



**The Tri-County Human
Trafficking Task Force's**

Biennial Report

**July 2023 –
June 2025 Term**

Prepared By :

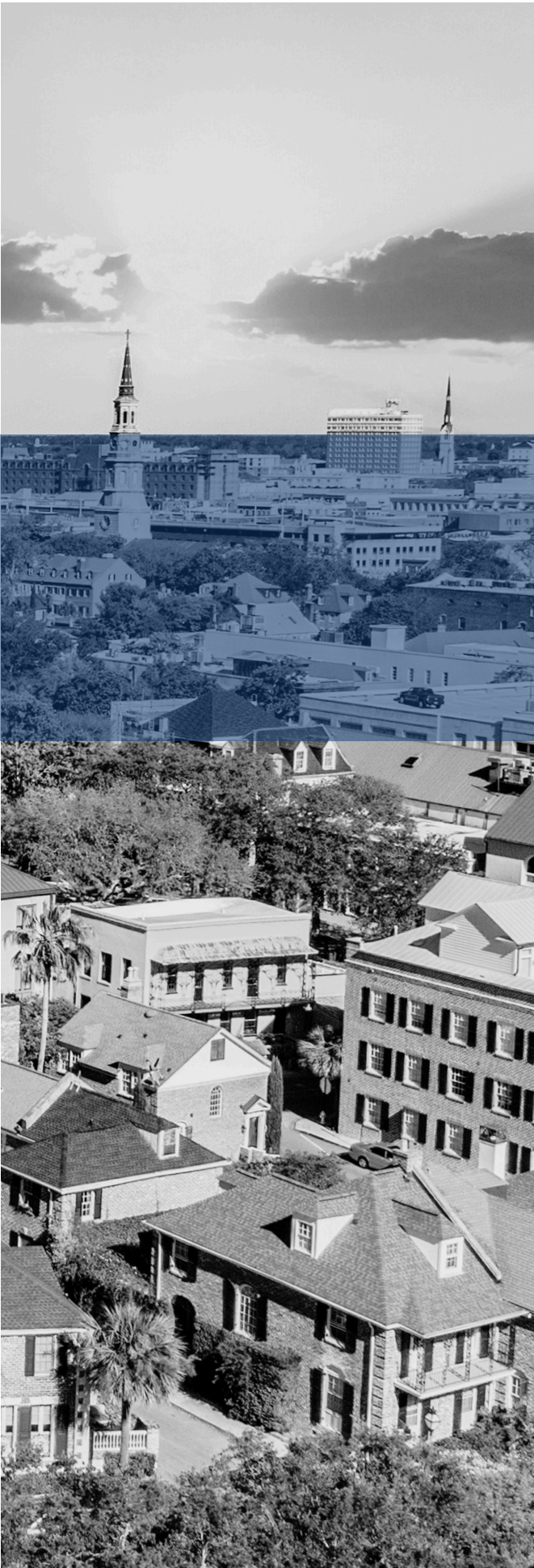
**The Tri-County Human
Trafficking Task Force**

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Biennial Report

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About Us

The U.S. Department of State declares human trafficking is a global problem solved on a LOCAL level through a coordinated multidisciplinary response.¹

Established in 2018, the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force uses prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnerships to implement a coordinated community response against sex and labor trafficking.

The Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force is named by the S.C. Attorney General as the official regional task force in our area.



because human trafficking is a global problem solved on a local level

¹ U.S. Department of State. (2018, June 28). *Trafficking in Persons Report 2018* [PDF]. U.S. Department of State. from <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/282798.pdf>

Our Vision

End human trafficking in the Tri-County area and ensure survivors have access to justice, sustainable support, and freedom.



