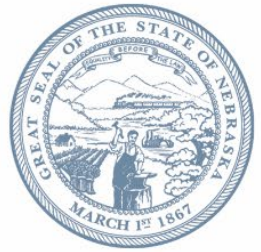


NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Jim Pillen, Governor

# Nebraska Statewide Trafficking Protocol Guidance

*Helping People Live Better Lives*

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## INTRODUCTION

With support from Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Nebraska Support to Trafficking Survivors Action Team (NE-STSAT), a survivor-led, multidisciplinary group with expertise in Human Trafficking work, identified a need to develop a statewide, multidisciplinary response to improve outcomes for child and youth victims of human trafficking.

This guidance document was created to support the development and implementation of protocols to ensure that systems and providers are equipped to respond appropriately and consistently to child and youth victims of sex and labor trafficking.

This protocol guidance is intended to provide an overview of the roles varying professional disciplines play in a successful multidisciplinary response to human trafficking in Nebraska. The guidance aims to provide a shared foundation for anti-trafficking response, and to identify key considerations and practices for those working with youth and young adults.

This document is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal advice or counsel. Further training, education, and legal guidance should be sought with appropriate external sources such as those suggested in the Training and Resources section.

Nebraskans who have experienced exploitation or trafficking, many of whom may not publicly identify as someone with lived experience for a variety of reasons, were the primary authors and influencers of this guidance document. The shared language used throughout this document was also adopted by the NE-STSAT, honoring the collaborative approach centered on the leadership provided by survivors who led and influenced this team. *See “Shared Language” on page 11.*

This guidance document was created in partnership with multiple states, agency and organization representatives, community members, and most importantly survivors of exploitation, trafficking, and abuse. The team is grateful for the dedication of time, expertise, and insight provided by all who worked to complete this guiding document. The team wishes to express the deepest gratitude and respect for every individual who experienced exploitation, trafficking, or abuse whose courage and determination lead the way through this project.

### *Contributing Organizations*

[Central Plains Center for Services](#)

[Friendship Home](#)

[Legal Aid of Nebraska](#)

[Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers](#)

[Nebraska Child and Families Foundation](#)

[Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence](#)

[Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services](#)  
[Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition \(NICWC\)](#)  
[Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition \(NETAV\)](#)  
[NebraskaPATH](#)  
[Pointer Adventures](#)  
[Thriving Warrior](#)  
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## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended to be used as a supplemental tool to guide the development of organization or agency response protocols and to increase readiness and capacity to support and serve those who may have experienced exploitation and trafficking. The components included are key to understanding, developing and increasing an organization-wide trauma responsive approach to trafficking and exploitation response. Each section includes overarching information, considerations for reflection, and suggests action steps. Those who choose to use this document are encouraged to engage first with the specific sections that would be most helpful to them, and to become familiar with the resources for further learning that are included.

## CROSS DISCIPLINE PARTNERSHIPS

Though applicable to a variety of community and state agencies, this guidance is specific to those working in the following disciplines operating in the State of Nebraska and neighboring Native American tribes.

## Exploring Highlighted Disciplines

**Child Serving Agencies:** *Advocacy and Outreach Agencies, Child Welfare, Child Advocacy Centers, and Schools*

Individuals working in these disciplines assess for safety to provide a range of services to support, prevent, address, respond to, and advocate for the needs of those who may have experienced abuse, violence, and sexual exploitation. Those working in these disciplines may encounter individuals who may have experienced various forms of violence at multiple points, and often have ongoing relationships with those they serve in or across multiple settings.

**Health Care:** *Public Health, Hospitals, Mental Health, and Medical Forensic Exam Provider*

Individuals working in healthcare and mental health provide a range of services to support, advocate for, and treat physical and mental health concerns impacting individuals and/or community members. Those working in these disciplines have an opportunity to intervene or respond to abuse and exploitation, including human trafficking, but may or may not have ongoing relationships with the individuals they serve.

**Housing:** *Shelters, Housing, and Emergency Placement*

Individuals working in these disciplines provide a range of services to house, support, and assess survivors of abuse and exploitation. They are often an initial contact for those who may be seeking short-term refuge and can provide early intervention and advocacy opportunities. The individuals they encounter may not initially present as someone who has experienced trafficking or exploitation.

**Legal System:** *Court and Judicial, Juvenile Corrections, Law Enforcement, Legal Representation, and Prosecution*

The legal system is comprised of the courts and judiciary, juvenile corrections, law enforcement, legal representation, and prosecution. Individuals working in these disciplines often encounter those who have experienced abuse and exploitation due to legal issues which may require longer term and limited relationships. Those working in these disciplines have the opportunity to focus on demonstrating the value or benefit of systemic protections offered under the law by operating within the constraints of the law with trustworthiness and respect towards the choices and actions of those they serve.

Each multidisciplinary partner plays a different role in intervention, protection, justice seeking, and healing of those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking. *See “Understanding Exploitation and Trafficking” on page 6.*

Though the service scope and goals of multidisciplinary agencies vary, through collaboration multidisciplinary teams can leverage the resources and strengths of partners to address gaps in service provision and provide comprehensive and holistic care to those they serve.

## Working Together and Collaboration

Challenges may arise because of the service scope, service objectives, and ethical considerations that may vary among multidisciplinary partners. All partners must align around shared goals while respecting ethical standards and obligations of various partners despite differences in strategy and approach.

Protecting our communities and its most vulnerable members from exploitation and trafficking is a shared responsibility. Each discipline has its own set of principles, expectations, and standards, and individuals employed within each discipline should leverage their expertise and work within the boundaries of their fields.

Those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking may harbor reluctance in working with certain disciplines, owing to past experiences. However, if individuals within a discipline operate ethically and responsibly, it can help to promote relationship building and engagement with those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Apprehension or resistance may continue, and it is vital to acknowledge that the current response systems have not been impartial and have caused harm. To overcome the barriers created by past or current responses, everyone must collaborate with integrity, honest reflection, and empathy.

Conflicts and misunderstandings may arise when working together. These conflicts are commonly due to the line individuals cannot cross because of the limitations or guidelines they must follow within their roles. These issues can usually be resolved by assuming positive intent and building partnerships with others within those same disciplines. Ongoing conversation, connection, and learning opportunities that include perspectives and participants from multiple disciplines can also support the resolution of many of these concerns.

## Reflection and Suggested Actions

Certain individuals and groups are often made vulnerable to exploitation or trafficking. These groups often include those affected by poverty, exposure to or use of illicit substances, exposure to violence, those impacted by child welfare and/or court systems. Other factors that increase vulnerability are experiencing abuse or neglect, homelessness, abandonment, pregnancy, periods of separation from family, or lack of adult supervision. These circumstances elevate the risk of further traumas such as exploitation and trafficking. Additionally, Native youth, Black, AAPI, Latinx, LGBTQIA2S+, refugees, immigrants, and people with disabilities often encounter additional obstacles to protection and dignified intervention.

Multidisciplinary teams should be intentional about engaging people with lived experience in the protocol development process. Those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking can offer invaluable insight that can improve protocols, identify gaps and barriers, and ensure protocols are inclusive and fully trauma informed.

Here are some important next steps:

- Familiarize yourself with each section of this document and the resources included, specifically Understanding Exploitation and Trafficking beginning on page 7.

- Take the time to review [Nebraska's Multidisciplinary Team \(MDT\) Orientation Manual](#).
- Identify the organizations that participate in the MDT in your area, and identify the role you play within an MDT, or in supporting the work of MDT's.
- Take note of the partners that are included or are part of your work. Notice the potential missing partners, partners that may not be aligned in values, and partners that may be mutually beneficial.

If you are part of developing or evaluating response protocols, consider familiarizing yourself with the following:

- Appendix Document: Standards of Practice to Support Victims/Survivors of Trafficking (NHTTF, SAFE-T, NebraskaPATH, 2020)
- [North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission](#)  
[Standards of Service](#) developed to help support consistent service provision for those who have experienced trafficking.
- [NCCASA](#)  
[Expanding our Reach, Equipping North Carolina's Rape Crisis Centers to Serve Survivors of Human Trafficking](#) This manual provides practical information to support increased capacity to serve survivors of human trafficking within rape crisis centers in North Carolina. Information applicable to other programs that respond to or support survivors of violence.
- **Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force**  
[Safety Planning and Harm Reduction Protocol](#), The protocol is a reference tool for those who are interested in learning what a protocol that includes harm reduction might look like.
- [Futures without Violence](#)  
[Building Collaborative Responses to Human Trafficking](#) includes links to current resources, webinar recordings, and other resources to support building and strengthening collaborative responses.
- **Office for Victims of Crime**  
[Practical Guide: Survivor Informed Services](#) This guide was developed for service providers, to support engagement of survivors in anti-trafficking work

## UNDERSTANDING EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING

### Exploitation

It is important for all disciplines to understand how exploitation and trafficking occur and to be alert to the ways systems of response may have inadvertently caused harm and ways they can support healing in their response.

Exploitation and human trafficking, both sex and labor, are human rights issues that impact all people in various ways across the globe. It is important to have a firm understanding that exploitation is about benefiting from the work of others, and that exploitation itself may be layered and present in a wide variety of ways. People groups that are marginalized, systemically underserved in the social setting, or overrepresented in a criminal setting bear an increased risk of exploitation and a wide variety of mistreatment.

Systemic and social issues such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion based on nationality and race, class, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, language, and other factors increase a person's vulnerability to being exploited or trafficked for sex and labor. Recognizing that exploitation and trafficking do not occur because of one single issue is critical to supporting those who experience it. When any of the factors are combined or intersecting, the likelihood of exploitation and/or trafficking increases exponentially.

Unjust and inequitable cultural dynamics and systemic structures increase the risk that marginalized people groups will be exploited. On the same hand, provision of fair compensation, access to affordable legal representation, mental and physical health services, safe affordable housing, and presence of a positive and trustworthy adult all significantly decrease the risk of exploitation and trafficking. The presence of adequate social support and basic need-meeting are protective measures in our communities.

## Trafficking

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, human trafficking is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex.

- Exploiting a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion were used.
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 states that human trafficking involves:
  - a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
  - b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery
- **Sex trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC § 7102).
- **Labor trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, (22 USC § 7102).

