



2023

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**  
ANNUAL REPORT



**DAVE YOST**  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



# DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

My fellow Ohioans,

Every day in Ohio and across the nation, human traffickers lure desperate souls with the dream of a better life, only to ensnare them in a nightmare of forced sex or labor.

The victims are women and men, girls and boys. Often, the trafficker is someone they know. Sometimes, the trafficker is a parent or guardian.

And even though it might seem that human trafficking occurs only in society's darkest corners, it can happen in any community, often in plain sight.

As the state's chief law officer, I am committed to wiping out this scourge in Ohio. To lead the way, I created the Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI) in 2019. This report details HTI's progress in 2023.

The Human Trafficking Initiative works to build awareness, empower Ohioans to take action in their communities, strengthen victim services, and ensure that traffickers and "johns" are brought to justice. To carry out its work, HTI collaborates with social-service agencies, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit groups and anti-human trafficking coalitions statewide, and with the AGO's Human Trafficking Commission and many sections of my office.

Among HTI's key partners in my office are the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission, which works with law enforcement to organize and support human trafficking task forces throughout the state, and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, which provides staffing, technical expertise and technological resources to task forces and local law enforcement agencies. Additionally, HTI works with the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy to train officers to identify and investigate human trafficking.

But the challenge of eradicating human trafficking in Ohio falls not only to my office and to law enforcement agencies statewide, but also to the people of Ohio. As a society committed to the common good, we share an obligation to care for one another, to help those in need. To that end, the fight against human trafficking very much relies on the willingness of Ohioans to speak up when they see something wrong.

The more we work together, the more progress we'll make.

Yours,

Dave Yost  
Ohio Attorney General

## **ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking is the illegal use of vulnerable people to make a profit through sex work or labor, a societal scourge that is happening right now throughout Ohio. No community within our borders — whether urban, suburban or rural — is immune.

Ohio defines labor trafficking as “involuntary servitude” and sex trafficking as “compelled sex activity for hire.” Sex trafficking can include prostitution, but prostitution does not necessarily constitute sex trafficking. The distinction is easily remembered as “2 vs. 3.” Unlike prostitution, sex trafficking must include a third-party beneficiary, meaning that someone besides the two people engaged in the sexual act is involved. Commonly, the third party — the one who profits — is a pimp, significant other, friend or relative.

When people think of sex trafficking, they often imagine a stranger — the third party referred to in Ohio law — pulling up in a van and kidnapping a young victim, or keeping a young woman locked in chains. These perceptions, however, are mostly myth. Most traffickers know their victims well. Many also know their victims’ families. Traffickers rely on building trust and a close relationship with their targets by filling the victims’ needs and, in the process, identifying vulnerabilities. Then they exploit those vulnerabilities to compel their victims into being trafficked.

Labor trafficking, too, is a problem throughout Ohio and the United States. Many people incorrectly believe that only undocumented immigrants are trafficked for labor, but it can happen to those who enter the country legally and to U.S. citizens. Furthermore, labor trafficking can happen within legitimate businesses — construction, food service, agriculture, and others — where it hides in plain sight and makes it harder to identify.

People of any age, race, sex or socioeconomic status can fall victim to human trafficking, but certain factors make individuals more vulnerable. The nonprofit Polaris, which operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, identifies the following as significant risk factors:

- Substance use
- Mental health concerns
- Recent migration or relocation
- Involvement with the child welfare system
- Persons experiencing homelessness

## **AG YOST’S HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE**

In 2019, not long after winning the first of two terms as Ohio’s 51st Attorney General, Dave Yost identified the fight against human trafficking as a top priority of his administration. To that end, he created the Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI), whose mission is to end labor and sex trafficking statewide by building awareness, empowering Ohioans to join the battle within their communities, helping victims, and ensuring that traffickers and buyers are brought to justice.

As part of the initiative, HTI team members collaborate with social-service agencies, state and federal agencies, law enforcement agencies on all levels, nonprofit organizations, and anti-human trafficking coalitions. They have conducted both basic and advanced training for such agencies as well as businesses, community groups and others.

## Priorities of the HTI

Ending sex trafficking and labor trafficking in Ohio are priorities of the HTI, which, on the broadest level, aims to equip all Ohioans with the knowledge and resources to recognize the warning signs of human trafficking and report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

More specifically, the HTI team has established these strategies:

- Focus on prevention and education on victimization of one human being for another's profit. These efforts include raising awareness among youth and young adults.
- Promote legislative policy to ensure that Ohio is doing what it can to fight trafficking.
- Assist and train task forces and prosecutors to build human trafficking cases and develop more task forces throughout the state.
- Understand barriers to wraparound services and identify next steps for survivors of human trafficking.
- Reinforce collaboration and discussion among Ohio stakeholders to strengthen and unify community responses to human trafficking.

Because resources and awareness vary widely throughout Ohio, the connections that the HTI team makes as it travels the state are extremely valuable. As team members learn of successes by certain organizations, they work with those groups to spread best practices to other communities so that all Ohioans can benefit from effective strategies and shared wisdom.

## The HTI Team

**Linda Majeska Powers** serves as the legal director for the Ohio Human Trafficking Initiative, assisting task forces, criminal investigators and prosecutors in the prosecution of human trafficking cases. Linda provides specialized instruction and training for law enforcement and prosecutors centering on best practices in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. She also conducts community outreach.

Linda previously served as a senior assistant attorney general in the Consumer Protection Section, where as a member of the Economic Crimes Unit she specialized in prosecuting cases involving financial exploitation of older Ohioans and disabled Ohioans, public corruption, and complex white-collar fraud. Before joining the Ohio Attorney General's Office, she was a prosecutor for the city of Elyria.



