

Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board 2023 Annual Report

Pursuant to Public Act 461 of 2014, the members of the Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board developed this annual report to detail the Board's activities and recommendations for improving health and mental health services for victims of human trafficking. The report is submitted to the chairs of the committees concerned with health policy of the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives.

Board Members 2023

The Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board (HTHAB) is comprised of nine members including prescribed representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, medical professionals, mental health professionals, human trafficking survivors, and human trafficking prevention and intervention experts.

Dr. Dena Nazer, Chairperson, represents individuals licensed to practice medicine, recommended by the Senate Majority Leader (appointed Chair of the Board April 2023-December 31, 2026)

James Blessman, M.D., represents individuals licensed to practice medicine, recommended by the Speaker of the House.

Jessica Glynn, Equ., represents an individual with experience and expertise in the field of intervention in or prevention of HT or treatments of HT survivors (appointed April 2023-December 31, 2026)

Brigette (Robarge) Henderson, represents human trafficking survivors.

Katherine Kogelmann, represents mental health professionals.

Sheila Meshinski, R.N., represents registered professional nurses with experience in an emergency department, emergency room, or trauma center of a hospital (reappointed April 2023 – December 31, 2026)

Rodica Richmond, of Linden, represents human trafficking survivors.

Demetrius Starling, Senior Deputy Director for MDHHS's Children's Services Agency. He serves as a representative of MDHHS.

At the time of this submission, the Board is awaiting a MDHHS designee member.

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
2023 Board Actions	7
Policy Recommendations.....	13
Conclusion	14

Executive Summary

Human trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, or if the individual induced to perform a commercial sex act is under 18 years old. Human trafficking is a serious public health issue, and the healthcare community can play an integral role in confronting it.

Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board (HTHAB) was created in 2014, as a public advisory body housed in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and comprised of health and mental health professionals, human trafficking prevention experts, government agency representatives, and survivors of human trafficking. The Board's mission is to improve the quality of and access to health and mental health services for victims of human trafficking.

In 2020, the HTHAB became officially housed within Division of Victim Services (DVS) and DVS staff took on the responsibility for coordination of HTHAB duties. This is the Board's seventh annual report submitted to the Legislature.

2023 Activities:

- Hosted the first annual Standing Together Against Trafficking (STAT) conference
- Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking Grant
- Disseminated the Human Trafficking Response Protocol that was finalized in the previous year
- Participated in the MDHHS Human Trafficking of Children Protocol Revisions
- Provided Expertise and Coordination of Human Trafficking Funding
- Provided Basic Training on Human Trafficking for New Grantees
- Researching and Strategizing Policy Initiatives
- Attended Anti-Trafficking Conferences to Expand Knowledge of Prevention Work
-

Guest Speakers and Presentations at the HTHAB Meetings:

- Professor Bridgette Ann Carr, Human Trafficking Clinic, University of Michigan: Human Trafficking in Michigan/Work the Clinic is doing.
- Kara Moberg, Farmworker Legal Services: Human Trafficking in Farmworker Communities
- Amy Smith, Director of Healing Services at the Avalon Healing Center: Human Trafficking Services at Avalon Healing Center
- Rha'Shandra Haigler, Senior Director of Housing and Human Trafficking at Turning Point: Human Trafficking Services at Turning Point

Policy Recommendations

- A stable and reliable funding stream for building capacity of human trafficking services

Introduction

In 2014, a 21-bill legislative package overhauling the human trafficking chapter in Michigan statute was signed into law by Governor Rick Snyder. One of these bills, Public Act 461 of 2014, established the Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

The Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board (HTHAB) is comprised of nine members including representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, medical professionals, mental health professionals, human trafficking survivors, and human trafficking prevention and intervention experts.

Public Act 461 of 2014 charges the Board with five essential duties:

1. Collect and analyze information about available health services for trafficking survivors.
2. Identify government agencies that are involved with issues related to human trafficking and coordinate the dissemination of information about health services to trafficking survivors.
3. Meet with local health agencies to review health services and establish a program to make survivors more aware of available services.
4. Establish a program to improve public awareness about available health services for survivors.
5. Review existing state laws and administrative rules relating to medical and mental health policies affecting survivors of human trafficking and make recommendations to the legislature and state agencies to improve those laws and rules to address medical and mental health services available to survivors of human trafficking in this state.