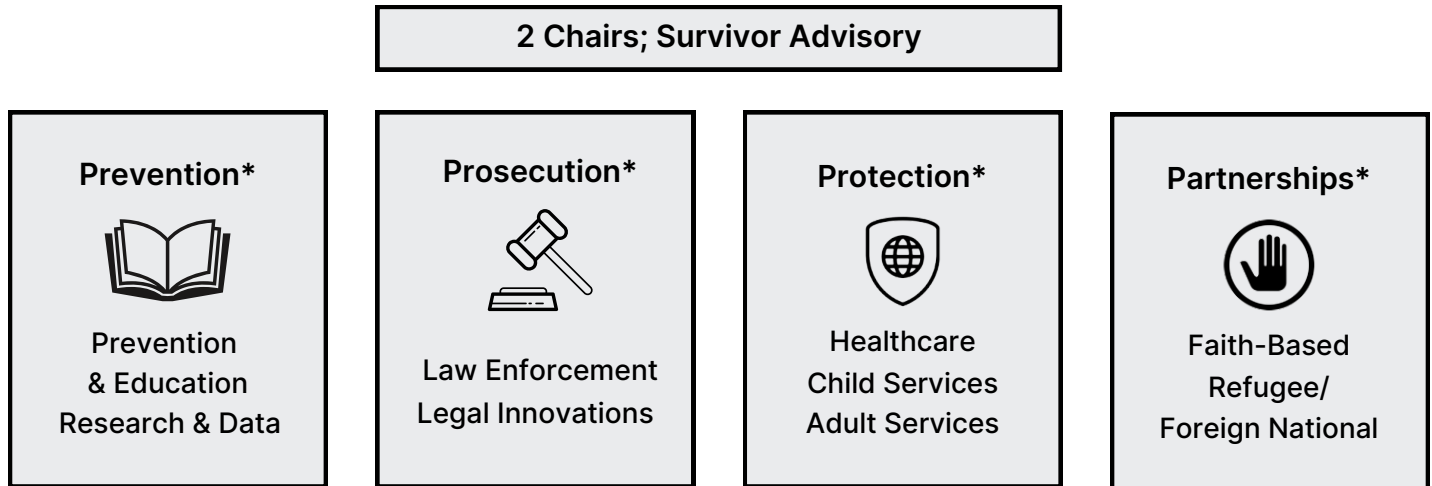
Our Mission

Implement a trauma-informed coordinated community response to combat human trafficking in the Tri-County area.

Our Structure

July 2023 - June 2025

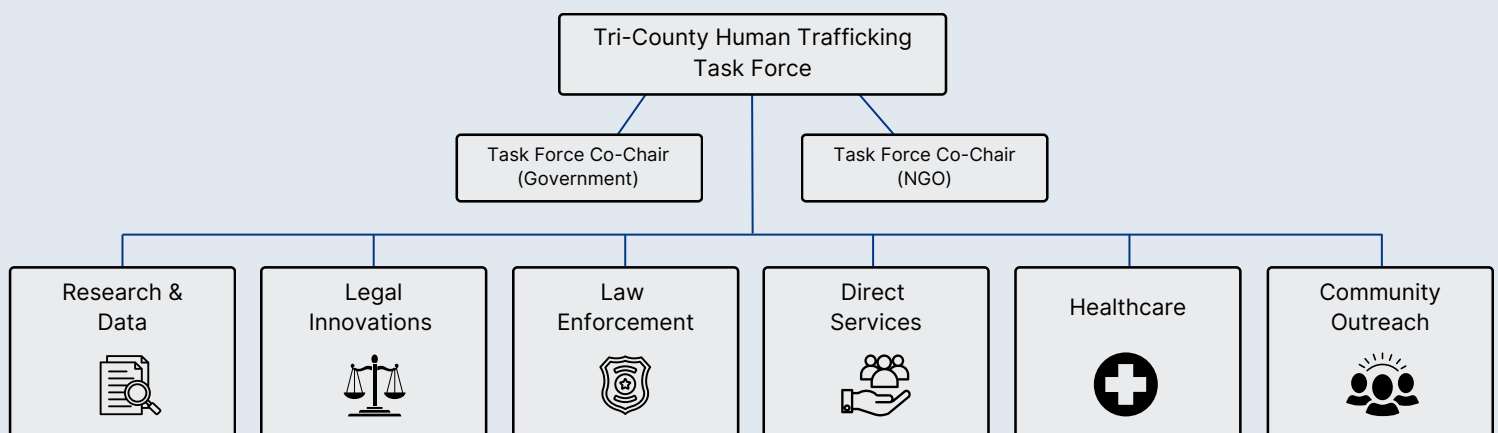
In the previous term, the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force operated with 9 subcommittees, led by two task force chairs and supported by a Survivor Advisory Committee.



