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# How to Fight Human Trafficking at the Local Level

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**There is a painful reality that exists in communities that we call home.** Human trafficking, which is modern day slavery is often “hidden in plain sight.” Local interventions are an important piece of the puzzle to save trafficking victims, and dismantle the criminal networks, which are often involved in other types of illicit trade such as drugs and arms. Also, trafficking by individuals, outside of organized crime, is likely only be visible at the local level.

The use of technology and the internet enables criminal enterprises to broaden their reach, threatening the health and safety of communities across great distances and jurisdictions. This is why government leaders, law enforcement, human services providers, community organizations and other stakeholders are partnering to combat the problem.

According to the most recent statistics collected by the National Human

Trafficking Hotline, North Carolina ranks #11 nationally in the number of human trafficking cases reported by each state. Under North Carolina state law, victims of human trafficking are defined as those who are “minors involved in any commercial sexual activity; adults induced into commercial activity through force, fraud or coercion; and children and adults induced to perform labor or services through force, fraud or coercion.”

In 2017, 228 trafficking cases in North Carolina were reported to the national hotline with 324 victims, 137 traffickers, and 57 trafficking businesses identified. The data, however, does not represent the full scope of trafficking in North Carolina. Underreporting and lack of awareness about the hotline render these statistics incomplete. Traffickers use certain areas in the community as a way to market, transport or sell their victims’ “services.”

These areas may include:

- tourist destinations
- large public events
- online advertising
- interstate highways
- truck stops
- highway rest stops
- military bases
- factories
- international borders
- seasonal farming areas
- near colleges and universities

Certain county employees may be uniquely positioned to help spot the signs of suspicious behavior. Those in law enforcement and departments of health, social services, including child protective services may encounter potential cases of human trafficking. In addition, librarians, health department staff, first responders, emergency management/disaster recovery personnel, permitting authorities and inspectors and waste management personnel may also come into contact with trafficking victims or their abusers.

According to child welfare subject matter experts at the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), G.S. 7B 101, mandates reporting by county departments of social services to investigate cases of potential human

trafficking of minors, including cases in which the suspected trafficker is not the child’s parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker. As part of these child protective services investigations, child welfare agencies are required to work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons, and local law enforcement agencies to determine whether the child or youth is listed as a missing person or has been reported as missing in the past.

In addition, DHHS notes that child welfare agencies are required to report to and work closely with law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children when a child or youth in the custody of the agency runs away or is missing from foster care, as these children and youth are particularly vulnerable to potential traffickers and other safety issues. For cases involving foreign national children, child welfare agencies are required to notify the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) to facilitate the provision of interim services to the child pending certification of the child as a victim of trafficking.

There are a range of tools and resources available to counties to raise awareness and educate employees on the indicators of human trafficking. Information is also available to help counties establish protocols for reporting. Margaret F. Henderson, Director of the Public Intersection Project and lecturer at the UNC School of Government, has developed various resources to help local government combat human trafficking. The resources are available at [www.sog.unc.edu/resource-series/human-trafficking](http://www.sog.unc.edu/resource-series/human-trafficking). Building on work initiated with Project No Rest, a statewide





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Margaret F. Henderson, Director of the Public Intersection Project and lecturer at the UNC School of Government has developed many resources to help local government combat human trafficking.

anti-human trafficking project sponsored by the UNC School of Social Work, she is developing educational and training resources specific to local governments. She recommends the following six steps for local elected officials to help end human trafficking.

### What Local Government Elected Officials Can Do to End Human Trafficking

1. Begin a process of self-education.
2. Encourage professional training of local government staff.
3. Convene multidisciplinary, cross-organizational meetings to initiate or boost local efforts.

4. Request progress reports on those local efforts.
5. Build community awareness through public recognition events or by requiring that human trafficking hotline posters be displayed in all governmental buildings.
6. Pass ordinances to control businesses that might provide cover for traffickers, such as “pop-up” massage or nail parlors, 24-hour adult video stores, and other sexually oriented businesses.

“Across the globe, a lack of both awareness and adequate coordination across levels of governments are two basic challenges that enables human trafficking,” said Henderson. “The School of Government has been partnering this year with Councils of Government across North Carolina to host basic training for local government staff. One consistent message we’ve been hearing in these sessions is that staff in different kinds of positions – inspectors, fire fighters, librarians, etc. – report that they’ve been seeing the indicators but didn’t understand what they were seeing.”

Henderson notes that once local governments receive basic training on trafficking, they can then use existing processes to assess how trafficking might be taking place locally. “We need communities to take time to focus on trafficking, either by using existing collaborations that address specific vulnerabilities (such as homelessness) or by considering specific environmental conditions (such as big public events) or

business models (such as illicit massage parlors.)”

The National Human Trafficking Hotline offers several ways for victims and others to report a potential trafficking situation. It is operated by Polaris, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to ending modern slavery worldwide. The hotline is staffed by specially trained and experienced Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocates available 24/7 by phone at **1-888-373-7888**, by text at **233733**, by email at **help@humantraffickinghotline.org**, or by chat at **humantraffickinghotline.org**. Advocates help victims and survivors access direct services through an extensive referral network and facilitate reporting of potential human trafficking tips to specialized law enforcement agencies. Callers can speak with the Hotline in English, Spanish, and in more than 200 additional languages using a 24-hour tele-interpreting service.

The North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking supports the development of localized assistance networks, called Rapid Response Teams, which are multidisciplinary teams of direct service agencies, emergency responders, and law enforcement that assist in the first 24 to 72 hours of an identified victim of human trafficking’s recovery and rehabilitation process.

