



Human Trafficking of Children Annual Report

Department of Children and Families
Office of Child Welfare
October 1, 2021

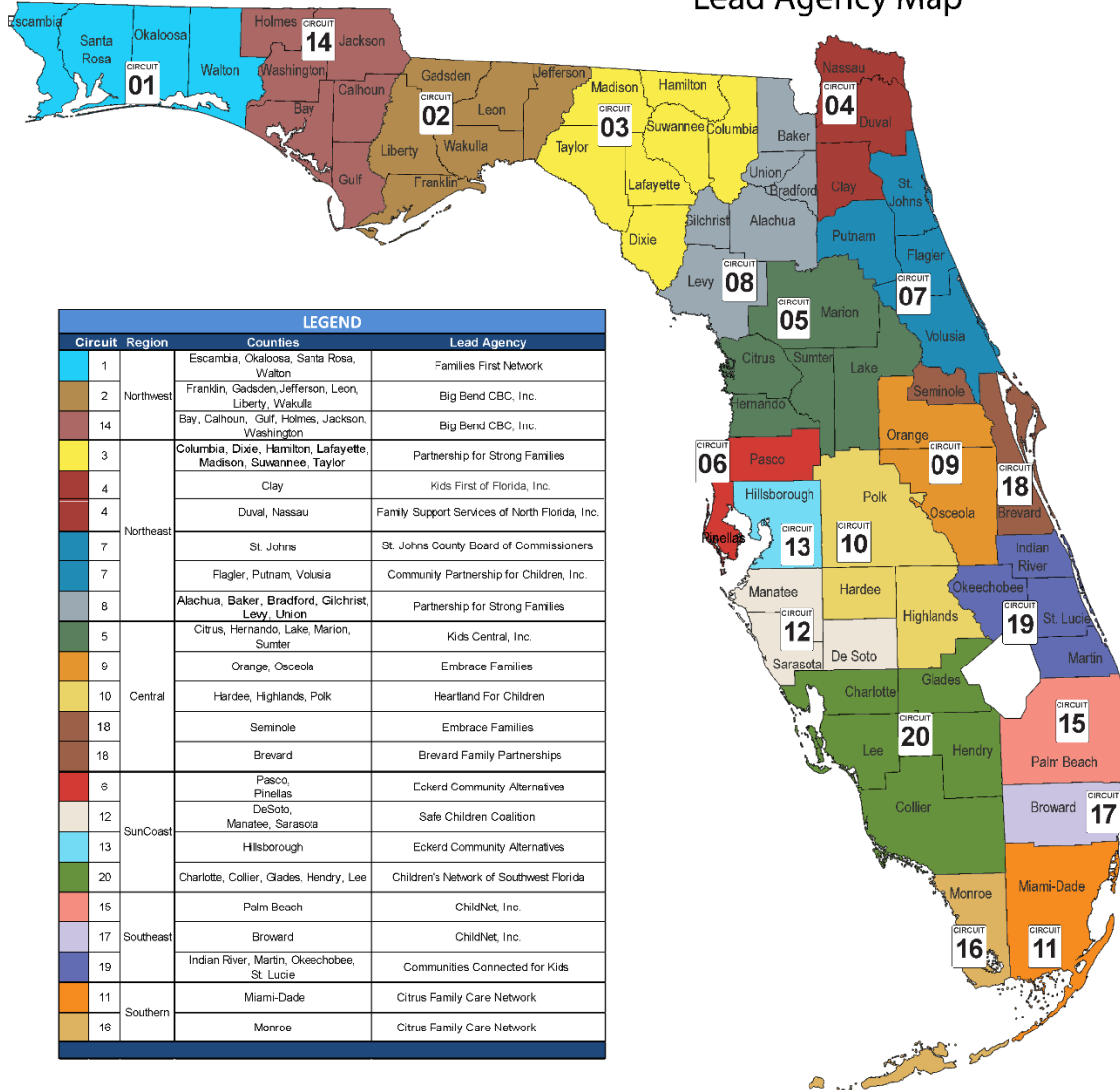
Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

Ron DeSantis
Governor

DCF Regions, Circuits, and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies



Community-Based Care Lead Agency Map



Florida Department of Children and Families
Annual Human Trafficking Report
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Background

Section 39.001(5), Florida Statutes, establishes the following goals for the treatment of sexually exploited children who are residing in the dependency system:

- Ensure these children are safe;
- Provide for the treatment of such children as dependent children, rather than as delinquents in the criminal or juvenile justice system;
- Sever the bond between exploited children and traffickers, and reunite these children with their families or provide them with appropriate guardians; and
- Enable these children to be willing and reliable witnesses in the prosecution of traffickers.