Our New Structure

Starting July 2025

To better align with the State Human Trafficking Task Force, the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force will consolidate its 9 subcommittees into 6 starting in July 2025. The Survivor Advisory Committee will also be integrated with the Direct Services subcommittee.



Executive Summary

Over the past two years, the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force has made substantial progress through the focused work of its nine subcommittees, each targeting critical points in prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnerships. The Adult Services Subcommittee significantly improved jail-based screening processes, resulting in higher identification and referral rates of trafficking survivors. The Child Services Subcommittee completed a specialized training on mental health related to youth who have experienced trafficking, training 16 participants. The Healthcare Subcommittee established strong partnerships with regional health systems and led legislative advocacy for Bill H.4343, which mandates human trafficking training for healthcare workers. The Law Enforcement Subcommittee strengthened law enforcement engagement through multi-agency collaborative meetings and trained over 60 criminal justice professionals, while the Legal Innovations Subcommittee trained more than 45 attorneys and led efforts to increase survivor access to expungement services.

Public engagement and education were also prioritized. The Prevention and Education Subcommittee launched the Task Force's first Youth Advocacy Certification Program and formed key partnerships, including with public libraries, to host events and foster youth leadership. The Faith-Based Subcommittee launched a statewide interfaith training initiative and participated in public events to raise awareness. The Research and Data Subcommittee implemented new screening tools in correctional and probation settings, maintained ongoing data collection for national grant programs, and shared findings at major academic conferences. Together, these efforts demonstrate a multi-sector, coordinated approach to combating human trafficking, with strong foundations laid for future expansion and impact.

Focus Areas



Adult Services Subcommittee

- Prioritized jail-based screening to identify trafficking survivors within the correctional system.
- Worked to increase screening capacity.
- Ensured a greater percentage of flagged individuals are interviewed.



Child Services Subcommittee

- Worked to increase the community's capacity to meet the mental health needs of this population by offering its previously established human trafficking training to more clinicians.
- Focused on exploring supplemental training needed for foster care placement providers, including both family placements and group home placements, to continue improving the stability of placements.



Faith-Based Subcommittee

- Focused on involving the faith community in the continuum of care.
- Aimed to support both survivors and service providers by emphasizing that faith is a crucial element in the healing and transition process.



Healthcare Subcommittee

- Focused on strengthening partnerships with hospitals in the tri-county area by updating points of contact at each facility.
- Expanded training and education initiatives on human trafficking to reach most major healthcare institutions.



Law Enforcement Subcommittee

- Focused on planning both short- and long-term sustainable training for law enforcement agencies.
- Worked to improve communication and collaboration among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.



Legal Innovations Subcommittee

- Concentrated on expanding attorney training to ensure legal professionals are equipped to recognize and appropriately respond to human trafficking cases.



Prevention & Education Subcommittee

- Prioritized youth advocacy and the development of community partnerships.
- Participated in outreach events by providing presentations and educational materials to raise public awareness.



Refugee & Foreign National Subcommittee

- Aimed to enhance the identification of victims through direct and indirect community outreach.
- Focused on identifying safe spaces for vulnerable populations and targeting outreach in those areas.



Research & Data Subcommittee

- Concentrated on refining data tools to support intervention efforts.
- Led key projects including the implementation of a jail screening tool, a probation tool, and participation in the Department of Justice Housing Grant to better track and support survivors.

Achievements

This section outlines the achievements of the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force's subcommittees for the two-year term spanning July 2023 to June 2025.

Adult Services Subcommittee

The Adult Services Subcommittee, in collaboration with jail staff and victim service providers, **enhanced jail screening processes, protocols, and interview rates.** As a result, **a higher percentage of flagged individuals were successfully screened.** Jail personnel also received targeted training to support identification and referral of trafficking survivors.

