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From: David J. Carroll, Director

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILD TRAFFICKING LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORT**

The Los Angeles County Child Trafficking Leadership Team (CTLT) advances a coordinated, prevention-oriented approach to ending child trafficking and improving outcomes for children, youth, and families impacted by exploitation. The CTLT's Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking is grounded in three overarching goals:

1. Reduce the number of youth and families impacted by human trafficking (HT).
2. Improve youth and family well-being and healthy youth development.
3. Promote healthy family environments and social connectedness.

These goals recognize that ending child trafficking requires more than identifying individual cases or responding after exploitation has occurred. Prevention requires addressing conditions that heighten vulnerability; strengthening protective factors; ensuring youth and families can access meaningful support; and building systems that promote safety, stability, health, and connection.

The Department of Youth Development submits this report on behalf of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) to provide an update on the CTLT's work since October 7, 2025.

**Advancing a Public Health Approach**

This reporting period marks an important evolution in the CTLT and the County's broader approach to child trafficking. The CTLT is now being led by CAST. This is the first time a community-based anti-trafficking organization has led the Leadership Team, reflecting the County's commitment to advancing a public health approach that complements the criminal legal system rather than relying on it as the primary intervention.

The Department of Youth Development (DYD) has also strengthened its leadership within the CTLT, linking the Leadership Team to the County's broader efforts to reduce youth incarceration, expand community-based alternatives, and promote healthy development.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), DYD, and Probation, in partnership with the Board, are identifying opportunities to reduce unnecessary dual-system involvement for youth affected by trafficking. This includes strengthening coordinated case planning, expanding access to community-based advocacy and stabilization services, and, when appropriate, consolidating case management within the least restrictive and most supportive system that can safely meet a young person's needs.

This evolution matters because youth should not have to navigate multiple disconnected systems or take on additional system involvement simply because they have experienced exploitation.

**Operating Environment**

The CTLT's work is underway amid significant challenges affecting the broader network of services available to children, youth, and families. Healthcare and behavioral health facilities continue to face capacity constraints; funding for housing and other community-based services has been reduced or is under pressure; and increased immigration enforcement has heightened fear and uncertainty among immigrant communities, including concerns about whether survivors and their families can safely seek help.

These conditions can heighten vulnerability to exploitation while making it harder for young people and families to access resources that promote safety and stability. They underscore the need to strengthen the County's prevention infrastructure, protect access to services, and ensure that responses to trafficking do not create additional barriers or harms for youth and families.

**Building Countywide Infrastructure**

The County is also continuing to build the infrastructure necessary to extend a public health approach to human trafficking beyond the child-serving system. During this reporting period, the feasibility study examining a potential County structure to serve adult survivors of human trafficking was completed and returned to the Board.

The CTLT recommends that the County continue moving toward County investment in, and implementation of, a sustainable structure for adult survivor services, with intentional coordination between that structure and the CTLT. Establishing this connection is critical to ensuring continuity of services for Transition Age Youth (TAY) as they move between child- and adult-serving systems, and supporting a consistent public health approach to human trafficking.

Continued development of this Countywide infrastructure, alongside the CTLT's work on prevention, coordinated response, community-based services, and youth and family well-being, creates an opportunity to shift the County from a primarily response-oriented model to a comprehensive public health approach. That approach would address both survivors' immediate needs and the underlying conditions that contribute to trafficking.

While progress has been made, the County's human trafficking response system remains fragmented and confusing, leaving survivors at risk of re-exploitation. More investment is needed to strengthen the safety net and provide the supports survivors depend on for safety, healing, and long-term well-being, reducing the risk of re-exploitation.

**Key Partner Organizational Capacity Updates**

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

DCFS has no vacancies in positions related to child trafficking work, and its funding has not been affected by recent changes. The department onboarded seven new advocates and added a substance use expert to strengthen its capacity to serve impacted youth.

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

DMH added two new staff members in January 2026 and is now fully staffed. The DMH team conducts weekly outreach to Camp Vernon Kilpatrick (CVK), and DMH liaisons participate in DREAM and STAR courts.

Department of Public Health (DPH)

DPH experienced a funding reduction of approximately $30 million due to federal changes. Staffing assigned to human trafficking work was also reduced in 2026, from 4 positions to 1, a 75% cut, and DPH projects continued fiscal constraints in the near term.

Despite these staffing reductions, DPH continues to prioritize prevention and early intervention. DPH's Office of Women's Health has transitioned into the department's new Center for Health Equity, consistent with the CTLT's public health approach.

DPH has added human trafficking as an intake option in its Navigator Program, which provides navigation tailored to individual needs, along with a live navigator to answer questions. The program began collecting data in January 2026 and has since provided human trafficking information to two clients.

Additionally, DPH's Children's Medical Services division administers the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPCFC), which serves children and youth in the child welfare system who have been placed in foster care by DCFS or the Probation Department. HCPCFC is a public health nursing (PHN) program that provides expertise in meeting the medical, dental, mental health, and developmental needs of children and youth in foster care. During fiscal year 2025-26, HCPCFC nurses provided consultation on 624 children and youth impacted by commercial sexual exploitation. Most were between 16 and 18 years old (56.3%), followed by 18 to 21 (37.3%) and 13 to 15 (6.4%).

Department of Youth Development (DYD)

In early 2026, DYD increased its leadership in the CTLT, strengthening the connection between the Leadership Team and the County's broader work to reduce youth incarceration, expand

community-based alternatives, and promote healthy development. DYD co-leads the Community Resources and Services Subcommittee with CAST and has taken the lead on management of CAST's contract to support the CTLT.

DYD also strengthened its capacity to integrate trafficking prevention and survivor resources into its continuum of services through:

1. Contracting with 5 advocacy organizations using SB 794 funding to provide justice-involved youth who are victims of or at risk of trafficking with specialized supports. DYD continues to identify opportunities to expand specialized support and programming for this population as part of the department's role providing in-facility and reentry services.