Linda has bachelor's degrees in criminal justice and justice, morality and constitutional democracy (JMCD) from Michigan State University and a law degree from Western Michigan. While attending law school, she worked in the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, part of the Michigan Attorney General's Office. She left the Michigan AGO briefly – to create the Crime Victim Advocacy Office in the Eaton County Prosecutor's Office – and then returned.

As a victim advocate for the Attorney General’s Human Trafficking Initiative, **Mary Kate Waggoner** focuses on strengthening services for survivors and providing training and technical assistance to anti-trafficking organizations and groups statewide. Mary Kate is a licensed independent social worker and two-time graduate of the University of Akron. She is passionate about serving marginalized and victimized populations through her advocacy work and the development of effective programs and systems. Her expertise is in providing trauma-informed care to survivors of sexual violence, with a special focus on human trafficking victims. She also is experienced in program development, policy writing, federal grant management, consulting and training.



The HTI team offers free trainings, both in person and remotely, to spread the word about the fight against human trafficking. In 2023, the team trained more than 3,500 people, encompassing professional groups and organizations ranging from restaurant employees, school administrators and school safety officers to boards of developmental disabilities, municipal inspectors and utility employees.

Also during the year, Legal Director Powers was a keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Indiana-Kentucky-Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters (IKORCC) in Cleveland and the Nationwide Children’s Hospital Speaker Series Event in Columbus. Powers met with a delegation of diplomats from Oman to discuss human trafficking in our two countries. And the HTI team had a presence at the 2023 National Night Out on Crime in Cleveland and the Walsh University Day to Speak on Human Trafficking and Survivor Recognition Walk.

The HTI offers these training programs, tailored to fit the needs of the audience:

### **Human Trafficking 101**

Presenters explain human trafficking and how it happens. Attendees learn:

- How victims are affected and who is vulnerable.
- Who traffickers are and how they operate.
- How misconceptions make people believe trafficking happens only to other people in other places.
- What to watch out for.
- How reducing demand can help.
- What improvements are being considered for Ohio laws and what those laws say now.
- How attendees can join the fight.

### **Advanced Human Trafficking Training**

Presenters address:

- What law enforcement and prosecutors need to know.
- How experts are working with victims and survivors of human trafficking.
- What barriers and gaps in services exist.
- How to identify human trafficking victims.
- Why a multidisciplinary team is important.
- What factors complicate investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking cases.

## HTI's Partners Within the AGO

The fight against human trafficking is a highly collaborative effort involving the AGO, social-service agencies, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations and anti-human trafficking coalitions throughout the state. Within the AGO, the HTI team works with the following partners:

### Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission

The commission — made up of the HTI team, Ambassador Advisory Council members and outside partners — works to develop methods for ending human trafficking. The commission meets quarterly. It has seven mission-focused subcommittees that meet monthly:

- The **Demand Reduction Subcommittee** seeks to decrease social and legal tolerance of human exploitation, striving to shift attitudes and behaviors of Ohioans — particularly among men, who drive most of the demand for sex trafficking. During 2023, the subcommittee:
  - Supported passage of relevant legislation, encouraged supply-chain transparency to ensure that state and private services are not bolstered by forced labor or child labor, and worked to grow a network to collectively push demand reduction.
  - Continued working to define and understand the concept of demand reduction as it applies to both sex and labor trafficking in Ohio. The group spent much of the year discussing the topic at length and doing related research. Subcommittee members are now drafting a detailed white paper on how to effectively and safely pursue demand reduction. In addition, the subcommittee produced and distributed a brief training module that could be added to any agency's existing "Human Trafficking 101" presentation.
- The **Healthcare Subcommittee** aims to improve victim care by promoting trauma-informed practices and increasing awareness of trafficking among medical professionals. The group seeks to improve data collection, in part through a pilot program at a small number of Ohio hospitals. Some subcommittee highlights for the year:
  - In March, AG Yost held a press conference announcing the launch of a training initiative for health-care professionals. Two videos and an accompanying trainer's manual created by the Healthcare Subcommittee were made publicly available on the HTI webpages of the Attorney General's website. Also added to the site was a "Message to Healthcare Workers" video featuring trafficking survivor Stephanie Rollins, an Ambassador to AG Yost's Human Trafficking Commission.
  - In April, the subcommittee was awarded the Level Up Award at the 3 Levels of Greatness gala in Columbus, with several subcommittee members and the subcommittee's three Ambassadors on hand to receive the award. (3 Levels of Greatness is a nonprofit organization that provides support to trafficking victims by empowering them to "soar above all circumstances.")
  - With help from the AGO Communications team, the subcommittee filmed two additional videos for health-care workers. The videos and guides will soon be added to the HTI pages of the Attorney General's website.
  - The subcommittee welcomed Nancy Hashman as an Ambassador.

- The **Law Enforcement Subcommittee** focuses on issues affecting how Ohio’s peace officers encounter and deal with cases of human trafficking. Priorities for the subcommittee are addressing the trafficking problem within the hotel and lodging industry in Ohio, finding ways to improve trafficking-related data collection, and providing trauma-informed interview training for all human trafficking investigators statewide. During 2023, the subcommittee:
  - Educated its members on the “Buyer’s Remorse” human trafficking sting organized by the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC), part of the Attorney General’s Office; shifting the language from “rescue” to “recovered” when referring to victims; and HTI-initiated changes regarding human trafficking reporting in the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG) by local law enforcement agencies.
  - Was tasked with drafting a short, universal presentation on human trafficking that can be shared with local law enforcement agencies. This presentation is envisioned as similar to the one previously shared by the Demand Reduction Subcommittee – something that could be dropped into a law enforcement agency’s existing human trafficking presentation.
- The **Legal and Legislative Subcommittee** evaluates Ohio’s current laws on human trafficking, how those laws are implemented and the legal training that’s available. It also focuses on changes and legal trainings that could improve the state’s response to human trafficking.

