Los Angeles County Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent & Address Child Trafficking

2025 - 2030

Strategic Plan to Prevent & Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

2025 - 2030

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Child trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and labor trafficking are complex social issues. Addressing these pervasive challenges requires a comprehensive and strategic approach that not only acknowledges the historically-rooted and current-day push factors making children, youth, and families vulnerable but also confronts the motivations driving people to exploit others. The Los Angeles County Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking is a bold and ambitious strategy designed to close critical gaps in our response, build on past efforts, and drive innovation. The Plan aims to prevent and address exploitation of all youth by harnessing the strengths and power of families and communities across Los Angeles County.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

In Los Angeles County, we are committed to ensuring no youth experiences human trafficking (HT). We envision a future where exploitation is prevented by eliminating the conditions that perpetuate trafficking, and where youth and families are supported in meeting their self-defined needs and finding joy in themselves and their communities.

This Strategic Plan is aimed at achieving three key goals:

Goal 1: Reduce the number of youth and families impacted by human trafficking.

Goal 2: Improve youth and family well-being and healthy youth development.

Goal 3: Promote healthy family environments and social connectedness.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking comprises two parts: the Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE), contained here, and the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, which is intended to integrate labor trafficking into the County's anti-trafficking efforts. The development of these plans was carried out through two distinct processes, with areas of overlap noted below.

The Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation was developed through rigorous processes grounded in a decade of local experience, national research, and deep community engagement – including with young people and families. Project development took place in four key stages: initial review and framing, in-field community engagement, synthesis and strategy definition, and feedback and refinement. Importantly, individuals with lived experience participated in every stage of the process, including carrying out and leading community engagement. The plan was informed by input from nearly 80 youth, families and other individuals impacted by CSE, more than 30 community-based organizations and public agency partners, and members of the Los Angeles County Child Trafficking Steering Committee.

APPROACH

The Strategic Plan takes a three-prong approach to addressing child trafficking. First, it moves toward a comprehensive public health, community-based response, charting a path away from relying heavily on juvenile justice and child welfare system-based approaches. The public health approach includes a focus on prevention, multidisciplinary collaboration, and an integration of all forms of trafficking, including labor trafficking. Second, the plan is narrative change driven. Third, this plan is guided by a set of core principles and best practices, which are woven into all areas of the plan:

- Equity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality
- Healthy Youth Development and Self-Determination
- Ethical and Authentic Youth and Lived Experience Engagement
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Harm Reduction
- Intergenerational Approaches

THE PLAN

Over the next five years and beyond, Los Angeles County is committed to preventing and addressing child trafficking by focusing on six key strategic priority areas. Each area is supported by specific strategies, actionable items, programs and initiatives designed to foster collaboration among youth, families, and communities. Together, these efforts will drive the County towards achieving the ambitious goals set forth in the plan.

Priority Areas:

1. Invest in Prevention & Early Education
2. Build a Broad Community-Based Ecosystem
3. Fill Key Service Gaps
4. Promote Youth Leadership
5. Empower Parents & Caregivers
6. Assess & Adapt Existing Services

Key Learnings

Normalization of CSE - The sex trade is becoming increasingly normalized. Youth may not realize the harm that it may cause, and often rely on it to meet their basic needs, like food and housing. Because many youth don't associate themselves with the "CSEC" label or consider themselves as being trafficked, they don't seek out help.

Who We Are Missing - Identification and support has largely focused on cisgender girls. This means that males, transgender and non-binary youth are often overlooked. There are also gaps in identification and support of immigrant youth, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth, Native youth, youth with disabilities and neurodivergent youth, expectant and parenting youth (EPY), and youth experiencing labor trafficking.

Interventions Come Too Late - Parents and youth share that they aren't aware of CSE until it's too late. Often when they begin recognizing signs of trouble, they aren't able to get help. Providers pointed to gaps in emergency and crisis intervention, while youth expressed a desire to get help earlier, before a point of crisis.

Service Successes - Youth expressed appreciation for the services offered through specialized units within DCFS and Probation, the specialized courts, and community-based advocacy services, which emphasize relationship-building, more frequent interaction, and non-judgmental support. There are also many great community-based organizations across Los Angeles County to which youth and families are already connected – although some staff are not trained or equipped to identify and serve youth impacted by CSE.

Service Accessibility - Challenges to accessibility limit service utilization. These include difficult-to-understand eligibility requirements, complicated referral processes, and requirements that a young person must have an open child welfare or juvenile justice case to get into programs. Services primarily center around young people with less consideration of families' and, specifically, parents' needs.

Service Gaps - Youth highlight the need for more services that will help them move toward self-sufficiency outside of exploitation. These include financial assistance and literacy, educational advocacy, internships and employment support across a range of fields, mentorship, and housing. Service providers and professionals highlight the need for stronger supports in areas like physical and mental health, substance use treatment, and housing.

Peer and Survivor Mentorship - Connecting with individuals with shared lived experience is one of the most impactful services that youth and families receive.

Role of Law Enforcement and the Ongoing Disproportionate Incarceration of Youth Impacted by CSE - Despite legal and policy changes to prevent criminalization of youth for CSE, impacted youth continue to be overrepresented in the County's detention facilities. Revisiting the role of law enforcement is needed.

CSE is an Intergenerational Issue - Many youth impacted by CSE are expecting or parenting, and intergenerational trauma and system involvement is common among impacted families. Intergenerational modes of support and healing are essential to preventing and addressing trafficking.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Five-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking comprises two parts: the Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE), contained here, and the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, which is intended to integrate labor trafficking into the County's anti-trafficking efforts. The development of these plans was carried out through two processes. Where there is overlap between the two plans, it is noted in this document. Decisions about what, how, and when to integrate specific components of the two plans will be led by the Child Trafficking Leadership Team (CTLT) and must include input from experts in each of the areas, with an emphasis on centering the voices of individuals with lived experience.

The Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address CSE was developed using a systematic and inclusive process designed to capture a wide range of perspectives and insights, particularly from those directly impacted by CSE. This method ensured that the Strategic Plan would be both relevant and driven by the needs of the community.

PHASES

Initial Review & Framing

In-field Community Engagement

Synthesis & Strategy Definition

Draft Feedback & Refinement

PHASE 1

Initial Review & Framing

The project began with a review of current CSE-related work, protocols, and initiatives within the County, as well as results and recommendations from past research and evaluation. The planning team also reviewed more than 20 strategic plans from Los Angeles County agencies and other organizations. Relevant data from DCFS and Probation was also reviewed.

Learnings from the review were used to create a framework to contextualize information that we would later gather through the stakeholder engagement process. This helped us identify critical gaps and areas for improvement and prevent duplication or exclusion of relevant initiatives.

This first phase set the planning team up to better frame upcoming community engagement - clarifying the goals, key questions, and desired outcomes.

PHASE 2

In-field Community Engagement

Understanding stakeholders' needs, perspectives, and vision for change was essential. To ensure that this process was comprehensive and representative, we conducted community engagement through a series of listening sessions.

We held nine youth sessions, two parent/caregiver sessions, and eight sessions with community-based organizations (CBOs) and public agencies. For the youth sessions, we partnered with organizations with which youth were already connected to facilitate trust and safety. These sessions included youth with and without CSE experience and diversity across genders, race/ethnicities, system experiences, and other critical perspectives. Individuals with lived experience participated in planning the listening sessions, and facilitated the majority of youth sessions.

The planning team engaged the Los Angeles Child Trafficking Steering Committee (SC) throughout the process. Early on, the SC shared its proposed strategic priorities. The planning team presented at the quarterly SC meetings, conducted one listening session and one feedback session with the full committee, and discussions with groups of members on discrete topics. We presented to the Los Angeles County Youth Commission and collaborated with the Commissioner leading their work related to CSE.

PHASE 3

Synthesis & Strategy Definition

Synthesis of the listening sessions involved identifying recurring themes and gaps, which were then distilled down to actionable insights.

The insights were then categorized into strategies and actions. This categorization process was critical in organizing the information in a way that was both logical and actionable, facilitating a clear and concise summary of next steps for Los Angeles County.

This phase was key to defining the core set of strategies - assessing each based on their potential impact and effort required for implementation. By balancing impact and effort, the Strategic Plan aims to maximize effectiveness and sustainability in addressing the identified needs and challenges.

PHASE 4

Draft Feedback & Refinement

Feedback gathering for the Strategic Plan involved sharing the draft strategies and actions with key stakeholders: youth, Steering Committee members, community-based organizations, and Los Angeles-based members of the statewide CSEC Action Team's Advisory Board of lived experience experts.

The feedback process was iterative. Through each round, the planning team honed in on specific actions and zoomed out to see how all the actions connect in a five-year, outcome-oriented roadmap that comprehensively addresses the communities' needs.

INTRODUCTION

MISSION & VISION

In Los Angeles County, we are committed to ensuring no youth experiences human trafficking (HT). We envision a future where exploitation is prevented by eliminating the conditions that perpetuate trafficking, and where youth and families are supported in meeting their self-defined needs and finding joy in themselves and their communities.

GOALS

01 *Reduce the number of youth and families impacted by human trafficking*

02 *Improve youth and family well-being and healthy youth development*

03 *Promote healthy family environments and social connectedness*

CURRENT STATE

2,265
child welfare referrals were made for allegations of CSE in Los Angeles County between 2020-23.

1/2
of CSE referrals were for youth aged 15 or younger.

80%
of CSE referrals were for Black or Hispanic youth.

Los Angeles County is consistently cited as one of the nation's centers for CSE of youth (United States (U.S.) Department of Justice, 2009). Over the last three fiscal years (2020-2023), there were 2,265 child welfare referrals made for allegations of CSE in Los Angeles County (Child Welfare Services/Case Management System {CWS/CMS}, 2024). On average, 90 percent of these referrals were for female children, 35 percent were Black children, and 45 percent were Hispanic children. Notably, 18 percent of CSE referrals in 2022-2023 were for children aged between 9-13 years old, 31 percent were for 14-15 year-olds, and 51 percent were for 16-17 year-olds (CWS/CMS, 2024). Studies show that reports made undercount the prevalence of exploitation, with many young people continuing to go unidentified – specifically boys, transgender and non-binary youth, youth experiencing familial exploitation, Native youth, AAPI youth, immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, and neurodivergent youth.

In recent years, California and Los Angeles County have implemented several policy changes to shift public perceptions of children and youth who have experienced CSE and to develop supportive, multidisciplinary, non-punitive responses to their needs. In 2014, Senate Bill (SB) 855 was passed, clarifying that CSE victims are considered victims of child abuse and should be served by the child welfare system, rather than being considered delinquent and pushed into the juvenile justice system. This legislation also established the statewide CSEC Program, which Los Angeles has opted into; this program incentivizes counties with funding to develop multidisciplinary responses to CSE.

Subsequently, in 2015, SB 794 was enacted to codify the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, requiring county child welfare and probation departments to establish protocols for identifying, reporting, and serving children and youth at risk of CSE. It also mandated that counties take steps to locate youth missing from care, and understand the reasons why they were missing or away from care, to inform future placement and service decisions. Further solidifying this commitment, SB 1322 was passed in 2016, prohibiting the arrest of minors for prostitution and related charges, thereby ensuring that young people experiencing CSE are treated as victims of abuse rather than offenders.

Los Angeles County has also made significant practice and policy advancements to better serve children and families. Among these, the County has:

LEARN MORE:

- Building Bridges: How Los Angeles Came Together to Support Children and Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation

"None of these services existed when I was being exploited. We need more but it is very encouraging to see that it's getting better."

Advocate & Lived Experience Expert

Developed the Child Trafficking Unit within Probation and the CSEC section, now the Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Unit, within DCFS to provide multidisciplinary, intensive strengths-based support and case management services. Each of these units also have associated specialized courts, the Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) and DREAM Courts, which work closely through the multidisciplinary team approach based on SB 855.

Developed several specialized protocols that focus on identifying those experiencing CSE, while avoiding or reducing criminalization and detention in locked facilities. Said protocols included the 2014 groundbreaking Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol (FRP), which stopped the practice of arresting and prosecuting minors for prostitution-related offenses even before state law required this change, and the Detention Interagency Identification and Response Protocol to identify and serve youth who are incarcerated within the County's juvenile detention facilities. It also developed a collaborative protocol to support those who testify against their traffickers in criminal court, the Victim Witness Testimony Protocol.

Connected young people and their families to specialized attorneys and case managers through the Children's Law Center (CLC) of California's DREAM Unit and community-based advocacy services with specific expertise in serving youth impacted by trafficking. Many of these providers have lived experience themselves.

Instituted widespread training for County employees, caregivers, and providers, which has reached more than 100,000 people.

Committed to youth empowerment and survivor leadership development through many specialized youth empowerment events.

Implemented, in partnership with community-based partners, the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP), a psycho-education and support program for parents and caregivers caring for youth impacted by commercial exploitation.

Rolled out Intensive Services Foster Care for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

CALL TO ACTION

- Build on the strength and power of families and communities in Los Angeles County
- Take bold action to reduce child trafficking in the next five years
- Fill critical gaps in the response to child trafficking
- Assess past efforts to determine where to build on or adapt

Child trafficking, including CSE, sex trafficking, and labor trafficking are complex social issues. Exploitation of children and youth is a symptom, in large part, of pervasive, historically-grounded ills and unaddressed social issues of poverty, racism, colonialism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, xenophobia, and control of women and birthing people's bodies. Addressing this pervasive issue requires a comprehensive and strategic approach that acknowledges these historically-rooted and current-day push factors that result in vulnerabilities for children, youth, and families and that motivate people to exploit others.

More than a decade after Los Angeles' early reforms were initiated, there have been many positive impacts, but significant work remains. The current response to trafficking of children and youth is largely centered on a triage or crisis approach of addressing the harms that have already been felt and experienced. For example, interventions take place when a youth is identified in a sting operation, or when a medical provider treats a youth for persistent sexually transmitted infections/sexually transmitted diseases (STI/STD). Strategies are reactive to those harms, such as by building more placement options, arresting exploiters, and posting helplines in airport bathrooms, among others.

Some approaches have moved further upstream in an attempt to prevent the harm from occurring by increasing awareness among youth who may be vulnerable and uplifting the issue to the public more broadly. Yet, the complexity of the issue requires a more sophisticated and nuanced approach. One that recognizes and addresses the underlying issues, such as addressing the disease of addiction that drives a mother to sell sex with her young son in exchange for drugs, or the desperation a family is facing when it turns its child over to a sex buyer to have a roof over its head, or when another young person who has been exploited for a long period of time recruits a friend while in an emergency shelter, or a young transgender youth is kicked out of their home and only has a community in the streets to find love, belonging, and an ability to pay for gender-affirming hormone therapy.

Learning from more than a decade of experience, building on current research and data, and driven by what youth and families are facing, this Strategic Plan calls for a bold and ambitious strategy over the next five years and beyond. The plan aims to fill critical gaps in the response to child trafficking, assess past efforts to determine where to build on or adapt, and continue to drive innovation to prevent and address exploitation of all youth by building on the strengths and power of families and communities that make up Los Angeles County.

“Prevention work is everything. There is so much more we can do to get ahead of exploitation so we are not trying to clear up and restore.”

Advocate & Lived Experience Expert

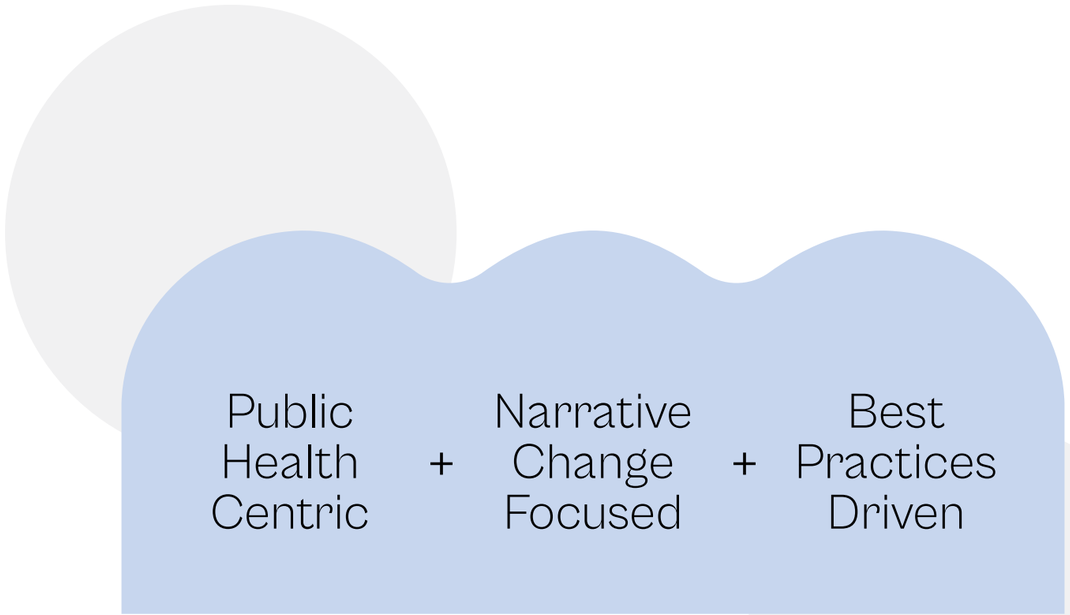
“I’m happy that commercial sexual exploitation is getting more acknowledgment and people in official government jobs are hearing this and spreading the word and doing something about it.”

Youth

APPROACH

The Strategic Plan takes a three-pronged approach to addressing child trafficking – interweaving a public health approach, narrative change, and integration of best practices and core principles. It recognizes the strength of young people, families, and communities; prioritizes reducing and avoiding harm all together; and calls for a change in the way society views and talks about the issue of CSE, with a more inclusive understanding of who is impacted, and who is deserving of help and support.

3-PRONGED APPROACH



APPROACH 1

Public Health Centric

Historically, human trafficking has been addressed through a criminal justice lens: arresting and punishing traffickers, and identifying and serving victims variedly through the juvenile justice system or the child welfare system. The Strategic Plan envisions a path forward that reduces reliance on juvenile justice and child welfare system-based approaches and moves toward a comprehensive public health, community-based response both in prevention and intervention efforts. This approach aligns with other county and nationwide initiatives to increase prevention efforts, build new and bolster existing community-based supports, and reimagine youth justice, including the elimination of incarcerating girls and gender expansive youth. (See, e.g., W. Haywood Burns Institute, 2020)

Using a socio-ecological model, this plan recognizes that trafficking is a public health issue that impacts individuals, families, and communities across generations. A public health approach seeks to address risk factors that lead individuals and communities to become vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of abuse while promoting protective factors that mitigate those risks. To effectively engage in anti-trafficking work, including prevention, professionals must consider the complex interplay between individual, relational, community, and societal factors that contribute to conditions of human trafficking, while also recognizing, utilizing, and bolstering the protective factors at each of those levels.

LEARN MORE:

- Youth Justice Reimagined: Recommendations from the Los Angeles County Youth Justice Work Group

/ System → Community-Based Response

/ Focus on Prevention

/ Multidisciplinary Collaboration

/ Integration of Labor Trafficking

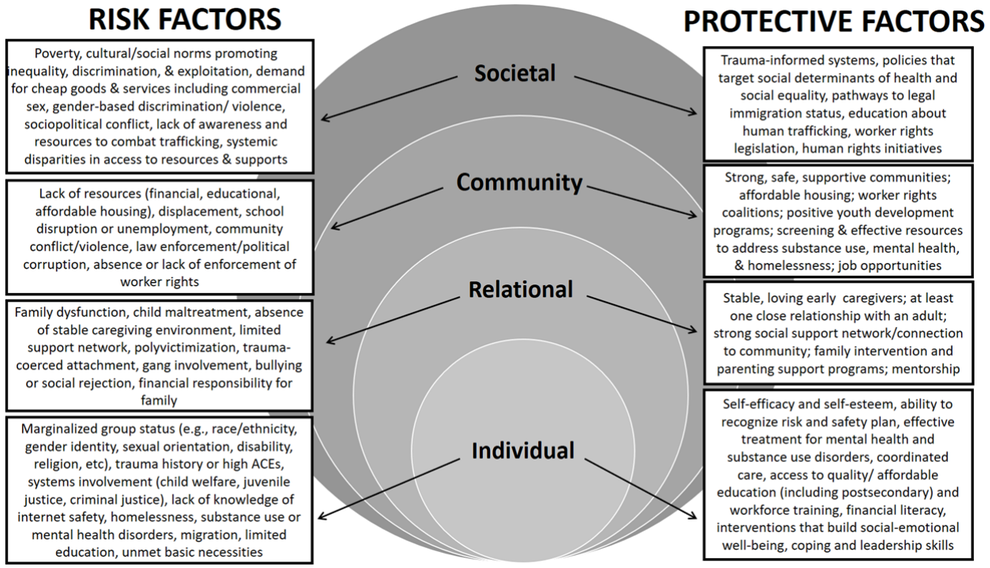


Figure 1:
Socio-ecological Risk and Protective Factors Related to Human Trafficking (Hopper, 2024)

SHIFTING FROM A SYSTEM-BASED TO A COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE

The public health approach involves a gradual reduction in reliance on juvenile justice and child welfare system-based approaches. This shift recognizes multiple simultaneous truths. First, that youth experiencing CSE are disproportionately under the jurisdiction of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, thus demanding targeted interventions for youth in those systems, such as the trauma-informed services that the County has developed over the last decade. And second, that the historical focus on law enforcement, DCFS, and Probation as the primary means of identifying and serving youth causes some youth further harm. The harms of these systems and the effectiveness of community-based approaches are well-documented in research, and were regularly and fervently echoed by youth and families in listening sessions. Specifically, system involvement leads to separation from family and community; disconnection from school, extracurricular activities, and positive relationships; negative impacts on physical and mental health; and other consequences, like difficulty obtaining housing and employment.

"All of the systems are pulling families in different directions."

In addition, system involvement can create additional vulnerabilities for youth experiencing CSE, like further trauma in out-of-home care, an inability to meet basic needs, or targeted recruitment by traffickers. Once in the system, there can be a system "trap" of being stuck in the system, or cycling in and out, because of perceived and actual programmatic gaps in types of services and supports that help the person stay safe and get their needs met in the community. This system "trap" can be particularly strong for youth who are parents themselves, who, because of their prior or current involvement with the child welfare system, face additional scrutiny and surveillance of their parenting. Inadequate support for youth transitioning from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and into adulthood can create additional vulnerabilities for CSE, including homelessness, unemployment, and lack of connection to healthy adults. These additional vulnerabilities for youth transitioning into adulthood, and for some, continued involvement in the commercial sex industry, may result in new or further criminalization with harsher and long-lasting consequences. Lastly, the system a youth is involved with, child welfare or delinquency, can lead to disparate resources, outcomes and opportunities; they are either criminalized for behaviors and circumstances related to their trafficking experience or encounter difficulty with receiving services, availability of service array, and perceptions of whether they are deserving of services.

The focus on systems also means that children and families cannot access services unless they are formally system-involved. For example, child welfare staff across the state of California report feeling challenged to support youth at-risk for CSE if they do not have an open case. This represents critical missed opportunities to intervene and support vulnerable youth and families in their communities. In addition, data show that about two-thirds of youth referred to child protective services for CSE in California were living at home at the time and had no prior out-of-home care history (Hammond et al., 2023). Youth in out-of-home care have been a primary focus of service provision, and as a result, those living at home with their families or those non-system involved have often flown under the radar. Similarly, the reliance on law enforcement contact to identify youth experiencing trafficking has meant that youth who live in communities that have not been the focus of identification efforts through the FRP, youth who experience more hidden types of exploitation (e.g., familial trafficking), and youth who do not fit the traditional profile of exploited children (e.g., boys) are rarely identified and served. For example, only six of the 561 youth identified through the FRP in years 2014-2020 were boys (Newcombe, French, Ackerman-Brimberg, & Walker Brown, 2020).

Unless and until Los Angeles County prioritizes supporting, building capacity of, and funding community-based alternatives to system involvement to prevent and address child trafficking using a public health approach, it will continue to rely on the crutch of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems to meet youth and family needs, at tremendous cost – financial, health, safety, well-being, and otherwise – to both the general public and impacted youth and families. Thus, this plan incorporates what many in the listening sessions communicated and what research supports: the need for a broader scope of prevention and intervention efforts that extend beyond public institutional boundaries and build on the power and strength of Los Angeles County's vibrant and diverse communities.

FOCUS ON PREVENTION

By applying a public health approach, the plan strives to implement: 1) primary prevention efforts to ensure that children do not experience trafficking in the first place, 2) secondary prevention efforts to provide an immediate trauma-informed response when child trafficking does occur, and 3) a tertiary prevention response to prevent the recurrence of a child being trafficked while providing long-term support to children and their families to promote healing and well-being.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Another core element of a public health approach is deep partnership and collaboration. Through the implementation of this plan, the County will work closely with communities and develop partnerships with a wide array of stakeholders, including but not limited to, youth and families who are at risk or have been impacted by trafficking, other community residents, CBOs, schools, medical and mental health providers, social service agencies, businesses, law enforcement, anti-human trafficking task forces, and the faith-based community. Through collaboration and coordination with a spectrum of multidisciplinary agencies that can be supported to serve as frontline responders to trafficking, we can multiply our attention and resources toward meeting the needs of those at risk or impacted by trafficking.

INTEGRATION OF LABOR TRAFFICKING

The application of a public health approach also compels Los Angeles County to take a more comprehensive approach to human trafficking. The public health approach to violence recognizes that different forms of violence, which includes both sex and labor trafficking, can be interconnected and often share similar root causes, such as poverty, racial and gender-based discrimination, family separation, and childhood trauma. Intersections between trafficking, child abuse, domestic and sexual violence are common and complex, with many victims experiencing more than one of these forms of violence. While there is some intersectionality among youth experiencing CSE and labor trafficking, more learning and capacity building is needed in order to fully understand the scope and dynamics of labor trafficking in Los Angeles County, as well as to appropriately tailor services and supports to meet the needs of youth with this experience.

