

July 2021



# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SEATTLE

PREPARED BY THE SEATTLE HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

# Table of Contents

<b>01</b>	Introduction	<b>41</b>	Recommendations: Housing
<b>03</b>	What is Human Trafficking?	<b>50</b>	Recommendations: Preventative Education
<b>13</b>	Local Stories of Trafficking	<b>60</b>	Recommendations: Access to Mental Health Services
<b>16</b>	Who is Trafficked?	<b>68</b>	Recommendations: Outreach Through Technology
<b>20</b>	Anti-Trafficking Tools in WA State	<b>75</b>	Closing Words
<b>29</b>	Models for Combatting Sex Trafficking	<b>77</b>	Glossary
<b>36</b>	Models for Combatting Labor Trafficking	<b>79</b>	Bibliography



# Introduction



We are three University of Washington students who were selected as 2021 Seattle Human Rights Commission Fellows. We are passionate about addressing human trafficking in our communities. We believe, and know, that human trafficking is an abuse of human rights. The fact that it is pervasive in the United States, is often hidden in plain sight, and it disproportionately harms marginalized communities is cause for concern and demands immediate action.

While we are committed to supporting survivors of human trafficking and preventing more people from becoming victims, it is important for us to acknowledge that we are not survivors of human trafficking ourselves.

We produce this report with and for community. We conducted extensive interviews with service providers and survivors in King County and performed detailed online research over the span of four months.

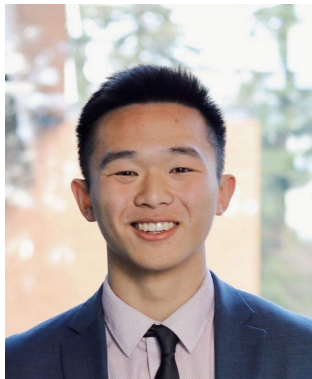
We have developed a set of recommendations for the City and the County in order to better support survivors of human trafficking in this area.

We start by demystifying human trafficking, presenting the history of human trafficking in the region, discussing anti-trafficking tools, and highlighting existing models used to address human trafficking.

This report was produced by Meagan King, Kendrick Lu, and Roshni Sinha.



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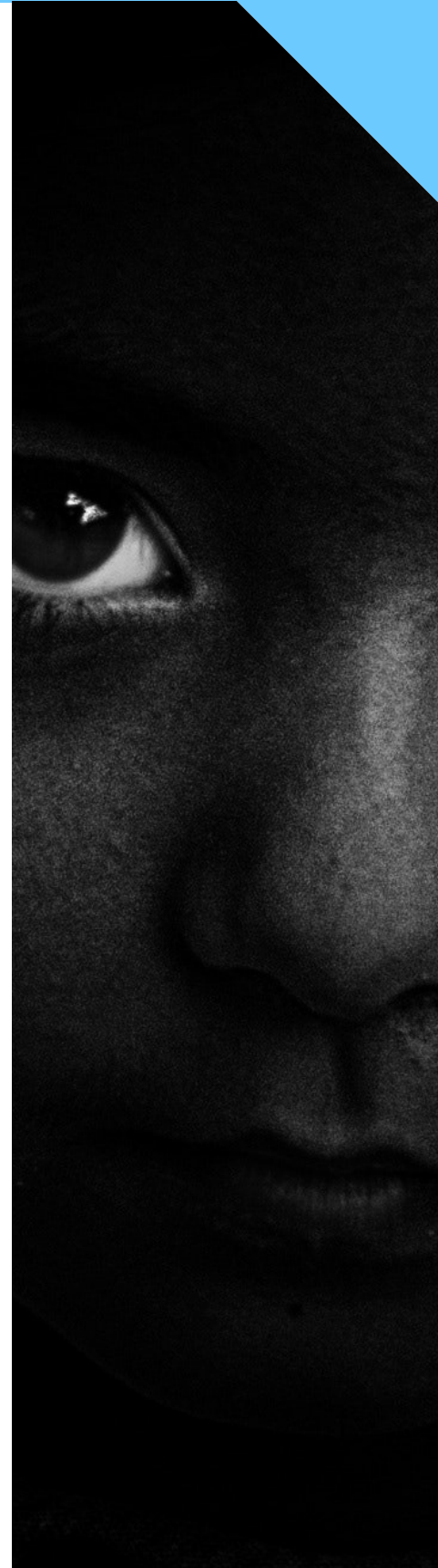


# WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

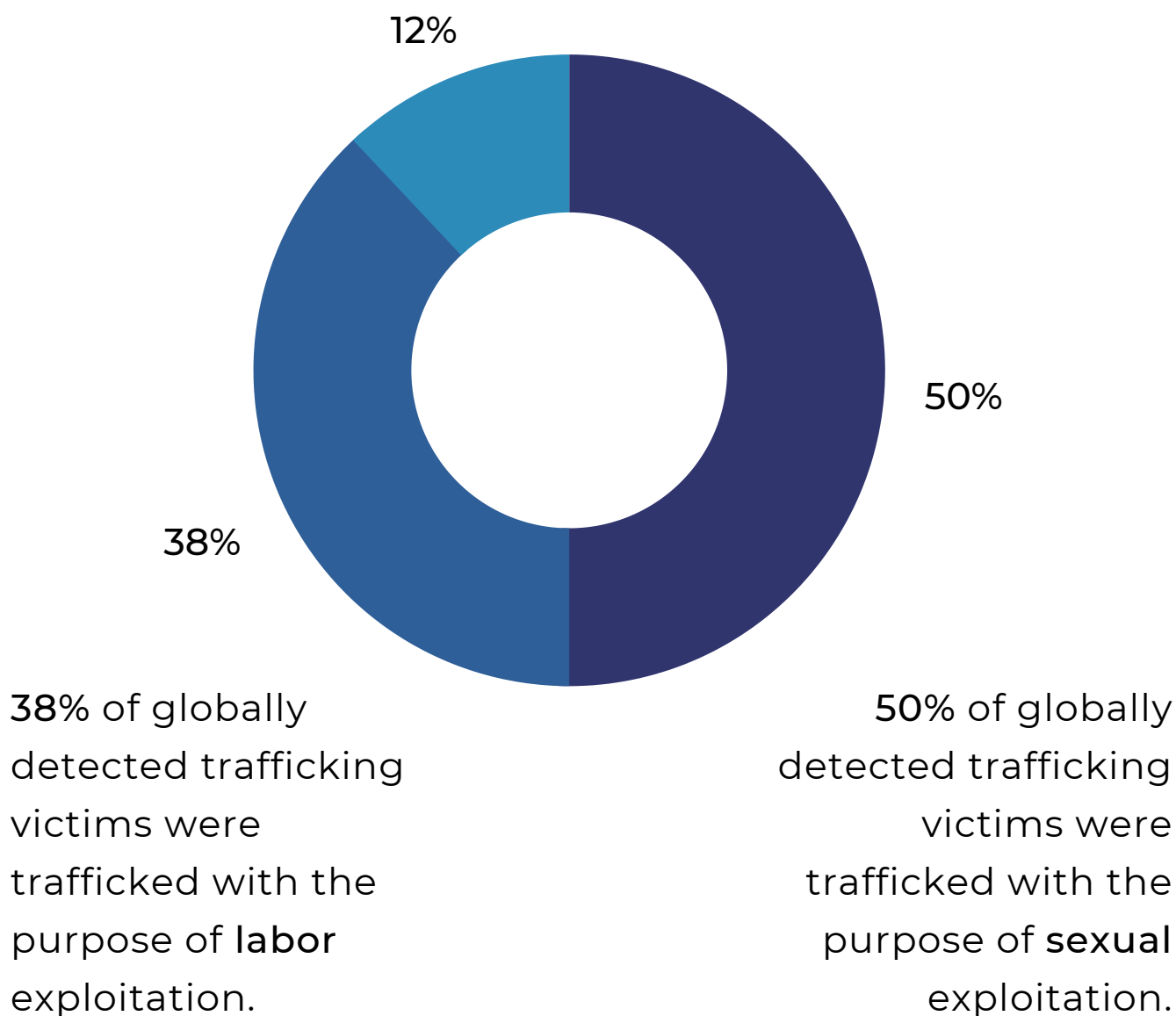
**HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A FORM OF MODERN-DAY SLAVERY IN WHICH AN INDIVIDUAL IS MADE TO WORK IN ANY INDUSTRY USING FORCE, FRAUD, OR COERCION.**

Human trafficking is a human rights violation according to the UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR 1948, Article 4).

The U.S. State Department estimates that there are **24.9 million** victims of trafficking worldwide. 14,500 to 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year (“About Human Trafficking” n.d.).



12% of globally detected trafficking victims were trafficked with the purpose of **other types of trafficking**, such as forced marriage, criminal activity, or begging.



**THESE STATISTICS WERE PROVIDED BY THE 2020 GLOBAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT,  
AUTHORED BY THE UN OFFICE ON DRUGS AND  
CRIME.**

# WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

In 2019, the Human Trafficking Hotline in the United States received calls from 4,312 individual survivors. The 2019 Federal Human Trafficking report states that 606 federal cases of human trafficking, excluding state cases, were moving through U.S. Federal courts.

It is important to note that cases of human trafficking are notoriously under-reported for many reasons; including its underground nature, lack of understanding about its definition, and a lack of awareness about its indicators. Individuals and the people around them are often unable to identify that they are being trafficked.

