



## **Human Trafficking of Children Annual Report**

Department of Children and Families  
Office of Child and Family Well-Being  
October 1, 2022

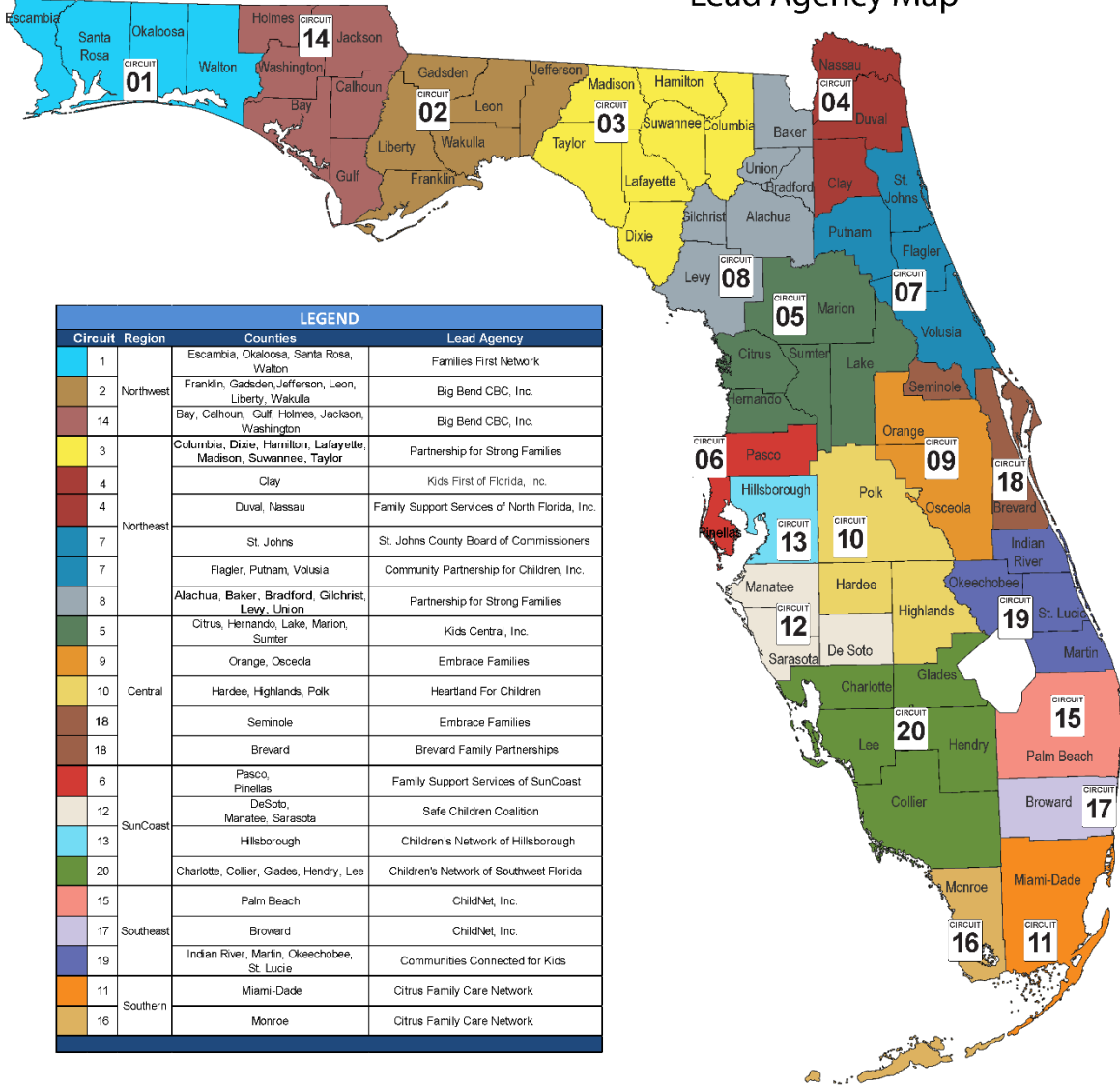
Shevaun L. Harris  
Secretary

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

DCF Regions, Circuits, and Community-Based Care Lead Agencies



# Community-Based Care Lead Agency Map



LEGEND			
Circuit	Region	Counties	Lead Agency
1		Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	Families First Network
2	Northwest	Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla	Big Bend CBC, Inc.
14		Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington	Big Bend CBC, Inc.
3		Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor	Partnership for Strong Families
4		Clay	Kids First of Florida, Inc.
4	Northwest	Duval, Nassau	Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.
7	Northwest	St. Johns	St. Johns County Board of Commissioners
7	Northwest	Flagler, Putnam, Volusia	Community Partnership for Children, Inc.
8		Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union	Partnership for Strong Families
5		Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter	Kids Central, Inc.
9		Orange, Osceola	Embrace Families
10	Central	Hardee, Highlands, Polk	Heartland For Children
18		Seminole	Embrace Families
18		Brevard	Brevard Family Partnerships
8	SunCoast	Pasco, Pinellas	Family Support Services of SunCoast
12	SunCoast	DeSoto, Manatee, Sarasota	Safe Children Coalition
13	SunCoast	Hillsborough	Children's Network of Hillsborough
20	SunCoast	Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee	Children's Network of Southwest Florida
15	Southeast	Palm Beach	ChildNet, Inc.
17	Southeast	Broward	ChildNet, Inc.
19	Southeast	Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie	Communities Connected for Kids
11	Southern	Miami-Dade	Citrus Family Care Network
16	Southern	Monroe	Citrus Family Care Network

