



## **Annual Human Trafficking Report**

Department of Children and Families  
Office of Child Welfare  
October 1, 2020

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Secretary

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# 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, 2019 and June 30, 2020 (State Fiscal Year [SFY] 2019-2020), unless otherwise noted.

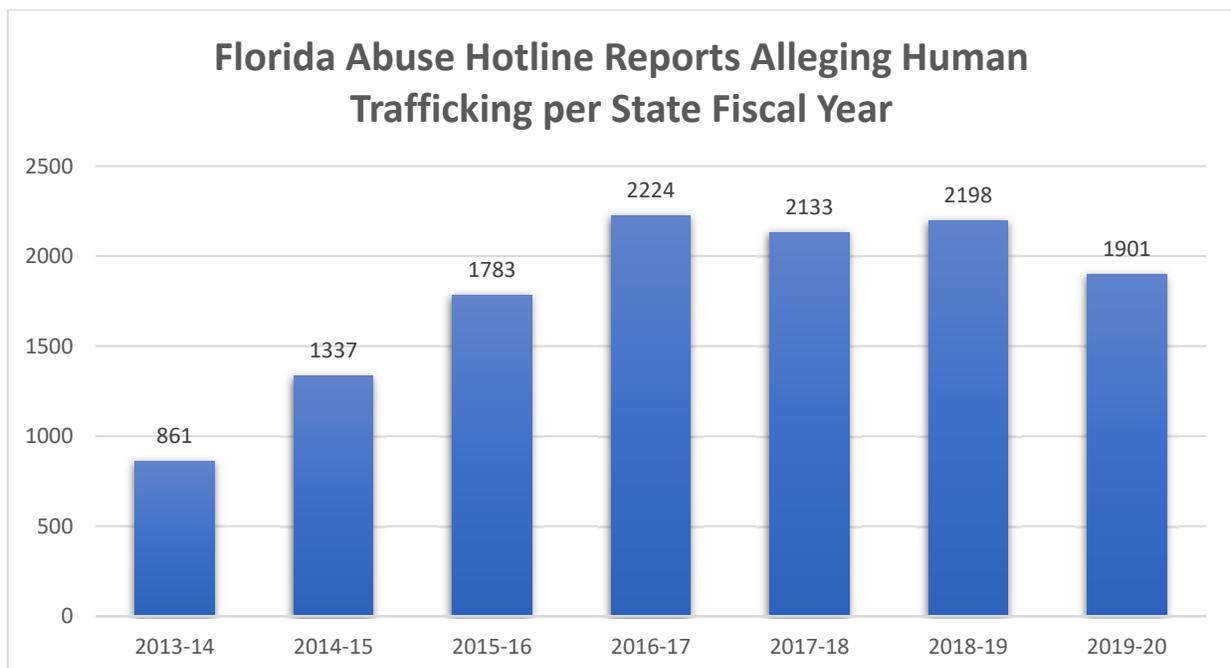
The Department tracked Human Trafficking allegations in two primary categories:

- *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 the alleged perpetrator 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 in exploiting that child.