Child Services Subcommittee

The Child Services Subcommittee **completed a specialized training on mental health related to youth who have experienced trafficking, training 16 participants.** Additionally, they **strengthened connections with professionals** working in foster care and identified critical service gaps within the system, laying groundwork for future improvements.



The Child Direct Services Subcommittee's two-day training titled: "Expanding Your Mental Health Practice: Working with Youth Who Have Experienced Trafficking."

Faith-Based Subcommittee

The Faith-Based Subcommittee successfully **developed a comprehensive database and network of over 1,000 faith-based individuals** committed to participating in human trafficking awareness and prevention events. The chair took part in a Train-the-Trainer initiative, sanctioned by the Attorney General's Office, resulting in an **approved and ready-to-use Interfaith Human Trafficking PowerPoint Presentation** for Tri-County community speaking engagements. Additionally, the subcommittee **participated in multiple Back-to-School backpack giveaways and six Trunk or Treat events,** distributing over 2,000 items in support of a TraffickProofSC.



Announcement of "The Fairy Godparent Project," a new initiative launched this term in partnership with Dee Norton Child Advocacy Center

Healthcare Subcommittee

The Healthcare Subcommittee successfully built connections across major healthcare systems, resulting in representation from each system on the subcommittee. Members **provided targeted human trafficking trainings at hospitals, mobile crisis units, EMS agencies, a school of nursing, and a dental school.** A training developed by a member from Roper was accredited for 1.0 CEUs. Additionally, the **subcommittee played a pivotal role in advocating for bill H.4343, championed by Representative Spencer Wetmore, which mandates trafficking training for healthcare providers.** The bill was successfully introduced and passed in the state House in under a month.

Law Enforcement Subcommittee

The Law Enforcement Subcommittee **developed a comprehensive tri-county contact list and facilitated multi-agency subcommittee meetings** to strengthen coordination with over 50 participants. It also **organized targeted training sessions for prosecutors, public defenders, and magistrate and summary court judges, reaching over 63 criminal justice professionals across the region.**

Legal Innovations Subcommittee

The Legal Innovations Subcommittee **hosted an expungement training to raise awareness and improve access to expungement services for survivors**, helping to eliminate barriers to employment and long-term stability. The subcommittee also contributed to broader efforts to train attorneys on human trafficking. **In total, over 45 attorneys were trained this term.**



Representatives from Lincoln Tubman Foundation, Nelson Mullins, and Tri-County HTTF spoke at Charleston School of Law on collaboration in human trafficking, highlighting a Charleston labor trafficking case with multi-state indictments.

Prevention and Education Subcommittee

The Prevention and Education Subcommittee actively engaged in community outreach, **participating in the Berkeley County Safety Fair and supporting statewide initiatives** such as the TraffickProofSC backpack giveaway. They **launched the state's first Youth Advocacy Certification Program (YACP) for human trafficking education and established a partnership with the Charleston County Public Library (CCPL) as a venue and co-sponsor for YACP events.** A youth leadership position was established, creating a clear pathway for youth involvement and leadership.

Refugee/Foreign National Subcommittee

The Refugee and Foreign National Subcommittee **hosted a successful resource fair** in December, featuring 27 community organizations, including law firms that offered "Know Your Rights" sessions and on-site legal support. **Attendees received personalized guidance and access to a wide range of regional programs and services, including health services and groceries.**

Additionally, 223 households were registered, making the event a valuable and impactful resource for the community. The subcommittee also **hosted presentations in schools**, delivered in Spanish, to educate parents about human trafficking.