2. Continuing to implement Safe Healing Centers (SHCs), small, community-based, therapeutic homes for girls and gender-expansive youth who are court-ordered to be removed from their homes. DYD currently contracts with ZOE International to provide 2 SHC beds for youth under Probation supervision who have been identified as commercially sexually exploited. DYD also continues to work with three additional partners (A New Way of Life, Boys Republic/Girls Republic, and Beloved Village) to launch sites for girls and gender-expansive youth involved in the Probation system within the next year.

3. Partnering with DCFS and CAST to provide training to its community providers and programmatic staff on child trafficking 101 in July and August. DYD will continue to offer trainings to ensure all providers are trained.

4. Connecting with DPH to learn about Universal Education practices and tools for multiple forms of gender-based violence, including child trafficking. DYD is identifying opportunities to integrate this approach for its providers to ensure all young people have resources and can be connected to resources if they disclose impact.

5. Identifying 3 providers in the Youth Diversion and Reentry Action for Youth programs to participate in a pilot CSE-IT screening offered by Westcoast Children's Clinic.

Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)

LACOE's human trafficking-related work is undergoing major organizational change, expanding from a unit to a division. LACOE staff now participate in multiple related initiatives across the County. LACOE is also onboarding new school-based staff, who will require significant training.

Department of Probation

Michelle Guymon, former Director of the Child Trafficking Unit, has retired and Joan Pera has been reassigned from the Child Trafficking Unit. Felicia Davis, who brings approximately 35 years of County experience, has recently taken over as Child Trafficking Unit Director. Given these staffing changes, the Board is working with Probation on a series of motions and report-backs to explore funding and staffing solutions. These solutions aim to provide the unit with the leadership support, training, and dedicated staff time needed to ensure the safety of probation and foster youth impacted by human trafficking, and to increase referrals to available advocacy agencies.

Youth Commission

Former Commissioner Brittianna Robinson, the Youth Commission's lived-experience champion, has retired, leaving no commissioner or designated youth champion with lived experience of human trafficking.

Despite this transition, the Youth Commission remains dedicated to supporting the work of the CTLT by enhancing outreach and awareness of child trafficking. In 2026, the Youth Commission shared child trafficking awareness videos at seven regular meetings and five district listening sessions, reaching over 140 youth, and deployed approximately 1,174 youth surveys throughout Los Angeles County.

Youth survey responses identified child trafficking as a Youth Commission priority area for 2027: of 237 total responses, child trafficking ranked eighth among reported priorities. The Youth Commission will host the Youth Engagement Committee's (YEC) Annual End-of-Year Event on October 3, 2026, where the Commission will discuss and review youth survey data and explore related recommendations. This event may serve as a vehicle to further explore how child trafficking–related work can be strengthened and expanded within the Youth Commission's existing initiatives. During the event, stakeholders (County and non-County partners) will have an opportunity to recommend survey questions for the YEC to consider in future youth surveys, including in 2027.

Please see **Appendices A-C** for more information about CTLT Subcommittees, Advocacy Services, and Components of a Non-Carceral Response to Human Trafficking. With support from DYD, CAST and CTLT partners will continue to provide reports to the Board to share updates on progress, key considerations, and next steps.

**APPENDIX A: Subcommittee Updates**

Subcommittee 1: Education and Awareness - Developing a Countywide Prevention Education Strategy

The Education and Awareness Subcommittee continues to advance Priority One: strengthening comprehensive human trafficking prevention, education, and awareness efforts within K–12 schools throughout Los Angeles County. Schools play a critical role in prevention and early intervention. Educators and school personnel are often positioned to recognize changes in student behavior, identify potential indicators of exploitation, and connect students and families with appropriate resources and support.

***Progress and Key Accomplishments***

The Subcommittee has focused its efforts on two complementary strategies designed to increase the availability of high-quality education and training while building a sustainable Countywide infrastructure for delivery.

*1. Development of a Core K–12 Human Trafficking Training*

In partnership with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Public Health, and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking the Subcommittee developed a comprehensive training focused on human trafficking awareness, prevention, identification, response, and available resources.

The initial pilot was delivered in May 2026 to social workers serving 419 LAUSD schools. Participants were eligible to receive continuing education units, and evaluation results indicated positive feedback and successful completion of the training objectives. Based on the pilot, the training is being refined and shortened for future delivery, with an additional offering planned for October 2026. The long-term goal is to provide schools throughout Los Angeles County with consistent, accessible, and high-quality foundational information regarding all forms of human trafficking.

Additional educational resources are also under development, including a human trafficking awareness video produced through DCFS and a planned interactive high school curriculum that will incorporate input from lived-experience experts and other stakeholders.

*2. Development of a Human Trafficking Speakers Bureau*

The Subcommittee is also developing a Human Trafficking Speakers Bureau composed of vetted agencies and qualified subject-matter experts.

The Speakers Bureau is intended to expand the County's capacity by creating a coordinated network of professionals who can provide specialized training and professional development to educators and school personnel. It may also support age-appropriate awareness and prevention presentations for middle and high school students.

This model is particularly important because it allows the County to leverage the expertise of community-based organizations and external partners while reducing reliance on a limited number of County employees for direct training delivery. Together, the core training and Speakers Bureau are intended to establish a more sustainable and scalable Countywide system.

*3. Strengthening Access to Information and Resources*

The Subcommittee continues to support enhancements to the County's human trafficking website and the dissemination of educational materials, including informational resources, training opportunities, and prevention materials.

These efforts support the development of a centralized and accessible source of information for educators, school administrators, students, families, service providers, and community partners.

