



## Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

Greetings and Happy Holidays!

As the year winds down and we enter the holiday season, we hope this newsletter will provide you with valuable tools as you embark on a new year of anti-trafficking work.

This edition includes information on upcoming funding opportunities, informative training events and a community spotlight from South Texas.

Thank you for another year of committed anti-trafficking work across Texas and valuable support to those who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation.

Have a very peaceful and blessed holiday season!

Warmest regards,

The Child Sex Trafficking Team

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### **Funding Opportunities**

The Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team is pleased to share the below funding opportunities for Fiscal Year 2026, released December 16, 2024. Active funding opportunities can be found on the [Funding Opportunities](#) tab of the eGrants website. Interested applicants should read these carefully.

Applicants must access the [Public Safety Office \(PSO\) eGrants grant management website](#) to register and apply for funding. The final date to submit and certify an application is **February 13, 2025**, at **5:00 PM CST**.

Funding opportunities through the Office of the Governor are listed below. For more information on each of these funding opportunities, please visit the eGrants homepage.



### **County Solutions to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation, FY 2026**

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support solution-driven projects from county governments to prevent, investigate, and prosecute commercial sexual exploitation in Texas. [View Funding Opportunity](#)

*This solicitation is specific to county projects that are not specialty court programs.*

### **General Victim Assistance Grant Program, FY 2026**

This grant is administered by Victim Services within the Public Safety Office. The purpose of this solicitation is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process. This solicitation is for programs seeking to provide general victim services to broad categories of victim populations that may include victims of commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking, including emergency and long-term residential (shelter) for children and transition-age youth as well as drop-in centers. [View Funding Opportunity](#)

### **Specialized Advocacy for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth, FY 2026**

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocacy programs. CSEY Advocacy programs provide individualized 24/7 crisis response, ongoing trust-based relational support, and case management for children and transition-age youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. For this solicitation, children are considered individuals 0–17 years of age and transition-age youth are individuals 18–24 years of age. [View Funding Opportunity](#)

*This solicitation is specific to CSEY Advocacy programs.*

### **Specialty Courts Program, FY 2026**

This grant is administered by State Justice Programs within the Public Safety Office. The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications for specialty court programs as defined in Chapters 121 through 130 of the Texas Government Code as well as the continuation of a training and technical assistance resource center. Commercially Sexually Exploited Persons (CSEP) Specialty Courts, are eligible for funding under this grant program. [View Funding Opportunity](#)

### **The Texas Model for Care Coordination, FY 2026**

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support programs to implement the Texas Model for Care Coordination for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY). The Care Coordination Model is a consensus-driven, collaborative approach to identify and recover CSEY, and to facilitate tailored, accessible, trauma-informed, and holistic resources through a coordinated network of providers. The target population is youth (0-17) with an option to serve transition-age youth (18-24), capacity permitting. [View Funding Opportunity](#)

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## **CSTT Monthly Webinar Series**

### **An Empowering Solution to Human Trafficking Utilizing the Power of Youth Voice**

Project Protect Our Children

January 28, 2025 | Virtual

In this webinar, you will learn how Project Protect Our Children, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preventing child sex trafficking, exploitation, and abuse through proactive community engagement, preventative educational programming, awareness, and empowerment opportunities, has created a Youth Action Board (YAB) to plan and implement human trafficking awareness events and activities. The Project Protect Our Children YAB program is youth-led, research-based and survivor-informed.

YAB members are called to action, are encouraged to use their passion to make a difference and are given a platform for their voices to be heard. Collectively, youth learn about human trafficking and then collaborate, brainstorm, and reflect on solutions and project ideas to raise awareness among their peers and community. This program is age-appropriate for middle and/or high school students and with approval, will launch as a college program in January 2025.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

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## Learning Opportunities

### **Responding to Sextortion Related Offenses Against Children**

National Criminal Justice Training Center

January 23, 2025 | Virtual

Sextortion using technology is an increasing trend seen by law enforcement. Sextortion is a crime where someone employs an abuse of power, usually a threat to expose explicit images, in order to coerce a person to do something. This 1-day training will identify the methods and tactics used by offenders and describe why youth are vulnerable to these tactics. The training will explain the long-term impact of these crimes on victims, offer a victim-centered response, and provide information on reporting these crimes to law enforcement, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and electronic service provider(s). This course will conclude with identifying effective Sextortion prevention messages for youth, parents, and educators.

