



**Arizona Human Trafficking Council  
December 8, 2022, 10:00 AM**

1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council was convened on **December 8, 2022**.  
1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (21)	Members Absent (8)
Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair	Delegate Nathaniel Brown
Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair	Heather Carter
Nick Alamshaw	Representative Regina Cobb
Dr. Sarah Beaumont	Director Don Herrington
Sarah Chung	Rick Leyvas
Doug Coleman	Senator T.J. Shope
Mikaya Petersen (proxy for Jennifer Crawford)	Councilman Jim Waring
Edwin Wangler (proxy for Director Mike Faust)	Sophia Philis-Ortiz
Alix Ridgeway (proxy for Director Debbie Johnson)	
Director Joseph Kelroy	
Zora Manjencich	
Jill Rable	
Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz	
Director Tim Roemer	
Major Jennifer Pinnow (proxy for Director Heston Silbert)	
Brian Steele	
Jeramia Ramadan (proxy for Director Michael Wisehart)	
Rachel Mitchell	
Jim Gallagher	
David Curry	
Lois Lucas	
Staff and Guests Present (25)	
Amy Peep, GOYFF	Governor Doug Ducey
Olivia Christiani, GOYFF	Gil Orrantia
Joanna Jauregui, McCain Institute	Alec Thomson, LAVIDGE
	Task Force & Workgroup Members
	Major Jennifer Borquez, ACTIC

**Call to Order**

- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, called the Arizona Human Trafficking Council meeting to order at **10:01 a.m.** with 21 members and 25 staff and guests present. She reviewed the procedures of the Council meeting and directed members of the public to the [GOYFF website](#) if they would

like to submit a public comment.

### Approval of Minutes

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, announced that the Council had reached quorum and requested a review of the **October 19, 2022** meeting minutes for motion to accept.
  - **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** moved to accept the **October 19, 2022** minutes.
  - **Jill Rable** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **10:04 a.m.**

### Governor's Address

- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, recognized the progress seen throughout the State of Arizona to expand multidisciplinary partnerships, raise public awareness of human trafficking, and increase the knowledge about programs and services that support victims.
- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, thanked **Governor Doug Ducey** for joining the Council, and for his steadfast leadership around human trafficking; proactively championing the prevention, education, and intervention happening at a state, county, and local level, as well as across all sectors.
- **Governor Doug Ducey** began by emphasizing the Council's importance to creating a healthier and happier Arizona for all. He reflected on his time on the initial task force when serving as Arizona's State Treasurer, and stated he was proud to make the Council permanent during his first year as Governor.
- **Governor Doug Ducey** commended Council members, stating that because of leaders from across the state and across disciplines all working collaboratively over the years, Arizona has been able to prevent human trafficking through awareness and education efforts, increase prosecution of human traffickers/buyers, and better respond to victims of trafficking through trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches. These efforts have led to:
  - Over 50,000 professionals and community members trained to identify, report, and respond to victims of human trafficking.
  - Supported over 30 research studies.
  - Critical legislative changes.
- **Governor Doug Ducey** continued by thanking the Council's previous co-chairs, Ambassador Cindy McCain and former Director of the Arizona Department of Homeland Security, Gil Orrantia. He explained that their leadership and tireless efforts made fighting human trafficking the priority it needed to be in Arizona. It also laid the groundwork for the current co-chairs, **Maria Cristina Fuentes** and **Claire Sechler Merkel**, to expand the critical work of the Council. **Governor Doug Ducey** is grateful for the current co-chair's passion, advocacy, and support for survivors.
- **Governor Doug Ducey** announced that Arizona will launch a state-wide, multi-media campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking and provide resources to all Arizonans. Through a partnership with the Arizona Department of Public Safety and the Arizona Department of Homeland Security, the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC) tip line will now serve as the hotline number for all human trafficking response requests in Arizona. **Governor Doug Ducey** explained that callers will not be rerouted to an agency out of state and hotline staff will be directed to the proper jurisdictions to support victims of trafficking in real time. These efforts continue to raise awareness of trafficking and encourage more Arizonians to get involved.

