



Governor's Council
to Combat Human
Trafficking in Arizona

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ARIZONA

Hybrid Meeting

November 29, 2023, 9:00 AM

1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007

A general meeting of the Governor's Council to Combat Human Trafficking in Arizona convened on **November 29, 2023**, notice duly given.

Members Present (16)	Members Absent (5)
Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair	Nathaniel Brown
Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair	David Lujan
Lieutenant Nick Alamshaw	Sophia Philis-Ortiz
Dr. Sarah Beaumont	Senator T.J. Shope
Sarah Way (Proxy for Sarah Chung)	Jim Waring
Doug Coleman	
Major Jennifer Borquez (Proxy for Col. Jeff Glover)	
Tonya Hamilton	
Steve Selover (Proxy for Joseph Kelroy)	
Lois Lucas	
Rachelle Lump	
Sara Micflikier (Proxy for Rachel Mitchell)	
Lieutenant Jason Sloan (Proxy for Captain Andrew Orozco)	
Jill Rable	
Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz	
Brian Steele	
Staff and Guests Present (7)	
Amy Peep, GOYFF	Darlene Quihuis, Presenter
Chantel Hutchinson, GOYFF	Commander Tom Boelts, Presenter
Emily Uline-Olmstead, GOYFF	Chief Deputy Russ Skinner, Presenter
	Sheriff Paul Penzone, Guest

Call to Order

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, called the Governor's Council to Combat Human Trafficking in Arizona meeting to order at **09:04 AM** with 16 members and eight staff/guests present. She reviewed meeting procedures, welcomed all those joining via Zoom, and thanked them for their flexibility.

Approval of Minutes

- With the quorum met, **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, requested a review of the **October 18, 2023** meeting minutes.
 - **Doug Coleman** moved to accept the **October 18, 2023** minutes.
 - **Major Jennifer Borquez** seconded the motion.
- All present members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **09:08 AM**.

Executive Order 2023-26

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, announced that Governor Hobbs continued the Council under [Executive Order 2023-26](#). Henceforth, the Council's new name is the "Governor's Council to Combat Human Trafficking in Arizona."
 - Find other changes in the linked Executive Order.

Human Trafficking Prevention Month Activities

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, stated that January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month. She provided a time for Council members to share their upcoming events/training sessions.

The Collaborative | Mercy Care

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Sarah Way** to present about the statewide Trafficking Youth Collaborative to the Council, specifically speaking on Mercy Care's process for preventing and treating trafficked youth.
 - **Sarah Way** is the Human Trafficking Project Manager with [Mercy Care](#). In this role, she works with communities to build collaborative processes for treating sexually exploited children. She brings extensive knowledge about Domestic Sex Trafficking, having worked directly with approximately 300 survivors of sex trafficking and the commercial sex industry during her tenure as the Human Trafficking Victim Advocate with the Phoenix Police Department Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit. Sarah is also a consultant for Arizona State University (ASU)'s Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention and Research (STIR), where she trains about best practices for street outreach to sex trafficking victims.
- **Sarah Way** began her presentation by explaining that the purpose of the Collaborative is to coordinate prompt treatment for all youths in child welfare custody who are suspected or confirmed of sex trafficking victimization in Arizona, provide communication channels between all stakeholders related to the child, build capacity for responding to trafficking victims, center best practices around survivor voices, and capture data to understand the unique experiences of trafficked children while using this data to craft solutions.
 - The Trafficked Youth Collaborative Process:
 - (1) Identification (suspected or confirmed)
 - Identifying a child as a victim or possible victim of trafficking (law enforcement/forensic interview or self-disclosure to a guardian, therapist, probation, or survivor).
 - Filing a police report with local jurisdiction.
 - (2) Multidisciplinary communication
 - (3) Documentation
 - Upkeep of trafficking log (Mercy Care)
 - (4) Immediate treatment
 - Medical or behavioral health assessment
 - MIND 24-7 or Emergency Departments (outside of Maricopa County)
 - (5) Ongoing therapeutic interventions
 - Services recommended by the clinical team (child's assigned provider)
 - Upkeep of trafficking log (Mercy Care)
 - Outcomes of the Collaborative Partnerships:
 - Stakeholders assist in law enforcement investigations
 - Timely interviews and exams
 - Preventing re-traumatization; fewer disclosures needed
 - Painting a comprehensive picture of the youth's experience to guide treatment
 - Ensure proper identification of human trafficking victimization and not a behavioral problem
 - Earlier intervention and better clinical documentation
 - Increased support to the child
 - Continuity of care
 - Positive, trusting relationships with human trafficking-specialized professionals

