



Arizona Human
Trafficking Council

**Arizona Human Trafficking Council
September 15, 2020, 9:00 AM
Virtual Meeting**

1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council was convened on September 15, 2020 virtually, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (22)	Members Absent (5)
Cindy McCain, Co-Chair	Debbie Johnson
Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair	Doug Coleman
Brian Steele	Kate Brophy McGee
Cara Christ	Lois Lucas
David Curry	Nathaniel Brown
Dominique Roe-Sepowitz	
Heather Carter	
Tony Mapp (Proxy for Heston Silbert)	
Jennifer Crawford	
Jill Rable	
James Gallagher	
Jim Waring	
Mary Therese Colla (Proxy for Joseph Kelroy)	
Maria Cristina Fuentes	
Marsha Calhoun	
Michael Wisehart	
Mike Faust	
Rachel Mitchell	
Sarah Beaumont	
Sarah Kent	
Sheila Polk	
Zora Manjencich	
Staff and Guests Present (8)	
Kim Brooks	Dave Saflar
Vianney Careaga	Gina Jernukian
Kristin Sorensen	Julie Medeiros
Claire Merkel	
Joanna Jauregui	

Call to Order

- **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, called the Arizona Human Trafficking Council meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with 21 members and 8 staff and guests present. **Director Orrantia** reviewed the procedures of how the remote meeting would be facilitated.

Roll Call

- **Director Orrantia, Co-Chair**, conducted roll call of the Council and took note of Councilmember proxies.

Approval of Minutes

- **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, requested a review of the **June 3, 2020** meeting minutes.
 - **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** moved to accept the **June 3, 2020** minutes.
 - **Dr. Sarah Beaumont** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes at 9:07 a.m.

COVID-19 Impact & Updates

Phoenix Police Department

- **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, introduced **Commander Jim Gallagher** and **Lieutenant Dave Saflar** of the Phoenix Police Department for their COVID-19 Impact Update. **Lt. Saflar**, a member of the department's Human Exploitation & Trafficking Unit, shared that following the onset of COVID-19, metropolitan Phoenix did not experience a reduction in trafficking related activity. Instead, during the height of COVID-19, the department experienced an increase in trafficking related calls for service and community complaints. The department adapted street level operations to follow COVID-19 guidelines, ensuring detectives could continue carrying out their law enforcement responsibilities. The department has also ensured that victim services be a focus during the pandemic.
- Over the course of the pandemic, the department had conducted seven operations that resulted in 79 arrests utilizing the Customer Apprehension Program (CAP) . The operational techniques employed in CAP have changed in order to minimize exposure with unknown contacts. **Lt. Saflar** emphasized not only the work their department is doing on the street but also addressing the threat that exists online. The department had recently undertaken an undercover operation that targeted the demand for child sex crimes and human trafficking. In total, 34 arrests were made during the operation.
- **Lt. Saflar** shared the status of massage parlor investigations. Massage parlors officially closed during the pandemic, however ongoing surveillance has shown that some locations were still conducting business. Ongoing covert operations are currently being conducted now that the business has reopened.
- **Director Gil Orrantia** asked about a specific example of a change in operations amid the pandemic. **Lt. Saflar** responded that their officers and detectives have employed more observation techniques through in-car operations which has resulted in more information gathered and the ability to then charge offenders with prostitution. **Commander Gallagher** added that the department is intentional in keeping CDC guidelines front of mind as law enforcement is a close contact profession. This has also given them the ability to explore new ways to maneuver through the pandemic and potentially carry-on some of the more effective techniques post-pandemic.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** asked if they could share more about the efforts that the department is jointly working on. **Lt. Saflar** described a street outreach program that they are working on, designed to provide resources to victims, being described as a softer approach. **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz** shared that the program is to be called STOP, which stands for Sex Trafficking Outreach Program. If Councilmembers would like to engage with this program, connect with **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz**. ASU intends to start this program in October.

Soul Survivor Ink

- **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, introduced **Gina Jernukian** and **Julie Mederios** of Soul Survivor Ink (SSI) for their presentation. **Gina Jernukian** is the founder of Soul Survivor Ink, a 5013(c) organization that removes or

covers-up branding tattoos forced on the victims of sex trafficking. She had been a Permanent Cosmetics, and Para-medical Artist for 11 years, when she learned of a new tattoo removal process and decided to offer this as another stream of income. Shortly after she was certified and began to offer this removal service, she started seeing some odd and questionable looking tattoos. **Gina** had heard of "brandings"; and how they were forced onto individuals to signify that they belong to a certain trafficker, causing her to seek out and educate herself more on this topic. Nearly 6 years later, SSI is now in 34 cities across the country and will perform approximately 1,000 procedures in 2020. They project to be in all 50 states by the second quarter of 2021.

