and table show that out of the 342 perpetrators arrested on charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking by the law enforcement agencies combined in Orange County between 2018 and 2022, 29% had previously served time in prison.

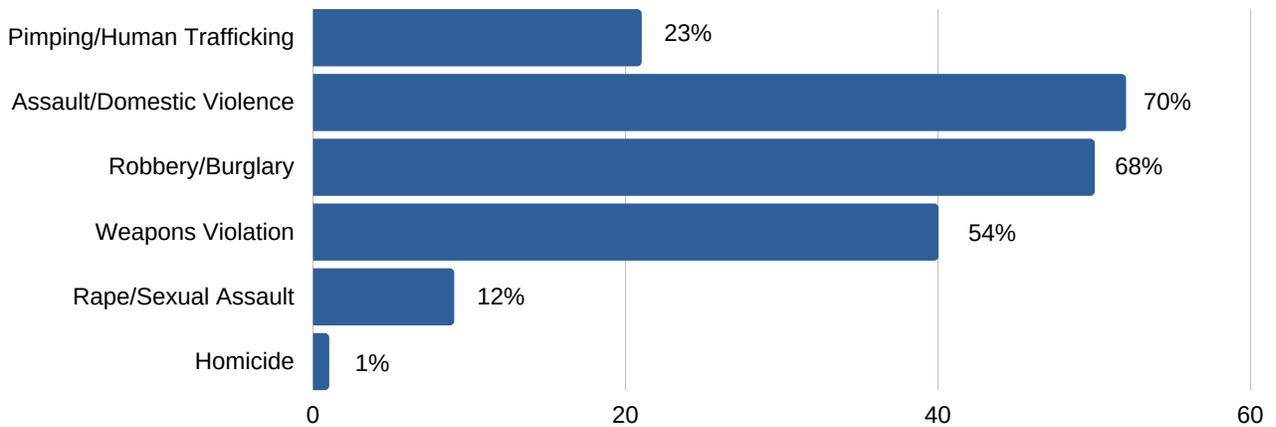
### History of Violent Behavior



Total history of violence	OCHTTF & SAPD Vice	Other OC agencies	Total
History of serious felonies, weapons violation and/or violent conduct	104	143	247
No history of serious felonies, weapons violation and/or violent conduct	63	32	95
<b>Total perpetrators</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>342</b>

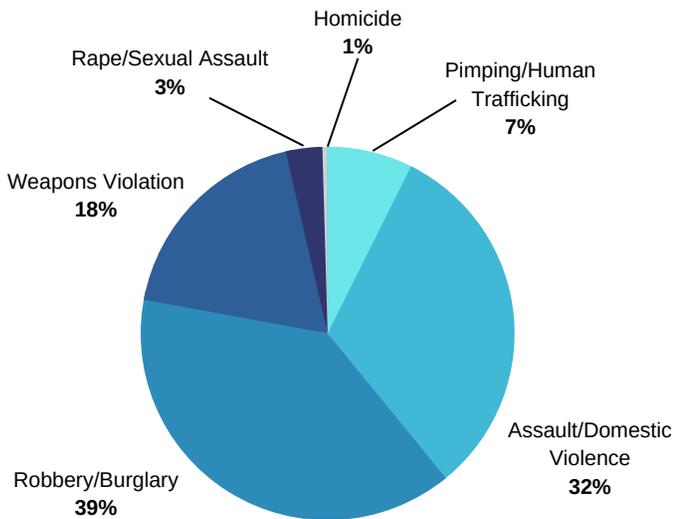
The *History of Violent Behavior* chart and table shows that out of the 342 perpetrators arrested on charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking by the law enforcement agencies combined in Orange County between 2018 and 2022, 72% have a criminal history of serious felonies, weapons violation and/or violent conduct.

### Types of Crime and Violence



The *Types of Crime and Violence* chart shows that out of the 74 perpetrators with a history of violence arrested by the OCHTTF on charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking between 2018 and 2022, 1 out of every 4 had previously been arrested for pimping/human trafficking. The incidents of violence was only counted one time for each crime category even if there were multiple incidents for the same type of crime perpetrated by the individual. This means that out of the 74 perpetrators, 52 or 70% were previously arrested for assault/domestic violence. This data set does not show all crime types evaluated from the total arrest history. In the attempt to understand more specifically the history of violence, the data revealed that pimping/human trafficking, assault/domestic violence, robbery/burglary, weapons violation, rape/sexual assault, and homicide were important contributing factors to the continued violent criminal conduct.

## Types of Crime Incidents



Types of Crime Incidents	Other OC agencies
Pimping/Human Trafficking	49
Assault/Domestic Violence	211
Robbery/Burglary	258
Weapons Violation	123
Rape/Sexual Assault	21
Homicide	3
<b>Total incidents</b>	<b>665</b>

The *Types of Crime Incidents* chart and table show that out of the 143 perpetrators with a history of violence arrested by the other OC law enforcement agencies and prosecuted on charges of pimping, pandering and/or human trafficking between 2018 and 2022, a total of 665 previous incidents of serious felonies, weapons violation, and/or violent conduct occurred. In contrast to the *Types of Crime and Violence* chart, this chart shows a count for each act of violence committed by the same person in the same crime category as opposed to only once in the category. This data reveals that 82% of the perpetrators with a criminal history of violence had a total of 665 incidents of violence. It is important to note that the 143 perpetrators committed over fourfold the amount of violent acts before making contact with the law enforcement agencies in a human trafficking investigation. This data set does not show all crime types evaluated from the total arrest history. In the attempt to understand more specifically the repeated history of violence, the data revealed that pimping/human trafficking, assault/domestic violence, robbery/burglary, weapons violation, rape/sexual assault, and homicide were important contributing factors to the continued and repeated violent criminal conduct.

It does not surprise the OCHTTF that the number of domestic violence priors is high. It is common for a call to come in about a disturbance between a male and female at a motel and for law enforcement to respond to an argument between an alleged boyfriend and girlfriend. If the contact resulted in an arrest, the perpetrator would likely have been arrested for domestic violence rather than human trafficking with the victim stating she and her boyfriend had a disagreement or that her boyfriend was upset and hit her. Officers may miss the fact that both parties had no legitimate explanation as to why they found themselves at the particular hotel, were recently from different parts of the state or country, or why the victim did not know her boyfriend's full name. It was easier to fit the incident into a narrative that is already familiar in training - domestic violence.

Through the use of victim-centered training and a trauma-informed approach to investigations, the law enforcement component of the OCHTTF better understands that part of the recruitment process for new victims is for the perpetrators to learn about their victim, often through social media connections, and let them feel seen and heard, as well as continuing to exploit the victim's history of sexual molestation or rape, father absence, and the desire to be loved - ultimately establishing themselves as the father figure "Daddy." The OCHTTF recognizes that trauma and other adverse childhood experiences contribute to the pimping and human trafficking-style relationships, referred to by law enforcement as the "Boyfriend Pimp," is one of the biggest hurdles faced when investigating human trafficking cases. The victim's reluctance to self-identify is seen as them willingly involved in sex work. Their reluctance to accuse their perpetrator is incorrectly seen as them consensually being involved with their exploiter. Evolving from the concept of "No victim, no crime" the OCHTTF acknowledges the power and control dynamics in the coercive nature between the two individuals.

## Prosecution Case Highlights

Warning: This case contains violent and graphic information that may disturb some readers. The real names of the victims are not used to protect their identity. It is one of the worst and rarer cases from what the OCHTTF normally encounters in human trafficking investigations. It is a combination of the victim initiating help and the type of evidence needed to prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” that force was used, typically associated with physical force. As shown in the criminal history charts, there is a high probability that violence occurs during the time period when victims are in a situation of pimping and human trafficking. However, conviction is not based on the belief that violence occurred, but proof of evidence of that violence.

