



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

PARI: PREVENTION OF ADOLESCENT RISKS INITIATIVE

**MARYLAND STATE-WIDE**

# Strategic Plan to Address Human Trafficking

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### FUNDING DISCLAIMER

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Activities outside the scope of this funding stream will be denoted by an \* and will be executed using other appropriate resources.



The “Maryland State-Wide Strategic Plan to Address Human Trafficking” represents a collective commitment to strengthen prevention efforts, identify survivors, and enhance agency and community coordination to provide support and services to survivors of human trafficking in Maryland.

The Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) extends congratulations and appreciation to the University of Maryland School of Social Work- Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative (PARI) for their dedicated work and support of Maryland’s survivors. PARI’s leadership and collaboration have been instrumental in shaping this strategy and ensuring that it reflects the needs, voices, and resilience of those most impacted.

Together with PARI, GOCPP affirms our commitment to building a safer Maryland where every individual is protected from the exploitation of human trafficking and empowered to thrive.

# THE PLAN IN BRIEF

Maryland has increasingly documented a significant problem of sex and labor trafficking of children and youth. A complicated mix of geographic and socioeconomic factors contribute to this crime, from Maryland's midpoint location on the Eastern Seaboard and access to I-95, to large numbers of vulnerable youth and unaccompanied minors. The University of Maryland's School of Social Work's (UMSSW) Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative (PARI) has been working with the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), as well as the Departments of Human Services (DHS) and Juvenile Services (DJS) since 2014 to build the infrastructure for Maryland to address the issue of human trafficking of minors. In addition, Maryland has a well-established statewide human trafficking task force and a U.S. Attorney's Office focused on successful prosecutions.

In 2022, GOCPP and PARI proposed an initiative that built upon existing relationships to provide a comprehensive system-wide response for identifying at risk child and youth victims of human trafficking in Maryland. This collaborative endeavor complimented other efforts by local government, law enforcement, prosecution, and social service providers. More specifically, in response to the issue of human trafficking and the needs of our state, this initiative aimed to develop a statewide strategy which leveraged existing victim services, child welfare and juvenile services efforts against human trafficking.

Our overarching aim was to develop Maryland's strategic plan for addressing human trafficking of children and youth which encompasses providing training and technical assistance for all key stakeholders, developing protocols and procedures to ensure that children and youth receive appropriate, evidence-based services via the expansion of the Regional Navigator Program, and strengthen data collection across multiple systems of care that work with and provide services to youth. This document is the culmination of the strategic plan including input from a multidisciplinary cadre of key informants, including survivor voices. It is expected to be utilized as a living document reflecting the dynamic nature of the anti-trafficking field and the multidisciplinary fields which comprise

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Continued

it. Six Pillars, i.e. overarching themes, emerged from more than three years of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and discussion groups. They are:

1. Improve access to services for survivors of human trafficking and enhance the quality of existing services.
2. Increase identification of victims of sex and labor trafficking in Maryland.
3. Increase community awareness of human trafficking and improve coordination of response.
4. Improve law enforcement response to human trafficking survivors and protect survivors from criminalization.
5. Make available high-quality, reliable data on human trafficking in Maryland.
6. Prevent individuals from experiencing human trafficking in Maryland.

As you read this document, recognize that it can be effective if the goals, objectives, and recommendations underlying these pillars are implemented collaboratively across a network of multidisciplinary professionals and advocates using a client-centered, trauma-informed approach that continues to leverage their expertise in light of the current landscape.

# OVERVIEW

## WHY THIS PLAN EXISTS

In 2012, Maryland family law was amended to add “prostitution of a child” and “human trafficking” as forms of sexual abuse, since then Maryland advocates have continued to position the state against both sex and labor trafficking.

Maryland continues strengthening the legal and policy frameworks intended to appropriately prosecute trafficking cases, most recently:

**2019**

The Anti Exploitation Act created a criminal labor trafficking statute that provides the necessary framework for investigating and prosecuting labor trafficking crimes at the state level.