During the year, the subcommittee:

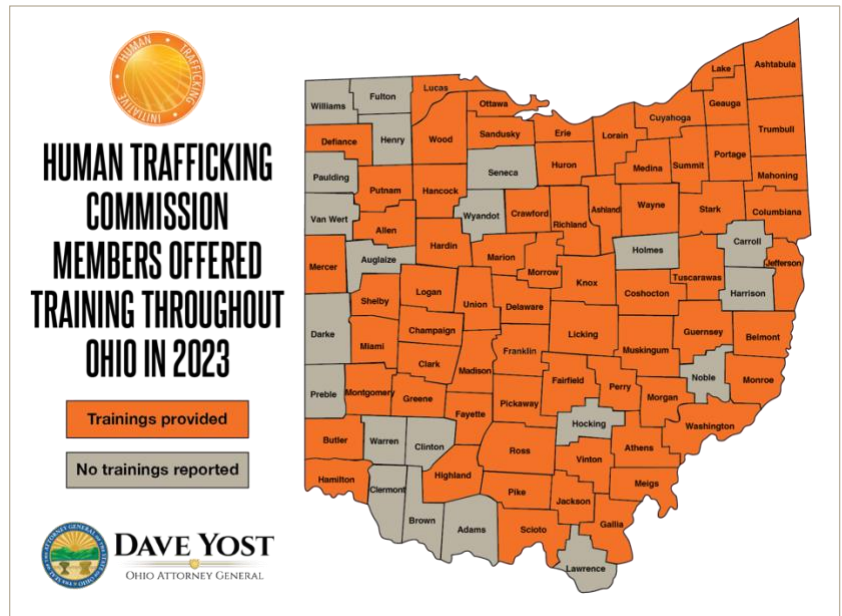
- Provided feedback on the Expanding Human Trafficking Justice Act, and subcommittee members later attended a press conference to support Rep. Tracy Richardson’s introduction of the bill in January 2024.
  - Began focusing on Erin’s Law as a platform to educate children on trafficking. Committee members reviewed the law and identified gaps.
  - Developed ideas on new initiatives for housing survivors. The subcommittee remains interested in partnering with recipients of Ohio Domestic Violence Network grants to share resources and fill identified gaps.
- The **Public Awareness Subcommittee** works to raise awareness and educate Ohioans about human trafficking, including myths and misconceptions as well as available resources.

During 2023, the subcommittee:

- Completed the “Human Trafficking 101 | Best Practices Guide to Raising Awareness in Your Community,” which is available on the HTI website. This document furthers the subcommittee’s mission to create professional human trafficking awareness guidelines and a cohesive set of educational tools for stakeholders to establish unity of information and reporting protocols across the state. The guide, which explores best practices for raising public awareness about human trafficking, is intended as a “how to” resource for anti-trafficking coalitions and community leaders throughout Ohio. It also is meant to ensure that the education being provided to adults is both evidence-based and survivor-informed. The guide was developed and peer-reviewed by anti-trafficking leaders and survivors statewide – to give it both rural and urban perspectives.
- Developed a similar guide, “Human Trafficking 101 | Best Practices Guide to Educating Youth of Middle & High-School Age,” to help communities raise awareness among young

people. The guide, available on the HTI website, also serves as a “how to” resource for anti-trafficking coalitions and community leaders throughout Ohio.

- Conducted a survey to gain a better understanding of the awareness training being performed by members of the Human Trafficking Commission. With so many individuals doing incredible work throughout the state, the Public Awareness Subcommittee wanted to gain a better understanding of the scope and nature of its members’ efforts — and where educational gaps might exist. The survey, sent to every commission member, covered topics such as the type of education provided, the county or counties where that education is happening, the audience, whether the education includes both labor and sex trafficking, and whether the education is evidence-based and survivor-informed. The map below depicts a high-level view of the survey results, with 67 of Ohio’s 88 counties having offered at least one training in 2023.



- The **Research/Gap Analysis and Data Subcommittee** seeks to identify areas in which better data can improve Ohio’s response to human trafficking. Methods include searching out gaps or inconsistencies in collected data, establishing criteria for what makes credible data, and examining current databases to see how collection and dissemination can be improved.

Subcommittee highlights for 2023:

- Per a request from AG Yost, an advisory group consisting of subcommittee members and additional researchers from throughout the state recommended a pilot program for how best to gather the prevalence data on human trafficking that is known to be severely lacking in Ohio. AG Yost provided funding for the recommended pilot project, which is based in Lucas County, with the University of Toledo’s Human Trafficking & Social Justice Institute leading data-collection efforts. In collaboration with the local anti-human trafficking coalition, Northern Ohio REACH (Regional Efforts Aimed to Combat Human Trafficking), the group is working on MOUs for participating agencies, a human trafficking screening tool to be implemented by all participating agencies, and a database to collect the screening data. This pilot project is expected to serve as a model for prevalence data collection in Ohio and nationally.
- The subcommittee also extensively explored sources of vulnerability data and research in Ohio and is currently exploring ways to translate this research to further victim/survivor identification.



- The **Victim Services Subcommittee** recommends best practices for human trafficking programs looking to enact standards and practices that are culturally sensitive and trauma-responsive. Through advocacy, leadership and accountability, the subcommittee also emphasizes diverse representation in the field and the historically marginalized voices of human trafficking survivors.