# Florida Department of Children and Families Annual Human Trafficking Report

October 2022

## Background

Section 39.001(5), Florida Statutes (F.S.), establishes the following goals for the treatment of sexually exploited children who are residing in the dependency system:

- Ensure these children are safe.
- Provide for the treatment of such children as dependent children, rather than as delinquents in the criminal or juvenile justice system.
- Sever the bond between exploited children and traffickers, and reunite these children with their families or provide them with appropriate guardians.
- Enable these children to be willing and reliable witnesses in the prosecution of traffickers.

## Purpose

This report provides information as required in section 39.524(3), Florida Statutes, as follows:

- The prevalence of child commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) number of children verified as survivors of CSE.
- The specialized services provided (residential and non-residential) and placement of such children.
- The number of children placed in safe houses and safe foster homes during the year.
- The criteria used to determine the placement of children.
- The number of children who were evaluated for placement.
- The number of children who were placed based upon the evaluation.
- The number of children who were not placed.
- The number of children who were referred to a safe house or safe foster home for whom placement was unavailable.
- The regions in which such placement was unavailable.
- The Florida Department of Children and Families (Department's) response to the findings and recommendations made by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

The activities described within this report occurred between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 (State Fiscal Year [SFY] 2021-2022), unless otherwise noted.

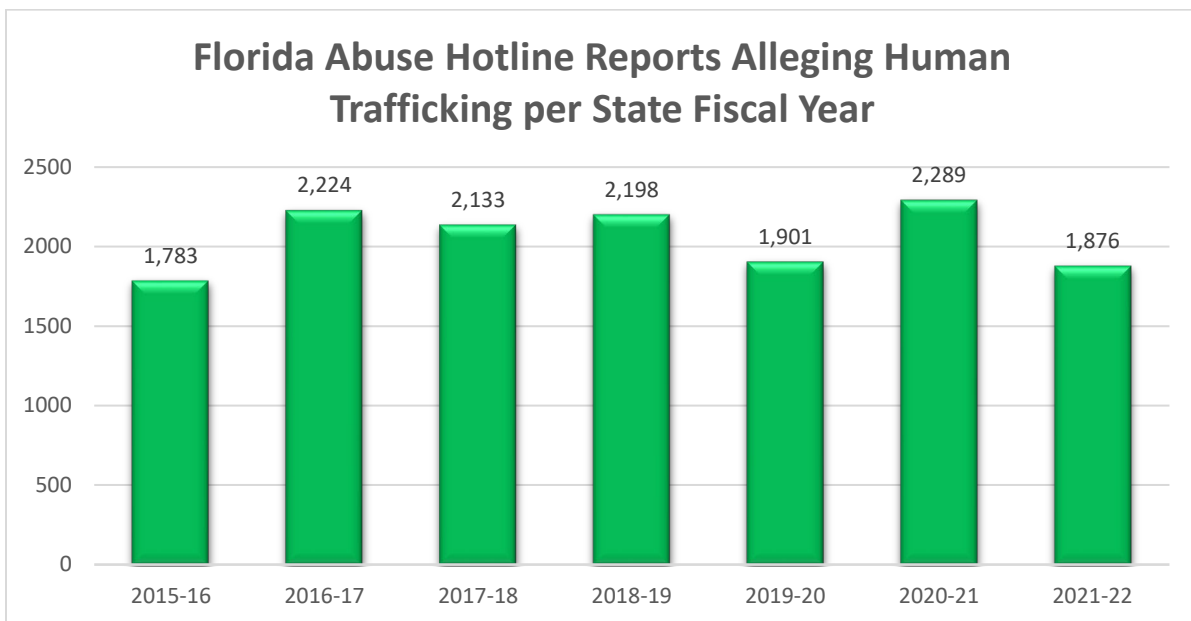
The Department tracked Human Trafficking allegations in two primary categories:

- *Human Trafficking-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC)*: This maltreatment type is used for cases in which the allegations involve commercial sexual exploitation of a child (e.g., adult entertainment clubs, escort services, prostitution, etc.). Investigative types for this category include *Caregiver*, *Other*, or *Institutional*. This distinction separates reports based on whether the alleged perpetrator is a parent, legal guardian, caregiver, unrelated adult, or appears to be an institution.
- *Human Trafficking-Labor*: This maltreatment type is used in cases in which the allegations involve issues associated with forced labor, slavery, or servitude that do not appear to be sexual in nature.

Human Trafficking–CSEC and Human Trafficking–Labor are the only maltreatments that do not require an alleged perpetrator to be a parent or caregiver to the victim child but rather any person who is suspected of exploiting that child.

### Investigative Intakes

In SFY 2021-2022, the total number of reports, initial and additional, accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline (Hotline) alleging one of the human trafficking maltreatments was 1,876 involving 1,506 children. Out of the 1,876 accepted reports, 1,742 (92.86 percent) were coded as CSEC; 134 (7.14 percent) were for Labor Trafficking. The chart below shows the trend in cases since SFY 2015-2016.

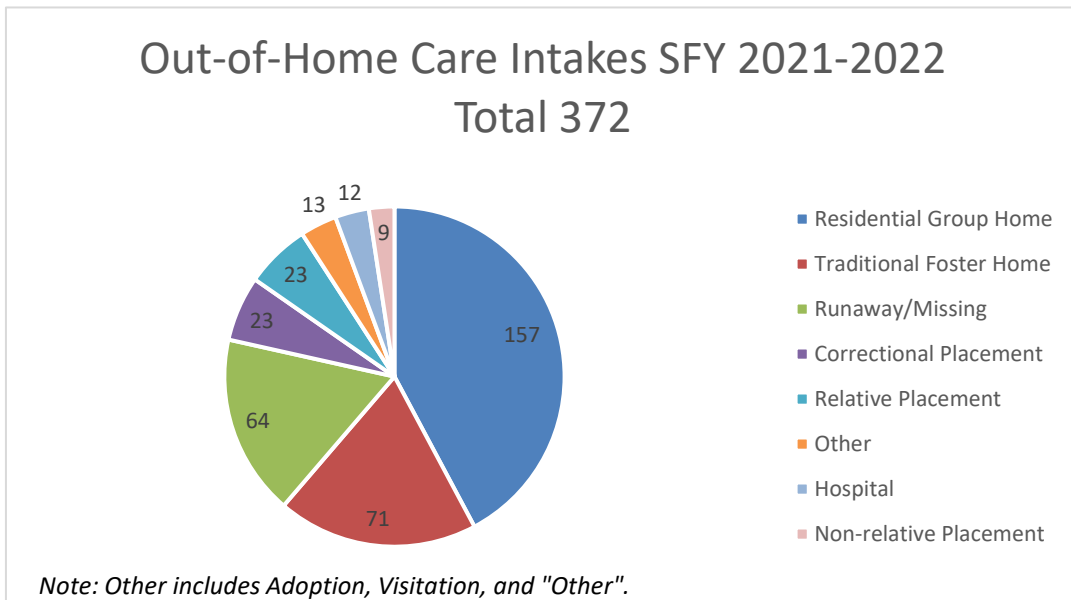


The increase in accepted reports to the Hotline in SFY 2020-2021 can largely be attributed to the changes in section 509.096, Florida Statutes, which were adopted in law in 2019, requiring public lodging employees to complete annual training on human trafficking awareness and to implement a protocol for the reporting of suspected human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline or to a local law enforcement agency. These efforts resulted in an increased number of reports submitted by employees of hotels and motels across Florida.