As the County undertakes this work over the next five years, we aim to apply the lessons learned from CSE prevention and intervention efforts from the last decade, to build on what has worked well, and to avoid replicating mistakes and minimizing unintended harm in the way we identify and serve youth and families impacted by labor trafficking. In some areas, integration of sex trafficking and labor trafficking efforts will be more straightforward, such as with respect to expanding training, resource mapping, and broadening community-based outreach and partnerships. In others, more learning and research is needed, such as identifying specific types of services offered, skills needed to effectively serve youth and families, and the appropriateness and types of system responses. Specifically, the County must take great care to avoid separating families and bringing more children into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in the name of child safety.

APPROACH 2

Narrative Change Focused

Moving Past the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Label to Change Perceptions and Serve More Youth

Over the next five years, this Plan aims to further shift how the public understands human trafficking, and how we perceive and view impacted youth, beyond the CSEC label. Narrative change through training, policy, and practice change has been an important piece of Los Angeles' strategy to address CSE, from the beginning. The principle that there is "no such thing as a child prostitute" has been embedded throughout the County's work in public awareness campaigns and through its groundbreaking FRP. Now we must push this narrative change further in ways that are more nuanced and responsive to emerging research and the perspectives of youth, families, and communities.

- *Normalization of the Sex Trade*
- *Stigma of the CSEC Label*
- *Over-labeling Misses Too Many Youth*
- *False Dichotomy: Victims vs. Traffickers*
- *Lack of Attention on Sex Buyers*

NORMALIZATION OF THE SEX TRADE

Involvement in the sex trade is increasingly being normalized among youth because of social media and oversexualization in media, in general. Professionals and young people expressed that many youth think it is no big deal to engage in commercial sex. They may not understand, or do not realize until years later, the trauma and violence that exists within the sex trade or the short and long-term consequences. At the same time, even those who did not self-identify their experience as trafficking or victimization expressed that they often needed to engage in the sex trade to meet their basic needs. One youth shared:

"I was homeless. I needed to have sex to have a place to live. It was normalized to the point where I didn't see the impact. Maybe I was into the guy, but there were times I didn't want sex so I was getting raped and I didn't even know it."

STIGMA OF THE CSEC LABEL

Being exploited is stigmatizing and can be associated with feelings of shame, both for the youth experiencing it and their families. Association with the "CSEC" label can exacerbate this stigma. Especially when used to describe an individual as "a CSEC", this label can push young people into a box based on one experience rather than recognizing them as whole people. Being "CSEC" labeled can also limit young people's access to essential services, supports, and relationships because of ongoing biases and negative perceptions about youth impacted by CSE.
One youth shared:

"Once it was time for me to be released [from juvenile hall], I was there for an additional two months because they couldn't find me placement. Because I was a 'hard to place youth', the [CSEC] label itself made it hard to get into an appropriate housing situation."

There are still broad societal beliefs that differentiate between young people who are victims of rape and young people who are commercially sexually exploited. Although their experiences of sexual violence, violation, and trauma have similarities, society often views any perceived engagement in the commercial sex industry as a choice and those in it as less deserving of care, support, and resources. And, despite concerted efforts, media outlets still refer to victims of CSE as "child prostitutes," perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

OVER-LABELING MISSES TOO MANY YOUTH

Focusing the County's efforts only on youth who self-identify as having experienced CSE or who the County has labeled CSEC, leads to under-identification of large groups of vulnerable or trafficked youth. Specifically, this has led to disproportionately high numbers of cisgender girls, especially Black and Latina girls, labeled as CSEC, and the under-identification of LGBTQ+ youth, males, immigrant youth, Native youth, AAPI youth, and youth with disabilities and neurodivergent youth. The focus on sex trafficking also means that the County has under-identified, and thus underserved, youth impacted by labor trafficking. Without adapting the narrative to address the broad definitions of trafficking, as well as the gender, cultural and linguistic diversity of Los Angeles County, we will continue to miss large groups of impacted youth.

FALSE DICHOTOMY: VICTIMS VS. TRAFFICKERS

There is a false dichotomy between those considered "victims" and "traffickers." This obscures the fact that some youth who experience CSE are also involved in bringing other youth into CSE. These youth are often labeled "bad kids," "recruiters" or even "traffickers," a practice which criminalizes them for a behavior that is often connected to survival and their own trafficking experience; either through forced criminality by another person, because bringing other youth in can help reduce the harm they face, or even because they view themselves as helping the other youth (for example, by avoiding an abusive living environment). (See Shared Hope International, 2020).

In addition, those who traffic or facilitate the exploitation of others often come from the same communities and backgrounds of trauma, and have similar needs as those who are victimized. Exploitation and trafficking has also become a means of survival – a viable, and for some the only, way of making money that is passed down through generations.

LACK OF ATTENTION ON SEX BUYERS

Much of the public focus on CSE remains on the victims and traffickers, granting much less attention to the purchasers of sex who fuel the demand that drives the commercial sex industry. Media coverage, public awareness campaigns and law enforcement efforts often focus on the victims rather than the perpetrators, which gives buyers a level of anonymity and shields them from scrutiny and criminal liability. Given that sex buyers tend to be White males (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017) and those victimized through trafficking tend to be low income, youth of color – predominantly Black, Brown, Native, and LGBTQIA youth – this disparity in treatment continues to reinforce racist, sexist, and capitalistic societal structures that perpetuate trafficking.

APPROACH 3

Best Practices Driven

This plan is guided by best practices and principles in the field, which should be integrated into all areas of the plan – from initial planning to implementation.

/ Equity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality

/ Healthy Youth Development

/ Ethical and Authentic Engagement

/ Trauma-informed Care

/ Harm Reduction

/ Intergenerational Approach

EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND INTERSECTIONALITY

This plan recognizes that human trafficking disproportionately impacts already marginalized populations, especially those youth with multiple intersecting marginalized identities, including youth of color, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, immigrant youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities. Efforts must address the structural drivers of exploitation, such as racism, sexism, misogyny, colonialism, capitalism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism. All services, supports and awareness building efforts must be delivered in culturally, linguistically and gender responsive ways, recognizing and celebrating the diversity of Los Angeles County youth, families and communities.

HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION

This plan is grounded in the principle that all youth deserve dignity, respect and support. They deserve to have their experiences heard and honored. All youth deserve to thrive, not just survive, to experience joy and tap into their creativity. This plan seeks to support youth in their own self-determination and prioritize healthy youth development and leadership.

ETHICAL AND AUTHENTIC YOUTH AND LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT

This plan acknowledges that all work in the County must be driven by and in partnership with youth, families and individuals with lived experience. This must be done authentically and ethically, ensuring that youth and family input is valued and not tokenized, and that practices are not exploitative or re-traumatizing.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

This plan prioritizes the integration of trauma-informed care, ensuring that all services are designed with an understanding of the impact of trauma on youth and families. This approach emphasizes safety, engagement and empowerment, thus creating an environment where individuals can heal and thrive.

HARM REDUCTION

This plan embraces harm reduction practices, which focus on reducing the harm of risky circumstances or behaviors, and recognizes small, incremental changes that build toward longer-term safety. Harm reduction is grounded in youth autonomy, emphasizing meeting youth where they are without judgment and encouraging them to use their agency in making safer decisions.

INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH

This plan recognizes that exploitation, and the trauma that often precedes and follows it, is often intergenerational. It also calls upon the tremendous power and strength of intergenerational approaches to interrupt the cycle of trauma and system involvement, and support true healing. This plan seeks solutions that support families and community ecosystems throughout the life trajectory.

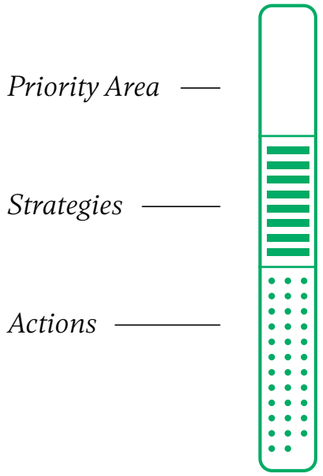
LEARN MORE:

- HHS Human Trafficking Prevention Framework
- Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness

THE PLAN

THE PLAN OVERVIEW

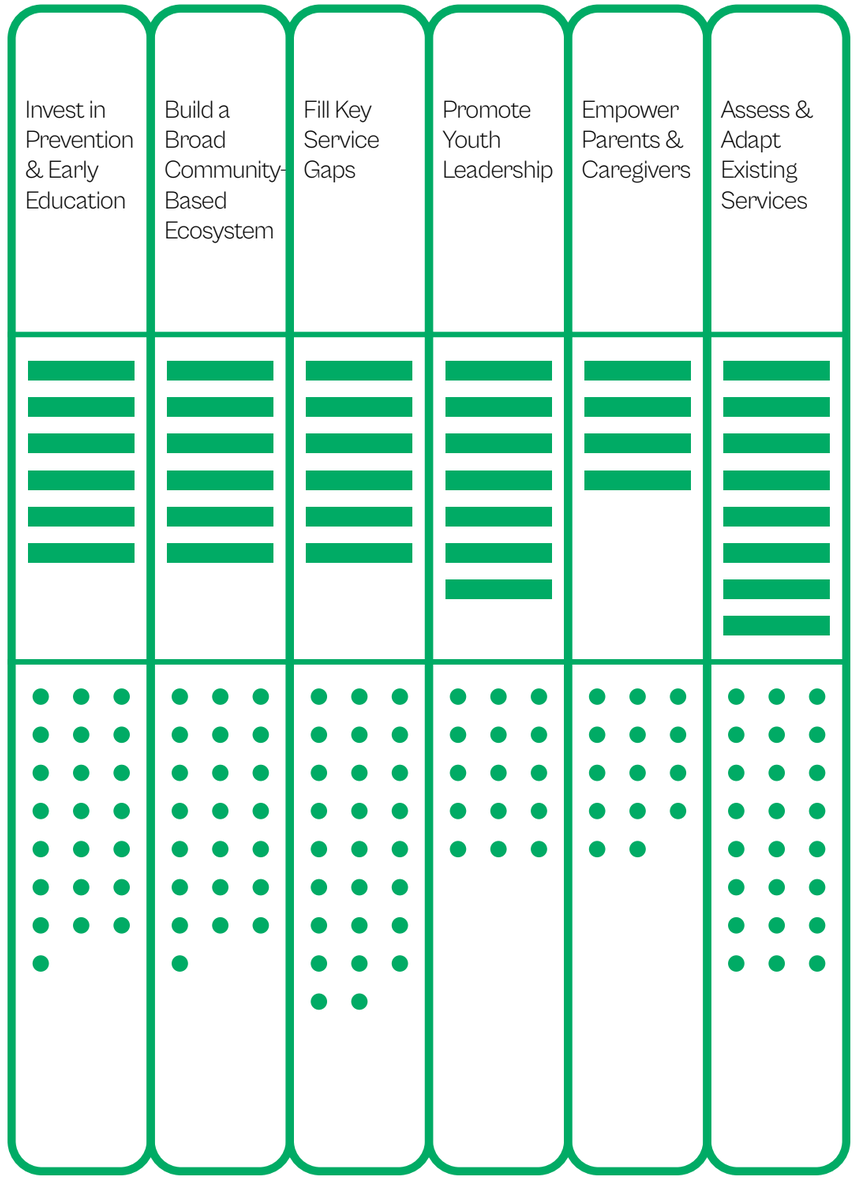
In this section, you will find the nuts and bolts of the plan. It is divided into six priority areas, each targeting a different aspect of the issue. Within each priority area are specific strategies, which are further broken down into critical and tangible actions - making this plan both accessible and achievable.



6
PRIORITY AREAS

38
STRATEGIES

123
ACTIONS



PRIORITY AREA

1

Invest in Prevention & Early Education

Los Angeles County will increase investment in prevention efforts and early education to stop trafficking before it occurs.

PRIORITY AREA

2

Build a Broad and Inclusive Community-Based Service and Support Ecosystem

Los Angeles County will support capacity building of a broad, inclusive, holistic, and community-based service ecosystem to increase service capacity, continuity and accessibility, enabling youth and families to exercise self-determination and meet their needs close to home.

PRIORITY AREA

3

Fill Key Service Gaps: Housing, Mental Health, Health Care, and Substance Use Treatment, Employment Support, and Support for Transition Age Youth

Los Angeles County will support healthy youth development and well-being by filling key service gaps related to housing, health and mental health, substance use treatment, employment support, financial literacy, and other life skills.

PRIORITY AREA

4

Promote Youth Empowerment, Peer Mentorship, and Lived Experience Leadership

Los Angeles County will continue to invest in and support youth empowerment and self-determination, social connectedness, joy, and lived experience leadership across County and community initiatives.

PRIORITY AREA

5

Empower Parents & Caregivers to Support their Children

Los Angeles County will take an intergenerational approach to preventing and addressing exploitation, empowering parents and caregivers whose children are experiencing CSE, as well as supporting expectant and parenting youth (EPY) impacted by CSE.

PRIORITY AREA

6

Assess & Adapt Existing Collaborative, Trauma-Informed Services for System-Impacted Youth

Los Angeles County will continue to evaluate, adapt, and reinvest in collaborative, youth-centered, and effective trauma-informed responses to support youth and families impacted by CSE who are system-impacted.

PRIORITY AREA

1 Invest in Prevention & Early Education

Investing in prevention and early education is a priority because it has the potential to impact a larger number of youth and families, and reduce harm by avoiding trafficking before it happens. Increasing the focus on prevention will minimize some of the vulnerabilities that contribute to trafficking, the trauma of trafficking itself, along with the associated short and long-term harms to physical and mental health, future educational and employment opportunities, and harms to the broader community and County. This strategy area includes both increased and earlier education about CSE, as well as targeted interventions that address the underlying vulnerabilities that lead to trafficking, such as poverty and homelessness.

The Plan's emphasis on prevention is aligned with the national focus on prevention within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (e.g., the National Human Trafficking Prevention Framework, 2024) and the work of the Los Angeles County Prevention and Promotion Systems Governing Committee. This priority area is also in line with the Human Trafficking Prevention Education and Training Act of California, SB 1227, which requires middle and high schools to provide human trafficking prevention education to students.

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Reductions in the number of youth impacted by human trafficking
- Increases in knowledge about human trafficking and other related forms of violence
- Increased collaboration and information sharing across programs
- Increased protective factors among youth

"I hadn't realized there was anything wrong. If you are young and it becomes normalized, it is harder to speak up... If my family had any clue about what I was going through as a kid, they would have done something to help prevent it." Youth

WHY IMPORTANT

BROAD & NUANCED AWARENESS BUILDING

Young people and families in stakeholder listening sessions shared that they were unaware of CSE and trafficking, as it was never discussed with them. They expressed a desire for open conversations about these topics in schools and with support systems, including peers.

SERVICES BEFORE HARM

Serious harm and system involvement often have to occur before services are available. Meeting basic needs and offering support before a crisis are essential to preventing CSE.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Many youth first encountered CSE through social media, which facilitated grooming and normalized the sex trade. Social media can also be an intervention point to counteract negative messages youth receive.

SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION

Schools are crucial sites for expanding awareness and capacity of students, school staff and families to prevent, identify and respond to trafficking.

STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Build Capacity of Schools to Prevent, Identify, and Respond to Child Trafficking
- 1.2 Build Capacity of Community-Based Organizations to Identify and Support Youth Impacted by Trafficking
- 1.3 Increase Targeted Prevention Efforts to High-Risk Youth (including but not limited to child welfare and probation system involved youth, homeless youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and immigrant youth)
- 1.4 Coordinate with County and City Agencies, and Community-Based Programs/Organizations Addressing Poverty, Homelessness, and Community Violence to Elevate Issue of Human Trafficking and Share Resources
- 1.5 Develop Social Media Prevention Strategy
- 1.6 Build Awareness and Capacity to Address Familial Trafficking

"I am here for awareness and letting people know the signs, but we need financial literacy, to build self-confidence, build life skills, teach how to fill out job applications. We need to uplift and empower youth to be self-sufficient. The County doesn't see this as prevention. People want to create a solution to a problem but they don't want to focus on the cause of the problem. If you ignore poverty and lack of equity that factor into the risk, you are not actually tackling the issue."

Lived Experience Expert

Why focus on prevention and early education?

1. A broad & nuanced approach to awareness building is needed and desired

Young people in our stakeholder listening sessions shared that they were unaware of CSE and trafficking, as it was never discussed with them. They expressed a desire for open conversations about these topics in schools and with support systems, including peers. For example, the youth planning committee for the 2024 LA Youth Civic Leadership Academy[1] selected CSEC as one of four topics to focus on. Youth, families, community-based providers and public agencies were all excited about leveraging schools to prevent and address CSE. In 2021, only about five percent of referrals to child protective services for exploitation were from schools (CWS/CMS).

Numerous youth shared that they were introduced to CSE by peers or traffickers while in foster care, unhoused, or in juvenile hall. Youth expressed that a desire for love and connection often led them into CSE, which could often mirror unhealthy relationship

1
This convening included youth leaders from the Olivia E. Mitchell LA City Youth Advisory Council, Los Angeles County Youth Commission, Long Beach Youth Advisory Council, Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development, LAUSD's Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, Youth Source Center Youth Advisory Councils, and Homeless Youth Forum of LA.

dynamics the youth had previously experienced – for example, youth coming from abusive home environments which mirrored the sex industry's power dynamics, or youth experienced with equating material gifts with love due to poverty. Despite its prevalence, for many youth, no trusted adult or mentor had prepared them for confronting such situations. Some youth shared that they were continuing to attend school while being exploited, and were not identified or offered resources by school personnel. One youth stated:

> *"While I was in middle school, being in the lifestyle never stopped. I left school to go be with my trafficker, would go work, and come back. If school staff and teachers were able to see warning signs, if there was a teacher aware of me leaving campus, a lot of stuff could have been prevented. They didn't know what was going on, or what to look for."*

Pervasive misunderstandings and bias about what trafficking is and who it impacts also means that boys, young men, and transgender and non-binary youth are not taught about CSE and associated harms. Biases could also push them into exploitation. One youth shared:

> *"Parents definitely unfairly punish queer and trans youth... A lot of it comes to self-worth or how you are treated. When you aren't getting attention or love, you may seek it somewhere else."*

Stakeholders highlighted the need to include in prevention curricula information that could prevent youth from being victimized and from becoming potential perpetrators – as either traffickers or buyers.

Lastly, further assessment is needed of existing public awareness campaigns. Both youth and families shared that they do not connect to or see themselves in either the language or imagery in existing public awareness efforts, like billboards. They may not consider their own experiences as "CSEC" or "trafficking," and therefore, do not relate to information or services using that language. Additionally, because of the wide linguistic diversity in the County, any future public awareness campaigns and outreach must be tailored to different communities in the languages they speak, and aligned with any relevant County language access plans.

2. Services Before Harm

Many stakeholders shared that trafficking was occurring at seemingly younger and younger ages. Nearly one in five (18 percent) referrals for CSE to child protective services in Los Angeles County in 2022-2023 were for children aged between 9-13 years old (CWS/CMS, 2024) indicating the need for prevention strategies to begin early to avoid harm.

Numerous parents and caregivers shared that they knew something was going wrong with their child (e.g., they started skipping school, hanging out with the wrong crowd) and when they reached out for help, they could not get it. Schools were often the place they went first for help, but they were told by schools that it was normal adolescent behavior or that they could not get any services unless there was system involvement (e.g., child welfare or probation referral). Law enforcement was also frequently not helpful, saying they could not treat the young person as missing if they had "run away" or that they had more pressing cases to focus on. Serious harm had to occur before services were available.

Poverty, homelessness, and unmet basic needs are major drivers of CSE. When asked what could have prevented CSE from occurring, numerous youth noted that they needed a job or a place to live. Youth, families, and service providers agree that providing financial resources and meeting basic needs are crucial to preventing CSE and helping youth avoid returning to it.

3. Social Media

Many youth first encountered CSE through social media, which facilitated grooming and normalized the sex trade. A youth shared:

> *"Social media can be a factor in talking to [exploiters] or being groomed. You are getting your needs met, but these people know that you are vulnerable."*

Queer youth, in particular, noted that social media was often the only place they felt accepted, but that it could also place them in danger and normalize unhealthy relationship and power dynamics. One youth said:

> *"I need somewhere that I can go to to be with other queer people, but that place [Grindr] ends up being hypersexualized."*

Recognizing that youth are frequently using social media, service providers also highlighted social media as an opportunity for education and intervention to counteract negative messages youth were receiving. One service provider noted:

> *"We embrace social media. We share content creators with positive information with youth. If you watched it, I can change your algorithm. The internet is big, let's meet youth where they are."*

4. School-Based and Other Prevention Strategies are Effective

A report by the National Academies Press (2013) recommends increasing awareness and understanding across various sectors, including

education. Educational institutions are seen as crucial in implementing prevention strategies by fostering environments where students can learn about the risks and signs of exploitation. By integrating awareness programs into the school curriculum, educators also play a pivotal role in early identification and prevention (National Academies, 2013).

The Toolkit for Building a Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol (HTSSP), funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has been successfully implemented by school nurses in Oklahoma. This program included community collaboration and training. Findings from the research indicate that the training was successful in increasing awareness and preparedness to identify and respond to human trafficking. Results also highlighted the unique position of school nurses to identify at-risk students and respond early with preventive measures (Peck et al., 2024).

Prevention curricula exist and implementation of these programs has been successful in California already. For example, the PROTECT program, managed by 3Strands Global Foundation, offers a comprehensive approach to human trafficking prevention education for K-12 students and school staff. PROTECT provides age-appropriate curriculum, online training, and resources to help school professionals recognize, respond to, and report human trafficking. The program is implemented in several states, including California, Utah, Texas, Michigan, Ohio, and Georgia, and has trained more than 111,000 adults and 776,000 students to date (3Strands Global). The PROTECT prevention curriculum has been rolled out in four school districts in Los Angeles County, as well as some charter schools, already. Additionally, many CBOs already offer prevention programs in schools, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and other spaces, which can be leveraged and expanded.

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

This priority area aligns with the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, priority areas 1 (Public Awareness/ Outreach Efforts) and 2 (Training), and labor trafficking will be integrated into the strategies outlined here. Additional community engagement and consultation with individuals with lived experience is needed to ensure language and messaging is appropriately adapted to reach youth impacted by labor trafficking.

PRIORITY AREA

1

Invest in Prevention & Early Education

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1.1 Build Capacity of Schools to Prevent, Identify, and Respond to Child Trafficking	○ Develop and implement developmentally-appropriate trafficking prevention education plan for students in elementary, middle and high schools on healthy relationships, identifying grooming and abusive behavior, boundaries, safety planning, seeking help, power and control, health literacy, dynamics that lead to vulnerabilities and resilience/strengths to avoid victimization and perpetrating trafficking. ○ Provide HT Prevention Train the Trainer Curriculum to school counselors, social workers (SW), nurses, teachers, Department of Public Health (DPH) Student Wellbeing Center staff and other educators, community liaison Public Health Nurses, education sector staff, health educators, promotoras and community health care workers. ○ Implement HTSSP, including clarifying referral processes between schools and CBOs when CSE of youth is identified or suspected. ○ Train and leverage Student Wellbeing Centers to be one-stop shops for trafficking-related psycho-education, health and mental health care resources. ○ Expand use of schools to provide education and appropriate service referrals for parents/caregivers. ○ Provide prevention education through schools for parents/caregivers and create opportunities for parents/caregivers and youth to come together for dialogue/discussion. ○ Identify and implement prevention curriculum focused on males and healthy relationships to avoid becoming buyers and traffickers (e.g., I Am Curriculum). ○ Create HT Prevention Bureau of Speakers composed of trained subject matter experts, including peer advocates and parent partners. ○ Create new HT 101 training video for posting on County Learning Net and other virtual spaces for access to on-demand training.
1.2 Build Capacity of Community-Based Organizations to Identify and Support Youth Impacted by Trafficking	○ Provide training to community-based organizations on human trafficking identification, available prevention resources, and how to tailor services to support youth impacted by trafficking. ○ Expand existing community-based prevention curriculum to more youth-serving organizations, FBOs and others.
1.3 Increase Targeted Prevention Efforts to High-Risk Youth (including but not limited to child welfare and probation system involved youth, homeless youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and immigrant youth)	○ Collaborate with community-based organizations serving high-risk youth to offer prevention curriculum. ○ Implement prevention curriculum for all youth upon entry to out-of-home care or detention. ○ Explore integration of trafficking into SW and probation officer training on SB 89 requirements.
1.4 Coordinate with County and City Agencies, and Community-Based Programs/Organizations Addressing Poverty, Homelessness, and Community Violence to Elevate Issue of Human Trafficking and Share Resources	○ Explore collaboration with city agencies addressing poverty and supporting the alleviation of poverty, homelessness, and community violence, including but not limited to the Department of Economic Opportunity, the DPH Office of Violence Prevention, and the LA Homeless Services Authority. ○ Provide training to county and city agencies to increase awareness of trafficking and intersection with poverty, homelessness, and other forms of violence. ○ Explore integration of trafficking-related information and resources with Mandated Supporting Initiative. ○ Explore integration with existing universal basic income (UBI) programs, including LA's Guaranteed Income Program, and consider development of a pilot UBI program for youth and families identified as at risk of or experiencing trafficking.
1.5 Develop Social Media Prevention Strategy	○ Work with Youth Commission, youth and survivor leaders to develop social media strategy focused on prevention of trafficking (e.g., warning signs of trafficking/exploitation). ○ Identify and disseminate existing guidance and training on how to safely use the internet and engage in social networking spaces - for both parents and youth (including federal Trafficking in Persons report).
1.6 Build Awareness and Capacity to Address Familial Trafficking	○ Integrate familial trafficking into prevention curricula. ○ Expand discussion of familial trafficking in Human Trafficking 102, mandated reporter training, and agency policies.