During 2023, the subcommittee focused on three major initiatives designed to strengthen Ohio's capacity to connect trafficking survivors with effective, evidence-informed services:

- *Ohio's Standards of Service for Trafficked Persons & Human Trafficking Service Directory* – Since the launch of Ohio's service standards in 2010, the subcommittee has maintained and updated this important tool for providers of services for Ohio trafficking victims. Any existing or new provider is invited to complete a self-assessment to evaluate the program's alignment with Ohio's standards. The service standard self-assessment process strengthens Ohio's response to human trafficking and helps participating agencies build their service capacity. Additionally, organizations with programs that meet or exceed the standards are invited to be listed in Ohio's Human Trafficking Service Directory, available [here](#). The subcommittee provided technical assistance to organizations throughout the year to help developing programs meet the standards. Since the survey launched last year, 81 organizations have responded and 34 organizations have programs that meet the standards and are listed on the state services directory.
- *Ohio's Child Response Protocol* – The subcommittee led a collaborative revision of Ohio's Child Response Protocol Toolkit. Originally produced in 2017, the toolkit is designed to equip Ohio communities with the ability to support a coordinated response to sex and labor trafficking of youth. The kit provides a series of preferred practices to aid communities in creating collaborative, survivor-centered interventions. There are many ways that it can be used – for example, to increase community collaboration, identify response partners, to learn how to identify and respond to children who have experienced trafficking, and to appropriately support survivors. The subcommittee expects to complete the revision in 2024. Once complete, the tool will be available on the Attorney General's website.
- *Male Shelter Project* – The subcommittee partnered with Kwami Adoboe-Herrera – an HTI Ambassador, an expert on the subject of human trafficking and a former member of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking – to explore ways to increase the availability of shelter for male survivors of human trafficking. This effort centers on Adoboe-Herrera's vision of making safe, service-enriched shelter and housing available to the vastly under-identified population of male survivors. This project will conclude in 2024 with the production of a program model to help Adoboe-Herrera bring his vision to reality.

## **Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI)**

BCI agents provide staffing, technical expertise and technological resources to human trafficking task forces and local law enforcement agencies. BCI's Special Victims Unit helps local authorities investigate and prosecute those who commit crimes against children, including human traffickers, sexual abusers and others. Additional resources are provided through BCI's Cyber Crimes, Criminal Intelligence, and Technical Operations units, including manpower for human trafficking investigations and prosecutions, forensic analysis, training and technical assistance, equipment loans and victim advocacy. BCI also aggregates trafficking data reported by law enforcement agencies in OHLEG; the 2023 statistics can be found later in this report.

## Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC)

Led by the Attorney General, OOCIC provides structure and support to local law enforcement agencies in Ohio that have uncovered organized criminal entities within their jurisdictions. As a primary tool, OOCIC uses special task forces, which it forms by bringing together law enforcement agencies to combat the criminal enterprises. Multiple task forces throughout the state target human trafficking.

## Ohio Peace Office Training Academy (OPOTA)

OPOTA trains law enforcement officers to identify and investigate human trafficking in Ohio. Since Ohio's Safe Harbor Law was enacted in 2012, all new peace officers have been required to participate in an OPOTA-approved course on human trafficking. The HTI team created a Human Trafficking 101 course for OPOTA Online and teaches a two-day, in-person class at OPOTA once a year.

## Ambassador Advisory Council

The Ambassador Advisory Council consists of trafficking survivors — individuals with lived experience — whose real-life expertise is needed to inform the Human Trafficking Commission's work and to help determine its impact. Many Ambassadors have joined commission subcommittees and have assisted with training and events. A new Ambassador term began in 2023. Current Ambassadors are:

### Kwami Adoboe-Herrera

Kwami is an anti-trafficking advocate, speaker and consultant. As a survivor, he understands the tragic impact of human trafficking. His lived experience has shaped his career and interests, leading him to advocate for policies to aid victims as they navigate life after being trafficked.

Kwami serves on the board of Not for Sale: One Step at a Time, which raises awareness and provides hope to communities everywhere. In December 2020, President Trump appointed him to the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, which provides a formal platform for trafficking survivors to offer advice and make recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies to the president's Inter-agency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF).



Kwami earned a bachelor's degree from Walsh University. In the fight against human trafficking, he seeks to raise awareness, reduce the risk of male victimization, educate government officials and the public, and advocate for victim protection and wellness. As a consultant, he partners with the Blue Campaign, the federal government, NGOs and service providers. In 2023, Kwami was awarded a Gillen-Massey Award, which recognizes people in the trenches who dedicate themselves to the fight against trafficking. His goal is to work for the federal government, rescuing and protecting victims from traffickers: "I believe that, with God's assistance, we will be able to defeat this heinous crime against human life."

## Dancy D'Souza

To all who think that human trafficking “doesn’t happen here,” Dancy represents the face that says otherwise. The lived experience of surviving labor trafficking in the United States has given her a unique perspective of the insidious, lucrative and vastly invisible trafficking industry. Having survived labor trafficking and debt bondage, she and her family – Harold, Bradley and Rohan –together provide a voice for the underserved, often-unseen, mostly misunderstood and highly vulnerable trafficked population from the platform of Eyes Open International.



Eyes Open International helps trafficking victims and other vulnerable populations by connecting them to resources, collaborating with various organizations and law enforcement agencies, and creating awareness communitywide with presentations and programs at schools and colleges and universities.

Dancy’s volunteer efforts were [recognized](#) in 2023 by the [Do Good](#) program.

## Harold D'Souza

Harold’s journey has been one of transformation, from a survivor of labor trafficking and debt bondage in the United States to a survivor-advocate and public speaker. She has earned global recognition for his unwavering commitment to combating labor trafficking and advocating for the rights of survivors.



As a co-founder of Eyes Open International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing prevention efforts through survivor-informed research, Harold has become an inspiration worldwide. He also actively participates in various anti-trafficking organizations and efforts, including serving on the board of directors for Justice at Last, which provides free legal representation to survivors.