***Key Challenges***

While meaningful progress has been made, the ability to expand these efforts across Los Angeles County is constrained by significant staffing, workload, and funding limitations.

*1. Limited Staffing Capacity*

Staffing reductions across County departments and partner organizations have significantly affected implementation capacity. Several participating agencies currently rely on a limited number of individuals to support human trafficking prevention and education efforts while simultaneously managing other responsibilities. Although County partners remain committed to advancing Priority One, the current staffing structure limits the County's ability to rapidly expand training, provide technical assistance, develop curriculum, coordinate external trainers, conduct outreach, and evaluate program effectiveness.

*2. Competing Workload Demands*

Human trafficking prevention and education responsibilities are frequently carried out in addition to existing departmental assignments and mandated responsibilities. As staffing levels have declined, remaining personnel have assumed additional duties. Expanding services Countywide requires dedicated capacity for training development and delivery, coordination, outreach, partnership development, quality assurance, follow-up, and evaluation. Without additional staffing or dedicated resources, expansion will continue at a limited pace.

*3. Insufficient Funding*

Current efforts are supported through a limited budget. However, the existing level of funding is not sufficient to support the scale of training, curriculum development,

coordination, outreach, technical assistance, and evaluation necessary to effectively reach a County as large and diverse as Los Angeles County. Additional dedicated funding would strengthen the County's ability to expand training delivery, support qualified community partners, develop educational resources, improve outreach, provide technical assistance, and measure program reach and effectiveness.

***Strategic Priorities and Next Steps***

The Education and Awareness Subcommittee will continue to focus on the following priorities:

1. Expand access to the core K–12 human trafficking training through LACOE and participating public and charter schools.
2. Establish and maintain a vetted Human Trafficking Speakers Bureau.
3. Develop clear standards and expectations to ensure quality, consistency, and age-appropriate training.
4. Increase professional development opportunities for educators, administrators, counselors, and other school personnel.
5. Expand age-appropriate prevention and awareness education for middle and high school students.
6. Continue enhancing centralized County resources and educational materials.
7. Strengthen coordination among County departments, LACOE, school districts, charter schools, community-based organizations, and subject-matter experts.
8. Identify sustainable funding opportunities.
9. Develop measures to evaluate participation, reach, engagement, and outcomes.

***Key Considerations***

Achieving a comprehensive Countywide approach will require an investment in infrastructure and capacity that reflects the size, diversity, and complexity of Los Angeles County. Additional investment in the following areas would strengthen the County's ability to meet this need:

1. **Dedicated staffing** to sustain Countywide prevention and education efforts.
2. **Sustainable funding** to support training, curriculum development, outreach, technical assistance, and evaluation.
3. **Community partnerships** that expand the County's capacity through vetted and qualified providers.
4. **Data and evaluation systems** to measure reach, participation, and effectiveness.
5. **Continued collaboration with schools and educational partners** to ensure training and resources are accessible throughout the County.

***Conclusion***

With additional staffing, dedicated funding, and sustained collaboration, Los Angeles County can strengthen its ability to provide educators and students with meaningful access to the knowledge, resources, and support necessary to recognize, prevent, and appropriately respond to human trafficking and the exploitation of youth.

| **Year 1 Priorities: Education and Awareness** |
|---|

| Priority | Status |
|---|---|
| Identify, adapt, and/or develop an inclusive HT prevention curriculum to deliver in select schools, with training components for students; teachers and staff; and parents and caregivers | The Polaris HT Curriculum was selected as an interim placeholder for LA County's mandatory HT training while the CTLT develops custom materials |
| Develop, adapt, or improve guidance for school districts on creating and implementing school safety protocols that explain how to respond to HT and comply with reporting laws | Outcome data for the Antelope Valley Pilot and associated School Safety Protocol is not yet available and will be included in a future update |
| Update the Los Angeles County Human Trafficking Website with new content on trafficking of children and youth, reflecting key themes of the County's new five-year strategic plan | Outcome data for the website update is not yet available and will be included in a future update |
| Develop a reference guide and list of online resources and tools; LACOE will circulate these to districts countywide, including juvenile court schools, during the first weeks of the 2025-2026 school year | LACOE is currently working across 80 school districts, providing training and workshops, developing and sharing resources, and responding to individual requests for technical assistance and support |
| Develop a youth educational HT video for students | CAST developed a 15-minute youth educational video |
| **Year 2 Priorities** | |
| School-based Trafficking Prevention Education Curricula | Status is not yet available and will be included in a future update. |
| Develop Train-the-Trainer for Speakers Bureau cadre | |
| Implement a Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol (HTSSP) | |
| Create a new or updated HT 101 training video | |

**Survivor-Led Documentary on Youth Trafficking**

CAST and DCFS are producing a short documentary on the trafficking of minors and transition-age youth. Most public understanding of trafficking is shaped by sensationalized, stranger-based narratives, but that story is rare. This film tells the far more common one: trafficking that happens in familiar places, by people kids trust, involving sex trafficking, labor trafficking, or both, and routinely missed by the systems meant to help. It follows how trafficking usually happens, not how it's usually portrayed.

Told through survivor leaders now at the forefront of anti-trafficking work, who were trafficked as minors or transition-age youth and have since become the researchers, educators, advocates, lawyers, and program builders reshaping this field, the film walks through the full arc in their own words: risk factors, recruitment tactics, the role of forced criminality, why identification so often fails, what escape actually requires, and what healing looks like. It approaches trafficking through a public health lens: risk, prevention, intervention, and healing. Observational and interview-driven, with no reenactments or dramatization, the film treats survivors not as case studies but as

experts, translating their own experience into insight that gives audiences and systems a clearer, more actionable understanding of what trafficking is and what stops it.