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*For the purpose of this report, a **victim** of human trafficking refers to an individual who is still being trafficked, while a **survivor** refers to an individual who has exited their trafficking situation.*

With the rise in relevance of the Internet and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, taking action against human trafficking is more important than ever. While human trafficking often operates in the dark, there are legal and social measures that can be taken to reduce the amount of trafficking in a region and to substantively support survivors.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAFFICKING

## SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking occurs when an individual is compelled to perform commercial sex acts through force, fraud, or coercion. Minors under the age of 18 are considered to be sex trafficked if they are sexually exploited; regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion was used. Sex trafficking can take place anywhere; including on the street, in massage parlors, escort services, residential brothels, truck stops, hotels, and more (National Human Trafficking Hotline).

When we think of the broader term 'human trafficking', sex trafficking is usually what comes to mind. However, it's important to acknowledge that sex trafficking can affect anyone, and that other types of trafficking exist - like labor trafficking.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAFFICKING

## LABOR TRAFFICKING

Labor trafficking occurs when an individual is compelled to perform labor or services through force, fraud, or coercion. Some industries where labor trafficking occurs include agriculture, hospitality, domestic work, and factories (National Human Trafficking Hotline).

As pointed out by a study by Sutapa Basu and Johnna E. White of the University of Washington Women's Center, the outsourcing of production and procurement to countries with cheaper labor than the U.S. has enabled companies to decrease costs. This contributes to a phenomenon known as 'the race to the bottom' – where countries whose cheap labor attracts manufacturers compete to lower wages and labor standards; in order to continue attracting those manufacturers. As a result, companies with global supply chains are more likely to be at risk of contributing to forced labor practices (Basu and White, n.d.).

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAFFICKING

## DOMESTIC VS. INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING

It is also important to distinguish the scale upon which trafficking - sex or labor - takes place. **Domestic** human trafficking occurs when an individual is trafficked within their country of origin. **International** human trafficking occurs when an individual is transported from one country to another country for the purpose of being trafficked. In King County, individuals may be sex trafficked locally or from abroad. In comparison, a high proportion of labor trafficking victims in King County are trafficked from abroad. These trafficking cases are often characterized by debt bondage, confiscation of travel documents, and threat of deportation.

These categories of trafficking often overlap. For example, a victim of international labor trafficking can be forced into sex work, thus making them a victim of sex trafficking.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAFFICKING

Why is it important to distinguish whether someone is a victim/survivor of domestic or international trafficking? Immigration status can limit one's access to housing and healthcare, including mental health services.

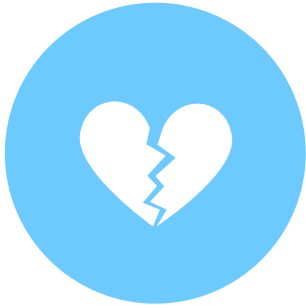
Many survivors who were trafficked internationally into the United States may face barriers to care due to their undocumented status, language barriers, and more. Two stakeholder interviews revealed that survivors of international trafficking in King County experienced lack of access to assistance in the period before they received their T visa.

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*Access to services for international survivors in WA State is currently being addressed. In the 2021 legislative session, Washington passed Engrossed Senate Bill 5164, which provides public assistance to certain non-citizen victims of human trafficking. This piece of legislation will be implemented in 2022 and is a major step forward in closing the gap in services that are accessible to visa-less survivors.*



## **TRAFFICKERS USE VARIOUS METHODS TO COERCE THEIR VICTIMS INTO BEING TRAFFICKED.**



### **EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION**

This is commonly referred to as the "Loverboy" scenario. Here, a woman or girl becomes homeless; she meets a man who offers her food and housing; she falls in love with them; and she is trafficked after a few months of emotional manipulation.



### **DOMESTIC MINOR**

In this scenario, there is early sexual abuse or experience with domestic abuse. Individuals in this situation often are early referrals of child welfare; have experiences in foster care; have run away from home; experience universal service failure within the courts and child welfare system; are criminalized as they are being victimized; and have a common criminal history because they were exploited at a young age.

## FOREIGN NATIONAL



In this case, a foreign national seeks education or work in the United States. Promised this by their trafficker, they travel to live in the U.S. - yet when they arrive, their travel documents are taken away, and they are forced to work in some other capacity with the threat of deportation hung over their heads. They will have their earnings seized by their trafficker, or will not be paid at all. This form of labor trafficking is common in construction, hospitality, elder care, domestic work, agriculture, farm work, massage parlors, and more.

King county is a hotspot for human trafficking because of its proximity to national and international travel hubs - like SeaTac airport (King County Council 2018).

WA STATE HAS THE

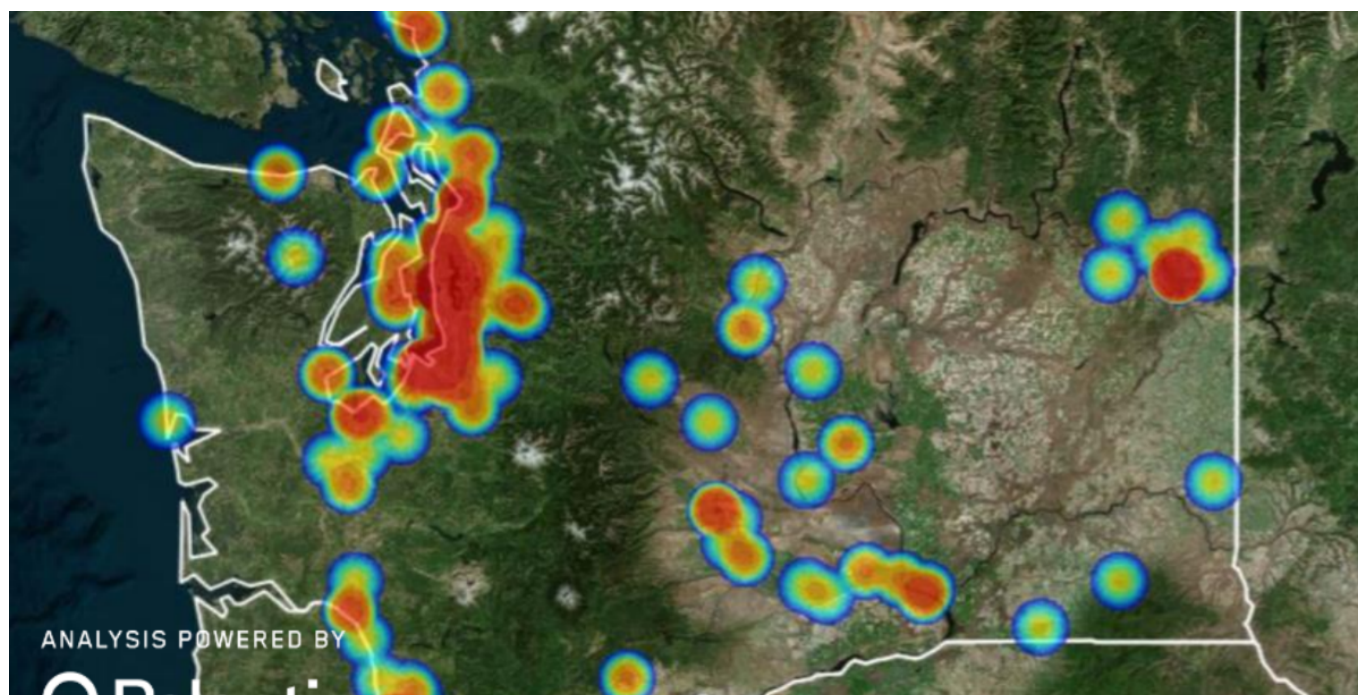
8TH

IN 2019,

519

HIGHEST VOLUME  
for human trafficking  
hotline calls in the country.

CASES OF TRAFFICKING  
were identified in WA State  
by the Human Trafficking  
Hotline.



*A map of human trafficking cases in WA State in 2018,  
provided by the Polaris Project.*

# LOCAL STORIES OF TRAFFICKING

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Here are some stories of human trafficking that took place in King County.

19  
80s

In the 1980s, Stefan Christopher, a 47-year-old University of Washington PhD graduate and farm-owner, traveled to Bangladesh to marry a girl who was 12 years old. After a year, he trafficked her and eight other members of her family, including minors, from Bangladesh. He forced the family to work on his farm in Oakville, Washington with no pay, sexually abused several of the girls, and physically beat the men. After one of the minors he sexually abused committed suicide, he was sentenced to four years in prison, but only served 18 months.

