

Protecting Ohio's Families



Ohio Attorney General's Office
Human Trafficking



2012
Annual Report



MIKE DEWINE
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

OHIO HUMAN TRAFFICKING
COMMISSION



MIKE DEWINE

★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

Dear Ohioans,

Human trafficking is a horrendous crime that preys upon the most vulnerable among us, often targeting our children. In August 2011, after hearing from local citizens about suspected human trafficking in numerous massage parlors in Warren, Ohio, I decided to reconvene the Ohio Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission. In response to this concern, my office, in collaboration with local law enforcement, launched a full investigation into these massage parlors. This investigation resulted in the closure of these suspected human trafficking fronts and sparked an awareness of the need for greater resources to combat this issue.

2012 has been an important year in the fight to end human trafficking in Ohio, and the Human Trafficking Commission has been a crucial piece in my office's human trafficking efforts. I am proud of the progress that the Commission has made over the past year. From researching and passing major human trafficking legislation to creating statewide webinars to teach children, teachers, and parents about the dangers of trafficking, this Commission has been on the front lines of the fight to better protect our most vulnerable Ohioans against the risk of human trafficking.

My office has also focused on training and supporting law enforcement to give them the tools to arrest traffickers and connect victims to supportive services. Through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy, we have trained law enforcement on how to identify and investigate human trafficking cases. We also announced the first indictments under the state's Trafficking in Persons law, using our new Ohio Organized Crime Investigative Commission's Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force to investigate and prosecute these cases. Law enforcement is sending a clear message to traffickers that Ohioans will not tolerate those who harm our children and our most vulnerable for their financial gain.

I would like to thank all of the dedicated men and women who have collaborated with my office through the Human Trafficking Commission, the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, and our other initiatives to end this abuse. Though we have come far in 2012, we still have a great deal of work ahead of us. I look forward to our continued collaboration throughout the coming year.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General

Law Enforcement Subcommittee

The Law Enforcement Subcommittee is comprised of a working group of law enforcement officers involved in human trafficking investigations across the state. As a first step, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee held a Human Trafficking Summit which brought together law enforcement from across the state to exchange information and receive human trafficking updates.

The Law Enforcement Human Trafficking Summit was held at the Ohio Department of Public Safety on May 10, 2012. All investigators who had completed advanced human trafficking training at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy were invited. A total of 47 investigators attended the day-long summit. The summit featured legislative updates from Representative Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), and human trafficking case reviews from experienced police detectives from the human trafficking task force in Toledo. Investigators were also given tips on how to conduct undercover investigations in human trafficking cases.

The first Law Enforcement Human Trafficking Summit was a success. The Summit attendees were compiled into a contact list, which was then sent to all summit attendees to facilitate the continued exchange of information and networking among advanced human trafficking investigators.

In the future, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee will expand its focus on labor trafficking in Ohio and continue to assist in bringing greater training and awareness to local law enforcement.

Legal & Legislative Subcommittee

The Legal and Legislative Subcommittee achieved a major victory with the passage of House Bill 262, the Safe Harbor Law, in June, 2012. This legislation was sponsored by subcommittee Chair Representative Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and its main provisions are designed to assist victims in getting needed services to escape the trafficking situation, provide increased support to law enforcement, and toughen penalties on traffickers.

One of the most important things the legislation does is view the person being trafficked as a victim, instead of as a criminal. By doing so, the law establishes a diversion program for trafficked youth to assist them in obtaining supportive social services and to keep them out of the juvenile justice system.

A barrier that victims face is the collateral consequences of a prior prostitution-related conviction. To address this problem, the law provides a mechanism for victims of human trafficking to apply to the court to have their prior Solicitation, Loitering to Engage in Solicitation, and Prostitution records expunged, regardless of whether anyone was ever convicted of trafficking the victim.

The second set of changes implemented in the law requires that all law enforcement take human trafficking training as part of their basic peace officer training curriculum. To facilitate this process, the Ohio Attorney General's Office has created three online trainings, as well as in person trainings, through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy. Additionally, local law enforcement is now required to report data on human trafficking violations to the Attorney General's Office through the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI). BCI will track and compile the data into an annual report on human trafficking beginning in 2013.

Finally, the law increases penalties for traffickers. The Safe Harbor Law increased the penalty for human trafficking to a first degree felony with a mandatory prison term of at least ten years. This brings Ohio law more in line with penalties traffickers face at the federal level. The Safe Harbor Law also forces sex traffickers to register as sex offenders.

Furthermore, recognizing that a trafficker will often use harassment and intimidation to prevent a victim from testifying in court, the law includes a provision that makes obstructing justice in trafficking cases a second degree felony. This provision sends a clear message that Ohio takes protecting its most vulnerable citizens from manipulating traffickers seriously.

Recognizing the need for additional funding to serve this complex population of victims, the law creates a victims of human trafficking fund and specifies that seizures from traffickers be deposited in this fund to provide assistance to victims. Finally, the bill authorizes human trafficking victims to file a civil law suit against their traffickers and receive damages for the harm they experienced at the hands of their trafficker.