Subcommittee 2: Community Resources and Services - Building an Accessible and Equitable Community Safety Network

The Community Resources Subcommittee completed several Year 1 priorities and is in the process of refining its Year 2 plan. In addition to broader efforts to map resources and build connections between community and county providers, the Subcommittee also includes workgroups focused on specific projects. Year 1 highlights are listed below.

| **Year 1 Priorities: Community Resources and Services** | |
|---|---|
| Priority | Status |
| Develop Resource Map of Programs and Services | • Conducted a survey of more than 150 organizations, invited orgs to present for shared learning, consulted with CTLT members<br>• Coordinated with TAY Table to determine feasibility of adding trafficking resources to the planned TAY Resource Hub |
| Develop a Community Pathway for Services | • Held a Peer Navigator Summit<br>• Connected with County's Community Pathways Collaborative<br>• Obtained feedback from youth and parents<br>• Drafted a Resource Navigator job description |
| Youth Empowerment Committee | • Hosted a Youth Empowerment Summit for youth survivors<br>• Convened youth leaders regularly to build leadership skills, provide peer learning and support |
| Parent Empowerment Program | Curriculum is in process of being finalized:<br>• Update curriculum based on parent feedback survey<br>• Update curriculum in Spanish<br>• Pilot the updated curriculum |
| Safe Youth Zones | Will be included in a future update:<br>• Develop poster and quick reference guide<br>• Create toolkit for non-County organizations<br>• Expand partnerships and locations |
| **Year 2 Priorities** | |

| |
|---|
| Resource Mapping<br>• Continue to develop partner directory, expand outreach, and develop vetting protocol<br>• Refine resource mapping plan to focus on county-funded providers with HT expertise<br>• Continue to coordinate with TAY Resource Hub<br>• Develop strategic connections to other subcommittees and CSEC/HT structures |
| Community Pathways<br>• Finalize Resource Navigator job description<br>• Convene providers with peer navigators to inform model<br>• Determine feasibility of embedding in existing county programs or seeking funding |
| Youth Empowerment Committee<br>• Plan additional youth empowerment events throughout the year |
| Parent Empowerment Program:<br>• Continue to refine curriculum and expand pilot |
| Parent Empowerment Program:<br>• Continue to refine curriculum and expand pilot |

***Progress and Key Accomplishments***

1. *Peer Navigator Summit (October 2025)*

Peer Navigator Summit (NCYL): Held October 30, 2025. Full outcomes, including materials produced, recommendations, resource mapping, funding, and identified service gaps, are not yet available and will be included in a future update.

2. *Youth Empowerment Event (August 2026)*

On August 15, 2026, CAST hosted a wellness event for system-impacted youth survivors of HT at the Los Angeles LGBTQ Center. Nineteen youth attended the event, which ran from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and included lunch. Workshops covered a range of wellness activities, including massages, manicures, essential oil-making, art, yoga, and facials, and youth could sign up for any workshop or service of interest. Youth also received self-care items, clothes, and makeup to take home. DCFS staff attended, along with staff from Vista Del Mar and Optimist. Youth were visibly engaged throughout the day, appearing relaxed after yoga and focused while creating art and making body scrubs and essential oils. CAST received positive feedback from a social worker who shared that for some of the youth in her care, it was their first time participating in self-care activities.

3. *Parent Empowerment Program, Strengthening caregiver protective capacity*

The Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) is a 10-week support and education program for parents and caregivers of children impacted by commercial sexual exploitation. Optimist and Vista Del Mar alternate responsibility for delivering PEP on a quarterly basis. Since the contracts began on October 1, 2023, providers have conducted 14 PEP cohorts with 161 parent participants. DMH and a DCFS Parent Partner deliver the Spanish-language PEP classes, and ZOE International has delivered several English-language PEP classes through a subcontract with Vista Del Mar and Optimist.

The Parent Empowerment Program and its companion Prevention Module are in the final stages of curriculum development. All program content has been finalized and is with the graphic designer for formatting and design, and materials have also been sent for Spanish translation to broaden accessibility. Once design and translation are complete, materials will undergo a final review before full implementation. This work represents significant progress toward launching both the full Parent Empowerment Program and a standalone prevention-focused module for parents, caregivers, and community partners.

According to PEP survey results, 100% of participating parents reported that the program helped increase their understanding, attitudes, and beliefs regarding their child. Parents cited improved understanding of how to show love to their child, communicate more effectively, and provide support, as well as greater understanding of why a child may not leave an exploitative situation and of the impact of trauma on pathways to healing and recovery. All participating parents indicated they would recommend PEP to others.

*4. HT Resources and Awareness: Youth Commission (YC)*

The Youth Commission (YC) continues to show HT awareness videos during district listening sessions, and commissioners have expressed interest in bringing more HT information to their communities. The TAY Table leads are developing a central resource hub and are working to ensure HT-related resources are represented in it. The YC has identified a need for additional awareness materials focused on labor trafficking.

Subcommittee 3: Systems and Protocols - Designing Functional and Inclusive Systems

The Systems and Protocols Committee, chaired by DCFS and Probation, established the committee's five-year work plan, which outlines the committee's annual priorities, responsible parties, implementation timeframes, and key measures for evaluating progress and outcomes.