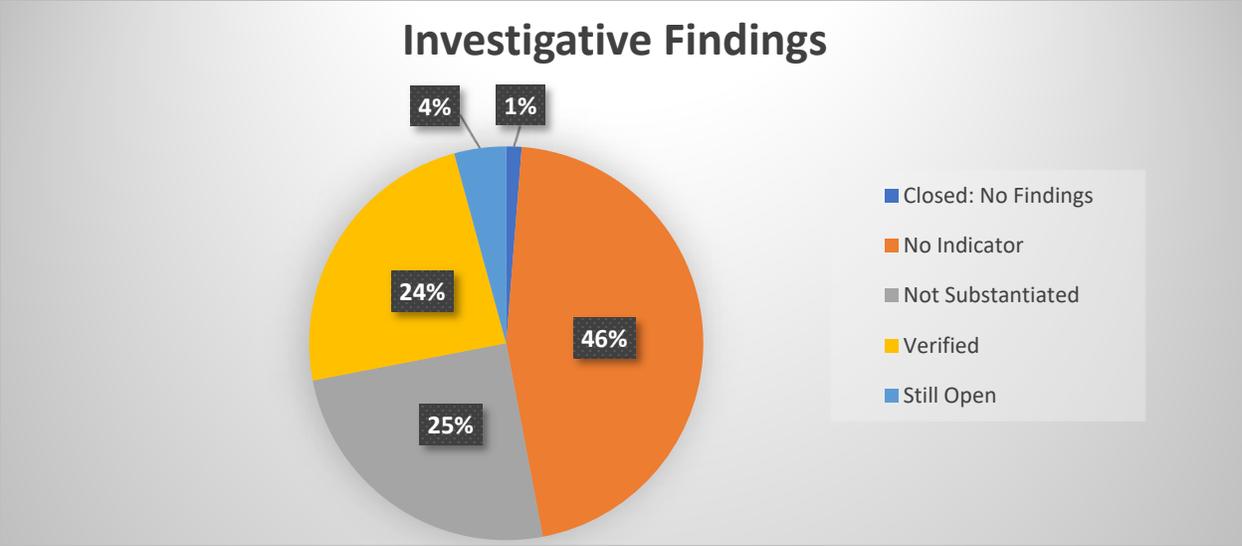
### Investigative Reports

In SFY 2019-2020, the total number of reports, initial and additional, received by the Florida Abuse Hotline (Hotline) alleging one of the human trafficking maltreatments was 1901 reports involving 1463 children. The chart below visually depicts the number of reports from SFY 2013-2014 through SFY 2019-2020. As shown in the chart, there was a significant increase in reports each year from SFY 2013-2014 through 2016-2017, and then the numbers of reports alleging human trafficking started to level off.



There are several factors that most likely contribute to these trends. After the addition of the human trafficking maltreatment to the abuse maltreatment index, intensive trainings were conducted throughout the state for Department staff, partner agencies, and community stakeholders. 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 have also 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 2019-2020 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 time period last year.

For SFY 2019-2020, out of 1901 reports, 1885 noted a gender, male or female, and 16 had gender listed as unknown. Out of the 1885 reports, 83.66 percent (1577) were for female victims and 16.34 percent (308) were for male victims. This indicates almost a two percent increase for male victim intakes compared to 14.5 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. Approximately 92 percent (91.99 percent) were coded as Human Trafficking-CSEC, while eight percent were coded as Human Trafficking- Labor. Of the 1901 reports, 452 (23.78 percent) were closed as verified; but it should be noted that 81 (4.26 percent) of the cases were not yet closed with findings at the time of the data pull in July 2020. The rate of verification is very similar for CSEC and Labor Trafficking: 23.78 percent (417 out of 1744) for commercial sexual exploitation and 22.29 percent (35 out of 157) for labor trafficking.



The Department also identifies the number of reports received per county and region. In looking at county level data, Miami-Dade (193), Broward (158), and Hillsborough (142) received the most reports followed by Orange (138) and Duval (106). The following chart shows the number of reports received by region. As illustrated below, the highest number of reports for the human trafficking maltreatment came from the Central Region (448).

HT Intakes SFY 2019-2020			
Region	Human Trafficking - CSEC	Human Trafficking - Labor	Grand Total
Central	405	43	448
Northeast	276	12	288
Northwest	189	12	201
Southeast	292	32	324
Southern	183	15	198
Suncoast	399	43	442
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1744</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>1901</b>

However, when calculating the rate using the human trafficking data divided by the average estimated child population per region for SFY 2019-2020, the picture changes significantly. Looking at the human trafficking intake rate per 100 children in the population, the Northwest region had the highest rate of reports, followed by the Northeast.