**2019**

The Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act requires law enforcement agents and local Departments of Social Services who have reason to believe a child is a victim of sex trafficking to notify a Regional Navigator in their jurisdiction or region to obtain needed services for the child. The goal of the Regional Navigator model is to increase coordination and prevention efforts and ensure that victims and survivors of human trafficking receive the services they need to heal and rebuild their lives and futures.

**2023**

The Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking Safe Harbor and Service Response was enacted, preventing minors from prosecution for offenses as a result of being trafficked; instead, directing them to the juvenile justice child protection systems.

**2024**

Children - Labor Trafficking formally defines labor trafficking as form of child maltreatment and authorizes the Departments of Social Services to screen and investigate these reports and expands the scope of the Regional Navigator Programs to serve youth who are at risk or known victims of child labor trafficking.

Because of these efforts, more is known about the scope and characterization of sex and labor trafficking in Maryland.

Every Local Department of Social Services (DSS) office has screened at least one child sex trafficking case, and, from 2013 to 2024, 1,345 child sex trafficking cases have been reported in Maryland.<sup>1</sup> The environmental scan conducted as part of this project indicated that anti-trafficking efforts in Maryland have disproportionately focused on anti-sex trafficking initiatives. This awareness has opened opportunities to place additional focus on anti-labor trafficking work.

## Human trafficking exists largely because of disorganization and deprivation within communities.

To address it more fully, advocates seek to better align their resources, successes, and lessons learned particularly as many systems are stretched thin.

This plan emerged from a call-to-action among the state's anti-trafficking advocates to develop cohesive, integrated action plans, consistent mechanisms for sharing information and resources, and standardized systems for stakeholders to access data, training, and fundraising resources. This strategic plan works to further cement and expand the collaborative nature of these advocates' work.

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<sup>1</sup>2013–2024 Child Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (CHESSIE), Child Juvenile & Adult Management System (CJAMS); DHS-SSA, as analyzed and reported by the Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative, University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work

# PROCESS & DEVELOPMENT

## HOW WE GOT HERE

This plan draws upon the experiences of those actively working to address human trafficking in Maryland.

With support from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), the planning team from Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative from University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW PARI) applied a multi-pronged approach leveraging data and tapping into a cross-section of professionals, including survivors.

These activities began in April 2024 and culminated with the development of the strategic plan which was made available in September 2025.

The plan's progress was communicated to stakeholders throughout the process. This "roadmap" diagram was used to indicate the current step in the process using "you are here"-style indicators:



## ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

### Maryland Human Trafficking Environmental Scan

A summary report aggregating the findings of existing environmental scans on the scope of human trafficking in Maryland and the state of the anti-trafficking work to combat it. The scan included information from other scans on:

1. The state of anti-trafficking professional development,
2. The scope and context of labor trafficking experienced by children and,
3. Labor trafficking experienced by migrant women in the crabbing industry.

### Stakeholder Survey

A survey disseminated through formal (task forces and similar groups) and informal (social/collegial) networks that collected quantitative and qualitative data from respondents across Maryland's anti-trafficking field.

**# OF RESPONDENTS:** 191

**FIELDS REPRESENTED:** Social services, mental health, law enforcement, legal representation, juvenile justice, medical, NPOs/NGOs, immigration/immigrant support, task force participants, municipal employees

**OF NOTE:** 10% of respondents were trafficking survivors

### Key Informant Interviews

The interviews were conducted by Mitchell and Giovanni and gathered qualitative data from professionals working in Maryland's anti-human trafficking field. The team used [this guide](#) to direct the interviews.