The passage of House Bill 262 has greatly strengthened Ohio's response to human trafficking. Both Polaris Project and Shared Hope International, two national organizations that rate states' laws on human trafficking, increased Ohio's grade following the passage of the bill. Prior to the passage of House Bill 262, Ohio was part of the "dirty dozen" of states ranked at the bottom for its legislative response. Ohio is now in Polaris Project's top tier and was one of four states that was "most improved." There have been a number of indictments under the state Trafficking in Persons law that are still awaiting trial. It is clear that awareness of this problem is growing in Ohio, with the general public, the legislature, and in the criminal justice community.

Despite improvement, however, there is still work to do in increasing Ohio's legislative response to human trafficking. Shared Hope International's improved letter grade this year remains only a "C." The Legal and Legislative Subcommittee is already busy drafting legislation for the next General Assembly to refine the work done in House Bill 262 and to improve our response to human trafficking victims statewide. Priority legislative areas include lengthening the statute of limitations in Trafficking in Persons cases to match that of other sexual abuse cases, and to clarify language to make it easier to prosecute traffickers under the Trafficking in Persons law.

Finally, the subcommittee wants to train the legal community to help it understand the provisions of House Bill 262 and Ohio's human trafficking legislation. The Attorney General's Office had the opportunity to update Ohio's criminal prosecutors on the new law during the fall meeting of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association.

Prevention, Education & Awareness

The Prevention, Education & Awareness Subcommittee has focused on making educators aware of the signs of trafficking and how to help. This focus on educators is consistent with the Research & Analysis Subcommittee's 2012 Sex Trafficking in Ohio report, which recommended that educators be provided greater training on how to identify potential victims of human trafficking in their classrooms. The first project that the subcommittee completed was a fact sheet for educators. This fact sheet gives basic information about human trafficking and risk factors. The fact sheet is posted on the Ohio Department of Education's website, along with the Human Trafficking Commission's webpage at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/HumanTrafficking.

The subcommittee also completed a series of three webinars to educate teachers, parents, community members, and students on human trafficking. This series of webinars was created by the Human Trafficking Commission and hosted by the Ohio Department of Education. Tony Talbott, Professor of Political Science and Human Rights at the University of Dayton, and Rachel Adkins, Anti-Human Trafficking Education Specialist for the Central Ohio Rescue and Restore Coalition, taught viewers the definition of human trafficking, risk factors, warning signs, and how to access resources for help. These webinars were recorded and remain available on the Ohio Department of Education website.

Research & Analysis

The Research & Analysis Subcommittee spent the year completing the 2012 Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio report. This report was released in August 2012 and looked at the experiences of 328 females involved in the sex trade in Ohio across five cities; 115 of which were trafficked as youth. The cities included in the study were Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo. The study sought to determine the risk factors faced by minors who entered into sex trafficking, and made recommendations for improved response to sex trafficking in Ohio.

Major findings from this report were that individuals who were sex trafficked as minors were more likely to have been victims of child abuse; subject to neglect; to have a close family member involved in the sex trade; to experience depression; to have been raped; to run away from home; to have difficulty in school, and to have previous interactions with law enforcement. Those who were sex trafficked before the age of 18 were also more likely to have been in the proximity of those who sold, bought, or sold others for sex. Prior to being trafficked, victims were likely to have a much older boyfriend who preyed upon the victim's vulnerability. Surprisingly, many child victims were recruited by a female who was also involved in selling sex or a female who first acted like a friend.

The report also contains information about those who purchase sex, otherwise known as johns, including the professions of the johns who purchased the women involved in the study and where sex was most likely to be purchased. Significantly, most sex trafficking victims report being sold in customers' homes or offices and in houses set up for prostitution. These places are more elusive to law enforcement detection than street-level sex trafficking.

Finally, the report contains a variety of recommendations for increasing the response to sex trafficking victims in Ohio. One recommendation is that child sex trafficking be considered child abuse and that the child welfare system respond to these cases along with law enforcement. The report also recommends that Ohio increase its response to runaway children, as these children are at greater risk for recruitment into sexual exploitation. Other recommendations include establishing protocols to identify and divert high risk youth; reducing stigma faced by child victims; focusing on demand reduction and arresting buyers; and investing in services to respond to adult victims.

The Research and Analysis Subcommittee has a number of future projects planned. The subcommittee would like to complete a report for anti-trafficking coalitions around the state with specific recommendations for each. Currently, a doctoral student at University of Toledo is completing a research project on providing occupational therapy to human trafficking survivors with a research component to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The subcommittee will also focus on this occupational therapy component in the coming year.

Victim Services and Safe Locations

The Victim Services and Safe Locations Subcommittee has been working on numerous projects throughout 2012. The subcommittee has been working with the Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force through the Ohio Department of Health to create medical protocols for victims of human trafficking. The Ohio Department of Health is currently incorporating human trafficking into its sexual assault evidence collection protocols.