Purpose

This report provides information as required in section 39.524(3), Florida Statutes, as follows:

- The prevalence of child commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) number of children verified as victims of CSE.
- The specialized services provided (residential and non-residential) and placement of such children.
- The number of children placed in safe houses and safe foster homes during the year.
- The criteria used to determine the placement of children.
- The number of children who were evaluated for placement.
- The number of children who were placed based upon the evaluation.
- The number of children who were not placed.
- The number of children who were referred to a safe house or safe foster home for whom placement was unavailable.
- The regions in which such placement was unavailable.
- The Florida Department of Children and Families (Department's) response to the findings and recommendations made by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

The activities described within this report occurred between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (State Fiscal Year [SFY] 2020-21), unless otherwise noted.

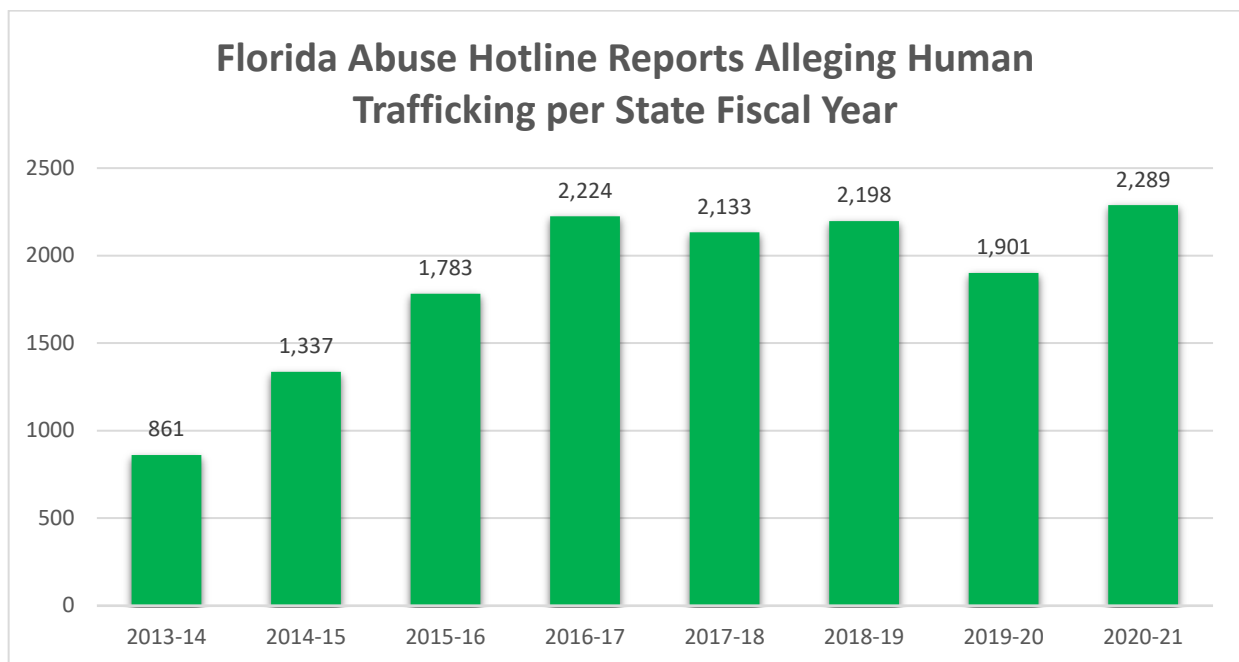
The Department tracked Human Trafficking allegations in two primary categories:

- *Human Trafficking-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC)*: This maltreatment type is used for cases in which the allegations involve commercial sexual exploitation of a child (e.g., adult entertainment clubs, escort services, prostitution, etc.). Investigative types for this category include: *Caregiver*, *Other*, or *Institutional*. This distinction separates reports based on whether the alleged perpetrator is a parent, legal guardian, caregiver, unrelated adult, or appears to be an institution.
- *Human Trafficking-Labor*: This maltreatment type is used in cases in which the allegations involve issues associated with labor trafficking, slavery, or servitude that do not appear to be sexual in nature.

Human Trafficking–CSEC and Human Trafficking–Labor are the only maltreatments that do not require an alleged perpetrator to be a parent or caregiver to the victim child but rather any person who is suspected of exploiting that child.

Investigative Reports

In SFY 2020-21, the total number of reports, accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline (Hotline) alleging one of the human trafficking maltreatments was 2,289 involving 1,750 children. Out of the 2,289 accepted reports, 2,128 (92.97 percent) were coded as CSEC; 156 (6.82 percent) were for Labor Trafficking, and five had a general maltreatment of Human Trafficking (not enough details to distinguish between the CSEC and Labor Trafficking). The chart below shows the trend in cases since SFY 2013-14.