**# OF INTERVIEWS:** 20

**INTERVIEWEES' AVERAGE YEARS IN THE FIELD:** 10.5

**FIELDS REPRESENTED:** Social services, mental health, law enforcement, legal representation, juvenile justice, medical, NPOs/NGOs, immigration/immigrant support, task force participants, municipal employees

## Discussion Sessions

In the fall and winter of 2024, UMSSW PARI hosted two Discussion Sessions with leaders from across Maryland facilitated by Eisler to discuss the themes described in the environmental scan, survey, and key informant interviews. Participants applied their perspectives and contributed to establishing the priorities and activities that appear in this strategic plan.

The pillars, goals, objectives, and suggested activities listed in this plan are a distillation of those discussions and the themes that emerged.

In March and April 2025, the pillars, goals, and objectives identified during the Discussion Sessions were presented to the broader anti-trafficking community, including the Discussion Session participants, for awareness and to elicit feedback.

**FINDINGS:** The pillars, goals, and objectives articulated in this plan ([page 11](#)) are a direct distillation of the priorities discussed during these sessions.

**# OF PARTICIPANTS:** 31

**FIELDS REPRESENTED:** State and local task forces, juvenile justice, human services, immigration legal services, Federal prosecutorial offices, law enforcement, and others (See [Appendix A](#) for details).

### PLANNING TEAM

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Neil Mallon  
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Dorian Mitchell  
MPower Scholar

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MS, Clinical Research Specialist (Former)

# WHAT TO EXPECT

On the following pages, you'll see the plan laid out in sections:

## Pillars

Overarching themes that group goals and activities.

## Goals

Broad statements describing success at a high level.

## Objectives

Activities and outputs to show progress and success.

## Suggested Activities

Examples of tangible activities, work products, and resources. These are suggestions that came from the Discussion Groups and are not a prescriptive workplan. Not every objective has suggested activities at this point.

## SPECIAL FOCUS

While most themes directly connect to anti-human trafficking efforts, a focus from those who contributed to the plan's development included addressing foundational determinants of health and well-being. As such, several sections of the plan emphasize this approach to anti-trafficking work.

Addressing these factors can prevent dangerous situations or disrupt cycles of violence/illness/distress.

## FOR EXAMPLE

A lack of stable housing can make someone vulnerable to trafficking. By reinforcing a housing safety net, some people may find that they can avoid or leave trafficking situations.

## FIRST NEXT STEPS

Once this plan is finalized and disseminated, the first activity will be to collaborate statewide, galvanizing leaders at all levels to commit to specific portions of this plan and coordinate activities. This work will begin by engaging the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MHTTF) as well as other local task forces to divide this work among areas of expertise. A further description of next steps is included in the "Conclusion" section of this plan.



## PILLAR 1

Improve access to services for survivors of human trafficking and enhance quality of existing services.

### GOAL 1

**Mobilize with advocates from related issue areas to support organizations in obtaining federal, state, local, and private funding for critical victim services.**

### OBJECTIVE 1

Develop a “toolkit” for fundraising to support organizations that seek funding and/or wish to diversify funding streams within Maryland’s anti-trafficking field.

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Establish a working group focused on aggregating existing grant-writing templates, resources, and funder lists.
- Aggregate funding documents from stakeholder orgs willing to contribute.
- Create a standard set of blank, editable templates and guidance (white label documents) for organizations to leverage when seeking funding along with a resource directory.
- Identify/create location to store toolkit, either connected to MHTTF website or newly created data center.
- Establish funding streams/sources to compensate survivors for contributing to anti-HT work.
- Establish regular opportunities for MHTTF membership to seek guidance, problem solve and collaborate on fundraising efforts.
- Hold up to three events annually to support fundraising, including working sessions w/ peers, training/input from fundraising experts, etc.

**GOAL 2**

Reduce barriers to assistance for foreign-national victims of trafficking.

**OBJECTIVE 1**

Improve access to benefits for minors with OTIP eligibility letters.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

Eliminate barriers for potential U visa applicants through passage of legislation to change the requirements for certification.\*

**GOAL 3**

Ensure service providers working with trafficking survivors understand state-specific procedures and best practices.