Research and Data Subcommittee

The Research and Data Subcommittee achieved key milestones, including **refining and implementing a jail screening tool, securing an MOU for its use, and training jail and probation staff.** They continued data collection for the probation tool and DOJ Housing Grant, and conducted survivor interviews when possible. Key findings were shared during task force meetings and **presented nationally at the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences annual conferences.** In addition to these presentations, **the subcommittee published two peer-reviewed articles (citations below) about the local human trafficking screening tool and why victims don't report their victimization.**

Publications

Hill, L. & M. Hefner (2023). Successes and challenges in implementing a human trafficking screening tool in a local detention center. *Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, 18(1), 241-258.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/19367244231219940>

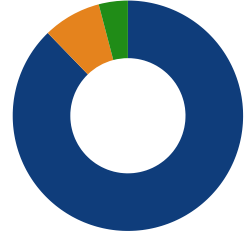
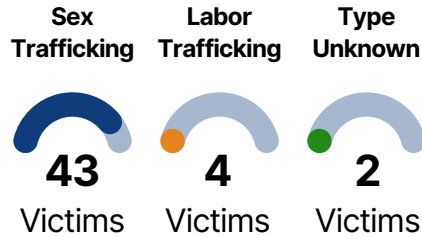
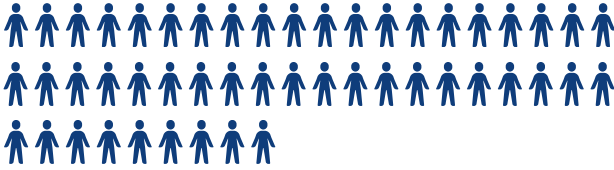
Hefner, M. & L. Hill (2023). Naming, blaming and claiming: Understanding human trafficking victims' nondisclosure and non-reporting behavior. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1-15.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322705.2023.2281212?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

Impact By Numbers

Jail Screening Tool

The jail screening tool is a specialized assessment used within the Charleston County Detention Center to identify potential victims of human trafficking, particularly among vulnerable adults.

49 Victims identified by the jail screening tool since October, 2023



FEMALES



MALES



Arresting Offenses*

Misc. Crimes: **38**

Notable Mentions:

- Giving false information to police: **5**
- Violation of probation: **5**

Violation of probation: **5**

Drug crimes: **21**

Violent crimes: **17**

Property crimes: **12**

Fraud crimes: **8**

**number of offenses, not number of individuals – some individuals received multiple charges, while other did not.*

MDT Grant

A grant was awarded to the Task Force in 2023 to support a five-year project aimed at building capacity and strengthening the foundation for an effective multi-disciplinary task force.

115 Adults served through the grant Oct. '23 - March '25

Grant-Funded Services Provided Oct '24 - March '25:

The Formation Project: **669 Services**

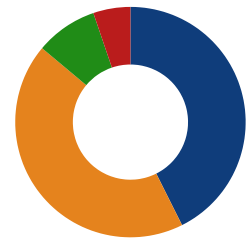
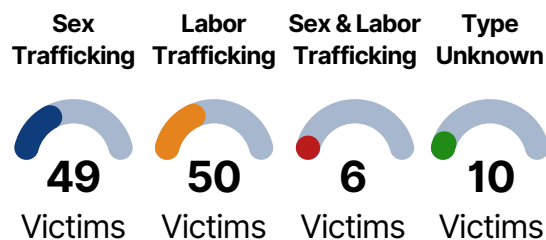
Top 3 Services:

- Emergency Money: **85**
- Transportation: **84**
- Emergency Shelter: **71**

Lincoln Tubman Legal: **974 Services**

- Legal services are key to identify and address labor trafficking

**Over the full course of the grant so far*



FEMALES

78



MALES

30



UNKNOWN

7



Top Exploitation Categories Among Survivors Served:

Prostitution: **43**

Cleaning Services: **14**

Hotel / Hospitality: **13**

Labor / Agriculture: **9**

Construction Landscaping: **8**

Domestic Servitude: **7**

Restaurant / Food Services: **4**

Forced Criminality: **3**

Challenges Encountered

This section outlines challenges encountered by the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force's subcommittees for the two-year term spanning July 2023 to June 2025.

Adult Services Subcommittee

As the subcommittee chair was established mid-term, initial efforts **focused on building membership and clarifying objectives**. A significant challenge was differentiating the Adult Services role within the task force from overlapping work done through the jail screening tool, which involves multiple stakeholders across systems.