### People vs. Anthony Jackson and Marquesh Fox

In late October 2020, “Danielle” was sitting at a bus stop in front of a supermarket in Highland when a pick-up truck drove up with a male driver, Anthony Jackson, inside. He tried to talk to her, but she ignored him which made him angry and he drove away. However, Jackson did not leave and instead drove into the parking lot behind the bus stop. He came up from behind Danielle and dragged her into the truck. Once inside Jackson punched Danielle in the face, forced her head down on his lap and kept punching her until he got tired. He threatened to kill her if she tried to escape. Then, Jackson drove to two different apartment complexes to park where he raped Danielle at each location. She tried to resist, saying “no” several times, but she was too physically exhausted and also under the influence of substances. Danielle was in survival mode and did what was necessary to appease Jackson to save her own life.

As evening arrived, Jackson drove to a motel. He took Danielle to a motel room and a female, Marquesh Fox, opened the door. Anthony Jackson and Marquesh Fox were in a relationship. Inside the room, Jackson continued to beat Danielle. She believed Jackson was trying to injure her so that she would not be able to run away. When Jackson left the motel later that night Fox let Danielle out of the bathroom to go to sleep on the bed. While Danielle was sleeping, Fox woke her up and forced Danielle’s head between Fox’s legs to perform oral sex. Danielle was not allowed to stop until she could make Fox orgasm, even when she cried in discomfort asking to stop because her face was severely bruised and movement from her jaw caused more pain. Danielle was left alone with Fox for two days where she continued to force Danielle to perform oral sex and was physically assaulted, including smacking Danielle’s face into a door.

After two days, Jackson returned with empty trash bags. Danielle feared for her life believing he was going to kill her after she overheard a conversation. One night when Jackson, Fox and Danielle were driving back to the motel from one of Fox’s sex dates with a sex purchaser, Fox pointed out to a female standing by herself and said to stop the car. Jackson tried to make conversation with “Kristina”, but she did not get in the car. They pulled into the parking lot near a gas station and kept watch on Kristina trying to assess her situation. Fox grew impatient and told Jackson to grab Kristina. Kristina had traveled to California from Nevada with a male friend. While in Ontario, Kristina got into an argument with the friend and he abandoned her. She walked aimlessly flagging down passing motorists for help. When Jackson went to talk to Kristina again she explained that she was stuck with no money, no phone or a place to stay. Jackson offered Kristina a ride and to stay at the motel.

When they arrived at the motel, Jackson and Fox gave Kristina methamphetamine. Fox took Kristina’s ID, social security card, and the only \$20 she had on her. When Kristina attempted to confront Fox, Jackson slapped her across the face. Jackson told Kristina she was going to prostitute for him and instructed her to call him “Pimp Daddy”. Jackson removed the handgun from his waistband and stuck it into Kristina’s mouth. He told her if she tried to run away or if she caused his life or freedom to be threatened then he would kill her and her children. Scared for her life, Kristina believed Jackson was capable of following through with his threats.

Jackson then raped Kristina while Fox watched. They also forced Danielle and Kristina to perform sexual acts on each other while being recorded. They took turns sodomizing Danielle with a toothbrush travel case and did not stop when she protested in pain. Jackson and Fox took photos of the victims dressed in lingerie and posted the photos in online ads marketing them for prostitution. Kristina met the sex buyers with Fox in the motel room. When the sex buyers asked why Fox was present she would say that Kristina was in training. One sex buyer came two days in a row and paid \$400 each time for sex with Kristina. Kristina made \$2,000 for Jackson and Fox in two days.

Danielle's first transaction was at a hotel in Los Angeles. Fox walked Danielle to the hotel door, negotiated with the sex buyer and took the money. After 30 minutes, Fox returned to the room to walk Danielle back to the car. One time while driving to meet customers Kristina got out the car to urinate and attempted to run away, but wasn't able to get very far because she was so sore. Fox chased after her and pulled her back into the car. Fox was so infuriated she picked up a wine bottle and clubbed Kristina in the face. The impact was so forceful it caused the bottle to shatter and left a large laceration over Kristina's eye. Fox continued to arrange sex transaction for the victims, but now it was only being conducted out of their motel room.

The victims each were forced to have sex with more than 10 customers every day. The customers gave the payment to the victims, who then put it into a drawer where Fox would later retrieve the money. The victims never learned the real names of Jackson and Fox and were only allowed to address them by "Pimp Daddy" and "Empress". One time Kristina heard Jackson refer to Fox by another name. When Kristina called Fox by that name instead of "Empress", Jackson got angry and struck Kristina in the head with his fist several times. He told her to never use that name again.

When it was time to sleep, the victims were placed naked underneath one of the beds inside a cage-like bedframe. They were doused with water and the air conditioner turned up. They were left naked, cold, hungry and in pain. Sometimes a handful of the cereal Cheerios was thrown at them to eat while they were held captive under the bed. They were not allowed to use the bathroom and forced to urinate on themselves.



After several days Jackson instructed everyone to pack up because they will be moving to a different motel in Anaheim. The room wasn't ready, so Jackson drove them to Venice Beach where they walked the boardwalk and ate fish tacos. Jackson and Fox shopped for clothes using the money the victims made from being prostituted. When they returned to the motel room, the victims were told to start getting dressed for work. While Jackson and Fox were having sex, Jackson forced the victims to perform oral sex on him. This angered Fox and she attacked Jackson. During the altercation, Danielle ran out the door and told Kristina, "Let's go!"

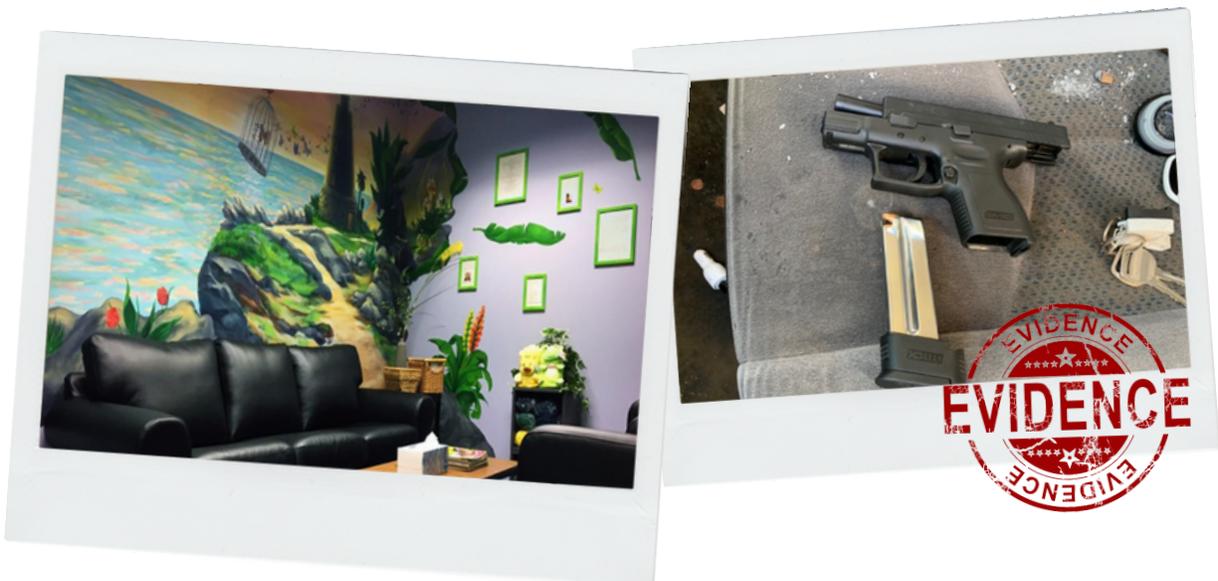
Danielle hid in the bushes around the block. Half naked and only wearing a fishnet skirt, a passerby gave her a t-shirt. She eventually made her way to a fast food place where she was given a pair of pants and blanket by a homeless man. Danielle found a man who was willing to give her a ride and she called her friend to help take her home. Kristina ran to the motel lobby and kept yelling for someone to call the police. Fox came to the lobby to get Kristina. She attempted to persuade Kristina to calm down and return to the room. Kristina refused and Fox eventually left. Kristina did not know where Danielle ran off to and kept saying she was afraid for Danielle's life thinking Fox had caught her. Patrol officers from the Anaheim Police Department arrived at the motel soon after the 911 call made by the front desk lobby clerk.

