

To: Lara DeLaney
Senior Deputy County Administrator

From: Contra Costa District Attorney

Subject: Proposal to Appy Federal Funds to
Enhance Efforts to Collaboratively Prevent and Respond to
All Forms of Human Trafficking in our Community

Date: January 31, 2022

I. Overview

The Contra Costa District Attorneys Office is the sole prosecuting agency with Contra Costa County. Our sole mission is to seek justice and enhance public safety for all residents.

It has become clear that human trafficking occurring in and through our community is significant. Sex and labor trafficking occur in several forms here, including street level prostitution, exploitation through on-line dating applications and social media sites, domestic servitude, wage theft and extortion.

In 2018, District Attorney Diana Becton established the office's first Human Trafficking Unit to develop a collaborative and comprehensive approach to combat exploitation of persons for sex, or labor, coordinate victim services, and provide education to raise community awareness. Contra Costa County received a federal grant, and the District Attorney's office became the funded law enforcement partner in the Federal Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking grant. We expanded our partnership with The Contra Costa Alliance to End Abuse and local direct service providers to build a local, state and federal Human Trafficking Task Force, which has seen remarkable success.

The Contra Costa District Attorney's office has been a leader in our County's collaborative efforts to identify victims of all forms of human trafficking, but is significantly underfunded to meet the needs of our community. The Human Trafficking Unit needs to expand in order to truly have a meaningful impact on crimes of trafficking and exploitation in our community.

II. Trends

Human trafficking is among the worlds fastest growing criminal enterprises and is estimated to be a \$150 billion-a-year global industry. It is a form of modern day slavery that profits from the exploitation of our most vulnerable populations. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are more than 24.9 million human trafficking victims worldwide at any time. This includes 16 million victims of labor exploitation, 4.8 million victims of sexual exploitation, and 4.1 million victims of state imposed forced labor. The victims of human trafficking are often young girls and women. Young girls and women are 57.6% of forced labor victims and 99.4% of sex trafficking victims. ¹

¹ *Human Trafficking*, State of California, Department of Justice, Oag.ca.gov

Highway 4 links sex trafficking victims and exploiters from East to West Contra Costa. Richmond and San Pablo see street-level prostitution in the 23rd Street corridor (known as a “blade”). East and Central County see on-line dating applications being used to promote commercial sex that then occurs in cars parked in public places (“car dates”) or hotels.

The economic instability caused by the pandemic has made people more vulnerable to both sex and labor exploitation. Commercial sex, often involving domestic and teen-dating violence, has become a part of intimate partner relationships as more couples struggle to make ends meet. Young people glamorize commercial sex based on popular culture / music which promotes the so-called “pimp” lifestyle.

III. Racial Equity

In Contra Costa County, many of our sex trafficking victims are young Black and Hispanic women. Young people glamorize commercial sex based on popular culture / music which promotes the so-called “pimp” lifestyle.

IV. Gaps

We do not have adequate resources and/or staff, and there is a continued need to develop a collaborative and comprehensive approach to combat exploitation of persons for sex, or labor, to coordinate victim services, and provide education to raise community awareness. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this work, there is an acute need for a Human Trafficking Coordinator, who brings together the large number of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies due to the multijurisdictional nature of this work, along with other essential staff who support the work of the Human Trafficking Unit. The existing staff is strained because in addition to managing complex human trafficking cases, they must actively engage in prevention, awareness-raising outreach events, community events, and school trainings. These activities are critical to meeting grant mandates, as well as building trust between law enforcement, community members and social service/advocacy professionals.

Human trafficking cases are complex, often involving an enormous amount of evidence that must be examined from digital devices, like cell phones, computers, and social media accounts. Additional resources are needed to strengthen identification, investigation and prosecution of all types of Human Trafficking Cases.

V. Intersectionality:

The victims of human trafficking are often young girls and women. Young girls and women are 57.6% of forced labor victims and 99.4% of sex trafficking victims. ²

² *Human Trafficking, State of California*, Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General, Oag.ca.gov

In Contra Costa County, our victims are all too often young Black and Hispanic women. Young people glamorize commercial sex based on popular culture / music which promotes the so-called “pimp” lifestyle.