There are several factors that most likely contribute to these trends including: the addition of the human trafficking maltreatment to the abuse maltreatment index in 2009 and the specific CSEC and Labor Trafficking maltreatments in 2013, and intensive trainings for Department staff, partner agencies, and community stakeholders in 2015 when the human trafficking coordinators were hired. The purpose of those trainings was to increase overall awareness of the human trafficking maltreatment, identification of potential occurrences and victims in various settings, and recognition of human trafficking as child abuse reportable to the Hotline. Unlike all other child abuse maltreatments, human trafficking as a maltreatment is unique, as the Department investigates all reports of commercial sexual exploitation or labor trafficking of minors regardless of the alleged perpetrator's relationship to the victim child. All other maltreatment reports require that the alleged perpetrator be a parent or a caregiver to the victim. Due to this distinction, additional training efforts were necessary to clarify the Department's role in investigating human trafficking allegations. Those extensive early training initiatives were likely the major contributing factor to increased reports in the first few years.

The initiation of targeted identification efforts and the Human Trafficking Screening Tool within the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ - 2015) and the Department (2016) likely played a role in increased identification of potential victims and reports alleging human trafficking to the Hotline. While training, awareness, and targeted screening efforts continue, it was expected that the number of reports would start to flatten out on an annual basis. The slight decrease in the number of reports in SFY 2019-20 is most likely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and preventative measures that followed such as stay-in-place orders, closures of businesses and entertainment venues, and less people traveling to and around Florida. This decrease is consistent with the overall drop in the number of calls to the Hotline, which was estimated to be close to 30 percent less compared to the same period the prior year.

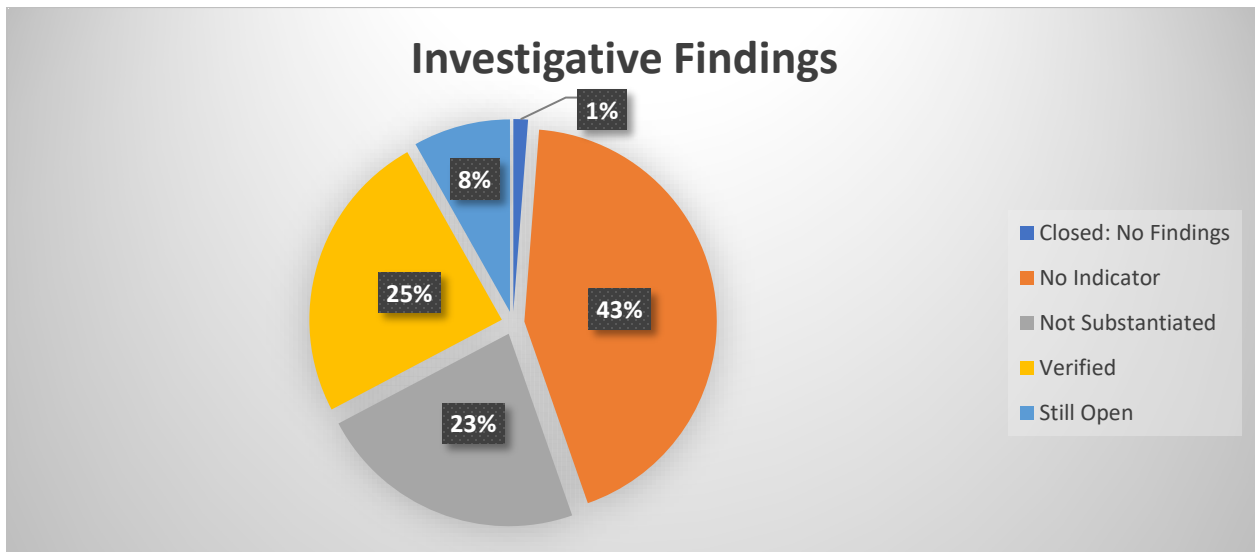
The increase in accepted reports to the Florida Abuse Hotline in SFY 2020-21 can be attributed to several factors. First, there was a drop in reports in the last quarter of the previous fiscal year due to the pandemic. It is presumed that several instances of trafficking did not become known and reported until a few months later when the pandemic environment normalized. Secondly, section 509.096, Florida Statutes, was created in 2019, requiring public lodging employees to complete annual training on human trafficking awareness and, by January 1, 2021, to implement a procedure for the reporting of suspected human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline or to a local law enforcement agency. These efforts resulted in an increased number of reports submitted by employees of hotels and motels across Florida. Lastly, all human trafficking awareness and special topics trainings continued in SFY 2020-21 as usual but were converted to online modes of delivery resulting in much greater numbers of attendees than was ever possible to achieve through in-person sessions.