All human trafficking awareness and special topics trainings continued in SFY 2021-2022, as usual but were held in online or hybrid modes resulting in much greater numbers of attendees than was ever possible to achieve through in-person only sessions.

For SFY 2021-2022, out of 1,876 reports, 81.82% percent (1,535) were for female survivors, 17 percent (319) were for male survivors, and 1.18 percent (22) were other. This percentage distribution is very similar to the numbers from the last year.

Of the 1,876 reports, 77.35% of reports listed children living at home with their parents or other caregiver, while 19.83 percent (372 reports) had children listed in out-of-home care at the time of intake. Out of those 372 reports, 157 listed children living in residential group homes. Other reports for out-of-home care showed 64 children being on runaway/missing status, 23 children in correctional placements, 12 in hospital setting, and others in various forms of relative and non-relative foster home types. Additionally, 2.3 percent of reports showed children living at home under the Department’s supervision and 0.43 percent of reports had children living in a household receiving family support services. **These numbers dispute the widespread opinion that human trafficking mostly affects children in foster care.**



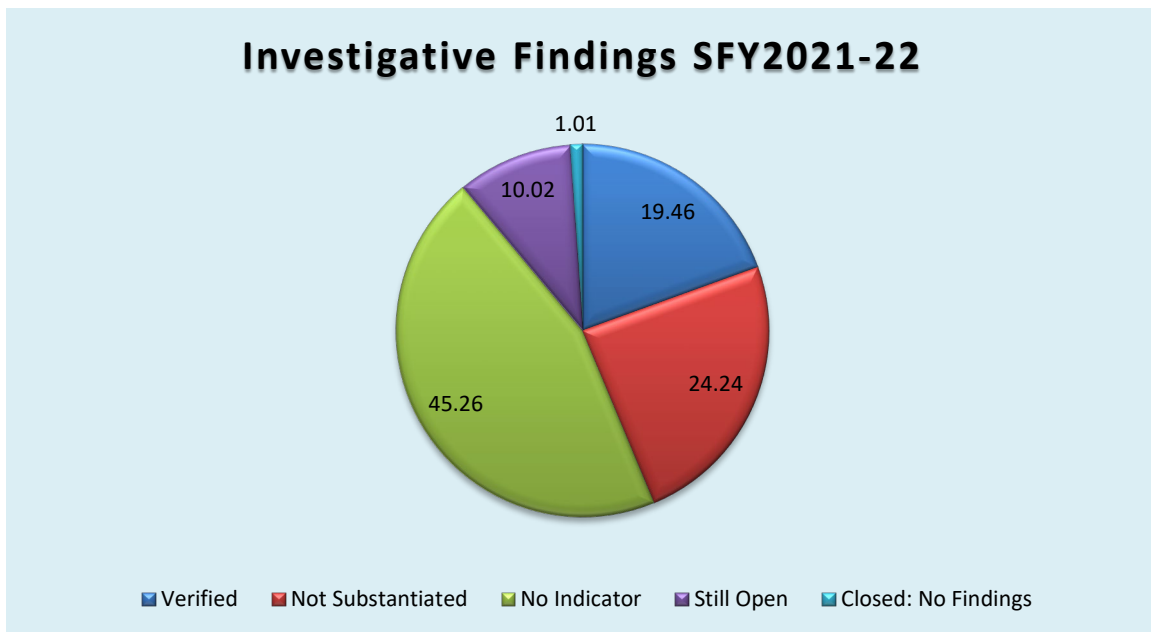
County level data indicates Orange (177), Miami-Dade (169), and Hillsborough (166) received the most reports followed by Broward (130) and Duval (111). The following

chart shows the number of reports received by Department region. As illustrated below, the highest number of reports for the human trafficking (HT) maltreatment came from the Central Region (473) closely followed by Suncoast Region (463).