In recognition of his tireless efforts, Harold was appointed to the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking by President Barack Obama in 2015 and continued his service under President Trump through July 2020. He also serves as a consultant to the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In 2023, he was awarded the U.N. Human Rights Hero Award.

## Nancy Hashman

Nancy is a transformational leader and a shining example of hope for women who have been victims of human trafficking. As an Ambassador, she plays a vital role in Ohio’s survivor community as a voice for victims. She is clinical case manager and building manager for Sanctuary Night, a place where vulnerable women who are at risk of sexual exploitation can rest, eat, connect and access essential resources. She speaks to incarcerated women and provides peer mentoring with CATCH Court, a groundbreaking specialized docket in Columbus that aims to end the cycle of exploitation for survivors.

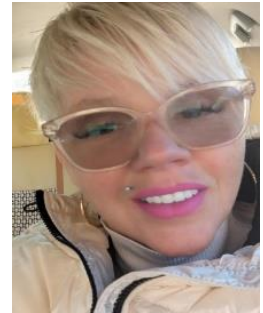


As a mother and ally, Nancy passionately speaks up for LGBTQ+ people and those who, like her son, are living with HIV. *Columbus Monthly* last year honored Nancy with an Everyday Hero Award for her

contributions to underserved central Ohio communities. She is taking her experiences into the classroom by pursuing a degree in social justice. She also is passionately gathering resources and creating a plan for a “Housing First” option for survivors: “Housing is a basic need, and it is almost impossible for someone in survival mode to exit the lifestyle when they have no stability options.”

### **Christina Lapointe-Jackson**

Christina, a native of New Orleans, is a survivor and an advocate with a passion for humanity. She views education as an ongoing experience. Her latest victories include overcoming addiction (she is now 13 years sober), mental-health struggles and self-hatred. She considers every day a gift.



### **Annette Mango**

For more than a decade, Annette was homeless, addicted to drugs, being beaten by sex buyers and pimps, and freezing in the alleyways of Cleveland during winter. Then, in 2015, she voluntarily went on the human trafficking specialized docket in Cleveland Municipal Court, charged with solicitation and drug abuse. As part of her recovery effort, she became involved with the Renee Jones Empowerment Center (RJEC), which assists trafficking survivors. Today, she is drug-free, has a full-time job, rents her own apartment, and has reunited with family members. She also became one of the first trafficking survivors in Cuyahoga County to have her trafficking-related criminal convictions expunged. In 2017, she completed a survivor-educator certification course through RJEC, which prepared her to share her story through public speaking. After years of pain and humiliation, she now uses her experiences to educate others.



As an Ambassador, Annette provides input into health-care policy development and protocols. Among other things, she contributed to the creation of an evidence-based health-care policy template, now available for downloading by any health-care organization via the Attorney General’s website. Annette also serves as a survivor adviser to the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking in Cleveland and is an alumna of the Empower Her Network (now called Empowered Network).

Most recently, Annette partnered with two registered nurses to provide education throughout Ohio and even globally, walking health-care providers through “A Day in the Life” – Addressing Healthcare Response and Medical Treatment of Those in the Life of Human Trafficking. She also helped to educate future medical professionals, speaking in the past year to allied health students and medical students at Mount Vernon Nazarene, Bowling Green State and The Ohio State universities.

From being homeless to now feeling hopeful, Annette has her sights set on working for a health-care facility or in extended stay housing for older women who have been victimized. She took an important step in realizing that dream by recently earning her high-school diploma. She plans to continue using her experience and voice to enlighten health-care providers and first responders

about the multifaceted, complex needs of trafficking victims, as it is from these experiences that Annette has transformed from victim to survivor to empowered thriver.

### **Stephanie Rollins**

A fierce advocate for trafficking survivors, Stephanie works as a Harriet's Hope case manager for the Salvation Army. She recently earned her high-school diploma and is now pursuing certification as a chemical dependency counselor assistant.



Her history with Gracehaven, which helps young trafficking victims, fueled Stephanie's passion to become the advocate she needed when she was helping the teenage survivors. A voice for the voiceless, she help helps educate others on awareness and prevention of trafficking and works with survivors to reach the next level of recovery. "I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be a standing light showing that we survivors of trauma and addiction can truly recover and take back our lives and be able to live our lives successfully'."

Stephanie has been recognized by the state for her amazing work and contributions.

### **Haleigh Young**

A licensed social worker, Haleigh recently began working as a human trafficking program administrator for the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. Previously, she spent three years in the child-welfare field and served on a local coalition.



Haleigh is an advocate for human trafficking victims and trauma recovery. She has testified in support of anti-human trafficking legislation; worked to educate others about human trafficking by speaking at local and state events, schools, a juvenile detention center, and other venues; and spoken about the importance of housing and employment for victims of crime at a Survivors Speak Ohio press conference at the Statehouse.

Haleigh has a strong passion for helping trafficking victims/survivors as well as youth who have experienced abuse, neglect or other significant trauma. Last year, she was named "Caseworker of the Year" by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio for her work at Clark County Job and Family Services.

In her new position, Haleigh hopes to improve human trafficking policies and protocols, further educate communities about human trafficking, and improve victim services through trauma-informed and trauma-responsive care."

# 2023 Human Trafficking Commission: Year in Photos



# Human Trafficking Summit

Given the priority he places on the fight against human trafficking, Attorney General Yost has committed his office to planning and presenting a statewide Human Trafficking Summit.

The Ohio Attorney General's fourth annual Human Trafficking Summit took place on Jan. 26, 2023, with 20 workshops offered to 945 attendees, both in-person and virtual. The summit put a special emphasis on labor trafficking, a key component of human trafficking that is frequently overlooked.