### Looking Back

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, stated that she is grateful that **Governor Doug Ducey** recognized the importance of fighting this heinous crime throughout Arizona. She also thanked fellow Council members, task force members, and partners across the state for their dedication and creativity in finding workable solutions to prevent trafficking, increase prosecutions of perpetrators, and enhance support for victims.
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, explained that the Council has illuminated the human trafficking landscape in Arizona and across the United States through 30 research studies that have provided insight on how systems of care can better serve survivors of human trafficking, aiding in strengthening protections for victims, and increasing penalties for perpetrators.

- More Arizonans are trained to identify, respond, and serve victims of trafficking using trauma- and survivor-informed approaches. These efforts have led to ensuring the availability of accessible and comprehensive resources for all sectors that may interact with victims and survivors, focusing on capacity building to ensure sustainability, as well as continuing to expand throughout the state.
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, thanked the Governor's of Youth, Faith, and Family (GOYFF), as well as Joanna Jauregui from the McCain Institute, for their efforts to support the Council as they work to end trafficking in the State of Arizona.
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** to discuss more about her work as the director of the Arizona State University (ASU) Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research (STIR). **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz's** research on women and violence with a focus on prostitution and the therapeutic needs for exiting have led to her having an expertise in sex trafficker profiles, establishing geographical prevalence of sex buyers in communities, and sex trafficking victim prevention and intervention design studies. Her knowledge in this arena has opened the door to working closely with community partners including the Phoenix Police Department, the Phoenix Prosecutor's Office and Catholic Charities DIGNITY program.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** reviewed the findings of her research through the years and how it has aided in critical changes to how Arizona best serves victims of trafficking.
  - In a study done from 2017 to 2020, 291 children in Maricopa County had been identified as sex trafficking victims.
    - All but 4 of the children were from Arizona.
    - The age ranged between 5-17 with the average being 15.
    - Most identifications were made through the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) or law enforcement.
    - Record keeping of children who were trafficked from schools and behavioral health centers was implemented during year two and three of the study.
    - Custody of those children went from 93% in the first year to 60% in the second year, determining the need of support to victim's families, guardians, and other involvement with individuals who are outside of the system.
  - Youth Experiences Survey (YES)
    - Youth experiencing homeless are disproportionately affected by sex trafficking. The majority of respondents reported having been kicked out of their homes with 36% reporting they had been sex trafficked for access to survival needs such as food and shelter.
      - The study's findings have led to increased services for youth experiencing homelessness over the last two years. The Arizona Department of Housing has implemented homeless services for youth, new drop in centers, as well as street outreach conducted across the state.
    - 22% of victims of sex trafficking identify with being in special education at some point in their lives.
      - Prevention curriculum was created for educators. More information can be found [here](#).
  - Starfish Place serves women who were sex trafficked and their children. It is unique and run based on findings from data collected.
  - Findings outlined throughout the 30 studies conducted through the years have assisted multiple agencies in receiving federal grants.
  - Looking at the future:
    - Working with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) and the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) substance abuse programs as this is a high risk population.
    - Juvenile Probation.