Reference: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/federal-law>; <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-115s1862enr/pdf/BILLS-115s1862enr.pdf>

In the State of Nebraska, sex trafficking is the exchange of anything of value for a sex act with/sexual image of a child under age 18 years; or the exchange of anything of value for a sex act with an individual over the age of 18 years when evidence of coercion, force, or fraud are present.

Children, defined as anyone under the age of 18 years, cannot legally consent to commercial sex, and therefore, legally sex trafficking legally exists without coercion, force, fraud, abduction, or manipulation by another person when the victim is under 18. Children cannot be prosecuted for participating in commercial sexual exchange according to Nebraska statutes. Sex trafficking is a felony crime for anyone who purchases or exchanges goods for sex acts with minors, or who helps to arrange or profits from the trafficking or exploitation of any individual.



Sex trafficking of a minor is considered a form of child abuse in Nebraska, and therefore suspicions regarding the trafficking of a minor must be reported to DHHS and Law enforcement (see Confidentiality and Reporting Guidance). Since September 2019, DHHS must assess all reports of suspected trafficking of minors for safety, risk, and needed services.

Reference: Nebraska Statute 28-830- [Human Trafficking defined](#). Statute 28-831- [Identifies sex/labor trafficking as prohibited acts, sets penalties](#).

## Trauma and Impact

Though it is widely accepted that trafficking and exploitation are a form of trauma, the depths and complexity of the trauma caused by exploitation and trafficking are not well understood.

A traumatic event which overwhelms a person's capacity to cope and navigate through a singular event or short-lived event, has different impacts on a person than prolonged abuse and exploitation. For those who have experienced complex trauma and specifically exploitation, the process of preparing them to experience such traumas are rooted in relationships that used and betrayed them. Those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking often believe that relationships are dangerous, and their experience generally proves this to be true.

Most people who eventually experience exploitation or trafficking have experienced various abuses at the hands of another person or system other than the person who grooms and ultimately abuses or exploits them. This is important because exploitation and trafficking is often portrayed as just one person or just one situation that created the space and environment where exploitation and trafficking were able to occur. From societal pressures and systemic injustices to the experiences of multiple forms of abuse, it is critical to notice the ways in which a person becomes vulnerable. Exploitation most often occurs because of the culmination of many other forms of violence and abuse that progress to profit from another person's labor or abuse, not a singular scenario.

It is important to understand that those who have experienced complex traumas have learned to navigate the world, cope, and think about their experiences in ways that have allowed them to survive in spite of what is or has happened to them. These ways of navigating the world are psychological and physiological reactions to complex trauma and are developed in many ways to minimize further harm to self or others. The ways of thinking or navigating the world were developed in reaction to the trauma, an internal protective system functioning as a navigation system and as a lens through which every other interaction with the world is experienced.

The ways of thinking are protective, interpreting circumstances through the lens of unmet needs and making the person feel as if they are in control of what happens next. Over time, these same ways of thinking that protect those who are experiencing, or have experienced, exploitation and trafficking can also be what keeps them from healing through external behaviors that may close them off from trustworthy people who can support and help in healthy ways.

From the perspective of service providers or systems, behaviors that come from these ways of thinking may seem to be contradictory, challenging, or even dangerous. Behaviors are most often a sign that something is happening or has happened. It is important to recognize behavior as the outward presentation of a person attempting to meet a real or perceived need or threat.

Youth who have experienced complex traumas such as exploitation or trafficking may exhibit behaviors that make it challenging to support them. It is important to remember that their behaviors are often the outward presentation of the ways of thinking or coping that protected them through violence and abuse. While these behaviors may be tough to navigate through as someone trying to help or support, it is critical to understand and recognize that the behaviors may be frustrating or even scary to the youth as well. Behaviors that may be seen as disruptive or uncooperative should be viewed as an opportunity to engage as a safe and trustworthy person.

Moving forward and healing doesn't just come from a change in behavior. To move into what is commonly referred to as post trauma life, or post trauma growth, the perspective and thinking must change. The experience of complex trauma skews thinking and beliefs in order to make sense of what is happening in very deep ways. Understanding the world beyond or from any other view other than what was ingrained by the relationships in which the trauma occurred requires major shifts in thinking, and the brain to rewire. It takes significant support, resources, and time to make these shifts and changes.

To intervene, support, protect, and serve those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking, being trauma informed is not enough. Complex traumas such as trafficking, or exploitation require those who intervene or support those who have experienced them to be prepared to respond to the effect and impact that these experiences have on the body, mind, emotions, and behaviors of a person. Each discipline must work to both understand and be prepared to navigate through the impacts of complex traumas such as exploitation and trafficking.

Those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking often have had many of their needs deeply neglected, and their safety has likely been compromised. Neglecting the emotional and psychological safety of youth who have experienced exploitation and trafficking is a harmful mistake. Being physically safe does not mean an environment is safe to ensure stabilization and healing, and those who experience exploitation and trafficking must feel safe in order to believe their situation can improve. Emotional and psychological safety are created through a relationship that is concerned with the wholeness of a person, and not only what that person can do or provide. These relationships take time and trustworthy behavior to build.

Those who are least likely to be protected from harm by systems and society at large are left vulnerable to experiencing harm which impacts the whole person and community. Those who traffic or exploit are often acutely aware of those who have been made vulnerable by systems and by society and use multiple approaches to minimize the risk they may take on through exploiting or trafficking others. Those who traffic or exploit others may present as caregivers, romantic partners, and persons in positions of authority such as teachers, coaches, or clergy. They may work over a significant period of time to gain the trust of the person they intend to victimize and may provide a variety of resources and support intertwined with limitations or threats that become tighter and more volatile over time. Because of this, those who seek to support or intervene must be ready to exercise patience and be prepared to respond in ways that do not mimic the tactics and strategies used by those who traffick or exploit.

Those who seek or work to support or intervene must work to ensure that service plans and delivery are unique to the individual, and work to find ways to honor the individuals desire to pursue justice in nontraditional ways, even if their pursuit does not involve prosecutions. It is important to remember that cyclical or repeated participation in services or investigation measures is normal, especially for those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking, and therefore should not be seen as an indicator of lack of motivation or as a systemic failure. The success or progress of someone who has experienced exploitation or trafficking should not be solely defined by participation in any specific service. The focus of those working to support or intervene should be on establishing partnership and trustworthy relationships with those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking so they can provide their own definition of progress, healing, and success.

Reference:

Polaris. (2021). [Telling the real story of human trafficking: A comprehensive framework](https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/human-trafficking-guide.pdf). Polaris. <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/human-trafficking-guide.pdf>

Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). [A public health approach to preventing human trafficking: Highlights socio-ecological model, risk factors, and promising strategies and approaches](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/HHS%20Human%20Trafficking%20Prevention%20Framework_Final.pdf). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/HHS%20Human%20Trafficking%20Prevention%20Framework\\_Final.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/HHS%20Human%20Trafficking%20Prevention%20Framework_Final.pdf)

Polaris. (2018). [On-ramps, intersections, and exit routes: A roadmap for systems and industries to prevent and disrupt human trafficking](https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking.pdf). Polaris. <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking.pdf>

Polaris. (2023). [In harm's way: How systems fail human trafficking survivors](https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris-modified-June-2023.pdf). Polaris. <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris-modified-June-2023.pdf>

Farrell, A. (2022, September 9). [People who've experienced trafficking are heroes](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/to-end-human-trafficking/202209/people-whove-experienced-trafficking-are-heroes). Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/to-end-human-trafficking/202209/people-whove-experienced-trafficking-are-heroes>

Schwartz, A. (2020). *A practical guide to complex PTSD: Compassionate strategies to begin healing from childhood trauma*. Callisto

Ramsey County Attorney's Office, & Sexual Violence Justice Institute at the MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault. (n.d.). [Safe Harbor Protocol Guidelines: Framework and explanation around No Wrong Door response model and guidance for protocol development](https://mncasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Safe-Harbor-Protocol-Guidelines.pdf). <https://mncasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Safe-Harbor-Protocol-Guidelines.pdf>

## Reflection and Suggested Action

It is critical to take collaborative steps to consider, navigate, and remove barriers faced by those who are most vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking, and to do so with intentional and expansive inclusion of those with lived experience. Take continual action to ensure learning from current information about exploitation and trafficking, and how experiences of intervention and support may differ based on identity and intersectionality, Tribal Nations, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA2S+, Black, AAPI, Latinx and other populations that experience marginalization. It is critical to utilize resources and information that is influenced and developed by those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking, take extra care to ensure what is shared is at least supported by those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking.

Consider becoming familiar with the following resources:

- US DHHS [National Human Trafficking Prevention Framework: A Public Health Approach to Preventing Human Trafficking](#)

- OVC [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) Campaign
- Administration for Children and Families [Toolkit for Building a Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol](#), specifically page 6 and Appendix A.
- [Push and Pull: The Intersections of Poverty, Health Disparities, and Human Trafficking](#)

## WHEN EXPLOITATION OR TRAFFICKING IS SUSPECTED

- Screen youth who may be vulnerable to exploitation or trafficking, especially youth who have demonstrated behaviors which may indicate they are at risk or have been exploited or trafficked.
- For additional support and resources related to training and screening tools currently used in Nebraska, (pg. 26)
  - *From: The Tribal Response and Resources for Human Trafficking Victims in Nebraska (created by Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition [NICWC] and Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition [NETAV])*
  - Best practice recommendations:
    - Screen all clients or potential clients for human trafficking with regular screening/intake protocols/procedures
    - Administer the screening tools verbally (advocate/staff member asking the client the questions)
    - If victimization is not indicated on the screening tool, this does NOT mean that the person has not experienced human trafficking at some point. Always allow for victims to identify later and look into rescreening later on as needed.
  - Screening Tools: (please note, this is not an exhaustive list of human trafficking screening tools; programs may implement others as needed/helpful)
    - Quick Youth Indicators for Trafficking (QYIT)
      - 4 yes/no questions
      - Best for screening with limited time, screening for homeless/missing youth, initial screener and can then follow up with more thorough assessment
      - Link to copy for printing:  
[https://vcrhyp.org/client\\_media/Trafficking%20and%20Exploitation%20Tools/QYIT%20-%20Covenant%20House%20NJ.pdf](https://vcrhyp.org/client_media/Trafficking%20and%20Exploitation%20Tools/QYIT%20-%20Covenant%20House%20NJ.pdf)
    - Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool
      - 8 questions
      - Link to screening tool and guide for use:  
[https://nhhtac.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/adult\\_human\\_trafficking\\_screening\\_tool\\_and\\_guide.pdf](https://nhhtac.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/adult_human_trafficking_screening_tool_and_guide.pdf)
        - Note: the Screening Tool is located on pages 16-17 to print/utilize
- If trafficking is suspected or confirmed via screening tools for a minor, follow mandatory reporting laws as outlined in this guidance. Assessing additional resource needs (in addition to what your agency provides), best practice is to ask, “What additional resources or information can I assist you with today?” or “How else can I help you today?”