Child Services Subcommittee

The subcommittee **faced uncertainty about the scope of its influence**, particularly within the foster care system, where many directives are implemented top-down, limiting grassroots impact. **Difficulty gaining momentum** on foster care-related goals and a perceived lack of inter-subcommittee collaboration also created barriers to progress.

Faith-Based Subcommittee

One of the primary challenges faced by the Faith-Based Subcommittee this term was **member recruitment and retention**. With only 2-3 active members, the subcommittee struggled to maintain a consistent presence at events and fully engage in planned initiatives, limiting its overall impact and capacity for outreach.

Healthcare Subcommittee

The subcommittee **struggled to secure institutional buy-in for human trafficking training in healthcare systems**, as many departments did not see it as a priority. Legislative advocacy within healthcare leadership was also challenging. High member turnover and inconsistent engagement from some facilities hindered progress, leading to efforts to expand internal networks for greater continuity and support.

Law Enforcement Subcommittee

Key challenges included **high turnover within law enforcement agencies and varied training needs and baseline knowledge across departments**. These differences made it difficult to implement uniform training or programming and necessitated more customized approaches for each agency.

Legal Innovations Subcommittee

Coordinating attorney training proved difficult due to conflicting schedules between attorneys and trainers, making it challenging to find mutually available time slots.

Prevention and Education Subcommittee

Accessing schools for training and education initiatives proved challenging due to administrative and policy barriers. As a result, the subcommittee shifted to offsite platforms for youth-focused training. Additional difficulties arose when attempting to develop a curriculum, leading to complications around which curriculum route to take for the Youth Advocacy Certification Program.

Research and Data Subcommittee

Challenges included **frequent staff turnover among both law enforcement and service provider partners**, which disrupted continuity in data collection and training. The subcommittee also encountered issues with **data quality**, such as incomplete or inconsistent records, and struggled with securing large enough sample sizes and consistent participant recruitment for interviews.

Lessons Learned

This section outlines lessons learned by the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force's subcommittees for the two-year term spanning July 2023 to June 2025.

Adult Services Subcommittee

Structurally, the team **recognized the need to clearly define goals, timelines, and outcomes early in the process**. From a project standpoint, implementing the jail tool revealed practical lessons: the importance of offering a Spanish-language option, the benefit of private versus verbal administration of questions, and that in-person second interviews were significantly more successful than web-based follow-ups.

Child Services Subcommittee

Members **recognized the critical need for inter-subcommittee collaboration**. A grant-related shift in focus at the task force level contributed to a sense of stagnation, revealing how broader task force dynamics can directly affect subcommittee growth. The team also **learned the limitations of operating solely at the local level while addressing issues rooted in state systems**. Going forward, they plan to focus more on partnering with local initiatives while continuing to seek meaningful engagement at the state level.

Faith-Based Subcommittee

The Faith-Based Subcommittee **learned that meaningful progress often takes time and persistence**. While responses at the state level may be slow, it is essential to remain focused on what can be accomplished locally. The subcommittee also **recognized the need to prioritize and strengthen member recruitment** to build a more sustainable and active network.

Healthcare Subcommittee

The subcommittee **learned that proactively offering human trafficking education across departments and clinics is more effective than waiting for training requests**. Consistent, well-scheduled meetings are critical for maintaining momentum. Leadership recognized the value of leveraging internal expertise, such as education leads, and sharing responsibilities. Adding a co-chair helped distribute workload.

Law Enforcement Subcommittee

The subcommittee stressed the need for sustainable training to address frequent law enforcement turnover and **highlighted the value of strong collaboration between law enforcement and service provider victim advocates**. Including **solicitors in leadership has added a broader perspective**, strengthening the subcommittee's approach.

Legal Innovations Subcommittee

Attorneys are willing to assist pro bono, especially when CLE credit is offered as an incentive. We should also **better identify and coordinate with nonprofits** already handling certain case types to avoid duplication and strengthen impact.

Prevention and Education Subcommittee

The subcommittee **learned that clear structure and defined expectations are essential for youth leadership roles**, especially to ensure accountability and sustainability. Additionally, **member engagement increases when subcommittee work is organized around tangible projects**.

