

Senate Majority Policy Committee Public Hearing on Human Trafficking in Pennsylvania

Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 2:00 PM

Written testimony of Kathy Buckley, Director, Office of Victims' Services Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)

Good afternoon, Chair Laughlin and distinguished members of the Senate Majority Policy Committee. My name is Kathy Buckley, and I serve as the Director of the Office of Victims' Services at the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). On behalf of PCCD, thank you for the invitation to provide testimony on PCCD's role in helping victims of human trafficking and for raising awareness about this critical issue.

As you may know, PCCD is a state agency that is governed by a 48-member board which brings together a wide range of people and perspectives necessary to understand issues facing our communities, identify potential solutions, and invest in effective strategies that can make a real difference. PCCD also serves as Pennsylvania's State Administering Agency (SAA) for federal justice-related funding, administering a wide range – and growing number – of programs, funding streams, and initiatives aligned with our mission.

PCCD has supported efforts to make communities safer for all Pennsylvanians for 45 years and facilitating the delivery of services to victims of crime, including victims of human trafficking, is central to our mission. At an agency level, PCCD administers several federal and state grant funds that support state and local organizations to engage in anti-human trafficking projects and initiatives. Some specifics about these grant programs are as follows:

Federal Victims of Crime Act Program

Under the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Program, PCCD supports county-based efforts to identify and serve victims of sex and labor trafficking. From October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023, VOCA funded grantees served 322 victims of labor trafficking and 777 victims of sex trafficking.

An example of VOCA funded efforts is the "Legal Aid for Victims of Workplace Exploitation Project" by Justice at Work, formerly known as Friends of Farmworkers. This statewide project provides high quality, culturally and linguistically competent services to victims of workplace exploitation and labor trafficking, many of whom are afraid to seek help because they are dependent on their traffickers for basic needs. This organization helps labor trafficking victims with legal needs, in both the criminal justice system and the immigration system, which is vital to keeping such victims safe while attempting to hold traffickers accountable.

Some specific examples of how Justice at Work has helped human trafficking victims includes the following:

- Assisted with applying for a T (Trafficking) Visa for a victim who had a long history of trafficking that began when she was purchased at age 15 by a 29-year-old man for forced labor and sex. In addition to the T VISA, Justice at Work was able to recoup unpaid wages that were owed to the victim, helping her stabilize her living situation.
- Coordinated legal, immigration, and social services for a male victim of labor trafficking who was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of a fall from a fruit tree. After his accident, the trafficker dismissed him; with nowhere to live, no support network, and no way to survive.
- Coordinated with the International Council on Migration to complete the legal process to reunite a victim of labor trafficking with her two children, who the trafficker had prevented her from seeing or communicating with for years.

Federal Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program

Under the federal Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, PCCD promotes innovative responses to sex trafficking. One such project is the Salvation Army's [New Day to Stop Trafficking](#) initiative, which is active in both Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties. During its first year of implementation, New Day's Mobile Response to Stop Trafficking Project has provided case management and peer support to 32 survivors of sex trafficking.

One such example of their work involves a survivor who was referred to the program by the VICE Unit as a high-risk youth for her involvement with commercial sexual exploitation. As New Day worked with the survivor and began to understand the circumstances that led to her trafficking, they were able to advocate for her case to be transferred to Philadelphia's WRAP (Working to Restore Adolescents' Power) Court – a court created to offer alternatives to criminalization for minor victims of sex trafficking. The JAG funded counselor supported the minor victim with obtaining a stable foster home, accessing supportive services, and reunification with her child.

New Day is also partnering with [Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#) to train Philadelphia Law Enforcement officers on trafficking, trauma informed responses to survivors, and services available. The first training was delivered in late November 2023 to 36 attendees.

STOP Violence Against Women Grant Program

The STOP Formula Grant Program under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) supports communities in their efforts to engage in multi-system, collaborative response strategies to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking that keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable. STOP grants also support responses to sex trafficking.

Pennsylvania's STOP Implementation Plan to the federal Office on Violence Against Women identified a statewide objective to "increase adoption of effective identification of and

multi-disciplinary responses to human trafficking across Pennsylvania.” Several STOP-funded county projects support efforts to bolster services to sex trafficking victims and improve the multi-system response to sex trafficking in local communities.

PCCD’s STOP Protocol Development Tools for Domestic and Sexual Violence both address human trafficking as a component of the response to these crimes and provide resource information on human trafficking for counties to consider in developing their multi-system response protocols.

Additionally, PCCD works closely with its statewide partners to advance awareness of human trafficking. The Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) has used STOP funding to provide the major and minor judiciary and their staff with training on Human Trafficking and Act 105 of 2014 (see below). AOPC has also utilized STOP funding to put education and awareness information about Human Trafficking on their website as well as social media outlets. The Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR) has utilized STOP Funding to create technical assistance and reference materials on Human Trafficking to law enforcement, prosecutors and rape crisis centers. PCAR also uses STOP funds to support a dedicated Anti- Human Trafficking Coordinator who has been providing technical assistance to county Human Trafficking Taskforces and helps programs network with other anti-trafficking groups across Pennsylvania.

Act 105 of 2014

Act 105 of 2014 is Pennsylvania’s Anti-Trafficking Statute. Among other things, this act imposes criminal fines and penalties upon convicted traffickers. In addition, a portion of the moneys forfeited and the proceeds from the sale of all property forfeited are deposited into a specially designated state fund administered by PCCD.

Of the total proceeds forfeited, 50 percent is to be distributed toward support services for victims of human trafficking (as defined in Pennsylvania’s Crime Victims’ Act), including notification of availability of victim services, assistance with crime victims’ compensation, and advocating for their rights under Pennsylvania’s Victims’ Bill of Rights. The remaining 50 percent is to be used for projects that prevent human trafficking including increasing public awareness and training of first responders.

Most recently, PCCD is using \$250,000 of Act 105 funds to supplement services under the Crime Victims Act and to fund the Villanova Law Institute, which was selected through a competitive solicitation process, to address commercial sexual exploitation and to act as Pennsylvania’s human trafficking resource for coordination of information, training, and technical assistance.

This project blends well with collective state agency efforts, of which PCCD has been a part of, to address human trafficking. Since 2022, PennDOT has convened a statewide workgroup of stakeholders to coordinate state agency awareness and training efforts regarding human trafficking, and it has taken preliminary steps to identify existing resources created by

state agencies, coordinate efforts to promote effective use of resources, and identify gaps in services for victims of human trafficking.

The Shapiro-Davis Administration's top priority is to make Pennsylvania communities safer and through these funding streams and collaborations, PCCD is providing invaluable support and resources to victims of human trafficking.

I want to extend my gratitude to this Committee for your continuous support in our mission to support victims and survivors of crime.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony, and I am happy to take any questions you may have.