Region	Human Trafficking - CSEC	Human Trafficking - Labor	Grand Total
Central	431	42	473
Northeast	263	17	280
Northwest	191	16	207
Southeast	261	20	281
Southern	167	5	172
SunCoast	429	34	463
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1742</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>1876</b>

### Investigative Findings

Of the 1,876 reports, 365 (19.46 percent) were closed as verified, 188 (10 percent) of the cases were not yet closed with findings when the report data was compiled in July 2022. The rate of verification for CSEC was 19.34 percent (337 out of 1,742). This shows a 5 percent decline in verification rate which might be attributed to better understanding the nuances between sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. For Labor Trafficking, the verification rate went up from 17.95 percent last year to 20.9 percent (28 out of 134) reflecting growing attention of the issue of minor labor trafficking in Florida resulting in more reports being investigated. In SFY 2021-2022, there were 27 verified male survivors of CSEC and 19 male survivors of Labor Trafficking; 310 females were verified as survivors of CSEC, and 9 females were verified survivors of Labor Trafficking.



## **Available Safe Houses, Safe Foster Homes, and Other Residential Programs**

Specialized residential placements currently exist in the Central, SunCoast, Southeast, Southern, and Northeast Regions. The Department's Human Trafficking Unit staff meet with all specialized CSEC residential providers on a quarterly basis to discuss issues and provide technical support.

During SFY 2021-2022, the number of available safe houses decreased from eight to five as two homes for female survivors and one home serving males permanently closed. Two of those homes switched to providing services via outreach teams and one home was forced to close due to not being able to extend their land lease. As a result, the number of safe house beds decreased from 56 beds in July 2021 to 31 beds as of July 2022. On July 10, 2022, there were six available beds and no waiting list for safe home beds.

One of the existing Suncoast Region safe homes continues to expand their bed capacity by adding a new building to their campus. This will provide eight additional beds for female survivors. Another Suncoast Region safe home is in the process of moving to new location within their county and plans to convert the existing building into transitional housing for dependent CSE youth over the age of 18. While there are programs in the state that provide residential transitioning housing for adult female survivors, this would be the first home where survivors transition into adult independent living within the same provider of therapeutic services and with the necessary level of support and care. One more safe house, also in Suncoast Region, is in the planning stage of opening an additional safe house for minor survivors in a neighboring county while building an additional house on the existing property for youth over age 18. Another home is in the initial stages of the licensing process in the Northwest Region.

Although the number of identified child survivor of human trafficking is higher than the number of beds available in safe houses, these beds may not always be filled because decisions to place each child are based on the existing make-up of current safe house residents and the individual's specific needs. The complexity of the residents' needs may limit the number of youth a safe home accepts at any given time. Occasionally, there is a decision to not introduce too many new youth into a home over a short period of time to ensure adequate assimilation of new youth into the program and consistent and stable staff engagement with the existing youth. Each facility has its own intake and assessment process and ultimately determines the appropriateness of any child for that specific placement. Youth who are not in the custody of the Department (i.e., "community youth") are being placed in safe houses if their individual circumstances require that level of placement and services. It has been estimated that 25-30 percent of safe house residents are community youth. It is also important to note that not all verified survivors require the level of care provided at a safe house; some survivors may be more appropriately served in their own homes with community-based wrap-around services and others may need a higher level of care such as a residential substance abuse or mental health treatment center.

There are two residential campus settings that have specialized CSEC treatment services for child survivors. The residential campus settings can serve female and

male youth. The beds available on these campuses fluctuate based on the total number of residents in all programs offered. These residential campuses also have additional specialized treatment for survivors experiencing substance abuse and those with intellectual disabilities. In addition to these residential campuses, there are also several substance abuse treatment facilities throughout Florida that are equipped to serve the specialized needs of children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation.

Providing substance abuse treatment often becomes a priority when this need is presented in a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staffing. This allows a youth to reach a more stable state of being prior to receiving services to address their victimization. A safe house placement would not be an appropriate placement for a youth struggling with severe substance abuse or in need of detox; therefore, it is critical that substance abuse treatment providers are trained on CSEC and able to serve the needs of this population. Aspire Health Partners in the Central Region and Stewart-Marchman-Act Behavioral Healthcare in the Northeast Region are two examples of substance abuse treatment providers that have also been trained to serve CSEC youth. The Department continues its efforts to identify other programs serving substance-dependent youth who are willing to train their staff on the nuances of working with commercially sexually exploited children.