- Additional resources/needs could include (but not limited to); note, you can verbally ask the client if they need assistance with each area listed:
  - Mental Health Services
  - Health Care Services (i.e. physical health needs)
  - Sexual Health Services
  - Substance Abuse Services
  - Housing/Shelter
  - Transportation
  - Domestic Violence/Human Trafficking/Sexual Assault/Intimate Partner Violence Advocacy Services
  - Legal Assistance
  - Youth Services
  - Other Social Services/Needs
- Find Nebraska Human Trafficking Statewide Resource List via NebraskaPATH here: [https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_informed/publications/resources.html](https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_informed/publications/resources.html)
- Find Tribal Trafficking Resources in Nebraska via nicwc.org and/or netav.org

## HEALING COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Trafficking and exploitation are the result of inequities in society and systems, these inequities cause vulnerability in people who often end up experiencing exploitation or trafficking. A community where all people feel belonging and safety, have equitable economic opportunities, and are treated equally and with dignity is a community that has considerable protection from exploitation and trafficking. Seeking to prosecute traffickers, find legal justice, or providing trauma-informed services for those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking is important, but this will not decrease trafficking or exploitation by itself. Increasing supports and safety measures, expanding services and developing genuine relationships with people who have been made vulnerable requires commitment to working and collaborating together, deep understanding, trustworthiness, and the fully supported leadership of those with lived experience.

When working to intervene, investigate, or support youth who have experienced exploitation or trafficking there are many things to take into consideration and to practice. Some of the considerations are addressed in other sections of this document (see Understanding Exploitation and Trafficking on page 6, for example), each of these considerations needs to flow from shared language, practice of cultural humility, clear and thorough communication, safety planning, trustworthy relationships and ethical survivor engagement.

### Shared Language

The way trafficking and exploitation is often described or discussed can be a barrier or a pathway to intervention and support. Use of uninformed, outdated, or inaccurate terminology can spread and deepen the hold of false narratives and misinformation. This may cause distrust, misunderstanding, and lead to distancing from participation in any services or investigation that may be offered. Use of informed and current terminology and phrases can provide those who have experienced abuse, exploitation, and trafficking a sense of safety, meaning, and understanding.

Much of the terminology and phraseology used throughout this document come directly from the wisdom of those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking and through documents written or heavily influenced by those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. The shared language resources highlighted below provide insights regarding common terms and phrases, alternative terminology, and guidance to support developing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of exploitation and trafficking itself.

As with all other aspects of developing and implementing responses to exploitation and trafficking, those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking should be informing and defining the terminology that is used by those who seek to intervene or support. A clear and accurate understanding of what trafficking and exploitation is, the impact, and what is needed to heal and prevent is possible through the wisdom and expertise of those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking.

Over time, language may change and evolve, and commitment to continual learning is needed in order to maintain a current and historical understanding of common terminology. It is important to be alert to the impact of words and phrases that are used, and to choose with compassion the use of terminology that is consistent with that which is used by those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking whenever possible.

- Telling the Real Story of Human Trafficking: Getting it right. Making it matter. (2021) Polaris Project. While this entire document is helpful to review and reflect upon, pages 21-29 provide guidance around use of phrases and images used to tell stories of exploitation or trafficking.
- Changing the Narrative of Violence Against Women and Girls. (2018) Women's Fund of Omaha This document provides helpful context to how gender-based violence is messaged in the media, provides important distinction between legal and in-practice terms on pages 5-6, and a grid on pages 19-27 to help reflect and shift how gender-based violences of all kinds are discussed and shared.
- Support Every Survivor Gender and Sexuality Glossary publication by Free From includes important language considerations on pages 152-155
- Action Plan for Survivor Leadership in the Next Decade publication by Survivor Alliance includes a glossary on pages 52-56.
- National Survivor Network provides a list of Foundational Terms
- SharedHope International provides glossary of Trafficking Terms

## Cultural Humility

Honor and respect the diversity of youth and families served by any organization or agency that offers services or intervention, especially anyone offering services to those who may have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking. Cultural considerations should be at the forefront of the work, recognizing that social support plays a part in protecting youth. Any teams created to provide insight or care should comprise of individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds and experiences, including the cultural background of the youth. Home environment, language, ability, and any other demographic information should never be assumed. Instead, youth should be given opportunities to determine what to share about themselves and their needs at any point during the life of the relationship and services.

Remember that many things that may seem routine for those who may serve those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking may not be routine or even familiar for anyone else, taking time

to explain and ensure understanding is critical. Before engaging, consider factors such as the background of the youth, likelihood of images or recordings being taken without consent, likelihood of being forced or coerced to participate in criminal activities for safety, needing to be dependent on those who may not be trustworthy to have basic needs met, or having limited control over circumstances. Consider previous harm that may have come through response systems, or the biases and gaps that response or protective systems may have. Consider the impact of trauma on behavior, memory, emotional regulation, and relationships. And consider emotional and psychological safety equally with physical safety.

### Clear and Thorough Communication

Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking may have complex legal histories, and it is likely that criminal offenses may have been committed by the youth during their experiences for a wide variety of reasons. Regardless of whether a survivor may appear cooperative, it is crucial that youth be given complete information about all services that are offered to them and any investigation that may be occurring. This must include how services and investigations work, the purpose of them, the extent of the youth's control over who participates or gets involved in the services, and what happens to any information, statements or recordings gathered during the course of the services or any investigation. It is important to note that withholding or "gatekeeping" information and opportunity may be used by those who perpetrate violence, exploitation, or trafficking. Withholding information and opportunity from those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking, no matter the reason, may appear to be untrustworthy behavior and will impede the building of healthy relationships. In the event that information or opportunity must be withheld, it would be important to have conversation with the youth about the fact that information is being withheld and the reason for this.

### Safety Planning

Multiple tactics and behaviors used by a person to manipulate or control another person are used when exploiting or trafficking others. Power and control tactics in human trafficking may include limiting free choice, coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, denying, blaming, minimizing, sexual abuse, physical abuse, using privilege, and/or economic abuse. Unfortunately, many systems of response may mimic power and control tactics in interactions and attempts to protect. Individuals working to support or youth who have experienced exploitation or trafficking need to be aware of the strategies they are using to intervene or support and make every effort to avoid use of power and control tactics to make progress with or on behalf of these youth.

Be aware of the negative experiences or traumas that youth, yourself, or other adults that are close to the youth, may have had. Notice things that may bring these traumas back to mind. Regularly engage in informal and conversational safety planning with all parties. Include self-management strategies, boundaries, and meeting of basic needs as part of these plans. Recognize the signs that something is becoming overwhelming and take regular action to maintain internal sense of safety to manage external responses to stress and trauma behaviors and avoid potentially mimicking strategies used by those who exploited or trafficked youth. *See Appendix "Sample Safety Plan."*

### Build Trustworthy Relationships

Great care and consideration should be taken to be trustworthy, predictable, and to treat youth with dignity and respect regardless of how the youth responds. Striking a balance between respecting a youth's autonomy and acknowledging the harms they face may be a challenge at times. Many working with youth who have experienced sexual exploitation and trafficking find it helpful to adopt a harm-reduction approach, an approach that acknowledges change is a process and focuses on minimizing harmful consequences instead of controlling environments or behaviors. This approach can help establish deeper rapport with youth, which can lead to meaningful and healing outcomes.

Many youth who have experienced exploitation or trafficking have been betrayed or used by people who claimed to care about them. As a result, trauma bonding, trusting others, or being trusted, may have impacted them and be difficult for them. The youth may only engage when there is something to be gained, may appear to be overly compliant or even overtly aggressive or dismissive. These behaviors may appear to others as though the youth are being manipulative or inappropriate, often these are skills and strengths that have allowed these youth to meet their needs and survive and should be interpreted as such. Through fostering strong and supportive relationships with trustworthy adults, the risk of abuse, neglect, misdiagnosis or mistreatment, assault, violence and exploitation among youth may be reduced.

- Show genuine interest and curiosity to develop connection, notice and ask about who they are, what they enjoy, what worries them, and things that may interest them. An established connection of care and concern from the beginning of the relationship increases the likelihood of productive connection if a problem arises. This is true whether a youth has experienced exploitation and trafficking. Trustworthiness is earned by approaching all relationships from a place of genuine care and concern.
- When trying to understand a youth better, it is essential to take note of their body language and interactions. Reviewing their records, seeing where they may be succeeding and where they may be having difficulty is also helpful. Speaking with caregivers about their home life and other activities they participate in can provide valuable insights, along with observing behavior in multiple settings. However, be alert to how this information-seeking strategy may mirror strategies used by those who would seek to profit from the labor or abuse of the youth. Be curious and show genuine concern for their well-being as a whole person, instead of what they can do to further an agenda that may not be shared.
- Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking often require a range of support to address and navigate through their complex needs, and they should not be limited to supports provided by individuals who are typically paid to provide services. It is crucial that youth see themselves and their families reflected in the service providers that support them, and to have influence regarding who is included and invited to participate in their services or any investigation. Informal and relatable supportive relationships are essential, as these relationships can provide support outside the limitations of any investigation process and throughout a healing journey.
- When identifying resources and services, ask about resources and services the youth may already be aware of or have desire to participate in. Keep the conversation open-ended and



have them regularly to encourage youth to provide their input. By building relationships with youth before they are labeled as "problematic," more positive outcomes can be nurtured and co-created. Be creative and ask questions that stimulate ideas rather than shutting down discussions.

- Regular check-ins with youth at different times can help to monitor progress and build a strong relationship. Having consistent open and caring conversations with youth about available resources and services, such as positive peers and adult role models, helps to reduce shame and stress that may be associated with using the resources and services.
- It is equally important to understand that youth may not want to be involved in law enforcement or child protection systems, and it may take them an extended period of time to talk about their experiences. Prioritize the youth's needs whether they disclose additional information that may be helpful for an investigation or services. Do not pressure the youth to discuss their experiences, as this can be counterproductive and lead to negative outcomes. Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking may react differently to pressure, including being falsely cooperative, openly hostile, or refusing to participate. It is important to be sensitive to the needs of the youth and provide a supportive environment regardless of their cooperation.

