PROJECT ALTO: ARIZONA LABOR TRAFFICKING OUTREACH

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D.
Ezequiel Dominguez, MSW

Arizona State University
Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research
INTRODUCTION

• Current landscape of anti-trafficking efforts unique to addressing labor trafficking situations
  ○ Stakeholder grants are inclusive of victims of labor trafficking; still have a low number of this population enrolled in services
• What subgroups are more likely to encounter labor trafficking?
  ○ There is a high demand for day laborers around the valley
    ▪ Hired for short-term manual labor jobs including plumbing, landscaping, roofing
    ▪ Sometimes undocumented; mostly limited-English; sometimes isolated from family and friends
PROJECT OVERVIEW

• Human Trafficking Leadership Academy Class 6 recommendation for preventing labor trafficking: conduct safe outreach to undocumented laborers

• Community partners: ASU STIR, Chicanos Por La Causa, Consulate General of Mexico, Consulate General of Guatemala, International Rescue Committee, McCain Institute

• Mission: Support undocumented workers and those involved in informal labor with developing a better understanding of labor rights and increasing awareness of services available in the community
METHODOLOGY

• Developed screening tool
  ○ Demographics
  ○ Resources checklist: Housing, transportation, hygiene products, clothing, detox/drug treatment, employment assistance, food assistance, legal/immigration assistance, case management
  ○ Trafficking-specific questions
• Scouted locations (Home Depot, Circle K, ARCO gas stations) in central Phoenix and East valley
  ○ Incorporated feedback from multiple Reddit posts discussing locations of day laborers
• Printed Know Your Rights materials (pamphlets and shoe cards) in English and Spanish
• Purchased food and drink and assembled snack packs
• Centralized around Spanish speaking staff and volunteers
OUTREACH

Between September 2021 and April 2022...

The team met with over 200 day laborers
143 agreed to complete an intake
### DEMOGRAPHICS
(n=143)

**AGE**
- Average age = 38.7
- Ranged from 17 to 74

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
- Mexico (121)
- Guatemala (10)
- Honduras (4)
- Nicaragua (2)
- Cuba (1)
- El Salvador (1)
- United States (1)

**SEX**
- 96.5% (n=144) identified as males

**LANGUAGE**
- 96.5% (n=144) spoke only Spanish

- 96.5% of participants spoke only Spanish.
Almost 1 out of 3 day laborers reported being promised work where the work or payment were different than expected or promised.

(n = 44)
FINDINGS

Very high rate of reports of labor disputes

"I will work and they will tell me that another guy will pay me, and I would leave without getting paid."

"I was picked up at Home Depot to move furniture and was not paid the $250 that I was told I would earn."

"At the farm I work at, I know a lot of people who don't get paid what they should or were promised."
LESSONS LEARNED

• Day laborers may be at an increased risk for street-level and workplace victimization
  ◦ Street-level: Burglary (“walking ATMs”), physical and sexual assault
  ◦ Workplace: Wage theft, poor job site conditions, abandonment at job site

• Factors that can increase likelihood of victimization:
  ◦ Social isolation (friends and family live elsewhere)
  ◦ Language barrier
  ◦ General distrust of authorities/social service agencies
LESSONS LEARNED (continued)

• Be intentional with building a team who looks like the community we're trying to serve
• Project was well-received at the national level
  ◦ Las Vegas Rape Crisis Center Human Trafficking Response
  ◦ Howard County Government (Maryland)
• Developed Outreach In A Box to easily share
DISCUSSION

• Redefining success
  ◦ Although not many people may follow up with services, they are now equipped with information to help avoid victimization and prevent re-victimization
• Need to expand labor trafficking specific training to service providers and other relevant stakeholders (Dept. of Labor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, etc.)
• ALTO moving forward
  ◦ What other communities could benefit from outreach that centralizes around a worker's rights based approach?
AVAILABLE BRIEF

PROJECT ALTO: ARIZONA LABOR TRAFFICKING OUTREACH

ISSUE OVERVIEW

Accumulating research continues to demonstrate that undocumented individuals are at a high risk for extreme victimization. Socio-cultural factors including fear of deportation, alienation, and general distrust of authorities have been known to exacerbate this phenomenon. Specifically with the day laborer population in Arizona, street-level victimization including robbery and sexual assault have been known to be prevalent. In addition, many of these individuals have also experienced high rates of workplace exploitation including wage theft and poor labor conditions.

THE DATA

In collaboration with other organizations including Chiapas Por La Casa, Consulate General of Mexico, Consulate General of Guatemala, International Rescue Committee, and the McCain Institute, 442 day laborers between September 2021 and April 2022 received know your rights brochures as well as information about services available in the community for legal assistance and case management. Of those spoken with, almost one out of every 3 (n=44) reported being promised work where the work or payment were different than expected or promised.

AGE

- Ranged from 17 to 74
- Average age = 38.7

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- Mexico (75)
- Guatemala (13)
- Honduras (6)
- Nicaragua (5)
- Ecuador (3)
- El Salvador (2)
- United States (1)

LANGUAGE

- 96.5% spoke only Spanish

DISCUSSION

Unlike with sex trafficking, the topic of labor trafficking prevention remains sadly unexplored. However, acknowledging and understanding the social, cultural, and economic factors that place some communities at a higher risk of being trafficked is critical. Increasing awareness of labor rights, challenging historical distrust of social services and authorities through open and honest dialogue, and improving service provider awareness of best practices for serving those with current or past involvement in labor trafficking situations are ways in which the anti-trafficking community at large can better address the needs of this underserved population.