Background

The issue of human trafficking has received increased attention by the public in recent years. While the number of human trafficking cases in the United States remains unclear, we know that people are being trafficked in communities—large and small, affluent and poor, rural and urban—across the country. Members of our communities are being exploited at the hands of profiteers and robbed of their most fundamental right—freedom. Michigan is no exception to this crime.

Human trafficking is no longer viewed as solely a law enforcement issue. Rather, experts on human trafficking now recognize that healthcare professionals can play an important role in both identifying and assisting victims of trafficking. Studies have shown that most of the human trafficking victims report seeing a healthcare professional at some point while being trafficked. Unfortunately, many healthcare professionals lack the training to identify victims. Everyday healthcare professionals have an opportunity to empower victims to leave their traffickers, and we should give them every possible resource to do this.

However, the healthcare professional's role does not end once a victim has been identified. Viewing human trafficking from a health lens necessitates addressing the physical and behavioral health consequences of human trafficking. The needs of trafficking victims are complex, and the factors affecting physical, mental, and emotional health are often interrelated. To properly address these complex needs, healthcare professionals must collaborate with other resources and providers in their communities. The Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board recognizes this need for cooperation and the HTHAB has made a conscious effort to partner with other government agencies, community non-profits, healthcare organizations, and, most importantly, survivors of human trafficking. No one person, provider, or organization can address all of the needs of trafficking victims, but through education, training, and coordination we can develop a network of services for survivors that can empower victims and survivors to live healthy, independent lives.

2023 Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board Actions

The Board planned four quarterly meetings during the 2023 calendar year. Meetings were held in person. However, in light of AG Opinion No. 7318, Board members may have requested accommodation due to a *qualified disability* and participated remotely. Those Board members with a qualified disability participating remotely via the conference call line counted toward quorum and were able to vote.

- March 16, 2023
- June 15, 2023
- September 14, 2023
- December 14, 2023

2023 Board Activities

During 2023, members of the Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board worked on several initiatives outlined below.

Hosted the first annual Standing Together Against Trafficking (STAT) conference

The Board and the Division of Victim Services hosted the first annual Standing Together Against Trafficking (STAT) Conference on September 6th, 2023, at the Lansing Center, with over 200 attendees. The *STAT* conference is an opportunity for anti-trafficking professionals, subject matter experts, and survivors to engage in dialogue, networking, and information sharing as we unite efforts to make Michigan a national leader in the anti-trafficking movement.

Highlight Reel: <https://youtu.be/3ddHxnmwIk8>

The Conference presented an impressive list of keynote speakers and subject matter experts, including:

- Bella Hounakey, *Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*

Recognizing and Responding to Labor Trafficking <https://youtu.be/yUg3a-AKVm0>

- Elizabeth Campbell, *Clinical assistant professor of law and co-director of Michigan Law's Human Trafficking Clinic*

Human Trafficking in Michigan: Dispelling Myths and Misconceptions
<https://youtu.be/7LRaHetK6Yw>

- Rachel Lloyd, *Founder and CEO, Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS)*

Where Do We Go From Here? A Call to Action https://youtu.be/zC_aYkCwqgc

The 2024 STAT Conference is being planned for September 2024 in Ann Arbor.

Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Human Trafficking Victims Grant

Division of Victim Services staff with support from the Board, secured a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime. This \$1.5 million three-year award supports coordinating efforts at a statewide level to improve the systemic response to child and youth victims of sex and labor trafficking. The board will play an integral role in this project by utilizing its health care expertise to inform the work.

Core Partners

- Uniting Three Fires Against Violence
- Children's Services Administration
- Michigan Victim Advocacy Network
- University of Michigan Human Trafficking Law Clinic
- Department of Attorney General

Goals and Objectives

- Gain a better understanding of the nature and prevalence of sex and labor trafficking of children and youth in Michigan.
- Improve the statewide systemic response to children and youth victims of labor and sex trafficking.
- Promote an anti-trafficking movement in Michigan grounded in best practice, including being empowerment based, survivor centered, culturally responsive, and trauma informed.
- Focus on child and youth victims of labor trafficking and trafficking of Native American children and youth.

Developed a Policy/Protocol Human Trafficking Toolkit for Health Providers

The HTHAB oversaw the development of and provided feedback on a Human Trafficking Toolkit for Health Providers. The Toolkit will assist health care providers implement a more systematic response to identify and respond to human trafficking in the health care setting. Health providers looking to improve their response to human trafficking victims will be able to use this Toolkit as a guide for developing and implementing a protocol within their community and health care setting.