For SFY 2020-2021, out of 2,289 reports, 2,262 noted a gender, male or female, and 27 had gender listed as unknown. Out of the 2,262 reports, 82.63 percent (1,869) were for female victims and 17.37 percent (393) were for male victims. This indicates a 1 percent increase for male victim intakes compared to 16.34 percent of the reports received for male victims the previous year. This can be attributed to more extensive trainings on

male victimization conducted by the Department and its community partners. Out of the total accepted reports, approximately 93 percent (92.97 percent) were coded as Human Trafficking-CSEC, while 6.82 percent were coded as Human Trafficking-Labor.

Investigative Findings

Of the 2,289 reports, 562 (24.55 percent) were closed as verified, 187 (8.17 percent) of the cases were not yet closed with findings when the report data was compiled in July 2021. The rate of verification for CSEC was 25 percent (532 out of 2,128). For Labor Trafficking, it was 17.95 percent (28 out of 156). In SFY 2020-21, there were 65 verified male victims of CSEC and 16 male victims of Labor Trafficking; 466 females were verified as victims of CSEC, and 12 females were verified victims of Labor Trafficking.



County level data indicates, Broward (204), Orange (162), and Miami-Dade (158) received the most reports followed by Hillsborough (155) and Duval (128). The following chart shows the number of reports received by Department Region. As illustrated below, the highest number of reports for the human trafficking maltreatment came from the Central Region (582).

HT Reports SFY 2020-21				
Region	Human Trafficking	Human Trafficking – Sexual Exploitation	Human Trafficking - Labor	Grand Total
Central	2	545	35	582
SunCoast		489	29	518
Southeast		336	37	373
Northeast	2	335	22	359
Northwest		264	18	282
Southern	1	159	15	175
Grand Total	5	2128	156	2289

Based on the human trafficking intake rate per 100 children in the population, the Northwest Region had the highest rate of reports, followed by the Northeast and Central Regions.

HT Intake Report Rate SFY 2020-21	
Region	HT Report Rate per 100 children
Northwest	0.09
Northeast	0.06
Central	0.06
Southeast	0.05
SunCoast	0.05
Southern	0.03
Grand Total	0.05

Available Safe Houses, Safe Foster Homes, and Other Residential Programs

Specialized residential placements currently exist in the Central, SunCoast, Southeast, Southern, and Northeast Regions. All such residential programs are available to any child in the state of Florida who has been a victim of human trafficking. The Department’s Human Trafficking Unit staff meet with all specialized CSEC residential providers on a quarterly basis to discuss issues and provide technical support.

During State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020-21, the number of available safe houses decreased from nine to eight as one home for female victims permanently closed. As a result, the number of safe house beds decreased slightly from 61 beds in July 2020 to 56 beds as of July 2021. Across the state, there are now seven safe homes for female victims of and one for male victims. The safe house for male victims has the capacity to accept five youths. As of July 8, 2021, there were nine available beds across all safe houses.

Although the number of identified child victims of human trafficking is higher than the number of beds available in safe houses, these beds may not always be filled because decisions to place each child are based on the existing make-up of current safe house residents and the individual’s specific needs. The complexity of the residents’ needs may limit the number of youths a safe home accepts at any given time. Occasionally, there is a decision to not introduce too many new youths into a home over a short period of time to ensure adequate assimilation of new youths into the program and consistent and stable staff engagement with the existing youths. Each facility has its own intake and assessment process and ultimately determines the appropriateness of any child for that specific placement.

Youths that are not in the custody of the Department (aka “community youths”) are being placed in safe houses if their individual circumstances call for that level of placement and services. It has been estimated that 25-30 percent of safe house residents are community youths.

It is also important to note that not all verified victims require the level of care provided at a safe house; some victims may be more appropriately served in their own homes

with community-based wrap-around services and others may need a higher level of care such as a residential substance abuse or mental health treatment center.

There are two residential campus settings that have specialized CSEC treatment services for child victims. The residential campus settings can serve female, male, and transgender youth. The beds available on these campuses fluctuate based on the total number of residents in all programs offered. These residential campuses also have additional specialized treatment for victims experiencing substance abuse and those with intellectual disabilities. In addition to these residential campuses, there are also several substance abuse treatment facilities throughout Florida that are equipped to serve the specialized needs of children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Providing substance abuse treatment often becomes a priority when this need is presented in a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staffing. This allows a youth to reach a more stable state of being prior to receiving services to address their victimization. A safe house placement would not be an appropriate placement for a youth struggling with severe substance abuse or in need of detox; therefore, it is critical that substance abuse treatment providers are trained on CSEC and able to serve the needs of this population. Aspire Health Partners in the Central Region and Stewart-Marchman-Act Behavioral Healthcare in the Northeast Region are two examples of substance abuse treatment providers that have also been trained to serve CSEC youth.