“If school staff and teachers were able to see warning signs, if there was a teacher aware of me leaving campus, a lot of stuff could have been prevented.

They didn’t know what was going on, or what to look for.”

Youth

5%

of referrals to child protective services for exploitation were from schools, in 2021.

18%

of referrals for CSE to child protective services in Los Angeles County were for children aged 9-13, in 2022-2023.

PRIORITY AREA

2 Build a Broad and Inclusive Community-Based Service and Support Ecosystem

The public health approach to trafficking – which includes a shift to addressing trafficking without the requirement of child welfare or juvenile justice system involvement – requires deep investment in supporting youth and family safety and well-being in their communities. This priority area aims to develop and increase access to a broad ecosystem of service providers with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to address the holistic needs of youth and families impacted by or vulnerable to trafficking. The County already invests in, and must continue to invest in, specialized advocacy and housing services, which have provided critical services and long-lasting relationships to thousands of young people (Dierkhising et al., 2020; Newcombe et al., 2020).

Rather than building more specialized services, this priority area focuses on intentional coordination, collaboration, capacity building, and resourcing the many organizations to which youth and families are already connected – some of which the public agencies are currently unaware of. *(Intro continues on p. 62)*

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- A wider range of service options are available to youth and families across the County
- Increased awareness of available services in the community among youth and families
- Increases in access to services and help-seeking among youth and families across the County
- Increases in collaboration between community and public agency partners

"In some ways there are an overwhelming amount of resources, and yet there is also a shortage of resources everywhere." Lived Experience Expert

WHY IMPORTANT	STRATEGIES
BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY Complex systems, referral processes and eligibility requirements limit access to services.	2.1 Identify and Resource Community-based Human Trafficking Liaison Teams by Region/ Service Planning Area to Support Navigation and Networking
STIGMA Stigma around CSE deters people from seeking help. Service exclusion lists mean some youth are precluded from some services altogether.	2.2 Improve Accessibility of Services to all Youth by Streamlining Referral Processes, Funding Services Navigation, and Removing Requirements of System Involvement to be Eligible for Services
CSE-SPECIFIC SERVICES Specialized services have been highly impactful. There is room for growth so they reach more youth.	2.3 Partner with Youth Commission on Development of Resource App and Ensure Trafficking-Specific Resources are Integrated
LIMITS ON SERVICE PROVISION Funding and staffing limitations prevent providers from building rapport and deepening community outreach.	2.4 Expand Outreach to Organizations Serving Youth in Under-Identified Populations to Increase Awareness of Trafficking, Offer Referrals to Trafficking-Specific Organizations, and Support in Adapting Existing Programming to Address Trafficking-Related Needs
CRISIS VS. LONG-TERM STABILIZATION Providers seek more services for emergency stabilization while youth want services before those crises happen.	
TRANSPORTATION Lack of safe and accessible public transportation puts youth in dangerous situations and prevents them from accessing services/support they need and want.	2.5 Provide Youth with Safe and Accessible Transportation
SERVICES FOR UNDER-SERVED POPULATIONS Many youth have been missed. Culturally-appropriate and gender-responsive services will help close gaps.	2.6 Expand No Wrong Door Approach to Services Through Safe Youth Zone
COST-SAVINGS Community-based responses are a huge cost savings to the public, and avoid severe and life-altering harms of system involvement to youth and families.	

Specifically, the Plan calls for the establishment of HT Liaisons, by region. Ideally, the liaisons will have lived experience, and will be a clearinghouse for the resources available in their area, support referrals, and make it easier for youth and families to access those services. The HT Liaisons will also foster collaboration among CBOs and public agencies by bringing them together, sharing resources and information. In addition, to ensure youth and families can access services close to home, through organizations tailored to their individual languages, cultures, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), and other important intersections, the County will support capacity building of those organizations to ensure they are equipped to identify youth experiencing or at risk of trafficking, and adapt their services accordingly. Additionally, the County will partner with organizations to coordinate referrals to HT Liaison or particular services. This will broaden access and break down stigma for youth in traditionally under-identified and underserved populations, including males, LGBTQ+ youth, Native youth, AAPI youth, EPY, immigrant youth, youth with disabilities and neurodivergent youth, youth impacted by labor trafficking, and others.

Lastly, the County will take steps to break down barriers to accessibility of these services to ensure the service eligibility requirements are easily navigable. This includes expansion of the Safe Youth Zone (SYZ) initiative, which supports youth in accessing services within their communities and from a broader range of public agencies (including education, health, mental health, and public health, among others) and CBOs collaboratively. This also includes development of safe transportation support to ensure youth are not put in further harm's way and can access the rich network of services already available.

Why focus on building a community-based ecosystem?

1. Barriers to Accessibility

Despite many available services for youth and families in Los Angeles County, accessibility remains a significant barrier. Families and youth in the listening sessions noted that navigating public systems is complicated, public agencies are often unaware of or disconnected from community-based providers, and programs and services have confusing referral processes, documentation requirements, and eligibility criteria. Youth and families are often handed a long, unvetted list of services without any understanding of what would be most relevant to them, nor what they qualify for. These accessibility barriers are particularly challenging for youth with disabilities; English language learners; immigrants, especially undocumented and/or unaccompanied minors; and those with unstable living conditions and a lack of connection to trusting adults who can help them.

Youth and families, frequently overwhelmed with services and appointments, prefer to receive help close to home from familiar places and from people with whom they are already connected. Many of these CBOs offer a variety of services under one roof, provide support to meet basic needs (such as food, free clothing, diapers and wipes), and offer activities, support groups, and vetted referrals and relationships with other organizations. Who provides these services and how they are provided make it easier for youth and families to connect. Staff at these organizations are non-judgmental, and are often from the same communities and may even have had similar experiences. Services are offered in numerous languages and are culturally responsive.

2. Stigma

Many stakeholders shared that stigma around CSE deters people from seeking help, as parents are blamed and kids are labeled as promiscuous or "bad."

"I struggled early on with people giving referrals and none of them were relevant to me.

Do you even know my name? Do you know anything about me? When you need support and help, you need people who are going to show up.

[That's why now] I always vet resources before I give them out."

Advocate & Lived Experience Expert

Fear of system involvement if they come forward, such as arrest, juvenile or criminal records, child welfare surveillance, family separation, and deportation, also prevents youth and families from accessing services. Moreover, within families and communities there can be a taboo around communicating about sex generally, which may further stigmatize young people and families who are impacted.

Additionally, stakeholders shared that some agencies – including health and mental health care providers and emergency shelters – have lists of youth they will not serve because they perceive the youth as violent or express that they are unable to meet the youth's needs. These service exclusion lists prevent youth identified as having experienced CSE from accessing needed services.

3. CSE-Specific Services

The County's investment in specialized advocacy services, particularly those from Saving Innocence and ZOE International, has been highly impactful. Youth reported feeling cared for and safe, getting their needs met, and appreciated being connected to others with shared experiences. One youth shared:

"Living there was something I needed. We got everything we needed. It felt like being somebody's favorite step child. I feel like that right there really helped me heal."

These services, however, have primarily supported cisgender girls, with small numbers of transgender, non-binary, and male youth receiving services.

In contrast to the specialized services, many CBOs serving youth at risk of or experiencing trafficking do not see themselves as "CSEC providers." Consequently, they may be unaware they are already serving youth affected by or at risk of trafficking, and some providers shared that their staff lack the knowledge and skills to identify youth, tailor their services to this group, or refer them to specialized providers.

4. Limits on Service Provision and Relationship Building

Strict contract requirements and funding limitations, particularly those requiring referrals from DCFS and Probation to provide services, restrict providers from serving the broader community and under-identified populations, limiting their resources and time for non-system-impacted youth. For example, agencies with Prevention & Aftercare contracts through DCFS reported that they receive so many referrals from DCFS that 90 percent or more

of their services were being provided to youth and families with DCFS referrals, limiting their resources and time for doing community outreach and serving walk-in clients.
All stakeholders emphasize the importance of relationship building for healing from trafficking. However, high staff turnover, high caseloads, and confusing funding structures, including uncertainty around the ability to bill for initial outreach, hinder providers from spending the necessary time doing outreach and building rapport with youth. Youth share that they can tell when someone is "just there for a paycheck," rather than genuinely trying to build a relationship and support them, and this often impacts their willingness to engage in services.

5. Crisis vs. Long-Term Stabilization

Many providers noted the need for emergency or crisis services, and reported that because they were often interacting with youth in crisis moments, it could be difficult to move into longer-term goal-setting and treatment. Conversely, youth reported that they've asked for help before a crisis, but only received assistance once a crisis takes place. They note that their concerns, like ill-equipped or poorly matched placements or unmet mental health needs, are often ignored if the youth appears to be doing well or until the situation becomes dire. For example, a youth asked to be moved from a group home where they were being

"You had to look broken to be taken seriously at times. If you take care of yourself, then people don't believe you aren't doing well."

Youth

"They tend to live in a crisis driven space. From one day to the next things can drastically change. The need for immediate resources is crucial - if you don't have any immediate resources, it gets really bad and they will go with survival."

Service Provider

mistreated, but the request was ignored until the youth ran away, which triggered a crisis response. In addition to this escalating the situation and unnecessarily putting the youth in harm's way, this often leads to punishment or further judgment of the young person.

6. Transportation

Lack of safe and accessible public transportation puts youth at additional risk of exploitative or dangerous situations, and prevents them from accessing services and supports that they need and want. Youth shared that public transportation can be "very scary," with people targeting youth who look vulnerable. One youth shared:

> *"I have been turned away from the bus because I didn't have change, trying to leave the blade. I had no way to get around, especially being a minor."*

7. Services for Under-Identified and Under-Served Populations

Many stakeholders shared that we are missing youth impacted by trafficking, and that there are gaps in services for under-identified and under-served populations, including LGBTQ+ youth, males, Native youth, AAPI youth, immigrant youth, EPY, youth experiencing familial trafficking, youth with disabilities and neurodivergent youth, and youth experiencing labor trafficking. Language and cultural differences, such as attitudes about sex, views about power and control within families, and widespread stigma often mean that trafficking is either not known about or is not discussed; it also means that services must be adapted to both better identify youth and offer culturally-appropriate and gender-responsive services.

Many youth (particularly males and LGBTQ+ youth) do not identify with the "CSEC" label, even if they have experiences that fall under the legal definition of human trafficking, and therefore do not seek help. Some youth use the term "sex work" and do not view involvement in the commercial sex industry as victimization of any kind, while also viewing it as the only way to meet their needs. Law enforcement and some service providers have noted they are less likely to do outreach to these youth who are viewed as "being out there on their own" and not viewed as trafficking victims.

8. Cost-Savings of Community-Based Responses

In addition to preventing severe and life-altering harm for youth and families that system involvement can cause, investing in community-based resources has the potential for tremendous savings of resources.

The economic toll of child abuse and neglect in California, including CSE, has been estimated at $16.5 billion in 2023 (Safe and Sound, 2024) and the economic toll of child sexual abuse, including CSE, has been estimated at $9.3 billion in the U.S. in 2015 (Letourneau et al., 2023). In addition, the average annual cost of youth incarceration in California in 2020, was approximately $300,000 per youth (Justice Policy Institute, 2020).

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

This priority area aligns with the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, priority area 6 (Service Provision) and priority area 8 (Collaboration). The precise barriers and solutions to address accessibility, organizations to be included in outreach efforts and partnerships, and youth and family experiences with services may be different for youth impacted by labor trafficking. Additional community engagement and consultation with individuals with lived experience is needed to flesh out how these strategies apply or must be adapted to serve youth impacted by labor trafficking.

PRIORITY AREA

2

Build a Broad Community-Based Ecosystem

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
2.1 Identify and Resource Community-Based Human Trafficking Liaison Teams by Region/ Service Planning Area to Support Navigation and Networking	○ Conduct resource mapping across all regions for services for children, youth and families. ○ Create a forum for all regional HT liaisons to meet regularly to share resources and lessons learned. ○ Identify and support a network of community providers within each region. ○ Coordinate Community Partnership/Alliance (including CBOs, public agencies, and individuals with lived experience) to meet regularly, share resources, best practices, and changes to laws and policies. ○ Support youth and families in accessing relevant services and system navigation.
2.2 Improve Accessibility of Services to all Youth by Streamlining Referral Processes, Funding Services Navigation, and Removing Requirements of System Involvement to be Eligible for Services	○ Invest in peer service navigators for youth and families. ○ Explore opportunities for revising referral structures in County contracts to enable peer and community referrals without requirement of system involvement. ○ Conduct outreach to agencies/organizations that have instituted service exclusion lists to understand reasoning, provide education, and address underlying issues. ○ Coordinate with existing County hotlines (including 988 and 211) to ensure child trafficking resources are available and disseminate hotline information to youth.
2.3 Partner with Youth Commission on Development of Resource App and Ensure Trafficking-Specific Resources are Integrated	○ Review and update existing resource compilations for inclusion of necessary information and accessibility (“Know Before You Go” app; One Degree; ILP. online; Child Trafficking Resource Guide). ○ Collaborate with Youth Commission and other youth leaders to ensure information is youth-friendly and accessible.
2.4 Expand Outreach to Organizations Serving Youth in Under-Identified Populations to Increase Awareness of Trafficking, Offer Referrals to Trafficking-Specific Organizations, and Support in Adapting Existing Programming to Address Trafficking-Related Needs	○ Develop relationships with organizations serving youth in under-identified populations and support in adapting existing programming to address trafficking-related needs. ○ Offer trainings on specific intersections of trafficking with under-identified populations. ○ Adapt existing policy, trainings, and materials to include inclusive language and imagery. ○ Expand contracts with CBOs to ensure services are tailored to under-identified populations.
2.5 Provide Youth with Safe and Accessible Transportation	○ Assess cost, impact and opportunity of expanding existing County contracts with child-specific transportation services. ○ Provide flexible funding to CBOs for youth transportation in County advocacy, mental health, prevention & aftercare, diversion, reentry, and other contracts. ○ Support Transition Age Youth (TAY) in obtaining drivers’ licenses and provide guidance in the car leasing/purchasing process. ○ Explore collaboration with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, rideshare companies, and other transportation providers to provide training to employees and identify opportunities for increasing youth safety on public transportation.
2.6 Expand No Wrong Door Approach to Services Through Safe Youth Zone	○ Extend network of participants in SYZ protocol to additional county agencies, hospitals and clinics, schools, FBOs, and CBOs. ○ Create and disseminate signage and quick reference guides for participating organizations and youth. ○ Establish SYZ protocol for non-crisis/emergency support.

“Living there was something I needed. We got everything we needed. It felt like being somebody’s favorite step child.

I feel like that right there really helped me heal.”

Youth
describing the ZOE International Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP)

2/3
of youth referred to child protective services for CSE in California were living at home at the time and had no prior out-of-home care history.

PRIORITY AREA

3 Fill Key Service Gaps: Housing, Mental Health, Health Care, Substance Use Treatment, Employment Support, and Support for Transition Age Youth

In addition to expanding the network of services available through development of the service ecosystem, the County will also expand the breadth and types of services and supports available to young people to support healthy youth development and well-being. Specifically, this priority area emphasizes capacity building and increased access to the service areas that youth and families asked for, where there are noted gaps, and which have been identified as priorities through from past advocacy and research – housing, physical and mental health care and substance use treatment, education, employment, life skills and financial support and literacy, and peer support. When left unaddressed, these needs are some of the key push factors into exploitation. These gaps are especially noteworthy for TAY, who face additional barriers in the types and accessibility of services, as well as increased potential harms if their needs are not met, including criminal penalties for survival activities, such as involvement in the commercial sex industry and other forced criminality. In each of these areas, peer support should be integrated (as described more in priority area 4).

Because several of these areas have been identified as priorities for numerous years, this Plan calls for concrete steps and investment to address them now. *(Intro continues on p. 74)*

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Improvements in overall physical and psychological well-being among youth, including decreases in substance use
- Increases in youth employment
- Increases in housing stability

"Safe placements are such an issue . . . Youth want to do better and get better and can't get out of these situations. We tell them 'this is all there is for you.'"

Advocate & Lived Experience Expert

WHY IMPORTANT	STRATEGIES
HOUSING Homelessness and housing instability for youth and families across the board and lack of placements for youth in out-of-home care and coming out of detention, remain major challenges for youth impacted by CSE.	3.1 Increase Availability of Financial Literacy, Job Readiness, Life Skills, and Educational Support and Advocacy
HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, & SUBSTANCE USE Youth impacted by CSE often have greater physical and mental health needs, including substance use, than peers. Trauma-informed, non-judgmental care is essential.	3.2 Increase Availability of Trauma-Informed Mental Health Care and Substance Use Treatment
TRANSITIONING TO INDEPENDENT LIVING Transition age youth often fall through service gaps, being deemed ineligible for benefits and facing months-long waits for assistance, leading to acute housing and food insecurity that can drive them into or back to CSE for survival.	3.3 Increase Availability of Trauma-Informed Health Care 3.4 Expand Access to a Continuum of Community-based, Trauma-Informed Housing Options 3.5 Increase Targeted Supports for Transition Age Youth 3.6 Utilize Flexible Funding to Quickly Address Youth and Family Economic and Concrete Needs

This does not mean building new, trafficking-specific services across all of these areas. Rather, it calls for working within the community-based ecosystem to address these longstanding and long-understood needs, exploring and utilizing new and innovative approaches to support youth and families within their communities and without stigma. Investment in these areas is essential for both prevention into CSE and supporting youth and families to exit and stay out of exploitation.

Why is filling key service gaps important?

1. Housing

All stakeholders highlighted that homelessness and housing instability for youth and families across the board and lack of placements for youth in out-of-home care and coming out of detention, remain major challenges for youth impacted by CSE. Youth with histories of CSE are more likely to experience housing instability, which in-turn increases their risk for ongoing CSE along with other adverse outcomes (Dierkhising et al., 2022; Dierkhising et al., 2020). Youth in Los Angeles County who experience CSE and out-of-home care often live in group homes which are also the type of living situation they are more likely to leave without permission (Dierkhising et al., 2022).

Both youth and professionals emphasized the need for a range of housing options – both short- term emergency housing for stabilization, and longer-term housing that fosters independence and self-sufficiency. Because of difficulties in accessing safe housing in communities, stakeholders shared that some parents and youth even request that the young person come back into care at 17 and a half years old, even if they had previously returned home, thinking they will get more support within the system; instead they end up homeless due to a lack of housing for this population. One advocate and lived experience expert reflected on the lack of placement and shelter options, noting what DCFS and advocacy agencies have had to resort to when no other housing was available for young people:

> *"Safe placements are such an issue. The few that there are in the County are right on the blade on Fig. Youth want to do better and get better and can't get out of these situations. We tell them 'this is all there is for you.' They are right along the area we should be protecting you from. We have watched DCFS put youth in motels . . . they are being placed in the very spaces they have been exploited and trafficked in."*

Youth have recommended several ways to improve these housing options to improve safety and stability – including having non-judgmental and well-trained staff, activities that youth are interested in, and having youth participate in designing programs (see, e.g., Dierkhising & Ackerman-Brimberg, 2020).

Service providers also highlight the ubiquity of housing instability among clients who are expectant and parenting. Providers for these youth reported that nearly all of their clients face housing instability, exacerbated by the lack of housing options for parenting youth, particularly those with multiple children or wanting to live with their partners.

2. Health, Mental Health, & Substance Use

Stakeholders have observed an increase in substance use among youth affected by CSE, both in numbers impacted and lethality. Because of the severe levels of trauma many youth have experienced, both before and because of their trafficking, youth who experience CSE often have greater mental health needs, including substance abuse, compared to their counterparts (Cole et al., 2016). Substances may be what leads a young person into exploitation – trading sex to obtain drugs. Substances may be something youth use to cope with their trauma and violence of

> *"A lot of group homes and foster homes are not accepting of youth that are transitioning [out of exploitation]. They don't understand that process. They don't understand that youth need rest. For the first week, they don't want to do anything. I liked this program because its services were a one stop shop for everything. The biggest thing is housing. They were able to immediately house me. Then they can help you branch out and get referrals to other organizations - mental health services, basic needs like toiletries and clothing."*
>
> Lived Experience Expert

exploitation. And substances may also be used by traffickers and purchasers to control and manipulate young people. The differences in why a youth is using is integral in determining what the response ought to be.

Mental health providers emphasized the need for both emergency inpatient and ongoing outpatient mental health and substance use treatments. Youth and professionals both shared that many youth do not wish to or are not ready to engage in talk therapy, and that a broader range of trauma-informed services and non-western healing modalities must be available, like arts and movement-based healing.

Additionally, significant barriers exist to treatment, such as lack of training on rapport-building with those experiencing CSE, limited cultural awareness, and challenges with engaging youth and families in treatment (Feldwisch et al., 2024). While some community-based providers in Los Angeles are trained in trauma-informed practices, many shared that they have difficulty actually implementing such practices, and lack specific training on how they apply to youth experiencing CSE, and especially those experiencing familial trafficking. Confirming what stakeholders shared, research is clear that continuity of care is needed to improve engagement, rapport, and successful outcomes (Dierkhising et al., 2018; Feldwisch et al., 2024). However, continuity of providers also remains a challenge in Los Angeles County, with youth getting new clinicians each time they are put in a new placement or as they cycle between detention and the community. One youth shared:

> *"I've had a million therapists and I'm tired of retelling my story."*

Youth and public agency staff noted that receiving adequate health care can also be a challenge. Youth are forced to wait hours to receive CSE health screenings, or are being rejected from health clinics and are being sent to emergency rooms because health care staff is unwilling or ill-equipped to address their needs or behaviors. Other youth report they face judgmental and derogatory language from health care staff when they seek care. Additionally, youth identified through FRP, which explicitly includes health screenings as part of the collaborative process, have low rates of accessing physical health care, especially those who return to their families.

3. Transitioning to Independent Living

Data from the DCFS DREAM Unit indicate that of youth who were 18 and over and exiting care in 2023, 29.5 percent had completed high school or received a GED, 11.4 percent were attending college, 27.2 percent were working full or part time, 59.1 percent had at least one connection to a committed, caring adult, and 77.2 percent had housing (DCFS DREAM Program case reviews). These transition age youth often fall through service gaps, being deemed ineligible for benefits and facing months-long waits for assistance, leading to acute housing and food insecurity that can drive them into or back to CSE to survive. One youth shared that they were told by their current social worker that when they turned 18, they would lose all support. That youth had been waiting months for food stamps, and did not know how they were going to eat that night. A social worker explained:

> *"We have a lot of 18 year olds who are homeless or on the road to being homeless."*

Another SW described the cycle of instability and re-traumatization that can occur without support:

> *"In the AB 12 unit, if there is one offense that occurs that is not a huge safety issue, instead of working with the youth and trying to preserve the placement or housing, they are being asked to immediately leave programs. This is re-traumatizing youth because these professionals and providers who are supposed to be aware [of CSE and trauma-informed care] are telling them that they are not wanted."*

Ongoing criminalization is also common among TAY if adequate support is not provided. Data from Los Angeles' FRP indicates that one in three youth identified through the FRP went on to be arrested for prostitution after turning 18 (See Newcombe et al., 2020).

To better support the transition to adulthood, youth and families emphasized the need to directly address poverty and financial instability contributing to CSE. Specifically, youth and families asked for direct financial aid, financial literacy, educational advocacy, internships, and employment support, including in the arts and entrepreneurship, beyond just the trades. Older youth described independent living classes that they liked and found useful, such as cooking, financial literacy, and healthy relationships, but shared that many classes that were once offered are no longer available.

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

This priority area aligns with the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, priority area 6 (Service Provision). Additional community engagement and consultation with individuals with lived experience is necessary to identify the specific service needs, gaps, and best practices for youth and families impacted by labor trafficking.

PRIORITY AREA

3

Fill Key Service Gaps

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
3.1 Increase Availability of Financial Literacy, Job Readiness, Life Skills, and Educational Support and Advocacy	○ Clarify referral processes and increase referrals to existing programs, and identify additional programs providing financial literacy, job readiness, internships and mentorships, life skills, employment services, and educational/support and advocacy. ○ Ensure all County youth-serving organizations are familiar with programs, including "Level Up", that offer funding for recreation/therapeutic interventions and transportation for youth in foster care. ○ Explore collaboration with community colleges to increase awareness about trafficking and facilitate referrals of students to all appropriate services and support.
3.2 Increase Availability of Trauma-Informed Mental Health Care and Substance Use Treatment	○ Invest in continuity of care model through the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to ensure youth are connected to trauma-informed providers regardless of the youth's location. ○ Increase the number of beds and locations where youth treatment is offered to address acute and ongoing substance use issues. ○ Connect DPH/Department of Health Services (DHS) substance use educators and other county funded youth-focused substance use programs to youth serving programs in the community. ○ Increase and/or clarify funding processes to increase availability of non-western, holistic, integrated, alternative and complementary modalities of healing (including but not limited to leveraging recent changes through the Medi-Cal Transformation). ○ Provide training to mental health and health care providers on CSEC-specific adaptations to treatment modalities.
	○ Provide technical assistance to providers with national experts through National Center on Child Trafficking and others on implementation of Trauma-informed Care (TIC) and CSEC-specific and other adaptations to treatment modalities. ○ Identify a Substance Abuse Provider to attend DREAM and STAR Court multidisciplinary team meetings. ○ Provide consultation, support, and training by DMH CSEC Division clinicians to community-based mental health providers on creative, trauma-informed methods of working with youth beyond traditional treatment settings.
3.3 Increase Availability of Trauma-Informed Health Care	○ Require discipline-specific training for all medical staff at Medical Hub Clinics, community clinics, hospitals, mental health providers, 988 and 211 staff, DPH nurses and health educators on trauma-informed language, health care practices, and trafficking identification and response. ○ Develop and implement identification protocols within DMH, DHS, and DPH with clear referral processes when youth impacted by CSE is identified. ○ Explore development of on-call medical consultation with a child trafficking medical specialist to be available 24 hours per day.
3.4 Expand Access to a Continuum of Community-based, Trauma-Informed Housing Options	○ Collaborate with community-based housing providers and philanthropic organizations to support development and implementation of continuum of specialized housing options for youth impacted by CSE, as set forth in 2020 Research to Action Brief. ○ Require comprehensive staff training and supports at all levels of out-of-home care staff, as set forth in 2020 Research to Action Brief. ○ Collaborate and provide targeted training with emergency shelter providers to ensure staff have capacity to support youth impacted by CSE. ○ Support development of youth drop-in center in the City of Los Angeles.