- Fewer and shorter absent without leave (AWOLs) cases
 - Transition to adulthood and access to human trafficking victim services
 - Statewide expansion efforts
 - Partnered with the McCain Institute, Arizona State University (ASU)'s Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention and Research (STIR), the Arizona Anti-Trafficking Network, the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS), Juvenile Probation, the Courts, Child Advocacy Centers, local law enforcement, and regional task forces to reach all counties.
 - Southern Arizona Collaborative was established in 2021 with the Southern Arizona Child Advocacy Center.
 - Eastern Arizona Human Trafficking Coalition was established in 2023 for collaboration and training in Navajo, Apache, Gila, Graham, and Greenlee Counties.
 - Challenges facing rural communities
 - Lack of specialized victim services
 - No 23-hour Crisis Centers
 - Large geographic regions increase travel time for victims
 - Staffing shortages that do not allow time for training
 - Sex trafficking dynamics differ from urban settings:
 - Familial trafficking
 - No-3rd Party facilities for victims that are experiencing addiction, poverty
 - Fewer disclosures due to stigma
- **Tonya Hamilton** asked if the Collaborative works with the Coalitions, non-profits, or the Tribal nations.
 - **Sarah Way** responded that the two 2023 meetings were in the Globe area specifically for the Eastern Human Trafficking Coalition. The first meeting had quite a few San Carlos Apache Nation attendees. For the second meeting, the Coalition partnered with them directly, and the San Carlos Apache Nation comprised approximately 75% of the attendees.
- To view Sarah Way's presentation, click [here](#).

The Collaborative | MIND 24/7

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, announced that **Mary Kaye Garcia** could not present to the Council due to sickness.

The Evaluation of the Collaborative

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** to provide an overview of the evaluation process of the Collaborative.
 - **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** is an Associate Professor of the School of Social Work and the ASU STIR Director.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** began her presentation by explaining that the evaluation process is still pending approval. However, she provided a brief overview of the current findings.
 - From 2021 to 2023, the Collaborative saw 309 children.
 - The majority of referrals came from DCS.
 - A child sex trafficking case (male or female) went through the Collaborative in 11 of Arizona's 15 counties.
 - Of the children the Collaborative saw, a high number of these youth reported using fentanyl.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** also explained some of the current trends the Collaborative has witnessed, particularly that of familial trafficking, referred to also as family-facilitated trafficking, family-controlled trafficking, or relative trafficking.
 - In the case of familial trafficking, there is a unique relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.
 - Across the different types of trafficking (labor, sex, and sex/sex and labor), there were increased reports of the trafficker being a family member or caregiver.

- In 2021, [Polaris](#) data indicated that a parent/caregiver facilitated the trafficking for 33% of the national human trafficking hotline cases. Internationally, approximately 41% of child trafficking is perpetrated by a family member/caregiver.
- If exploitation occurred by relatives, the age of victimization ranged from 4 to 16. If it happened due to non-relatives, the age of victimization ranged from 11 to 17.
- Some challenges in minor familial trafficking include:
 - The minor is unwilling to testify, and if they do, is not believed.
 - There is not enough evidence to prosecute these cases.
 - Laws not written with family perpetrators in mind.
 - No or inadequate options for out-of-home placement.
- Cases are more likely to be reported by anonymous community members rather than professionals, such as teachers, healthcare providers, social workers, law enforcement officers, and others who work with vulnerable populations.
- Recommendations for handling these cases moving forward:
 - Believe victim testimonies.
 - Accurately identify and label cases of familial trafficking; abuse, neglect, or other offenses hinder service mapping.
 - Comprehensive programs explicitly tailored to familial victims.
 - Focusing on trauma and attachment to facilitate “deprogramming.”
 - Age-appropriate.
 - Cultural considerations.
 - Employ a full-time Human Trafficking Investigator within the child welfare system.
 - Create multidisciplinary teams with specializations in family-controlled trafficking.
 - Increase interactions with social service agencies, child advocacy centers, victim advocates/[guardian ad litem \(GAL\)](#), victim service providers, and other law enforcement agencies.
 - More training for law enforcement regarding familial trafficking.
- To view Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz’s presentation, click [here](#).