**OBJECTIVE 1**

Update Standards of Care document first published by the MHTTF, Victim Services Subcommittee.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

Create clear guidance on mandated reporting for child sex and labor trafficking cases.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

Explore feasibility of expanding Maryland's Regional Navigator Program to adult victims of trafficking over age 24.

**OBJECTIVE 4**

Partner with Maryland Survivor Network, National Survivor Network, and other survivor-led groups to identify three actions that ensure those with lived experience have meaningful input and leadership opportunities in Maryland's anti-trafficking work.

**GOAL 4**

**Increase survivor access to a continuum of housing and shelter options.**

**OBJECTIVE 1**

Pivot available housing funds towards establishing rental assistance and housing voucher programs for survivors as a more flexible, low-barrier, and cost-effective alternative to emergency shelters and transitional housing programs run by nonprofits.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

Educate MHTTF members and HT stakeholders on how to access and navigate Maryland's housing and shelter landscape while ensuring they understand and can use available resources.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

Recruit and maintain a representative from Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development for active participation on the MHTTF steering committee and victim services committee.

**OBJECTIVE 4**

Anti-trafficking service providers should establish a specialized Housing Navigator position(s) to identify housing options and remove barriers for survivors in obtaining and maintaining housing.

**OBJECTIVE 5**

Any Maryland state agency that places children in residential settings (DHS, DJS, MSDE, and DOH) establish and/or expand contracts with residential child welfare placements that have specialized effective programs for trafficked youth.



## PILLAR 2

Increase identification of victims of sex and labor trafficking in Maryland.

### GOAL 1

Establish a comprehensive training program on sex and labor trafficking for professional groups and agencies most likely to intersect with trafficking survivors.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Improve implementation of HT trainings for agencies that already have mandated training by assessing compliance with implementation, ensuring information is accurate and evidence-based, and educates on labor and sex trafficking equally.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Mandate standardized human trafficking 101 training at entry level/onboarding and in-service for relevant agencies and systems without current training requirements, including private child welfare providers and resource parents, fire and EMS personnel, and hospital staff.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Conduct needs assessment/buy-in building with decision makers across agencies for entry-level and in-service training.
- Establish working groups of survivors (compensated), agency personnel, service providers, advocates, etc. to inform training programs.
- Aggregate existing training programs and leverage them to create consistent/cohesive messaging and templates across training programs.

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**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES** Continued

- Leverage existing meeting systems, determine how to best promote ongoing training, and to share lessons learned across groups. (Focus on not creating “meeting fatigue” while energizing and refining the work.)
- Establish a templated training toolkit for MD organizations to leverage when developing training to promote consistency and baseline levels of quality.
- Ensure that information on Maryland’s Safe Harbor Law, Regional Navigator Program, labor trafficking statute, and mandated reporting requirements are included in all HT trainings.
- Establish regular sharing mechanism(s) for counties to learn from each other and promote a culture of quality and dedication to anti-HT work.
- Develop regular sharing mechanisms for survivors to share stories/lessons learned, develop their own professional skills, and contribute to (with compensation) improving how survivors interface with systems and services.
- Assess the implementation of and compliance with previous training mandates for state agencies and systems, including law enforcement through the Maryland Police Training Commission.



## PILLAR 3

Increase community awareness of human trafficking and improve coordination of response.

### GOAL 1

Enhance functioning and impact of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force to better serve as a source of information for community members and groups to increase awareness of Maryland's anti-trafficking efforts.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Update Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MHTTF) website to improve information-sharing with Maryland's anti-human trafficking community including services providers, policy makers, survivors, and others.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Establish a working group to determine what aspects of the website should be improved, updated, or maintained, with specific focus on accurate data, increasing awareness of trafficking in Maryland, and actionable resources.
- Make formal recommendations for website updates to MHTTF Steering Committee for approval.
- Launch updated website and publicize with stakeholders.
- Partner with data collection working group and survivor network to develop an ongoing external "storytelling" approach.
- Identify funding/in-kind resources for updating the website.
- Engage graphic designer/web developer.