3.5 Increase Targeted Supports for Transition Age Youth

- Ensure all TAY are connected with Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Linkages staff and are enrolled in public benefits, as appropriate (e.g., CalFresh, Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation) before transition.
- Provide all TAY with information and appropriate referrals to relevant CBO, including human trafficking-specific organizations.
- Partner with peer mentor/advocate programs to offer presentations and guidance to TAY on available resources and programs.
- Host fun and engaging Independent Living Program orientation events with youth, planned in collaboration with youth leaders and CBOs.
- Work with community-based and philanthropic organizations to expand access to a continuum of community-based, trauma-informed housing options.
- Expand Advocacy Services contracts to include a curriculum and a toolkit to support youth in acquiring self-sufficiency skills.

3.6 Utilize Flexible Funding to Quickly Address Youth and Family Economic and Concrete Needs

- Explore feasibility of expanding availability of Restoration Funds to any youth impacted by CSE, regardless of system involvement.
- Identify, implement, and train on new funding available for youth strength building activities and immediate needs through 2024 California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Tiered Rate Structure.



“My daughter turned 18 a week ago. When they close the case, she is basically homeless. There was no plan. There are financial literacy classes and job placement, but they have been

talking about that for 6 months and none of that happened.”

Parent

70.5%
of youth exiting care in 2023, from the DREAM Unit have not completed high school or received a GED.

40.9%
of youth exiting care in 2023, from the DREAM Unit do not have a connection to any committed, caring adult.

PRIORITY AREA

4 Promote Youth Empowerment, Peer Mentorship, and Lived Experience Leadership

Some of the County's most impactful programming and investments to date are the survivor and peer-led mentorship services provided through the contracted advocacy agencies, the annual and monthly youth empowerment events, and participation of individuals with lived experience in development of the County's policies and practices. This Plan calls for expansion of these initiatives, as well as deeper investment in peer-to-peer models of prevention and support services – which includes professional development of youth leaders to effectively serve their peers.

The impact of these investments is exponential – supporting healing through relationships and leadership development, skills building and community power shifting that goes far beyond an individual. Centering youth and lived experience expertise in both individual level decisions and systemic change plays an important role in restoring the power that may have been lost through exploitation, and supporting youth to lead self-determined lives. Lived expertise must also be integrated into all policy and practice changes to ensure they are driven by community needs and will have the desired impact. *(Intro continues on p. 86)*

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Increased participation youth & survivors in policy/practice change
- Increased resources to support youth & survivor participation
- Increased social capital among individuals with lived experience
- Youth and survivors regularly provide feedback to the County in a systematic way
- Youth develop positive relationships with peers & adults

"We need more one-on-one mentorship for survivors. Different people have different talents and specialties. Youth can be matched with other peer leaders that want to learn about those things." Lived Experience Expert

WHY IMPORTANT

RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY BUILDING

Youth and parents/caregivers universally report that connections with individuals who have shared lived experiences, such as survivors or peer mentors, are often the most transformative relationships they encounter.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT EVENTS

Service providers and youth overwhelmingly appreciate the empowerment events hosted by the County.

YOUTH & FAMILY VOICE IN CURRENT STRUCTURES

Youth and families want more empowering spaces for their voices to be heard.

STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Fund and Expand Youth Empowerment Programs and Events
- 4.2 Invest in Youth Leaders to Plan and Carry Out Peer-To-Peer Outreach, Events and Training Efforts
- 4.3 Expand Availability of Peer and Survivor Advocates, Mentors, and Navigators to all CSE-Impacted Youth, Regardless of System Involvement
- 4.4 Collaborate with the Youth Commission
- 4.5 Explore Program Models to Foster Multi-Generational Connections Between Elders and Young People, Movement Building and Mentorship
- 4.6 Hire Survivors/Lived experience Experts in Critical Roles, Including Direct Service, Supervision, and Leadership
- 4.7 Consult with Lived Experience Experts in all County Program, Curriculum, and Policy Development, Including Implementation of Strategic Plan

Investing in the leadership of lived experience expertise aligns with broader County priorities such as the Youth Commission, and investment in credible messenger programs.

Why is youth empowerment and lived experience leadership important?

1. Relationships & Community Building

Youth and parents/caregivers universally report that connections with individuals who have shared lived experiences, such as survivors or peer mentors, are often the most transformative relationships they encounter. Emotional support and connections with peers can be just as crucial to success outside of exploitation as access to concrete resources like housing, food, and financial security. Youth overwhelmingly report positive experiences with the specialized community-based advocates, with 81 percent of surveyed youth reporting advocacy services as helpful (Dierkhising et al., 2020). However, there are a limited number of organizations that are contracted to provide advocacy services and they are limited to providing services to youth with a referral from DCFS or Probation. This makes it difficult to reach the broader spectrum of youth from both eligibility and capacity standpoints. Additionally, recent changes in the contracted providers for community-based advocacy services has interrupted continuity in services for young people, and required significant training and onboarding.

Service providers and youth alike praised numerous existing community-based programs and organizations led by individuals with lived experience, and/or offering peer-based models for promoting leadership, education, and employment. Several noted that they had limited capacity to serve large numbers of youth due to funding and staffing shortages, but had the potential and desire to expand their impact to more young people if additional resources were available.

2. Youth Empowerment Events

Service providers and youth overwhelmingly appreciate the empowerment events hosted by the County. Youth enjoy connecting with other survivors, spending time in nature, expressing themselves through art, dance, music, and building relationships with positive adults and peers. These events provide fun and positive experiences that help them reconnect with

their inner child and experience life beyond their trauma, supporting their growth and healing.

3. Youth and Family Voice in Current Structures

Youth and families often feel that their voices are not valued or considered in many public system spaces. Existing structures, such as Child and Family Teams, intended to involve them in decision-making, often are not working as intended, leading to low participation rates. Youth have reported feeling ganged up on, or that all of the pressure was on them to comply with requirements, while public agency partners did not uphold their obligations. Youth and families possess vital information about safe places and resources that could be transformative, but these are often overlooked because they are not seen as partners in case planning, or their input is dismissed. When advocates are present or youth are properly prepared; however, these spaces can feel empowering and generative.

Lived experience experts highlighted that all County efforts to further integrate individuals with lived experience must be done ethically, thoughtfully and with proper support (mental health, emotional, financial, and professional development), so as not to cause additional harm to both the experts themselves and youth they may be working with. Youth and adults with lived experience expressed having both positive and negative experiences in contributing to practice and policy change in the County – youth shared that they appreciate listening sessions and the opportunity to speak on panels to ensure their voices are considered; others noted that they had been tokenized, or that their feedback had been ignored.

Scholars, survivors, and the U.S. federal government all agree that survivors of human trafficking are critical to the anti-trafficking movement and that there must be opportunities for lived experience leadership beyond the telling of their stories (Lockyer, 2020; Palmer, 2023). Those impacted by human trafficking are crucial in ensuring that programs, practices, and policies are victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally competent.

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

This Priority Area aligns, in part, with the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, Priority Area 9 (Lived Expertise/Partnership with Survivor Leaders). Additional work is needed to build out peer mentorship, youth empowerment, and integration of lived experience expertise in County efforts related to labor trafficking.

PRIORITY AREA

4

Promote Youth Leadership

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
4.1 Fund and Expand Youth Empowerment Programs and Events	○ Collaborate with and/or fund CBOs and/or youth leaders to plan and host empowerment events. ○ Expand outreach for youth empowerment events to under-identified and under-served populations. ○ Expand empowerment events to include parents/caregivers and siblings.
4.2 Invest in Youth Leaders to Plan and Carry Out Peer-To-Peer Outreach, Events and Training Efforts	○ Identify and coordinate with existing youth/peer leadership and mentorship programs. ○ Identify youth leaders and community partners to participate in HT Speakers Bureau. ○ Use train-the-trainer model, with ongoing professional development to train and support youth leaders to carry out peer-to-peer outreach, prevention and intervention curricula.
4.3 Expand Availability of Peer and Survivor Advocates, Mentors, and Navigators to all CSE-Impacted Youth, Regardless of System Involvement	○ Explore feasibility of expanding contracts for peer and survivor advocates and mentors to permit community and peer referrals. ○ Train and support Peer Support Specialists through DMH to provide support to youth impacted by CSE.
4.4 Collaborate with the Youth Commission	○ Collaborate with Youth Commissioners to ensure that Youth Commission initiatives take into account needs of youth impacted by trafficking. ○ Integrate Youth Commissioners into County trafficking initiatives as appropriate.
4.5 Explore Program Models to Foster Multi-Generational Connections Between Elders and Young People, Movement Building and Mentorship	○ Explore existing program models (ex. Homeboy Industries) and identify opportunities for collaboration or program development.
4.6 Hire Survivors/ Lived Experience Experts in Critical Roles, Including Direct Service, Supervision, and Leadership	○ Evaluate and address barriers to hiring individuals with lived experience in the county and county-contracted positions. ○ Determine appropriate pay structures given expertise levels, and identify opportunities for ongoing professional development and advancement.
4.7 Consult with Lived Experience Experts in all County Program, Curriculum, and Policy Development, Including Implementation of Strategic Plan	○ Identify examples and/or develop and implement protocol for ethical practices for hiring and collaborating with individuals with lived experience. ○ Identify and support lived experience experts to participate in CTLT and HT Alliance.

“I got a survivor advocate. Me and her literally had the same exact story, so we connected. She used to always tell me, you remind me of little me.

The advocacy program helped me a lot because they knew who I was.”

Youth

All

stakeholders agree that there must be lived experience leadership and peer support programs.

81%

of youth surveyed found specialized CSE advocacy services to be helpful.

PRIORITY AREA

5 Empower Parents & Caregivers to Support Their Children

Trafficking affects entire families and communities, yet efforts often focus solely on youth, overlooking the family unit's role. Parents and caregivers are crucial resources in prevention and intervention but typically lack awareness until it impacts their family directly. Discrimination worsens the situation, with Black and Brown families facing judgment when their child is experiencing trafficking, while White families receive praise for supporting and seeking out help for their children. In addition, little attention has been paid to navigating the complex family dynamics in cases of familial trafficking including decisions about family separation when abuse occurs. Familial trafficking often involves blame and stigma without addressing factors like intergenerational trauma, poverty, substance dependence, intimate partner violence, and other contributing factors. Many youth impacted by CSE are also expectant or young parents themselves and face incredible difficulty in getting their families' needs met, particularly when still experiencing violence.

(Intro continues on p. 94)

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Reductions in system involvement for families impacted by CSE
- Increased access and availability of services and programs for parents (including EPY)
- Improvements in child health and development
- Increases in healing from intergenerational and historical trauma, including familial trafficking

"The information was so powerful. My daughter was missing, and so much was going on. Everytime after the class, I had a plan."

Parent, describing Parent Empowerment Program

WHY IMPORTANT	STRATEGIES
CAREGIVER SUPPORT IS NEEDED Parents lack information and resources to support their children. Programs we already have are working well and can be expanded. **OVERREPRESENTATION OF EPY** Programs and supports for expectant and parenting youth can support healing and break intergenerational cycles.	5.1 Expand Parent Empowerment Program 5.2 Expand Access to Real-Time Coaching and Technical Assistance for Parents/Caregivers 5.3 Increase Direct Concrete Support to Parents 5.4 Increase Supports to Expectant and Parenting Young People Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation

This priority area aims to build on the strengths and power of parents and caregivers to prevent exploitation and support healing by equipping them with informational, emotional, and material resources to meet basic needs (such as money, diapers, and food). LA has already initiated support through the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) and parent partners. This plan calls for expanding these programs and increasing support for EPY to ensure a family-centered, intergenerational approach.

Why is empowering parents and caregivers important?

1. Parents and Caregivers of Youth Experiencing CSE Need Information and Support

Parents and caregivers shared that they initially knew very little about CSE when they noticed concerning behaviors in their children. They found law enforcement and schools unhelpful, as these institutions often dismissed such behaviors as typical adolescent behavior or said they could not help if the youth was a "runaway."

Parents and professionals shared that if families are struggling to meet basic needs, it can be difficult to provide their children with the attention, care and support necessary to avoid and/or heal from exploitation. They noted that material support to parents and caregivers to help them meet basic needs is essential, including financial assistance, food, diapers, housing, transportation, and hygiene products. Many stakeholders shared experiences of parents asking for their children to be placed into foster care or incarcerated because they felt unable to meet their needs or keep them safe. Providing direct financial support to a family member to secure a larger apartment can be the difference between a youth going into foster care and being able to stay with family in a familiar community.

Parents have responded positively to the PEP offered by CBOs and the DMH, valuing the education, communication strategies, and community it provides. One parent shared:

> *"So much was going on. Every time after the class [PEP], I had a plan."*

Another said:

> *"When all of this started with my daughter, and the Social Worker mentioned human trafficking and brought me to this class, I got offended. My daughter is not trafficked, that's not me. At the beginning, I never shared that I was taking these classes. When I heard this information, my mouth was open to the floor."*

Parents and caregivers desire more programs similar to this, and available earlier as preventative measures, not just after a youth has experienced CSE.

Additionally, parents seek real-time coaching and technical assistance from individuals with lived experience to guide them through challenging situations. A DMH clinician noted the importance of this one-on-one support:

> *"We need more parent partners that are more specific to help on these cases, even if it doesn't come fully wrapped with the advocacy services. If we want kids to come home, this is critical."*

Parents and caregivers whose children are system-involved may lack the resources to participate in court-ordered services, struggling with costs, time off from work, transportation, and childcare. Additionally, families struggle to navigate systems and access appropriate services – with courts often ordering programs unrelated to their actual needs, leading to frustration and disillusionment with the system. This, in turn, hinders family preservation or reunification. Parents also desire funding for fun activities with their children to rebuild relationships, like going to the movies, not just services like family therapy.

CSE also impacts other children in the home. Other children may observe family conflict, get less attention, or be exposed to the impacts of trauma on their sibling(s) who are experiencing CSE. Multiple families noted being forced to make the impossible choice between supporting their child experiencing CSE and attending to the needs of their other children. Some faced threats from social workers and/or attorneys that they would have their other children removed from their homes due to perceived safety concerns related to the child experiencing CSE's behavior, exploitation, or exposure to a trafficker. One parent noted:

> *"It breaks your heart because it unbalances the family."*

2. Expectant and Parenting Youth Experience CSE at High Rates

Many youth participants in the listening sessions were young parents or expecting, and service providers have seen a rise in CSE among their expectant and parenting clients in recent years. A study on girls and young women participating in the STAR Court indicated that 31 percent had been pregnant, and among those, 18 percent had experienced two or three pregnancies (Barnert et al., 2020). Some youth

"As we look to empower families to support youth, we have to keep in mind possible generational cycles and how triggering or unsettling it can be trying to learn about your child and learning about yourself and your experience in turn. We need additional support if parents are going to be in these spaces, especially if they have the experience themselves."

Lived Experience Expert

"If we also put parents at center, then we can have them in a healthy state - and the kids see that their parents are strong and can help them."

Parent Partner

noted their own children were in foster care due to concerns about their ability to care for them amidst exploitation, incarceration, or housing instability, with increased surveillance on system-impacted youth who become parents. Intergenerational data in California reveals a concentrated risk for children born to mothers who are in foster care with 53 percent of babies born to mothers in care having a subsequent referral to child protective services (Eastman & Putnam-Hornstein, 2019). One youth reported that staff at her group home for young parents provided some help, but would write her up for making small mistakes, rather than helping her care for her baby.

Youth wanted more information about reproductive health care prior to and during their pregnancies. And because of devastating maternal mortality rates for certain populations of birthing people – with Black women experiencing maternal mortality rates more than 2.5 times that of non-Hispanic White women (Hoyert, 2021) – youth also wanted additional support through the birthing process, like doulas and midwives that were more attuned to their needs. Once their babies are born, they want non-judgmental support in navigating new parenthood, and help accessing necessary items like diapers and car seats. In addition, there is a need for creating supportive spaces for parenting youth to build community with their co-parents, partners, families and

other parenting young people. Young people expressed the desire to connect to others who understand the struggle of navigating a world where they are seen as "bad" parents for being young, while also expected to be perfect parents. They expressed wanting to be trusted and respected as parents while receiving the support they need to thrive as youth. This looks like taking their children to the doctor and being asked questions by the doctor about their children's health directly; rather than watching as the doctor asks an accompanying adult. This also looks like not being judged because they ask questions about their child/ren's health or other things that adults regard as "common sense." Youth expressed that the threat of child protective services involvement was often used as a method of coercion to get them to comply with others' parenting expectations. For example, one youth expressed that others told her mother that she should call DCFS on the youth because she hung out with her friends too much. Removing or threatening to remove children of young parents is not supportive and continues a legacy of trauma.

Stakeholders also shared that there are disparities in the availability of services for young parents, specifically that EPY involved in probation have fewer supportive resources than those in the child welfare system.

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

With the exception of exploring the expansion of the PEP, the Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking does not currently include work aligning with this Priority Area. Further exploration, including community engagement and consultation with individuals with lived experience, is needed.

PRIORITY AREA

5

Empower Parents and Caregivers

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
5.1 Expand Parent Empowerment Program	○ Update PEP curriculum based on feedback from parents/caregivers and lived experience experts. ○ Recruit, hire and train additional parent partners to provide psycho-education workshops and facilitate support groups. ○ Develop a psycho-education virtual video library for parents/caregivers. ○ Expand delivery of PEP to more parents and caregivers by enabling community referrals without requirement of system involvement, and including parents/caregivers with children at risk of exploitation to support prevention.
5.2 Expand Access to Real-Time Coaching and Technical Assistance for Parents/Caregivers	○ Recruit, hire and train parent partners to provide one-on-one coaching and consultation. ○ Create and implement a process for parent/caregiver consultation with other lived experience experts and/or other subject matter experts.

5.3 Increase Direct Concrete Support to Parents	○ Ensure all impacted parents/caregivers are connected with DPSS Linkages staff and are enrolled in CalFresh and other public benefits, as needed. ○ Connect parents/caregivers to services and supports, as needed, including mental health, health supports and substance use treatment. ○ Connect families to post-adoption support services, as appropriate. ○ Provide financial assistance for positive, fun activities for parents/caregivers and children.
5.4 Increase Supports to Expectant and Parenting Young People Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation	○ Collaborate with CLC's Family Support and Advocacy Center and Young Parent Support and Advocacy Center to ensure expectant and parenting youth (EPY) impacted by CSE receive support to care for their children without DCFS/Probation involvement. ○ Ensure all impacted expectant and parenting youth are connected with DPSS Linkages staff, enrolled in CalFresh and other public benefits, and connected with Nurse Family Partnership, as needed. ○ Develop peer support and community building for youth experiencing CSE who are EPY. ○ Conduct resource mapping and create a resource guide for EPY.

“We need more parent partners that are more specific to help on these cases. If we want kids to come home, this is critical.”

DMH Clinician

31%
of girls and young women in the STAR Court had been pregnant.

53%
of babies born to mothers in foster care in California have a subsequent referral to Child Protective Services.

PRIORITY AREA

6 Assess & Adapt Existing Collaborative, Trauma-Informed Services for System-Impacted Youth

The foundation for providing collaborative, trauma-informed services to youth in Los Angeles County has been continually developed, laid, and implemented for the last decade, and must be revisited and monitored regularly in order to remain strong and be able to bear the weight of changing conditions. Los Angeles County has invested deeply in creating innovative, trauma-informed practices to identify and provide services to youth impacted by CSE – including specialized units within DCFS and Probation, specialized courts, community-based advocates, and several multi-disciplinary protocols. These have been models for other jurisdictions across the country, and have had positive impacts on thousands of youth since 2012.

However, due to changes in the law that have reduced law enforcement presence and known harm that law enforcement-based responses can cause, shifts in dynamics of exploitation in Los Angeles, and strains on resources within the departments that have historically carried out these strategies (including DCFS and Probation), some of these specialized services are no longer functioning as effectively or as originally intended, and may need to be revisited, adapted, or eliminated.

(Intro continues on p. 104)

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Increases in utilization of collaborative, multidisciplinary protocols and practices that have positive outcomes
- Increases in number of youth and families receiving best practices (e.g., collaborative, trauma-informed responses)
- Increases in knowledge and awareness of effective and ineffective practices to support survivors and decrease demand for commercial sex

"There is no STAR Court as we know it right now."

MDT Participant

WHY IMPORTANT	STRATEGIES
CHANGES TO SPECIALIZED SERVICES Specialized services have worked well for many youth. Recent changes mean it's time to evaluate and adapt.	6.1 Analyze Current Functioning and Impact of STAR and DREAM Courts, Child Trafficking Unit, and DREAM Units and Adapt as Needed
ONGOING INCARCERATION OF CSE YOUTH Despite efforts to decriminalize youth impacted by CSE, data indicates large percentages of youth incarcerated in County detention facilities have CSE experience.	6.2 Provide Case Consultation and Support to Youth-Serving Professionals Outside of Specialized Units
SHIFTING ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT Stakeholder feedback, legal changes, and research indicate the need to revisit law-enforcement-based responses, which can cause further harm to youth and communities.	6.3 Explore Expansion of Use of Multidisciplinary Teams Structures to All Youth Impacted by CSE 6.4 Explore Evolving Role of Law Enforcement in a Public Health Approach to Trafficking, and Develop Appropriate, Trauma-Informed Law Enforcement Responses
BUYER & EXPLOITER ACCOUNTABILITY Further exploration is needed in how the County addresses demand for commercial sex and holds buyers accountable for their role in commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth – including alternatives to criminalization.	6.5 Collaborate on Countywide Efforts to End Incarceration of Girls to Ensure Trafficking Experience is Considered & Services are Integrated 6.6 Assess and Refine Implementation of Victim Witness Protocol 6.7 Assess Appropriateness of Integration of Labor Trafficking into Existing County Specialized Services, Protocols, and Units 6.8 Assess and Adapt County Efforts to Address Exploiter and Buyer Accountability

In addition, there is opportunity for growth in collaborative approaches that do not require a youth to be involved with law enforcement, DCFS and Probation. This includes collaborating with the DPH, the Department of Youth Development (DYD), and making greater efforts to decarcerate youth and keep youth in their communities through Youth Justice Reimagined.

This priority area calls for assessment of the ongoing efficacy of existing system-based responses to inform where further investment is warranted and where shifts or adaptations are needed, all within the context of the broader shift toward a community-based, public health approach to trafficking.

Why is assessing and adapting existing responses for system-impacted youth important?

1. Changes to Specialized Courts, Units, Advocates, and Multidisciplinary Teaming

Collaborative trauma-informed responses that the County has implemented have worked well for many youth. Youth feel supported by the specialized deputy probation officers (DPO), social workers, judges, court staff, attorneys, and community-based advocates (Dierkhising et al., 2020). These relationships often last far beyond the time in which an official case is open – with judges, advocates, and workers attending graduations, birthday parties, and other important events in youths' lives. This is a testament to the focus on engagement and relationship building in these programs.

While the specialized courts have become national models, assessment of their ongoing efficacy and impact is needed. Some youth do not wish to receive specialized services or transfer to a specialized court because it

can be stigmatizing – if a youth is in the STAR Court, for example, then it "outs" them to peers, family members and others about their CSE experience. Additionally, the STAR Court is facing significant challenges due to staff turnover among court participants, including the absence of a consistent CSEC Liaison from Probation's Child Trafficking Unit (CTU) at multidisciplinary meetings due to staffing shortages. These multidisciplinary teams (MDT), a requirement of the statewide CSEC Program and an essential forum for collaboration among public agencies and community partners to ensure youth receive trauma-informed services, are not functioning as effectively as they once did – which stakeholders report is contributing to rising rates of incarceration of youth impacted by CSE. One MDT participant noted:

> *"There is no STAR Court as we know it right now."*

Meanwhile, conditions are worsening in the County's juvenile halls, where decades of sexual and physical abuse has been uncovered, and staffing shortages and closures have resulted in significant harm for incarcerated youth. It has also meant that Probation has reassigned DPOs from the Child Trafficking Unit to juvenile hall, significantly reducing the number of specialized CTU DPOs to serve youth and leading to staff turnover. These frequent staffing changes have disrupted the continuity of CTU DPO assignments as youth transition between community and detention. This lack of consistency undermines the relationship-centered services that were once a cornerstone of the program.

2. Ongoing Disproportionate Incarceration of Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Despite efforts to decriminalize young people experiencing CSE, and ongoing efforts to get to zero incarceration of girls in Los Angeles County (see Board Motion, Nov. 30, 2021), data from the County indicates that large percentages of girls and gender-expansive youth who have been incarcerated in the County over the last several years – often more than 50 percent – have previously been identified as having experienced CSE. Past research has shown that girls identified as having experienced CSE have more contact with the legal system, including more arrests, petitions filed, petitions sustained, bench warrants, and entrances to juvenile hall (Dierkhising et al., 2020). Youth are being incarcerated on warrants for probation violations or because there is nowhere for them to go when parents are unable or unwilling to receive them, there are waiting lists for STRTPs, or it is taking too long to find resource families. In addition, stakeholders reported that dual

status youth are often transferred from DCFS jurisdiction to Probation jurisdiction because there is a perception that DCFS either cannot handle their behavior, or cannot keep the youth and/or their staff safe. One probation officer noted:

> *"We do see some of our youth deteriorate . . . become involved in incidents while they are [incarcerated], they connect to other kids there, so those who weren't CSEC are coming back as CSEC."*

Implementation of the County's collaborative Interagency Detention Identification and Response Protocol, which is meant to identify and serve youth impacted by CSE who are in the County's detention facilities, have stalled due to staffing shortages and deteriorating conditions in detention facilities.