As of July 8, 2021, there were 13 safe foster homes with the capacity of 14 beds within the Citrus Helping Adolescents Negatively Impacted by Commercial Exploitation (CHANCE) Program, a treatment program by Citrus Health Network implemented in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, to address the unique mental and behavioral health needs of youth who have been commercially sexually exploited. Devereux Florida, through its DELTA Foster Home Program, has seven safe foster homes with the capacity of 10 beds available located in both Central and Northeast regions. They continue to provide training for foster families statewide and collaborate with the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBCs) in the Central Region to develop safe foster home capacity. The Safe Foster Home model can serve male, female, or transgender children.

Transition to At-Risk Home Model

In compliance with The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), the Department has developed a definition of youth considered to be at-risk for sex trafficking and, therefore, eligible for placement in group care homes that are certified in serving this population.

“Child or youth at risk of sex trafficking” means an individual who has experienced trauma, such as abuse, neglect, and/or maltreatment, and presents with one or more of the accompanying risk factors:

- a. History of running away and/or homelessness.
- b. History of sexual abuse and/or sexually acting out behavior.
- c. Inappropriate interpersonal and/or social media boundaries.

- d. Family history of or exposure to human trafficking.
- e. Out-of-home placement instability demonstrated by repeated moves from less restrictive levels of care.

The Department estimates that approximately 495 youths currently in the dependency system meet these criteria. The Department developed a 24-hour train-the-trainer curriculum for group home providers wishing to provide services for youth at-risk for human trafficking. Two training sessions were completed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 with 290 participants certified as trainers of this new curriculum.

Other Specialized Services (Non-Residential)

In addition to residential services, Devereux and CHANCE also provide community-based wrap-around services to CSE youth who are not in specialized housing, whether that be with a relative, foster home, or other housing appropriate for that child. Community-based services are a crucial part of the continuum of specialized services that are available to CSEC youth and can be utilized for a youth that has a stable and supportive living environment, does not want to go to a safe house, or does not need the level of care of a safe foster home, safe house, or residential treatment center. Typically, these services include therapy, specialized case management or advocacy, and other services to meet the individualized needs of that youth. For example, in the past year, Devereux conducted 21 consultations, delivered 12 psychoeducational sessions to caregivers, completed trainings for 12 at-risk youths, and provided 13 community trainings. Redefining Refuge, the Nancy J Cotterman Center, and the Open Doors Outreach Network are other examples of service providers that offer community-based services to CSE youth.

Redefining Refuge is a specialized service provider and advocacy agency that provides integrative community-based treatment options, rehabilitation, and support services for CSEC youth in the community, dependency system, and DJJ diversion program. Their multidisciplinary approach combines trauma-informed care, strength-based and evidence-based interventions that are individualized, integrated, and consistent with a youth's case plan. Services include safety, treatment and transition planning, traditional and alternative/creative therapies, life skills management, court advocacy and legal services, schooling and tutoring assistance, coordination of medical care including medication management, crisis intervention, recreation, intensive case management, incidental and emergency funds, consultation with caregivers, family respite, mentor services, and tangible needs. Redefining Refuge provides services to Circuit 13 (Hillsborough County) only and served 82 children (47 Dependency, 35 Community) in SFY 2020-21.

Broward County's Nancy J. Cotterman Center (NJCC) is Broward County's only Certified Rape Crisis Program and Accredited Children's Advocacy Center. NJCC's Human Trafficking Program provides intensive case coordination services to individuals who have experienced human trafficking and those who are at risk of human trafficking. These services are available to adults, minors, US citizens, and foreign nationals. Case coordinators complete human trafficking and needs assessments, safety planning, and work closely with the survivors to meet their needs. They provide crisis intervention,

court and law enforcement accompaniment, and connect survivors to services to include legal, housing, mental health, and medical. NJCC offers youth educational groups which discuss various topics including human trafficking, consent, runaway behavior, and healthy relationships. The program also provides community outreach and training on human trafficking to continue to raise awareness and form partnerships with key stakeholders. In SFY 2020-21, NJCC served 57 children.

The Voices for Florida Open Doors Outreach Network provides services to victims of sex trafficking ages 10-24 in 21 counties. Since program inception in July 2017, they have served 1,249 victims through 196,831 hours of direct services. Open Doors partners with nearly 800 organizations and stakeholders across Florida to meet the immediate and on-going needs of victims served. Of those served, 73 percent are under the age of 18 and 86 percent identify as female.