19  
95

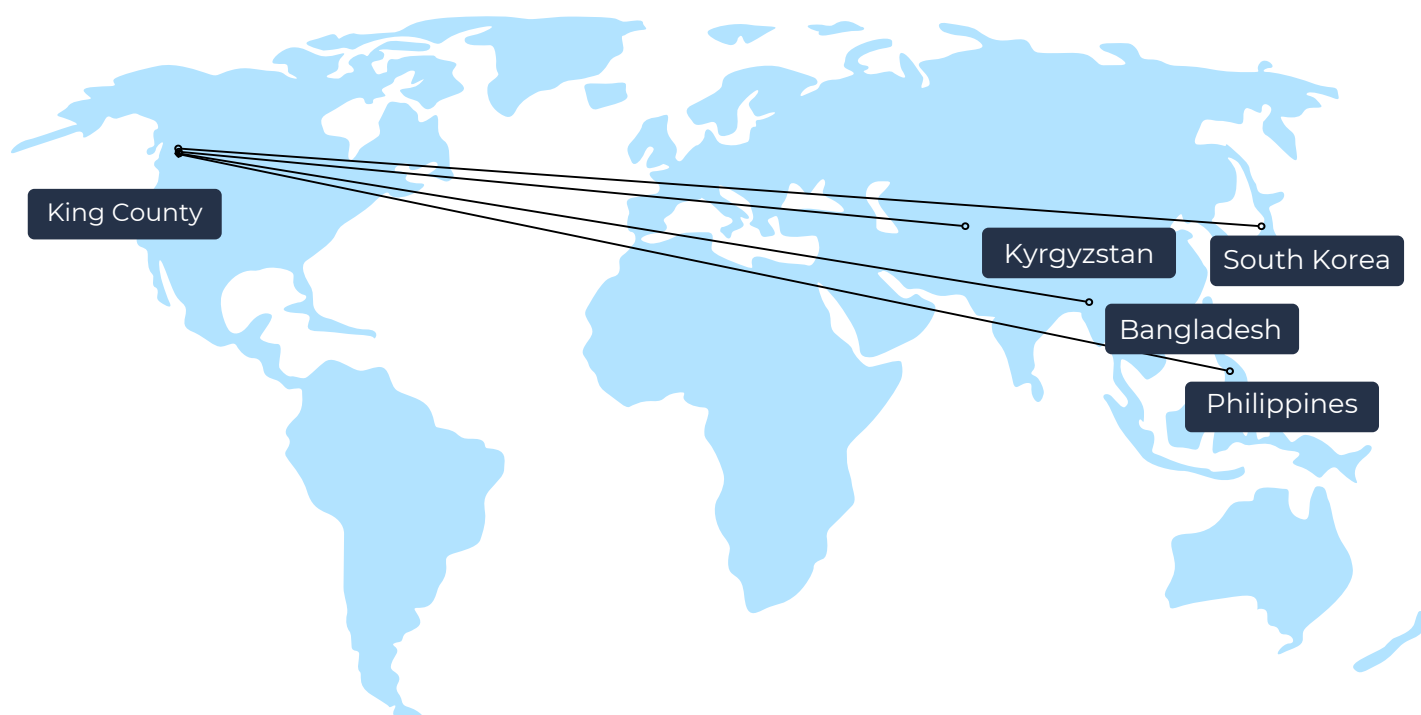
In 1995, Susana Blackwell, a Filipino mail-order bride, was shot by her ex-husband on the second floor of the King County Courthouse. Blackwell was 7 months pregnant at the time, seeking a divorce after being trafficked to the United States and being subjected to violence and threats of deportation by her ex-husband. Blackwell and one other woman died after this attack, while another woman sustained critical injuries.

20  
00

In 2000, Anastasia King, a young mail-order bride from Kyrgyzstan and former University of Washington student, was murdered by her ex-husband and a tenant who lived in his house. Initially, her ex-husband Indle King promised a wonderful life. However, her ex-husband threatened to hurt her, forced her to have sex, and forbade her from going to a counselor after they were married. According to prosecutors, Indle killed her because he wanted a new mail-order bride and did not want to lose money in a divorce (Kitsap Sun 2022).

20  
18

In 2018, Charles Peters, the leader of the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison for promoting prostitution. The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen was a group of men who used a website to buy sex from trafficked Korean women and leave reviews. The women were forced to live in brothels based in luxury apartments in Bellevue and Seattle. A total of 13 brothels were shut down and 33 men were arrested in a 2016 investigation. 12 women were recovered and none were charged.



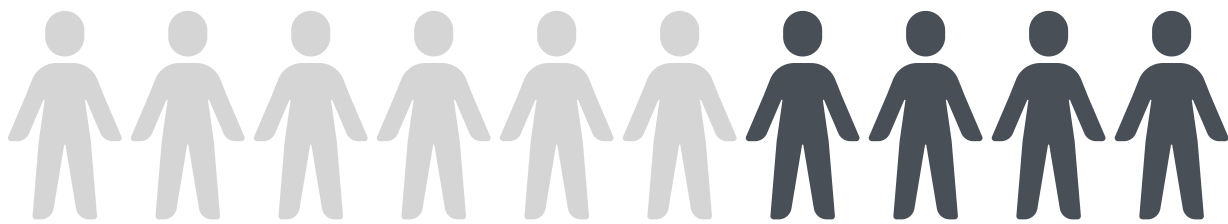
The above graphic shows some of the countries from which local victims of trafficking have come to King County from.

Human trafficking is not some far-off phenomena that only happens in underdeveloped countries. Human trafficking **has been and is happening** here in King County.

# WHO IS TRAFFICKED?

*Marginalized and minority communities are disproportionately affected by sex and labor trafficking.*

## Black victims of CST



Black girls are disproportionately affected by child sex trafficking (CST). Between 2011 and 2019, over 4 out of every 10 child victims of sexual exploitation in King County were Black and most were girls. In comparison, only 6% of King County was Black (KCPAO 2019).

In contrast, 72% of prosecuted sex buyers in King County between 2011 and 2019 were white men. Thus, a pattern emerges in King County in which predominantly white men are exploiting Black girls (KCPAO 2019).



# WHO IS TRAFFICKED?

## Indigenous Women and Girls

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) continues to be a widespread issue throughout the nation and is especially a problem in King County.

There is a large disparity between the number of reported MMIW cases and the number of cases actually logged into the U.S. Department of Justice database; a November 2018 report from the Urban Indian Health Institute found that 5,712 cases of MMIW were reported in 2016. However, of these, only 116 were logged into the Department of Justice database (UIHI 2018).

Data on MMIWG is inadequate for several reasons. These include racial misclassification, poor relationships between Indigenous communities and law enforcement, conjugation of city/county/state and tribal jurisdiction, hesitance of law enforcement that interact with tribal members to follow law and procedure, poor record-keeping protocols, institutional racism in the media, and a lack of substantive relationships between journalists and Indigenous communities (UIHI 2018).

## WHO IS TRAFFICKED?

On the state level, Washington ranked second, behind New Mexico, as the state with the highest number of MMIWG cases. Among cities nationwide, Seattle ranked first as the city with the highest number of cases of MMIWG as of November 2018 with 45 cases (UIHI 2018).

The Urban Indian Health Institute collected data on 506 cases across 71 U.S. cities. Of these, 27% of cases were of girls 18 or under. Many of these cases include sexual violence and domestic violence. Some of these cases also were tied to human trafficking. Of perpetrators, the Urban Indian Health Institute was able to uncover that 83% were male and approximately half were non-Native (UIHI 2018).

It is important to us to note that the gap in data on MMIWG because this translates into MMIWG being underrepresented in the existing data on human trafficking in King County.

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*Seattle is ranked first as the city with the highest number of cases of MMIWG as of November 2018 with 45 cases.*

# WHO IS TRAFFICKED?

## Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Nationals

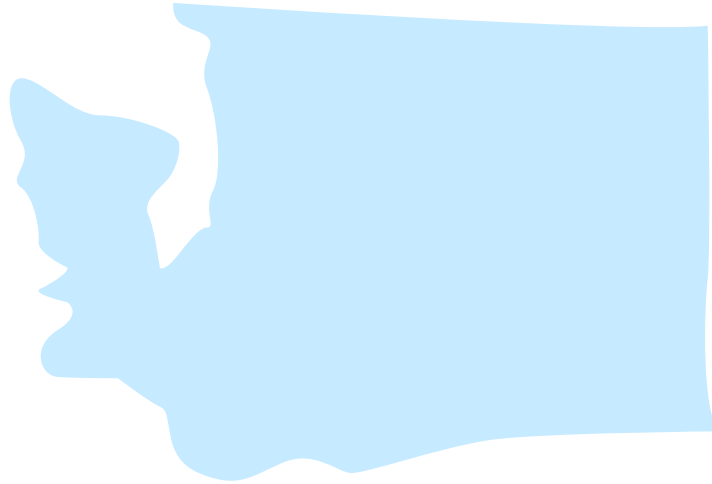
In 2017, the Polaris Project released a report highlighting that the majority of labor trafficking victims in the United States come from Latin America and the Caribbean. The report referenced the agricultural sector, in which 76% of likely victims of labor trafficking were immigrants and approximately half came from Mexico (Polaris Project).

Eastern Washington is particularly vulnerable to labor trafficking due to its agriculture-heavy economy. In 2011, Yakima farms were implicated in a [lawsuit](#) filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, for using trafficked labor.



# ANTI-TRAFFICKING TOOLS IN WA STATE

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Tools used to combat human trafficking fit into one or more of three categories.

The first is **legislation**, which includes the implementation of laws that criminalize trafficking. The second is **education**, which refers to raising awareness of the warning signs of a potential trafficking situation among the general population and has the potential to reduce instances of trafficking. The third is **direct services** for trafficking victims. These must be provided as victims are being trafficked, when they are exiting their trafficking situation, and after they have exited.

Let's examine the efforts in WA State in each of these categories.

# LEGISLATION

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The foundational piece of legislation undergirding anti-trafficking law at the state level is House Bill (HB) 1175.

WA State became the first state to criminalize human trafficking through HB 1175, which was passed in 2003. It defines the acts that constitute trafficking in the first and second degrees, both class A felonies.