Should concerns arise, it is essential to work in partnership with the youth, their family, and other members of their care team to identify and minimize, or remove the barriers that may be hindering success. It is important to avoid removing the youth from a caring and supervised environment whenever possible, and instead engage the community to find alternative solutions when problems arise.

### Ethical Survivor Engagement

It is critical that those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking are part of the development and implementation of all aspects of response and prevention efforts. This includes legal action and response, program development, and service delivery. It is core to the work to operate in partnership with those who have experienced exploitation and trafficking to support the restoration of autonomy over their lives and increased confidence in determining the next steps in their healing and recovery. Offering services that facilitate connection with formal and informal support within a person's chosen community are protective and intervening measures.

Those who have experienced victimization offer invaluable insight and expertise to those who work to respond, interrupt, or intervene. Better outcomes for those who may be at risk, or those who have already experienced exploitation or trafficking, must intentionally include survivors to identify and develop solutions that are fully informed and meet actual needs. These outcomes will be increasingly more successful as space for those who experience exploitation and trafficking is made to choose how and if they will lead, and whether or not to participate in services, programs, or investigations.

This shift in perspective can help to adjust interactions, center relationships that are not transactional or oppressive, and in remembering that complex trauma impacts every aspect of a person's life. While

specific actions may be complicated when the law dictates a particular response, such as when minors are involved, maintaining honesty, compassion, and trustworthiness throughout is critical.

Consider this survivor reflection

“As a young survivor, my journey through various systems of response has been complex, marked by both resilience and vulnerability. Prior to my experience with sex trafficking, I had already endured traumas that left lasting scars, shaping my perceptions and interactions with people in positions of authority to me. If it were not for my encounters with ethically engaged professionals, I’m not sure my journey would have unfolded the same. When professionals took a trauma-informed approach by respecting my autonomy and offering support without imposing decisions, I began to feel validated and was able to reclaim agency over my life.

One example of this ethical approach was when a counselor at a drug treatment center patiently listened to my story without judgment, offered options within my treatment plan and found ways to support my needs. Their compassionate response made me feel seen and supported, instilling a sense of hope in me during a dark time. Alternatively, encounters with professionals lacking ethical awareness has left me feeling further marginalized and frustrated. One time a law enforcement officer responded dismissively to my report of exploitation, attributing blame to me and questioning the validity of my experiences. The lack of empathy and understanding exacerbated feelings of shame and isolation, reinforcing the trauma I was already experiencing.

Ethical survivor engagement isn't just morally important but plays a big role in helping survivors heal. As I keep moving forward in my recovery journey, I push for changes in systems that put survivors' well-being and control first. It's crucial that support systems don't end up causing more harm to those they're supposed to help.”

Navigating the complexities of ethical survivor engagement is crucial for anyone working with sexually exploited youth. By prioritizing trauma-informed approaches and building trust-based relationships, survivors' recovery journeys can be profoundly impacted.

The following is an excerpt and information from Leslie Briner’s [“Responding to Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking of Youth”](#) by Leslie Briner:

*Building Trust: The Foundation of Ethical Engagement*

Trust is the foundation of ethical survivor engagement. Given survivors' mistrust in others, intentional efforts to build trust are vital. This involves:

- Rapport Building: Forming genuine connections with survivors by spending time getting to know them on their terms. Engage in activities aligned with their interests, creating a safe space for them to share their experiences.
- Trust Building: Recognizing that trust is earned slowly over time through consistent, respectful interactions. Service providers should demonstrate empathy, validate survivors' experiences, and uphold confidentiality. By demonstrating reliability and accountability, service providers can gradually build trust with survivors.

### *Navigating Relationship Dynamics*

Effective engagement with survivors extends beyond individual interactions to include broader relationship dynamics, including:

- **Relationship Stabilization:** As trust deepens, survivors may proactively seek support. Service providers should respond promptly and sensitively, fostering an environment where survivors feel comfortable discussing their needs openly. Establishing clear communication channels and offering ongoing support can contribute to relationship stability.
- **Support System Building:** Recognizing the importance of building a supportive network around survivors, including family members, mentors, and community resources. Assist survivors in accessing these supports to enhance their long-term stability and well-being. By empowering survivors to cultivate meaningful connections and resources, service providers can strengthen their resilience.

### *Collaboration with Community Partners*

Ethical survivor engagement requires collaboration with various community partners, including law enforcement, legal professionals, and social workers. This collaboration involves:

- **Building Relationships:** Proactively engage with community partners to foster mutual respect and understanding. Recognize diverse roles and perspectives, striving for cohesion and alignment in supporting survivors. Establishing open lines of communication can enhance collaborative efforts.
- **Negotiating Role Boundaries:** Acknowledge different mandates and priorities while advocating for survivor-centered approaches. Navigate potential conflicts by prioritizing survivors' safety and well-being. By fostering a culture of collaboration, service providers can maximize the impact of interventions.

### *Trauma-Informed Practice: A Pillar of Ethical Engagement*

Trauma results from overwhelming stress that exceeds one's ability to cope or integrate emotions with an experience. It can manifest in various forms and disrupt fundamental needs such as safety and belonging.

Trauma-informed practice is grounded in understanding the neurological, psychological, and societal impacts of trauma. It incorporates multiple perspectives on trauma into service delivery, focusing on improving overall wellness rather than just treating mental illness. This approach recognizes that traditional service approaches can re-traumatize young people and communities. It is built on five core principles:

- **Safety:** Ensuring physical and emotional safety.
- **Trustworthiness:** Maximizing trustworthiness and respecting boundaries.
- **Choice:** Prioritizing youth's choice and control.
- **Collaboration:** Maximizing collaboration with youth.
- **Empowerment:** Prioritizing youth's self-determination and access to justice.

### *Systems without Trauma Sensitivity:*

- Misuse or overuse of power, leading to punishment and disempowerment.
- Higher rates of staff turnover and low morale, affecting cohesion.
- Labeling and focusing on negative behaviors.

- Devaluing and pathologizing youth.

#### *Systems with Trauma-Informed Practice:*

- Use empathy and strengths-based approaches.
- Provide awareness/training on re-traumatization.
- Center youth voice in all aspects of care.
- Focus on understanding what has happened to the youth.

Ethical survivor engagement is imperative to successful survivor outcomes. By centering trauma-informed principles, fostering trust-based relationships, and collaborating with community partners, service providers can create a supportive environment where survivors feel empowered to reclaim agency over their lives. Upholding the dignity, autonomy, and well-being of all survivors ensures they receive the care and support they deserve (Briner, 2018).

## Reflection and Suggested Action

Here are some additional questions to consider:

- What are the barriers or challenges that those who experience exploitation or trafficking may face that are impacted by their identities? What are the steps that are taken by your agency or organization to remove or mitigate these barriers or challenges?
- How are historically and currently excluded or marginalized populations represented within your agency or organization? Is this representation mirrored from the board room and throughout the agency or organization?
- In what ways does inequality show up or create barriers in the protection of or intervention for those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking?
- What is the process by which protocols, policies, and procedures are reviewed and changed to ensure those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking are treated equitably and in trauma responsive ways?
- Do the stories told within your agency or organization reflect and accurately represent the impact of exploitation and trafficking, or how it may present?
- What is your organization or agency process to ensure continual learning, and to correct misrepresentation of what exploitation and trafficking look like and who it impacts?
- How does your agency or organization ensure that those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking are represented, included and adequately compensated, for developing and providing training, policies, case review or direction, and programs? How is this commitment reflected?

#### Suggested Action:

Connect with the resources provided in Training and Resources (beginning on page 25), and participate in learning and support opportunities with other organizations or agencies.

Become familiar with the impact and benefit of healthy relationships and developmental relationships.

Consider reviewing the following:

- [Askable adults: Summary of Best Practices](#) gives an overview and summary of best practices and what being an “Askable Adult” is all about.
- [Search Institute Youth Development Research and Insights](#) include important and tangible information on developmental relationships, developmental assets, and social capital among other things.

- [Creative Interventions](#) provides a [toolkit](#) and workbook with practical guidance on intervening in interpersonal violence. This may be helpful in identifying interventions as well as further understanding of the impact violence of all kinds has on the community.
- The Sexual Violence Prevention Educators Guide <https://www.omahawomensfund.org/svp-educators-guide/>
- Read “5 Ways your words Impact Trafficking Survivors” <https://polarisproject.org/blog/2023/01/language-matters-5-ways-your-words-impact-trafficking-survivors/>
- Read “Balancing Aces with HOPE” <https://positiveexperience.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Balancing-ACEs-with-HOPE.pdf>

Learn more about ethical engagement of those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Consider reviewing the following:

- [Thriving Warrior’s Dear Community](#) is a public statement regarding following the lead of survivors, written by the Thriving Warrior community in Nebraska.
- Responding to Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking of Youth <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a137c51e5dd5bd61d5ea534/t/5ac7a48a562fa7b74ea71a00/1523033226903/Responding+to+the+Sexual+Exploitation+and+Trafficking+of+Youth+Toolkit+3rd+Edition+Spring+2018.pdf>
- Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs published [Empowerment or Exploitation? Ethical Engagement of Survivor Leaders in Anti-Trafficking Organizations](#) which explores unethical and ethical engagement of survivors in anti-trafficking work.
- [Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience](#) A framework and toolkit to support increasing meaningful engagement with those who have experienced trafficking.

## Confidentiality, Reporting and Legal Considerations

### Mandatory Reporting Guidelines

In Nebraska, all individuals over 18 are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. Sex trafficking of a minor falls under mandatory reporting laws and is included in how child abuse is defined in the State of Nebraska.

It is important to note that failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect may result in a misdemeanor crime which could be punishable by a fine and/or jail time. Some tribes, organizations or agencies require certain steps to be taken when a report needs to be made. Being familiar with the law as well as the policies and procedures where you work is critical to ensuring that you respond appropriately if and when a disclosure is made, or you suspect abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred.

