

Statement of Problem

According to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), Human Trafficking (H.T.) is defined in its most severe form as Sex Trafficking, which is identified by the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act,” and Labor Trafficking which is defined as the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.” In both instances compliance is obtained through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, without regard of transport across borders acting as the definitive marker (TVPA, 2000). Although the numbers cannot be definitively confirmed due to the secretive nature of the industry, the US Department of Health and Human Services (2008) estimates that anywhere from 600,000 to 800,000 people are bought and sold in the labor and sex markets globally; and anywhere from 14,000 to 17,500 are trafficked into and within the United States annually. The Cook County Commission on Women’s Issues (2007) stated “in a 2003 article, The New York Times labeled Chicagoland as a national hub for trafficking. Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, one of the largest national airports, its multi-faceted transportation infrastructure, and central geographic location make it an ideal location for traffickers to transport victims and disperse them as needed to other cities and states.” Given the implications of this statement, and the outlining suburban areas that remain unawares, it is considered imperative that regional awareness of the crisis be powerful and immediately forthcoming.

As we are able to identify the vulnerable as being the target population in H.T., we need to make the necessary changes to successfully educate Law Enforcement so that they can effectively combat it at the source of risk. Each of the towns identified in a preliminary study

north and northwest of Chicago carry large populations of financially and culturally at-risk. The goal is to form a coalition of varying agencies to tackle the problem head on beginning with the relationship between Law Enforcement and Social Work..

With the passage of the TVPA (2000), Law Enforcement has the legal tools to investigate and arrest traffickers, the ability to provide protection and recovery services, and allows for funding for outreach and education programs in the area of human trafficking; however, many police agencies in the suburban Chicagoland area cannot define human trafficking or its members due to lack of awareness of both measure and legislation. Police agencies must be educated and trained on H.T. in order to have the knowledge and support they need to adequately investigate criminal cases where H.T. may be present.

According to current area anti-trafficking practices, it is the primary goal of agency facilitators to focus on the element of multi-agency involvement, to successfully create a more holistic approach to combating Human Trafficking. Unfortunately, it has been discovered that this theory of approach is seemingly unsuccessful in the suburbs outlining the City of Chicago due to the breakdown of contact, collaborative efforts, and follow-up.

A casual conversation with a suburban patrol officer and his lack of knowledge in the area of H.T. seemed curious considering current H.T. initiatives, so at his request additional information was provided. Upon his understanding of the criteria used to identify trafficked persons he recalled three cases within the four months prior to awareness that would have met initial criteria for further assistance and investigation by local and federal agencies.

With this, a broad investigation of area suburban police departments was initiated. In all, 37 police departments north and northwest of Chicago were contacted by phone to gauge awareness and interest in H.T., and the lack of knowledge was so astonishing that it was deemed

necessary to do a more thorough investigation. A survey was then constructed to assess H.T. awareness, knowledge, training, interest in further information, victim identification, and familiarity with current H.T. Legislation. Fifteen police departments were sampled to include suburbs north-east, north-central, and north-west of Chicago. In all 11 of 15 police departments returned surveys. Based on the 105 responses [by officers of varying rank - from chief to patrol] the most notable results include; 12 with training in H.T. (three reside in a town that identified and prosecuted a federal H.T. case in 1996, and five others are in an adjoining department), 79 requested more information, 92 did not know what resources were available to them, and 81 were not aware of current federal legislation (TVPA 2000). In more than half of the police departments visited, officers of varying rank spoke candidly about known or suspected cases of H.T. - both domestic and sexual exploitation, as well as areas of high-risk in their communities. In all of these cases they stated that little or nothing could be done. In their opinion it was due to lack of knowledge, lack of resources, lack of support, lack of time, and cultural barriers. Of the 15 police departments visited; one department declined involvement, two departments prohibited command staff from participating, and three departments are in the process of completing their surveys for return.

Unfortunately, with this examination of local Law Enforcement it has been discovered that the ideal of a collaborative approach to combating Human Trafficking has been largely unsuccessful in the suburbs outlining the City of Chicago. If it is the goal of the government, federal agencies, social workers, and social service agencies to identify and rescue victims, as well as bringing offenders to justice - then it would seem reasonable and necessary to arm first-responders with the tools they need to identify and investigate traffickers and trafficked individuals. This initiative would give two primary sources of rescue and protection, Police and

Social Workers, a duality of service that seems so lacking in current practice. It would not only expand available resources, but lessen pressure on Department time and personnel limitations as a result of collaborative assistance. In addition, enhancement of education and resources to Law Enforcement is crucial in increasing the number of victims identified, thereby justifying current national funding, initiatives, and tactical procedures.

There are several key findings from this brief study that have shed light on current practice failures in connection with Law Enforcement and Social Work partnership, and how successful program implementation can be achieved. Special attention was paid to candid, impromptu discussions of what officers wanted or needed in training efforts. First and foremost is proper contact. One of the more important discoveries of this investigation is that police departments are chronically short on funding, manpower, and time; and ultimately overloaded in every capacity of service. With countless solicitations for trainings and products, it is easy to understand how mailing a training disc to a department training sergeant is likely to be buried or ignored despite a voice mail follow-up. It was found to be much more effective to meet them where they are. In every department that an officer was personally interacted with at the time of survey disbursement; completion and return was 100%. This coupled with the brevity and direct approach of the surveys lent to a mutual understanding of time constraints and the need for efficiency. The officers appreciated that the surveyor required their assistance but respected their limitations.

The second most important aspect of collaborative involvement is the necessity of acculturation. Police are a culture in and of themselves, as are Social Workers. In any profession, what one experiences in their vocational activities is how they tend to contribute to, or resist new enterprises. Given that Human Trafficking is a crisis that both Police and Social Workers see in

similar light; if we truly expect a coupling of agencies, as well as the elimination of failure within its construct, then initiatives must begin with sensitivity and understanding of the opposing agency's cultural differences. The uniqueness of this initiative lies in its ability to think outside the box, and overcome absolute authority in trade for integration, contribution and cooperative measures by multiple agencies.

The third priority was the recognition of financial constraints. A great deal of departments prioritize their funding according to critical need, and unfortunately, due to the lack of awareness and training initiatives Law Enforcement agencies do not recognize a need for H.T. training. However, once informed, the majority of departments approached expressed a willingness to lend officers for training in the context of collaborative efforts if it didn't impede on their current funding limitations. A grant would certainly provide the resources necessary to maximize effective training efforts to be all-inclusive, rather than awarding training only to those departments that are financially viable.

The primary program objective is to provide strong partnerships between Law Enforcement and Social Work in order to exceed information processing by engaging members into proactive group response - thereby inciting action. Availability of reliable resources, concrete training, and real-life scenarios and execution tactics will also supply an initiative sustainability that will reach far beyond current practices. Additionally, by thinking in a progressive manner and approaching H.T. training efforts from a Law Enforcement perspective, agencies can certainly circumvent an "us against them" struggle for understanding and cooperative learning engagement. It is time to bridge the gap, and what better way than with social justice that touches every element of society.

Project Design and Implementation

Capabilities/Competencies

Impact Outcomes and Evaluations

References

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *The Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking*. Retrieved on May 29, 2008 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking>.

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. Public Law 106-386, October 28.

The Cook County Commission on Women's Issues-The Realities of Human Trafficking in Cook County: Strategies for Ending the Exploitation of Women and Girls. (2007). Public Hearing Report (October).

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Affirmative responses by Law Enforcement personnel in relation to current knowledge and experience in the area of Human Trafficking (H.T.).

Figure 1