The Toolkit was finalized in early 2023 and publicly released during the STAT conference. The Board is developing a distribution plan to ensure the Toolkit reaches those in the healthcare field, including a demonstration and explanation video.

The Toolkit can be viewed on the Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board webpage.

https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Division-of-Victim-Services/HTAB/HT-Toolkit/Human-Trafficking-Response-Protocol-Toolkit_Final.pdf?rev=97905539dca6465490b7a2d0b6943e7d

Participated in the MDHHS Human Trafficking of Children Protocol Revisions

Board members and staff have been requested to be part of a workgroup tasked with revising the Human Trafficking of Children Protocol. This work group is comprised of key stakeholders including those with expertise in human trafficking and child abuse, and legal matters. The protocol is primarily used by agencies when coming into contact with children, including, children's services workers, law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys' offices, children's advocacy centers, medical health, and mental health professionals. The protocol was last updated in 2017.

Provided Expertise and Coordination of Human Trafficking Funding

Over the past several years, HTHAB members and staff aided in several legislative initiatives that provided funding for victim service providers and community programs engaged in anti-trafficking work. Below is a summary of each funding stream.

Human Trafficking Victim Services Expansion Pilot

In the FY 22 budget, \$500,000 of general funds were allocated to create and implement the Human Trafficking Victim Services Expansion Pilot. The pilot utilizes victim-centered and trauma informed approaches to human trafficking. DVS and HTHAB staff worked with the Legislature to develop the criteria for this pilot. The goal of this funding was to help build capacity in programs that want to begin human trafficking work and also for programs that have worked with human trafficking survivors but have little or no expertise in applying for and managing federal or state dollars.

This is a 3 year project administered by DVS to do the following: encourage the development of specific and dedicated human trafficking victim services; focus on building capacity within eligible organizations to offer services specifically designed to meet the needs of human trafficking victims; provide training and technical assistance to established organizations that supports the development of human trafficking victim services; increase organizations capacity to provide victim services designed to meet the unique needs of human trafficking victims; fund human trafficking service organizations that agree to develop services and accompanying policies and procedures for human trafficking victims. After a competitive application process funding was awarded to S.A.F.E. Place and Sacred Beginnings.

In the FY 23 budget, an additional \$1million was allocated to enhance the Human Trafficking Victim Services Expansion Pilot by funding more human trafficking victim service providers: Alternatives for Girls, Safe Haven Ministries, Michigan Advocacy Program, and Avalon Healing.

Human Trafficking Local Collaborative Teams

The FY 23 budget allocated \$250,000.00 to counties or coalitions of counties to support collaborative teams to address human trafficking and coordinate with specialists in the department of state police and Federal Bureau of Investigation. Collaborative teams shall facilitate trauma-informed support throughout each county within multidisciplinary groups to engage law enforcement, health care professionals, and entities that provide survivor-centered services and are collectively focused on providing advocacy to human trafficking survivors. Collaborative teams are tasked with the prevention of opportunities for predators to engage in both sex and labor trafficking. A plan is currently being developed for allocating these grants, that can range from \$3,000.00 to \$20,000.00 and be used to pay for human trafficking-related training, equipment, supplies, meeting expenses, and victim services. Three county Task Force grantees have been awarded funding, Kalamazoo, Kent, and Muskegon counties.

Training and Technical Assistance

Division of Victim Services staff continue to provide ongoing training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities for funded anti-trafficking victim service providers. The DVS specific Learning Management System provides asynchronous online learning and anti-trafficking specific resources that support best and promising practices. In addition, DVS staff provide bi-monthly training and networking opportunities for funded programs.

Researching and Strategizing Policy Initiatives

During several Board meetings, members discussed creating subcommittees/teams to work on further researching policy initiatives. Board members and staff will research areas of interest and report back to the full group to decide on how to pursue the issue further.

Several areas of interest include:

- Public Benefits Eligibility for Foreign National Human Trafficking Survivors Under State and Federal Law.
- Further develop Toolkit distribution plan.
- On-going human trafficking trainings for healthcare workers
- Advance community/partner engagement with the healthcare field to create stronger relationships.

Attended Anti-Trafficking Conferences to Expand Knowledge of Prevention Work

Board members attended anti-trafficking conference, such as the Freedom Network USA Human Trafficking Conference, to expand knowledge or prevention work being done across the country.