On November 4, 2020, at 4:30 a.m., investigators with the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force were called for possible human trafficking and took over the investigation. Kristina was taken back to the Anaheim Police Department and a Waymakers Victim Advocate was called out to provide additional support and emergency resources. Kristina complained of injuries to her head, face, legs, arms and abdominal pain. She was taken to the hospital accompanied by the OCHTTF investigator and victim advocate. After 8 hours at the hospital and multiple examinations she returned to the Anaheim Police Department.

The police were not able to find Danielle after canvassing the scene. Jackson and Fox were both located and arrested. Investigators were able to find Danielle's ID inside Jackson's pants pocket and later made contact with Danielle. She did not stay to report what happened to the police because she was afraid that Jackson was going to find her and kill her. She also did not think the police would believe her or do anything about it.

By the end of the night, Kristina was exhausted, scared and traumatized. She did not want to leave the police department to go sleep at a hotel by herself as the only shelter option available. Realizing that Kristina may be sleep deprived, hoping to de-escalate the high emotional situation and avoiding more trauma to her current state of mind and condition, the victim advocate and investigator stayed at the police station longer. They allowed Kristina to sleep inside the victim interview room. After Kristina woke up she felt a little better and left with the victim advocate to check in at the hotel. They were escorted by the investigator in a separate car helping to reassure Kristina's safety that night.

On September 9, 2021, Anthony Jackson was found guilty by a jury on charges of human trafficking, pimping, pandering, forcible oral copulation, assault with a firearm, kidnapping, and sexual penetration with a foreign object. He was sentenced to 128 years to life in state prison. Marquesh Fox was found guilty on charges of human trafficking, pimping, pandering, assault with a deadly weapon, forcible oral copulation, and sexual penetration with a foreign object. She was sentenced to 24 years in state prison.



## People vs. Treneir Middlebrook

On March 3, 2023, Treneir Middlebrook, who was recently paroled, was pulled over for a traffic violation in Stanton in a known area for prostitution activity. In the car were two additional females, a young adult who he referred to as his "girlfriend" and a minor. Upon consensual search, the police found condoms on the adult female and text messages that indicated there could be a pimping relationship. The case was referred to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Vice for further investigation. Middlebrook drove the minor from Nevada to Los Angeles where they spent some time at the well-known track on Figueroa Street. The "track" is a slang term used for a geographical area for soliciting street prostitution. Then they drove to Orange County to look for a motel. The investigator learned the minor has been involved in prostitution since she was 13 years old.

Middlebrook denied any type of pimping and pandering relationship with the females. However, upon further search of the minor's phone the communication exchanged confirmed that Middlebrook was the victim's trafficker, encouraged her to prostitute, referred to him as "Daddy" and will make him proud. The communication between Middlebrook and the minor revealed a "Romeo" style of pimping. Romeo pimping is a method used where the pimp convinces the person he intends to have work as a prostitute for him the idea of a glamorous lifestyle. It is achieved through making the victim feel cared for, as if they are in a real "boyfriend and girlfriend" romantic relationship. It is done with the intention to manipulate the victim into believing that they are working towards her dreams together of a better life. In reality, the pimp does this to gain full control by taking advantage of her vulnerabilities of needing love, family and feeling seen and valued in order to benefit from the proceeds of her being prostituted. This tactic is commonly used with younger victims creating a trauma bond similar to domestic violence relationships, except it is not just within an isolated situation between two people. The sex traffickers are often repeat offenders and the victim is not the perpetrator's first and only victim, and will not be their last either, to maintain the supply and demand of the business product.

Against the advice of the court, Middlebrook represented himself and waived his rights to a defense attorney. At first, he was willing to plead guilty as long as the sex offender registration was not included as part of the deal. This is not uncommon for defendants charged with sex trafficking to rather keep the human trafficking charge and get rid of the required sex offender registration, as it is perceived as having a more serious impact on their life than pimping or human trafficking on their criminal record. The People rejected the deal of dismissing the sex offender registration requirement and Middlebrook proceeded to move the case to trial.

Part of the Defendant's opening arguments at trial on why it wasn't human trafficking included, "They have to see signs of fatigue, trauma, any clothes. They got to look at their clothes to see if they're worn out, see if they're starving... Like I've been locked up with alleged pimps. And I ask questions. There is no meeting their grandmother. You don't -- a pimp doesn't meet anyone's grandmother. I met the girl's grandmother." He also claimed there was no evidence to support that they are a victim and that anything happened stating, "They (Jane Does) didn't say a word about... "He's a pimp. He's pimping me... It was nothing as it was no crime committed. Jane Doe didn't engage in any sex. So for a crime to be committed, somebody has to be engaged in sex and a pimp has to be responsible."

The evidence presented to the jury included jail calls made where Middlebrook expressed how he had been caught in the act. In the closing arguments, Middlebrook continued to state that there was no evidence shown to prove human trafficking and that it didn't happen. He argued that the prosecutor and court were just making up the law. During trial, even though Middlebrook waived his rights to defense counsel, the jury saw that the People ensured a fair trial for the Defendant.

Middlebrook was found guilty by a jury on charges of human trafficking of a minor and pandering of a minor. He was sentenced to 4 years in state prison.

## People vs. Donald Clark

On May 25, 2015, Donald Clark sent a message to an undercover law enforcement social media account with the OCHTTF posing as a minor. The communication initiated between Clark and the “minor” included him saying that he was waiting for her and wanted her “loyalty, dedication and trust.” As the correspondence continued, Clark said he expected to make \$500 per day and negotiated other terms of payment. When the minor said that this was not what they had originally discussed Clark called her a “hoe” and “fake ass bitch”. In response the minor told Clark to “have a nice life” and wanting to stop the communication, but he still told her to bring the money to him before he “finds her and beats her ass.” On June 13, Clark contacted the minor again saying he wanted her. She was instructed to meet him in Los Angeles by taking the bus where he would pick her up. Clark was reminded that she and her younger friend, who she was supposed to bring along with her to work for him, were both minors. He said he didn’t care. In December 2017, Donald Clark was found guilty by a jury on charges of human trafficking of a minor, attempt pimping of a minor, pandering and sentencing enhancements of a prior strike conviction for robbery and false imprisonment. Clark appealed the human trafficking of a minor arguing that the communication was not with a real minor. On December 12, 2019, the Court of Appeal of the State of California, Fourth Appellate District, upheld the People’s conviction. The publication argued that it “holds that a person violates the human trafficking of a minor by engaging in the prohibited conduct whether the target is an actual minor or not.” In spring 2023 Clark was convicted again by a jury in a separate case on the same charges that he originally appealed. While in prison he had possession of a cell phone and was recruiting a minor for purposes of prostitution work, but had actually made contact with the undercover social media account from the Reno Police Department who he believed to be a minor.

