



Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

Dear Partners:

It's been an incredibly busy Human Trafficking Prevention Month in the State of Texas! In this issue of our newsletter, we recap some of the best resources and trainings that we found out there as well as learning and funding opportunities (coming up quick!), and as always, success stories.

Yesterday marked [Safer Internet Day](#). With children and youth spending more time online (and predators, too) online exploitation is occurring at record rates. In order to help you equip those in your network with education and awareness to prevent, identify and report [online exploitation](#) of children, we've added a section to this newsletter dedicated to tools and resources. This month, we are featuring a new campaign called [R.E.A.L. Friends Don't](#) by the McCain Institute.

We'd also like to highlight the work of our parent division within the Governor's Office, the Public Safety Office. [PSO's Biennial Report to the Legislature](#) is full of good information on our work to support the work of Texas' brave and courageous first responders, emergency management personnel, victim service providers and other criminal justice professionals.

Thank you for joining the fight,

CSTT

Human Trafficking Prevention Month Recap

Governor Abbott [issued a proclamation](#) recognizing January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas. Below are just a few of the activities that took place in our state to kick off this new year with a renewed focus on ending trafficking.

Bullock Museum Exhibit Launch

On January 9th, the Bullock Texas State History Museum opened a new exhibit on human trafficking. [Not Alone](#) educates visitors about human trafficking and gives them a sense of hope and empowerment in combating the issue. Check out the success stories at the end of the newsletter for more information.

Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking

[GRACE](#) hosted the statewide Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking from January 11th through January 17th. The week launched with a virtual interfaith event, including remarks from First Lady Cecilia Abbott, DFPS Commissioner Jamie Masters, prayer, and a panel discussion with a diverse group of faith leaders. If you are part of a faith community that participated in the week of prayer, we would love to hear a summary of your activities; send us a message at CSTT@gov.texas.gov.

Here are just a few highlights of activities shared from GRACE members:

- Many members of Congregation Agudas Achim watched the virtual launch event. The community also utilized many of the Jewish prayers throughout the week both in worship and to share over social media.
- The [Freedom Church Alliance](#) organized daily prayer events at locations across Houston. Individuals followed safety protocols to gather and pray for daily intentions and an end to human trafficking.
- The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops created a Catholic toolkit for the week of prayer, which included social media/print graphics, prayer intentions, and calls for actions. The toolkit was shared with bishops and constituents across the state. The Diocese of Austin shared this resource with all of its priests and equipped parishes with social media infographics, bulletin inserts, and prayers for use at mass.

Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council Webinar Series

In May 2020, the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council released a [strategic plan](#) to address human trafficking in Texas. During Human Trafficking Prevention Month, the Coordinating Council launched a webinar series to cover each of the 5 main goals in the strategic plan: PREVENT, PROTECT, PROSECUTE, PROVIDE SUPPORT and PARTNER.

The final webinar in this series is focused on partnerships and will take place **Tuesday, February 16 from 12pm-1pm CST**. RSVP to humantrafficking@oag.texas.gov and use this meeting information to join:

[Zoom link](#)

Webinar ID: 916 0684 8016

Password: 876461

New PSAs from Our Partners in the Heart of Texas

Unbound and The Heart of Texas Human Trafficking Coalition released three, one-minute public service announcements as part of the #NotInMyCity human trafficking awareness campaign. The videos highlight areas of trafficking that are often underserved and underrecognized: labor trafficking, trafficking of boys, and familial trafficking. [Visit this link](#) to view the videos and share them with your community.

Online Safety

More and more, children are being targeted, groomed, and exploited online. CSTT is partnering with the McCain Institute to amplify their [R.E.A.L. Friends Don't](#) campaign, a smart and easy-to-use tool that equips parents to have critical conversations with their children and teens re: online safety. Check out the website for educational tools and help educate more parents by re-tweeting and posting the Governor's [social media posts](#) about the campaign.

You can also learn more about online exploitation of youth and how to report it at the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#).

Monthly Webinar Series

Rebecca Bender Moved to Texas! - February 11th from 1:00 - 2:00 PM.