Below is an overview of Year One (January 2025–December 2025) and Year Two (January 2026–December 2026) priorities and their status.

| **Year 1 Priorities: Systems and Protocols** | |
|---|---|
| Priority | Status |
| Enhance First Responder Protocol Training on labor trafficking and labor trafficking by forced criminality | Completed |
| DCFS/Probation child trafficking integrated curriculum for CSWs, SCSWs, and DPOs/SDPOs | Completed Human Trafficking 101 on March 6, 2025; completed Human Trafficking 102 on October 28–29, 2025 |
| HT-integrated curriculum for caregivers, to be developed by September 2025 | Completed September 3, 2025 |
| Establish DCFS/Probation youth prevention curriculum | Completed August 13, 2025 |
| Update Child Trafficking Desk Guide for DCFS social workers | Completed September 11, 2025; currently being revised to align with the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | updated Assessment of Exploitation policy (posted July 31, 2026) |
| Complete Child Protection Hotline integrated training (sex and labor trafficking) | Completed October 2, 2025; an online, on-demand version is in development |
| Develop and implement a Youth Empowerment Committee led by Youth Survivor Leaders | Completed July 25, 2025 |
| Year Two Priorities (January 2026 through December 2026) | |
| Post all DCFS policies addressing trafficking identified in the Year One plan on the DCFS Policy Website | Completed July 31, 2026 |
| Complete an updated Interagency MOU integrating sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and labor trafficking by forced criminality, with all required signatures, by December 15, 2026 | In progress |
| Complete on-demand training for Child Protection Hotline, DCFS Emergency Response, and Continuing Services social workers | In progress |
| Monitor current training contract performance and implement a new installment of the Child Trafficking Training Contract by May 1, 2026 | Completed May 1, 2026 |
| Update the training plan every 90 days to ensure it addresses current County needs | Ongoing |
| Implement a new installment of Advocacy Services for Youth Impacted by Child Trafficking by October 1, 2026 | New contracts executed July 15, 2026 |
| Promote youth empowerment, peer mentorship, and lived-experience leadership through monthly Youth Empowerment Committee meetings and quarterly empowerment activities | Ongoing |
| Expand access to trauma-informed housing by supporting development of the Sisterhood Sanctuary TAY housing model | Completed (all 7 housing units now covered via a DCFS THPP+ contract |
| Increase availability of trauma-informed mental health care and substance use treatment | In progress |

The Child Trafficking Administrative Data Report has been updated with Fiscal Year 2025–2026 data on child trafficking referrals to the Child Protection Hotline, demographics of children reported as known or suspected trafficking victims, and referrals by reporter type. The updated report is included as

**Appendix B**

**Advocacy Services for Youth Impacted by Child Trafficking**

DCFS contracts with Optimist, Vista Del Mar, and Inner Circle Foster Family Agency to provide Advocacy Services for children and youth impacted by HT. New contracts with Optimist and Inner Circle began on July 15, 2026; both share an annual maximum of $1.8 million in SB 855 state funds. Vista Del Mar's Advocacy Services contract will terminate on September 30, 2026, and the agency is currently transitioning its youth to Inner Circle. The new contracts expand services to children and youth receiving services from DCFS and/or Probation, as well as non-system-involved youth.

Through Advocacy Services, youth and families are connected to advocates, including lived-experience experts, who provide intensive support to those at high risk of exploitation or who have experienced it. Advocates develop safety plans with youth, conduct strengths and needs assessments in collaboration with youth, and initiate intensive case management and advocacy services. Advocates also work with each youth's Child and Family Team to coordinate resources, address identified needs, and support progress toward the youth's goals, and participate in Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings to collaborate on ongoing assessment, case planning, and service delivery.

Each year, DCFS reviews the Advocacy Services contracts to evaluate service quality and compliance; the most recent evaluation was completed in spring 2026. Since the Advocacy Services contracts began on October 1, 2023, DCFS has tracked referrals for youth identified as at risk of or impacted by HT. From October 1, 2023, through August 18, 2026, Advocacy Services agencies received a total of 568 referrals: 362 to Vista Del Mar, 198 to Optimist, and 8 to Inner Circle (the newest contracted provider).

Because the narrative, tables, and outcome measures below reflect different reporting cutoffs based on the timing and scope of each review, referral totals vary across this section and should be interpreted within each data source's date range. The table below summarizes provider-specific referral and survey data for the review periods shown.

| **Youth Engagement Surveys** | **Vista Del Mar** | **Optimist** |
|---|---|---|
| Review period | 10/01/2023 to 02/24/2026 | Not provided |
| Total youth referred to Advocacy Services | 282 | 230 |
| Youth stated achieving goals they wanted to achieve (Youth Survey) | 72.2% | 67.7% |
| Youth stated receiving the help they needed (Youth Survey) | 100% | 92% |
| Youth felt they had voice and choice of Advocacy goals | 100% | 92% |
| Youth felt comfortable talking to their Advocate | 92% | 92.4% |
| Youth felt heard and understood by their Advocate | 100% | 100% |
| Parents increased understanding of CSEC as a result of PEP | 100% | 100% |
| Parents felt PEP helped increase their understanding, attitude, and beliefs about their child and CSEC | 100% | 100% |

**Advocacy Services Case Reviews**

Fifteen case reviews were conducted. Nine youth achieved all identified goals, including attending school, graduating high school, stabilizing in care, obtaining a driver's license, reunifying with family, reducing anxiety, participating in therapy, learning job skills, applying for jobs, receiving tattoo removal services, enrolling in college, and attending medical appointments. Six youth experienced challenges, primarily due to running away and substance use.

**Parent Empowerment Program**

PEP delivery details and outcomes are described under the Community Resources and Services Subcommittee update.

**The First Responder Protocol**

Advocacy Services also provides a joint crisis response with law enforcement, DCFS, and, if applicable, Probation, through the First Responder Protocol (FRP). The FRP is activated when a partner law enforcement agency has a possible or known victim of child sex trafficking in custody and the responding officer calls the Child Protection Hotline to report it. DCFS and an Advocate respond within 90 minutes of the referral to ensure the child's immediate basic needs are addressed, provide emotional support, and offer ongoing Advocacy Services for long-term support.

| First Responder Protocol Joint Responses by Calendar Year | |
|---|---|
| **Year** | **Responses** |
| 2019 | 190 |
| 2020 | 187 |
| 2021 | 153 |
| 2022 | 117 |
| 2023 | 62 |
| 2024 | 101 |
| 2025 | 123 |
| 2026 (YTD, 8/18/26) | 110 |

FRP responses have trended upward since 2023, and the County anticipates continued growth this year based on the year-to-date total of 110 as of August 18, 2026.

