



Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking

Program Description

As a result of the need for an improved agency response to juvenile victims in Ohio, the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) applied for funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). In October 2017, OCJS was awarded \$949,968.00 to implement the *Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking* three-year grant program. The purpose of the grant is to develop a statewide strategy to improve identification of and access to services for juvenile victims of human trafficking in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Ohio.

OCJS has utilized the federal funding to hire three liaisons housed at the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS), the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), and the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (ONCAC). Through their respective agencies, these liaisons provide direct support to county child welfare agencies, juvenile courts, and children's advocacy centers (CAC). The grant also funds a full-time Grant Coordinator position at OCJS to oversee the work of the grant liaisons and guide programmatic efforts and goals.

Needs Assessment Overview, Results and Action Steps Taken

Process: In order to meet the objectives defined by the Office for Victims of Crime, needs assessments were conducted to better understand how the child welfare agencies and juvenile justice entities in the state of Ohio currently respond to juvenile victims of human trafficking. Due to the nature of the child welfare agencies and child advocacy centers being spread widely across the state, the liaisons at PCSAO and ONCAC primarily collected information via phone interviews. Visits to the Juvenile Detention Centers and Community Correctional Facilities were conducted in-person by the ODYS liaison where the needs assessment questions were discussed.

Results: Overall, the results of the needs assessment reflected three themes across the systems of interest.

- ❖ **Increased training** for professionals beyond introductory information on human trafficking in Ohio. Many respondents noted that training is received, but it does not address organizational instruction and protocols regarding what services should be provided once an individual is identified as a victim of human trafficking.
- ❖ **Improved screening tools and protocols** for child welfare and juvenile justice agencies were also identified as a need, given that protocols are largely inconsistent across the state. Inconsistencies appear in the type of screening tool that is used, if high-risk criteria are assessed, and when the screening occurs.
- ❖ Finally, assessments revealed that there is an overall **lack of provider knowledge** on appropriate and effective resources for juvenile victims of human trafficking.

Action Steps:

ACTION STEP 1

Develop and provide training and technical assistance to juvenile justice agencies, child welfare, and child advocacy centers across the state with the opportunity to discuss case examples, practice identifying trafficked juveniles, and encourage the formation of multidisciplinary treatment teams.

ACTION STEP 2

Create an updated screening tool and corresponding policy for juvenile justice agencies and child welfare through working groups and survivor advisory committee participation.