Rapid Response Team coverage across the state is inconsistent. In many communities, the effort depends on the individual efforts of a few people, as opposed to being institutionalized across organizations. This variation

in community capacity heightens the importance of working across geographical borders and on using the National Human Trafficking Hotline as a resource. Rapid Response Teams are connected to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, so when a caller dials the hotline, they will be referred to the appropriate local assistance provider.

“Not only do the business models of trafficking employed across counties vary, depending on the unique characteristics of each community, the capacity to respond successfully varies widely as well,” observed Henderson. “The good news is that people who hold the necessary expertise and resources tend to be generous in sharing with others, for the benefit of the victims.”

In 2012, the General Assembly first created the North Carolina Trafficking Commission to lead anti-human trafficking efforts in the state. It is an entity of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts and is charged with examining and combating human trafficking; funding and facilitating research; creating measurement, assessment, and accountability measures; informing and educating law enforcement personnel, social services providers, and the general public; suggesting new policies, procedures, and legislation; developing regional response teams; and identifying gaps in law enforcement or service provision and recommending solutions. Currently, local law enforcement has representation on the NC Human Trafficking Commission, but not county

*“As commissioners, we should support all efforts to eradicate this horrific injustice...essentially, modern-day slavery.”*

commissioners, mayors, council members, county or municipal managers, or departmental directors. Visit [www.nccourts.gov/commissions/human-trafficking-commission](http://www.nccourts.gov/commissions/human-trafficking-commission) to learn more about the commission. Counties can also find related grant opportunities and read the 2019 report from the General Assembly on Human Trafficking in North Carolina.

In 2017, new state laws were passed that require posters displaying information about the National Human Trafficking Hotline be placed in specific locations such as emergency rooms, employment centers, highway rest stops, transportation stations, premises for which there is an ABC permit and adult establishments. The posters are available in a printable format on the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission website under “Awareness Signs.” Counties may elect to voluntarily post signage in areas where human trafficking victims may be present.

Christine Long, Executive Director of the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission emphasized the importance of working with local governments to fight the scourge of human trafficking. “All North Carolinians have a role in ending this hideous crime and social justice issue. In truth, we are all affected either directly or indirectly from human trafficking. While there are many necessary steps to stop victimization, awareness is key to both prevention and identification. Local governments are an invaluable ally in the process,” she said.

Renee Price, Orange County Commissioner discussed a human

trafficking related conference she attended recently. “According to the conference organizer, I may have been the only elected official in attendance as a participant. Nevertheless, elected officials and community leaders need to become aware of human trafficking, and admit that it exists throughout our country and can be occurring next door, literally. Law enforcement personnel as well as county social services, health and library staff, by the nature of their work, may be in a position to save a life if they learn to recognize the signs of human trafficking. As commissioners, we should support all efforts to eradicate this horrific injustice...essentially, modern-day slavery.” ■



Renee Price, Orange County Commissioner, serves on the NCACC Board of Directors.

# North Carolina Spotlight

## 2017 National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics

The National Human Trafficking Hotline provides survivors of human trafficking with vital support and a variety of options to get help and stay safe. The data below do not represent the full scope of trafficking in North Carolina. Lack of awareness of human trafficking or of the National Hotline can lead to significant underreporting, particularly among labor trafficking populations or by certain racial or ethnic groups. However, this information can shed some light on trafficking in North Carolina which can help put traffickers out of business and help survivors find the services they need.

Victims Identified

324

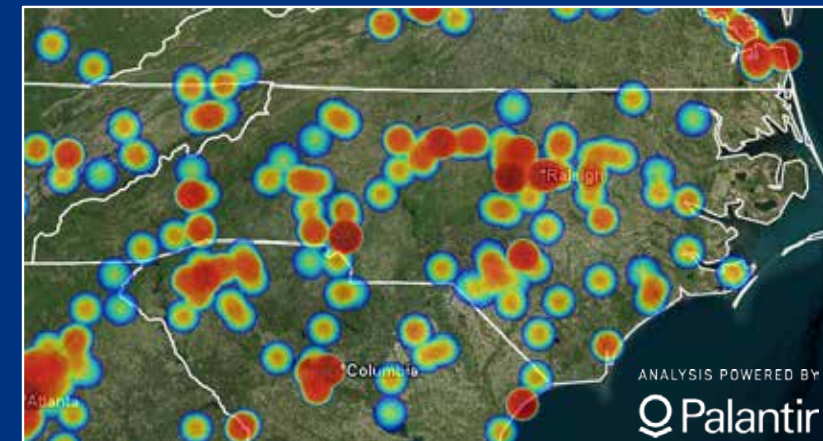
Traffickers Identified

137

Trafficking Businesses

57

### Locations of Trafficking<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Some cases may involve multiple locations.

### Communication to the National Hotline



Phone Calls  
908



Webforms  
77



Emails  
38



Texts  
46



The data in this report represents signals and cases from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017 and is accurate as of July 11, 2018. Cases of trafficking may be ongoing or new information may be revealed to the National Hotline over time. Consequently, statistics may be subject to change as new information emerges.

### 228 Trafficking Cases



|                   |           |                                 |          |
|-------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Sex Trafficking   | 154 Cases | Sex & Labor Trafficking         | 17 Cases |
| Labor Trafficking | 52 Cases  | Form Not Specified <sup>2</sup> | 5 Cases  |

<sup>2</sup>Cases where trafficking type is not specified are typically a result of callers self identifying as victims or service providers or law enforcement seeking referrals for trafficking victims without providing further details about the presence of forced work or forced commercial sex.