



# What to Know: Municipal Response to Human Trafficking

Municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to respond to human trafficking in their communities and neighborhoods. Effective and sustained municipal engagement ensures a proactive response toward human trafficking, serving as a catalyst for change and leveraging the diverse resources within a municipality across local agencies, political leadership, nonprofit and private sector organizations, and community groups.

The [City of Houston](#), which appointed the first Special Advisor to the Mayor on Human Trafficking in the United States in 2015, designed the [Ten/Ten Municipal Fellowship](#) with representatives from 18 mayor’s offices across the United States. The Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services collaborated with Houston to support in-person and virtual convenings of the fellowship facilitated by the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC). This fact sheet reflects learnings from the Ten/Ten Municipal Fellowship, including implementing systems-level services, engaging industries impacted by trafficking, raising awareness at scale, and conducting data-informed disaster outreach. Municipalities represented diverse urban, suburban, and rural community experiences. The resources and examples provided are intended to serve as a guide to help municipalities across the United States take a proactive approach to human trafficking in their communities.

## RESOURCES

- [City of Chicago: Creating a Coordinated Response to Human Trafficking](#)
- [City of Houston: Policy Council Toolkit](#)
- [NHTTAC: Core Competencies for Human Trafficking Response in Health Care and Behavioral Health Systems](#)
- [SOAR eGuide: Multidisciplinary Treatment and Referral Team](#)
- [SOAR for Communities Trainings](#)

## Institutionalize a Municipal Response: The Foundation

### Commit Municipal Resources to Lead Strategic Planning and Support Action Plan Implementation

- Create a senior-level position dedicated to developing a coordinated response (Houston, TX; Chicago, IL)
- Rotate among offices/divisions to infuse support while recognizing the capacity limits for each city agency (Los Angeles, CA)
- Advocate for and develop a municipal-led public health response through a citywide department (Houston, TX)
- Establish a formal citywide coordinating group with representation from city agency decision-making staff (Houston, TX; New York City, NY)

## RESOURCE

- [City of Chicago: Citywide Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking](#)
- [NHTTAC Human Trafficking Community Readiness Guide](#)

### Institutionalize Knowledge and Response of Human Trafficking Across Government Agencies

- Implement anti-trafficking training and provide outreach materials for public health and hospital staff, public safety personnel, fire department staff, and restaurant inspectors (Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA; Louisville, KY; Plainfield, NJ)
- Create a human trafficking unit inclusive of both sex and labor trafficking with criminal jurisdiction at the state bureau of investigations (Charleston, SC)

- Coordinate the law enforcement trafficking response, designate the lead investigative agency, and provide specialized training on all forms of trafficking (Charleston, SC)
- Institutionalize the city's response through training of city employees (e.g., public health employees, law enforcement, hospital staff, public school employees, district attorney's office staff, child welfare and social services employees, behavioral health and substance use treatment providers, fire department staff, restaurant inspectors, community outreach and violence prevention specialists) with screening, identification, and reporting functions (Houston, TX; Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; Louisville, KY; New York City, NY; Plainfield, NJ)

### RESOURCES

- [Polaris: The Typology of Modern Slavery: Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States](#)
- [Responsible Sourcing Tool](#)

### Ensure Ethical Procurement of Commodities and Labor by City Agencies by Executive Order, Resolution, or Department Policy

- Analyze high-risk commodities and labor sectors that city agencies procure to prioritize areas of concern (Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA)
- Design and deliver risk mitigation presentations for vendors focused on compliance, risk mitigation, and corporate responsibility (Houston, TX)
- Incentivize proactive procurement of vendors by awarding points to those that demonstrate specific activities to prevent human trafficking within supply chains (Houston, TX)