Research and Data Subcommittee

A key takeaway was **the importance of cultivating strong partnerships**, especially given the persistent intra-organizational barriers stemming from differing goals and protocols. Collaborative relationships across agencies are essential to overcome these challenges and keep data projects on track.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE SC 2025/2026 SESSION

Priority #1: Training for Healthcare Providers on Human Trafficking - (H4343)

Why it matters:

Healthcare workers are one of the few groups likely to interact with trafficking victims during exploitation. In fact, **85% of victims will seek medical care** during their victimization.

Yet, most healthcare professionals receive no formal training to identify human trafficking and support victims.

This bill changes that. It would introduce a mandatory education course on human trafficking awareness for healthcare professionals as part of their license renewal or reactivation—equipping providers with the tools they need to identify victims and respond effectively.



*Lauren Knapp,
Tri-County Human
Trafficking Task
Force Co-Chair
speaks on bill
H.4343 in front of
the House Medical,
Military, Public and
Municipal Affairs
Committee*

The TCHTTF – a dedicated coalition of community organizations, law enforcement, legal experts, and community members – advocates for legislation that combats trafficking through prevention, accountability, and survivor-centered justice.

We work to have legislative priorities—because we believe policy **must** be informed by frontlines.

Priority #2: Updating the Commercial Sex Code & Preventing Demand - (S235)

Why it matters:

South Carolina's commercial sex laws haven't been updated since 1986—before trafficking was recognized as a crime and before the rise of the internet. Current laws do not distinguish between the seller, buyer, or orchestrator of commercial sex and exploitation. South Carolina also has one of the **lowest penalties in the country** for purchasers of sex, meaning there is little to no risk for traffickers.

This bill can prevent the demand and help victims. It would separate the three parties involved: the seller, buyer, and orchestrator (potential trafficker). This is **procurement**, where the victim is not treated the same as the trafficker, and gives law enforcement **a tool to convict likely traffickers without requiring victim testimony.**

Priority #3: RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) Legislation - (S76 & S85 / H3520)

Why it matters:

Human trafficking often involves **organized criminal networks**—from gangs and crews to family-based enterprises. These bills introduce **racketeering and enterprise crime tools** that:

- Help law enforcement **dismantle entire trafficking operations** (Key for SLED)
- Strengthen cases **even when victims can't testify**
- Target leadership, enablers, and profit-makers, not just those on the front lines

Currently, **33 states** have adopted some version of RICO laws. South Carolina is **not yet one of them.**

The Groundbreaker Award

The Groundbreaker Award goes to:
a person or entity who is an originator,
innovator, or pioneer in a particular
activity; an originator, someone who
leads to or makes possible further
developments, growth, improvements

2023 Winners:

Erin Hart, DNP, BSN, BS, Medical
University of South Carolina and the
Tri-County HTTF Healthcare, Co-
Chair

Celina Anthony, M. Ed., Department
of Federal Programs, Charleston
County School District and Tri-
County HTTF Refugee & Foreign
National, Co-Chair

2024 Winner:

Nicole Hoffman, Thrive Program
Coordinator & Human Trafficking
Specialist at Kay Phillips Child
Advocacy Center and the Tri-
County HTTF Child Direct Services,
Co-Chair

Honorable Recognitions:

Dot Krzemien, Special Agent at South
Carolina Law Enforcement Division

Dr. Leslie Hill, Ph.D., Associate Professor
at The Citadel and the Tri-County HTTF
Research & Data, Co-Chair



Pictured are the 2024 Groundbreaker Award winner and Honorable Recognitions: Top left, Dr. Leslie Hill; top right, Special Agent Dot Krzemien; bottom, award winner Nicole Hoffman.

Priorities for Next Year

This section outlines priorities for the Tri-County Human Trafficking Task Force's nine subcommittees for the upcoming two-year term spanning July 2025 to June 2027.