3. Shifting Role of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement has traditionally played a large role in identifying youth impacted by trafficking. Stakeholder feedback and research on the harm and inefficacy of law enforcement-based responses on both impacted youth and communities more broadly indicates a need to revisit this approach. Many youth report predominantly negative experiences with law enforcement, with some even directly exploited or abused by law enforcement personnel. Others fear that interactions with law enforcement could worsen their situation, potentially leading to increased friction or violence from exploiters or exposing them to devastating immigration consequences, like deportation. One youth noted:

> *"I can be put in danger being seen talking to a cop on the street."*

Another youth highlighted that:

> *"It feels like law enforcement will never care about trans people."*

Youth are also interacting with law enforcement and Probation due to forced criminality related to trafficking at increasingly younger ages. There is a sentiment among traffickers and some youth that they will not get into trouble because they are young and the law no longer applies to them, and they are therefore being groomed into exploitation and to commit more serious crimes.

Changes in the law are also impacting the role of law enforcement in identification and support for youth experiencing trafficking. Specifically, SB 357, passed in 2022, removed loitering with the intent to commit prostitution from the Penal Code, which has resulted in fewer patrol officers in areas known for exploitation and a shift in law enforcement's

interactions (or lack thereof) with young people. Youth and professionals also reported that the reduced law enforcement presence has led to an increase of blatant exploitation and violence on the streets, to the point where some street outreach workers no longer feel comfortable doing street outreach.

4. Assessing Buyer and Exploiter Accountability

Stakeholders expressed an interest in exploring how the County is addressing accountability of both exploiters and buyers. Further exploration is needed into how the County addresses demand for commercial sex and holds buyers accountable for their role in commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth – including alternatives to criminalization. Although there is a lack of consensus on the approach, current policies and practices should be examined to ensure they effectively deter buyers and reduce trafficking of children and youth.

INTEGRATION WITH LABOR TRAFFICKING

The Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking priority area 5 (Policies and Procedures) overlaps with some items in this priority area. As the County embarks on this integration in the context of shifting to a community-based, public health approach, great care must be taken with respect to whether and how these policies, practices and services are expanded to include youth impacted by labor trafficking. As noted, assessment is needed to determine whether to adapt, expand, or scale back on these approaches with respect to youth impacted by CSE. It would be premature to expand these approaches to youth impacted by labor trafficking before such assessment has taken place, as well as further community engagement and consultation with individuals with lived experience. This is essential to avoid replicating mistakes and to minimize unintended harm in the way we identify and serve youth impacted by labor trafficking. Specifically, expansion of some of these approaches could have a net-widening effect, inappropriately expanding the reach of law enforcement, the child welfare system, and the juvenile justice system to more youth and families and putting further strain on already stretched public systems.

PRIORITY AREA

6

Assess & Adapt Existing Services

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
6.1 Analyze Current Functioning and Impact of Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) and Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Courts, Child Trafficking Unit, and DREAM Units and Adapt as Needed	○ Conduct assessment of functioning and impact of STAR and DREAM Courts, CTU, and DREAM Units using administrative and qualitative data from youth and families. ○ Adjust/amend existing models to enhance impact, as needed.
6.2 Provide Case Consultation and Support to Youth-Serving Professionals Outside of Specialized Units	○ Clarify process for specialized DPOs/SWs to provide consultations and support to DPOs/SWs serving youth outside of units. ○ Create and implement process for connecting youth-serving professionals with lived experience experts through Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) or the CSEC Action Team Advisory Board (or Los Angeles-specific lived experience experts) for one-on-one case consultation.
6.3 Explore Expansion of Use of Multidisciplinary Teams Structures to All Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation	○ Assess and implement updates to STAR and DREAM Court MDT processes, as needed. ○ Explore inclusion of youth outside of specialized courts and units into existing multidisciplinary team processes.

6.4 Explore Evolving Role of Law Enforcement in a Public Health Approach to Trafficking, and Develop Appropriate, Trauma-Informed Law Enforcement Responses	○ Assess implementation of FRP and adapt as needed. ○ Examine and bolster the role of DHS and DMH supports in the FRP process. ○ Explore expansion of collaborative street outreach models with community-based partners.
6.5 Collaborate on Countywide Efforts to End Incarceration of Girls to Ensure Trafficking Experience is Considered and Services are Integrated	○ Collaborate with Ending Girls' Incarceration Community Collaborative and DYD. ○ Identify and train CSEC Coordinators within all county detention facilities. ○ Re-establish implementation of Detention Interagency Identification & Response Protocol. ○ Facilitate collaboration among STAR Court MDT to identify and address drivers of incarceration. ○ Identify and train HT champion within DYD to participate in CTLT. ○ Collaborate with DYD in development of Safe and Secure Healing Centers as alternatives to detention to ensure they are equipped to identify and serve youth impacted by CSE.
6.6 Assess and Refine Implementation of Victim Witness Protocol	○ Conduct assessment of early implementation of Victim Witness Protocol. ○ Adjust/amend existing protocol to enhance impact, as needed.

6.7 Assess Appropriateness of Integration of Labor Trafficking into Existing County Specialized Services, Protocols, and Units	○ Consult with youth, families, and CBOs to discuss appropriateness of integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking. ○ Collaborate with multidisciplinary partners carrying out specialized services, protocols and courts to discuss appropriateness and feasibility of integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking. ○ Conduct further landscape analysis of national research and consult with additional subject matter experts regarding potential integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking.
6.8 Assess and Adapt County Efforts to Address Exploiter and Buyer Accountability	○ Review data on law enforcement efforts to hold exploiters and buyers accountable. ○ Review Probation data for individuals arrested for human trafficking, solicitation of prostitution, and related charges. ○ Explore implementation of intervention program for individuals on probation for human trafficking, solicitation of prostitution, and related charges (e.g., I Am curriculum). ○ Explore alternatives to exploiter and buyer accountability from other jurisdictions.

“We need street outreach. Sometimes being in that moment, someone coming to tell you, I can help. It can snatch you right out of it. A few times, I have had someone come and

plant the seed and that makes you ponder.”

Lived Experience Expert

50%
or more of girls incarcerated in LA have experienced CSE, despite efforts to decriminalize young people impacted by trafficking.

Girls impacted by CSE have more legal system contact - more arrests, petitions filed and sustained, bench warrants, and entrances to juvenile hall.

$300K
is the annual cost per youth of incarceration in California in 2020.

PATHWAY TO CHANGE

ROADMAP

This roadmap highlights the key phases and steps the County will take to realize the goals of this plan over the next five years. This process will be scaffolded, iterative, and will evolve as changes in law, policy, and practice require. In some areas, the County already has a strong foundation upon which to build immediately. In others, more groundwork must be laid first – relationship development, capacity building, and learning. Throughout, the County will work in deep partnership with youth, families, and community partners to carry out the plan, reflect on progress, and adapt as needed.



YR 1

Outreach & Planning

- [ ] Convene Child Trafficking Leadership Team (CTLT) and subcommittees.
- [ ] Develop CTLT subcommittee implementation plans.
- [ ] Connect with and integrate stakeholders, including youth, families, and CBOs.
- [ ] Conduct outreach on related County initiatives.
- [ ] Identify existing programs to pilot/build on.
- [ ] Assess costs of new and existing programming, and identify funding sources.
- [ ] Complete integration of CSE and LT plans.
- [ ] Develop evaluation plan with youth, family and community input.

YR 2

Initial Implementation

- [ ] Continue regular meetings of CTLT and subcommittees.
- [ ] Continue youth, family, and community engagement and integration.
- [ ] Launch prevention pilots.
- [ ] Expand contracts and streamline referrals for community-based programs.
- [ ] Hire and launch HT Liaisons and HT Alliance.
- [ ] Begin evaluation of existing specialized services.
- [ ] Integrate and leverage resources from related County initiatives.

YR 3-4

Monitoring & Expansion

- [ ] Maintain engagement of CTLT members.
- [ ] Continue to carry out implementation plans.
- [ ] Regularly evaluate plan implementation and effectiveness, and adapt as needed.
- [ ] Collect and integrate youth, family and community feedback on implementation.

YR 5

Looking Back & Thinking Ahead

- [ ] Assess progress on goals, strategies and action items.
- [ ] Reflect on learnings from implementation.
- [ ] Identify areas of additional capacity building and expansion.
- [ ] Set goals for next five year goals.

Data-Driven Implementation

Implementation is at the crux of the work and must be done in a thoughtful and collaborative way. First, an implementation team, the CTLT, must be established (see Board Motion, Aug. 6, 2024). The CTLT plays a pivotal role in coordinating efforts, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability. Adjustments to the plan, as well as to existing and new initiatives, are also expected given the evolving nature of community needs, emerging challenges, and new opportunities that may arise. This iterative process will ensure the Plan remains dynamic and responsive to the changing landscape.

The CTLT is also responsible for assigning subcommittees to manage the rollout of individual strategies and action items. Importantly, the CTLT subcommittees will include youth and individuals with lived experience. These groups will then develop a timeline for implementing the action items and identify key performance metrics to track progress and outcomes. Tracking progress involves capturing both process metrics and outcome metrics. Process metrics will measure the quantity and quality of the work being done. In parallel, outcome metrics will gauge the impact of the strategies on youth, families, communities, and public systems or agencies.

These performance metrics will vary across strategies and actions and will likely require data from a variety of agencies, organizations, and individuals, including feedback directly from youth and families. Examples of potential process and impact outcomes are included in the plan (see Appendix), these can be used as starting points that can be adjusted based on available data, resources, or further analysis.

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- Positive changes in organizational culture, such as increased collaboration, openness, and innovation
- Improved competencies and expertise across stakeholders
- Systematic tracking of progress and outcome data
- Adoption of new practices, behaviors, or attitudes related to human trafficking

Data-Driven Implementation

Strategies & Actions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
7.1 Collaborate Across Systems and Initiatives, Along with Community Partners to Implement the Plan	○ Community-based organizations are included in the implementation process. ○ Youth, families, and those with lived experience are included in the implementation process. ○ Partnerships across public systems and agencies are identified. ○ Overlap with other County initiatives are explored and considered during implementation, including but not limited to Youth Justice Reimagined (including YES teams and Youth Development Networks), Ending Girls' Incarceration Initiative, poverty alleviation and universal basic income initiatives such as Breathe, Mandated Supporting Initiative, County language access plans, Department of Economic Opportunity programs, Systems of Care, and others.
7.2 Build out an Accountability Structure for Implementation	○ Establish a CTLT that includes representatives from DCFS, Probation, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, DPH, Los Angeles County Office of Education, DYD, Los Angeles County Youth Commission, the County's Child Trafficking Consultant, community partners and individuals with lived experience. ○ Develop subcommittees responsible for individual strategies and action items. ○ Each subcommittee includes at least one individual with lived experience. ○ Each subcommittee engages in a strategic prioritization process of the strategies assigned to them. ○ Each subcommittee develops a timeline for implementing the action items based on the strategic prioritization process. ○ The CTLT approves all implementation plans and timelines.

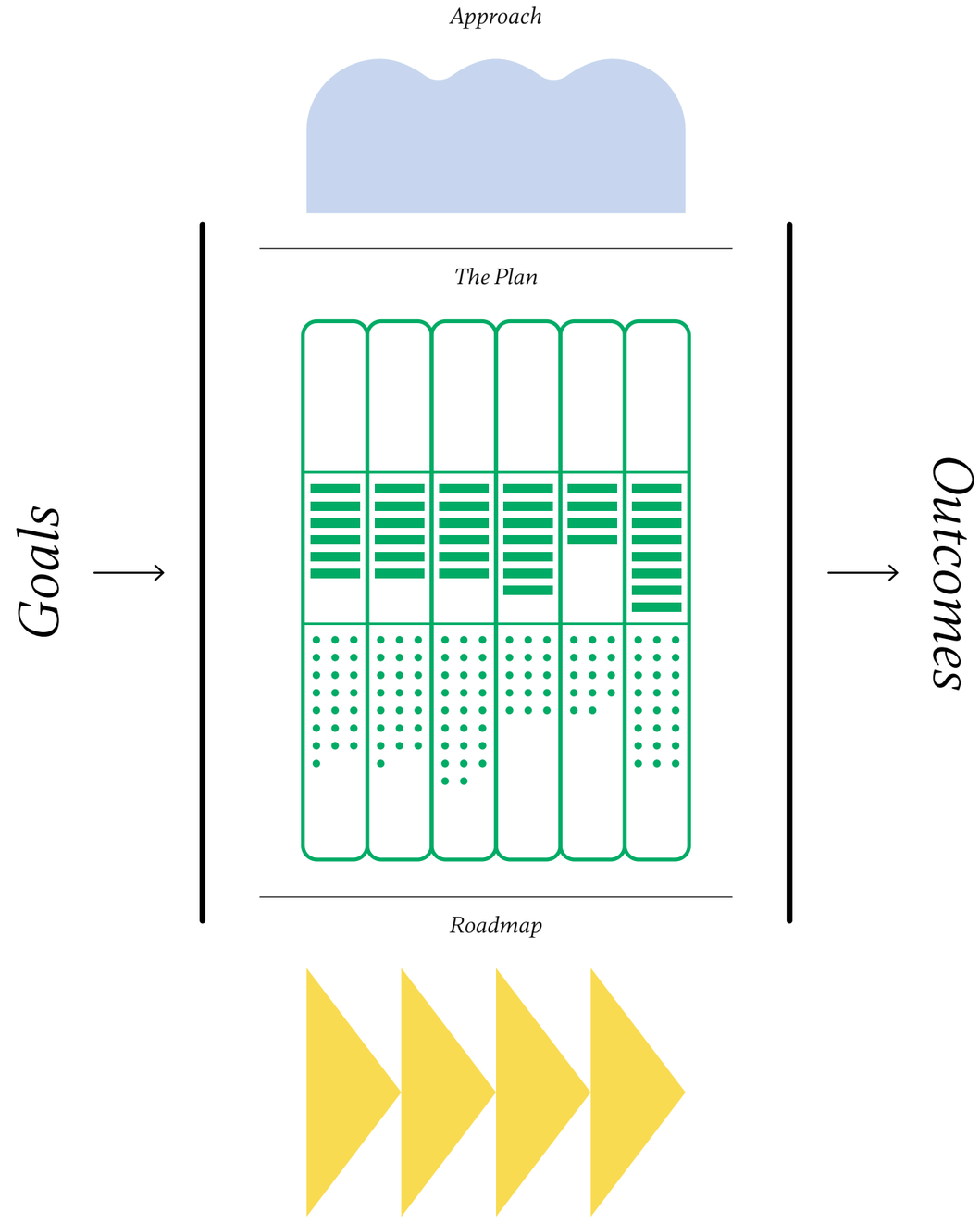
7.3 Collaborative Identification of Performance Metrics to Track Quality, Reach and Effectiveness of Strategies and Actions	○ Each subcommittee identifies the necessary performance metrics to track progress and outcomes. ○ Available data (both quantitative and qualitative) from a variety of organizations, agencies, and systems are explored and included in the tracking plan. ○ CBOs are involved in the identification of performance metrics in a way that does not overburden them. ○ Systematic youth and family feedback is included in the key performance metrics. ○ Process metrics are included that measure the quantity and quality of the work being done, providing insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of the action items. ○ Outcome metrics, defined in collaboration with youth and families, will gauge the impact of the strategies on youth, families, communities, and public systems or agencies. ○ Examples of potential performance metrics in the plan are considered and adjusted based on available data, resources, or further analysis. ○ The leadership team refines and approves all recommended performance metrics to ensure they accurately reflect the goals of the Strategic Plan.
7.4 Monitor Progress Throughout Implementation	○ Each subcommittee is monitored by the CTLT through regular communication and collaboration. ○ Develop and utilize an agreed upon data tracking mechanism. ○ Analyze ongoing data to identify patterns, trends, and areas where there are opportunities for growth. ○ Adjustments are made as needed by the leadership team, with input from the subcommittees, to ensure the plan remains dynamic and responsive to the changing landscape. ○ A communication strategy is established (e.g., public meetings, updates, and feedback mechanisms) to keep stakeholders, the Board of Supervisors, Steering Committee, and the public informed on progress, successes, and challenges.

7.5 Explore Creative Funding Streams	○ A variety of creative funding mechanisms such as the Family First Prevention Services Act, Medi-Cal, philanthropic organizations, and federal funding avenues, are explored to support implementation. ○ Explore methods of dissemination of funding that remove bureaucratic barriers, including disbursement of funds directly to CBOs, and methods of funding that ensure continuity of services for youth.
7.6 Include a Process for Deeper Exploration and Capacity Building Throughout Implementation	○ Multiple stakeholders engage in national roundtables and advisory groups to expand the County's knowledge and capabilities. ○ Stakeholders engage in ongoing learning of best practices, national responses to human trafficking, and the overlap between labor trafficking, forced criminality, and sex trafficking.
7.7 Institutionalize the Implementation of the Plan to Guarantee Sustainability	○ Integrate the Strategic Plan into the county's annual budgeting, performance management, and decision-making processes. ○ Provide training or town halls for county staff and stakeholders to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to implement the plan effectively. ○ Periodically review and update the Strategic Plan to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions and needs. ○ Engage the community in a systematic way to check that implementation is meeting their expectations and needs.
7.8 Integrate Youth Feedback Structure to Evaluate all County Initiatives and Community-Based Programs on Human Trafficking	○ Develop and implement youth and family feedback structures to assess implementation of Strategic Plan. ○ Require county contractors to include youth and parent/caregiver feedback in program evaluation. ○ Develop and implement youth and family feedback into assessment of all County collaborative protocols and specialized services (FRP, Detention, Victim Witness, SYZ, specialized courts and units). ○ Collaborate with CBOs to identify data already being collected, and capacity for or support needed to collect additional data.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

For nearly fifteen years, the County has demonstrated its commitment to recognizing and addressing the harm caused by child trafficking. This Strategic Plan represents a renewal of this commitment that is rooted in youth and community strength and well-being. It represents a paradigm shift from system-based to a community-based response and from a crisis response to a preventative one. It celebrates the County's diversity and is grounded in equity and inclusion. Building on the momentum established during this plan's creation, Los Angeles County will continue to drive innovation and set a national standard for community-based, compassionate care for youth and families.



“It has been a great experience and feeling to know that there are people trying and working to help. I want my baby to know this is something I was a part of and something to help the community. Hopefully it will be important to him once he is old enough to understand.”

Youth

APPENDIX

SPREADSHEET OF ALL PRIORITY AREAS, STRATEGIES AND ACTION ITEMS

Priority Area # 1: Invest in Early Education and Prevention		
1.1	**Build Capacity of Schools to Prevent, Identify, and Respond to Child Trafficking**	
1.1(b)		Provide HT Prevention Train the Trainer Curriculum to school counselors, social workers (SW), nurses, teachers, Department of Public Health (DPH) Student Well-being Center staff and other educators, community liaison Public Health Nurses, education sector staff, health educators, promotoras and community health care workers.
1.1(c)		Implement HTSSP, including clarifying referral processes between schools and CBOs when CSE of youth is identified or /suspected.
1.1(d)		Train and leverage Student Well-being Centers to be one-stop-shops for trafficking-related psycho-education, health and mental health care resources.
1.1(e)		Expand use of schools to provide education and appropriate service referrals for parents/caregivers.
1.1(f)		Provide prevention education through schools for parents/caregivers and create opportunities for parents/caregivers and youth to come together for dialogue/discussion.
1.1(g)		Identify and implement prevention curriculum focused on males and healthy relationships to avoid becoming buyers and traffickers (e.g., I Am Curriculum).
1.1(h)		Create HT Prevention Bureau of Speakers composed of trained subject matter experts, including peer advocates and parent partners.
1.1(i)		Create new HT 101 training video for posting on County Learning Net and other virtual spaces for access to on-demand training.
1.2	**Build Capacity of Community-based Organizations to Identify and Support Youth Impacted by Trafficking**	
1.2(a)		Provide training to CBOs on human trafficking identification, available prevention resources, and how to tailor services to support youth impacted by trafficking.
1.2(b)		Expand existing community-based prevention curriculum to more youth-serving organizations, FBOs and others.
1.3	**Increase Targeted Prevention Efforts to High-Risk Youth (including but not limited to child welfare and probation system involved youth, homeless youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and immigrant youth)**	
1.3(a)		Collaborate with CBOs serving high-risk youth to offer prevention curriculum.
1.3(b)		Implement prevention curriculum for all youth upon entry to out-of-home care or detention.
1.3(c)		Explore integration of trafficking into SW and probation officer training on SB 89 requirements.
1.4	**Coordinate with County and City Agencies, and Community-based Programs/Organizations Addressing Poverty, Homelessness, and Community Violence to Elevate Issue of Human Trafficking and Share Resources**	
1.4(a)		Explore collaboration with city agencies addressing poverty and supporting the alleviation of poverty, homelessness, and community violence, including but not limited to the Department of Economic Opportunity, the DPH Office of Violence Prevention, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.
1.4(b)		Provide training to county and city agencies to increase awareness of trafficking and intersection with poverty, homelessness, and other forms of violence.
1.4(c)		Explore integration of trafficking-related information and resources with the Mandated Supporting Initiative.
1.4(d)		Explore integration with existing universal basic income (UBI) programs, including Los Angeles' Guaranteed Income Program, and consider development of pilot UBI program for youth and families identified as at-risk of or experiencing trafficking.
1.5	**Develop Social Media Prevention Strategy**	
1.5(a)		Work with Youth Commission, youth, and survivor leaders to develop social media strategy focused on prevention of trafficking (e.g., warning signs of trafficking/exploitation).
1.5(b)		Identify and disseminate existing guidance and training on how to safely use the internet and engage in social networking spaces — for both parents and youth (including federal Trafficking in Persons report).

1.6	**Build Awareness and Capacity to Address Familial Trafficking**	
1.6(a)		Integrate familial trafficking into prevention curricula.
1.6(b)		Expand discussion of familial trafficking in Human Trafficking 102 training, mandated reporter training, and agency policies.
Priority Area # 2: Build a Broad and Inclusive Community-based Service and Support Ecosystem		
2.1	**Identify and Resource Community-based Human Trafficking Liaison Teams by Region/Service Planning Area to Support Navigation and Networking**	
2.1(a)		Conduct resource mapping across all regions for services for children, youth and families.
2.1(b)		Create a forum for all regional HT Liaisons to meet regularly to share resources and lessons learned.
2.1(c)		Identify and support a network of community providers within each region.
2.1(d)		Coordinate Community Partnership/Alliance (including CBOs, public agencies, and individuals with lived experience) to meet regularly, share resources, best practices, and changes to laws and policies.
2.1(e)		Support youth and families in accessing relevant services and system navigation.
2.2	**Improve Accessibility of Services to all Youth by Streamlining Referral Processes, Funding Services Navigation, and Removing Requirements of System Involvement to be Eligible for Services**	
2.2(a)		Invest in peer service navigators for youth and families.
2.2(b)		Explore opportunities for revising referral structures in County contracts to enable peer and community referrals without requirement of system involvement.
2.2(c)		Conduct outreach to agencies/organizations that have instituted service exclusion lists to understand reasoning, provide education, and address underlying issues.
2.2(d)		Coordinate with existing County hotlines (including 988 and 211) to ensure child trafficking resources are available and disseminate hotline information to youth.
2.3	**Partner with Youth Commission on Development of Resource App and Ensure Trafficking-specific Resources are Integrated**	
2.3(a)		Review and update existing resource compilations for inclusion of necessary information and accessibility ("Know Before You Go" app; One Degree; Independent Living Program (ILP) Online; Child Trafficking Resource Guide).
2.3(b)		Collaborate with the Youth Commission and other youth leaders to ensure information is youth-friendly and accessible.
2.4	**Expand Outreach to Organizations Serving Youth in Under-identified Populations to Increase Awareness of Trafficking, Offer Referrals to Trafficking-specific Organizations, and Support in Adapting Existing Programming to Address Trafficking-related Needs**	
2.4(a)		Develop relationships with organizations serving youth in under-identified populations and support in adapting existing programming to address trafficking-related needs.
2.4(b)		Offer trainings on specific intersections of trafficking with under-identified populations.
2.4(c)		Adapt existing policy, trainings, and materials to include inclusive language and imagery.
2.4(d)		Expand contracts with CBOs to ensure services are tailored to under-identified populations.
2.5	**Provide Youth with Safe and Accessible Transportation**	
2.5(a)		Assess cost, impact and opportunity of expanding existing County contracts with child-specific transportation services.
2.5(b)		Provide flexible funding to CBOs for youth transportation in County advocacy, mental health, prevention & aftercare, diversion, reentry, and other contracts.
2.5(c)		Support Transition Age Youth (TAY) in obtaining drivers' licenses and provide guidance in the car leasing/purchasing process.
2.5(d)		Explore collaboration with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, rideshare companies, and other transportation providers to provide training to employees and identify opportunities for increasing youth safety on public transportation.
2.6	**Expand No Wrong Door Approach to Services Through Safe Youth Zone**	

2.6(a)		Extend network of participants in SYZ protocol to additional county agencies, hospitals and clinics, schools, FBOs, and CBOs.
2.6(b)		Create and disseminate signage and quick reference guides for participating organizations and youth.
2.6(c)		Establish SYZ protocol for non-crisis/emergency support.
Priority Area # 3: Fill Service Gaps in Key Areas: Housing, Mental Health, Health Care, and Substance Use Treatment, Employment Support, and Support for Transition Age Youth		
3.1	**Increase Availability of Financial Literacy, Job Readiness, Life Skills, and Educational Support and Advocacy**	
3.1(a)		Clarify referral processes and increase referrals to existing programs, and identify additional programs providing financial literacy, job readiness, internships and mentorships, life skills, employment services, and educational/support and advocacy.
3.1(b)		Ensure all County youth-serving organizations are familiar with programs, including "Level Up", that offer funding for recreation/therapeutic interventions and transportation for youth in foster care.
3.1(c)		Explore collaboration with community colleges to increase awareness about trafficking and facilitate referrals of students to all appropriate services and support.
3.2	**Increase Availability of Trauma-informed Mental Health Care and Substance Use Treatment**	
3.2(a)		Invest in continuity of care model through the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to ensure youth are connected to trauma-informed providers regardless of the youth's location.
3.2(b)		Increase the number of beds and locations where youth treatment is offered to address acute and ongoing substance use issues.
3.2(c)		Connect DPH/Department of Health Services (DHS) substance use educators and other county funded youth-focused substance use programs to youth serving programs in the community.
3.2(d)		Increase and/or clarify funding processes to increase availability of non-western, holistic, integrated, alternative and complementary modalities of healing (including but not limited to leveraging recent changes through the Medi-Cal Transformation).
3.2(e)		Provide training to mental health and health care providers on CSEC-specific adaptations to treatment modalities.
3.2(f)		Provide technical assistance to providers with national experts through National Center on Child Trafficking and others on implementation of Trauma-informed Care (TIC) and CSEC-specific and other adaptations to treatment modalities.
3.2(g)		Identify a Substance Abuse Provider to attend DREAM and STAR Court multidisciplinary team meetings.
3.2(h)		Provide consultation, support, and training by DMH CSEC Division clinicians to community-based mental health providers on creative, trauma-informed methods of working with youth beyond traditional treatment settings.
3.3	**Increase Availability of Trauma-informed Health Care**	
3.3(a)		Require discipline-specific training for all medical staff at Medical Hub Clinics, community clinics, hospitals, mental health providers, 988 and 211 staff, DPH nurses and health educators on trauma-informed language, health care practices, and trafficking identification and response.
3.3(b)		Develop and implement identification protocols within DMH, DHS, and DPH with clear referral processes when youth impacted by CSE is identified.
3.3(c)		Explore development of on-call medical consultation with a child trafficking medical specialist to be available 24 hours per day.
3.4	**Expand Access to a Continuum of Community-based, Trauma-informed Housing Options**	
3.4(a)		Collaborate with community-based housing providers and philanthropic organizations to support development and implementation of continuum of specialized housing options for youth impacted by CSE, as set forth in 2020 Research to Action Brief.
3.4(b)		Require comprehensive staff training and supports at all levels of out-of-home care staff, as set forth in 2020 Research to Action Brief.