The wide-ranging summit workshops included:

- Human Trafficking 101
- Why People Solicit Sex – John School Program
- Trafficking for Forced Labor: Obligations of the State Legal Protections, Coercion, Victim-Centered Services (Maryland)
- Hidden in Plain Sight: The Impact of Brain Injury on Survivors of Human Trafficking and the Programs that Serve Them
- Ohio Department of Youth Services' Statewide Response to Human Trafficking
- Frog in a Well
- An IDEA Framework to Empower You to Empower Survivors
- Lessons Learned: Utilizing Victim-Centered Approaches in Human Trafficking Cases
- Improving Healthcare Response to Human Trafficking
- Intersectional and Ethical Practices: Serving Culturally Diverse Populations
- A Survivor Parent's Journey
- Leveraging States' Buying Power to Reduce the Demand for Labor Trafficking
- Ethical Storytelling and Empowering Survivor Voices
- Understanding and Utilizing Familial Undercover Ads
- Trauma-Informed Approach to Patients in the Healthcare and Advocacy Systems
- Trauma Recovery Centers: Survivor Healing, Empowerment, and Leadership
- Preventing and Supporting Youth in Foster Care as it Relates to Human Trafficking
- Protecting and Enforcing the Rights of Adult and Minor Victims of Trafficking
- Human Trafficking and Older Adults
- A Standardized Data Collection Protocol for Human Trafficking Service Providers

Also at the summit, Attorney General Yost and the Human Trafficking Initiative team honored outgoing members of the Ambassador Advisory Council for their contributions to the cause.

The summit keynote speaker was Suleman Masood, an expert on labor trafficking and male victimization. Masood spoke on the history of labor trafficking and how it has progressed over time. He provided his expertise and insights on what labor trafficking looks like today, explained how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected labor trafficking, and identified industries that are vulnerable to labor trafficking.

Known for coining the term "survivor-informed," Masood also explored what victimization looks like and how systems working with trafficking survivors can have a survivor-informed approach, creating opportunities for equitable partnerships. He graciously shared elements of his lived experience, empowering summit attendees with guidance on how they can work to improve Ohio's response to labor trafficking.

A couple of pieces of legislation focused on human trafficking were introduced in the General Assembly in 2023:

**HB 230 (Reps. Cindy Abrams and D.J. Swearingen)**

In addition to making many changes regarding drug trafficking, HB 230 would create the criminal offense of “participating in an organization or operation for trafficking in persons.” The new charge, a first-degree felony, would prohibit knowingly participating in, assisting, giving advice to and/or transporting people for a human trafficking organization. The bill, approved in December 2023 by the House Homeland Security Committee, is awaiting a vote by the full House of Representatives.

**HB 322 (Reps. Cindy Abrams and Bill Seitz)**

HB 322 would create the offense of “grooming,” prohibiting an adult from engaging in certain “patterns of behavior” with a minor. Included is a pattern that would cause another adult to believe that he/she is attempting to entice, coerce, solicit or prepare the minor to engage in sexual activity for the purpose of trafficking the minor. The new charge would carry a varying penalty, depending on the case’s fact pattern. The bill also would make several changes to the Childhood Sexual Abuse Registry, including lowering the penalty for failing to register from a criminal penalty to a civil one. HB 322 has received four hearings in the House Criminal Justice Committee, where it awaits a vote.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY**

As noted, the fight against human trafficking in Ohio is a highly collaborative effort encompassing a wide range of resources statewide. For its part, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office offers investigative resources through regional human trafficking task forces that are overseen and supported by OOCIC, provides training to law enforcement officers through OPOTA, and provides case support through resources housed at BCI, including the Special Victims Unit and the Criminal Intelligence Unit. To help educate the public on the scope of the problem in Ohio, BCI annually reports statewide statistics on human trafficking, as provided by local law enforcement agencies.

### **Human Trafficking Task Forces**

In 2023, eight OOCIC human trafficking task forces operated in the state: the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, HEAL Human Trafficking Task Force, Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force, Major Crimes Task Force, Montgomery County Human Trafficking Task Force, Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, Southeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force and Southern Ohio Organized and Summit Regional Human Trafficking Task Force.

Human trafficking tips come via hotlines, emails and calls from concerned community members, parents, social-service providers, law enforcement and health-care providers, among others. In 2023, the OOCIC task forces received 705 human trafficking tips, prompting 747 victim interviews and referrals for services. Ohioans have played a significant role in “see something, say something,” creating opportunities for victims to tell their stories and for traffickers to be held accountable through the work of our dedicated law enforcement teams.



Task forces and cooperating agencies persisted in bringing traffickers to justice, achieving these notable successes in 2023:

## January

- The Summit Regional Human Trafficking Task Force conducted an operation in Medina County during which 11 men were charged with engaging in prostitution, two were charged with misdemeanor drug offenses, one was charged with possession of drugs, and one warrant arrest was made. One female victim was encountered and offered services through RAHAB Ministries.
- Paul Chiles, aka “Tommy Guns,” was sentenced to a minimum of 14 years in prison after pleading guilty to human trafficking and involuntary manslaughter. An investigation by the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force uncovered Chiles’ exploitation of numerous women, including Cecilia Riegel, to whom he provided narcotics; Riegel later overdosed and died.

## February

- Rusty Campbell was sentenced to 30 years in prison for human trafficking, rape and pandering after an investigation by the Southeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force. The related cases of two other suspects are pending.
- Working with the Wickliffe Police Department and Lake County Sheriff’s Office, the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force conducted a demand-reduction sting that resulted in the arrest of six men for attempting to buy sex. Among those charged with solicitation was the president of the Eastlake City Council, John Meyers, 47. The others were:
  - Ronald Bevier, 30, Columbia Station.
  - Alvin Bridges, 47, Euclid.
  - Andrew Champa, 40, Wickliffe.
  - Garrett Kellogg, 20, Strongsville.
  - Salvatore Longo, 44, Beachwood.