Human trafficking is a class A felony in WA State; the maximum penalties for class A felonies are life in prison and/or a \$50,000 fine (RCW 9A.20.021, n.d.).

PER RCW 9A.40.100,  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
OCCURS WHEN A  
PERSON:

**"...RECRUITS, HARBORS,  
TRANSPORTS,  
TRANSFERS, PROVIDES,  
OBTAINS, BUYS,  
PURCHASES, OR  
RECEIVES BY ANY  
MEANS, ANOTHER  
PERSON KNOWING, OR  
IN RECKLESS  
DISREGARD OF THE  
FACT, THAT FORCE,  
FRAUD, OR COERCION  
AS DEFINED IN RCW  
9A.36.070 WILL BE USED  
TO CAUSE THE PERSON  
TO ENGAGE IN FORCED  
LABOR, INVOLUNTARY  
SERVITUDE, A  
SEXUALLY EXPLICIT  
ACT, OR A COMMERCIAL  
SEX ACT..."**

What distinguishes trafficking in the first degree versus the second degree?

Per RCW 9A.40.100, if the act of trafficking involves...

- committing or attempting to commit kidnapping
- a finding of sexual motivation
- the illegal harvesting and/or sale of human organs
- a scenario that results in death

...then it becomes first-degree human trafficking.

When the act of trafficking does not include one of those four elements, it becomes second-degree trafficking.

It should be noted that though we attempted to locate information on the number of first-degree and second-degree trafficking cases in the state, we were unable to successfully do so.

In the case of a minor being trafficked, the act of trafficking is also categorized into first or second-degree trafficking based on whether one of the four above-mentioned elements is present.

If the trafficked individual is a minor, does that affect the legal designation of trafficking?

If the potential victim of trafficking is under 18 and is recruited, harbored, transported, provided, obtained, bought, purchased, or received to engage in a sexually explicit act or a commercial sex act, then that automatically qualifies as human trafficking - regardless of the presence of an element of force, fraud, or coercion, as minors cannot provide sexual consent per RCW 9A.40.100.

In other words, If the victim of any offense identified in this section is a minor, the presence of force, fraud, or coercion is not a necessary element of an offense, and consent to the sexually explicit act or commercial sex does not constitute a defense.



# EDUCATION

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Another important tool in fighting trafficking is education. Many victims do not realize that they are being trafficked until they are deep in the situation; often due to the emotional manipulation tactics that their traffickers use to convince them that nothing is wrong. Trafficking is also enabled because victims are unfamiliar with the warning signs of a potential trafficking situation; this means that education on the signs of a trafficking situation can prevent it.

Education for minors is equally important as education for adults. If minors can be educated on the warning signs of a potential trafficking situation, then the chances of trafficking decreases. Similarly, adults will be able to avoid potential trafficking situations, but also identify others who may be at risk and intervene.

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*"If minors can be educated on the warning signs of a potential trafficking situation, then the chances of trafficking decreases. Similarly, adults will be able to avoid potential trafficking situations, but also identify others who may be at risk and intervene."*

There is no statewide curriculum on human trafficking in WA State public schools. Instead, human trafficking awareness and education is carried out on the grassroots level by anti-trafficking nonprofits. One example is Seattle Against Slavery's Trafficking Prevention for Schools (TPfS) program, which empowers young people to become allies in the fight against human trafficking.

Anti-trafficking nonprofits also drive human trafficking education at the national level; for example, the PROTECT program is an anti-trafficking education program that has been implemented at the state level in six states. It was created and is run by three nonprofit organizations: 3Strands Global Foundation, Love Never Fails, and the Frederick Douglass Family Initiative.

For the adult population, education is similarly carried out by anti-trafficking non-profits. For example, Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) provides trainings for companies that enables employees to spot and prevent human trafficking. There is no legislation mandating that companies in certain industries prone to using trafficked labor conduct these training sessions.



*A training session held by BEST.*

*Trainings specialize in different industries where labor trafficking is prevalent, like aviation, hospitality, and maritime.*

There has been a recent attempt to make anti-trafficking education a mandated part of public education in WA State. Last year, Senate Bill 5395 went into effect, requiring all public schools to provide comprehensive sexual education to their students by the 2022-23 school year; one amendment proposed including sex trafficking as part of the bill's requirements. However, the amendment was not passed, and public school curricula still lack a uniform inclusion of anti-trafficking education.

# DIRECT SERVICES

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Direct services to victims and survivors of trafficking also represent a key part of the state-wide anti-trafficking response; seeking to serve those currently in, are exiting, or have exited trafficking situations. These services are almost entirely provided by a coalition of nonprofits and non-governmental organizations. Very rarely do direct service providers only offer one specific service to victims and survivors. Instead, they follow a case-management system and provide multiple services depending on the individual's needs.

What types of services do these organizations provide? It depends on the victim or survivor's needs, but can include:

- medical and dental services
- language interpretation
- help obtaining permanent housing
- emergency housing (shelters)
- mental health services
- culturally relevant advocacy
- food assistance
- transportation
- clothing
- help pursuing higher education
- relocation to home country
- phone cards
- job training
- legal representation

Direct service providers also usually serve specific demographics and/or localities. While YouthCare serves youth and young adults, Kent Youth and Family Services' cases are limited to youth living in South King County; the Seattle Indian Center serves Indigenous communities; the Organization for Prostitution Survivors serves primarily adult female survivors of prostitution. Factors like gender, sexuality, race, and age all impact a victim or survivor's lived experience and ability to access direct services. This can lead to a barrier of access, where certain demographics are underserved by providers.

Direct service providers are typically funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Justice, through its Office for Victims of Crime.

Below are the logos of local service providers that were so generous to help us with our research.



# MODELS FOR COMBATING SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking legislative models are the typical tools that policymakers and elected officials employ when they try to make meaningful progress in the space. Currently, there are four dominant models. Let's explore each of these models.



# MODELS FOR COMBATING SEX TRAFFICKING



## CRIMINALIZATION

This model makes sex trafficking and prostitution criminal offenses against the law.



## LEGALIZATION

This model makes the sale of sex legal, but regulated and controlled by the government.



## FULL DECRIMINALIZATION

This model removes all laws that prohibit or regulate selling, facilitating, or buying sex.



## NORDIC MODEL

This model identifies prostituted individuals as victims and protects them from legal penalties, and criminalizes the buying or facilitating of trafficked sex. (Sex Trafficking and Prostitution 2021)





# CRIMINALIZATION

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Criminalization is the dominant policy used to tackle prostitution. Activities associated with prostitution, such as selling, purchasing, or organizing sex, are often criminalized (Bramham 2016). In this model, the person in the sex trade, i.e. the individual being trafficked, is charged, which can lead to a criminal record. Under the criminalization model, there are no services provided for people in the sex trade or those exiting sex trafficking. Due to their criminal records, trafficked people may endure future discrimination and ostracization when they seek employment and housing.

This model criminalizes all parties involved in the sex trade and burdens the victims - those being trafficked. Our discussions uncovered the fact that the unequal enforcement and treatment by law enforcement of the parties involved in trafficking disproportionately lets traffickers and buyers face little to no consequence. Additionally, this model violates the human rights of sex workers by both undermining their ability to protect themselves and limiting their access to legal protections and health services (Ma, Chan, & Loke 2017).



# LEGALIZATION

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The legalization model ensures that the buying, selling, or promoting of sex is legal. It encourages the regulation of the sex trade by state or Federal government with licensing and taxes.

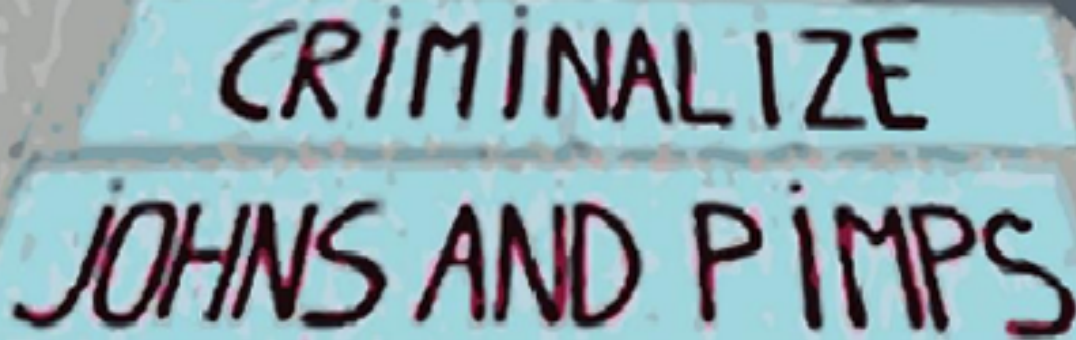
While proponents argue that the legalization model reduces risks faced by sex workers, this model has the potential to expand the market for human trafficking instead of reducing it. A study on the sex trade in Amsterdam post-legalization found that the market expanded more than the supply accounted for, thus causing an inflow of trafficked women from Eastern European countries. This effect was stronger than the substitution effect, which is the theory that legalized sex workers would be favored over trafficking victims. Interviews with legal sex workers in Amsterdam show that they feel pressured to perform additional services they otherwise would not perform in order to compete with other women. A study of 150 countries found that legalized countries on average report higher trafficking inflows (Cho, Dreher, & Neumayer 2012).