3.4(c)		Collaborate and provide targeted training with emergency shelter providers to ensure staff have capacity to support youth impacted by CSE.
3.4(d)		Support development of youth drop-in center in the City of **Los Angeles**.
3.5	**Increase Targeted Supports for Transition Age Youth**	
3.5(a)		Ensure all TAY are connected with Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Linkages staff and are enrolled in public benefits, as appropriate (e.g., CalFresh, Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation) before transition.
3.5(b)		Provide all TAY with information and appropriate referrals to relevant CBO, including human trafficking-specific organizations.
3.5(c)		Partner with peer mentor/advocate programs to offer presentations and guidance to TAY on available resources and programs.
3.5(d)		Host fun and engaging ILP orientation events with youth, planned in collaboration with youth leaders and CBOs.
3.5(e)		Work with community-based and philanthropic organizations to expand access to a continuum of community-based, trauma-informed housing options.
3.5(f)		Expand Advocacy Services contracts to include a curriculum and a toolkit to support youth in acquiring self-sufficiency skills.
3.6	**Utilize Flexible Funding to Quickly Address Youth/Family Economic and Concrete Needs**	
3.6(a)		Explore feasibility of expanding availability of Restoration Funds to any youth impacted by CSE, regardless of system involvement.
3.6(b)		Identify, implement, and train on new funding available for youth strength building activities and immediate needs through 2024 California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Tiered Rate Structure.
Priority Area # 4: Promote Youth Empowerment, Peer Mentorship, and Lived Experience Leadership		
4.1	**Fund and Expand Youth Empowerment Programs/Events**	
4.1(a)		Collaborate with and/or fund CBOs and/or youth leaders to plan and host empowerment events.
4.1(b)		Expand outreach for youth empowerment events to under-identified and under-served populations.
4.1(c)		Expand empowerment events to include parents/caregivers and siblings.
4.2	**Invest in Youth Leaders to Plan and Carry out Peer-to-peer Outreach, Events and Training Efforts**	
4.2(a)		Identify and coordinate with existing youth/peer leadership and mentorship programs.
4.2(b)		Identify youth leaders and community partners to participate in HT Speakers Bureau.
4.2(c)		Use train-the-trainer model, with ongoing professional development to train and support youth leaders to carry out peer-to-peer outreach, prevention and intervention curricula.
4.3	**Expand Availability of Peer and Survivor Advocates, Mentors, and Navigators to all CSE-impacted Youth, Regardless of System Involvement**	
4.3(a)		Explore feasibility of expanding contracts for peer and survivor advocates and mentors to permit community and peer referrals.
4.3(b)		Train and support Peer Support Specialists through DMH to provide support to youth impacted by CSE.
4.4	**Collaborate with the Youth Commission**	
4.4(a)		Collaborate with Youth Commissioners to ensure that Youth Commission initiatives take into account needs of youth impacted by trafficking.
4.4(b)		Integrate Youth Commissioners into County trafficking initiatives as appropriate.
4.5	**Explore Program Models to Foster Multi-generational Connections Between Elders and Young People, Movement Building and Mentorship**	
4.5(a)		Explore existing program models (ex. Homeboy Industries) and identify opportunities for collaboration or program development.
4.6	**Hire Survivors/Lived Experience Experts in Critical Roles, Including Direct Service, Supervision, and Leadership**	

4.6(a)		Evaluate and address barriers to hiring individuals with lived experience in the County and county-contracted positions.
4.6(b)		Determine appropriate pay structures given expertise levels, and identify opportunities for ongoing professional development and advancement.
4.7	**Consult with Lived Experience Experts in all County Program, Curriculum, and Policy Development, Including Implementation of Strategic Plan**	
4.7(a)		Identify examples and/or develop and implement protocol for ethical practices for hiring and collaborating with individuals with lived experience.
4.7(b)		Identify and support lived experience experts to participate in CTLT and HT Alliance.
Priority Area # 5: Empower Parents and Caregivers to Support Their Own Children		
5.1	**Expand Parent Empowerment Program**	
5.1(a)		Update PEP curriculum based on feedback from parents/caregivers and lived experience experts.
5.1(b)		Recruit, hire and train additional parent partners to provide psycho-education workshops and facilitate support groups.
5.1(c)		Develop a psycho-education virtual video library for parents/caregivers.
5.1(d)		Expand delivery of PEP to more parents and caregivers by enabling community referrals without requirement of system involvement, and including parents/caregivers with children at risk of exploitation to support prevention.
5.2	**Expand Access to Real Time Coaching and Technical Assistance for Parents/Caregivers**	
5.2(a)		Recruit, hire and train parent partners to provide one-on-one coaching and consultation.
5.2(b)		Create and implement a process for parent/caregiver consultation with other lived experience experts and/or other subject matter experts.
5.3	**Increase Direct Concrete Support to Parents**	
5.3(a)		Ensure all impacted parents/caregivers are connected with DPSS Linkages staff and are enrolled in CalFresh and other public benefits, as needed.
5.3(b)		Connect parents/caregivers to services and supports, as needed, including mental health, health supports and substance use treatment.
5.3(c)		Connect families to post-adoption support services, as appropriate.
5.3(d)		Provide financial assistance for positive, fun activities for parents/caregivers and children.
5.4	**Increase Supports to Expectant and Parenting Young People Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation**	
5.4(a)		Collaborate with CLC's Family Support and Advocacy Center and Young Parent Support and Advocacy Center to ensure expectant and parenting youth (EPY) impacted by CSE receive support to care for their children without DCFS/Probation involvement.
5.4(b)		Ensure all impacted expectant and parenting youth are connected with DPSS Linkages staff, enrolled in CalFresh and other public benefits, and connected with Nurse Family Partnership, as needed.
5.4(c)		Develop peer support and community building for youth experiencing CSE who are EPY.
5.4(d)		Conduct resource mapping and create a resource guide for EPY.
Priority Area # 6: Assess and Adapt Existing Collaborative, Trauma-informed Services for System-impacted Youth		
6.1	**Analyze Current Functioning and Impact of Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) and Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring (DREAM) Courts, Child Trafficking Unit, and DREAM Units and Adapt as Needed**	
6.1(a)		Conduct assessment of functioning and impact of STAR and DREAM Courts, CTU, and DREAM Units using administrative and qualitative data from youth and families.
6.1(b)		Adjust/amend existing models to enhance impact, as needed.
6.2	**Provide Case Consultation and Support to Youth-serving Professionals Outside of Specialized Units**	
6.2(a)		Clarify process for specialized DPOs/SWs to provide consultations and support to DPOs/SWs serving youth outside of units.
6.2(b)		Create and implement process for connecting youth-serving professionals with lived experience experts through Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) or the CSEC Action Team Advisory Board (or Los Angeles-specific lived experience experts) for one-on-one case consultation.
6.3	**Explore Expansion of Use of Multidisciplinary Teams Structures to All Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation**	

6.3(a)		Assess and implement updates to STAR and DREAM Court MDT processes, as needed.
6.3(b)		Explore inclusion of youth outside of specialized courts and units into existing multidisciplinary team processes
6.4	**Explore Evolving Role of Law Enforcement in a Public Health Approach to Trafficking, and Develop Appropriate, Trauma-Informed Law Enforcement Responses**	
6.4(a)		Assess implementation of FRP and adapt as needed.
6.4(b)		Examine and bolster the role of DHS and DMH supports in the FRP process.
6.4(c)		Explore expansion of collaborative street outreach models with community-based partners.
6.5	**Collaborate on Countywide Efforts to End Incarceration of Girls to Ensure Trafficking Experience is Considered and Services are Integrated**	
6.5(a)		Collaborate with Ending Girls' Incarceration Community Collaborative and DYD.
6.5(b)		Identify and train CSEC Coordinators within all county detention facilities.
6.5(c)		Re-establish implementation of Detention Interagency Identification & Response Protocol.
6.5(d)		Facilitate collaboration among STAR Court MDT to identify and address drivers of incarceration.
6.5(e)		Identify and train HT champion within DYD to participate in CTLT.
6.5(f)		Collaborate with DYD in development of Safe and Secure Healing Centers as alternatives to detention to ensure they are equipped to identify and serve youth impacted by CSE.
6.6	**Assess and Refine Implementation of Victim Witness Protocol**	
6.6(a)		Conduct assessment of early implementation of Victim Witness Protocol.
6.6(b)		Adjust/amend existing protocol to enhance impact, as needed.
6.7	**Assess Appropriateness of Integration of Labor Trafficking into Existing County Specialized Services, Protocols, and Units**	
6.7(a)		Consult with youth, families, and CBOs to discuss appropriateness of integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking.
6.7(b)		Collaborate with multidisciplinary partners carrying out specialized services, protocols and courts to discuss appropriateness and feasibility of integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking.
6.7(c)		Conduct further landscape analysis of national research and consult with additional subject matter experts regarding potential integration of system-based services for youth impacted by labor trafficking.
6.8	**Assess and Adapt County Efforts to Address Exploiter and Buyer Accountability**	
6.8(a)		Review data on law enforcement efforts to hold exploiters and buyers accountable.
6.8(b)		Review Probation data for individuals arrested for human trafficking, solicitation of prostitution, and related charges.
6.8(c)		Explore implementation of intervention program for individuals on probation for human trafficking, solicitation of prostitution, and related charges (e.g., I Am curriculum).
6.8(d)		Explore alternatives to exploiter and buyer accountability from other jurisdictions.
Pathway to Change: Implement the Strategic Plan in a Data-driven Way to Track Progress and Outcomes		
7.1	**Collaborate across systems and initiatives, along with community partners to implement the plan**	
7.1(a)		Community-based organizations are included in the implementation process.
7.1(b)		Youth, families, and those with lived experience are included in the implementation process.
7.1(c)		Partnerships across public systems and agencies are identified.
7.1(d)		Overlap with other County initiatives are explored and considered during implementation, including but not limited to Youth Justice Reimagined (including YES teams and Youth Development Networks), Ending Girls' Incarceration Initiative, poverty alleviation and universal basic income initiatives such as Breathe, Mandated Supporting Initiative, County language access plans, Department of Economic Opportunity programs, Systems of Care, and others.
7.2	**Build out an accountability structure for implementation**	
7.2(a)		Establish a CTLT that includes representatives from DCFS, Probation, LASD , DPH, LACOE , DYD, **Los Angeles County** Youth Commission, and the County's Child Trafficking Consultant, community partners and individuals with lived experience.
7.2(b)		Develop subcomittees responsible for individual strategies and action items.

7.2 (c)		Each subcommittee includes at least one individual with lived experience.
7.2 (d)		Each subcommittee engages in a strategic prioritization process of the strategies assigned to them.
7.2 (e)		Each subcommittee develops a timeline for implementing the action items based on the strategic prioritization process.
7.2(f)		The CTLT approves all implementation plans and timelines.
7.3	**Collaborative Identification of Performance Metrics to Track Quality, Reach and Effectiveness of Strategies and Actions**	
7.3(a)		Each subcommittee identifies the necessary performance metrics to track progress and outcomes.
7.3(b)		Available data (both quantitative and qualitative) from a variety of organizations, agencies, and systems are explored and included in the tracking plan.
7.3(c)		CBOs are involved in the identification of performance metrics in a way that does not overburden them.
7.3(d)		Systematic youth and family feedback is included in the key performance metrics.
7.3(e)		Process metrics are included that measure the quantity and quality of the work being done, providing insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of the action items.
7.3(f)		Outcome metrics, defined in collaboration with youth and families, will gauge the impact of the strategies on youth, families, communities, and public systems or agencies.
7.3(g)		Examples of potential performance metrics in the plan are considered and adjusted based on available data, resources, or further analysis.
7.3(h)		The leadership team refines and approves all recommended performance metrics to ensure they accurately reflect the goals of the Strategic Plan.
7.4	**Monitor Progress Throughout Implementation**	
7.4(a)		Each subcommittee is monitored by the CTLT through regular communication and collaboration.
7.4(b)		Develop and utilize an agreed upon data tracking mechanism.
7.4(c)		Analyze ongoing data to identify patterns, trends, and areas where there are opportunities for growth.
7.4(d)		Adjustments are made as needed by the leadership team, with input from the subcommittees, to ensure the plan remains dynamic and responsive to the changing landscape.
7.4(e)		A communication strategy is established (e.g., public meetings, updates, and feedback mechanisms) to keep stakeholders, the Board of Supervisors, Steering Committee, and the public informed on progress, successes, and challenges.
7.5	**Explore Creative Funding Streams**	
7.5(a)		A variety of creative funding mechanisms such as the Family First Prevention Services Act, Medi-Cal, philanthropic organizations, and federal funding avenues, are explored to support implementation.
7.5(b)		Explore methods of dissemination of funding that remove bureaucratic barriers, including disbursement of funds directly to CBOs, and methods of funding that ensure continuity of services for youth.
7.6	**Include a Process for Deeper Exploration and Capacity Building Throughout Implementation**	
7.6(a)		Multiple stakeholders engage in national roundtables and advisory groups to expand the County's knowledge and capabilities.
7.6(b)		Stakeholders engage in ongoing learning of best practices, national responses to human trafficking, and the overlap between labor trafficking, forced criminality, and sex trafficking.
7.7	**Institutionalize the Implementation of the Plan to Guarantee Sustainability**	
7.7(a)		Integrate the Strategic Plan into the county's annual budgeting, performance management, and decision-making processes.
7.7(b)		Provide training or town halls for county staff and stakeholders to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to implement the plan effectively.
7.7(c)		Periodically review and update the Strategic Plan to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions and needs.
7.7(d)		Engage the community in a systematic way to check that implementation is meeting their expectations and needs.
7.8	**Integrate Youth Feedback Structure to Evaluate all County Initiatives and Community-based Programs on Human Trafficking**	
7.8(a)		Develop and implement youth and family feedback structures to assess implementation of Strategic Plan.
7.8(b)		Require County contractors to include youth and parent/caregiver feedback in program evaluation.
7.8(c)		Develop and implement youth and family feedback into assessment of all County collaborative protocols and specialized services (FRP, Detention, Victim Witness, SYZ, specialized courts and units).
7.8(d)		Collaborate with CBOs to identify data already being collected, and capacity for or support needed to collect additional data.

TABLE OF PROPOSED OUTCOMES

Impact Outcomes		
Priority Area # 1: Invest in Early Education and Prevention		
Priority Area 1 Impact Outcomes	1. Reductions in those impacted by CSE. 2. Increases in knowledge about human trafficking and other related forms of violence. 3. Increased collaboration and information sharing across programs. 4. Increased protective factors among youth.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
1.1	Build capacity of schools to prevent, identify, and respond to child trafficking	Schools are trained in CSE, equipped with resources to respond to CSE, and providing prevention curricula to students.
1.2	Build capacity of community-based organizations to identify and support youth impacted by trafficking	A broad network of commnity-based organizations are trained in CSE and equipped with resources to respond to CSE.
1.3	Increase targeted prevention efforts to high-risk youth (including but not limited to child welfare and probation system involved youth, homeless youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and immigrant youth)	Access points to high risk youth are identified and targeted prevention efforts are provided such as identification protocols, education, and harm reduction.
1.4	Coordinate with County and city agencies, and community-based programs/organizations addressing poverty, homelessness, and community violence to elevate issue of human trafficking and share resources	Collaborations exist with agencies, programs, and County initiatives with shared goals.
1.5	Develop social media prevention strategy	Information on safe internet and social media usage is available to youth and was developed by youth.
1.6	Build awareness and capacity to address familial trafficking	Specific and comprehensive information on familial trafficking is integrated into ongoing awareness, prevention, and training activities.
Priority Area # 2: Build a Broad and Inclusive Community-Based Service and Support Ecosystem		
Priority Area 2 Impact Outcomes	1. A wider range of service options are available to youth and families across the County. 2. Increased awareness of available services in the community among youth and families. 3. Increases in access to services and help-seeking among youth and families across the County. 4. Increases in collaboration between community and public agency partners.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
2.1	Identify and resource community-based Human Trafficking liaison teams by region/Service Planning Area to support navigation & networking	Number of CSE liaison teams in each Service Planning Area within the County that coordinate with each other and are each equipped with the knowledge of a broad array of services within their assigned region.
2.2	Improve accessibility of services to all youth by streamlining referral processes, funding services navigation, and removing requirements of system involvement to be eligible for services	Increases in service access youth who are not system-involved
2.3	Partner with Youth Commission on development of Resource App and ensure trafficking-specific resources are integrated	Increases in youth who have easy access to youth-friendly information on human trafficking
2.4	Expand outreach to organizations serving youth in under-identified populations to increase awareness of trafficking, offer referrals to trafficking specific organizations, and support in adapting existing programming to address trafficking-related needs	Increases in access to services and help-seeking among under-identified populations
2.5	Provide youth with safe and accessible transportation	Increases in youth perceptions of safety when using public transportation
2.6	Expand no wrong door approach to services through Safe Youth Zone	Increases in locations that are categorized as SYZs

Priority Area # 3: Fill Service Gaps in Key Areas: Housing, Mental Health, Health Care, and Substance Use Treatment, Employment Support, and Support for Transition Age Youth		
Priority Area 3 Impact Outcomes	1. Improvements in overall physical and psychological wellbeing among youth, including decreases in substance use. 2. Increases in youth employment. 3. Increases in housing stability.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
3.1	Increase availability of financial literacy, job readiness, life skills, and educational support and advocacy	Increases in economic and employment stability, and education opportunities
3.2	Increase availability of trauma-informed mental health care and substance use treatment	Reductions in trauma related symptoms (e.g., posttraumatic stress, depression, irratibility) and substance use
3.3	Increase availability of trauma-informed health care	Increased engagement in health care services among youth at risk for or experiencing human trafficking
3.4	Expand access to a continuum of community-based, trauma-informed housing options	Increases in safe and stable housing options for youth in out of home care
3.5	Increase targeted supports for transition age youth	Increased housing, economic, and employment stability for youth transitioning out of care
3.6	Utilize flexible funding to quickly address youth/family economic and concrete needs	Improvements in efficiently supporting youth and family's basic needs
Priority Area # 4: Promote Youth Empowerment, Peer Mentorship, and Lived Experience Leadership		
Priority Area 4 Impact Outcomes	1. Increase in participation of youth and survivors in policy and practice change 2. Increases in resources to support youth and survivors participation (e.g., training and compensation) 3. Increases in social capital among individuals with lived experience. 4. Youth and survivors regularly provide feedback to the County in a systematic way 5. Youth develop positive relationships with peers and adults.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
4.1	Fund & expand youth empowerment programs/events	Increased access to youth empowerment events and activities
4.2	Invest in youth leaders to plan/carry out peer-to-peer outreach, events and training efforts	Increases in opportunities for professional development and leadership for youth
4.3	Expand availability of peer and survivor advocates, mentors, and navigators to all CSE-impacted youth, regardless of system involvement	Increases in youth impacted by CSE who are connected to an advocate
4.4	Collaborate with the Youth Commission	Improvements in collaboration with the Youth Commission
4.5	Explore program models to foster multi-generational connections between elders and young people, movement building and mentorship	Increased connections to programs that foster multi-generational relationships and connections
4.6	Hire survivors/lived experience experts in critical roles including direct service, supervision, and leadership	Increases in professional development and leadership oppportunities for lived experience experts
4.7	Consult with lived experience experts in all County program, curriculum, and policy development, including implementation of Strategic Plan	Increased engagement and integration of lived experience expertise in all human trafficking related work in the County

Priority Area # 5: Empower Parents and Caregivers to Support Their Own Children		
Priority Area 5 Impact Outcomes	1. Reductions in system involvement for families impacted by CSE. 2. Increased access and availability of services and programs for parents (including EPY). 3. Improvements in child health and development. 4. Increases in healing from intergenerational and historical trauma including familial trafficking.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
5.1	Expand Parent Empowerment Program	Improved parent-child engagement and parental/caregiver efficacy in resolving conflicts and engaging in rule setting
5.2	Expand access to real time coaching & technical	Improved self-efficacy and agency in caregiving
5.3	Increase direct concrete support to parents	Higher economic self-sufficiency
5.4	Increase supports to expectant and parenting young people impacted by CSE	Increases in family connectedness and access to community support
Priority Area # 6: Assess and Adapt Existing Collaborative, Trauma-informed Services for System-impacted Youth		
Priority Area 6 Impact Outcomes	1. Increases in utilization of collaborative, multidisciplinary protocols and practices that have positive outcomes. 2. Increases in number of youth and families receiving best practices (e.g., collaborative, trauma-informed responses). 3. Increases in knowledge and awareness of effective and ineffective practices to support survivors and decrease demand for commercial sex.	
	Strategies	**Proposed Process Outcomes**
6.1	Analyze current functioning and impact of STAR & DREAM Courts, CTU & DREAM Units and adapt as needed	Increased fidelity of specialized programs and alignment with best practices
6.2	Provide case consultation and support to youth-serving professionals outside of specialized units	Increased use of case consultation and secondary support to youth outside of the specialized units who are also impacted by CSE
6.3	Bolster use of multi-disciplinary team structures to all youth impacted by CSE	Improve the multidisciplinary teaming process and expand to youth outside of the specialized units
6.4	Explore evolving role of law enforcement in a public health approach to trafficking, and develop appropriate, trauma-informed law enforcement responses	Improve the law enforcement response to trafficking to alignment with best practices, including a public health approach
6.5	Collaborate on Countywide efforts to end incarceration of girls to ensure CSE experience is considered and services are integrated	Decreases in youth incarceration and increase in access to CBO services
6.6	Assess and adapt County efforts to address exploiter and buyer accountability	Increases in programs and efforts to address demand
6.7	Assess appropriateness of integration of labor trafficking into existing County specialized services, protocols, and units	Increased integration of labor trafficking into County services and appropriate adaptations made
6.8	Assess and refine implementation of Victim Witness Protocol	Increased fidelity to the Victim Witness Protocol

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CBO - Community-based organization

CLC - Children's Law Center of California

CSE - Commercial sexual exploitation

CSEC - Commercial sexual exploitation of children

CTLT - Child Trafficking Leadership Team

CTU - Los Angeles County Probation Department Child Trafficking Unit

DCFS - Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

DHS - Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

DMH - Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

DPH - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

DPO - Deputy Probation Officer

DPSS - Los Angeles County Department of Social Services

DREAM Court - Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring Court

DYD - Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development

EPY - Expectant and parenting youth

FBO - Faith-based organization

FFPSA - Family First Prevention Services Act

FRP - Los Angeles County Law Enforcement First Responder Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

HT - Human trafficking

HTSSP - Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol

ILP - Independent Living Program

LACOE - Los Angeles County Office of Education

LA Metro - Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

LE - Law enforcement

LEE - Lived experience expert [no hyphens]

MDT - Multidisciplinary team

PACT - Child & Family Policy Institute of California's Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking Project

PEP - Parent Empowerment Program

PHN - Public Health Nurse

Probation - Los Angeles County Probation Department

SOGIE - Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

STAR Court - Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience Court

STRTP - Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program

SW - Social worker

SYZ - Safe Youth Zone

TAY - Transition age youth, usually referring to youth approximately 18-25 years old

UBI - Universal basic income

VWP - Los Angeles County Victim Witness Testimony Protocol for Supporting Youth Impacted by CSE

YC - Los Angeles County Youth Commission

YJR - Youth Justice Reimagined

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Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking

2025 - 2030

A Comprehensive Approach to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking in Los Angeles County: Five Year Strategic Plan to Integrate a Response to Child Labor Trafficking

Introduction

For the past decade, California has led the nation in identified human trafficking cases. In 2019, one-third of cases involved the trafficking of children and youth under the age of 18.[1] In response, state and local jurisdictions have dedicated resources to address child trafficking, including the development of systems for identification, prevention, and specialized services.