### Building and Maintaining Confidence

It is important to be open, predictable, and honest with the youth every step of the way. From the very beginning of your relationship with them, create open dialogue about what your role is and the limitations of your role. Position yourself as their partner and collaborate with them whenever possible, honor your boundaries and theirs, and be honest about things you may be required to do because of the job you are performing or laws that dictate what happens next. Have conversations about confidentiality and mandatory reporting early in your relationship with them and make those

conversations ongoing. During any conversation, listen, validate their feelings, be open about what you do not know, and ask how you can continue to support them. Respect the youth's right to privacy as much as possible, do not share with others what they have shared with you without their express consent unless it could be harmful or dangerous to keep it to yourself or you are required to do so.

When mandatory reporting is required, be open with the youth that you are making a report, explain why you are making a report, and what it could mean for them. Whenever possible, have the youth participate with you in the reporting process. This step, though potentially uncomfortable, can help to build and maintain trust and ease youth fears about what you say to others about them.

Have resources readily available and be willing to help connect them with advocates or other services whenever possible. Having a previously established relationship with your local resources and programs will help you make better referrals and suggestions when the time comes.

### Who to Call and What to Expect

Nebraska Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-652-1999 (on or off tribal reservation) if child(ren) or minor(s) may be experiencing abuse including trafficking.

- o The caller/reporter will need to be prepared to give detailed information that is known by them and relevant to the abuse/neglect situation being reported.
- o Though the caller/reporter does not need to know all of the information in order to make the report, the worker who answers the hotline will always inquire about the following:
  - Current family address
  - Incident address/jurisdiction (if different from address above)
  - Are there any safety issues for the child protective services worker or law enforcement to be aware of?
  - Family strengths
  - Mental/developmental health
  - Drug/alcohol use or manufacturing/cultivating/distributing
  - Do the intimate partners involved in domestic violence reside in the same home?
  - Were or have weapons been involved in the violence

Additional information:

- What school/daycare does the child(ren) attend?
- Is an interpreter needed? What is the primary language?
- Who else can verify this information?
- Tribal affiliation(s): tribe name(s):
- Has contact with the tribe been attempted?
- Non-custodial parent or extended family

If the case involves an active threat to you or the victim, or to report a human trafficking case to law enforcement, call 911.

- Tips for law enforcement can also be directed to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888)
- For tips to Nebraska State Patrol (for cases on non-reservation land) call the Nebraska Human Trafficking Tip Line (1-833-757-5665; 1-833-PLS-LOOK).

## Additional Reporting Resources

- National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888)
- StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-7NATIVE; 1-844-762-8383)
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [NCMEC] (1-800-LOST; 1-800-843-5678)
- Local domestic violence shelter
  - Find Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence member programs' information here: [https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_help/](https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/)
  - Find Nebraska Human Trafficking Statewide Resource List via NebraskaPATH here: [https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_informed/publications/resources.html](https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_informed/publications/resources.html)

## Legal Considerations

For those who have experienced, or are experiencing, exploitation and trafficking, the complex nature of exploitation and trafficking often includes pending delinquency, criminal, or child protection cases. Many who have experienced exploitation and trafficking have a wide range of civil and criminal legal needs, including family law, housing, immigration support, access to benefits, access to government documents, disability protections, expungement of records, and confidentiality rights, and more.

It is important for those who work in protective or response systems to understand the dynamics of exploitation and trafficking and utilize a trauma-informed approach when working with those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking.

It is rare for those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking to self-identify, so it is up to individuals within these systems to be aware of the laws that can help those who may be impacted. Legal representation, advocacy, and other forms of support are vital, and it is crucial for those providing these services to be aware of the potential legal needs of those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Recognizing the legal needs of those who may have experienced exploitation and trafficking and approaching these situations in a trauma responsive manner, can help better serve and protect, and open pathways forward.

## Important Statutes and Laws

### Related Nebraska Laws

- Each statute can be found using the search engine provided on the Nebraska Legislature website <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/browse-statutes.php>
  - Statute 25-21,299 Civil remedies
  - Statute 27-412 Sex offense cases; relevance of alleged victim's past sexual behavior or alleged sexual predisposition
  - Statute 27-413 Offense of sexual assault, defined
  - Statute 27-414 Criminal use; evidence of similar crimes in sexual assault cases
  - Statute 27-415 Civil case; evidence of crimes in sexual assault cases
  - Statute 28-371- Defines **vulnerable adult**. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-386- Defines **abuse/neglect/exploitation of a vulnerable adult**. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-707- **Defines Child abuse, sets penalties**. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-710 **Child Protection and Family Safety Act** [Nebraska Legislature](#)



- Statute 28-711- **Requires someone with reasonable cause to believe a child is a victim of abuse/neglect call the DHHS hotline.** [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-713- Details responsibilities of DHHS and law enforcement on reports of child abuse/neglect. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-717- violation; penalty for willfully failing to report child abuse or neglect. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-801 Establishes Immunity and affirmative defense
  - Statute 28-830- **Human Trafficking defined.** [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 28-831- **Identifies sex/labor trafficking as prohibited acts,** sets penalties. [Nebraska Legislature](#)
  - Statute 29-3523 **Criminal history record sealing**
  - Statute 29-3005 1132 **Victim of sex trafficking; motion to set aside conviction or adjudication**
  - Statute 29-2292 **Deferral of entry of judgment of conviction**
  - Statute 29-110 Statute of limitations
- Learn more about the federal Legal Definition of Human Trafficking and Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) 2013
    - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/898> 22 USC § 7102
    - <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking>
  - McKinney Vento Act
    - Learn more about McKinney Vento Act here <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/mckinney-vento-act-quick-reference>
  - Violence Against Women Act
    - Learn more about VAWA here <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/abused-spouses-children-and-parents>

#### *Additional Reporting Considerations and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Guidance*

Staff and volunteers at agencies primarily serving adult (18 and older) survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault must comply with the confidentiality standards laid out in federal and state laws. These laws bar domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) agency staff/volunteers from sharing personally identifying information about any individual they serve.

Personal identifiable information includes the survivor's name, date of birth, address, contact information, social security number, driver's license number, passport number, and student ID number. Depending on the size and demographics of the community in which the survivor is receiving services, personally identifying information may also include the gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or religious background of the survivor, as well as the details of the crime they experienced.

DVSA agency staff and volunteers can release a survivor's identifying information in specific circumstances. These include when reporting instances of child abuse and neglect or when the release of information is consented to by the survivor. Survivors consenting to the sharing of their personally identifying information must complete a "Release of Information" form with the DVSA agency that clearly



states the specific information they agree to share, is reasonably time-limited, and is signed by the survivor. Per federal regulations, DVSA agencies cannot require a survivor they are serving to sign a release of information.

The purpose of these confidentiality standards is to protect survivors against retaliatory violence from their abusers, reduce stigma related to reporting violence victimization, and give survivors autonomy over when and how their information is shared. DVSA agency staff/volunteers are trained to treat the confidentiality of those seeking services with the utmost importance. Breaching confidentiality may place their agency in jeopardy of losing funding, make them in violation of the service standards set by the Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, and, most critically, endanger the life of the survivor they are serving.

When a DVSA agency staff/volunteer is asked whether they have worked with an individual, they are trained to respond in a way that neither confirms nor denies their potential interaction with said individual. This response is considered best practice regardless of whether or not the staff/volunteer has interacted with the individual in question.

It is possible for DVSA agencies to work with other service providers and agencies in a way that preserves survivor confidentiality. DVSA agency staff/volunteers can answer most hypothetical questions about certain types of situations and are always able to answer general questions about the services their agency provides. Informing a DVSA staff/volunteer that you would like to get in touch with a specific survivor and asking the staff/volunteer to pass along your contact information is another way to establish contact with the survivor.

### Suggested Action

In addition to becoming familiar with the guidance, laws, and statutes highlighted in this section, take time to review the following:

- Urban Institute publication [Justice in Their Own Words](#) and [Delivering Justice for Human Trafficking Survivors: Implications for Practice](#)
- The Women's Fund of Omaha's publication [Nothing About Us Without Us](#) and [Legal Guide for Representing Victims/Survivors of Sex Trafficking](#).

## TRAINING & RESOURCES

Striving to ensure all those who work to intervene, support, protect, and serve, those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking are prepared and ready to serve and respond from a trauma informed framework is critical. Responding from a place of readiness supports better outcomes for all involved, and significantly reduces the risk of causing harm or retraumatizing those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Even when an agency or organization is well established in its capacity to respond and train those who are employed within them to work with and support those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking, continual reflection and growth is important. With continued learning from a framework of humility and compassion, knowledge deepens and expands, perspectives and understanding shift, and often gaps in knowledge emerge. As gaps in knowledge emerge, the need for practical and applicable resources increases.

There are resources and support available for organizations, agencies, community groups, and individuals who find themselves serving or interacting with those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Yet, identifying applicable, relevant, and trustworthy resources can be time consuming and confusing. Whether uncertainty or confidence is present, before searching for resources, begin with reflection.

- Reflect on personal and work-related biases and values. Values and bias inform beliefs, and beliefs inform behavior, thus speech and action towards or about others is directly linked to values and bias.
- Reflect on personal and work-related limitations. Become aware of how personal experiences may cause focus to shift or motivate judgment calls that may be unfair. Become aware of how funding restrictions, legal requirements, and lack of representation, may impact availability of certain resources as well as support for growth.
- Reflect on knowledge and skill gaps that may keep from trauma readiness and what seems to be the most urgent gaps on which to focus energy.

Throughout the search and identification of the resources that are right for the identified needs keep the rights and humanity of those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking at the forefront of all actions. It is critical to treat those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking with dignity and respect, and to not create or enforce unnecessary barriers to their maintaining agency and control over their own journey. Work to establish trustworthy relationships that promote physical and emotional safety, respect for decisions, and leave out judgment.

The resource section of this document includes links to many resources available to support growth and further enhance response to those who may have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Training and resources provided to individuals in all fields should ensure complete inclusion of, and fair compensation for, those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. At times, specific training developed and implemented by those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking may be limited. There are numerous individuals who have experienced exploitation or trafficking who have chosen to use, and have been supported in using, their expertise to provide guidance, develop solutions and techniques, and influence response systems. Many of the resources included in this document were written, developed, and heavily influenced, by those with lived-experience.

## Training

Extensive, ongoing training, coaching, and on-the-job experience is critical to effectively work with those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. There may be legal requirements for mandatory training within each of these disciplines. For example, sexual assault advocates may be required to have 40 hours of training and be employed by or serve as a volunteer at an organization that provides crisis care to those who have experienced sexual assault.