# FULL DECRIMINALIZATION

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The Full Decriminalization model allows for all parties involved in trafficking to not be held criminally liable for their actions. The decriminalization model fully legitimatizes the buying, selling, and promoting of sex by pimps, traffickers, or brothels; meaning they will not face any criminal charges or fines. This model involves removing laws against prostitution and using alternative regulations to manage the operation of the sex industry.

In our work, we have uncovered that the Full Decriminalization model may lead to more violent sex buyers, to an increase in trafficking, and to more harm being done to victims because there are no legal repercussions for buyers. This model does not require regulation from the government on a local, state, or Federal level. The similarities between the legalization and decriminalization models lie in their attempts to seek the removal of the stigma of people involved in the sex trade, but this removes the consequences and punishment for sex buyers, pimps, or sex traffickers (n.d. 2021).



CRIMINALIZE  
JOHNS AND PIMPS

Photo courtesy of lawc.on.ca

## NORDIC MODEL

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The Nordic Model seeks to provide a holistic approach to reducing the demand for prostitution by decriminalizing prostituted individuals while criminalizing buyers, sex traffickers, or any other exploiters (Boyer 2020). This model decriminalizes those who are being trafficked, provides them with services in order to exit, and makes buying people for sex a criminal offense in order to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking. The Nordic Model also holds buyers and pimps accountable for buying sex and abusing survivors.

This model is premised on the assumption that buying human beings for sex is harmful, exploitative, and never fully safe. The Nordic Model also aims to have high-quality support and non-judgmental services to support those who are trying to exit sex trafficking or prostitution. Exit services include access to housing, education, job training, child care, legal assistance, and emotional or psychological support. This approach has been adopted by Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Canada, France, and Israel (Nordic Model Now 2021).



The Nordic Model was first instituted in Sweden in 1999 as part of the Kvinnofrid law (Violence Against Women Act). Its goals were to protect the human rights of people involved in sex work, while reducing the demand for paid sex and making commercial sex exploitation less profitable (Ohlsson 2015). Since its implementation, it has led to a drop in sex trafficking deaths from 80% to less than 1% of sex trafficking deaths. It reduced the market for sex - the percentage of the general male population who bought sex decreased by 5%. It ultimately decreased street prostitution, which is notoriously unsafe (Bramham 2016).

Opponents of this model argue that criminalizing the buyers of sex work would take the “good customers” out of the mix and would pressure sex workers to take on more violent clients.

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*Research shows that buyers of sex are aware of sex trafficking. Of buyers in King County, the majority are college-educated and come from professional business backgrounds, and thus should know about the harms of trafficking that they inflict. Research also shows that buyers in King County are mostly male, white, married, and middle to upper-class.*

# MODELS FOR COMBATING LABOR TRAFFICKING

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Labor trafficking has received less public attention than sex trafficking; thus, there is less existing literature on models for eliminating labor trafficking. Instead, we will look at the authority figures in the anti-labor-trafficking space and the strategies they employ.

The leading organization in this space is the International Labor Organization (ILO). Founded in 1919 as part of the League of Nations, the ILO sets international labor standards, including standards concerning the eradication of forced labor and labor trafficking. In 2014, the ILO announced the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, a legally-binding document that lays out the strategies states must take to combat forced labor.

In the Protocol, the International Labor Organization divides efforts to combat labor trafficking into **prevention, protection, and remedies**. Its definitions of these three elements can be seen on the next page.

**Prevention:**

- Educating and informing those considered particularly vulnerable, employers, and the wider public.
- Extending the coverage and enforcement of relevant laws to all workers and sectors.
- Strengthening labour inspection and other services responsible for implementation of these laws.
- Protection from abuses rising during the recruitment process.
- Supporting due diligence by the public and private sectors.
- Addressing root causes and factors that heighten the risks of forced labor.

**Protection:**

- Effective measures for the identification, release, protection, recovery, and rehabilitation of victims.
- Protecting victims from punishment for unlawful activities that they were compelled to commit.

**Remedies:**

- Ensuring victims' access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation, irrespective of their presence or legal status in the territory.

## GLOBALIZED CAPITALISM AND ITS RELATION TO LABOR TRAFFICKING

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As pointed out by a study by Sutapa Basu and Johnna E. White of the University of Washington Women's Center, the outsourcing of production and procurement to countries with cheaper labor than the U.S. has enabled companies to decrease costs. This contributes to a phenomenon known as the **'race to the bottom'** – where countries with cheap labor compete to lower wages and labor standards, in order to continue attracting manufacturers who are looking to cut costs.

As a result, companies with global supply chains are more likely to be at risk of contributing to forced labor practices. Supply chain regulation has therefore emerged as the default method for combatting labor trafficking, either by third-party non-governmental organizations, or governments themselves. These parties conduct audits upon a random sample of a company's supply chain, through which they ensure that labor rights are being upheld.

One example is the **Fair Labor Association (FLA)**, which partners with companies to accredit them as Trademark Licensees or Participating Companies.



To screen a company's supply chains, the FLA administers a self-annual assessment to partners to measure where they stand on labor standards.


The FLA also monitor a portion of a company's supply chain via in-person audits to ensure that the company is meeting the FLA's fair labor code.

It is important to acknowledge that as consumers grow more conscious of whether their products are ethically sourced, companies now want to flaunt their commitment to corporate social responsibility as a selling point; corporate social responsibility becomes a competitive advantage.

The public's expectation can certainly encourage a company to adhere to standards of corporate social responsibility, with labor rights being only one area. However, consumers also need to also consider what companies aren't showing them, and seek to uncover it. More frequent and randomized supply chain audits are being touted as a solution to that end.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The City of Seattle should take steps to assist survivors in three key areas: **housing, preventative education, and mental health services and substance abuse treatment.**

These three areas were repeatedly corroborated by the direct service providers we spoke to as areas for which current resources and funding are sorely lacking.

The City should also invest in outreach technology to better reach victims.

# HOUSING

We recommend that Seattle and/or King County:

- implement a housing voucher program to increase survivor access to permanent housing.

The City and County should create a program that provides trafficking survivors with housing vouchers to help them overcome the numerous systemic barriers that survivors face when seeking housing. This should be done in collaboration with the Seattle Housing Authority, to expand its low-income housing program to include survivors.

# HOUSING

## Rationale

Housing for trafficking survivors can be divided into two categories: emergency/transitional housing, and permanent housing.

- **Emergency/Transitional Housing**, which is short-term in nature and provides a way for survivors to immediately get out of their trafficking situation. Depending on the survivor's needs, this can last for up to two years. An example is REST's emergency receiving center, which provides female-identifying survivors a place to 'rest and consider their next steps' for 30-90 days.
- **Permanent Housing**, which is long-term and provides a stable location that survivors can use to start a new life. Here, service providers facilitate rather than provide; for example, the International Rescue Committee assists survivors in finding rental opportunities and paying rental fees. Survivors typically rent from local landlords throughout King County, in apartment units or single rooms in houses.

Emergency/transitional and permanent housing must both be invested in concurrently.



Safe housing is critical for survivors because it is foundational to nearly every other need that survivors of trafficking might have. For example, what long-term good would it do to provide mental health services to a victim who is unable to leave their trafficking situation and is thus continuously being traumatized? Similarly, what long-term good would it do to provide job training to a survivor if they are homeless? Safe and stable housing must be established before other needs can be met.

From both primary and secondary research, access to safe shelter is repeatedly identified as an essential need for survivors. Housing as a policy focus was central to a 2008 report by the Washington State Task Force against the Trafficking of Persons, which called for the expansion of emergency housing and for more assistance towards trafficking victims to enter existing low-income housing options.

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*One positive to note is that trafficking survivors who are also T-1 Nonimmigrant visa holders are able to seek federal housing assistance in Washington State. In other words, a foreign national who is a victim of trafficking will be able to receive federal housing assistance as long as they receive their T-visa. (However, the gap between the time a person leaves their trafficking situation and when they receive their T-visa is still a significant blind spot.)*

Access to permanent housing lets survivors begin to build a new future.

*“Permanent housing is the key to preventing homelessness and re-victimization, and supports trafficking victims as they move towards recovery and full self-sufficiency.” - Washington State Task Force against the Trafficking of Persons*

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Throughout our interviews, housing also repeatedly came up as a key need of survivors; 88% of our interviews with case workers mentioned housing as a vital need for trafficking survivors. It is because of this repeated focus on housing that this report has decided to focus on it.

### **Permanent Housing: Barriers to Access**

However, our interviews revealed that trafficking survivors face several systemic barriers when trying to obtain permanent housing. One case worker pointed out that when applying for housing, survivors cannot compete with the average renter, due to a number of factors stemming from their status as a survivor of trafficking. These may include, but are not limited to: lack of steady income; lack of rental history; lack of credit history; and/or lack of a co-signer or guarantor - all things that might give a landlord reason to reject their application. As a result, service providers have been forced to resort to informal networking with landlords to overcome these hurdles and obtain housing for survivors.

A strong step to get rid of these barriers is the 2017 Fair Chance Housing ordinance, passed by the City of Seattle to prevent unfair bias in housing against renters with a past criminal record. It prevents landlords from accessing renters' criminal records, and thus prevents them from unfairly denying them housing based on criminal history ("Fair Chance Housing - CivilRights | Seattle.Gov" n.d.). Trafficking survivors can have criminal records for theft, drug possession, or prostitution - often as a result of being forced into those activities by their trafficker. The Fair Chance Housing ordinance helps trafficking survivors overcome that hurdle when applying to housing in Seattle.