## People vs. John Clark

On September 7, 2020, John Clark, who called himself “Louie” sent a message to an undercover social media account with the OCHTTF. Clark was persuading the “young female” to leave her current situation and join his team. He was persistent in his pursuit saying “let’s make dreamwork happen” and that he was going to guide her to greatness like she’s never seen before. He went to describe himself as a business man. In a phone conversation between Clark and a female undercover officer Clark indicated that he was in prison and will be released soon. He told her to start working for him with the second female who Clark believed was a minor associated with her stating, “I still run my program even from up in here. That don’t stop nothing.” Clark had been incarcerated since 2012 for attempted murder. At a strip club a pimp “tried to snatch his bitch up”, so he shot him saying, “I make sure all my bitches safe.” On October 29, 2020, in coordination with the OCHTTF the California Department of Corrections initiated a sweep of the prison. Clark was found in possession of a cell phone and tablet that had been altered. The cellphone had over 200 apps downloaded and 165 contacts with 1,185 calls logged. On September 15, 2022, John Clark was convicted and sentenced to 3 years.



# Power and Control

The following text messages were exchanged between a 16-year-old victim and her trafficker. A translated version was provided for purposes of understandability of the correspondence, since the original text messages consisted of shorthanded messages, slang, emojis and terminology commonly used in the subculture of "the game" or "the life".



## Community Support & Healing

### Faith in Action & Survivor Journey

Faith comes in all forms. The action of faith, the complete trust and confidence in someone or something, can be directed towards people such as family, friends, and colleagues or things such as institutions, organizations and systems. What happens when people and things fail you or can't be there for you all the time? A survivor's journey to heal is their own path to walk. The ability to freely exercise the type of support that works for their individual life experience is an important motivational factor in reclaiming their identity. These are the stories of the faith journey of survivors who explored options beyond people and things. They shared what worked or didn't work for them when they looked to God or a higher spiritual power to lean on for hope and strength.



“I was a victim of trafficking starting at the age of 15 and didn't get help until I was 25 years old. During my trafficking it was hard to stay connected to God because I didn't understand why I was going through what I was going through. My faith was rocky. I saw no way out, but I always believed in God even if that meant that being trafficked was the path he chose for me. I started to try to rationalize the pain with my religion because I was raised that God doesn't put anything on you that you can't bare. When I started getting help, I didn't like being referred to as a prostitute or sex worker. I didn't feel I could be open about everything because sometimes it was just praying about it and things would work out with no real action items. I believed in God, but prayer with no action wasn't going to help me and I knew that. Most of the religious people who came to me were overbearing and invasive. Also, they didn't really understand what human trafficking was or even encountered anyone who had been trafficked. However, faith and God did play a role in my healing journey. I found a therapist who was God fearing. I was able to connect with God and get deeper than I have ever been before. I leaned on my religion despite me not going to church. Today, my relationship with God is better than ever! Me and God are locked in. PERIOD! I am so grateful to have an amazing relationship where I now walk by purely faith and not by sight. I learned that I am so loved, an unconditional and forgiving love like no other! A love so kind that he gave his life for me. I am in church now and study my bible regularly. I would not be who I am today if I had given up on God and I know now that he has never given up on me.” - Kia Dupclay



Kia Dupclay is a survivor of human trafficking who got out before her 25th birthday. As a young teen she was placed in foster care and started experiencing homelessness, as not many people wanted to take in a CSEC (commercially sexually exploited children) "troubled" youth. Juvenile hall was often used as a placement when she would flee her abusers seeking physical safety in the systems. After finally getting out with the help of her first true support system, she realized through life-skills programs and having stable housing that she had the power to overcome her past and turn her pain into true purpose. Kia worked for an anti-human trafficking organization, but saw that outreach and training were the heart of her work and Free 2 Dream Big was born!

“When I was being trafficked, I was (and still am) a Christian. I had faith that I was going to make it back home. Even when I was sold across state lines I knew God was going to make a way for me to come home. I had seen plenty of hurtful and harmful things. However, I was being protected because as other girls got beat around me, I didn't. I believe God kept me safe till I could come home. I did however feel that I was the one who got myself into this mess, so I didn't reach out for help. I tried to make it home on my own without anyone noticing what I was going through. Prior to being trafficked and post-trafficking I was attending church on the regular. My church had just went to a conference that was geared towards teaching people about human trafficking. So when I went missing they had thought I was possibly being trafficked and prayed for me every day until I came home. I didn't tell anyone what I went through until three years after making it home. I was fearful that people would look at me with shame, and taint who I was as a believer in Christ. When I did start to receive help it was with a faith-based organization called Gems Uncovered. Staying strong in my faith was key. It gave me a purpose behind my testimony. It shined the light on the darkness I went through and made it make sense. I came back alive to share my story to give others hope that they can be saved and have a normal life after trafficking. My beliefs are strong. I believe that God carried me through what I went through. I thank Jesus for my testimony, from the trials I went through as a child to now. He has given me purpose which is so important in this world. You have to start living intentionally and purpose helps you with that. But, don't push religion on victims and survivors. Lead by example and pray over them or with them if they would like. It's important to make sure we respect boundaries and build trust because that's key to establishing a long-term and honest relationship with the survivor. Also if you say you're going to do something, follow through with it because that can be key to bringing walls down.” - Mariah Marple



Mariah Marple is a survivor. From the age of 7 she was molested, to the age of 17 when she was groomed and sexually exploited. At the age of 18 she was sold across state lines by her trafficker. As a survivor of sex trafficking, Mariah has dedicated her life to bringing awareness to sex trafficking and trauma. She has taken many trauma informed trainings, become a certified mentor, and began her pursuit of shining a light on this dark issue. Mariah has published her story, been on a global podcast, as well as radio and TV shows, and travels from city to city at different speaking events to share her story and open the eyes of the community around her. Mariah works with a non-profit called Gems Uncovered as a mentor and case manager to help victims transform themselves into survivors with her Survivor Mentality mentoring program.

“Eastside got involved with the OCHTTF because we wanted to be part of something meaningful, strategic and effective when it came to the work of anti-human trafficking efforts. We hold a very high value in collaboration and learning from experts in the community to figure out how we can be most effective as a church in any area we are looking to make an impact. We are so grateful that the OCHTTF is so well rounded with experts from various sectors across Orange County who all work together and make a coordinated effort to make change, advocate for those who have been victims of exploitation and bring justice to the offenders.” - Eastside Church

The OCHTTF has been working in collaboration with **Eastside Christian Church** since 2015. The long-standing support their *Compassion Ministry* provides has been instrumental. There have been many times where the teams have sat together to see how community support can multiply the impact. While the OCHTTF work is very heavy, deep and meaningful, it is refreshing, encouraging and down-right fun to get to dream up plans for the future as our entire community pulls together around this cause. The most memorable contributions Eastside Church brings to the survivor continuum of care work is the fun, joy, gratitude and empowerment from the Disneyland trips to Survivor Graduation ceremonies.