Several organizations and agencies in Nebraska offer training to support awareness and ever-improving services and interventions for those who work within multiple disciplines. Some of these organizations include:

Agency/Organization	Focus	Website or Contact Information
Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers mission is to enhance Nebraska's response to child abuse. Members of multidisciplinary teams may find training and support information on the website.	Website: <a href="https://www.nebraskacacs.com/who-we-are/">https://www.nebraskacacs.com/who-we-are/</a>  MDT Enhancement: <a href="https://www.nebraskacacs.com/mdt-enhancement/mdt-training-offerings.htm">https://www.nebraskacacs.com/mdt-enhancement/mdt-training-offerings.htm</a>
Nebraska Attorney General's Office	Website includes presentations and information intended to raise awareness and prevent human trafficking in Nebraska.	Website: <a href="https://ago.nebraska.gov/">https://ago.nebraska.gov/</a>  Training: <a href="https://ago.nebraska.gov/get-informed-0">https://ago.nebraska.gov/get-informed-0</a>
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services	Website includes training videos and additional information designed to assist providers in supporting youth and families when responding to human trafficking.	Website: <a href="https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/default.aspx">https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>  Training: <a href="https://dhhs.ne.gov/pages/human-trafficking.aspx">https://dhhs.ne.gov/pages/human-trafficking.aspx</a>
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation	The mission of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation is to maximize the potential of Nebraska's children, youth, and families through collaboration and community-centered impact.	Website: <a href="https://www.nebraskachildren.org/">https://www.nebraskachildren.org/</a>  Connected Youth Initiative: <a href="https://neconnectedyouth.org/">https://neconnectedyouth.org/</a>  Resource List: <a href="https://www.nebraskachildren.org/stay-current/resources.html">https://www.nebraskachildren.org/stay-current/resources.html</a>
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence	The Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence is a statewide advocacy organization that works to enhance safety and	Website: <a href="https://www.nebraskacoalition.org">https://www.nebraskacoalition.org</a>  Training: <a href="https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_involved/training-and-events/event_calendar.html">https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_involved/training-and-events/event_calendar.html</a>

	justice by changing beliefs and behaviors, and dismantling the systems that perpetuate sexual and domestic violence, human trafficking, stalking, and other forms of violence.	
NebraskaPATH	NebraskaPATH facilitates connections between those involved in the anti-trafficking movement to build a competent, trauma-responsive, and survivor-centered response to human trafficking in Nebraska.	Email: <a href="mailto:nebraskapath@gmail.com">nebraskapath@gmail.com</a>  Service Provider Directory: <a href="https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/file_download/62e55f82-0802-4b26-bf58-211c3e1ed97a">https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/file_download/62e55f82-0802-4b26-bf58-211c3e1ed97a</a>
Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition (NETAV)	Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition (NETAV) is a statewide tribal domestic violence/sexual assault coalition working to raise awareness and promote prevention of intimate partner violence against Native Americans and tribal communities in Nebraska through education, training, technical assistance, and support.	Website: <a href="https://www.netav.org">https://www.netav.org</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:info@netav.org">info@netav.org</a>
Rachel Pointer of Pointer Adventures (formerly Rachel Pointer Coaching & Consulting)	Rachel provides Anti-trafficking consultation, ongoing specialty training, facilitation, or resilience coaching. Rachel also provides one-time event workshops and presentations, and provides administrative	Rachel Pointer, Owner & Anti-Trafficking Consultant & Survivor Leader <a href="http://www.rachelpointer.com">http://www.rachelpointer.com</a>

	support such as collaboration meetings, documentation review and information collection, for the purpose of supporting projects or programs.	
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Not everyone who has experienced exploitation or trafficking will make these experiences public, and there should not be an expectation for them to do so. However, it is crucial that training, learning materials and guidance are created, delivered, or supported by those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. Training, learning materials, and guidance should also include perspectives and influence from multiple individuals who have experienced exploitation or trafficking and have a wide variety of experience within the field. Training, learning materials, and guidance should include current information, and any information older than five years should be noted to be potentially outdated or foundational. In recent years, many previously held conclusions about trafficking and exploitation have been challenged and changed as those with lived experience have been more supported in providing leadership and expertise.

Reviewing training and learning materials that are already used is a reasonable and encouraged beginning point. Consider the following:

- Who created the content or publication that is being used to train or inform? What role did those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking play in creating or delivering this content? Are there perspectives from multiple individuals who have experienced exploitation or trafficking included, and if not, is this made clear?
- Were those who experienced exploitation or trafficking paid fairly for any role they had in developing,
- Who funded the content or publications that are being used to train or inform? What role did the funding bodies have in developing, designing, or delivering, the content? How might that have influenced what was included?
- How current is the research and resources that laid the foundation for this content or publication?

## Additional Resources

- **Administration for Children and Families, Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP)**
  - [A Public Health Approach to Preventing Human Trafficking](#)
  - [National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States](#). (2020). Best Practices and Recommendations for States.
  - [Toolkit for Building a Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol](#) Document to support school districts develop response protocols and training.
- **Advocates for Youth** (<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>) Advocates for Youth is an advocacy organization empowering young people to protect themselves and impact their world.

- [Creating Safer Spaces for LGBTQ Youth \(Toolkit\)](#), The toolkit was developed to help youth-serving individuals in education, healthcare and nonprofit organizations support safety in their service environments.
- [Connected Youth Initiative](#) and its many partners offer services, programs, and support in these categories via a unique function called Central Navigation.
  - Transition Support (e.g., youth-led, strength-based coaching)
  - Financial Assistance and Housing (e.g., Opportunity Passport Program)
  - Education and Career Pathways
  - Leadership and Engagement (e.g., advocacy, social connections)
  - Support for Young Survivors of Trafficking
  - Support for Young Parents and Families
- [Department of Justice](#)
  - [FAQ on VAWA Confidentiality Provision](#)
- [Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime: Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center Library](#)
  - [Practical Guide: Survivor Informed Services](#) This guide was developed for service providers, to support engagement of survivors in anti-trafficking work.
- [Freedom Network USA](#) is the largest coalition working on human trafficking in the United States. The FNUSA network includes survivors, legal and social service providers, researchers, and expert consultants.
  - [Recentering Sex Worker Safety in Anti-Trafficking Work: Perspectives from the Field](#). [These guidelines](#) were created to help anti-trafficking organizations reduce the harm that anti-trafficking efforts cause to those in the sex trades and work more collaboratively with sex worker safety advocates.
  - [Standards of Care for the US Anti-Trafficking Field](#) developed to establish basic guidelines to ensure consistent service provision grounded in trauma-informed, evidence-based practices and centering survivor choice.
- [FreeFrom](#) is a LA-based organization founded and staffed by survivors of power-based violence.
  - [Support Every Survivor](#), This publication discusses how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability shape survivors experiences and needs.
  - [Trust Survivors Report](#) This publication discusses the Safety Fund and its impact, includes many important messages from survivors and may challenge preconceived notions about financial support.
- [Global Fund to End Modern Slavery \(GFEMS\)](#) is a movement builder, advocate, grantmaker, and survivor-led organization working to strengthen lived experience leadership at all levels of the fight against modern slavery.
  - [Equity in Evidence: fusing lived experience and community knowledge into research to end human trafficking](#) Is a report on the findings from a conference which brought together international anti-trafficking experts to address gaps in current research and how this impacts services.

- **Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force**
  - [Safety Planning and Harm Reduction Protocol](#), The protocol is a reference tool for those who are interested in learning what a protocol that includes harm reduction might look like.
- **[Modern Slavery & Human Rights, Policy & Evidence Centre](#)** works to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to address it.
  - [Towards principles for equitable engagement: six research projects, research summary](#) highlights six research projects on the topic of ethical engagement of those who have experienced exploitation or trafficking. November 2023.
- **[MN Department of Human Services, Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door](#)** Response to sex trafficking and exploitation in MN emphasizing trauma-informed support rather than delinquency response.
  - [Safe Harbor Protocol Guidelines](#) Updated in 2020, this comprehensive document explores safe harbor protocol guidance in MN.
- **[National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)** builds evidence-based strategies with and for people who use drugs. The work of [harm reduction intersects](#) with many movements, including trafficking and exploitation response.
  - [Principles of Harm Reduction](#), This document is a brief introduction to harm reduction principles and can be very useful in beginning to understand the importance of adopting this lens in anti-trafficking work.
- **[National Survivor Network National Survivor](#)** is a network of survivors in the US and includes survivors of trafficking and exploitation.
  - [Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience](#) A framework and toolkit to support increasing meaningful engagement with those who have experienced trafficking.
  - [Survivor Storytelling Workbook](#) This workbook was developed by survivors, and primarily for survivors who are considering telling their stories.
- **[NCCASA](#)**
  - [Expanding our Reach, Equipping North Carolina's Rape Crisis Centers to Serve Survivors of Human Trafficking](#) This manual provides practical information to support increased capacity to serve survivors of human trafficking within rape crisis centers in North Carolina. Information applicable to other programs that respond to or support survivors of violence.
- **Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska** <https://biane.org/>
  - Online Brain Injury Screening and Support System <https://biane.org/braininjury/brain-injury-screening-tool.html>
- **NebraskaPATH** ([nebraskapath@gmail.com](mailto:nebraskapath@gmail.com)) NebraskaPATH is a listserv community of organizations and individuals in Nebraska who have partnered against human trafficking.