There are four CSE-specific drop-in centers serving youth in Florida. More Too Life, located in the SunCoast Region, offers victim services, housing assistance, prevention, and advocacy. Images of Glory, located in the Central Region, offers victim services, pantry/supplies, and referrals. Kristi House's Project Gold (Girls Owning their Lives and Dreams), located in the Southern Region, was launched in 2007 and opened the first Drop-In Center in Florida offering safe space and individualized wrap-around services in home-like settings exclusively for girls who have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. One Drop-In Center is centrally located in Miami and a second site opened in Homestead in June 2021 to serve girls in south Miami-Dade. The Drop-in Centers are open on weekdays with special after-hour needs accommodated by the 24-hour Project GOLD hotline. During SFY 2020-21, Project GOLD provided services to 82 girls.

Vital to the continuum of care are providers that have designated staff within their programs that can work with CSEC youth even though they primarily serve a broader non-CSEC population. Young Parent's Project focuses on serving pregnant and parenting court-involved teenage girls; however, some staff members are trained on specific issues of human trafficking and can serve pregnant and parenting CSEC youth. Zebra Coalition provides housing and support services to youth identifying as LGBTQ+ and provides services to victims of CSEC as they encounter them without having a program designated as specialized services. There are many additional providers serving at-risk youth, along with mental health providers and street outreach organizations located throughout the state of Florida that have recognized the importance of understanding the specialized needs of CSEC youth and have trained their staff to be able to serve this population. Available services continue to expand; however, training and awareness on the risk factors often seen with this population, such as homelessness/runaway or substance use, will continue to be an important task for the Department and local community task forces to address.

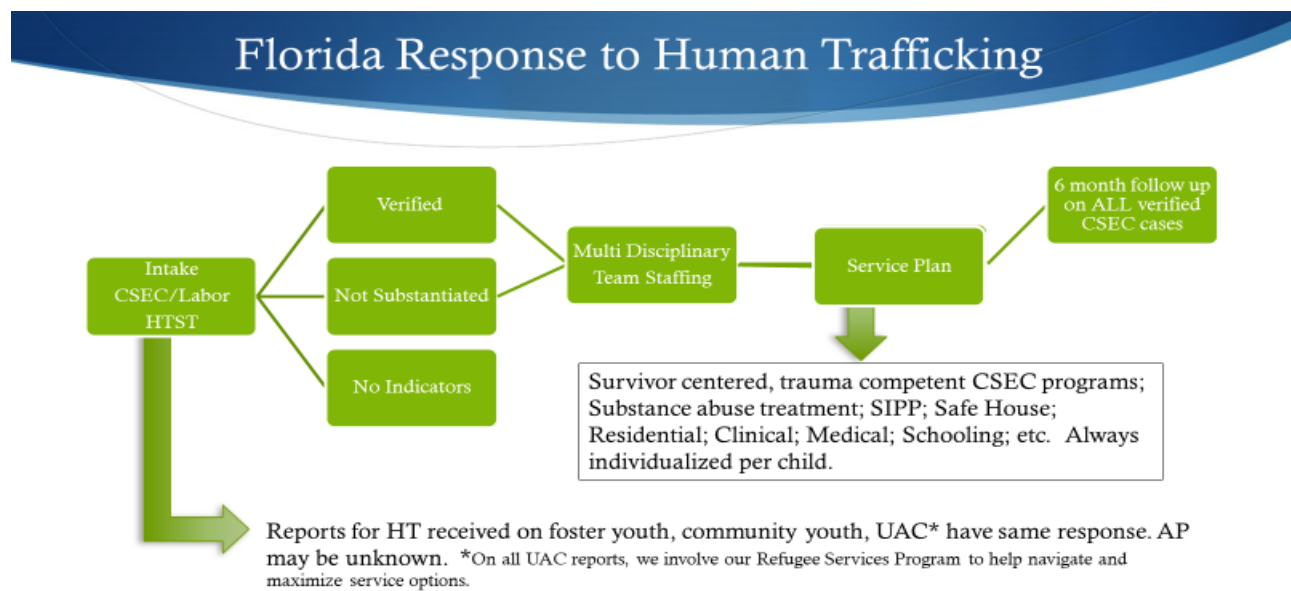
As we continue to expand and develop the continuum of care for CSEC youth, the Department encourages all specialized providers to partner with outside evaluators to assess their program. This ensures the much-needed evaluation of the outcomes for specific programs, as well as provides important research on program and service

modalities that work best with the CSEC population. The goal is to see promising practices become evidence-based practices.

Placement of Victims in Safe Houses and Safe Foster Homes

A Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST) was developed in the fall of 2014 through a Department and DJJ workgroup. This tool is designed to assist child welfare professionals and DJJ staff with identifying youth who have been victims of CSEC and Labor Trafficking. DJJ launched the tool in its Juvenile Assessment Centers statewide beginning February 27, 2015, and subsequently modified it in June 2020. DCF initiated statewide implementation of the tool on January 13, 2016.