Anti-Human Trafficking Fund

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Darlene Quihuis** to update the Council on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Border Security Anti-Human Trafficking Grant Fund, utilization of dollars, and funded programs.
- **Darlene Quihuis** began her presentation by providing an overview of the fund.
 - House Bill (HB) 2893: Established [ARS 26-105](#); Border Security Fund
 - HB 2860: Established [ARS 26-106](#); The Anti-Human Trafficking Grant consists of monies appropriated by the Arizona State Legislature that is administered and distributed to eligible programs to reduce human trafficking in Arizona by the DEMA. Eligibility for a program to receive funding does either of the following:
 - Work to reduce human trafficking by providing assistance and analytical services to law enforcement agencies;
 - Provide services to victims and training to law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies and the public on preventing and identifying human trafficking.
 - [HB 2862](#) Section 110(3): Detailed the \$10 million appropriation.
 - \$2 million to the [Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center \(ACTIC\)](#) of the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS).
 - \$8 million in grant funding awards (\$500,000 at most per agency) to City, Town, and County Law Enforcement agencies.
- **Darlene Quihuis** explained that DEMA awarded 20 programs in eight Arizona Counties, totaling approximately \$9.5 million, including its allocation to the ACTIC to establish the tip line (\$2 million).
 - Counties include La Paz, Gila, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma.
 - Most commonly, programs requested funding for personnel (i.e., dedicated human trafficking detectives), professional development (conferences and training), and supplies. **Darlene Quihuis**

emphasized that if programs requested technology (i.e., license plate readers), the information collected is shared with other counties, noting the funds have allowed the opportunity to establish various partnerships.

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, stated that she appreciated DEMA and Darlene's work throughout this process and that the fund allowed the local agencies to decide what they needed for their specific community.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** asked if current awardees who requested less than the \$500,000 max could reapply for the remaining amount left in the fund.
 - **Darlene Quihuis** responded that programs can amend their application if they initially requested less than \$500,000.
- To view Darlene Quihuis's presentation, click [here](#).

Yavapai County Human Trafficking Conference

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Commander Tom Boelts** to discuss the [Yavapai County Sheriff's Office's \(YCSO\)](#) DEMA program with the Council.
- **Commander Tom Boelts** began his presentation by providing an overview of YCSO's program and partners, discussing that YCSO was a DEMA award recipient, receiving \$500,000 to hire two full-time human trafficking detectives who are responsible for organizing buyer stings, following up on leads to the nationwide/state hotline, locating victims, speaking with the community, and assisting agencies with human trafficking investigations. Other details regarding the program and the allocated funds discussed:
 - Vehicles and equipment.
 - National conference training for detectives and their supervisors.
 - Three years, partial funding for the Arizona Human Trafficking Summit; in 2023, over 300 people attended the Summit.
 - Jail screening program and training for Detention Officers.
 - Develop a screening tool to assess an inmate's risk of human trafficking victimization and implement it during intake.
 - Develop training for Detention Officers to recognize and act on indicators of outside attempts to victimize inmates.
 - Yavapai County Multidisciplinary Team (MDT).
 - Provide quality training and expand attendees' disciplines and geographic locations.
 - Overtime to YCSO and law enforcement partners for buyer stings.
- To view Commander Tom Boelts's presentation, click [here](#).

Maricopa County Tablets

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Chief Deputy Russ Skinner** to provide a presentation about the [Maricopa County Sheriff's Office \(MCSO\)](#) mission and partnership of education, detection, and investigation of crimes involving Sex and Human Trafficking. The DEMA Anti-Human Trafficking Grant Fund funds the program.
- **Chief Deputy Russ Skinner** explained that MCSO collaborated with the ASU STIR to secure the DEMA Anti-Human Trafficking Grant Fund, which provides
 - \$495,000 over three years;
 - Implementation of a Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Investigator that will be part of the East Valley Human Trafficking Task Force (EVHTTF) housed under the Mesa Police Department;
 - Enhanced training in Human Trafficking Detection and Investigation for current Special Victims Unit Detectives.
 - Priority on trafficking cases developed within the jail system and community cases where MCSO has primary jurisdiction.
 - Dedicated office space in the East Valley for investigators and victim interviews.
- **Chief Deputy Russ Skinner** provided more details regarding the MCSO Special Victims Unit – East.
 - Moved to a 3,025 square foot off-site location in September 2023 with proximity to MCSO's areas of responsibility