- To join the listserv, please use the following sign-up form:  
<https://forms.gle/Mni11SWoteR7gZ5E7>
- [Services Directory](#) The service provider directory includes information about providers who serve trafficking survivors in Nebraska. It is updated biannually and is current as of 2023.
- [Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence](#) is a statewide advocacy organization that works to enhance safety and justice by changing beliefs and behaviors, and dismantling the systems that perpetuate sexual and domestic violence, human trafficking, stalking, and other forms of violence.
  - [Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska](#) a guide for participating in legislative advocacy. Written by survivors, for survivors.
- [Nebraska Court Improvement Project](#)
  - [What Now: A Guide for Kids in Nebraska's Juvenile Court System](#)
  - [What Now: A Guide for Young People in Nebraska's Juvenile Court System](#)
- [Nebraska Hospitals Association \(NHA\)](#) is a statewide association representing Nebraska's health systems and hospitals. [https://www.nebraskahospitals.org/about\\_us/](https://www.nebraskahospitals.org/about_us/)
  - [Nebraska Hospital Association Human Trafficking Toolkit](#) Practical and effective tools for health care providers to respond when human trafficking is suspected or identified.
- [North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission](#)
  - [Standards of Service](#) developed to help support consistent service provision for those who have experienced trafficking.
- [SexualAssaultHelp.Org](#)
  - [Sexual Assault Victims Bill of Rights](#)
- [SharedHope International](#) Shared Hope influences anti-trafficking work through research and legal support.
  - [Report Cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking: 2023 Toolkit](#) This report card shows the areas where each state has made progress and where we still need to do some work in regard to child and youth sex trafficking.
  - [Safe Harbor Fact Sheet](#) This fact sheet provides an overview of Safe Harbor laws.
  - [Tips on How to Talk to Your Kids About Online Interactions](#) A practical tipsheet to support parents and caregivers in talking to their kids about internet safety.
- [Survive & Thrive Advocacy Center \(STAC\)](#) STAC is a coordinator and service provider for those who may be at risk, or have experienced, human trafficking based in Florida.
  - [Talking with Youth about Human Trafficking: A Resource Guide for Caregivers](#) A resource guide for caregivers to support understanding what human trafficking is, how to recognize it, and how to talk to youth about it.
- [Survivor Alliance](#) Survivor Alliance is a global network of survivors of trafficking and slavery.



- [Action Plan for Survivor Leadership in the Next Decade](#) The action plan was developed and presented by survivor leaders from across the world. It includes practical and actionable steps.
- [Women's Fund of Omaha](#) The Women's Fund of Omaha is an organization dedicated to addressing gender-based inequities in our communities.
  - [Changing the Narrative of Violence Against Women](#) Changing the Narrative is a guide to support responsible sharing of information about gender-based violence, it is specifically designed for media and those who share on various media platforms.
  - [Creating Safe Environments in the Workplace for Victims/Survivors of Violence: Administration Toolkit](#) is a guide for supervisors and administration to support creating safer workplaces for survivors of violence.
  - [Legal Guide for Representing Victims/Survivors of Sex Trafficking Guide is a guide to support legal representation for those who have experienced sex trafficking.](#)
  - [Sexual Violence Prevention Educators Guide](#) The educators guide was developed in collaboration with individuals and organizations who have a shared mission of creating a world free of sexual violence. It is designed to support everyone, and specifically for those who educate and support students aged 13-18.
  - [Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence in the Legislative Process Tipsheet for supporting survivors through legislative advocacy process.](#)
  - [Nothing About Us Without Us](#) research report which outlines survivors needs, from survivors themselves.
- [US Department of State](#)
  - [Survivor Engagement Resources](#)

### Shared Language Resources

- Survivor Influenced Dictionaries, Glossaries, and Language Considerations
  - [Women's Fund of Omaha](#)
    - [Changing the Narrative of Violence Against Women and Girls \(pg 19-27\)](#)
  - [National Survivor Network](#)
    - [Foundational Terms](#)
  - [SharedHope International](#)
    - [Trafficking Terms](#)
  - [Free From](#)
    - [Support Every Survivor Gender and Sexuality Glossary \(pg 152-155\)](#)
  - [Survivor Alliance](#)
    - [Action Plan for Survivor Leadership in the Next Decade Glossary \(pg 52-56\)](#)

### Additional VAWA resources:

- Comparison for VOCA/FVPSA/VAWA and HIPPA confidentiality standards:  
<https://www.techsafety.org/privacy-comparison>

- State laws related to confidentiality (NE located on pages 45-46):  
[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51dc541ce4b03ebab8c5c88c/t/61e9da8acfa98a276a13af1e/1642715790156/CI\\_Advocate+Confidentiality+%26+Privilege+laws\\_2022.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51dc541ce4b03ebab8c5c88c/t/61e9da8acfa98a276a13af1e/1642715790156/CI_Advocate+Confidentiality+%26+Privilege+laws_2022.pdf)
- VAWA Grant Conditions, Victim Privacy and Effective Oversight Procedures:  
<https://www.techsafety.org/vawa-privacy-and-effective-oversight>

Tribal Response and Resources for Human Trafficking Victims in Nebraska – To access the Tribal Response and Resources Checklist, go to <https://www.netav.org/resources> to click on the most updated version.

# Appendix

## **Appendix Table of Contents**

- Standards of Practice to Support Victims/Survivors of Trafficking (NHTTF, SAFE-T, NebraskaPATH, 2020)
- Thriving Warrior Open Letter
- Survivor Driven Policy Change
- Sample Release of Information (ROI)
- Sample Personal Safety Plan
- Sample Emergency Safety Plan

## **Nebraska Standards of Practice to Support Victims/Survivors of Trafficking**

### **Nebraska's Anti-Trafficking Movement**

These standards were developed in 2018 by the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force (NHTTF) to ensure best practice standards of care are established in Nebraska and available to respond to the needs of victims/survivors.

The production of this content was supported by grant number 2015-VT-BX-K041, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and grant number 2015-VT-BX-K016-ECM, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). BJA/OVC is a component of the United States Department of Justice's (USDJ) Office of Justice Programs. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the USDJ.

The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force initially started in 2015 as a joint effort of the Salvation Army and the Nebraska Attorney General. The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force established a statewide, victim-centered response to human trafficking. In 2020 the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force shifted to focus more intensely on law enforcement and prosecution, and the Nebraska Partnership Against Trafficking of Humans (NebraskaPATH) was formed to better support the growing network of multi-disciplinary service providers, survivors, advocates, community partners and local law enforcement.

\*\*Below are the Standards of Care included in the document Nebraska Standards of Practice to Support Victims/Survivors of Trafficking, updated June 2020.\*\*

### **Guiding Principles and Standards of Care Within Scope of Services**

- We recognize that human trafficking is a human rights issue impacting all people.
- We understand that poverty, inequality, gender discrimination and social exclusion (based on race, class, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, language, etc.) can increase a vulnerability to being trafficked for sex and labor.
- We believe survivor input is important in all aspects of program development and service delivery and work in collaboration with survivors to see restored autonomy over their lives and increased confidence in determining the next steps in their healing and recovery.
- We are aware that human trafficking often happens due to the absence of relationships, sense of belonging, and/or ostracism from a community and we offer restorative services that facilitate.
- We acknowledge that healing from complex trauma such as trafficking does not take place in a linear fashion, therefore, cyclical participation in services is not seen as an indicator of failure on the part of the provider.

## **Best Practice Standards of Care**

### **1. Respect for and protection of human rights**

Human trafficking is a serious human rights violation. Assistance provided to victims/survivors of trafficking should aim to restore their rights, provide protection from further violations, and ensure that victims/survivors are made aware of their rights.

### **2. Special considerations for minor victims/survivors**

When working with victims/survivors who are minors (under the age of 19), keep in mind that special considerations often apply. For example, there are specific legal requirements about reporting concerns, sharing information, and getting consent or informing parents or guardians prior to providing services or care in most cases. Programming and services will also need to be adapted for minor victims/survivors to account for important developmental differences and the unique needs that children or adolescents have. Service providers are advised to develop programming and work in collaboration with their local Child Advocacy Center(s), the Department of Health and Human Services, Juvenile Probation and other systems and stakeholders that are knowledgeable on serving minor victims/survivors and their families.

### **3. Accessibility**

Service providers have a coordinated intake process that assesses the individual needs of victims/survivors and can ensure victims/survivors receive services within an organization that can meet their needs, with language that a victims/survivor prefers (ex. developmentally appropriate, trained interpreter, etc). The need for access to specialized interpretation services is communicated in referrals to other providers via release of information. It is advised that agencies develop their own resource list for staff in order to access additional services (see appendix).

### **4. Informed consent**

All services to victims/survivors of trafficking are provided with consent from victims/survivors, as they are the leaders of their treatment and have choice in services. Information about resources and services must be provided in a language the victim/survivor understands. Rights, responsibilities, confidentiality, and exceptions to confidentiality should be explained to victims/survivors in a way that is understandable before service provision begins and prior to when the victim/survivor consents to services.

### **5. Anti-discrimination**

Victims/survivors of human trafficking will have access to services regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.

### **6. Cultural humility**

Service provision should be diverse, inclusive, and flexible to meet the different needs of each victim survivor. Assistance provided to victims/survivors will promote equality and diversity and ensure that victims/survivors are treated fairly and with dignity, on the basis of a victim/survivors needs and with the full respect for their gender, gender identity, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, or age.

## **7. Confidentiality and right to privacy**

All information and communication about the victim/survivor must maintain regard for their right to confidentiality and privacy. The need for confidentiality should be maintained throughout all stages of assistance with victims/survivors, from initial identification through to completion of services. Service providers should clearly communicate to the victim/survivor the limits of their confidentiality. Service providers should ensure that information is only collected and shared with the informed consent of the victim/survivor whenever possible and within the “need to know” limits. Recognizing the different roles of stakeholders involved with victims/survivors, it is advised that clear communication of information and options be made available while respecting the limits of confidentiality for each agency.

Service providers should inform victims/survivors of the risks of sharing their story with the media and must not ask victims/survivors to speak to the media. To avoid potential risk of harm to a victim/survivor, service providers should request them to interact with the media only after the end of their period of service, (after relative safety of the victim/survivor is determined) with their full, ongoing consent, and after appropriate training and counseling.

## **8. Self-determination and participation**

Services will be built on the belief that the victim/survivor has the right to self-determination and agency in the decision-making process. Participation is voluntary.

Victims/survivors choose how and when to leave their trafficking situation and the pace of their recovery. Service providers should be prepared to serve victims/survivors at any stage in this process or know where to refer for appropriate access to services. In acknowledgement that the healing process for victims/survivors is a cyclical process, agencies should consider allowing rapid and easy program reengagement as eligibility requirements allow.

## **9. Gender-sensitive**

Service providers will recognize the needs of victims/survivors are different and that, in order to treat them equally, their gender identity in relation to their needs and circumstances ought to be understood and acknowledged. Service providers will strive to offer tailor-made supports that are responsive to the specialized needs of victims/survivors, including the use of preferred pronouns when speaking to and about a victim/survivor.

## **10. Individualized treatment and care**

The most appropriate personalized assistance, support and protection measures should be provided according to the needs, circumstances, and experiences of the individual victim/survivor. The service provider has a responsibility to have a discussion with the individual victim/survivor on how to engage with informal support networks.

## **11. Holistic and victim/survivor-centered**

Service providers are willing and able to consider all aspects of each individual, including their physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, financial, legal, and social well-being. Service providers will provide or coordinate with other organizations to ensure victims/survivors have access to survivor led support within their own scope of practice.