## March

- Investigators with the Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force conducted “Operation Saving Daylight,” seizing hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and financial assets, business records and other evidence. Searches took place at three business locations:
  - Tiger Spa, 420 W. Market St., Warren
  - Sunny Spa, 2819 W. Market St., Warren
  - 76 Spa and Tanning, 5325 Seventy-Six Drive, Austintown
- Warrants also were executed in the region at private residences in Leavittsburg, Warren, Austintown, Youngstown and Poland. Additionally, search warrants and court orders were executed outside Ohio, as the investigation spans six states. The task force has been investigating these businesses for suspected human trafficking and money laundering for several years; the investigation is ongoing.

## April

- Terrael A. Alls was indicted by a federal grand jury on three counts of sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion. Alls had been in custody since his arrest on March 31 by the U.S. Marshals Service. The Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force investigated the case for more than a year, with numerous victims having been identified.
- In another case investigated by the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, Ka'auija'nae Unique Washington was sentenced to a minimum of 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to human trafficking.

## May

- An operation conducted in Stark County by the Summit Regional Human Trafficking Task Force led to the arrest of 16 men on charges of engaging in prostitution. One other man was arrested on a charge of promoting prostitution after responding to an advertisement offering sex with a juvenile. Three women were offered services through RAHAB Ministries.
- The Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, in collaboration with the Westshore Enforcement Bureau and the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, arrested 10 men during a sting in North Olmsted. Nine were charged with engaging in prostitution; the 10<sup>th</sup>, a Tier III sex offender, was charged with promoting prostitution, a fourth-degree felony.
- The Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force also saw a Lorain County case come to a close when Elyria resident Steven Gilbert, 36, was sentenced to life in prison for 31 human trafficking offenses. He will be eligible for parole after spending at least 172½ years in prison. The task force assisted the Lorain County Sheriff's Office, the Elyria Police Department and the Investigative Division of the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office in the investigation. Gilbert ran a human trafficking ring that preyed on numerous drug-addicted women.

## June

- Nicholas Hutchins was operating a commercial sex-trafficking operation out of various hotels in Warrensville Heights and an apartment building in Maple Heights. In executing several search warrants, investigators from the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force identified victims, found numerous firearms, and seized illegal drugs as well as \$116,805 in cash. Hutchins, 39, pleaded guilty in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court to trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and possession of criminal tools; he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and, upon release, will be required to register as a Tier II sex offender. Co-conspirator Nadine Siggres, 40, pleaded guilty to abduction, promoting prostitution and possession of criminal tools. She was sentenced to five years of community control and designated a Tier 1 sex offender. Six months earlier, in December 2022, co-conspirator Ariel Taylor, 33, pleaded guilty to possession of drugs, endangering children and possession of criminal tools. She was sentenced to six months in jail, followed by five years of community control. This case was investigated by the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force.

- Adam Saunders, 35, of Mercer, Pennsylvania, was sentenced to four years prison after a jury trial in Columbiana County Common Pleas Court. The case dated to September 2021, when Saunders responded to an undercover ad on a known prostitution website and arranged to pay for sex with a 14-year-old girl and an adult female. When he arrived in East Palestine, Ohio, he was arrested. The jury found him guilty of compelling prostitution, attempted sexual conduct with a minor, possession of criminal tools and engaging in prostitution. The case was investigated by the Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force and the East Palestine Police Department, and prosecuted by the Columbiana County Prosecutor's Office.

## July

- The Summit Regional Human Trafficking Task Force conducted a demand-reduction operation in Stark County, where 10 men were arrested. Eight were charged with engaging in prostitution, and the other two with compelling prostitution. Three women were offered services by Rahab Ministries. A fourth woman attempted to flee the scene in a vehicle, struck a Stark County marked unit and led officers on a short pursuit before being apprehended. She was charged with felonious assault, failure to comply, soliciting, and driving under suspension.
- The Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force saw a long-term investigation come to close when Lowellville resident Joseph Garchar was sentenced to 24 years and three months in prison. Garchar, 47, had pleaded guilty in the U.S. Northern District Court of Ohio to sexually exploiting a minor after the task force's investigation found him in possession of child pornography.

## September

- The Summit Regional Human Trafficking Task Force conducted operation at four massage parlors — three in Summit County and one in Stark County. Three search warrants were served. Six women were interviewed and offered services by the Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center.

## October

- Rebecca Auburn was indicted on four counts of murder, four counts of involuntary manslaughter, five counts of aggravated robbery, five counts of felonious assault, five counts of corrupting another with drugs, one count of tampering with evidence and four counts of trafficking in drugs — all felonies after an investigation by the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Columbus Division of Police. Auburn was initially part of a human trafficking investigation, given her involvement with other potential victims and a suspect. During an interview, she admitted to numerous robberies and murders. She would use narcotics to overdose male sex buyers and, once they were unconscious, take their belongings. Several of the men died, and other cases are still being investigated.
- The statewide sting “Operation Buyer’s Remorse” was conducted by eight OOCIC task forces; numerous local, state and federal law enforcement agencies; and several non-governmental agencies that specialize in victim services. The operation ended in 160 arrests, the execution of 11 search warrants at massage parlors, numerous narcotics and firearm seizures, and services offered to 104 individuals.