The second collaborative project with the Governor's Task Force and the Ohio Department of Health is the development of a protocol for medical triage immediately after rescue. This protocol is intended to operate when law enforcement or a victim services agency brings a survivor to medical personnel. Recognizing that survivors may not self-identify as victims of trafficking, the protocol adds social history questions for medical personnel to explore other signs of human trafficking, and complete a body map and photo documentation of injuries. The Ohio Department of Health is currently taking initial work drafted by the Victim Services and Safe Locations Subcommittee to create a draft of this protocol.

The Victim Services and Safe Locations Subcommittee also actively supports the development of a peer review process for Ohio human trafficking service providers. A matrix of human trafficking services created by the subcommittee has been re-purposed into a peer review tool. This tool lists all services that could be provided to a human trafficking victim by a service provider and sets the standards for those services. Having a standard for victim service providers is critical to ensure that human trafficking victims are getting the highest standard of care. The peer review tool is currently complete and is undergoing final feedback from the anti-trafficking coalitions. The next step will be for the subcommittee to host training for volunteer peer reviewers in 2013 and the pilot peer reviews will take place once this training is complete.

Finally, the subcommittee has focused on facilitating coalition development in Eastern/Southern Ohio. Michelle Hannan, subcommittee chair, has established three new anti-trafficking coalitions in under-served areas of Ohio. The Southeast Ohio coalition services Guernsey, Monroe, Noble, and Washington counties. The new Mid East Ohio coalition services Muskingum, Coshocton, Perry, and Morgan counties. In addition, the Stark County coalition has been meeting for about a year in Canton, and is focusing on outreach and planning for victim services. The subcommittee will focus on supporting these new coalitions in the coming year.

Demand Reduction

The Demand Reduction Subcommittee is working toward the reduction of demand for forced labor and compelled commercial sexual activity in Ohio, with a focus on both potential consumers and the traffickers.

The subcommittee has been engaged in a number of long-term projects over the past year. One major undertaking has been the creation of a report on John Schools across the state. John Schools are programs to teach johns, the buyers of sex, about sex trafficking in the hope of reducing the demand by the john to purchase sex in the future. There is currently no standard for John Schools in Ohio. The subcommittee has been collecting information on the different John Schools across the state and will have a full report in the coming months.

Efforts are also in progress to survey programs on educational efforts working with youth in Ohio on human trafficking awareness and prevention, including a focus on working with men and boys on the impact they can have to end sexual exploitation.

This subcommittee has also been collecting ideas for possible research on the topic of demand reduction. Members of the subcommittee have reached out to universities interested in addressing this issue through further research.

In the future, the subcommittee will be releasing the John Schools report, and plans to host a training on demand reduction activities underway in Ohio and other demand reduction strategies that could be used across the state.

Other Attorney General Human Trafficking Initiatives

In addition to the work of the Human Trafficking Commission, the Attorney General's Office has been engaged in other internal efforts to combat human trafficking. These efforts focus heavily on law enforcement, recognizing the need to give law enforcement the tools and support to arrest traffickers and johns to better assist human trafficking victims.

Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force: The creation of the Ohio Organized Crime Commission's Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force is a law enforcement collaborative formed to investigate human trafficking cases in the Central Ohio area. The Task Force was announced in August 2012 and is primarily made up of officers from the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), the Columbus Police Department, the Powell Police Department, U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The Task Force has had several indictments under the state Trafficking in Persons law. All of the cases are currently pending trial. The Task Force is currently in discussions with several other law enforcement agencies in the Central Ohio area that are interested in joining the Task Force.

Central Ohio Human Trafficking Collaborative: The Central Ohio Human Trafficking Collaborative is a collaboration between the Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) and The Salvation Army of Central Ohio to create closer collaboration between law enforcement and victim services for human trafficking victims in Central Ohio. This collaboration, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, is a two-year project that will fund two Bureau of Criminal Investigation officers and a victim service provider for two years. The Central Ohio Human Trafficking Collaborative will work closely with the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force to investigate cases of human trafficking and ensure that the victims receive the proper response at the point of rescue.

Law Enforcement Training: The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy has been actively training local law enforcement on how to identify and investigate cases of human trafficking in Ohio. The recently passed Safe Harbor Law contains new mandatory training requirements for law enforcement. All peace officers are now required to have training in handling Trafficking in Persons violations as a part of basic peace officer training and current officers must also take this training.

As a result of the new law, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy has increased the number of law enforcement receiving human trafficking training. The Attorney General's Office has created a series of three online trainings to train local law enforcement agencies, in addition to offering both basic and advanced in-person trainings. In 2012, over 24,000 Human Trafficking eOPOTA courses were completed by law enforcement.

Conclusion

Though Ohio made great progress in the fight against human trafficking in 2012, there is still much work to be done to address this issue in the coming year. The Human Trafficking Commission's six subcommittees will continue to make progress in creating additional awareness of human trafficking in Ohio; increasing the response to victims; providing additional research to better understand human trafficking and its impact in our state; mobilizing law enforcement; and creating better laws to protect victims. The Attorney General's Office will continue to look for ways to support victims and provide additional resources to law enforcement to combat this crime. Human trafficking is a horror that attacks our most vulnerable citizens and we must all do our part to build awareness and eliminate this crime.



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