“Every Sunday I sat in the front row watching my grandmother and mother serve in the church. I had choir rehearsal on Saturdays, revivals on Wednesdays, and Bible study on Tuesdays. I sung the hymns of “Falling in Love with Jesus.” I had religion. I did not have a relationship with the Lord. My mother may have made some mistakes and was not educated on how to best support me once I was being trafficked, but I am grateful and thankful she introduced me to the Lord because he was not foreign to me. During my trafficking I never questioned if Jesus was real. I questioned WHO he was, but the way I called out to him I KNEW he could save me. I just wasn't sure WHEN. I believe there is a process to faith and belief that's based on the amount of intimacy. It was very hard to be intimate with the Lord when I felt dirty, like damaged goods and broken so I knew him as just a savior - but that's not all he is. I'm learning now at 28 years old who he is as a father and ultimately who he is as the KING who loves, adores and treasures me. What a gift to have a God who is madly in love with someone like me.

Honestly, religious people didn't turn me off. I just wasn't ready to surrender. My trauma gave a false sense of control over my life. I heard the sermons. I sat in juvenile hall and heard the preacher who had a past like mine. I just wasn't ready. I think what didn't help was being on the streets and the churches that were located nearby weren't inviting. I believed I had to “clean myself up before coming to Jesus”. I wasn't reassured that he would do the cleaning. God is love and he is unconditional, so love is unconditional. But, it's also a choice and can't be forced so when people tried to force me to be in communion with God it only made me want to run.

God sent PEOPLE first in my life who represented him well to LOVE me so I would then trust what they had to say about HIM! The relationship started horizontally with believers that unconditionally loved him, loved me and met me where I was - even in my “sin/brokenness”. How those people did it... They had authentic relationships with the Lord and in certain vital moments they planted seeds about him. There were baby steps: first someone introduced praise dancing as an “outward expression”. Then someone taught me how to write which led to writing out prayers. There wasn't a formal way of healing. The Lord used people who were committed to his purpose and who loved him purely, so they were obedient and prepared on how to love me.

Becoming anchored in Christ is not easy. It's one of the hardest walks of my life. Even harder than walking the track BUT the cost is worth it! I wouldn't trade this freedom, peace and joy for anything in the world. I now have an intimate relationship with the Lord and it continues to transform and renew, the woman that I am becoming but who he has always created me to be. The most beautiful thing is my faith impacts not just me but for my daughter and future generations. I'm learning it's a process and a journey but I'm grateful there is grace for my mistakes. I have an opportunity every morning to try again.

The biggest way for faith-based people to support victims and survivors is focus on loving them unconditionally with no expectation of anything in return (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). This is what comes to mind when I think about HOW to do it. Then when the time is right they will ask you about who the Lord is or wonder why you are the way you are. The Lord can use you to be the introducer or the mediator, but never try to force religion on survivors. Simply love them, show up and be consistent the same way the father is for us. Never use fear of consequences or Hell to convict or inform because Love will transform and correct.” - Oree Freeman



Oree Freeman lives a life of service. She is a woman who has overcome adversity and continues to thrive through life's many twists and turns. Oree is passionate, filled with spunk, and is tenacious in her advocacy. Oree's mission is to be a voice and a fighter for all people who have survived traumatic experiences and has devoted her career to combating against injustice by establishing AWARENESS, spreading HOPE and helping others find RESILIENCE within themselves. Oree is an advocate and motivational speaker where she transforms the lives of youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems by sharing what she has learned from her own experience as a child survivor of sex trafficking at the age of 11, as well as the countless youth she has served over the past seven years.

# Healthcare & Impact of Trauma

## Healthcare Involvement in Anti-Trafficking Efforts

Human exploitation is a complex and pervasive public health issue that often leads to severe, chronic, and long-term health conditions due to extreme violence, including physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse and assault. Some of the serious health consequences include untreated chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma, oral health problems, communicable diseases, sexually transmitted infections, injuries, and mental health disorders such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and suicidal ideation. (Greenbaum, 2020; Ijadi Maghsoodi et al., 2016; Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Price et al., 2019). According to several studies, up to 88% of survivors of sex and labor exploitation are in contact with a healthcare professional before, during, or after their period of exploitation; this includes trafficked youth who sought medical care in various healthcare settings, including Orange County. (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2016; Ertl et al., 2020; Greenbaum, 2017; Henry, 2016; Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Murdock et al., 2022, Price et al., 2019; Richie-Zavaleta et al., 2020).

Despite the pervasiveness, exploitation often remains invisible, significantly under-recognized, and under-documented due to healthcare provider and survivor-related challenges. There remains limited awareness and response to human trafficking due to multiple factors; a lack of accurate knowledge and education, a deficit in identification and response, and a lack of adoption of standardized evidence-based/survivor-informed protocols. In a recent Southern California study, two hundred seventy-seven frontline medical professionals were surveyed regarding youth sex trafficking, 95% of the participants of the field first responders and 100% of the emergency department (ED)/clinical professionals recognized the risk, yet none of the first responders reported that the scenarios depicted were potentially situations involving sexual exploitation. (Winks et al., 2023). Only 12% of the ED/clinical professionals recognized trafficking risk in at least one of the presented scenarios, and only 2% were able to identify all three scenarios correctly; 46% of the first responders also felt responding to nonmedical needs was outside of their job description, and participants also incorrectly endorsed 9 of the 16 exploitation myths presented in this study. (Winks et al., 2023). Survivors' reluctance to disclose abuse, limited long-term resources specific to human trafficking survivors, and the absence of a centralized database to reflect true prevalence also increase challenges to identification and recovery. (Kaufka-Walts, 2017; Murphy, 2017).

*Survivor 8 "A lot of minors probably are being unaccompanied to these places, if they are gonna get treated. And...they...they can lie...it's easy to lie about their age or whatever...being a John Doe in the hospital. But, just like...seeing like how someone is acting, their body language. The way they're fidgeting...the way they're talking. If they're scared... if they're completely denying the fact of where these bruises or marks or something is coming from and just totally brushing it off. Like, dig deeper...you know, because it's possibly more to a story." (Murdock et al., 2022).*

## Neurobiology of Trauma

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are common and can have a prolonged and severe impact on one's health. According to a landmark study, 67% of the population had at least 1 ACE, and 12.6% had four or more ACEs. (Felitti et al., 1998). When comparing significant risk factors and toxic stress of youth who were trafficked to non-trafficked youth, 94% of youth with a history of exploitation had at least six significant risk factors compared to only 43% of non-trafficked youth, and 61% with a history of exploitation had nine or more significant risk factors compared to 11% of those not trafficked. (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2017). Complex trauma, simultaneous or sequential forms of abuse and/or neglect, impacts the brain and body differently. In addition, the brain is not fully developed until the mid-twenties. Chronic toxic stress and chronic trauma affect the anatomy and physiology of specific areas of the brain including the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, amygdala, and corpus callosum.

The prefrontal cortex is the last to mature in the developing brain and controls executive functioning, consequence comprehension, and future planning. The hippocampus plays a primary role in memory while the amygdala is the emotional center of the brain. The corpus callosum connects the right and left brain hemispheres to help coordinate function and adaptation to real life situations. When stunted or adversely affected by toxic stress and trauma, these effects on the brain primarily manifest through adverse adaptive behaviors, social struggles, and mental health effects in these areas. Thus, while an adverse experience may alter the behavior of an adult, it actually shapes the structural framework and processing of a child's developing brain. (Hibel 2011; Stirling 2008). Brain chemistry, neural pathways, and gray matter changes can compromise psychological, emotional, and cognitive functioning. This is why survivors have been seen experiencing hypervigilant behaviors, altered decision-making, altered responses to stressful stimuli, poor decision making, memory lapses, lack of emotional regulation, trust issues, and aggression towards self and others. These responses to trauma may have originated as a biological adaptation to their toxic environment and adverse experiences (Rood, 2022).