The Department’s protocol is to administer the HTST to all suspected victims in all investigations that have a human trafficking maltreatment. Additionally, the tool might be used in other investigations when trafficking is suspected. Only investigators that completed a specialized training can administer the tool. Dependency Case Managers also have the requirement to be trained on the administration of the tool as they also screen youth within their caseloads.



*UAC stands for Unaccompanied Alien Minor

Upon identification of a child as a victim of CSEC, CBCs assess the child to determine the most appropriate placement. The current mechanism for assessment of placement is through an MDT staffing and the use of the Level of Care Placement Tool. The Level of Care Placement Tool considers factors that help determine the most appropriate placement for a youth including the following: runaway history, foster care history, current involvement with a gang and/or trafficker, current substance use, behavioral and psychiatric history, positive support systems, location considerations such as court involvement, and readiness to receive services. Youth with high-level needs such as

substance abuse or mental health treatment needs often require a higher level of targeted care such as a substance abuse treatment facility or a residential treatment center. Youth with a good support system at home may be best served with specialized community-based wrap-around services. Those CSE youth who may need a structured living environment and are ready to receive services may be a good fit for a safe house.

MDT staffings include Department staff, such as investigators and their supervisors, regional Criminal Justice Coordinators, regional Human Trafficking Coordinators, DJJ staff, service providers, law enforcement, Guardians ad Litem, and other parties as required by section 409.1754, Florida Statutes. These staffings include a discussion among the parties present to determine the specific service needs for the child. The staffings are guided by the Department's Human Trafficking MDT Staffing Form and result in a service plan being developed for each child. In compliance with the changes to statute created by Chapter 2017-23, Laws of Florida, the Human Trafficking MDT Staffing form was updated to include information necessary to complete a follow-up with all verified CSE victims six months after the close of the investigation. This section is sent to the Department's Regional Human Trafficking Coordinators, who complete the six-month follow-up.

Reported information from the CBCs across the state for SFY 2020-21 shows that a total of 497 youths were evaluated for placement in a safe house or safe foster home. Of these 497 youths, 60 (12.07 percent) were placed in a safe house or safe foster home based on the evaluation. The Northeast Region CBCs reported the most youth placed in a safe house or safe foster home with 16 youth placed.

Of the 497 youths evaluated for a safe home placement, 437 were not placed in a safe house or safe foster home for a variety of reasons. For some of them safe house was not a recommended level of care as they needed to be placed in a substance abuse treatment program, mental health facility, or were put in DJJ commitment programs. There were 42 youths not placed in a safe house because they were on runaway status. There are cases where a child may still be placed in a safe house or safe foster home after recovery from a runaway episode or upon discharge from a juvenile justice facility or higher-level mental health facility. Many of these youths are referred to specialized non-residential services in the community to address their needs as a victim of CSEC. The CBCs reported that 538 youths were referred to specialized community-based services, which includes youths with verified cases and some with cases in which CSEC was suspected.

At this time, there are no emergency placement options specifically for CSEC victims, although shelters under the Florida Network of Youths and Family Services have built capacity to serve this population through training, policy, and utilization of the HTST. There is often a delay between identifying the victim and placement in a specialized program. Available programs that focus on the specific trauma needs of these children have their own individualized intake and assessment processes. Such processes often require an interview of the child and/or a willingness of the child to participate in the program. Limitations on placement can also include factors such as gang affiliation and

commonality of exploiter - meaning these types of factors must be considered in determining placement and the current population of the safe house or CSEC program. Youths who have a shared gang affiliation or a conflicting gang affiliation, or youths who have shared exploiters, often cannot be placed together due to the degree of conflict it may cause in the home. Safe homes frequently refuse youths who engage in recruitment activity, who display a significant history of violence, or who have complex unmet needs such as active drug use or non-compliance with mental health treatment. The DCF-FSU workgroup (described below) is working on possible remedies to assist this population.

Expenditures for Human Trafficking

Annually \$3 million in recurring funds has been appropriated through the GAA to serve the needs of youth who were victims of sexual exploitation and had been adjudicated dependent or who were the subject of an open investigation due to allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. As directed by the Legislature, the funds were provided to the CBCs for costs associated with placement and services for sexually exploited youth.

The Department's community-based care lead agencies reported expenditures totaling \$3,643,531 on CSEC services and placements for 119 youths during SFY 2020-21. Kids Central, Inc. had the highest reported expenditures for CSEC services at \$591,833. Of the payments reported for CSEC services, the average annual cost of care for an individual client was \$30,610.

Of the service providers that were funded by the CBCs to provide services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation, Vision Quest Sanctuary Ranch received the largest share of the funding, for a total of \$1,055,025 to serve 24 youths. Bridging Freedom, Inc. received the second largest share of the funding, for a total of \$630,750 to serve 14 youths. Finally, Citrus Health Network, Inc. received the third largest share of the funding for a total of \$435,100 to serve 17 youths.