Finally, WA Senate Bill 5180: Vacating Certain Convictions is an encouraging piece of legislation that will permit individuals to "vacate a record of conviction from a gross misdemeanor or misdemeanor offense committed as a result of being a victim of sex trafficking, prostitution, or commercial sexual abuse as a minor; sexual assault, or domestic violence" ().

Effective starting July 2021, this law would help survivors clear their criminal records, move on with their lives, and seek permanent housing more easily.

These are examples of state-based interventions to remove a systemic barrier to access for trafficking survivors. The City of Seattle should be constantly seeking ways to either eliminate these barriers, or help survivors of trafficking overcome them.

## Learning from others: the Chicago Housing Authority

The following section will explore the efficacy of a strategy adopted by the Chicago Housing Authority beginning in 2017, which increased survivor access to shelter through a housing voucher program.

### The Chicago Housing Authority Voucher Program

In July 2016, the Chicago Housing Authority Board of Commissioners allocated 60 subsidized housing vouchers, in partnership with the Federal government, to trafficking survivors identified by local service providers (Ghias, n.d.). Survivors could then use the vouchers to obtain housing from Chicago landlords who accepted the vouchers; these landlords would be compensated by the CHA through rates determined by local real estate market analysis.

The survivors had to meet three requirements: 1) they met the Federal definition of human trafficking; 2) they demonstrated a need for housing; and 3) they had achieved a 'relative degree of stability - including legal status - so as to be able to adhere to the rules and requirements of public housing. If they were assessed to be a good fit for the program, they would be referred to the CHA, who would then decide whether to grant them a voucher (Ghias, n.d.).



By the end of 2017, 11 referred survivors had left their trafficking situation through the program (Ghias, n.d.); as of June 2021, 38 referred survivors had moved into units (Fernandez 2021). Among those who were able to leave, several successes were reported, including anecdotal increases in hope, health and wellbeing; increased motivation to access other services; strengthening of relationships with family and support systems; and the increased ability to focus on job search due to stable housing (Ghias, n.d.).

This recommendation encourages the City of Seattle to explore implementing a similar program locally, albeit with a few tweaks. An easy starting-off point for such a program would be President Biden's recently-passed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local public housing authorities. These will be used to assist families who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, victims of domestic violence, and victims of trafficking.

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*"Among those who were able to leave <their trafficking situations>, several successes were reported, including anecdotal increases in hope, health and wellbeing; increased motivation to access other services; strengthening of relationships with family and support systems because of stable housing; and the increased ability to focus on job search due to stable housing."*

Currently, 498 vouchers have been allocated to the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA); this is a big step towards combating homelessness locally. However, the City needs to work with the SHA to ensure that an appropriate proportion of these vouchers are specifically allocated for trafficking survivors. What that number of vouchers is should be decided in collaboration with local anti-trafficking organizations and service providers.

Additionally, the City should encourage the Seattle Housing Authority to make these vouchers as accessible as possible to survivors - meaning it should be open to survivors with minimal consideration for their citizenship status, criminal history, and other factors. Accessibility was a drawback of the Chicago Housing Authority's program, as it excluded undocumented survivors (Ghias, n.d.).

An obvious objection to lowering the bar for eligibility is that doing so would increase the risks that landlords face to their property; however, that risk can be mitigated through the case management of service providers, who will be working with survivors to help them adjust smoothly into their new surroundings.

# SUMMARY

The City and County should create a program that provides trafficking survivors with housing vouchers to help them overcome the numerous systemic barriers that survivors face when seeking housing.

Such a program would help trafficking survivors overcome barriers like criminal records, lack of steady income, and lack of rental history in seeking permanent housing.

This should be done in collaboration with the Seattle Housing Authority, to dedicate a certain number of emergency housing vouchers to trafficking survivors. That number should be determined by consultation with local service providers.

# PREVENTATIVE EDUCATION

We recommend that Seattle and/or King County:

- Implement a mandatory anti-human trafficking educational program that covers labor and sex trafficking be taught at schools and workplaces.

Along with the program taught by teachers, social workers should be accessible to students before and after the program. This is to ensure that students can ask additional questions, be assessed by a social worker if requested, and have access to community based resources for medical care, mental health care, or additional resources.

# PREVENTATIVE EDUCATION

## Rationale

Education serves as a preventative measure to human trafficking (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children & Human Trafficking). Human trafficking is a topic that is not required in classes or discussions within schools in the city, county or state. Schools should be a safe place for students, especially for those that may be experiencing instability or a lack of safety. School communities including teachers, counselors, bus drivers, nurses, food service staff, and other community members have the ability to advocate for children who may be exploited, but they must be aware of the warning signs or see how students may be vulnerable.





## Current Policies

There are two primary policies currently in this space.

- Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5563
- Senate Bill 5395

## Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5563

Washington's Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5563 focuses on educating school staff to aid in preventing the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors, but it does not go far enough in preventing human trafficking. The bill discusses the harms of sex trafficking, but not other forms of trafficking, such as labor trafficking. The legislature noted that students would benefit from teachers and school staff being trained in identifying and preventing child sexual abuse, commercial sexual abuse of minors, and sexual exploitation of minors.



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*Anti-trafficking education in schools is a vital part in preventing trafficking from happening - both for students as well as educators and school staff.*

A coalition of providers created the educational material and resources for Washington State. The guide is titled Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Trafficking of Children and Youth and covers the following topics:

- Defining 'Sexual Exploitation' and 'Trafficking'
- What We Know about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Youth
- The Dynamics of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking
- Who's at Risk?
- Warning Signs to Help Identify Pimps/Traffickers
- Warning Signs to Help Identify Victims
- How to Talk with Children and Youth about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking
- What to Do If You Suspect Abuse
- Victim Assistance Resources
- Community Prevention and Intervention
- Laws Addressing Sex Abuse, Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Washington State
- Reports, Studies and Additional Resources

This legislature only serves as a guide for school employees through this handbook (Commercial Sexual Exploitation).

While Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5563 focuses on training school staff, Senate Bill 5395 focuses on educating students on sex, healthy relationships, boundaries, and consent.

## Senate Bill 5395

Washington's Senate Bill 5395 ("Comprehensive Sexual Education in Public Schools") is starting to be implemented in schools from 2020-2023. From kindergarten to 3rd grade, children will learn skills in social emotional learning, which will help them learn how to cope with their feelings, set goals, and better get along with others (Comprehensive Sexual Education).

In 4th grade and 5th grade, starting in the 2020-2021 school year, schools must ensure that they teach students about affirmative consent and bystander training. Affirmative consent is defined as, "giving and receiving consent that includes clear, voluntary, enthusiastic permission to engage in sexual activity. It is not just the absence of "no.". Bystander training will teach students how to safely intervene when they notice bullying, sexual harassment, or unwanted physical touch. Schools must also teach age-appropriate content focusing on hugs or horseplay, hand-holding, kissing or other touch, as well as virtual contact, such as texts or emails or taking photos.

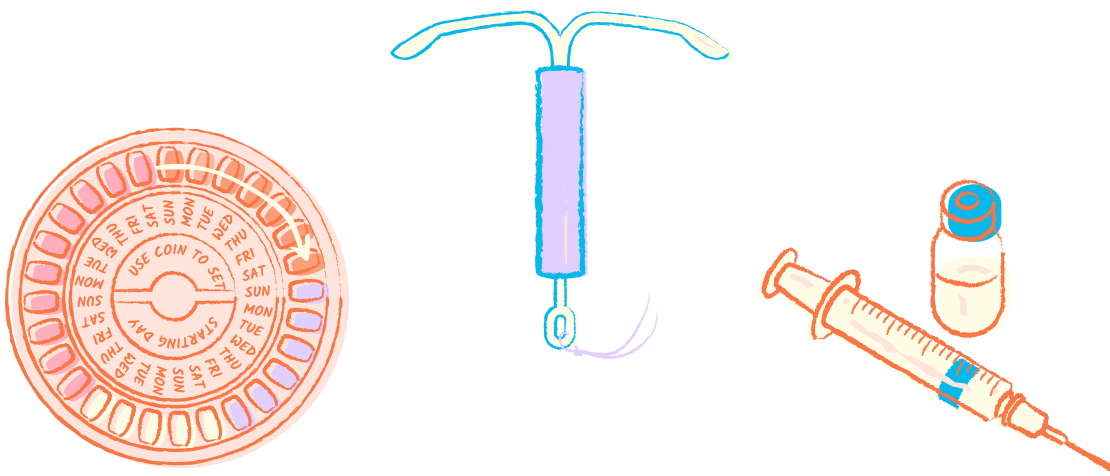
The curriculum for grades 6-8 will add an additional focus on helping students understand and respect personal boundaries, develop healthy friendships and dating relationships, gain a deeper understanding of human growth and development, and develop skills to support choosing healthy behaviors and reduce health risks.



Senate Bill 5395 also includes education on abstinence, STD prevention, and pregnancy prevention as well as understanding the influence of family and society on healthy sexual relationships. Grades 9-12 will also include information on how to access valid health care and prevention resources (Comprehensive Sexual Education).

Prior to the implementation of this bill, the only sex education required in Washington schools was on HIV and STD prevention.

The hope of this bill is that eventually it will help students understand their own boundaries, as well as respecting other individual's personal boundaries. It also hopes to help students understand healthy relationships or friendships and gain understanding of human growth and development (Comprehensive Sexual Education). Though these policies are a useful starting point, they do not do enough.