Like the nation overall, California and Los Angeles County's efforts have focused particularly on a response to child sex trafficking, or the commercial sexual exploitation of children. In 2014, the signing of Senate Bill (SB) 855 clarified that children who had experienced or were at risk of sex trafficking fell under the purview of child welfare agencies and created a statewide Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Program, an opt-in program administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Counties electing to participate received funding to establish intervention activities and services for children at risk of, or experiencing commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

In addition to funding, CDSS provided county welfare service professionals with training to effectively identify, intervene, and provide case management services. Subsequently, in 2015, SB 794 was enacted to codify the Federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, requiring county child welfare and probation departments to establish protocols for identifying, reporting, and serving children and youth at risk of CSE. It also mandated that counties take steps to locate youth missing from care and understand the reasons why they were missing or away from care to inform future placement and service decisions. Further solidifying this commitment, SB 1322 was passed in 2016, prohibiting the arrest of minors for prostitution and related charges, thereby ensuring that young people experiencing CSE are treated as victims of abuse rather than as offenders.

As a response, counties across California have created task forces and coalitions, launched public awareness campaigns, and formed partnerships with community-based providers. A recent report in 2020, highlights the innovative work which has been accomplished over a decade of Los Angeles County's leadership, while acknowledging gaps and the ***"need for more work to be done."***

As described in a recent 2020 report Building Bridges, "Los Angeles County, one of the nation's most populous counties in the country, is also the site for large numbers of children and youth being victimized through commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). Over the last decade, Los Angeles County has devoted significant time, energy, and resources to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth (CSEC/Y). The County's work has been driven by survivors—the individuals who have lived experience and whose lives are most affected by the policy and practice changes implemented. The County has made tremendous progress over the

[1] National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2019). California statistics. Retrieved from https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/california

past decade, learned many lessons along the way, and also recognizes that there is more work to be done."[2]

The Gap to Address Child Labor Trafficking

In stark comparison, the lack of legislative mandate, significant data, dedicated funds and services to address child labor trafficking has remained limited; which are critical to mobilize a response to further understand the scale of impact of labor trafficking and its frequent co-occurrence with CSE. Addressing the pervasive issue of commercial exploitation, in all its forms, will require a comprehensive and strategic approach that acknowledges historically-rooted and current-day push factors that result in vulnerabilities for children, youth, families, and communities.

The issue of child labor trafficking has been frequently misunderstood and under identified in systems due to a lack of data around the issue. However, recently more attention has been drawn to the topic exemplified by a 2023-2024 series of New York Times articles entitled "Alone and Exploited - An investigation into America's hidden migrant child workforce," exposing the horrific state of child labor in the U.S., and the record numbers of unaccompanied children entering the U.S. ending up in dangerous and exploitative jobs.[3] The national crisis elevated what emerging research and lived experience experts have highlighted for years. There remains a significant gap, in the awareness, and understanding of the shared vulnerabilities, co-occurrence and intersectional forms of commercial exploitation experienced by both immigrant and U.S. citizen children and youth. Research shows that this can occur in formal and informal or gig economies and through forced criminal activities.

Other situations of labor trafficking experienced by immigrant youth in Los Angeles can be seen in case examples submitted by the Children's Law Center (CLC) of California [names, and identifying details redacted for confidentiality]. A limited data set of immigrant youth being served by CLC, showed that of the 26 youth who had experienced commercial exploitation, 21 had experienced labor trafficking, four had experienced sex-trafficking, and one had experienced both. The youth identified as female (16) and male (10). The countries of origin included Guatemala (12), El Salvador (6), Honduras (5), and Mexico (3). Industries in which the youth had experienced exploitation included domestic labor, construction, forced criminality, food services, manufacturing, and in meat/poultry processing facilities. It should be noted that this

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[2] Newcombe, A., French, E., Walker Brown, K., & Guymon, M. Building Bridges: How Los Angeles County Came Together to Support Children and Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation (2020). Los Angeles County; National Center for Youth Law. https://live-ncyl-ci.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/wp_attachments/LA-County-Story-Building-Bridges.pdf

[3] Dreier, H; Luce; K. (2023). Alone and Exploited - An investigation into America's hidden migrant child workforce. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/series/alone-and-exploited

was a limited data set and does not include U.S. citizen youth who have experienced CSE, labor trafficking and forced criminality served by CLC across the agency.[4]

In a recent interview, an anti-trafficking expert and advocate, Jess Torres, whose childhood experience included CSE with co-occurring forced criminality and labor trafficking in the massage industry and as an au pair reflected on the importance of addressing the intersectional nature of commercial exploitation.

"People often think there's a clear-cut experience of trafficking when a trafficker doesn't care how you make money, or how they are extracting a profit. For example, a trafficker could have someone stripping, selling sex, panhandling, working a regular job, or stealing simultaneously. Sexual violence can also be a key factor of coercion and power dynamic, within a labor trafficking setting. I think that we're often trained as professionals to be concerned about the traumatic impacts of commercial sexual exploitation of children, but we might not dig deeper or understand the different ways that a young person might be manipulated – or what they are exposed to in other ways that can be equally as harmful." [5]

Finally, a 2024 report by Loyola Law School, Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative entitled Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Youth Who are Labor Trafficked by Forced Criminality in the Los Angeles Area [6] summarizes new data demonstrating that the number of youth trafficked for their labor, both sex/labor, or for criminal activities, is likely as common, if not more prevalent than child sex trafficking. The report raises concerns that Los Angeles County is likely criminalizing these youth, instead of identifying them as survivors of trafficking and providing them with wraparound services to stop the cycle of violence and abuse.

Relevant National and Statewide Data

- Of the 1,334 reported cases in 2021, involving 2,122 victims of human trafficking reported in California to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, **nearly 15 percent** involved some form of labor trafficking, and experts agree it is widely under-reported. The top reported industries included domestic work, agriculture/farms, peddling/begging rings, construction, illicit activity and health and beauty services. While age is not collected in all cases, **20 percent** of the total number of trafficking situations [where it was identified] involved children.[7]

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[4] Kari White, Immigration Attorney with Children's Law Center of California and Member of the Labor Trafficking Sub-Committee of the Child Trafficking Steering Committee to promote an Integrated Child Trafficking Response, July 30, 2024, Written Response on CLC Case Data.

[5] Jess Torres, Rising Safe and Sound Program Manager, CFPIC PACT Consultant, Interview with Melissa Gomez, PACT Project Director, July 31, 2024.

[6] Martinez, A. (2024). Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Youth Who are Labor Trafficked by Forced Criminality in the Los Angeles Area. https://www.lls.edu/media/loyolalawschool/academics/clinicsexperientiallearning/sji/publicationsandreports/LTFC%20Report.pdf

[7] National Human Trafficking Hotline (2021). California Statistics. Retrieved from https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics/california

- A ten-city study on commercial exploitation experienced by youth in Covenant House's care across the U.S. revealed that 1 in 5 (of the 641 youth interviewed) had experienced human trafficking – 91 percent were offered a lucrative work opportunity that turned out to be fraudulent.[8]
- In California, the participating sites included Los Angeles, where cases were evenly split, 50 percent CSE, 50 percent labor and Oakland, 40 percent CSE, 60 percent labor. Identified labor cases were largely U.S. citizen youth that disclosed forced criminality (drug dealing).
- Follow up research at Covenant House's New Jersey site "A Case of Mistaken Identity (2023)," similarly identified that as many as half of all youth facing homelessness who experienced trafficking have been labor trafficked (forced criminality was most common).[9]
- The U.S. Department of Labor found that there has been a 69 percent increase in the number of minors who are illegally employed in the U.S during 2018-2022.[9]
- A 2019 report by the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) summarizing data collected across the state of California found that even with the focus on sex trafficking 39 percent of cases reported included labor trafficking and up to 71 percent of cases involved children.[10]
- The 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: United States noted that Health and Human Services (HHS) issued 2,067 Eligibility Letters to foreign national children in FY 2023. Of the 2,067 foreign national children certified in FY 2023, 24 percent experienced sex trafficking, 67 percent experienced labor trafficking, and three percent experienced both labor and sex trafficking, and for six percent, the type of trafficking was unknown.[10]

Relevant Los Angeles County Data

- A 2022 Analysis of CAST's database of over 2200+ clients, revealed that 36 percent of cases involved labor trafficking and 24 percent of cases involved transitional-aged youth. 29 percent of clients surveyed between 2019-2023, were forced to commit crimes as a part of their victimization.
- Of those served in FY 2021-22, by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services Human Trafficking Victim Assistance Program, which has funded Los Angeles service providers including: CAST, Journey Out, and Volunteers of America, 21 percent were survivors of labor trafficking and nine percent were survivors of both sex and labor trafficking.[10]
- Recent data publicly available on the U.S. Department of HHS website, documented that Los Angeles County has the second highest number of unaccompanied children (2,503) in the nation released to sponsors in FY 2024 (through May 2024), who are at high risk for both CSE and/or labor trafficking.[10]
- A data set provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division merged with the Census dataset demonstrates the high number of immigrant youth at risk of labor trafficking in LA County. The data show the concentration of youth by county and by Los Angeles zip code. The highest numbers of youth originated from El Salvador, Guatemala,

[8] Murphy, Laura. (2017). Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth A Ten-City Study. https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ht/murphy-labor-sex-trafficking-homeless-youth.pdf

[9] US Department of Labor. (2024) https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20230727

[10] U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (2024), written communication with Paul Chang.

and Honduras. Distribution of sponsors was relatively equal across parents (11,559), aunts, uncles or siblings (11,657). While 3,140 were non-relatives[10].

- An investigation in 2024, found that poultry processing factories in La Puente and City of Industry were found to have employed children as young as 14 years old. These children were working to debone poultry using sharp knives and operate power-driven lifts to move pallets. The children also worked excessive hours in violation of federal child labor regulations and were retaliated against for cooperating with investigators by cutting their wages. [11]
- A survey conducted by Annie Fukushima, Ph.D., based on training conducted in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties by the Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) Project and CAST LA, found that Los Angeles County child welfare workers cannot effectively identify child labor trafficking. Over a quarter of participants (26 percent) said "no" when asked if they had ever worked with labor trafficked children, yet 40 percent of the same group said they have "likely or very likely worked with a child who had experienced being coerced for their labor." Nearly half (47 percent) had provided services to, or worked with children who were defrauded about terms of their employment. [12]

California's Child Welfare Response

In 2021, CDSS released ACIN 1-17-21, citing research conducted by Child and Family Policy Institute of California's (CFPIC) PACT Project as an initial roadmap for child welfare agencies, probation, and their partners to build capacity to prevent, early identify, and serve labor trafficked children and youth. The model affirms a comprehensive approach to addressing commercial exploitation of children, acknowledging that exploitation occurs on a spectrum, and can be intersectional in its nature. The learnings from the work among PACT's ten pilot county model (of which Los Angeles participated) resulted in guidance that counties could leverage the strengths of the existing CSEC Opt-In Program to build a path forward.

The research included a literature review, key interviews, listening sessions, and the facilitation of county readiness surveys, with the participating child welfare agencies and multi-disciplinary partners; in addition to statewide focus groups with community-based organizations (CBOs) and adult survivors of CSE and/or labor trafficking. It concluded that child labor trafficking or the commercial exploitation of a child for their labor or services is highly relevant to child welfare systems for several key reasons:

- Children with experience in foster care or the juvenile justice system are at a particularly high risk for labor trafficking;

[11] U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. (2024) Newsroom Release. Retrieved from https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/whd/whd20240502

[12] Fukushima, A.I. (2020). A survey of child welfare and labor trafficking in California: A white paper [White paper]. University of Utah. https://anniefukushima.com/2020/01/20/a-survey-of-child-welfare-and-labor-trafficking-incalifornia-a-white-paper/

- Child labor trafficking may involve serious physical harm or a substantial risk of serious physical harm to a child resulting from the failure or inability of the parent or guardian to adequately supervise or protect the child, which may be grounds for the child to be removed from the home and/or come under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court (Welfare and Institutions Code section 300(b)(1)). This may include children who were labor trafficked by a parent or guardian;
- Child labor trafficking frequently intersects with CSE; children at risk of or experiencing CSE should also be screened for child labor trafficking; and
- Concerns around child labor or child labor exploitation do not need to rise to the level of child labor trafficking to be harmful to children.

A significant challenge for county programs remains accessing specialized service funds to support labor trafficked youth, with the same equity as those who have experienced CSE. This can include critical wraparound support such as emergency response, contracted advocacy services facilitated by local CBOs, multi-disciplinary teaming, and cross-coordination with local, state, and national partners (particularly critical as cases of sex and/or labor trafficking often involve multiple jurisdictions and cross county or state lines). In 2022, CDSS Legal Team, provided written clarification to CFPIC PACT's County Network, that while Welfare and Institutions Code section 16524.7 requires CSEC Program funds to be used to cover expenditures related to prevention and intervention services and training related to children who are, or may become, victims of CSE; there is flexibility to utilize funds to serve labor trafficked youth, if a county determines that a child who is a victim of labor trafficking is also at risk of, or experiencing CSE. The statute allows CSEC funds to be used for training and services that would help prevent the child from becoming a victim of CSE. Based on this framework of prevention, Los Angeles County expanded their advocacy [13]contracts in 2023, to provide services to youth experiencing both CSE and/or labor trafficking.

Subsequently, in 2024, CDSS released ACIN 1-16-17, which provides a list of indicators, available screening tools, and four statewide special project codes in order to document information regarding children at risk for or experiencing child labor trafficking and/or forced criminality into the CWS/CMS in a uniform manner. This guidance further acknowledges the important role of the child welfare system in a response to child labor trafficking, in line with the mission to ensure children are safe and free from abuse and neglect.

As discussed above, PACT's initial report found that early adopter counties have approached the work by building on the existing strength of the local CSEC Opt-In Programs, while

[13] CDSS (2022). Written Response in an email to Melissa Gomez, PACT Project Director with CFPIC, on behalf of multiple county agencies who requested clarification, on use of specialized SB 855 Funds, to serve labor trafficked youth, and for use to train child serving professionals.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Wud5cwH9C0VHHIwxQ6e4t3mjvpM7LXbfZHyATs1TJws/edit

addressing existing gaps and barriers to identification and specialized services to youth experiencing labor trafficking and its intersection with CSE.

A few key takeaways regarding implementation of a comprehensive approach include:

- In the absence of legislative mandates, it takes time to build buy-in and capacity.
- Early implementation has focused on raising awareness, training staff, and strengthening partnerships.
- Building a structure around labor trafficking [integration] parallels the growth of the CSEC Program.
- Readiness to address child labor trafficking varies based on counties' existing foundation for a response to sex trafficking.
- Collaboration with individuals with lived expertise and community-based youth serving and culturally responsive organizations is critical.

In conclusion, continued education on all forms of child trafficking is necessary, and a prioritization of protocol expansion and partnership across systems, to prevent, better identify, and respond to all children and youth experiencing commercial exploitation.

Los Angeles County's Response

California's CSEC Program laid the groundwork for county child welfare agencies to develop a coordinated response to child trafficking. Since 2014, Los Angeles County has built on that platform and made great strides in developing awareness, implementing screening tools, creating internal and interagency protocols, and expanding services for youth who have experienced or are at risk of trafficking. Until recent years, Los Angeles County's training primarily focused almost solely on sex trafficking, with minimal awareness of the prevalence and co-occurrence of child labor trafficking. An unintended consequence is that many local child serving professionals conflate commercial exploitation or human trafficking with only CSE. This has done a grave disservice to all children at risk of, or experiencing labor trafficking, or who have co-occurring experiences of forced criminality and labor exploitation alongside their experience of CSE.

Los Angeles, as one of the initial ten pilot counties participating in the PACT Project, has been an early innovator, and has taken initial steps to build a comprehensive child trafficking approach since early 2019, by working in consultation with CFPIC's PACT Project, CAST, and the Department of Public Health (DPH), among other experts and leaders with lived expertise.

Raising awareness about labor trafficking has been foundational for developing the buy-in and collaboration that is needed for effective partnership, identification, and response. Moreover, awareness and education promotes a shared understanding to align policies, agreements, and future collaboration across systems. Lived experience leaders and CBOs have been critical leaders in the development of an integrated model. Through this integrative work, Los Angeles County aims to create a more inclusive landscape and equitable treatment for all children and youth experiencing trafficking, regardless of the way in which a child is being exploited.

While there is an increased awareness and movement to strengthen training and partnerships to address child labor trafficking, much work remains in the areas of standardizing screening

and identification, data collection, interagency collaboration and updating protocols to ensure that all children, regardless of the form of exploitation, are protected and supported.

As California and Los Angeles County move forward in developing a comprehensive child trafficking response, re-training is essential. The County must commit resources, strengthen existing partnerships, and consider new partnerships across sectors. This is especially critical, as data shows that engagement with any system can increase the risk of exploitation. Updated child trafficking policies and protocols should be carefully reviewed to ensure that a key goal is to keep families together while ensuring child safety, and also promoting protective factors to reduce vulnerabilities and risk factors associated with child trafficking and other forms of violence.

Figure 7. Key Areas Assessed

Key Area	
1. Prevention and Awareness	✓ Are there known efforts to prevent child labor trafficking in the county? ✓ Are there known efforts to raise awareness of the specific industries of concern in the county?
2. Staff Training	✓ Has the child welfare agency integrated child labor trafficking into staff training? ✓ Are child welfare agency staff and partners trained to recognize, identify, and respond to the indicators of child labor trafficking?
3. Screening and Identification	✓ Does the child welfare agency have a screening tool for both sex and labor trafficking? ✓ To what extent does the child welfare agency collect data in order to understand occurrence or co-occurrence of labor trafficking?
4. Policies and Protocols	✓ Does the child welfare agency have protocols in place, for instance: a designated point of contact, multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), flow chart of roles and responsibilities, 24-hour federal report for foreign born child/youth, etc.? ✓ Do child welfare agency documents, titles, and policy language inclusive of child labor trafficking? ✓ Are counties engaging survivors in the development of their child trafficking response?
5. Interagency Collaboration	✓ Is there a presence and buy-in of a steering team, coalition, and/or taskforce in the county? ✓ Is there collaboration with agencies including local and federal law enforcement, justice partners, CBOs, or faith-based communities?
6. Service Delivery	✓ Have service delivery structures and programs been adapted to support children and youth who have experienced or are at risk of labor trafficking? ✓ Are services for youth who have experienced or are at risk of labor trafficking available, accessible, and effective?

Roadmap for Implementation

In 2020, implementation recommendations were introduced by CFPIC's research based on key areas assessed in partnership with California counties [Figure 7] and included input from the CDSS and collaboration with child trafficking experts. While many of the recommendations will not be easy to immediately achieve due to a lack of legislative mandate or financial support, focusing on the key areas will assist Los Angeles County move toward a comprehensive and effective service delivery system to support children and youth at-risk of, or experiencing all forms of exploitation. For a comprehensive list of recommendations by jurisdiction, refer to the report.[14]

Looking Forward: Existing Implementation Efforts & Five-Year Strategic Plan

Los Angeles County began this critical work in 2019, with initial public awareness and training efforts; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, progress slowed and was inconsistent.

[14] Hamburg A., Barrio, A; Lua, V.; Gomez, M; Oppenheim, S. (2020). The Child Welfare Response to Labor Trafficking in California. Resource Development Associates, Child and Family Policy Institute of California. https://pact.cfpic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Child-Labor-Trafficking-Brief.pdf

In August 2023, leadership made the critical step to establish a child labor trafficking sub-committee under the CSEC Steering Team. Furthermore, to reflect the commitment to a comprehensive approach to addressing all forms of child trafficking in Los Angeles County, the CSEC Steering Committee updated its name to the Child Trafficking Steering Committee. The working group's subsequent coordination efforts have prioritized implementation, with a goal to support an integrated response to commercial exploitation in LA County, and has provided recommendations to guide the county's five year strategic planning process.

Membership is growing and includes partners such as the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Probation, DPH, LA County Office of Education (LACOE), LA County's DA's Office – Labor Justice Unit, Loyola Law School, CLC, community-based agencies serving youth impacted by trafficking, U.S. Department of Labor - Wage and Hour Division, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Los Angeles County Counsel, Thai Community Development Center, and the Department of Immigrant Affairs.

Established priorities include: regular interaction for partnership and collaboration between key partners, gathering of available data and increased understanding of barriers across multiple systems, and garnering expert support for coordination on current implementation efforts.

Some of LA County's significant efforts to date include:

- Participated as a member of initial PACT Cohort and research in 2019, which included a child labor trafficking readiness survey, a county steering team stakeholder survey, listening sessions with child welfare agencies and CBO's, focus groups with adult survivors of labor trafficking in California and key interviews with child welfare coordinators, lived experience leaders, and other experts.
- Consulted with PACT Project Director and CAST LA to establish a new DCFS Assessment of Exploitation policy on September 1, 2021, that includes child labor trafficking.
- Partnered with PACT and CAST Los Angeles, to train social workers and hotline responders on child labor trafficking; subsequently contracted with CAST LA for an ongoing Child Labor Trafficking 101.
- Expanded and executed Advocacy Services for Youth Impacted by Commercial Exploitation contracts on October 1, 2023, to include service provision to youth at risk of, or experiencing labor trafficking.
- In July 2023, hosted Melissa Gomez, PACT Project Director, who presented a plan of action to the LA County CSEC Steering Committee with specific recommendations to integrate LA County's response to Child Labor Trafficking.
- Established a subcommittee in September 2023, to support an integrated response to commercial exploitation in LA County.
- In December 2023, Steering Committee members voted to rename the Steering Committee to the Child Trafficking Steering Committee, an action to indicate their commitment to approach child trafficking from an integrated lens, addressing all forms of commercial exploitation.
- The subcommittee was tasked to support coordination of current implementation efforts and advise on recommendations to include in LA County's strategic five year plan.

About the Five-Year Work Plan
The following work plan was developed with participation and review by Child Trafficking Steering Committee members in order to integrate a child labor trafficking response into the new overall Five Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and Address Child Trafficking.

Acknowledgements
Special acknowledgement is given to key authors including Melissa Gomez (CFPIC PACT Project Director and Consultant), Co-Chairs Adela Estrada (LA County DCFS) and Susie Baldwin, M.D. (DPH), Stephanie Richard (Loyola Law School), Anabel Martinez (Loyola Law School), supportive data provided by Paul Chang (Department of Labor - Wage and Hour Division), Kari White (CLC), Dawn Schiller (CAST Training Director), Jess Torres (Rising World Wide Safe and Sound Director and PACT Consultant), and all the members of the Labor Trafficking Subcommittee who participated in the review and contributed significant knowledge and guidance to the efforts.

This work plan includes recommendations from research conducted by Resource Development Associates and CFPIC, funded by the CDSS.

Reference: The Child Welfare Response to Labor Trafficking in California, A Ten-County Case Study on Integrating a Response to Child Labor Trafficking, Resource Development Associates (RDA), Child & Family Policy Institute of California, 2020.

Strategic Priority 1: Public Awareness & Outreach
Los Angeles County will ensure public awareness and outreach activities and materials are inclusive of all forms of child trafficking. Los Angeles County will increase awareness by bridging partnerships with local, regional, and task forces or coalitions that comprehensively address child trafficking. Collaborate with partners in California including law enforcement, CBOs, child-serving agencies, anti-trafficking experts, tribal organizations, government entities, and other relevant parties on awareness campaigns and outreach activities that are inclusive of child labor trafficking.

Efforts to Date:
- Los Angeles County has a Human Trafficking Website and outreach materials that currently focus on CSEC only, which can be adapted to include all forms of commercial exploitation.
- Los Angeles County is a member of the Los Angeles Regional Human Trafficking Task Force and has many other existing partnerships on all forms of human trafficking that can be leveraged for outreach efforts.

Strategic Priority 1:	Public Awareness/Outreach Efforts
Implementation Objective:	Adapt existing campaigns and review, update, and/or create awareness/outreach materials so that all are inclusive of child labor trafficking and intersectionality with CSE.
Key Measures	• *Number of public facing county materials updated to include all forms of commercial exploitation.* • *Number of outreach material to youth and families that are updated to include all forms of commercial exploitation.* • *Number of future materials developed to include information on all forms of commercial exploitation.* • *Number of newly developed outreach and materials addressing specific needs and/or populations include information on all forms of commercial exploitation.* • *Number of individuals reached through updated materials (Web impressions, pamphlets distributed, etc.)*
Target Date:	By January 1, 2025

Action Steps	**Lead(s)**	**Time-frame**
1. Develop public information delivery plan and Identify current awareness/outreach materials, campaigns, that need to be updated to include labor trafficking.	Leads: DCFS/DPH/LACOE Workgroup Members: Child Labor Trafficking (LT) subcommittee	11/28/24

2. Review, Update and finalize awareness/outreach materials, campaigns, training brochures that need to be updated to include both sex/labor trafficking.	Leads: DCFS/DPH/PACT/ Loyola/Cast Workgroup Members: Child LT subcommittee/ Lived Experience Experts/Survivor Advisory Group/Asian Pacific Islander Human Trafficking Task Force/LA Regional Human Trafficking Task Force, Thai Community Development Center, DCFS, and Probation.	10/31/25
3. Review, update, and finalize websites: County of Los Angeles, DCFS, Probation, Department of Mental Health.	Leads: DCFS/DPH/DMH/ Probation/Chief Executive Office (CEO) Workgroup Members: Information Technology Services CEO, other relevant County agencies/Lived Experience Experts	10/31/25
4. Create plan for distributing public awareness/outreach materials.	Leads: DCFS/DPH/LACOE Workgroup: Child LT subcommittee/Child Trafficking Steering Committee	12/15/25
5. Distribute new public awareness/outreach materials	Child LT subcommittee members and LA Regional Human Trafficking Task Force/Labor Trafficking Steering Committee/Child Trafficking Steering Committee	1/12/26

Strategic Priority 2: Training

Los Angeles County will provide comprehensive training on child trafficking. Training will be enhanced to ensure education addresses all forms of CSE, labor trafficking, and forced criminality. Additional training will be developed to address the specialized needs to support foreign-born, immigrant and Native American youth through a culturally responsive and linguistically relevant lens.