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**GOAL 1** Continued**OBJECTIVE 2**

Recruit and maintain representation from Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Maryland Department of Labor, and Maryland Department of Health (DOH) for active participation on the MHTTF steering committee and Victim Services subcommittee.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

Improve communication and collaboration between the statewide Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and county-level human trafficking task forces, working groups, and coalitions.

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Include the chairs and co-chairs of each of the 12+ existing local HT task forces in the steering committee of the MHTTF.
- Re-establish email listserv to connect chairs of local HT task forces.
- Update statewide and county level HTTF map document and relocate to the MHTTF's website for public access and ease of updates.



## PILLAR 4

Improve law enforcement response to HT survivors and protect survivors from criminalization.

### GOAL 1

Ensure law enforcement are trained in trauma-informed identification and response to victims of trafficking.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Review, revise and improve law enforcement training on human trafficking and ensure statewide implementation of training mandate through the Maryland Police Training Commission.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Ensure law enforcement officers are equipped to identify and investigate labor trafficking through enhanced training, formalized protocols, and collaboration building with vulnerable communities.

### GOAL 2

Revise Maryland's criminal statute to better protect survivors and increase criminal prosecution of traffickers

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Work with state's attorney's offices, legal advocates, and Office of the Public Defender to identify most needed revisions to Maryland's human trafficking criminal statute.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Create workgroups include LE, SAOs, survivors, service providers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Introduce legislation.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Expand post-conviction relief and affirmative defense options for victims.



## PILLAR 5

Make available high-quality, reliable data on human trafficking in Maryland.

### GOAL 1

**Develop a plan to establish, coordinate, and improve data collection efforts on HT in Maryland so that data collected is consistent, community-oriented, and transparent.**

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Map the data needed, existing data sources, and critical gaps to define the scope and characteristics of HT in Maryland, with specific focus on areas where data is particularly lacking: labor trafficking, forced criminality, familial trafficking.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Establish plan for a centralized mechanism to manage, share, analyze, and store state data on human trafficking, with sustainable plan for who will update and maintain data collection tools (incl. A pilot data collection dashboard).

#### OBJECTIVE 3

Create and pilot a data collection “toolkit” to support municipal, multi-county, and statewide data collection, sharing, and analysis.

#### OBJECTIVE 4

Finalize updated data collection protocol, governance, templates/toolkit, and metrics for determining the toolkit’s success.

#### OBJECTIVE 5

Develop template for annual Maryland Human Trafficking Report.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Aggregate existing data collection tools to create templates for standardized surveys/guides/etc.
- Create working group of appropriate data collection organizations to develop plans.
- Establish “central hub” organization that will oversee data collection, analysis, info sharing, and updating/maintenance of the template toolkit.
- Identify appropriate and diversified funding streams to support the dashboard/hub.



## PILLAR 6

Prevent individuals from experiencing human trafficking in Maryland.

### GOAL 1

Identify individuals who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking for connections to services.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Ensure relevant state agencies have robust screening and identification protocols to intervene with individuals at risk of or who are experiencing trafficking.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Ensure that agencies and systems with existing identification processes are effective in identifying labor trafficking.

#### OBJECTIVE 3

Explore how evidence-based, skills-based human trafficking prevention material can be integrated into Maryland's existing violence prevention education programs.\*

### GOAL 2

Reduce community level vulnerability to trafficking by working across sectors and supporting legislation to reduce poverty and improve economic, health, education, and social outcomes for at-risk groups in Maryland.\*

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Build a policy communication “toolkit” to facilitate policy information to the public, professional stakeholders, and those who are vulnerable to trafficking situations, including survivors.