**Youth Empowerment Committee**

In partnership with DCFS, contracted Advocacy Services agencies, and non-contracted community-based organizations, Youth Survivor Leaders facilitate monthly Youth Empowerment Committee meetings and support youth during empowerment events for survivors between the ages of 14 and 24. The Youth Leaders developed the following purpose statement: "The Youth Empowerment Committee exists to empower, uplift, educate, and support youth. Through

structured programming, leadership development, and community bonding, we aim to foster healing, growth, and resilience while building future advocate role models."

Since the committee's launch in July 2025, Youth Survivor Leaders have held monthly planning meetings and monthly Youth Empowerment Committee meetings, except when a special empowerment event is scheduled for the month. This summer, youth participated in a trip to Disneyland, a painting party, a Marine Cruise, and a Youth Wellness event sponsored by DCFS, CAST, Optimist, Vista Del Mar, and Inner Circle Foster Family Agency. Youth Survivor Leaders have effectively engaged participants and helped them discuss issues important to them with peers and adult allies.

**Human Trafficking Training**

Since the training contract began on May 1, 2021, over 30,000 individuals have participated in 307 training classes across 40 topics. New trainings added during the fourth contract year include Labor Trafficking, Human Trafficking 101, The Neurobiology of Trauma, Advanced Harm Reduction, Addressing Disability and Human Trafficking of Young People, and Navigating the Intersections of Human Trafficking and Image-Based Sexual Abuse in Youth. Evaluation surveys indicate that, on average, 97% of attendees agree or strongly agree that training objectives were clear, they gained knowledge and skills, trainers demonstrated mastery and responsiveness, course materials were relevant, and the training improved their ability to provide fair and equitable services.

Priorities for the remainder of 2026 include completing a final draft of the Anti-Child Trafficking Interagency MOU and completing the online, on-demand HT-integrated curriculum for child welfare workers.

Committee members identified two priority areas for additional prevention support: (1) expanding the Wraparound program to non-system-involved children, youth, and families, and (2) expanding the Guaranteed Income Pilot program to system-involved youth, since poverty is a common risk factor for those impacted by HT.

**Year 1 Policy Development**

- Assessment of Exploitation Policy (updated July 31, 2026): This policy guide was updated from December 18, 2024, version to incorporate a change requested under the Los Angeles County Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking. The revisions broaden definitions of child trafficking, labor trafficking, and forced criminality, replacing older CSEC-specific language with more comprehensive, trauma-informed terminology; add expanded indicators of exploitation, including behavioral, environmental, and coercion-related red flags; strengthen procedures for CSWs covering safety planning, interviews, law enforcement coordination, medical exams, and services for LGBTQ+ and immigrant youth; and introduce new Special Project Codes with clearer documentation requirements.
- Statewide Special Project Codes (SPCs): Detail not yet available and will be included in a future update.

- Child Protection Hotline Policy: Detail not yet available and will be included in a future update.
- Multi-Agency Response Team Policy: Detail not yet available and will be included in a future update.

**Integration of Labor Trafficking and Labor Trafficking by Forced Criminality**

As part of the Los Angeles County Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking, the County continues to work toward more equitable identification, screening, service delivery, and data collection for children and youth experiencing labor trafficking, including labor trafficking by forced criminality (LT/LTFC). Historically, the County's child trafficking response and law enforcement activity have focused disproportionately on commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Integrating LT/LTFC into existing systems therefore requires changes to protocols, screening tools, training, data collection, and service pathways, while also considering the potential harms associated with increased system involvement.

**Progress to Date**

The County has made progress updating training and educational materials to ensure more equitable representation of labor trafficking and LT/LTFC and has also begun incorporating labor trafficking into existing identification and data infrastructure.

In May 2024, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) released new Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes to support more consistent identification and documentation of labor trafficking among children and youth. Los Angeles County has trained child trafficking liaisons and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) personnel on the new codes. Additional training, including an on-demand module, is being developed in partnership with UCLA to expand use of the LT/LTFC codes among hotline and other frontline staff.

The County is also participating in efforts to expand validated screening practices. The CSE-IT, currently used to identify risk and indicators of commercial sexual exploitation, is being updated to include a labor trafficking screening component. DCFS is expected to serve as a pilot agency for the updated tool, creating an opportunity to evaluate how labor trafficking indicators can be incorporated into the County's broader child welfare screening infrastructure. Additionally, DCFS, in collaboration with CAST, has been incorporating labor trafficking, including forced criminality, into all stakeholder training to support more equitable identification of and response to survivors of labor trafficking.

**Remaining Gaps and Implementation Challenges**

Despite this progress, significant gaps remain. Most law enforcement activities related to HT continue to focus on CSEC. Probation has not yet been able to fully update its protocols, screening practices, or service pathways to address the needs of minors who have experienced LT/LTFC. This creates a disparity in how different forms of trafficking are identified and addressed across County systems.

Implementation has also been affected by the review and approval processes required to update County materials, protocols, and training. Some materials require review by multiple County departments and, depending on the nature of the proposed change, may require additional Board action before implementation. These processes have contributed to delays in fully integrating LT/LTFC across County systems.

The County must also balance two important objectives: ensuring that youth who have experienced LT/LTFC are appropriately identified and connected to services, while avoiding unnecessary or harmful system involvement. Increased screening and identification should not automatically result in greater involvement with law enforcement, Probation, or other systems that may create additional trauma or barriers for youth. The Strategic Plan therefore emphasizes the development of responses that expand access to appropriate services and supports while maintaining a trauma-informed, youth-centered, and least-restrictive approach.