Efforts to Date:

- A required CSEC 101 Training for DCFS and Probation are offered, which focuses primarily on identifying and serving US citizen youth and CSEC/Y.
- DCFS contracted with CAST to provide an optional Labor Trafficking 101 training, which will need to be integrated into the required "CSEC 101" and renamed "Child Trafficking 101."
- In 2021, Child Protection Hotline workers were trained (one time only) on Data Entry into CWS/CMS on standardized codes for labor trafficking.
- In 2024, CSEC 103, was renamed/adapted as Child Trafficking 103, to consistently train DCFS regional office staff, and Child Protection Hotline workers to include data collection utilizing statewide special project codes on labor trafficking and involving a child in criminal activities, which were newly released in 2024, by ACIN 1-16-17.
- A required Caregiver Training, facilitated by CAST/Community College Foundation includes labor trafficking training per legislative requirements.
- Limited to no specialized training on serving foreign national/immigrant youth at risk of, or experiencing CSE and/or labor trafficking has been developed to date and is noted as a top priority based on county demographics. Training should be developed and include a focus on trafficking within familial settings.
- First Responder Protocol Training currently addresses CSEC/Y only and will need to be updated.
- Probation training currently addresses CSEC/Y and will need to be updated.
- LACOE received the Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education Grant through HHS funding during 2020-2024 and includes a prevention curriculum in limited schools on all forms of commercial exploitation of children.
- Countywide new employment training for all LA County staff currently trains on CSEC/Y. and will need to be updated.
- Safe Zone Training currently addresses CSEC/Y only and will need to be updated.

Strategic Priority 2:	Training
Implementation Objective:	Complete implementation of a Labor Trafficking Training Plan to increase Los Angeles County capacity to identify and serve victims of child labor trafficking.
Key Measures	• *Number, type of trainings offered in English/Spanish/Other completed by FY.* • *Training attendance by discipline/affiliation and type of training.* • *Training Pre/Post tests to measure knowledge acquisition, increased understanding of actionable prevention/intervention behaviors.* • *Number/percent of identified priority groups in Training Plan that completed training.*
Target Date:	By October, 2029

Action Steps	**Lead(s)**	**Time-frame**
1. Review and assess current array of CSEC and Labor Trafficking training that needs to be updated or adapted to address all forms of exploitation, intersectionality and specialized requirements, supports available to foreign national youth (highest priorities).	DCFS/DPH/CAST Loyola/PACT	Current - 2/1/25
2. Develop training plan, associated costs, and funding/pro bono opportunities to support plan. *A separate document linked HERE has already been started to start this process and includes documented training that should be adapted and newly developed.	DCFS/DPH/LACOE/ CAST	4/1/25
3. Enhance child trafficking training plan to include strategic areas based on key disciplines, i.e., Local Educational Agency, DCFS/Probation, CBOs, Schools, County employees.	DCFS/Cast/DPH/ LACOE District Attorney/PD/Law Enforcement/ Probation/DMH/ DHS	2/1/25-2/1/26

4. Based on training plan, adapt, update, or newly develop all LA County training i.e. combining the existing CSEC 101 and optional labor trafficking 101, into a Child Trafficking 101 that addresses all forms of commercial exploitation.	DCFS/DPH/LACOE CAST	To be determined (TBD): Date will vary based on the Training Plan by Discipline .
5. Implement training plan to meet the Identified priority training needs.	DCFS/Cast/DPH/ DHS/ LACOE/ DA/Public Defender/Law Enforcement/ Probation/DMH	1/2025-10/2029
6. Evaluate effectiveness of integrated training content adapted within the training plan.	DCFS/CAST/ Probation	10/1/24-10/2029

Strategic Priority 3: Screening and Identification

Los Angeles County will review current screening tools and assessments for inclusion of child labor trafficking/child trafficking through forced criminality. Limited understanding of the definition of child labor trafficking and lack of widespread implementation of screening and/or assessment tools inclusive of child labor trafficking has led to minimal identification.

Los Angeles County will work collaboratively and in partnership with the CDSS to develop a shared screening or adapt existing tools to be inclusive of labor trafficking, incorporating the definitions already used for coding child labor, or include additional tools that use a trauma-informed approach to increase screening and identification of child labor trafficking and its intersection with CSE.

Efforts to Date:

- Los Angeles County Policy on Assessment of Exploitation was adapted to include assessment of child labor trafficking; however, will need to be updated with new language released in guidance from CDSS.
- Indicator Chart, utilized by DCFS, was developed by PACT to include an overview of CSE, Labor Trafficking: Exploiting a Child's Labor and involving a Child in Criminal Behavior.
- Probation youth are currently being screened for CSE, but adaptation is necessary to address child labor trafficking and forced criminality.

Strategic Priority 3:	Screening and Identification
Implementation Objective:	Identify existing screening mechanisms and adapt or develop a universal screening tool to include child labor trafficking/child trafficking through forced criminality. Implement training for those required to screen.
Key Measures	• *Number of LT referrals to Child Protection Hotline.* • *LT referrals by disposition (evaluated out, unfounded, inconclusive, substantiated.* • *LT referrals that resulted in a new open case while child remained at home or and new foster care placement, or closed referral.* • *Demographic data (sex at birth, gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, service planning area, language; industry of exploitation; place of birth).* • *Number of DCFS/Probation youth documented as at-risk and victims of labor trafficking/Labor Trafficking through Forced Criminality (LTFC) using special project codes.* • *Number of youth identified as being victims of both sex and labor trafficking.* • *Number of agencies by discipline using a screening tool.* • *Sample of evaluated out/closed CPHL referral reviews to determine if/where the family/child/youth was referred to community supports/services.* • *Structured Decision Making Tool (Safety and Risk Assessment) utilization rate.*
Target Date:	July, 2027

Action Steps:	**Lead(s)**	**Timeframe**
1. Review Existing Screening Tools: i.e., SDM is currently utilized in LA County and can be enhanced to screen for LT/LTFC.	Child LT Subcommittee	6/2025
2. Adapt screening mechanisms used by DCFS/Probation to include child labor trafficking and forced criminality.	Child LT Subcommittee	7/2025
3. Provide training on how to use the chosen screening tool.	TBD	TBD
4. Implement use of screening tool.	TBD	TBD

5. Track and monitor and evaluate use of screening tool(s) in LA County.	DCFS/Probation Child LT Sub-committee	TBD

Strategic Priority 4: Data Collection & Research

Los Angeles County will improve data collection to understand the prevalence of child labor trafficking by utilizing the new Special Project Codes for Labor Trafficking, and completing the sub-category allegations (i.e., CSE, exploiting a child's labor, and/or involving a child in criminal behavior) as appropriate.

Los Angeles County will develop aggregated/de-identified data sharing procedures, mechanisms, and expectations for county and community groups participating in the Los Angeles County Child Trafficking Steering Committee, including law enforcement. Data sharing practices will increase collaboration and transparency to better understand the extent of child trafficking, who is at risk and where, which systems youth are engaging with, and outcomes for youth who interface with each system.

Efforts to Date:

- Training was established for DCFS social workers to improve data entry practice for CSEC/Y since 2014, and in 2023, content was updated to include labor trafficking; 10 DCFS Regional offices have been trained to date (August, 2024). New Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes were released by CDSS on May 13, 2024. Additional training is needed.
- Beginning in FY 2013 -2014, data collection by DCFS only tracked CSEC/Y. In 2021, after DCFS Hotline workers were trained around child labor trafficking, several cases of labor trafficking were identified and tracked through the exploitation sub-category. However, data has not been consistently collected/or analyzed for labor trafficking, involving a child in criminal behaviors, or co-occurrence with CSE.
- DCFS Data dashboard exists to track CSEC/Y and will need to be adapted to include labor trafficking, co-occurring victimizations, and involving a child in criminal behaviors.
- DCFS/Probation to add data baseline for CSEC, LT, and both.
- In 2024, Los Angeles County contracted National Center for Youth Law and the University of California, Los Angeles to conduct focus groups with transitional aged youth, gaining qualitative data on the services needs of youth who were at risk of or who had experienced CSE. The DPH has agreed to support additional focus groups with youth who are at risk of, or have experienced labor trafficking and CSE.

Strategic Priority 4:	Data Collection, Data Sharing, and Research
Implementation Objective:	• Improve data collection and data sharing mechanisms among County and community partners to ensure that youth experiencing all forms of trafficking are identified and tracked in the existing systems. • Complete research to improve understanding of needs of youth experiencing CSE/LT or intersections.
Key Measures	• *Number of youth at risk or victims of LT/LTFC identified and documented using Special Project Codes.* • *Listening Session qualitative data on experience and needs of labor trafficked children.* • *Number/percent of youth in DREAM/Child Trafficking Unit with intersectionality with LT/LTFC.* • *Number of youth arrested for LTFC* • *Number/percent of DREAM Court youth who are in need of and receiving services (mental health, substance use, education, Advocacy Services, immigration, pregnant/parenting services, and housing)*

Action Steps	**Lead(s)**	**Timeframe**
1. Update Child Protection Hotline Policy to include Child Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes and track use of codes quarterly.	DCFS	8/1/25
2. Train Social Workers/Supervising Social Workers and Deputy Probation Officers (DPO)/Supervising DPOs on Child Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes.	DCFS/Probation	10/1/24-10/1/29
3. Review and revise LA County DCFS Assessment of Exploitation Policy to include Child Labor Trafficking Special Project Codes.	DCFS/PACT/Loyola	10/1/25
4. Hold youth focus groups to collect qualitative data on experience and needs for labor trafficked children and youth/intersectional experiences.	DPH/ PACT (TBD) DCFS/Probation	TBD
5. Survey Social Workers and Probation Officers, to determine number of youth on current caseloads which have intersectional experiences with Labor trafficking and Labor Trafficking through Forced Criminality.	DCFS/Probation DREAM/Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court	11/1/24

6. Develop a Data Dashboard to collect and analyze youth at risk of or experiencing CSE, labor trafficking, and involving a child in criminal behavior.	DCFS	TBD
7. Coordinate with DA's office/PD's office to track data on cases of youth arrested for LTFC.	DPH/Probation/ DCFS	TBD

Strategic Priority 5: Policies and Procedures

Los Angeles County will update the language in all relevant internal policies and procedures to be inclusive of child labor trafficking. Language to be changed from Sex Trafficking, CSEC, or Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking to inclusive terminology such as Child Trafficking or CEC and/or Labor Trafficking and Forced Criminality.

Efforts to Date:

- DCFS Assessment of Exploitation policy was updated in 2021, but needs review.
- Child Protection Hotline Protocol was updated in 2021, but needs review.

Strategic Priority 5:	Policies and Procedures
Implementation Objective:	Policies and procedures that address CSE are developed or adapted to be inclusive of child labor trafficking.
Key Measures	• *Number of revised policies/Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) identified in the LT work plan that integrate LT/LTFC.*
Target Date:	6/30/25

Action Steps:	**Lead(s)**	**Timeframe**
1. Review and Identification of all policies & procedures which need development or updating.	DCFS/Probation	TBD
2. Review/Update LA DCFS Assessment of Exploitation.	Loyola	TBD
3. Review and Update FRP Policy & Protocol.	Multi-Agency Response Team (MART/Probation/ DCFS /PACT/Loyola	TBD
4. Update CSEC Desk Guide for Social Workers to include Child Labor Trafficking.	Loyola	TBD
5. Child Protection Hotline Policy.	DCFS/PACT/Loyola	TBD
6. MART Policy.	DCFS/PACT/Loyola	TBD

7. Interagency MOU and Matrix.	Child Trafficking Steering Committee	TBD
8. Explore development of MOU with PD to address LT/LTFC.	TBD	TBD
9. Develop shared protocols with the Department of Labor, to discuss roles/responsibilities in response to child labor trafficking cases.	DCFS/Advocacy Agencies	TBD

Strategic Priority 6: Service Provision

Los Angeles County will:

- Utilize the existing SB 855 County Opt-In CSEC Program Model to serve victims of child labor trafficking that currently fall under the purview of child welfare. This includes youth whose victimization has an intersection with sex trafficking, who are labor trafficked by parents or guardians, or are labor trafficked due to the failure or inability of the parent or guardian to adequately supervise or protect the child [WIC 300(b)(1)]. Los Angeles can leverage funding from CSEC Program Appropriation for training and capacity building.

- Make available and utilize Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and/or Child and Family Teams for labor trafficked children and youth. A multi-disciplinary response has proven successful in the collaboration of key stakeholders and available services in order to coordinate and address the ongoing and wide range of complex short, transitional, and long-term needs that exist for victims of sex trafficking. Counties can build on the existing mechanisms to support identified victims of child labor trafficking and their caregivers. Teaming strategies can serve to proactively plan for triggering events and be individualized to each child or youth's experience. Los Angeles will consider the inclusion of additional CBOs or partners with specialized expertise, as needed.

- Collaborate with local, statewide, federal, and tribal partners to ensure comprehensive, trauma-informed, culturally, and linguistically appropriate service delivery to children and youth who have experienced labor trafficking. Los Angeles will collaborate with providers that specialize in serving this population and increase partnerships with individuals and agencies who may offer unique support such as workforce development programs, cultural and immigration centers, or civil attorneys. Counties can clarify processes for referrals and coordination with CBOs and tribal organizations in order to ensure victims receive comprehensive services and individualized services.

- Will address the specialized needs of foreign-born victims and of both labor and/or sex trafficking who are eligible for additional services through the provision of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and subsequent California legislation. Supporting foreign born victims of child trafficking may include collaboration with the Refugee Program Bureau (which administers the Trafficking and Crime Victim Assistance Program and the California Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program); and collaboration with the Office on Trafficking in Persons to fulfill the TVPA requirement that federal, state, or local officials notify HHS within 24 hours after discovering a foreign national child victim to facilitate the provision of assistance (22 U.S.C. § 7105).

Efforts to Date:

- Services/resources historically have focused on CSEC/Y.
- Services/resources historically have focused on U.S. Citizen children/youth.
- Advocacy Contracts were revised in 2023, to include services to youth experiencing labor trafficking.
- Additional referrals have been made to CAST and other CBOs that serve child victims of labor trafficking outside of the contracted providers.
- DCFS maintains an Advocacy Platform to track and provide oversight of contracted service providers. The platform will need to be updated to track labor trafficking.
- While providers have noted cases of labor trafficking and co-occurrence with CSE, the actual number of youth served by contracted DCFS providers is unknown.

Strategic Priority 6:	**Service Provision/Advocacy**
Implementation Objective:	Develop and implement quality service provision pathways for youth experiencing or at risk of labor trafficking.
Key Measures	• *Number/percent of all contracted Advocacy providers trained on LT.* • *Number of HT trained language translators to meet the need of victims in LA County.* • *Data tracking on the # of Track DREAM Court youth with intersection of LT/LTFC.* • *Sample of case review data and interviews to measure practice around engagement of youth/family/kin/non-kin/MDT partners, teaming, youth voice and choice, harm reduction, coordinated case planning, and tracking/adapting.* • *Advocacy Services case reviews and interviews to measure application of a trauma-informed approach using the Integrated Core Practice Model.* • *Results of Advocacy Services' Youth Satisfaction Survey.* • *Development of a LT Resource Guide.*
Target Date:	TBD

Action Steps	**Lead(s)**	**Timeframe**
1. Map current service flow charts for serving CSE identified youth and adapt to include provisions for LT.	DCFS/Probation/ Loyola Law School	TBD
2. Meet with Advocacy Agency contracted providers monthly to identify training, practice support, and service delivery needs to continually improve efforts to serve child labor trafficking victims.	DCFS	TBD

3. Update DCFS Advocacy Platform to track and provide oversight of contracted service providers.	DCFS	TBD
4. Incorporate referral process and advocate response into First Responder's Protocol for child labor trafficking victims.	DCFS/Probation LASD	TBD
5. Identify additional CBO's (youth serving organizations) to meet gaps in service delivery (i.e., Positive Results in South LA).	Child LT Sub-committee	TBD
6. Review and explore adaptation of DREAM Court/STAR Court Transfer policy and procedures to address court cases involving child/youth victims of labor trafficking.	DCFS/County Counsel/CLC/ Probation/Youth's Attorney	TBD
7. Explore and adapt CLC's data tracking system for youth assigned to DREAM Court, to include labor trafficking.	Child LT Sub-committee/CLC/ DCFS	TBD
8. Establish a pool of HT trained translators who are available during and after traditional business hours to meet the linguistic needs of those identified to be at risk or victims of Human Trafficking in LA County.	TBD	TBD
9. Coordinate with Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs to better support service delivery for immigrant youth and language access for victims.	TBD	TBD

Strategic Priority 7: Steering Team/Leadership

Los Angeles County expanded the Child Trafficking Steering Committee to provide leadership and expertise on the intersection of child sex and labor trafficking. Los Angeles County's Child Trafficking Steering Committee provides ongoing oversight and support on interagency protocols to ensure county agencies and partners effectively collaborate to better identify and serve children and youth at risk or victims of trafficking. This mechanism was expanded to explicitly address the intersection of child sex trafficking with child labor trafficking and invited additional partners to address any gaps in services or resources. Los Angeles County will continue education and inclusion of additional members as it supports the strategic plan's efforts.

Efforts to Date:

- In July 2023, Melissa Gomez, PACT Project Director, presented a plan of action to the Los Angeles County CSEC Steering Committee with specific recommendations to integrate Los Angeles County's response to Child Labor Trafficking.
- In September 2023, a subcommittee was established to support an integrated response to commercial exploitation in LA County. Identified goals include: regular interaction for partnership and collaboration between key stakeholders, gathering of available data, and increased understanding of system gaps/barriers to serve labor trafficked youth. The sub-committee was tasked to support coordination of current implementation efforts and advise on recommendations to include in LA County's strategic planning.
- Membership is growing and includes partners such as, DCFS, Probation, DPH, LACOE,

Los Angeles County's DA's Office – Labor Justice Unit, Loyola Law School, CLC, Saving Innocence, US Department of Labor - Wage and Hour Division, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Los Angeles County Counsel, Thai Community Development Center, Department of Immigrant Affairs, and the CFPIC - PACT Project.

- In December 2023, Steering Committee members voted to re-name the Steering Committee: the Child Trafficking Steering Committee, an action to indicate their commitment to approach child trafficking from an integrated lens, addressing all forms of commercial exploitation.
- In 2024, Los Angeles County's Child Trafficking Steering Team, embraced a commitment to addressing child trafficking through the lens of a public health and prevention approach.

Strategic Priority 7:	**Leadership**		
Implementation Objective:	Build capacity within the Child Labor Trafficking Subcommittee and Child Trafficking Steering Committee to effectively implement a public health approach to child trafficking, using an integrated lens to address all forms of commercial exploitation.		
Key Measures	• *Number of coordinated meetings.* • *Presentations by key experts and training to steering committee.* • *Survey to gauge increase of knowledge.*		
Target Date:	10/1/24-10/1/29		
Action Steps:		**Lead(s)**	**Due Date**
1. Continued development of Child LT Subcommittee that meets bi-monthly and as needed.		DCFS/DPH/PACT	TBD
2. Build accessible library of resources on Child Trafficking to members of Child LT Subcommittee and Child Trafficking Steering Committee.		PACT LT Sub-Committee	TBD
3. Continued Consultation with CFPIC PACT's technical expertise.		PACT	TBD
4. Propose and incorporate feedback from the Child Trafficking Steering Team, to address budget and funding needs to accomplish the work plan.		DPH/DCFS	4/2025
5. Further Education to Steering Team Members about Public Health Approach and Integration of Child Labor Trafficking into a Comprehensive Approach. Include regular presentations by experts from the Labor Trafficking Subcommittee, Lived Experience Experts, and DPH.		DPH/Sub- Committee	TBD

Strategic Priority 8: Collaboration

Los Angeles County will:

- Collaborate with local, statewide, federal, and tribal partners to ensure comprehensive, trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery to children and youth who have experienced labor trafficking. Los Angeles County will collaborate with providers that specialize in serving this population and increase partnerships with individuals and agencies who may offer unique support such as workforce development programs, cultural and immigration centers, or civil attorneys. Counties can clarify processes for referrals and coordination with CBOs and tribal organizations in order to ensure victims receive comprehensive services and individualized services.

- Collaborate with Indian tribes, counties, and tribal governments as well as working with Native American and tribal organizations, including law enforcement, to create a joint response to child labor trafficking and its intersection with sex trafficking. Tribal communities have unique, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed responses to human trafficking based on their legal status, existing services, and other factors. Government agencies and nongovernmental organizations should consult with local tribes on the best way to identify and respond to human trafficking involving Native American victims of crimes occurring on tribal lands. In addition, it is important to identify service delivery partners who can meet the needs of indigenous individuals who may not be from a federally recognized tribe, including indigenous unaccompanied undocumented minors.

Efforts to Date:

- Partnership development has focused on US citizen CSEC/Y and must be expanded to additional collaborations.
- Partnership has focused on collaboration with LEA, and should shift to prioritize a public health, community-based approach.
- The LT Subcommittee has recruited newly identified partners to further collaborate efforts and improve cross-sector coordination.
- DCFS is a member of the Labor Trafficking Task Force in Los Angeles County and attends quarterly statewide labor trafficking implementation working group meetings with county programs to discuss cross-county collaboration through PACT.
- DCFS partnered with the Department of Labor on cases including investigations of poultry processing.

Strategic Priority 8:	**Collaboration**
Implementation Objective:	Improve collaboration between stakeholders to improve investigation and coordinated services for youth at risk of/experiencing labor trafficking.
Key Measures	• *Number of Human Trafficking Partnership Meetings held.* • *Number of participants.* • *Number of partnerships developed with agencies serving victims of LT.* • *Results of HT Partnership Survey.*

Target Date:	6/30/26	
Action Steps:	**Lead(s)**	**Due Date**
1. Review membership list of Steering Committee and LT Subcommittee - invite additional relevant members.	Child LT Sub-committee and Child Trafficking Steering Committee	11/1/24
2. Increased partnership with the Department of Labor, to discuss roles/responsibilities and develop shared protocols in response to child labor trafficking cases.	DCFS	TBD
3. Create a Community Partnership/Alliance focused on prevention and addressing child trafficking.	Child LT Sub-committee and Child Trafficking Steering Committee	TBD
4. Increase partnership with the Office of Immigration Affairs to better coordinate efforts and support for immigrant youth at risk of, or experiencing LT/CSE/FC.	TBD	TBD
5. Collaborate with DCFS Specialized Native American Unit to leverage existing partnerships to improve services to CSEC/Y and LT youth who identify as Native American.	DCFS	TBD
6. Outreach and promote coordination with Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development to develop protocol for identified youth trafficked for LTFC who could be within their program or shared support for service delivery, i.e. employment development, etc.	TBD	TBD
7. Expand outreach to TAY-serving organizations to better meet the needs of survivors age 18+.	TBD	TBD

Strategic Priority 9: Lived Expertise

Los Angeles County will engage with lived experience leaders, from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to inform county-level work. Include meaningful input of those with lived experience through participation on advisory boards and involvement in community-wide anti-trafficking efforts, which may include the development of public awareness campaigns, prevention or training curriculum, and direct service provision.

Survivors of child labor and/or sex trafficking should be included in any effort without requiring public disclosure of their experience or exploitation, should be representative of the diverse populations within Los Angeles County, and individuals should be compensated fairly for their expertise and work as subject matter experts.

Efforts to Date:

Lived experienced experts of CSE have advised on the development of LA County's work since 2014. Some additional support from survivors of both CSE/LT or LT have advised in consulting capacities, including:

- Jess Torres, is actively involved in leadership of the LT Subcommittee, through CFPIC, PACT Project.
- Dawn Schiller manages the DCFS Training Contract, supports training on Labor Trafficking of Minors, member of the LT Subcommittee, through CAST.
- Jimmy Lopez' training facilitation, through PACT (2020-2021).
- Jamelia Hinds training facilitation, through PACT (2020-2021).

Strategic Priority 9:	**Lived Expertise/Partnership with Survivor Leaders**
Implementation Objective:	Strengthen existing program development through meaningful engagement with lived experience experts in multiple domains.
Key Measures	• *Participation of survivor leaders in Child Trafficking Steering Committee and LT subcommittee.* • *# of consultations with lived expertise/leaders.* • *# of individuals contracted in advocacy roles/peer partners.* • *Funding amounts to support lived expertise in roles to address both CSEC/Y and LT youth, or professional/community education.* • *Pre-Post Surveys.* • *Youth satisfaction surveys.*
Target Date:	TBD

Action Steps	**Lead(s)**	**Due Date**
1. Explore and identify funding sources to provide compensation to lived experience experts for involvement in work.	LT Subcommittee	TBD
2. Identify a lived experience expert of labor trafficking to participate and advise on Child Trafficking Steering Team.	LT Subcommittee	TBD
3. Partner with contracted advocacy providers to employ peer mentors with experience of both CSE and/or labor trafficking.	TBD	TBD
4. Utilize survivor informed, reviewed outreach materials, curriculum, etc.	TBD	TBD
5. As the plan progresses, Identify ways to incorporate review, feedback, or participation by those with lived expertise to inform development of each domain, i.e., prevention, outreach, and screening.	TBD	TBD
6. Explore adaptation and implementation of the Parent Empowerment Program Model to support caregivers with youth who have experienced all forms of commercial exploitation.	TBD	TBD
7. Incorporate youth satisfaction survey qualitative data to improve programming.	TBD	TBD

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