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, thanked **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** for sharing and proceeded to introduce **Director Tim Roemer** stating that he leads the Arizona Department of Homeland Security and serves as the Arizona's Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) advising the Governor on a wide range of topics including cybersecurity, border security, and counterterrorism.
- **Director Tim Roemer** thanked **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, and **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, for the work they have done and the leadership they have shown, giving special recognition to his predecessor and previous Council co-chair, Gil Orrantia. He stated the Council has worked collaboratively to rescue victims, prosecute offenders, and has made the state safer.
  - He reminisced about the time a state trooper who was trained on identifying the signs of human trafficking was conducting a routine traffic stop and was able to rescue a teenage victim.
- **Director Tim Roemer** continued by highlighting the successes he has witnessed over the last eight years.
  - 1,400 individuals trained to recognize the signs of trafficking from 77 agencies across the state.
  - Approximately 300 children have been rescued from sex trafficking as a result of the trainings.
  - By utilizing victim-centered, trauma-informed, multidisciplinary approaches, rescues have been made of the following:
    - 134 runaways
    - 54 endangered youth
    - 12 victims of sex assault
    - 9 victims of physical abuse
    - 42 abducted children
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, thanked **Director Tim Roemer** for sharing and proceeded to introduce **Brian Steele** stating he is the CEO of the Phoenix Dream Center and has served domestic and international victims of human trafficking since 2008. The Phoenix Dream Center has developed a campus revenue increase of over 10 times the beginning amount, have directly driven the creation and implementation of four different transitional housing programs including the Trauma Informed Sex Trafficking Program, Family Systems Emergency Family Program, and the Age Out Foster Care Programs. They have also created numerous community based outreach programs including Youth and Sex Trafficking Prevention Outreach to Teen Girls, as well as greatly increased community and church support into the vision and mission of the Phoenix Dream Center.
- **Brian Steele** shared his point of view from someone who works inside the faith-based community, as well as the service provider community. He stated a list of accomplishments:
  - 50,000+ people have been trained, 100,000+ people impacted
  - The Collaborative
  - The impact of Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz's data (cited and used internationally)
  - Victim-services improvement
- **Brian Steele** ended by stating that the single-greatest accomplishment was that the Council made room at the table since its inception, increasing the number of ideologies and perspectives.

### Looking Ahead

- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, explained that the State of Arizona appropriated \$10 million directly to fight human trafficking. These monies were given to the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA), distributed through the [Anti-Human Trafficking Grant Fund](#). \$8 million being allocated to county, local law enforcement agencies to provide assistance, equipment, analytical services, services to victims, and training to law enforcement.
  - She stated that some of these monies have already been awarded, and emphasized how these funds provide an opportunity for transformational change.
- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, highlighted the efforts of the McCain Institute in the prevention, education, awareness, and training of trafficking. She continued by stating that the data and research being done at ASU STIR is vital to the longevity of any project, and necessary to receive financial support.
- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, discussed the media campaign that **Governor Doug Ducey** mentioned earlier in the meeting. She emphasized that it is not a single event specific media

campaign, but rather serves as a catalyst ahead of the mass events coming to Arizona designed to increase education of trafficking while bringing awareness to the new statewide tipline. This effort was to ensure the Council was disseminating information consistently and most effectively.

- Partnership between the Council and the United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) to bring nationally recognized Blue Campaign materials that are Arizona specific with the inclusion of the statewide hotline.
  - Funding came from a multitude of sources including GOYFF, DCS, Arizona Lottery, AZDHS, Arizona Office of Tourism, and DES.
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, discussed how she has witnessed a large difference in response/support compared to in 2015. She explained that the Council acquired additional funding from the NFL Host Committee to support prevention efforts leading up to the Super Bowl. The Council has also been able to obtain support from the Phoenix Airport Authority, agreeing to display Blue Campaign materials throughout the airports.

#### Upcoming Meeting

- **Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, reminded council members of the next meeting on **February 8, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.**, stating that it will be held in a hybrid format.

#### Closing Remarks

- **Governor Doug Ducey** reflected on all he has learned through the years in this arena, how there is still much to do when educating the public, but stated that trafficking is apolitical and can affect anyone. He thanked the Council for their hard work and is proud of where Arizona is at on this issue.

#### Adjournment

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, highlighted the different events that will be occurring in January which is recognized as Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness Month.
  - USDHS's Blue Campaign [Human Trafficking Youth Forum](#) - Tuesday, January 31, 2023
  - Phoenix Dream Center and StreetLight USA will be hosting two events:
    - [Phoenix Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention 2023 Summit](#) - Saturday, January 14, 2023
    - [Stop Traffic Walk](#) - Saturday, January 28, 2023
  - SOAP Project's [SOAP UP](#) - Saturday, January 28, 2023
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, adjourned the meeting at **10:59 a.m.**

Dated 13 of December 2022  
Arizona Human Trafficking Council  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Amy Peep  
GOYFF