[Register for this Training](#)

## **Creating a Community Action Plan for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse**

National Criminal Justice Training Center

February 19 - 20, 2025 | Virtual

Join other child-serving professionals to create a plan of action for preventing child sexual abuse of youth in your care. Learn the signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse, as well as mandated reporter and stakeholder responsibilities. Identify strengths and weaknesses of current prevention practices and develop an action plan for your organization using the Strategic Prevention Dashboard. This course is open to all members of child-serving organizations such as preschool, after-school care, summer camps, church groups, athletic associations, or others responsible for the care of minors.

[Register for this Training](#)

## **Following the Evidence in Child Abuse and Child Exploitation Cases**

National Criminal Justice Training Center

February 25 - 26, 2025 | Virtual

Examine the importance of multidisciplinary team (MDT) case coordination and evidence corroboration in the investigation of child abuse cases. Various members of the Multidisciplinary Team, such as law enforcement, child protective services, and forensic interviewers may gather different or differing information. Learn how to evaluate evidentiary findings through crime scene images, interviews, and case studies. Understand multidisciplinary team members' roles and responsibilities for protecting child victims and prosecuting offenders. Focus on offenders' use of technology, including the use of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in grooming and manipulation. Discuss a variety of technologies that can be used by investigators.

[Register for this Training](#)

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## 2025 Mental Health Creative Arts Contest

In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), in partnership with the Texas System of Care and Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health at The University of Texas at Austin, presents the [2025 Mental Health Creative Arts Contest](#) for children and adults.

This annual event is designed to shine a light on furthering the effort to reduce stigma around accessing help for mental health. Through their entries, contestants help demystify mental illness and spread awareness by sharing their unique expressions of what mental health looks and feels like to them. As a result, this encourages more people of all ages to seek help when needed.

The theme of this event is “What does mental health and well-being mean to you? Hurt. Healing. Hope.” Both children and adults may participate through their respective age groups: Elementary, Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Categories:

- Writing (story, essay, poem no longer than 300 words)
- Traditional Artwork
- Photography
- Digital Artwork
- Multimedia

The contest opens on November 1, 2024, and all entries are due no later **5:00 p.m. Central Time, Friday, March 1, 2025.**

For more information and to submit an entry for the contest, please visit the [Submit Art](#) webpage.

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## Community Spotlight



### The Texas Emergency Network Diversion Court

The Texas Emergency Network Diversion (TEND) Court is a Specialty Court that serves youth in CPS foster care at risk of sexual exploitation in Webb County. Inspired by Dr. Frances Bernat of Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), who recognized the unmet needs of exploited youth in South Texas, TEND began its fourth year on October 1, 2024.

TEND Court is overseen by Child Protective Services Court Judge Selina Mireles in Webb County, Texas. Its goal is to provide networked services to youth in Child Protective Services when gaps exist in their provision of care.

In TEND Court's first year, Judge Mireles hired Ms. Eliza Cavazos as an Executive Director to assist the Specialty Court in the identification of at-risk youth. TEND Court uses the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) to identify youth who are between ages 10 to 17 that are a clear concern for possible risk of exploitation. Once identified, both Judge Mireles and Ms. Cavazos utilize Trust Based Relational Intervention techniques to allow youth opportunities to meet with the court and share their concerns and needs.

TEND Court seeks to assist youth in moving from risk to resilience, utilizing the following short- and long-term goals: **T**rust with youth, **E**ncourage youth to excel, **N**urturing youth towards independence, and **D**iscovering the world outside of trauma.

TEND Court has achieved many positive results among its youth who are, and will remain, the center of this prosocial, preventive court's focus.



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## Report Human Trafficking

If you believe a someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

[iWatch Texas](#) – Tips made to iWatch are investigated by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) – Call the toll-free hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Tips made to the hotline are reviewed and routed to local law enforcement. This hotline also offers 24/7 confidential support for survivors.

[Texas Child Abuse Hotline](#) - Report child neglect and abuse, including sexual exploitation of a child, to the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.



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