As of July 5, 2022, there were 11 safe foster homes within the Citrus Helping Adolescents Negatively Impacted by Commercial Exploitation (CHANCE) Program, a treatment program by Citrus Health Network implemented in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, to address the unique mental and behavioral health needs of youth who have been commercially sexually exploited. Devereux Florida, through its DELTA Foster Home Program, has seven safe foster homes located in Central, Southeast, and Northeast Regions. Three more homes are in the process of getting licensed and are expected to open in late July 2022. Devereux continues to provide training for foster families statewide and collaborate with the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (Lead Agencies) in the state to develop safe foster home capacity. The Safe Foster Home model can serve male and female children.

### **Transition to At-Risk Home Model**

In compliance with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), the Department has developed a definition of youth considered to be at-risk for sex trafficking and, therefore, eligible for placement in group care homes that are certified in serving this population.

“Child or youth at risk of sex trafficking” means an individual who has experienced trauma, such as abuse, neglect, and/or maltreatment, and presents with one or more of the accompanying risk factors:

- History of running away and/or homelessness.
- History of sexual abuse and/or sexually acting out behavior.
- Inappropriate interpersonal and/or social media boundaries.



- Family history of or exposure to human trafficking.
- Out-of-home placement instability demonstrated by repeated moves from less restrictive levels of care.

The Department developed a 24-hour train-the-trainer curriculum for group home providers wishing to provide services for youth at-risk of human trafficking. The Department completed six training sessions for trainers and direct care staff to ensure that the training requirements for this type of congregate care are met. The trainings for direct care staff are held every two months. Another train-the-trainer session is taking place in October 2022 to give group homes the opportunity to build training capacity by having an in-house trainer. As of July 2022, there were 150 at-risk homes throughout Florida with a total capacity of 1,475 beds.

### **Other Specialized Services (Non-Residential)**

In addition to residential services, Devereux and CHANCE also provide community-based wrap-around services to CSE youth who are not in specialized housing, whether that be with a relative, foster home, or other housing appropriate for that child.

Community-based services are a crucial part of the continuum of specialized services that are available to CSEC youth and can be utilized for a youth that has a stable and supportive living environment, does not want to go to a safe house, or does not need the level of care of a safe foster home, safe house, or residential treatment center.

Typically, these services include therapy, specialized case management or advocacy, and other services to meet the individualized needs of that youth. For example, in the past year, Devereux conducted 175 consultations, delivered 64 psychoeducational sessions to caregivers, completed 22 Prevention and Awareness events, and provided 35 community trainings.

Redefining Refuge, the Nancy J Cotterman Center, and the Open Doors Outreach Network are other examples of service providers that offer community-based services to CSE youth. Redefining Refuge is a specialized service provider and advocacy agency that delivers integrative community-based treatment options, rehabilitation, and support services for CSEC youth in the community, dependency system, and delinquency system. Their multidisciplinary approach combines trauma-informed care, strength-based and evidence-based interventions that are individualized, integrated, and consistent with a youth's case plan. Services include safety, treatment and transitional planning, traditional and alternative/innovative therapies, life skills management, court advocacy and legal services, schooling and tutoring assistance, recreational activities, coordination of medical care and medication management, crisis intervention, intensive case management, incidental and emergency funds, consultation with caregivers, family respite, mentor services, and tangible needs. Redefining Refuge provides services to Circuit 13 (Hillsborough County) and served 141 children (71 Dependency, 70 Community) in SFY 2021-2022.

Broward County's Nancy J. Cotterman Center (NJCC) is Broward County's only Certified Sexual Assault Program and Accredited Children's Advocacy Center. NJCC's Human Trafficking Program provides intensive case coordination services to

individuals who have experienced human trafficking and those who are at risk of human trafficking. These services are available to adults, minors, US citizens, and foreign nationals. Case coordinators complete human trafficking and needs assessments, safety planning, and work closely with the survivors to meet their needs. They provide crisis intervention, court and law enforcement accompaniment, and connect survivors to services to include legal, housing, mental health, and medical. NJCC offers youth educational groups discussing various topics including human trafficking, consent, runaway behavior, and healthy relationships. The program also provides community outreach and training on human trafficking to continue to raise awareness and form partnerships with key stakeholders. In SFY 2021-2022, NJCC served 81 children who have experienced human trafficking.