Guest Speakers and Presentations at the HTHAB Meetings:

- **Professor Bridgette Ann Carr, Human Trafficking Clinic, University of Michigan:** The Human Trafficking Clinic (HTC) at the University of Michigan began in 2009 and represents victims of human trafficking regardless of type of victimization, gender, age, or nationality. The clinic provides comprehensive legal services. The Human Trafficking Lab utilizes multi-disciplinary teams of University of Michigan graduate students to determine methods for reducing vulnerability to human trafficking. The lab is currently in its second semester and consists of four instructors and 41 graduate students. Graduate students from various academic disciplines all provide unique perspectives that are valuable in helping reduce vulnerability to human trafficking.
- **Kara Moberg, Farmworker Legal Services: Human Trafficking in Farmworker Communities:** Kara Moberg spoke about services provided for human trafficking victims at Farmworker Legal Services. Farmworker Legal Services (FLS) is a statewide, nonprofit legal services provider that represents indigent immigrant, migrant, and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents throughout Michigan. It is FLS mission to ensure that immigrant, migrant, and seasonal farmworkers have equal access to economic and social justice through civil impact litigation in employment and civil rights cases.
- **Amy Smith, Director of Healing Services at the Avalon Healing Center::** The Avalon Healing Center recently opened its new facility in Detroit. Of the many services they offer, Avalon is committed to expanding its anti-trafficking program to provide comprehensive support and resources that aim to help clients improve their well-being, quality of life and long-term stability. There are two licensed trafficking counselors who provide full time counseling and three trafficking specialists. Case management services assist with housing, employment and accessing benefits, as well as healthcare staff assisting with follow-up care, referrals, and resources.
- **Jessica Glynn, Board Member:** Public Benefits Eligibility for Foreign National Human Trafficking Survivors Under State and Federal Law: Board member Jessica Glynn provided a brief overview of the struggles trafficking survivors encounter when attempting to access public benefits in Michigan and shared strategies she has seen other states employ to support survivors in accessing financial support. There are many barriers that foreign national survivors face in accessing benefits in Michigan. Once survivors have a certification letter it should be easy for them to walk into a state benefits office and be eligible for benefits; however, survivors are usually denied benefits.
- **Rha'Shandra Haigler, Senior Director of Housing and Human Trafficking at Turning Point:** Rha'Shandra discussed the Human Trafficking Services at Turning Point as well as highlighted several challenges they are seeing in the field. Housing options is a critical

need for survivors, availability, and landlord issues. Past charges on survivors' records are also presenting challenges in securing housing. There is a greater need for survivor legal representation and legal resources, and a financial need to be able to pay for such resources and others. Turning Point will continue to offer survivors assistance, even years after their first interaction; however, working on longer term services could be beneficial for survivors.

Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board Policy Recommendations

Public Act 460 of 2014 describes the following duty of the Board.

1. Review existing state laws and administrative rules relating to medical and mental health policies affecting survivors of human trafficking and make recommendations to the legislature and state agencies to improve those laws and rules to address medical and mental health services available to survivors of human trafficking in this state.

As the Board continues to review state laws and administrative rules, it is clear that the needs of victims of human trafficking need to be addressed and at the forefront of any conversation for improvements to state systems.

The Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board recognizes the vital importance of a consistent and steady funding stream for human trafficking victims across Michigan. The Board proposes and supports the allocation of state funding, and further supports efforts to advocate for federal money for the state of Michigan, to meet the needs of human trafficking victims. A stable and reliable funding stream is necessary for building capacity of reputable human trafficking services across the state.

Conclusion

The Board's activities described in this report represent one piece of the much larger picture of confronting human trafficking in Michigan. Healthcare professionals play a vital role in identifying and supporting victims and survivors of human trafficking. The mental, physical, and emotional consequences of human trafficking on victims and survivors are complex and creating victim-centered, trauma-informed services that effectively meets their needs requires collaboration and coordination across disciplines. To this end, much of the work in this report would not be possible without the essential input and cooperation of the HTHAB's partners throughout Michigan. This report builds on best practices from across the country to ensure the board is implementing evidence-based, collaborative approaches to serving victims of human trafficking. The board believes that through the work described in this report, healthcare professionals will have the opportunity to achieve their field's highest aim: empowering some of our society's most vulnerable individuals to lead healthy, thriving lives.