Direct Services Subcommittee

Formed through the merger of the Adult Services and Child Services subcommittees, the Direct Services Subcommittee will focus on **strengthening and expanding support systems for individuals impacted by human trafficking across the lifespan**. Key objectives include maintaining or **increasing capacity for jail screenings and developing a scalable model for program expansion**. The subcommittee also plans to **establish a Survivor Advisory Board to ensure survivor voices are integrated into policy and program development**. Outreach will be extended to youth aging out of the foster care system, especially those aged 18–24. Additionally, the subcommittee will **continue to build and strengthen partnerships within the foster care system and engage in cross-sector collaboration, including exploring the adaptation of the jail screening tool for use in the juvenile justice system**.

Healthcare Subcommittee

The subcommittee plans to **expand education beyond hospitals to clinics and community healthcare providers**. As South Carolina House Bill 4343 advances, members will prioritize **securing approval for a standardized one-hour human trafficking training module** that meets new legislative requirements. They will also focus on **outreach to smaller facilities and support the bill's passage through the Senate**.

Law Enforcement Subcommittee

Next term priorities include **the development and distribution of a short-term, easily shareable training module for law enforcement agencies**. The subcommittee also plans to enhance engagement by inviting law enforcement partners to present at subcommittee meetings, fostering peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.

Legal Innovations Subcommittee

The subcommittee intends to **partner more closely with outreach efforts and leverage student involvement for research initiatives**, expanding capacity and diversifying input into legal innovation projects.

Community Outreach Subcommittee

Formed through the merger of the Faith-Based and Presentation & Education subcommittees, the Community Outreach Subcommittee will focus on **expanding community engagement in human trafficking prevention and awareness**. The subcommittee will use the Interfaith Human Trafficking PowerPoint presentation to **host at least one in-person or virtual speaking engagement per month, with a focus on outreach to faith communities**. It will also promote the Fairy Godparent Project initiative and other community initiatives. Additional goals include **increasing the task force's presence at community events, launching a 2027 Youth Summit, and continuing to grow the Youth Advocacy Certification Program (YACP)**, with increased collaboration from faith-based organizations.

Research and Data Subcommittee

Priorities include **securing funding to sustain and potentially expand the jail screening tool and planning for long-term data-sharing mechanisms** after the MDT grant ends. The subcommittee also aims to **conduct further research on housing as a critical factor in trafficking prevention and recovery**, as well as study the potential impacts of the proposed healthcare training legislation.

Recommendations

Over the past two years, the following key recommendations have been identified as strategic priorities to enhance anti-trafficking efforts across the Tri-County Area.

1. **Enhance Data Collection and Sharing:** Strengthen coordination among Task Force agencies and stakeholders to collect, share, and analyze trafficking data. Use insights to drive smarter, more targeted interventions.
2. **Expand Critical Victim Services:** Prioritize safe housing for minors and adults & increase access to substance use rehabilitation, acknowledging traffickers' use of addiction as a control tactic.
3. **Sustain Research and Data Capacity:** Ensure researchers and data experts have sustained support and a seat at the table to guide evidence-based strategies.
4. **Bolster Legal Services Access:** Invest in legal services essential to identifying labor trafficking and navigating complex legal and government systems, including immigration and custody matters critical for long-term survivor stability.
5. **Prioritize Prevention and Education:** Continue youth-focused education and prevention efforts in schools. Engage survivor voices to dismantle harmful cultural narratives that glamorize commercial sex.
6. **Empower Prosecutorial Leadership:** Position prosecutors in leadership roles to unify law enforcement responses. Partnerships between local prosecutors and state law enforcement have proven effective in overcoming jurisdictional barriers exploited by traffickers.
7. **Integrate State and Federal Law Enforcement:** Incorporate both state and federal law enforcement as a task force to strengthen coordination and ensure a viable, comprehensive criminal justice response to trafficking.
8. **Engage Healthcare Systems as Core Partners:** Prioritize engagement of healthcare providers, both for early identification of trafficking victims and delivery of critical trauma-informed care and services.
9. **Support Child Advocacy Centers with Trafficking-Specific Services:** Ensure Child Advocacy Centers are equipped with dedicated trafficking programs to improve identification and provide holistic, community-centered support for child victims.

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company/tricityhttf](https://www.linkedin.com/company/tricityhttf)**