**Next Steps**

Moving forward, the CTLT will continue to integrate LT/LTFC into the systems and infrastructure established through the Five-Year Strategic Plan, including:

- Completing and implementing updated training and educational materials related to LT/LTFC;
- Expanding training on the CDSS Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes, including through the UCLA-developed on-demand training;
- Updating County screening and identification practices, including piloting the labor trafficking component of the CSE-IT through DCFS;
- Identifying and addressing remaining gaps in Probation protocols, screening, and services for youth experiencing LT/LTFC;
- Establishing consistent data collection practices that allow the County to better understand the prevalence, characteristics, service needs, and outcomes of youth experiencing labor trafficking;
- Continuing to evaluate how the County can improve identification and access to services without unnecessarily increasing harmful system involvement; and
- Conducting focus groups with survivors of LT/LTFC, their caregivers, and specialized service providers to continue integrating a diversity of lived-experience expertise.

These efforts are intended to move the County from a trafficking response that has historically centered CSEC toward a more comprehensive approach that recognizes and responds to the full range of trafficking experiences affecting children and youth.

**Appendix C**

## A Non-Carceral Response to Child Trafficking

A public health approach to child trafficking requires the County to provide meaningful pathways to safety and support before a young person reaches a crisis point or becomes involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

A non-carceral response does not mean the County has no role to play when a young person is experiencing trafficking. Rather, it means building a continuum of voluntary, accessible, trauma-informed, and community-based interventions that respond to a young person's needs without making system involvement a requirement or the gateway to receiving help.

In practice, this includes the following components of a continuum of care.

### Street-Based Medical and Outreach Teams

Street-based teams bring healthcare, behavioral health, harm reduction, case management, and basic needs assistance directly to young people in the places where they spend time. Rather than requiring youth to first enter a government office, shelter, hospital, or law enforcement setting, trusted providers can build relationships over time and offer services when a young person is ready.

For youth experiencing trafficking, this can include safety planning, identification of immediate needs, and connections to housing, food, transportation, education, and legal services. A young person does not need to disclose trafficking before receiving assistance; the relationship and the service connection come first.

### Youth Drop-In and Safe Access Centers

Youth should have places where they can walk in without an appointment and access basic needs and trusted adults without having to explain or prove what happened to them. Drop-in centers can meet immediate needs (food, showers, clothing, phone access) and connect youth to transportation assistance, healthcare, behavioral health support, case management, legal assistance, education and employment support, and longer-term housing.

These centers can also function as low-barrier safety points for youth who are not ready to enter a formal system. California's child-serving practice guidance emphasizes timely, accessible services and healing relationships, and recent California judicial-system materials have similarly identified community-based safe spaces and drop-in centers as potential alternatives to arrest-driven responses.

### Healthcare-Based Intervention

Healthcare settings offer an important opportunity for early identification and intervention because young people may interact with medical providers even when they are not engaged with child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

The County can strengthen protocols in emergency departments, community clinics, sexual health clinics, school-based health centers, and other healthcare settings. Providers in these settings should be trained to recognize trafficking indicators, conduct trauma-informed screening when appropriate, provide immediate medical and behavioral health care, and connect youth to community-based advocates.

Healthcare should not become another pathway into unnecessary system involvement. The intervention should prioritize confidentiality, informed consent where legally applicable, safety planning, and connection to services. Los Angeles County's existing public health infrastructure demonstrates that low-barrier healthcare access is possible; County sexual health clinics, for example, provide walk-in services and explicitly state that immigration status is not reported to authorities.

**Youth-Led Programs and Youth Centers**

Young people, drawing on their lived expertise, should be invited to co-design the services intended for them. Youth-led programming can create opportunities for mentorship, peer support, leadership development, creative expression, employment, civic engagement, and community connection.

For youth impacted by trafficking, youth-led spaces can be particularly valuable because they provide relationships and identities that extend beyond the experience of exploitation or system involvement. The County can invest in youth-designed programming, peer navigators, youth advisory structures, paid leadership opportunities, and youth-centered community spaces.

This approach is consistent with the County's broader youth development strategy, which emphasizes community organizations, mentorship, education, career pathways, and diversion rather than relying exclusively on the justice system.

**Wraparound Services Before Crisis**

One of the most important shifts is moving from a referral-after-harm model to an early-support model. A young person should not have to be trafficked, arrested, hospitalized, removed from their home, or otherwise reach a crisis before receiving intensive support. Community-based teams can work with youth and families who demonstrate elevated risk or unmet needs and provide coordinated assistance before those circumstances escalate.

The County already has community-based prevention and family-support infrastructure that can serve as a foundation for this approach, including Prevention and Aftercare, Alternative Response, Partnerships for Families, and Family Preservation services.

**School-Based Prevention and Early Intervention**

Schools are a critical setting for intervening before trafficking occurs or escalates. School-based approaches can integrate trafficking prevention into broader efforts addressing healthy relationships, exploitation, violence prevention, digital safety, mental health, and substance use.

Beyond identification and referral, schools can provide trusted adults, counseling, peer programs, restorative and supportive practices, family engagement, transportation and basic-needs connections, and direct pathways to community-based providers.

School personnel should be equipped to recognize indicators of exploitation while understanding that the appropriate response is not necessarily a law enforcement referral. Training should emphasize trauma-informed engagement, youth safety, mandated reporting requirements, and connection to appropriate services.

In addition, a dedicated survivor advocate position should be created to conduct outreach in schools. This could be modeled after the CAST Survivor Advocate position, which conducts outreach and responds to crisis calls from Dignity Health emergency departments. A school-based version of this role could ensure that youth learn about available services and, if needed, receive urgent resources immediately.