The Secret Place in Pensacola is a CSEC Advocacy Center and Family Wrap Around Service Provider for female survivors of sexual exploitation, ages 13-24 years old. The services include trauma informed care therapies such as music, art, and equine therapies, counseling, life skills development, GED help, drivers' education, career development and health and wellness education. Family wrap-around services provide education about family planning, crisis intervention and support services. Survivor Mentorship program focuses on mentoring CSE minor survivors and organizing therapeutic retreats. Awareness and Advocacy programs focus on community awareness and volunteer opportunities, as well as CSEC and Human Trafficking trainings for professionals in medical, education, legal, and law enforcement fields, as well as community partners. Services are provided throughout Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. Education and Training programs expand from local to statewide to national conferences. During SFY 2021-2022, The Secret Place served 91 youth and adults, provided over 90 local CSEC/HT presentations and trainings, and held 37 in-house CSEC workshops.

The Voices for Florida Open Doors Outreach Network provides services to survivors of sex trafficking ages 10-24 in 30 counties. Since program inception in July 2017, they have served 1,357 survivors through 227,429 hours of direct services. Open Doors partners with nearly 800 organizations and stakeholders across Florida to meet the immediate and on-going needs of survivors served. Of those served, 69 percent are under the age of 18, and 87 percent identify as female.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has two offices in Florida, one in Tallahassee and one in Miami. Both offices have anti-trafficking programs and serve all survivors of trafficking, including CSEC. The Tallahassee office has federal funding via the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), Department of Justice (DOJ), to provide comprehensive, client-centered, and trauma informed case management to survivors, direct financial assistance, and housing support in 10 counties: Leon, Jefferson, Wakulla, Gadsden, Liberty, Franklin, Gulf, Bay, Calhoun, and Taylor. The Tallahassee office is also a service provider with the Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP). Through the TVAP, the office is able to serve pre-certified and certified foreign national survivors of trafficking across the North Florida Panhandle with case management and direct assistance. The Miami office also has federal funding via OVC DOJ to provide comprehensive, client-centered, and trauma informed case management and direct

financial assistance to survivors in three counties: Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe. They also partner with the Miami-Dade Police Department via Enhanced Collaborative Model funding from OVC, using a multidisciplinary approach to assist in serving survivors and prosecuting cases in the same three counties. Finally, Miami also has a privately funded program via the Howard G Buffet Foundation, which uses a Collaborative Approach Model between law enforcement and social service providers, to focus on combating labor trafficking by assisting survivors and conducting outreach, especially in the agricultural sector of the south Miami-Dade area. Both offices also provide training, technical assistance, and conduct outreach and awareness activities.

There are four CSE-specific drop-in centers serving youth in Florida. More Too Life, located in the SunCoast Region, offers victim services, housing assistance, prevention, and advocacy. Images of Glory, located in the Central Region, offers victim services, pantry/supplies, and referrals. Kristi House's Project Gold (Girls Owning their Lives and Dreams), located in the Southern Region, was launched in 2007 and opened the first Drop-In Center in Florida, offering safe space and individualized wrap-around services in home-like settings exclusively for girls who have experienced or are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. One Drop-In Center is centrally located in Miami and a second site opened in Homestead in June 2021 to serve girls in south Miami-Dade. Two home-like Drop-In Centers in Miami-Dade County help members become empowered to develop their strengths in a nonjudgmental, trauma-informed environment. They are supported by staff who provide mentoring, advocacy, therapy, career coaching and academic support.

Project GOLD encourages girls to actively engage in services and participate in a wide array of group programs offered at the Drop-In Centers. Project GOLD specialists help girls to identify, progress, and meet their individualized goals, providing support and incentives for educational and employment achievements. The Drop-in Centers are open on weekdays with special after-hour needs accommodated by the 24-hour Project GOLD hotline. During SFY 2021-2022, Project GOLD provided services to 77 girls. Kristi House-Project GOLD has one of the strongest human trafficking survivor-mentor programs in the state of Florida.