HT Intake Rate SFY 2019-2020	
Row Labels	HT Intake Rate per 100 Children in the Population
Central	0.04
Northeast	0.05
Northwest	0.06
Southeast	0.04
Southern	0.03
Suncoast	0.04
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>0.04</b>

### Available Safe Houses and Safe Foster Homes

During SFY 2019-2020, the number of available safe houses increased from seven to nine, one for males and eight for females. The number of safe house beds increased slightly from 59 beds in July 2019, to 61 beds as of July 15, 2020. This is due to the downsizing of one of the houses from three buildings with capacity for 14 beds to two buildings with capacity of six and the opening of two new safe houses with capacity of five beds each. There are two safe houses in the Central Region, five in the Suncoast Region, one in the Southeast Region, and one in the Northwest Region. As of July 20, 2020, there were 11 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 youth into the program and consistent and stable staff engagement with the existing youth. Each facility has its own intake and assessment process and ultimately determines the appropriateness of any placement for a particular child.

It is also important to note that not all verified victims require the level of care provided at a safe house; some victim children 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 of commercial sexual exploitation. 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 CSEC victims experiencing substance abuse and for CSEC victims 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 the 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 are 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 CSE youth.

As of July 22, 2020, there are 14 safe foster home 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 six safe foster home 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.

### **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 available to CSE youth and can be utilized for youth that have a stable and supportive living environment, youth that do not want to go to a safe house, or any youth that 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. 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 and the Nancy J Cotterman Center cover Hillsborough and Broward Counties, respectively, while the Open Doors Outreach Network operates in 20 counties throughout the state.

There are three CSE-specific drop-in centers serving youth in Florida. Kristi House's Project Gold, located in the Southern Region, offers specialized case management, advocacy, empowerment groups, and clinical services. 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.

Vital to the continuum of care are providers that have designated staff within their programs that can work with CSE youth even though they primarily serve a broader non-CSE 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 are able to serve pregnant and parenting CSE youth. Zebra Coalition provides housing and support services to youth identifying as LGBTQ+ and has recently worked with Devereux to create a specialized advocate position for CSE youth identifying as LGBTQ+. 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 seen the importance of understanding the specialized needs of CSE 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.

Specialized residential placements currently exist in the Central, Suncoast, Southeast, Southern, and Northeast Regions. However, a new Safe House in Northwest Region is scheduled to open at the end of July or early August of 2020. 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 address issues pertaining to these providers and to provide technical support.

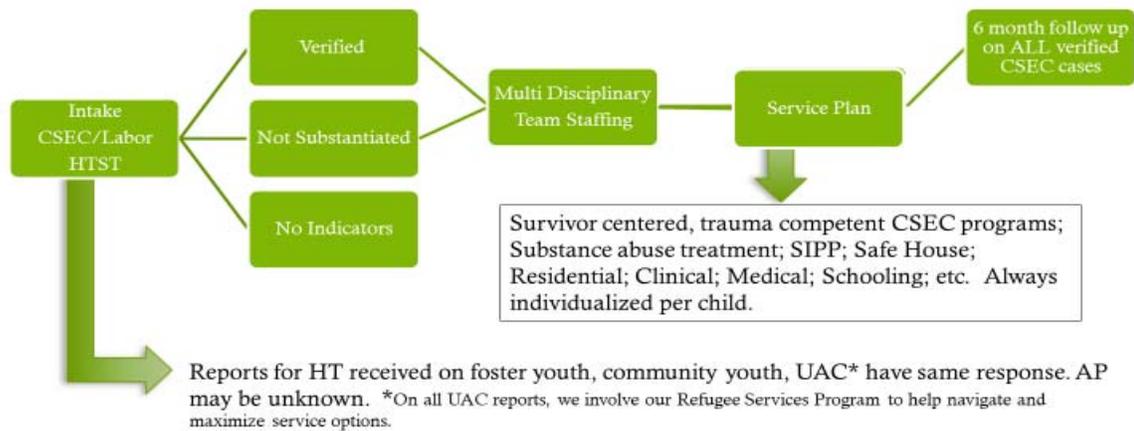
As we continue to expand and develop the continuum of care for CSE youth, the Department encourages all specialized providers to partner with outside evaluators to assess their program. This ensures the much-needed evaluation of the outcomes for specific programs, as well as provides important research on program and service modalities that work best with the CSE 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 commercial sexual exploitation and labor trafficking. DJJ launched the tool in its Juvenile Assessment Centers statewide beginning February 27, 2015, and subsequently modified it in June 2020. The Department initiated statewide implementation of the tool on January 13, 2016.