### **Impact of Trauma and the Biopsychosocial Sequelae of Exploitation**

Youth are susceptible to trafficking and often groomed into exploitive situations as minors, for various reasons, including their developmental age, potential lack of resources, limited life experience, fear, stigma, debt bondage, not self-identifying as a victim, or specific exposures to adverse childhood experiences as mentioned above. With the nature of exploitation often being extreme violence and repeated abuse, emotional and psychological trauma can compound leading to more serious mental health issues, which can have devastating long-term effects on emotional and mental health (Costa et al., 2019; Greenbaum, 2017). Survivors report experiencing various symptoms, including fear, guilt, distrust, complex trauma, and mental health disorders, such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, major depression, suicidality, and substance abuse, to name a few. (Greenbaum, 2017).

*Survivor 4 "A lot of girls suffer from PTSD...like a lot of trauma, because it's a trauma experience being in the life. (pause) Like...you'll have clients that will not respect your boundaries. Will not respect your pimp's boundaries and do whatever the f\*\*\*\* they want because they're paying for it... you know? And, that's the sad reality and a lot of people don't understand that." (Murdock et al., 2022).*

Survivors remain in dangerous situations due to reasons including fear of the consequences of leaving the trafficker(s), trauma bonding where the person has a strong emotional attachment to the abuser resulting from the cycle of abuse and perceived affection, lack of identification and support, and lack of knowledge surrounding the complexities of exploitation from the communities that surround them. Forced criminality also creates situations where survivors remain in exploitative situations, often prosecuted for crimes they were forced to commit under the control of their trafficker(s). These situations can lead to prolonged victimization, further increasing the injury burden impacting the youth, families, and communities surrounding them.

*Survivor 2 "We are terrified. Every person that walks through that door, we think it is either a client or a pimp or a friend of a pimp. We do not know. Then it gets to the point that we are sitting there for so long we get up and we leave. Sometimes don't even make it past the front desk, because it's terrifying. You don't want to sit there. You don't wanna be seen. You don't wanna be exposed. It's one of the scariest..." (Murdock et al., 2022).*

The complexity of exploitation and its outcomes, especially among youth, is evident. Healthcare professionals and medical organizations can directly impact the recognition, treatment, response, and care coordination of individuals and families experiencing or at risk of exploitation. Improving healthcare outcomes for those who have experienced these forms of trauma, or are at risk of such trauma, relies on healthcare providers understanding human trafficking and implementing a comprehensive approach to decrease barriers to care. These include, 1. accurate education and training, 2. policy & response protocols, 3. screening tools for early identification, 4. referral & resource provision, and 5. data collection and distribution. Institutions should be ready to respond with comprehensive anti-trafficking policy in place, including mandated reporting, referrals and community collaboration protocols. All pillars must be in place to foster long-term improved outcomes.

## Employment & Skill Building

Employment and skill building are essential factors in maintaining life stability. These empowering forces reduce vulnerabilities that human traffickers exploit. However, the road to basic economic security is often a difficult and rocky one. In fact, for many survivors the impact of trauma is a very real barrier for successful maintenance of education and employment, not due to a lack of motivation. By creating more opportunities to collaborate and connect survivors on future sustainable development is a crucial step to building a foundation that is survivor-driven and encourages a level of independence as they begin tapping into their own resilience.

**K[her]ut** was founded on the conviction that one of the key foundations to permanent change for survivors of human trafficking and their families is training and long-term, supportive employment opportunities in a safe, trauma-informed and understanding work environment. After attending multiple meetings and training opportunities by the OCHTTF collaborative, it became apparent that while there are many organizations that support survivors with basic needs and case management services, without a supportive employer to help them move forward, these women continue to struggle to survive. Kherut launched to fill this employment gap.



The women they serve face extreme challenges to obtain steady employment and a living wage, including criminal records, transportation, childcare, sobriety meetings, court dates, and a deficit of soft skills. While traditional employers must view employees from a transactional perspective, Kherut views each woman as a person with unique strengths and challenges. Kherut's *Savor* program is helping to break the chain of human trafficking and sexual exploitation through career training and long-term career opportunities in the food service industry leading to personal, long-term independence. The success of these survivors ripples through their families and into the surrounding community.

**Survivor story:** A foreign national survivor employed by Kherut was a victim of a criminal conspiracy involving sex trafficking from Asia. She came to the United States under debt bondage of \$45,000 to a member of the Asian transnational organized crime syndicate and required to work off her debt through commercial sex. She was the perfect victim to take advantage of, namely poor, desperate, uneducated, naive, unable to speak English and without any ties to the United States. She incurred her debt in order to support her daughter that she left behind in her home country so her daughter could have food to eat and attend school. She worked daily serving up to 10 sex buyers per day. Her role eventually transitioned to being an active participant of the human trafficking conspiracy within the organization. The criminal business enterprise coerced other girls from Asia who arrived to the United States under similar circumstances and trafficked them to many different locations in the United States for the purposes of commercial sex work.

She was eventually charged and indicted for being part of the conspiracy in the trafficking of other victims from Asia. She acknowledged the harm caused by her actions, and cooperated with the Government in the prosecution of the main perpetrators. After serving 48 months for her role, she worked hard to learn English and received a legal work permit to find a way to support herself and family. For nearly one year she applied for work, but due to her criminal record was unable to find employment. She heard about Kherut through a partnering connection with the OCHTTF and came in for a job interview. She shared her story honestly and her desire to never go back into the world of human trafficking. She asked with tears in her eyes if Kherut could give her another chance in life. Her determination and desire to learn and grow has been an inspiration. Kherut is excited to walk alongside this survivor as she begins a new journey full of dreams and goals.

**Soroptimists Together Against Trafficking II (STAT II)** is a coalition of Soroptimist clubs that was founded by four Orange County clubs in Huntington Beach, Newport Harbor Area, Westminster and Brea/La Habra because they knew that there would be greater impact to end human trafficking together than a single club ever could. As part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization, their mission is to provide women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. STAT II's focus is on the education and support of vulnerable women and girls who face obstacles to success. It is at the forefront of everything they do as Soroptimists. Since its inception in 2020, the coalition has grown to include Soroptimist clubs in Los Angeles, Ventura and Riverside counties. Training provided by the OCHTTF, through Waymakers, provided members with accurate information that ensures the work is in alignment with the OCHTTF mission to address protection, prosecution and prevention.

The *Live Your Dream* program financially supports victims and survivors of human trafficking with grants to offset costs associated with higher education, including vocational schools and certification programs. Grants are unrestricted, and can be used for childcare, books, tuition and transportation. Soroptimists work to prevent trafficking by also delivering the *Dream It, Be It* career support curriculum to foster care agencies, continuation schools and after-school programs. Vulnerable girls with obstacles to success, including those in poverty, unstable homes and teen motherhood, are brought together to share their dreams and understand there are healthy options available to them. In Orange County, working in community partnership with the OCHTTF and other collaborative organizations they help with survivor support groups, decorating safe homes, create survivor specific birthday baskets to celebrate life milestones, and comfort kits to provide a bit of happiness.



**Survivor story:** Laneisha grew up in poverty and a single parent household with a family of 8 siblings. She was removed from her family and placed in the foster care system. While in foster care, she had a child at age 15 by a pedophile twice her age. He later told her to work for him and keep the money “in the family” by trafficking her for commercial sex work. She survived sex trafficking, experienced domestic violence multiple times and chronic homelessness all before the age 25. Her former group home staff and late father figure Jim Carson's anti-trafficking organization, connections in the community, Waymakers, as well as her desire for continued higher education at Taller San Jose Hope Builders and Community College, helped her overcome obstacles to success. Laneisha applied for a Soroptimist International of the Americas Live Your Dream award through the Orange County club in Huntington Beach.