National Advisory Committee's Self-Assessment Survey

The National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States (NAC) was established on January 18, 2017, through the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014. Following the release of the Committee's interim report in September 2020, Best Practices and Recommendations to States, which contained 127 recommendations to address the sex trafficking of children and youth, the Committee has requested for each state to assess the extent to which they have worked to address the sex trafficking of children and youth in their state by using the NAC State Self-Assessment Survey. The survey lists all 127 recommendations with options to choose the tier in each recommendation that best describes the state's work. The Department of Children and Families and the Department of Juvenile Justice were designated by the Office of Florida Attorney General to serve as point of contact for the completion of the survey. Both departments have worked collaboratively with multiple agencies across the state to complete the survey by its due date.

Research Participation

This past fiscal year, the Department has participated in two federally-funded research projects conducted by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI). Both studies were sponsored by U.S. Administration for Children and Families grants. Upon completion, the results of these two projects will be made available to the Department and will inform the development of future policies, procedures, screening tools, and service delivery models across the state.

The first project focused on the human trafficking of child victims in the dependency system with the goal of better understanding the prevalence of human trafficking among youth transitioning from foster care, the risk and protective factors associated with increased or decreased risk of trafficking victimization, and the context surrounding victimization among youth in foster care. This project was conducted nationwide with Florida being one of the selected participating states.

A second study titled “Identifying and Addressing Human Trafficking in Child Welfare Agencies” aims to better understand how child welfare agencies select and implement screening tools, train workers on their use, and the relationship between screening and subsequent service delivery.

SOAR Training

In SFY 2020-21, the Department participated in two SOAR trainings offered by the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTTAC). The SOAR for Organizations training was aimed at empowering state and county foster care agencies, as well as contractors, to develop or adapt existing protocols, policies, and procedures to effectively identify and respond to trafficking. This training includes information on how to support children in care who have been affected by trafficking (directly or witnessed via family of origin/prior placements), how to provide support to foster care parents who have children in care affected by trafficking, and how to identify/screen foster care parents who may be perpetrators of any form of violence, including trafficking. The SOAR for Communities training module was focused on building a comprehensive multidisciplinary network of providers to effectively identify and respond to trafficking using a public health approach. Through this interactive strategic planning training series, communities learned how to apply the SOAR framework to identify community needs in developing a multidisciplinary public health response to human trafficking, how to evaluate the community’s current response to human trafficking and identify strengths and areas for improvement by looking at risk and protective factors within the community, and how to develop an action plan to expand and strengthen the current community response to human trafficking using a public health approach.

DCF-FSU workgroup

In January 2021, the Department partnered with the Florida State University to convene a work group focused on addressing safety and treatment needs of verified CSEC victims who frequently go missing from care with subsequent returns to sexual exploitation. It is of vital importance to respond appropriately to the needs of these victims by providing the right services at the right time. At the end of April 2021, there were 39 dependent youths who have experienced sex trafficking, have persistently rejected services, and have returned repeatedly to life-threatening commercial sexual exploitation. These youth engage in high-risk behaviors such as commercial or survival sex, severe drug use, and often go missing from care for prolonged periods of time. In many cases, service providers are unable to successfully engage these children in services due to the very short period the children spend with them in between runaway episodes. Sometimes these children are never recovered and occasionally youths die due to violence they re-experience on the streets while missing from care. In many cases, all possible placement options and treatment plans have already been exhausted. The workgroup meets every 4-6 weeks and is expected to produce a final document with recommendations for agencies involved in providing services to CSE youth and to present those recommendations to the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking.

Major Public Events

News outlets have written and discussed the impact of the Super Bowl on sex trafficking and how large events increase the demand for commercial sex. In preparation for Super Bowl LV (February 2, 2021), Tampa Bay Area's governmental and non-governmental agencies came together and worked diligently to address human trafficking concerns. They provided awareness education about human trafficking to the community and local businesses including airports, hotels, restaurants, transportation systems, etc. In addition, they compiled a list of readily available victim resources and created a specialized hotline for easy access through their Crisis Center of Tampa Bay 211. These efforts will continue to have a lasting positive impact on the fight against human trafficking in the Tampa Bay area.

The Department's data shows a slight increase in reports received by the Hotline in the week prior to the Super Bowl and for two weeks afterwards which most likely reflects the awareness efforts in the area. However, the number of verified findings for CSEC investigations went up slightly from 1 case in mid-January to 3 cases at the end of January to 2 cases on the week of February 14, roughly two weeks past the Super Bowl.

The same data was requested for Volusia County for the dates before, during, and after the Daytona 500 which took place on February 14, 2021. The data showed no changes in the number of human trafficking reports to the Hotline for that period.