## December

- An investigation by the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force resulted in the indictment of six people on 124 felony counts:
  - **James Antwan Dukes-Johnson, 28, of Columbus:** 39 felony charges, including aggravated murder, murder, engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, trafficking in persons, compelling prostitution, trafficking in a fentanyl-related compound and felonious assault.
  - **Michael Anthony Davis, 21, of Columbus:** 38 felony charges, including aggravated murder, murder, engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, trafficking in persons, compelling prostitution, trafficking in a fentanyl-related compound and felonious assault.
  - **Sarah Rose Dotson, 33, of Columbus:** 29 felony charges, including engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, trafficking in persons, compelling prostitution and possession of a fentanyl-related compound.
  - **Shahee Siler, 38, of Columbus:** 10 felony charges, including aggravated murder, murder, engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, promoting prostitution and felonious assault.
  - **Alexias Monay Lashel Carr-Johnson, 28, of Marysville:** Four felony charges, including engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity and money laundering.
  - **Tyler Leianne Payne, 29, of Columbus:** Four felony charges, including engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity and money laundering.

## Law Enforcement Training

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy continues to train local law enforcement to identify and investigate cases of human trafficking statewide. Under Ohio's Safe Harbor Law, all new peace officers are required to take an OPOTA-approved course on investigating human trafficking.

Building on updates to the OPOTA Online course and the two-day, in-person human trafficking investigation course, the Human Trafficking Initiative team saw a significant increase in attendance at human trafficking training by law enforcement. In 2023, a total of 3,088 Ohio peace officers and other law enforcement professionals completed the human trafficking course through OPOTA. That figure encompasses the 2,177 new peace officers who took the course as part of required basic training; the 825 peace officers who completed it through OPOTA Online, the academy's online classroom; and the 86 peace officers who completed an OPOTA instructor-led course.

## Law Enforcement Statistics on Human Trafficking

Several years ago, the HTI team noted some inherent ambiguities in the reporting form that had been used for years by law enforcement and took steps to implement a new one. When the new form was introduced in OHLEG in March 2021, the HTI team informed law enforcement of the changes. As a result, agencies across the state were able to share additional information about the types of charges that are part of their human trafficking cases. These charges include engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, compelling prostitution, promoting prostitution, drug trafficking, child pornography, money laundering, domestic violence, felonious assault, rape, weapons under disability, theft, tampering with records and others.

Ohio law requires local law enforcement agencies to collect data on their human trafficking investigations and forward that information annually to BCI.

The following Ohio counties reported cases to BCI in 2023: Clermont, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Hancock, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Montgomery, Richland, Stark, Summit.

The data collected for 2023 indicates that law enforcement reported identifying 45 human trafficking suspects, leading to 17 arrests and three successful criminal convictions. It is important to note that many of the reported investigations remain open, either with law enforcement or the court system. These numbers also do not reflect OOCIC Human Trafficking Task Force numbers.

Law enforcement agencies also reported the number of potential victims, traffickers, and buyers. Females were the most commonly identified human trafficking victims reported by law enforcement in 2023. Across all categories, there were 52 potential victims identified, including 45 potential victims of sex trafficking, six potential victims of labor trafficking, and one potential victim of both sex and labor trafficking.

Gender	Number of potential victims
Male	6
Female	52
Other	0
No gender listed	0

Age	Number of potential victims
12 & under	1
13-15	2
16-17	4
18-20	4
21-29	13
30-40	16
41-59	4
60-84	0
85 or older	0
Unknown	8

Race	Number of potential victims
White	26
Black	9
Asian/Pacific Islander	5
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	0
Hispanic	11
Multiracial	1
Other	0
Unknown	0

Law enforcement agencies identified 58 suspected human traffickers in 2023, including 52 suspected of sex trafficking, three of labor trafficking and three of both sex and labor trafficking.

Gender	Number of suspected traffickers
Male	32
Female	26
Other	0
No gender listed	0

Age	Number of suspected traffickers
17 & under	3
18-20	0
21-29	10
30-40	15
41-59	25
60-84	3
85 & older	0
Unknown	2

Race	Number of suspected traffickers
White	13
Black	22
Asian/Pacific Islander	17
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	0
Hispanic	5
Multiracial	1
Other	0
Unknown	0

Social and economic factors can contribute to trafficking victimization. Law enforcement agencies identified these factors in 2023 cases:

Social and economic factor	Number of cases
Criminal history	9
Drug, alcohol or other dependency	17
Homeless	9
Immigration status	9
LGBTQ youth	1
Poverty	8
Prior victim abuse	3
Runaway	2
Unsafe home	3
Unknown	20

Trafficking can involve movement of victims across cities, states, or the country. Law enforcement agencies identified these trafficking routes, modes of transportation and methods of recruitment in 2023 cases:

**Trafficking routes**

- Across city lines: 14
- Across county lines: 7
- Across state lines: 11
- Across country lines: 3
- Unknown: 12

**Modes of transportation**

- Motor vehicle: 25
- Airplane: 3
- Watercraft: 0
- Unknown: 18

**Recruitment methods**

- Drugs: 11
- Social media: 10
- Employment: 8
- Family/Friends: 4
- Relationship building: 4
- Housing: 3
- Runaway: 2
- Significant other: 3
- Unknown: 19

In 2023, 696 suspected buyers were identified by law enforcement agencies as consumers of sex trafficking connected to a human trafficking investigation. This number does not include those arrested during the various statewide operations in 2023. No consumers of labor trafficking were identified in 2023.

Gender	Number of suspected consumers
Male	696
Female	0
Other	0
No gender listed	0

Age	Number of suspected consumers
17 & under	0
18-20	0
21-29	191
30-40	272
41-59	231
60-84	2
85 & older	0
Unknown	0

Race	Number of suspected consumers
White	644
Black	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	51
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	0
Hispanic	0
Multiracial	0
Other	0
Unknown	0

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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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