- A neutral environment for victims to interact with detectives
 - Victim-focused interview room
 - Waiting areas for child and adult victims of sex crimes
 - [Winged Hope](#) donated furnishings to the lobby, play space, interview room, and kitchen
- **Chief Deputy Russ Skinner** discussed the MCSO Custody Bureau, explaining it is the fourth largest jail system in the nation (Harris County, Texas; Cook County, Illinois; and Los Angeles County, California) and provided employee and inmate statistics.
- **Chief Deputy Russ Skinner** explained the trafficking screening tool for inmates at Estrella Jail developed in partnership with ASU STIR, MCSO, sex trafficking survivors, and community partners.
 - The screening is a set of 12 questions delivered via tablet and helps to identify inmates who have experienced sex trafficking. It also allows inmates to request services while in custody or when released.
 - Since July 1, 2023:
 - One hundred twenty-six inmates have completed the screening, identifying as being a victim of sex trafficking.
 - Ninety-nine inmates were interviewed by one of six Detention Human Trafficking Liaisons and connected to community service providers.
 - The Arizona Human Trafficking Tip Line received 71 calls from MCSO Jails.
 - Four inmates have been placed into housing for trafficking survivors and provided other services once released.
 - Since 2019, four traffickers have been identified through tablet activity and turned over to Law Enforcement Detectives for further investigation.
 - As part of the DEMA Grant, MCSO and ASU STIR will offer sex trafficking programs and classes to MCSO's inmates.
 - On January 11, 2024, ASU STIR will begin group classes at the Estrella Jail called "Sex Trafficking Awareness and Recovery (STAR)".
 - ASU STIR and the MCSO Programs Division are working to develop self-help classes delivered on inmate tablets related to sexual trauma.
 - In 2018, MCSO partnered with ASU STIR and the McCain Institute to provide sex trafficking training to MCSO Civilian, Detention, and Sworn Staff
 - Over 250 MCSO employees have completed the training
 - ASU STIR and MCSO are working to develop a training video to present to all staff members.
 - ASU STIR and MCSO developed a sex trafficking training session that is specific to jails and prisons entitled "Sex Trafficking Behind Bars."
 - Identifying victims in custody
 - Identifying recruitment of victims behind bars
 - Interviewing victims
 - Connecting victims with community services
 - Identifying traffickers in custody using jail intelligence
 - ASU STIR and MCSO developed and published a training pamphlet, "What You Need To Know: Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Training Tool For Adult and Juvenile Correctional Services."
- To view Chief Deputy Russ Skinner's presentation, click [here](#).

Arizona Human Trafficking Tip Line

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Major Jennifer Borquez** to give an update regarding the Arizona Human Trafficking Tip Line, funded through the Anti-Trafficking Grant Fund and operated in partnership with the ASU STIR.
- **Major Jennifer Borquez** began her presentation by stating that as of November 2023, ACTIC has spent approximately \$1.5 of its \$2 million budget on the following:
 - Four electronic billboards were placed along valley highways for the month surrounding the 2023 Super Bowl.

- Collaboration with ASU STIR
 - Public awareness post-Super Bowl to amplify awareness of the tip line around the state through marketing materials (English and Spanish) for native communities and agencies serving human trafficking survivors.
 - 24/7 Human Trafficking Victim Crisis Assistance and Support; working to identify a better handoff for individuals who need to be transferred to ASU STIR.
- **Major Jennifer Borquez** explained that from February to September 2023, 71 calls to the tip line were received from Yavapai, Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties, with an increasing number each quarter.
 - The different call types are detailed below:
 - Self-reported sex trafficking (22)
 - Suspected sex trafficking (10)
 - Self-reported domestic issues (0)
 - Unknown-provided support (1)
- To view Major Jennifer Borquez's presentation, click [here](#).

Workgroup Updates

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, stated that Workgroup updates would move to the following meeting.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, reminded members of the next meeting on **February 15, 2024, at 09:00 AM**. The meeting will be held at the Executive Tower in a hybrid format for Council Members and the public to join virtually.

Adjournment

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Dr. Dominique Roe Sepowitz** moved to accept the motion.
 - **Rachelle Lump** seconded the motion.
- All present members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **11:13 AM**.

Dated November 30, 2023
Governor's Council to Combat Human Trafficking in Arizona
Respectfully Submitted By:
Amy Peep
GOYFF