In Contra Costa we have adopted a Five-prong approach. Prevention, Education, Awareness, and Enforcement, are supported by robust victim services. Our Human Trafficking prosecutors have noted how genuinely surprised many defendants are to be facing serious criminal consequences for supporting or profiting from the commercial sex work of others. As a result, we have partnered with Outreach Teams to teach human trafficking in local high schools including Richmond High and Cal High in order to raise awareness and allow our youth to make more informed choices in this arena to avoid both victimization and criminal justice system involvement.

Our Human Trafficking Unit collaborates with trusted advocacy partners including The Alliance, CVS, Family Justice Centers, CFS / CSEC Steering Committee, STAND, Love Never Fails, Justice at Last, Bay Area Legal Aid and more and on teaching, outreach and prevention.

Our Task Force partners now include the US Attorney’s Office, FBI and Homeland Security Investigations, California’s Department of Industrial Relations, Franchise Tax Board and Employment Development Department, Contra Costa law enforcement agencies, and local victim service providers.

VI. How Federal Funds will Support and Enhance Prevention

Our Human Trafficking Unit actively supports outreach aimed at prevention, education, and awareness. Staff, including Victim-Witness advocates represents the Task Force at awareness-raising events such as National Night Out and Human Trafficking Days of Action, based out of our Family Justice Centers in Richmond and Antioch.

Prevention is enhanced by prosecutors who engage in outreach into schools to teach Human Trafficking awareness in Richmond, San Ramon and Antioch schools, and have plans to expand the work with the San Pablo Police Department, along with working to secure Richmond as the location for a pilot, federally funded school outreach program. Our Human Trafficking Unit collaborates with trusted advocacy partners including The Alliance, CVS, Family Justice Centers, CFS / CSEC Steering Committee, STAND, Love Never Fails, Justice at Last, Bay Area Legal Aid and more and on teaching, outreach and prevention. Augmenting Human Trafficking Unit Staff will allow these efforts to continue and expand, even as referrals, investigations and prosecutions increase.

VII. How Federal Funds will Enable Transformational, Bold Ideas to Better Support Immigrant Workers and Families

The Human Trafficking Unit and Task Force have fantastic opportunities to expand our outreach efforts to those community members who are particularly vulnerable to labor trafficking and exploitation such as day laborers, construction workers, seasonal farm workers, domestic workers in hotels and motels and elder care facilities, in the first languages of these workers.

These populations are disproportionately Hispanic and Asian community members lacking immigration status. The Task Force envisions outreach to vulnerable communities, including distributing information that will help these community members support their families by understanding their legal rights to California's minimum wage and overtime, and fair, safe working conditions. Materials would be produced in English, Spanish and Mandarin and presented by/with advocacy partners already working in and trusted by these communities with the expected goal of connecting victims to culturally-competent services and support and investigating /prosecuting exploiters to get court-ordered restitution for the legal value of the victim's labor and support applications for Continued Presence, U Visas and / or T Visas.

These innovative approaches will require that we add capacity to the Human Trafficking Unit in order to plan and execute these outreach efforts and also to respond to the increased referrals, investigations and prosecutions, and victim service needs that will result.

VIII. What Success Will Look Like When Federal Funds Are Used to Add Capacity to the Human Trafficking Unit and Human Trafficking Task Force

The District Attorney's office will be able to better fulfill its existing mission of creating a sustainable, multidisciplinary and collaborative Human Trafficking Task Force. The office will have sufficient trained and experienced staff members to support and expand on existing outreach and training efforts. This will generate more case referrals, more investigations, more survivors recovered and connected to culturally competent services and support and more traffickers held accountable through state and/or federal prosecutions that have a goal of making victims whole through court-ordered restitution. As awareness of rights and potential liabilities increases, community members will be able to make more informed choices to avoid or mitigate exploitative situations involving labor and/or commercial sex or access needed help.

Also support for data collection and analysis allows for all Task Force partners to take more of a "data driven approach" to investigations and prosecutions, thus maximizing scarce resources.

IX. Funding Request \$1 Million