Rebecca Bender is CEO of the Rebecca Bender Initiative and Founder of Elevate Academy. Rebecca is a leader, advocate and consultant who equips individuals and organizations to identify and fight human trafficking in their own backyards. She was appointed to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, regularly testifies as an expert witness in court, and has trained over 100,000 professionals, including FBI. The Rebecca Bender Initiative is committed to changing the way Americans see and respond to human trafficking in their communities and empowering the survivors.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

Recent: Disrupting the Demand for Commercial Sex in Texas – Progress and Lessons Learned So Far - January 14th

Jamey Caruthers, the leader of the CEASE (Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation) Texas team and CHILDREN AT RISK Senior Staff attorney, shares what we've learned over the past year of CEASE work including new data on regional buyer disruptions and ad tracking during COVID, as well as a look at what the next year holds for anti-demand. Buyer trends are changing and our tactics are changing as well. Learn more about our new approach to interacting with buyers, our next CEASE expansion cities, and how we are working to ensure maximum sustainability for all CEASE programs. Access the webinar [here](#).

Funding Opportunity

Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women announces the Fiscal Year 2021 Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Solicitation

This funding opportunity seeks to support programs that provide 6-24 months of transitional housing with support services for victims who are homeless or in need of transitional housing as a result of a situation of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking; and whom emergency shelter services or other crisis intervention services are unavailable or insufficient.

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$37,000,000. Award Ceiling: \$500,000. Award Floor: \$300,000. **Due Date: March 2, 2021.**

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=330797>

Learning Opportunities

For Schools and Child Serving Agencies: PROTECT Texas Prevention Education and Training

3Strands Global Foundation is partnering with the Child Sex Trafficking Team to generously offer Texas schools and youth-serving organizations free access for one year to online training modules to help those working with youth better identify and respond to human trafficking. Participants completing the training will also have access to an age-appropriate, trauma-informed curriculum to teach youth. PROTECT recently launched an additional training for Texas school board members to meet the requirements of HB 403. These resources are available for free through February 2021, and individuals will need a work e-mail account with a school or youth-serving organization to register.

[Registration for School Board Members](#)

[Registration for Schools](#)

[Registration for Youth-Serving Organizations](#)

Success Stories



Protect

On January 9th, the Bullock Texas State History Museum opened the [Not Alone](#) exhibit. The exhibit centers on a series of questions that guide visitors to understand what human trafficking is and explore the human stories and current landscape of sex and labor trafficking. Audiences will gain awareness of who can be a target, the tools and techniques traffickers use to target individuals and keep them captive, and the roles healthy relationships and social media play in trafficking. The exhibit is the first of its kind and provides age-appropriate prevention messaging for middle school and up. We applaud the leadership of the Bullock Museum for their vision in creating this exhibit as well as the advisory committee, especially the incredible survivor leaders, who helped guide them. *Not Alone* will be on display in Austin through May 30, 2021 with hopes of a future traveling exhibit. For more information and to see other events planned in conjunction with the exhibit, visit www.thestoryoftexas.com/notalone.

Recognize

The Texas Secretary of State recently hosted the 2nd Annual Texas Businesses Against Trafficking (TBAT) Conference. TBAT is a program that recognizes businesses for their efforts to address human trafficking and provides opportunities to share training, resources, and best practices. Learn more by [watching a recording of the conference](#) and visiting the [TBAT website](#).

Recover

One of our CSEY advocacy programs was dispatched to meet a survivor, Keisha, at the hospital. Due to her medical condition, Keisha was unable to talk and appeared agitated when the advocate entered the room and disinterested when advocacy services were explained to her. However, when the advocate gave Keisha a survivor bag, her whole demeanor instantly changed. She put the chapstick on her lips and lotion on her hands and seemed very interested in the journal. The advocate let Keisha know that she cared about her and wanted to visit her again. Keisha then wrote on paper that she wanted the advocate to come back next week. At the next visit, the Keisha lit up when the advocate came into the room. She showed her advocate several pages of the journal where she had written about her experiences. Keisha still wasn't able to speak so the advocate sat with her and they colored together in an adult coloring book. Although their time together was mostly silent, Keisha seemed to be comforted by the advocate's presence. She said she felt alone in the hospital and was grateful to have a friend to sit with her.

Support Healing

Amy entered one of our residential providers last summer and excelled, becoming a mentor to peers on campus. She worked hard in therapy and in the program in general, learning new coping skills. Amy graduated from the program just a few months later and is now attending her senior year of high school and planning to play college basketball in the Fall.

Bring Justice

Seventeen year old Maria was referred to one of our CSEY advocacy agencies by a county juvenile probation department in 2019. Maria experienced repeated runaway incidents, but the consistency of her advocate's support empowered Maria to finally find the courage to share information that led to the identification of her trafficker. Maria has

worked hard to earn her GED and begin cosmetology program and still stays in touch with her advocate.

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