- SSI employs a proprietary device called Lightblade that removes and lightens brands.
- SSI has a contract in Pinal County that allows them to go into prisons to remove brandings on the inmates. SSI is currently working to develop an art catalog to assist first responders in identifying commonly used trafficking brands, such as a crown, and help provide services to victims of trafficking. They are dedicated to "heal from the outside in."
- **Julie Mederios** is a survivor of familial sex trafficking. **Julie** currently works as a survivor mentor for adolescent and adult survivors and will be finishing her masters in counseling this December. She works with the Phoenix Dream Center counseling adult survivors of trafficking. A large number of the survivors she has met, close to 75%, have a brand and some even have multiple brands. **Julie** commented that when her brands were covered up, she felt "like I was walking in freedom." This is an issue that has deeply impacted her life and her goal is to meet survivors no matter where they are at in their journey and provide hope that this is not the end.
- **Sheila Polk** asked **Julie Mederios** what legal obstacles she has encountered in her experiences when adult survivors work with youth survivors as mentors. **Julie** stated that the largest legal obstacle is when the adult survivor has a criminal record because it makes it difficult for them to obtain a clearance card to work with the youth survivors. She stressed the importance of finding others who have walked through the healing process and are in a place to interact with and support other survivors without triggering their trauma.
- **Mrs. McCain** thanked the presenters for their time, for letting Councilmembers know about this service, and for telling their story.

Online Misinformation & Human Trafficking

- **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz**, Director of the Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research at ASU, and **Samantha Calvin**, Community Health Faculty in the Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovations at ASU. **Samantha** teaches Fundamental of Human Trafficking in the College of Nursing at ASU.
- **Samantha** provided a background on the growth of conspiracy theories, the damage they cause and the increase in the misinformation that is being circulated on social media. This information can have troubling affects because of their misleading or entirely false content. She cited Pizzagate, QAnon, and Wayfair as recent examples. **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** pointed out that the Wayfair misinformation spread quickly throughout the Phoenix Valley to highlight how close the misinformation is.
- **Samantha** provided an example of misinformation that targets COVID-19 face mask guidelines. The captioned social media post stated, "In a mask, an adult or child cannot 'mouth' the words 'Help Me'." She explained the danger in how a posts like these help fuel ulterior motives, in this case using human trafficking as an emotional distraction from COVID-19.
- Other dangers involving misinformation that were shared included: resources intended for victims can be misused, the reality of human trafficking can be skewed, people can act on the conspiracy theories and false information leaking into other topics. Efforts to mitigate the effects of misinformation were provided: sharing correct information, correcting misinformation when you can, and learning more about the issue in your own community.
- **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, thanked **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** and **Samantha Calvin** for their time and effort in this area. She also commented on the importance of highlighting the correct information and mentioned that it is election season so that may have an impact on misinformation.

- **Gina Jernukian** echoed the importance of putting out correct information to mitigate the effects of misinformation. She shared some of the work Soul Survivor is doing through a video series on their YouTube channel to build clarity, truth, and prevention to sex trafficking.
- **Lt. Dave Saflar** asked about the motivations that drive individuals to spread or create misinformation. **Samantha Calvin** stated that it heavily depended on the individual, oftentimes misinformation can be used to influence or distract from other issues.
- **Dr. Sarah Beaumont** stressed the importance of redirecting to correct information to ensure adequate time and resources are spent where they are needed most. **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** responded by pitching the idea of the Council engaging in a Campaign of Truth to help dispel misinformation. **Senator Heather Carter** also offered the idea of the Council potentially providing an official statement to rally the community behind correct information. **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, responded that they will discuss these ideas further.

Announcement: STOP RFGA

- **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, introduced **Director Maria Cristina Fuentes**, Director of the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith, and Family. **Director Fuentes** notified Councilmembers that the STOP Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) is now live. The funds awarded under this RFGA are federal funds authorized through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. Approximately \$2.5 million will be awarded to programs throughout Arizona to support prosecution, law enforcement, and community-based victim serving organizations that address sexual assault, domestic violence, sex trafficking, stalking, and dating violence. The grant, with a maximum annual award of \$150,000 per grantee, is renewable for a combined term of 3 years. The grant application will close at 5 pm on October 26, 2020.

Workgroup Updates

- **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Sarah Beaumont**, Co-Chair of the Victim Services Workgroup, for an update on their Workgroup. **Dr. Beaumont** notified the Council that since the last Council meeting in June, the Workgroup met once to finalize planning for a virtual training webinar in response to COVID-19. The Workgroup recorded videos to share best practices and share resources that support vulnerable populations. Members of the Workgroup shared updates to policy and protocol in supporting employee health and safety, adjusting outreach and case management to virtual platforms, and addressing housing and food insecurity. These video recordings will provide viewers an opportunity to learn how other organizations have adapted their programs to continue to be effective and provide them with resources to address emerging issues in client safety and wellbeing. These training videos were recorded in partnership with the McCain Institute. **Dr. Sarah Beaumont** thanked **Kate Ormiston, Alicia Winchel, Dr. Angela Salomon**, and **Sarah Kent** for their participation in serving as presenters and thanked **Joanna Jauregui** and **Vianney Careaga** for their help on the logistics of the recordings. Additionally, GOYFF is working to finalize the space on the Council's website to host the recordings and the resources accompanied with them. The Workgroup will share with the Council soon once the recordings and resources are live.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, reminded Councilmembers to mark their calendars for the next Council meeting on October 21, 2020

Adjournment

- **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz**, before adjourning, updated the Council on the work she is doing with The Collaborative in training and capacity building. She also emphasized the importance of the Council's continued efforts to connect presenters with Council partners as opportunities for collaboration arise.
- **Director Gil Orrantia, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - **Mrs. McCain, Co-Chair**, moved to adjourn.

- **Captain Tony Mapp** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Dated 15 of September 2020
Arizona Human Trafficking Council
Respectfully Submitted By:
Vianney M. Careaga
GOYFF

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