The Department's protocol is to administer the HTST to all alleged 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.

# Florida Response to Human Trafficking



\*UAC stands for Unaccompanied Alien Minor

Upon identification of a child as a victim of CSE, 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 and regional Human Trafficking Coordinators, DJJ staff, service providers, law enforcement, Guardian 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 July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, shows that a total of 350 youth were evaluated for placement in a safe house or safe foster home. Of these 350 youth, 59 (16.86 percent) were placed in a safe house or safe foster home based on the evaluation. The Suncoast Region CBCs reported the most youth placed in a safe house or safe foster home with 21 youth placed.

Of the 350 youth evaluated for a safe home placement, 291 were not placed in a safe house or safe foster home for a variety of reasons. For some, a safe house was not a recommended level of care as they needed to be placed in substance abuse treatment program, mental health facility, or were put in DJJ commitment programs. There were 46 youth 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 youth are referred to specialized non-residential services in the community to address their needs as a victim of CSEC. The CBCs reported that 338 youth were referred to specialized community-based services, which includes youth with verified cases and some with cases in which CSEC was suspected.

For some of the youth referred for CSEC placement, such placement was unavailable. For 25 there were no beds available; 13 of them were from the Suncoast Region, eight from the Central Region, two from the Southern Region, and two from the Northeast Region. Fifty-one youth had not had additional necessary documentation such as a Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment or Suitability Assessment. Additionally, 27 youth were offered a placement in a residential safe house, but they declined to go. CBCs reported that for SFY 2019-2020, no youths were denied placement due to the lack or unavailability of funding.

At this time, there are no emergency placement options specifically for CSEC victims, although shelters under the Florida Network of Youth 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. Youth who have a shared gang affiliation or a conflicting gang affiliation, or youth 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 significant history of violence, or who have complex unmet needs such as active drug use or non-compliant mental health treatment.

## **Expenditures for Human Trafficking**

In SFY 2014-2015, \$3 million in recurring funds was appropriated from the General Revenue funds 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. In each subsequent SFY, the \$3 million in recurring funds have been provided to the CBCs for costs associated with placement and services for this population. In 2019, the Department increased its annual allocation of funds to serve CSE children from \$3 million to \$5.1 million.

Expenditures reported by the CBCs in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) indicate they spent a total of \$3,228,397 on CSEC services and placements for 122 youth during SFY 2019-2020. As in past years, there may be additional expenditures for services to this population that were not recorded in FSFN. Child Net Inc. had the highest reported expenditures for CSEC services at \$422,369. Of the payments reported in FSFN for CSEC services, the average annual cost of care for an individual client was \$26,462.

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 \$955,144 to serve 17 youth. Bridging Freedom, Inc. received the second largest share of the funding, for a total of \$480,350 to serve 18 youth. Finally, Citrus Health Network, Inc. received the third largest share of the funding for a total of \$405,648 to serve 19 youth.

## **Conclusion**

Florida continues to be one of the leading states in the country in its response to the issue of CSEC. As a result, the Department has representatives on a national expert council, a national human trafficking workgroup, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Southeast Region Human Trafficking Workgroup. Our service providers serve human trafficking subject matter experts for world-class organizations such as Kristi House, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Office of the Texas Governor, and Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health. The Department's Human Trafficking Unit staff regularly provides technical assistance to other states. Florida's child welfare data has been requested for multiple national research projects regarding human trafficking.

It is important to note that even in challenging times like the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Department's Human Trafficking Unit continued to deliver trainings and presentations to the child protective investigators, case management, and community stakeholders.

While progress has been made in building a more comprehensive system of care for CSE youth, child welfare professionals continue to see a need for the independent evaluation of placements and programs to fully understand and identify the best intervention options for the children served. This includes ongoing research examining optimal strategies for CSE victims who chose to repeatedly return to modes of commercial sex.