## Expand the Safety Net: A Person-Centered Response Network

### Strengthen Mechanisms to Reduce Risk and Identify Human Trafficking

- Conduct outreach to populations vulnerable to labor trafficking in the construction and restaurant industries (Houston, TX)
- Implement a screening tool in local hospitals (Houston, TX; Chicago, IL; Louisville, KY)
- Train community violence outreach and prevention specialists on human trafficking and its intersection with other forms of violence (Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA)
- Implement protocols to refer individuals who may be experiencing trafficking to appropriate in-person and remote services (Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; New York City, NY; Plainfield, NJ). Examples of agencies and professionals using these protocols include hotlines (New York City, NY); family justice centers (New York City, NY); victim advocates (Charleston, SC); domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking agencies (Los Angeles, CA); the Office of Labor Standards (Chicago, IL); and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (Chicago, IL)
- Engage compliance officers at the city contract construction sites (Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA)
- Leverage city agencies' planning and global information systems to prioritize outreach to high-risk neighborhoods (Houston, TX)

### RESOURCES

- [Human Trafficking Fact Sheet: What Disaster Responders Need to Know](#)
- [Human Trafficking Fact Sheet: What Disaster Responders Need to Do](#)
- [Human Trafficking Leadership Academy: Recommendations on Two-Generation/Whole Family Approach for Post-Secondary and Employment Opportunities and Economic Assets](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline: Referral Directory](#)
- [Safe Shelter Collaborative](#)
- [SOAR for School-Based Professionals](#)

- Conduct listening sessions with worker centers, labor organizations, faith-based organizations, and other provider groups to understand labor trafficking and exploitation occurring in the city (New York City, NY)
- Partner with law enforcement to implement a new state law that requires all law enforcement personnel to provide resources and information to anyone they come in contact with who could be experiencing trafficking (New York City, NY)

### **Coordinate Prevention and Victim Support Services**

- Secure resources and place a human trafficking psychology fellow in the county psychiatric unit (Houston, TX)
- Develop a response protocol for public schools, adapting the existing child abuse protocol; train all school-based nurses on human trafficking and the response protocol (New York City, NY)
- Map resources and develop a vetted service provider directory (Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; New York City, NY; Plainfield, NJ)
- Create a web-based portal to publicly list resources for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, including human trafficking (New York City, NY)
- Build capacity for youth prevention programming and direct services that address short- and long-term needs of youth survivors of human trafficking in child welfare settings (New York City, NY)
- Integrate programs that provide free trauma-informed services (e.g., medical, clinical, legal, and case management) to individuals who may have experienced trafficking into hospital systems (New York City, NY)

### **Enhance Identification and Expand Protection Through Local Laws and Ordinances**

- Pass a hotel ordinance that requires trafficking indicator training for hotel employees with pre-approved training by the mayor's office and a certification requirement to the city's regulatory body (Houston, TX) or a hotel ordinance that makes it illegal to rent a hotel room for less than 12 hours (Louisville, KY); post multilingual posters with information on the National Human Trafficking Hotline and noncompliance penalties (Houston, TX)
- Revise prostitution policies to enhance law enforcement engagement with and resources provided to individuals engaging in commercial sex (Houston, TX; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; New York City, NY)
- Institute record relief and expungement policies for survivors of trafficking and individuals with prostitution-related convictions (Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; New York City, NY)

### **Fill Shelter Gaps and Create Diverse Housing Options for Survivors**

- Expand shelter capacity through public and nonprofit partnerships (Houston, TX)
- Cross-train homeless and domestic violence shelter programs on trafficking indicators (Houston, TX)
- Secure diverse housing options for survivors of trafficking, which may include hotel accommodations (Charleston, SC), permanent housing support (Los Angeles, CA), transitional housing (Chicago, IL), and/or maintaining a housing fund within the victim services unit of a law enforcement agency (Louisville, KY)

### **Expand Economic Empowerment Opportunities for Survivors**

- Create a paid "safe leave" status for survivors to participate in their recovery, including for health care services and participation in the criminal justice system (New York City, NY)

## Maximize Impact Through Diverse Partners: Public-Private Partnership

### Create Regional Partnerships and Multidisciplinary Groups

- Work across counties through a multi-county task force (Charleston, SC)
- Engage city health staff, law enforcement, nonprofit prevention specialists, and private constituents to coordinate resources and create training materials (Charleston, SC)
- Collaborate across jurisdictions to conduct research on and develop a coordinated response to labor trafficking (New York City, NY)
- Convene working groups inclusive of public and private health systems to share best practices, conduct research on trauma- and survivor-informed telehealth practices, and explore piloting a universal education model in public health clinic settings to create safe spaces for patients to disclose experiences with trafficking (New York City, NY)