Her powerful story of resilience led the club to choose her to be considered for regional judging. But that is not where her story ends. Laneisha was chosen to represent the Desert Coast Region at the federation level where 3 women from the 19 countries and territories that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas are selected to receive an additional cash award. Laneisha's compelling story of triumph over adversity was recognized as a woman who was on her way to living her dream. Laneisha strives to become an attorney and work on public policy that would benefit foster youth aging out of the system, survivors, communities and ending the complex traumas and all other stories similar to her life experience. And again, Laneisha was chosen as one of the three. Laneisha is a powerhouse, determined to help others who have been in similar situations as hers. Instead of being a statistic, Laneisha is a role model and part of the solution.

“ I Will. Will I? Will I? I Will. - Laneisha

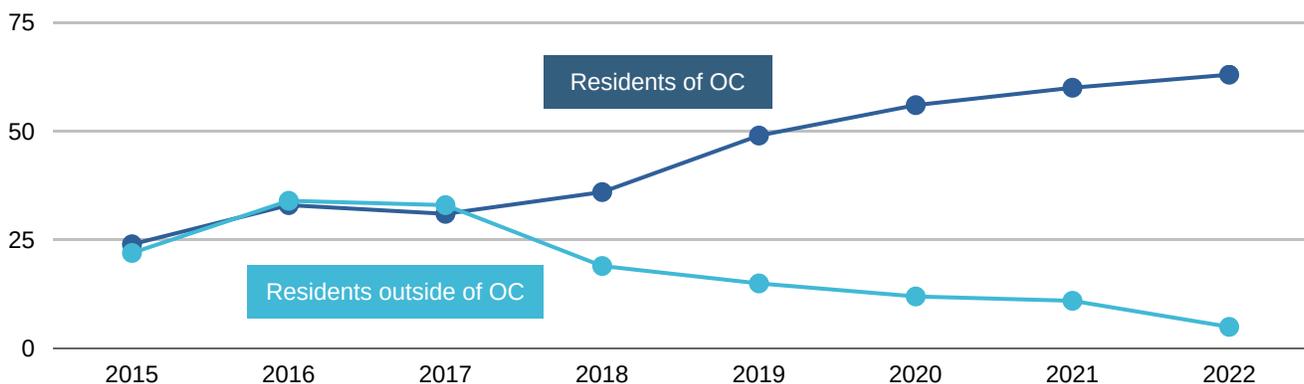
## Prevention & Youth Empowerment

### Treat the Wound, Don't Just Band-Aid It

The commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of minors became an increasing concern as the OCHTTF encountered more minors victimized and exploited. Removing minors out of these situations was just the beginning. The abuse and violence over time affected their physical, mental and emotional states to help “treat” or “reverse” trauma. The challenges continued with the minors rarely viewing or accepting themselves as victims of violence and abuse needing services or more common than not, having a strong emotional attachment to their sex trafficker with a need to help or protect them. The majority of the minors had already come with a long history of prior child abuse, lack of family support and/or involvement in the child welfare system. Their frequent history of running away and substance abuse which is often used to forget their pain only compounded the existing obstacles to maintain their safety and stability. Some youths have encountered the criminal justice system, but not as much as expected given the nature of the life conditions and criminal activity exposure. The sexual exploitation and trafficking had also been going on for a while, from months to years, before being identified by a third party or recovered by law enforcement.

The narrative of children being kidnapped off the streets is more a myth than actuality. The emphasis on more sensationalized storylines through public awareness platforms via social media, presentations, or mainstream entertainment has overlooked the majority of minors or young adults who first experienced trafficking as a minor victim and their pre-existing histories of violence as a “normal” occurrence in their life. This history, in combination with grooming by predators that often occurs through social media connections, can have a detrimental effect on child and brain development. The protection from sex traffickers continue to be important. However, it became increasingly apparent that more focus on prevention work was needed because of the revolving door of young victims with similar stories of exploitation and history of abuse.

**Jurisdictional Residence of Minor Victims**



The *Jurisdictional Residence of Minor Victims* chart shows the data comparison of the minors identified, located and recovered who are residents of Orange County and outside of Orange County. This data was collected by Orange County Social Services Agency from 2015 to 2022. There is a total of 503 minors, with 70% being OC residents and 30% being non-OC residents. 22% of the minor victims were from outside of Orange County coming from 21 other counties in California. 6% were from outside of California coming from 17 other states. 1% were from outside of the U.S. coming from 3 other countries.

In early 2019 the OCHTTF approached Higher Ground Youth and Family Services, a nonprofit organization based out of Anaheim that was already addressing other neighborhood social issues and violence affecting youths and families, to help develop a human trafficking prevention program. Their dedicated work to the well-being of children, families, schools and neighborhoods by being a prevention focused community resource and initial work in addressing gang prevention within these communities put them in an already well-established position in recognizing the difficulties of course correction for youths already involved in the systems. Even though there are no funds for human trafficking prevention work, Higher Ground took on the difficult task with the guidance of the OCHTTF for the type of youth social impact and educational engagement needed that is not just based on academic content. Higher Ground brought together Anaheim Union High School District, Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Long Beach, Chapman University, and Orange County Department of Education to create a human trafficking prevention program that would be best practice and evidence based. In the fall of 2019 the first 5-day curriculum was piloted at two junior high schools in Anaheim.

The research evaluation and results in the pilot group for the junior high school students in fall 2019 found that the students were enormously satisfied with the program with over 90% indicating they felt the program was great and better than a normal class meeting. The learning outcomes were achieved with 70-80% of students reporting solid knowledge about human trafficking. At the outset only 20% of students felt they had the ability to define, recognize and seek help for human trafficking, and those figures roughly tripled over the course of the program. The written responses from the students had many being able to associate human trafficking with tricking people to do something and using them for money. The students were able to connect for possible warning signs people they don't know online trying to get close through social media, get personal information and offering to buy things. The written responses for how to report human trafficking or get help showed that many kids did not just state parent, teacher or police, but a repetition in the theme of the word *trusted* adult.

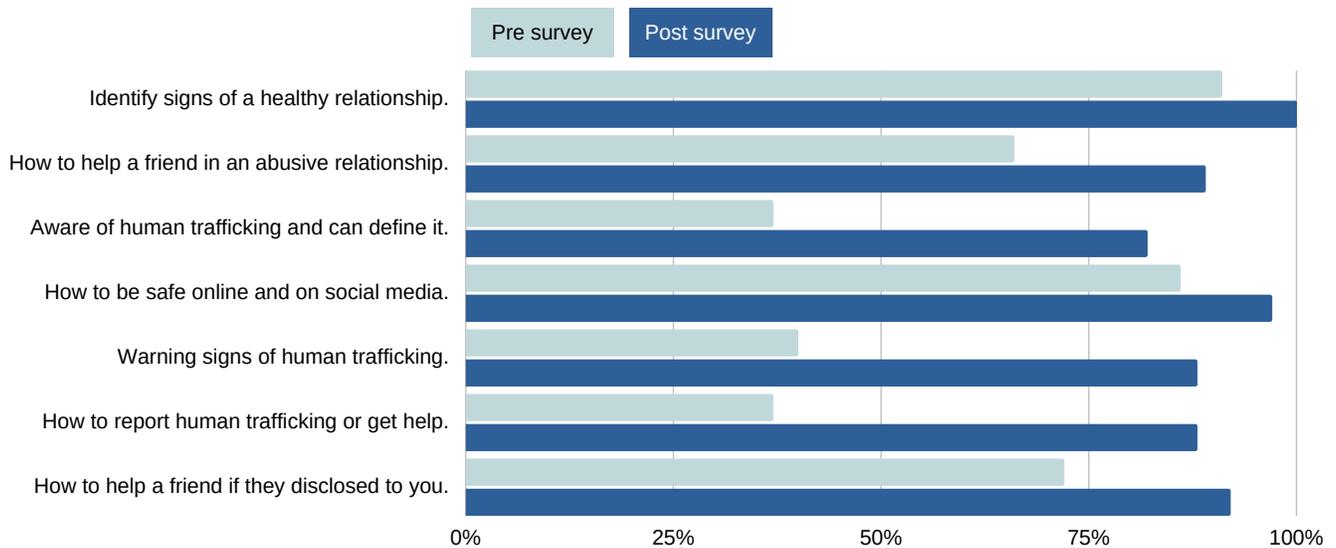
Three high schools participated in the human trafficking prevention program in the pilot year and due to the time constraints, the students could only meet for a day. The 5-day curriculum was converted to a 1-day class. The results from the 125 students from one of the high schools showed that 88% gave the program the highest rating and indicated it was better than a normal class day. 73% felt they could assist a friend who needed help. This was notably higher than their confidence in their ability to report incidents to authorities. The knowledge gains were more modest in comparison to a 5-day program.