Within their scope of practice, providers should engage victims/survivors in safety planning whenever possible. A general safety plan template is available in the appendix.

### **12.Continuum of care**

Services provided to victims/survivors of human trafficking should offer a comprehensive continuum of care. A holistic, victim/survivor-centered approach may include collaboration with other providers, who share in a holistic approach to services, to provide appropriate services for victims/survivors.

### **13.Professionalism & Boundaries**

Service providers will implement policies and procedures that set limits for safe, acceptable, and effective behavior by all staff that fosters positive attachments and healthy relationships within professional boundaries. Services agencies should encourage positive coping skills and self-care plans for staff who are working with victims/survivors of trafficking.

All staff have passed Nebraska DHHS and Sex Offender Registry Background checks. Exceptions made in the hiring of staff with criminal convictions are supported by an analysis of the severity of the offense, additional subsequent acts, timeframe of crime, compliance with sanctions, evidence of rehabilitation and potential benefits.

Provider staff must attend Human Trafficking Training through an approved trainer of the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force. Continuing education on Human Trafficking and related issues is highly encouraged. A list of agencies providing approved training is included in the appendix.

\*\*\*Guiding Principles and Standards of Care are adapted from IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking (2007); the Human Trafficking Foundation: Trafficking Survivor Care Standards (2015); the Ohio Human Trafficking Standards (2013) and the Office for Victims of Crimes Model Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime (2016)

### **Service Providers' Values & Commitments**

- **Service** - The provider's primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. The provider will draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to respond to human trafficking in our community. Providers will address the risk factors that leave people vulnerable to human trafficking.
- **Social Justice** - The provider will challenge social injustice and strive to ensure victim/survivor has access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making processes.
- **Dignity & Worth of Person** - The provider will respect the inherent dignity and worth of the victim/survivor and treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. The provider will promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. The provider will seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs.

- **Importance of Human Relationships** - The provider will recognize the central importance of human relationships. The provider will understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. The provider will engage victims/survivors as partners in service provision. The provider will seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of victims/survivors and their families, and our community.
- **Integrity** - The provider will behave in a trustworthy manner and act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.
- **Competence** - The provider will practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise in the area of human trafficking. The provider will continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to service victims/survivors in a trauma informed manner.

\*Adapted from NASW Code of Ethics





## **Thriving Warrior Open Letter**

Dear Community,

Survivors of violence against their personhood have value regardless and beyond what has happened to them. Survivors of violence against their personhood are resilient, can become, and often already are, powerful leaders. And the time has come for us to be clear about what we stand for, and how we believe survivors should be treated and included in work meant to support or serve them.

Ethical and best practice efforts and programs that are intended to protect, support, or impact change for survivors should be developed and championed by survivors. Being survivor centered and survivor driven requires deliberate inclusion of survivors wherever decisions are being made, wherever responses and action plans are being created, and wherever problems are being solved. It takes a tremendous amount of strength and skill to survive abuse, violence, and exploitation. Resourcefulness, creativity, and resilience are part of survivorship. Survivors are human beings, and often have expertise that goes far beyond what happened to them. Survivors are whole and capable people and deserve to be treated as such.

Survivors have solutions and meaningful insights that those who have not experienced abuse or exploitation simply do not have. Developing efforts and programs without survivor leadership in every step of the process dismisses and tokenizes survivors, this practice is harmful to victims and survivors.

Survivors are the experts in their experience and have valuable insights into supports necessary to navigate healing and change. Pressuring or limiting survivors to roles that are selected for them is typecasting, this practice is harmful to victims and survivors.

Survivors have a right to privacy and to decline to share any part of their experience or expertise without consequence, including the consequence of limiting opportunities to participate in leadership and limiting opportunities to be served or compensated. Capturing or utilizing survivors' stories without express consent or benefiting from the use of a survivor's story, or expertise without equitable compensation, is an exploitive practice that is harmful to victims and survivors.

Receiving funding, resources, or benefits from or for the purpose of developing programming or response to victimization, or providing services to victims or survivors, without equitably compensated survivors driving the work is exploitive and abusive. This practice is harmful to victims and survivors.

Any kind of exploitation, tokenization or typecasting survivors is harmful and contrary to best practice standards and trauma responsive care.

We invite you to join us in our efforts in ensuring survivors have our full support in healing and living the life of their choosing. We look forward to following the lead of survivors with you.

Sincerely,  
The Thriving Warrior Team

[www.AThrivingWarrior.com](http://www.AThrivingWarrior.com)



## Why emphasize survivor involvement in developing the next policy agenda?



Developing policies and programs without survivor input and influence in every step of the process puts survivors in the role of a rubber stamp or a token. This is a dismissive practice that harms victims and survivors.



Not seeking and empowering survivor leadership is also harmful to victims and survivors. Policies that are intended to protect, support, or impact change for survivors should be developed and championed by survivors.

Not every survivor is skilled in leading by writing or proofing policy, giving interviews, or even providing training. However, survivors are the experts in their experience, and have valuable insights into supports necessary to navigate healing and change.



**Survivor driven work is best practice, especially in policy and program development.**

Working alongside and with those who have experienced complex trauma ethically requires time. It requires a commitment to doing things in a way that honors the experience and healing of that person (or those persons) and having a deep connection to mission that is not attached only to finances.



Opportunity for meaningful (instead of revictimizing, exploitive, tokenized, or typecasted) survivor engagement and leadership emerges from being clear and honest about the vision, focused on strength and healing, and allowing for reflection over concerns raised.

Written & Prepared by: Rachel Pointer  
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**Elevating survivor voices and honoring lived experience through survivor driven policy that is aligned with the mission and values of an agency takes commitment.**

Being Survivor Driven requires Deliberate Inclusion of survivors wherever decisions are being made, wherever things are being created, and wherever problems are being solved.



Being Survivor Driven means there are Compensated Opportunities for survivors, survivors have Choice to engage or disengage at any point Without Consequence, and survivors Voices Count when decisions are ultimately made.

**Survivors have solutions and meaningful insights those who have not experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation simply do not have.**



Survivors are human beings, and often have expertise that goes far beyond what happened to them.



Honoring lived experience begins with recognizing survivors as whole and capable people.



It takes a tremendous amount of strength and skill to survive abuse, neglect, and exploitation.



Resourcefulness, creativity, and resilience are part of survivorship.



**For the communities you live in, for the partners you work alongside, and the survivors you serve:  
The commitment to being survivor driven is well worth the investment.**

Written & Prepared by: Rachel Pointer  
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## SAMPLE RELEASE OF INFORMATION



### Release of Information Form

I understand that Friendship Home has an obligation to keep my personal information, identifying information, and my records confidential. I also understand that I can choose to allow Friendship Home to release some of my personal information to certain individuals or agencies.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, authorize Friendship Home to share the following specific information with:

<b>Who I want to have my information:</b>	Name: Specific Office at Agency: Phone Number:
---	--

The information may be shared: ☐ in person ☐ by phone ☐ by fax ☐ by mail ☐ by e-mail  
☐ I understand that electronic mail (e-mail) is not confidential and can be intercepted and read by other people.

<b>What info about me will be shared:</b>	<i>(List as specifically as possible, for example: name, dates of service, any documents).</i>
<b>Why I want my info shared: (purpose)</b>	<i>(List as specifically as possible, for example: to receive benefits).</i>

Please Note: there is a risk that a limited release of information can potentially open up access by others to all of your confidential information held by Friendship Home.

#### I understand:

- ☐ That I do not have to sign a release form. I do not have to allow Friendship Home to share my information. Signing a release form is completely voluntary. That this release is limited to what I write above. If I would like Friendship Home to release information about me in the future, I will need to sign another written, time-limited release.
- ☐ That releasing information about me could give another agency or person information about my location and would confirm that I have been receiving services from Friendship Home.
- ☐ That Friendship Home and I may not be able to control what happens to my information once it has been released to the above person or agency, and that the agency or person getting my information may be required by law or practice to share it with others.

This release expires on: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Time

**Releases of information are valid for no longer than 30 days, but may be authorized for shorter periods of time, according to the needs of the victim.**

I understand that this release is valid when I sign it and that I may withdraw my consent to this release at any time either orally or in writing.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Reaffirmation and Extension (if additional time is necessary to meet the purpose of this release)

I confirm that this release is still valid, and I would like to extend the release until \_\_\_\_\_  
New Date New Time

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sample Personal Safety Plan

What are the things I am looking forward to or working on right now?

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What are my “warning signs” (thoughts, images, mood, situation, behavior) that a crisis may be developing or that I may need support:

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What are some **things I can do** to stay grounded, focused, or to calm when I start to feel anxious, worried, scared, or alone? What helps me feel safe and strong?

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Who can I call, text, or message when I **start to feel** I need support or when I am heading into a situation that may be tough?

Name	How I reach them

Who can I call, text, or message if ***I know I need help immediately***?

Name	How I reach them

Are there things I need right now? What do I feel would help me in my journey?

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What do I want to share with the people who help me feel safe, capable, and supported? What would be helpful for people who help me to know?

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Developed by ThrivingWarrior, 2016

## **Emergency Safety Plan**

(This is a sample emergency safety plan to use for providers not formally trained in safety planning. This will help with identifying safe people and next steps. May be important to include a shelter and pantry list for the service area.)

Warning signs (thoughts, images, mood, situation, behavior) that a crisis may be developing:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Internal coping strategies – Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person (relaxation technique, physical activity):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People whom you can ask for help:

- |          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 1. Name: | Phone: |
| 2. Name: | Phone: |

Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis (In an emergency call 911)

- |          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 1. Name: | Phone: |
| 2. Name: | Phone: |

Making the environment safe: (limiting social media, number change, seek out an advocacy center...)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are 3 things I can do to get my needs (food, shelter, safety) in the next 3 days:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I can also call the following crisis lines:

Crisis Text Line Text "Go" to 741-741  
Girls & Boys Town Hotline 1-800-448-3000  
Lasting Hope Recovery Center 800-523-7294  
National Suicide Prevention line 1-800-272-TALK  
(8255)

Safe Harbor Peer Services 402-715-4266  
Hope Hotline 1-800-784-2433  
TrevorLifeline (24/7)- 1-866-488-7386  
TrevorText (M-F, 1pm-8pm CST)- Text "START" to  
678678

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Client Signature

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