## Learning From Others

Prince William County Public Schools in Virginia State began a human trafficking prevention program in 2013. This was in response to their community being a target of domestic minor sex trafficking because of their close proximity to Washington D.C. and Baltimore, which have a lot of tourists, transient government employees, migrant workers, and large military presences. Their program began in 2013 after receiving a grant from the Potomac Health Foundation. In 2016, the program received funds from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. Currently, the program is fully self-sustainable and is no longer receiving funding from these grants (Human Trafficking Prevention).

The human trafficking prevention program is presented to 9th grade students in all 12 high schools, and also 2 middle schools, in the Prince William County Public School Division. From 2013 to June 30, 2018, the program was presented to over 30,000 students. Social workers and physical education teachers work together in the health or physical education classes to teach 90 minute interactive lessons on human trafficking which focuses on labor and sex trafficking.



The program also discusses coercive tactics that human traffickers may use in order to better prepare students so that they can protect themselves. Students also learn how to get help if someone they know is a victim of human trafficking. After the presentation, students are able to privately identify themselves or friends as possible victims. These individuals have the opportunity to meet privately with a social worker who assesses the needs of the student and helps them utilize community based resources, such as medical care, mental health care, or removal services.

Social workers provide a screening with students within 24 hours of the presentation. The social worker contacts the appropriate professional (a parent, law enforcement, or child protective services) based on the particulars of the case. The cases are managed by the appointed Human Trafficking Prevention Specialist who works with community organizations to provide health care, counseling, or group support. Due to this program, 667 students have come forward to meet with a social worker. Of the 667 students, 223 have been identified as having been sexually assaulted, groomed, or victims of human trafficking (Prince William County Public Schools 2020).

Locally, Seattle Against Slavery provides anti-trafficking education programs, such as Trafficking Prevention for Schools, Human Trafficking 101, and Preventing Local Human Trafficking. Currently, these programs are

offered at no cost to schools or youth organizations. Seattle Against Slavery also offers licensing of Trafficking Prevention for Schools to other organizations to become facilitators.

The training and curriculum is approximately two thousand dollars (as of May 31st, 2021). Seattle Against Slavery usually coordinates directly with teachers to bring their four-session prevention program into classrooms. This means that they visit the same teacher or school each semester or twice a year in order to provide the program to all students. A majority of their facilitators are now part-time interns from the School of Social Work. They are provided with a \$1500 stipend each quarter and currently take on 2-3 student facilitators each year.

They currently reach about 2000 students each year with Trafficking Prevention for Schools alone. In order to effectively reach schools statewide, they would need to build up their full-time staff of Education Coordinators, which average about \$55,000 per year. With a team of 2-4 coordinators, Seattle Against Slavery could double or triple the number of students they reach per year. Hiring more full-time staff would also enable this organization to train other organizations to license and facilitate anti-trafficking programs throughout the state (Seattle Against Slavery 2021).

# Summary

A combination of both aspects of the Prince William County Public Schools prevention program and Seattle Against Slavery's anti-trafficking program would be beneficial in creating anti-human trafficking education in Seattle and King County. We could use Seattle Against Slavery's Trafficking Prevention for Schools program to educate and develop a curriculum for teachers to present to their students. Another option would be for local organizations to come together and form a school curriculum in order to incorporate both labor and sex trafficking.



# MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

We recommend that Seattle and or King County:

- Create a collective fund to cover mental health services and substance abuse treatment for survivors of human trafficking.
- Increase accessibility to mental health and substance abuse services by identifying and equipping integrated care clinics with resources and training to treat survivors.

Survivors of trafficking face a myriad of obstacles to accessing care, including a lack of financial resources and availability of trauma-informed care by health professionals specifically trained to treat them.

Because of the existing barriers to care, we recommend that a collective fund should be established to cover the costs of mental health and substance abuse care for survivors. In addition, we recommend equipping integrated health clinics across King County with training resources to increase the number of healthcare workers that can meet survivors' unique mental health needs.



# MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

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We must emphasize here that mental health services encompass mental health counselling and substance abuse treatment.

## Rationale

While mental health awareness has increased in the last decade, it is important to acknowledge the unique mental health needs that victims and survivors of human trafficking have.

Survivors of human trafficking often have complex trauma, span a number of demographics, and require tailored approaches to mental health. Survivors are frequently diagnosed with substance abuse, personality disorders, ADHD, anxiety, and PTSD. Treating mental health issues in trafficking survivors is critical in reducing the probability of them re-entering the world of trafficking.

It has been established that poor mental health conditions are a risk factor for becoming houseless, using drugs, and being incarcerated for several offenses (Monroig 2020, 15). All of these experiences are

also risk factors for being trafficked. Therefore, supporting survivors and others at-risk for human trafficking through mental health care can be preventative, as well as restorative. It is a catalyst to effectively supporting them in all other areas of life.

## Creating a collective fund

Mental health care and substance abuse treatment is expensive and often inaccessible, especially for people who are undocumented and others without insurance coverage.



In the United States, a single one-hour traditional therapy session can cost between \$65 to \$250 for people without insurance. If a patient has severe depression, they may end up paying \$10,836 a year on health costs alone (Leonhardt 2021). These costs are extremely inaccessible for survivors and victims of trafficking who may have multiple factors, such as complex trauma, a criminal record, lack of a visa, and more that prevent them from being able to immediately obtain a job at all. Survivors and victims of labor and sex trafficking should not have to sacrifice their well being for other basic needs. These individuals should be able to focus on getting back on their feet after exiting a trafficking situation.



## Lessons Learned: Equipping Integrated Care Clinics

Recently, King County has made great strides in implementing integrated mental healthcare.

Integrated care clinics are healthcare settings that do not entirely separate mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and primary care. Rather, social and behavioral workers are embedded in this same location and they work together to provide more holistic care to patients. These settings increase access to mental health care and destigmatize mental health issues by offering them alongside medical services (Press and Livesey 2019).

King County has a history in researching and implementing integrative health care models. In fact, the University of Washington pioneered a specific model for integrated mental health care called collaborative care in the late 1990s, which is built on the principles of chronic illness care. It treats common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety that are persistent and require follow-ups. Over 90 randomized control trials have shown that the collaborative care model is more effective than the standard way of treating patients with anxiety, depression, and other behavioral health conditions. The Advancing Integrated Mental Health Solutions (AIMS) Center at the University of Washington continues to research and advocate for integrative healthcare and specifically, the collaborative care model (AIMS Center 2021).

Integrated care models have also made their way into schools in Seattle. Currently, there are 29 school-based health centers located at elementary, middle, and high schools in Seattle that provide sports physicals, preventative health care, evaluation and treatment of common health problems, immunizations, individual and group therapy, and counseling for several mental health issues; including depression and trauma. Five other school-based health centers serve students in the Bellevue, Highline, Renton, and Vashon school districts. These school-based health centers are independent clinics staffed by healthcare professionals. According to a study by Nadeem et al., trauma screening, such as the primary care-PTSD screening is possible to conduct at school-based health clinics.

The integrated healthcare model shows significant promise as a way to increase access and effectiveness of mental health care and substance abuse treatment. In scenarios where survivors may lack consistent modes of transportation, face barriers to visiting multiple clinics, or feel stigma toward mental health, the integrated healthcare model can serve to ease access to services. School-based health clinics offering mental health services may play an especially important role in identifying, referring, and treating survivors of trafficking. In addition to reducing barriers to care for children and adolescents from marginalized

communities, school-based health clinics may provide a unique opportunity for survivors of child trafficking and abuse to seek mental and physical health services while they are away from their trafficker.

However, while several integrated care settings exist, survivors face obstacles when trying to access care outside of survivor-specific centers because clinics are often ill-equipped to deliver trauma-informed care and have little experience working with survivors.

Meanwhile, according to a service provider at REST, survivor-specific centers such as the clinic at REST struggle to meet the demand for services, particularly mental health and substance abuse services, due to lack of funding and resources.

Due to the prevalence of human trafficking and child sexual exploitation in this region, it is crucial that all mental health professionals are trained to identify survivors of trafficking and child sexual abuse, refer them to appropriate resources, and provide survivor-centered, trauma-informed care. While previous recommendations for education in this report have focused on educating teachers students about human trafficking, it is critical that a mandatory, separate intensive training be developed and provided to mental health professionals in all settings in King County, particularly at integrated care clinics such as school-based health clinics.

## Summary

First, in order to reduce financial barriers to mental health care for survivors of trafficking, a fund should be created to cover the costs of mental health and substance abuse treatment services for survivors of labor trafficking and sexual exploitation in King County. Next, to increase accessibility to mental health services and decrease stigma, grants should be provided to clinics, such as the REST Integrated Care Clinic and the SHE clinic, which combine mental health and medical services and specifically provide trauma-informed counseling and other services to survivors. Funding these two clinics specifically would allow them to expand quality services to more survivors at locations they already trust.