Today, Higher Ground's Human Trafficking Program is a dedicated team of college presenters actively engaging with junior high and high school students in a 1 or 3 day prevention curriculum with vital discussions concerning the warning signs of human trafficking, including critical risk factors like abusive relationships and online safety. Through these important conversations, they build meaningful connections with the youth and serve as positive role models, empowering them with knowledge and the tools to stay vigilant and safe.

Higher Ground has educated over 5,000 junior and high school students. Higher Ground stepped up to the plate on a sensitive social issue and topic affecting youths. They knocked it out of the park to be a safe place for prevention education, intervention resources and opportunities for youth survivors to be mentors.



## Human Trafficking Prevention Program Pre and Post Survey



The *Human Trafficking Prevention Program Pre and Post Survey* chart shows some of the pre and post survey questions and results of over 3,300 junior and high school students in the 2022/2023 school year. Overall, there was a significant increase of 50% in student awareness about human trafficking and how to get help.

### Statements from students in the 2022-2023 school year

*"You guys did really good. Thank you for teaching me more about things that should be talked more about."*

*"Please come back! I feel like a lot of kids aren't well educated about situations like these or don't take it seriously enough. Also, would like to thank you for coming. I really appreciate that people still care to educate others about stuff like this."*

*"Made me feel safe!"*

*"You handled the topic in a responsible and respectful way."*

*"I loved that they shared their own stories because it made me think about all the times that it could've happened to me and made me want to be more cautious of my surroundings with the help of all their stories."*

*"They were easy to follow and they kept my attention. I really loved that about the presentation. They were getting the class involved so it helped me remember things easier."*

**Survivor story:** Recently, Higher Ground introduced the *Thrivers* program, which empowers survivors of human trafficking to transition into leadership roles within the after-school program. By providing behavioral health services and professional development opportunities, the ultimate goal is to empower them to achieve their dreams and secure the support needed to thrive. In the face of immense challenges, one remarkable thriver displayed incredible resilience. Struggling to obtain a green card due to her past as a human trafficking victim, she encountered legal barriers and a criminal background. Despite this uphill battle, she refused to give up on her dreams and her desire for a better life. She found solace with the Family Youth Development Specialist, who became her unwavering support of emotional guidance, navigating the court proceedings and standing tall before the judge. Her journey of transformation with the program's support gradually shed her fears. Finally, the day came when she returned with a radiant smile and the news of her victory etched in everyone's hearts. She emerged triumphant and secured her rightful place as a legal U.S. resident.

## Know More, Do Better

Those in the anti-human trafficking movement fully understand that human trafficking is a business of supply and demand. As the fight to end human trafficking continues there is an important piece missing when the crimes against children and demand is exponentially larger than those in the field of work to combat it. What would happen if we stopped or reduced the supply? The future is education. The future means prevention.

Prevention is a key element and there is no question that the OCHTTF and community partners understand its importance. On January 28, 2023, the OCHTTF in partnership with local nonprofits, held the “Know More, Do Better” sexual exploitation and human trafficking prevention event for National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month on the campus of California State University, Fullerton. Over 350 middle school students from 22 different Orange County schools attended the event. 24 organizations were present to provide hands on, individualized education and awareness of the resources that are available in a community resource fair activity. The event provided age-appropriate, informative and entertaining presentations from survivor advocate and motivational speaker Oree Freeman, as well as Vanguard University’s Global Center for Women and Justice’s Live2Free student led anti-trafficking club and Higher Ground.

This event went beyond the goal of increasing awareness and compliance with the January 2016 California Healthy Youth Act to provide knowledge and skills about healthy relationships. It provided education about sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and the repercussions of how it impacts our youths leaves little doubt to why prevention is vital to children’s health and well-being. This event showcased how people and community partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations moved the need for protecting vulnerable victims to action rather than waiting on the laws to educate people to action. The “Know More, Do Better” event educated and empowered! Students were asking questions and implementing critical thinking, not only with the resource table representatives, but with each other. They were empowered to say “no”, to understand their self-worth and to educate others. They will take the information and share with their friends and that is prevention! The teachers in attendance also asked questions and took resources back to their classrooms so that they could provide ongoing education. That is prevention!

After seeing the power of youth engagement and support throughout the event, there is no question that prevention must continue. We need to invest more resources and funding into preventative methods. Addressing human trafficking requires a multi-faceted approach. The young survivors need housing, mental health services, employment, education, treatment, medical care, etc. We must have legal consequences for perpetrators who engage in this crime on any level and it is mandatory that we engage actively in preventative measures. Preventing, educating and empowering our youth is instrumental in ending human trafficking and sexual exploitation. There is great anticipation for the “Know More, Do Better 2.0” event on January 31, 2024. There is no doubt that this conference of students and teachers will empower those in attendance to understand the importance of self-worth, respecting yourself, as well as others, feeling empowered to say “no”, and learning to accept “no”. All will help in preventing them from falling prey to sexual predators and traffickers.





## Acknowledgements

The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) would like to acknowledge the many people who helped make this multidisciplinary collaborative work possible to address human trafficking in Orange County and valued the importance of how these crimes affect all victims and a safer community for our youths. A special thank you to all those who contributed to this year's report writing and data collection. The content for the OCHTTF's 8th Human Trafficking Victim Report included work from the Anaheim Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Eastside Christian Church, Free 2 Dream Big, Higher Ground Youth and Family Services, Irvine Police Department, K[her]ut, Orange County District Attorney's Office, Orange County Social Services Agency, Public Law Center, Santa Ana Police Department, Soroptimists Together Against Trafficking II, Survivor Mentality, The Salvation Army, U.S. Attorney's Office, Waymakers, and the OCHTTF's Healthcare Subcommittee and Victim Service Provider Subcommittee.

The OCHTTF and this long-standing cause has come a long way to help pave the many pathways for victims and survivors of human trafficking, but we still recognize the importance of continual awareness, education and support between government and community-based organizations for an Orange County free of modern day slavery. With the level of persistence maintained by the OCHTTF Co-Chairs, Anaheim Police Department and Waymakers, we can proudly say looking back at the little things accomplished that it contributed to the big things necessary for the future of Orange County, California and the United States.

Together we have built. Together we will continue building roads around and through mountains.

Sincerely,

OCHTTF Co-Chairs  
Anaheim Police Department and Waymakers



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