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**GOAL 2** Continued**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Develop at least three communications materials to pilot as templates to assess efficacy, scalability, and user-friendliness.
- Draft and disseminate a preliminary protocol that organizations can use to coordinate communication about changes to policies at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Expand lessons learned from the pilot templates to create a draft toolkit for dissemination.
- Finalize the initial toolkit and create a plan for ensuring the maintenance and expansion of the toolkit.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

Establish a working group to engage the state legislature to champion legislation aimed at reducing poverty and improving the economic, health, education, and social outcomes for groups at risk for human trafficking.\*

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Establish a cohort of policy/prosecutorial stakeholders who will collaborate to drive messaging as policies change/update at the state and federal levels.
- Aggregate existing high-quality communication tools to evaluate them for desirable, replicable characteristics. Tools may include fact sheets, reports, video files, infographics, press releases, etc.
- Partner with the MHTTF website working groups to determine where/how to store these templates.
- Identify ongoing opportunities to advertise these resources and training on how to use them effectively.

# CONCLUSION

## WHAT COMES NEXT

Because human trafficking and the anti-trafficking work attempting to eradicate it are dynamic fields susceptible to social, political, and funding changes, this plan is intended to be treated as a living document.

This plan will be most effective if advocates for trafficking survivors and those working to strengthen the systems meant to protect survivors:

- Regularly review/revise the plan.
- Collaborate across fields and geographic regions.
- Create networks that can share successes, resources, and lessons learned across teams and professional spaces.

## INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- The UMSSW PARI team will **present the plan to the MHTTF Steering Committee and the Local/Regional Task Force Chairs** for input and planning.
- Leadership on the state and local task forces, Regional Navigators, funders, and other stakeholders will **determine working groups to collaborate on specific goals and activities**.
- Those working groups will leverage their expertise to **build work plans, shared activities, and realistic next steps** given the current landscape.
- UMSSW PARI, the MHTTF, and local tasks forces will **determine shared, regular update schedules** to inform the field of progress, adjust activities, and identify emerging areas of collaboration.
- The MHTTF chairs and UMSSW PARI will identify regular touch points over the next three (3) years to **review the current strategic plan priorities and activities to:**
  - Identify successes and completed activities.
  - Determine if any activities or priorities have changed and require revision.
  - Edit the plan, publish, and share the updated plan with stakeholders.

## IDENTIFIED RESOURCES TO EXECUTE

- **Diversity of funding** to support the overall activities of the strategic plan. Funding sources should support various aspects of the plan including prevention, identification, response, awareness, and policy development.
- **Stakeholders** who can be involved across the pillars and goals with the capacity to coordinate among groups, maintain momentum, and establish **centralized mechanisms for sharing resources** (ex. Shared drives, a website, etc.)
- Access to a quality **web developer** to create a sustainable, scalable web presence for the MHTTF.

Collaboration, flexibility, and consistency will be the backbones of this work to realize a state where human trafficking is acknowledged, understood, prevented, and addressed.

## APPENDIX A

Below is a list of the organizations that participated in the two (2) Discussion Sessions held in the last quarter of 2024. The participants were invited to attend and share their perspectives because of their expertise in their respective fields as it relates to addressing sex and labor trafficking in Maryland.

Asylee Women Enterprise	Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Ayuda	Maryland Department of Human Services/Social Services Administration
Cecil County Child Advocacy Center	Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
Cecil County Family Violence Programs	Maryland Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.	Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
Department of Justice United States Attorney's Office	Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement
Eastern Shore Human Trafficking Task Force	Montgomery County Human Trafficking Prevention Committee
Everstand	Prince George's County Office of Human Rights
For All Seasons, Inc.	Safe Place Child Advocacy Center
Frederick County State's Attorney's Office	Tahirih Justice Center
Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy	University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors
Heartly House Inc.	Washington County Department of Social Services
Howard County Government	
Human Trafficking Prevention Project	
Life Crisis Center	



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