**Family-Centered Support**

Because family instability, housing insecurity, poverty, isolation, and unmet behavioral health needs can increase vulnerability to exploitation, prevention must include support for families as well as the individual young person.

Family-centered services can include flexible financial assistance, housing stabilization, and childcare, alongside parenting support, family mediation, behavioral health care, substance use services, employment assistance, and culturally responsive navigation. These services aim to strengthen the protective environment around a young person when it is safe and appropriate.

**Community-Based Mobile Crisis and Rapid Response**

The County can also develop or expand mobile teams capable of responding when a youth is experiencing an acute crisis but does not require, or would be better served without, a law enforcement response. These teams could include behavioral health clinicians, youth advocates, medical providers, and peer or community-based staff who can respond in the community, stabilize the situation, and connect the youth to ongoing support.

This creates an important middle ground between "do nothing" and "call law enforcement." It recognizes that a young person's crisis may require an immediate response while still keeping that response health- and service-oriented.

**Housing as Trafficking Prevention**

Stable housing should be treated as a core trafficking prevention intervention rather than simply a downstream service. Youth without stable housing are more vulnerable to exploitation and may return to unsafe relationships or environments when no alternative is available.

The County can expand low-barrier emergency housing, transitional housing, host-home models; family reunification supports when appropriate, and longer-term affordable housing pathways. Housing interventions should be paired with voluntary case management and other supports rather than conditioned on compliance with a particular program or system.

**Employment, Education, and Economic Opportunity**

For older youth and transitional-aged youth, substantive economic opportunity is another critical prevention strategy. Paid internships, workforce development, education completion, apprenticeships, employment protections, and financial assistance can reduce economic vulnerability while building a young person's independence and social connection.

For youth experiencing labor trafficking or trafficking by forced criminality, these interventions are particularly important because exploitation may be directly connected to employment, debt, economic insecurity, or coercion.

**A Continuum Rather Than a Single Intervention**

These approaches should not be viewed as alternatives to one another. A comprehensive non-carceral response is a continuum of care in which a young person can enter through whichever door is safest and most accessible: street outreach, a school, a health clinic, a drop-in center, a youth program, a family-support provider, or another trusted community setting, and receive assistance without first having to become involved in a formal system.

The County's role is to ensure that these pathways are sufficiently funded, coordinated, geographically accessible, culturally responsive, and connected to one another so that youth do not have to navigate the system alone.

The ultimate measure of success should therefore not be the number of youth referred into government systems, but whether young people are safer, more stable, and better connected to the fuller set of outcomes discussed below.

**Data and Outcomes**

Effective implementation of the County's Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking requires data that can demonstrate not only what the County is doing, but whether those efforts are improving safety, stability, and well-being for children and youth.

Previous CTLT reports have relied heavily on Child Protection Hotline data and other available administrative data, including data concerning youth who are already involved in County systems. While these data provide important information about identification, referrals, and system activity, they provide only a limited picture of the broader population of youth who may be experiencing or at risk of trafficking. They also do not consistently capture what happens to youth over time or whether interventions result in sustained improvements in safety and stability.

The County currently lacks a consistent, cross-system framework for measuring longer-term outcomes for youth impacted by trafficking. As a result, it can be difficult to assess progress through a public health lens. Measures such as the number of screenings conducted, referrals made, trainings completed, or cases opened can demonstrate activity, but they do not necessarily demonstrate whether youth are safer, more stable, or better connected to supportive adults and community.

A public health approach requires the County to broaden its understanding of success. In addition to measuring service utilization and system activity, the County should increasingly examine outcomes such as housing and placement stability, school engagement, family and social connectedness, access to healthcare and behavioral health services, reduced exposure to exploitation and other forms of harm, and successful transitions to adulthood. Where appropriate, these measures should include the experiences and perspectives of youth themselves.

The County should also examine variation in activity and outcomes by demographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Such data can provide insight into which populations are most effectively identified and supported by current systems, and which populations are not being adequately supported. Some of this data is already in place but could be used more effectively. For example, the Child Welfare Services Data fact sheets published monthly by DCFS provide demographic information for all children involved in the child welfare system. Although this information is valuable, it is not sufficient for understanding demographic differences in program activities or outcomes, such as which youth are more likely to receive in-home support and which are more likely to be placed in foster care.

Training programs should also move toward collecting outcomes data. Currently, organizations that facilitate workshops and other learning opportunities for providers tend to collect data in two categories: (a) activities or process indicators, such as the number of trainings provided, the content of those trainings, the number of attendees, and (in some cases) attendee characteristics such as professional fields; and (b) post-training evaluation surveys.

These surveys function similarly to standard satisfaction surveys, asking attendees to rate the overall quality of training sessions and their relevance to their fields. In moving toward a public health approach, it is important to also consider the impact of training sessions on professionals' knowledge of and confidence in addressing human trafficking, and on their strategies for incorporating training content into their work. Training providers might incorporate open-ended questions that ask attendees to reflect on how they can apply what they have learned in their specific roles and contexts. Where feasible (and mindful of challenges such as survey fatigue), training providers might use pre- and post-surveys, with the latter administered both immediately after training and again three to six months later.

To advance this work, CTLT leadership is working directly with each participating County department and partner to identify the data they currently collect, determine where useful outcome information is available, and identify opportunities to strengthen data collection over time. This includes exploring both department-specific measures and common indicators that can be used across systems, while maintaining appropriate privacy protections and avoiding unnecessary collection of sensitive information. The County should also consider adopting standardized data collection across departments and programs to ensure data can be compared.

This work aims to build a stronger foundation for accountability and continuous improvement. The purpose is to build the capacity to answer a more fundamental question: are the County's collective investments and interventions creating safer, healthier, and more stable environments where children and youth can thrive?

The CTLT will continue to pursue this question as it strengthens its data collection and deepens its partnerships with County agencies and other stakeholders.