However, both the REST clinic and the SHE clinic currently only offer services to survivors of sex trafficking; therefore, it is vital that more integrated care clinics are equipped to provide care to survivors of both sex and labor trafficking as well as different demographics of people. Therefore, it is imperative that a training on identifying child sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and labor trafficking in King County is developed and implemented in integrated health clinics across King County. A training for mental health professionals addressing the specific mental health needs of sex and labor trafficking survivors, the

intersectionality of survivor identities, identifying human trafficking and sexual abuse in healthcare, and a localized landscape of human trafficking in the region should be developed to prevent victims and survivors from slipping through the cracks. Training professionals at these clinics can help alleviate barriers survivors face currently at clinics such as feeling misunderstood or not believed. Organizations that currently provide mental health services and/or substance abuse services and may be important to consult in developing a mental health training for King County include Kent Youth and Family Services, API Chaya, REST's Integrated Care Clinic, and the SHE Clinic. Another resource to consult is the National Human Trafficking Hotline. A virtual training for mental health professionals is available on their website and may be a good starting point for a more localized training.



# OUTREACH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

We recommend that Seattle and or King County:

- Create an Outreach Manager/Advocate position to send and respond to messages sent using Freedom Signal, expand and oversee the use of TIRA upon its release, and connect survivors of trafficking and exploitation to appropriate organizations.

There are several groups, spanning Seattle, Boston, and Baltimore, that are using technology to address barriers to accessing services for survivors of human trafficking.

# OUTREACH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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## Reaching victims and survivors through Freedom Signal

Freedom Signal is an application developed through a collaboration Seattle Against Slavery and REST, using Microsoft technology. The application targets victims of sexual exploitation and allows advocates to scrub the internet for sex ads placed in their area. Freedom Signal allows advocates to send direct outreach texts to these phone numbers. If a person responds, the advocate can then build a relationship with them and direct them to services. REST's first year using Freedom Signal technology led to over 40 victims of sexual exploitation engaging in exit services, compared to 3-5 additional victims and survivors seeking services via street outreach alone.

Currently, this digital platform is available to other service providers and advocates who wish to use it for a monthly fee. According to the Freedom Signal website, one organization that uses Freedom Signal found that victims who were sent direct text outreach were 244% more likely to engage with services. Another found that for every six hours of text-based outreach, a victim engaged in services compared to 60 hours of street-



based and in-person outreach for one engagement. This means that digital outreach is incredibly effective compared to current in-person methods alone in connecting survivors to services (Freedom Signal).

However, as a form of technology that is already in use, Freedom Signal currently faces multiple barriers to reaching its full potential. An email conversation with Seattle Against Slavery's technology team reveals that a lack of funding and staff are major obstacles in the implementation of Freedom Signal. Because of a lack of funding, Seattle Against Slavery charges a monthly fee for organizations that want to use Freedom Signal. Currently there are 15 organizations across the country that use it. However, many other organizations lack resources, such as staff and funding, that prevent them from using Freedom Signal because there is no one to respond to the numerous messages they may receive through the platform. Without a person to maintain conversations with victims of exploitation, Freedom Signal cannot operate and victims of exploitation who may have sought services after outreach with the app may continue to be exploited with no intervention.

### **Two goals, one tool: decreasing barriers to access and navigating culturally informed services with TIRA**

Several organizations are working on another platform called TIRA to reduce barriers to access. These groups



include REST, National Trafficking Sheltered Alliance, Boston University Spark!, and Impact ++ at the University of Washington. Advertised to be released in 2021, the digital platform is advertised to be a direct connection from survivors to service providers that puts survivors behind the steering wheel. By allowing survivors to upload a single profile instead of having to go through numerous health screening processes and re-live their trauma, TIRA is both survivor-centered and trauma-informed. TIRA is also advertised to help survivors find “the right door” by taking survivor preferences into account to make quality suggestions (TIRA). While TIRA simply connects survivors to advocates and providers, it can increase the visibility of culturally-informed services that may otherwise be unknown to survivors. It may also be an efficient way to advertise less considered, culturally-informed services such as acupuncture, art therapy, and healing circles alongside traditional Western health services.

Improving access to culturally informed services is important for multiple reasons, such as the impact of one’s immigration status, sex, race, gender, and sexuality on access to services. Addressing the different cultural needs of survivors and navigating feelings of shame and embarrassment related to their trafficking situation can be difficult. For example, in mental health care, Western talk-style treatments may not work for everyone. For some, other self-care practices such as acupuncture may be more beneficial (Hemmings et al.

2016). Therefore, it is important to expand the approach to mental health treatment and other services for survivors to offer more than counseling alone. In the case of counseling and other similar treatments, a survivor may also feel more comfortable speaking with someone of the same race, ethnicity, or gender as themselves.

While addressing cultural needs through healthcare is not a novel idea, it is important to note that healthcare services are often disjointed. Currently, finding availability for victim services can take weeks, involving dozens of calls and emails that further exacerbate barriers survivors face to care. These do not even include addressing survivor preferences for certain types of care or demographics of healthcare providers. In addition, language barriers may make this process even more difficult. However, as a digital platform, TIRA may provide a unique opportunity to both offer and collect data on culturally informed services that are available in King County and overcome language barriers through digital translation of the application.

The implementation of Freedom Signal and TIRA have the potential to reach significantly more victims than are currently served and can lessen barriers to victim services for survivors from all backgrounds and cultures. Putting the onus on trafficking victims to seek services forces them to navigate their trauma alone and overcome significant physical and mental barriers.

This being said, it is crucial that other methods of outreach including street outreach continue. Due to its digital nature, platforms like Freedom Signal unfortunately rely on victims of trafficking having safe access to a phone, which can vary depending on their trafficking situation. In order to reach those without a phone, other outreach methods and case management techniques must be continued. However, in today's digital age, the data shows that text-based outreach is working for many and connecting more victims and survivors with potentially life-saving care. Therefore, the adoption of Freedom Signal and TIRA as mainstream anti-trafficking tools in King County is crucial to supporting more survivors of trafficking.

## Summary

The city of Seattle should work closely with REST and Seattle Against Slavery to expand and implement both Freedom Signal and TIRA in King County upon its release through outreach grants. Adopting both of these technologies into its main framework would streamline the outreach and referral process for victims of trafficking and allow NGOs to focus on street outreach. Connecting with victims and survivors is necessary for them to access victim services, including housing, substance abuse treatment, and mental health care.

# POLICY

Along with our policy recommendations on housing, education, mental health and substance abuse, and technology, we recommend that Seattle and/or King County regulate whether current policies in place are being upheld to support survivors.

The needs of survivors and victims of human trafficking must not be neglected after they have left their previous trafficking situation. Many survivors may have had to commit other crimes during their exploitation. This may ruin their credit or make it difficult to gain employment or housing in the future. Laws that permit safe harbor or vacate convictions can help survivors transition into life post-trafficking. It is important to determine whether current anti-trafficking policy is effective and that it is reducing harm without unintended negative consequences.

# CLOSING WORDS

We urge the City of Seattle and King County to invest in four key areas: housing, preventative education, mental health services, and outreach technology.

In housing, the City must create a program that provides trafficking survivors with housing vouchers to help them overcome the numerous systemic barriers that survivors face when seeking housing.

In preventative education, the City must Implement a mandatory anti-human trafficking educational program that covers labor and sex trafficking be taught at schools and workplaces.

In mental health services, the City must 1) create a collective fund to cover mental health services and substance abuse treatment for survivors of human trafficking, and 2) increase accessibility to mental health and substance abuse services by identifying and equipping integrated care clinics with resources and training to treat survivors.

Finally, in outreach technology, the City must Create an Outreach Manager/Advocate position to send and respond to messages sent using Freedom Signal, expand and oversee the use of TIRA upon its release, and connect survivors of trafficking and exploitation to appropriate organizations.

Whatever solutions the City and King County may pursue, they must be survivor-centered and trauma-informed. Throughout our interviews with survivors, we repeatedly heard stories of initiatives and programs failing to take into account survivors' needs. The experiences of trafficking survivors are not tools to achieve political ends; they should only serve as guiding lights for anti-trafficking work.

We would like to thank the many parties that assisted us in the creation of this report: the service providers that graciously took the time to speak with us; our supervisor, Tyrone Grandison, for his constant feedback and support; the Seattle Human Rights Commission, for giving us the opportunity to dive into this research; and to the survivors who shared their stories with us.

We hope that this report serves as a stepping stone for future action, and would be happy to answer any follow-up questions.

# GLOSSARY

## Criminalization:

- This model is premised on making sex trafficking or prostitution a criminal offense against the law.

## Domestic Human Trafficking

- Occurs when an individual is trafficked within their country of origin

## Full decriminalization:

- This model is premised on removing all laws that prohibit or regulate selling, facilitating, or buying sex.

## Human Trafficking:

- Is a form of modern-day slavery in which an individual is made to work in any industry using force, fraud, or coercion.

## International Human Trafficking:

- Occurs when an individual is transported from one country to another country for the purpose of being trafficked

## Labor trafficking:

- Occurs when an individual is compelled to perform labor or services through force, fraud, or coercion

## Legalization:

- This model is premised on making the sale of sex legal, but regulated and controlled by the government.



# GLOSSARY

## Nordic Model:

- This model is premised on 1) identifying prostituted individuals as victims and protects them from legal penalties, 2) criminalizing the act of buying or facilitating trafficked sex. It should be noted that the Nordic Model is also referred to as the Equality Model in some communities.

## Sex Trafficking:

- Occurs when an individual is compelled to perform commercial sex acts through force, fraud, or coercion. Minors under the age of 18 are considered to be sex trafficked if they are sexually exploited, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion was used.

## Survivor:

- Refers to an individual who has exited their trafficking situation

## Victim of Human

## Trafficking:

- Refers to an individual who is still being trafficked

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