### RESOURCES

- [Human Trafficking Leadership Academy](#)
- [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: Prevention Education and Professional Training](#)
- [National Survivor Network](#)
- [Survivor Alliance](#)
- [Toolkit for Building Survivor-Informed Organizations](#)
- [Webinar: Increasing Community Response to Trafficking by Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships](#)

### Engage Experts With Lived Experience to Inform Development of Priorities, Goals, and Activities

- Integrate experts with lived experience into an interagency municipal response to provide support/insight, with compensation provided (Charleston, SC; New York City, NY)

### Diversify Funding Resources to Sustain and Expand Municipal Response

- Partner with local philanthropy to establish a funding committee composed of private funding to coordinate funding that maximizes resources and creates a one-stop-shop for local nonprofit and community-based organizations to go to request support (Houston, TX)
- Establish public-private partnerships, including with nonprofits, to expand eligibility for funding opportunities (Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA)
- Invest diverse federal funding sources (e.g., American Rescue Plan Act funding, Victims of Crime Act funding, Community Development Block Grant CARES Act funding) to support survivors of trafficking in various ways, including housing support (e.g., rapid re-housing and transitional housing), legal representation, emergency financial assistance, wraparound services, and prevention education (Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA)

## Address Gaps in Perception and Awareness: Outreach and Media Campaigns

### Reach Large and Diverse Audiences Through Media Campaigns

- Embed survivor-informed, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive media messaging on human trafficking where viewership is high using both public service announcement vehicles and paid placements for prime time viewing, such as movie theaters, radio, television, billboards, taxis, and mass transportation (Houston, TX; Chicago, IL; New York City, NY; Plainfield, NJ)
- Include media messaging that dispels misconceptions about trafficking (Plainfield, NJ), incorporates messaging to at-risk youth (Plainfield, NJ), and avoids the use of gender and racial stereotypes (Chicago, IL; Plainfield, NJ)

- Leverage data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline on incoming calls and cases specific to the community to inform outreach messaging; monitor results of campaigns through changes in hotline calls for a period of time (Houston, TX)
- Leverage public-private partnerships for in-kind services to design and implement media campaigns (Houston, TX)

### Grow Public Dialog Through Town Halls and Public Events

- Support regular outreach/awareness-raising events hosted by key members of the community (e.g., mayor, city council members) (Plainfield, NJ)
- Leverage diverse communication mechanisms, such as theatrical performances (Plainfield, NJ)

### Partner With Constituents to Expand Reach of Materials

- Partner with local not-for-profit organizations to disseminate materials to diverse populations across the community (Houston, TX)
- Provide outreach materials designed for police, the judicial system, and state-level initiatives to share with citizens and/or constituents (Houston, TX; Charleston, SC)
- Display human trafficking hotline information in municipal jails (Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA)
- Display awareness signs for youth in juvenile justice and community spaces (e.g., public libraries) to prompt self-identification (Louisville, KY)

### Tailor and Distribute Outreach Materials in Response to Municipal Crises or Events

- Disseminate information at key contact points (e.g., shelters) for at-risk populations on human trafficking and how to stay safe during a natural disaster that displaces people from their homes (e.g., Hurricane Harvey) (Houston, TX)
- Place campaign advertisements in airports, city government locations, and parks that tie into a major event in the community (e.g., Super Bowl, World Cup) (Houston, TX)

This fact sheet is responsive to the [Administration for Children and Families Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2022](#), [U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking's Annual Report Fiscal Year 2022](#), and Priority Action Principle 1.1.1 (Enhance community-coordinated responses to human trafficking) of the [National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking Fiscal Years 2022–2024](#).

### RESOURCES

- [City of Houston: Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [City of Houston: Taxi Industry Initiative Toolkit](#)
- [City of Houston: Watch for Traffick Media Campaign Toolkit](#)
- [Senior Policy Operating Group Public Awareness and Outreach Committee: Guide for Public Awareness Materials](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Look Beneath the Surface Campaign](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Blue Campaign](#)