Vital to the continuum of care are providers that have designated staff within their programs that can work with CSEC youth even though they primarily serve a broader non-CSEC population. Young Parent's Project focuses on serving pregnant and parenting court-involved teenage girls; however, some staff members are trained on specific issues of human trafficking and can serve pregnant and parenting CSEC youth.

There are many additional providers serving at-risk youth, along with mental health providers and street outreach organizations located throughout the state of Florida that have recognized the importance of understanding the specialized needs of CSEC youth and have trained their staff to be able to serve this population. Available services continue to expand; however, training and awareness on the risk factors often seen with this population, such as homelessness/runaway or substance use, will continue to be an important task for the Department and local community task forces to address.

As we continue to expand and develop the continuum of care for CSEC youth, the

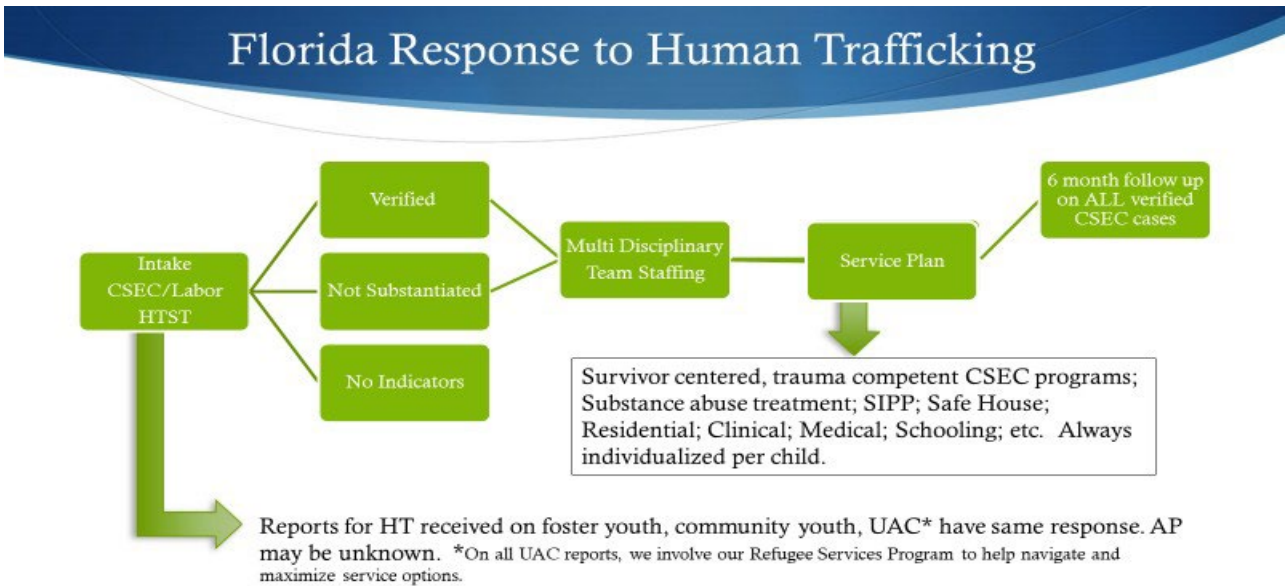
Department encourages all specialized providers to partner with outside evaluators to assess their program. This ensures the much-needed evaluation of the outcomes for specific programs, as well as provides important research on program and service modalities that work best with the CSEC population. The goal is to see promising practices become evidence-based practices.

**Placement of Survivors in Safe Houses and Safe Foster Homes**

A Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST) was developed in the fall of 2014 through a Department and DJJ workgroup. This tool is designed to assist child welfare professionals and DJJ staff with identifying youth who have been survivors of CSEC and Labor Trafficking. DJJ launched the tool in its Juvenile Assessment Centers statewide beginning February 27, 2015, and subsequently modified it in June 2020. The Department initiated statewide implementation of the tool on January 13, 2016.

In SFY 2021-2022, child welfare professionals administered 1,470 HTSTs (1,403 by child protective investigators and 67 by Lead Agencies). Additionally, DJJ staff completed 264 screening tools that resulted in trafficking-related investigations.

The Department’s protocol is to administer the HTST to all suspected survivors in all investigations that have a human trafficking maltreatment. Additionally, the tool might be used in other investigations when trafficking is suspected. Only investigators that completed a specialized training can administer the tool. Dependency Case Managers also have the requirement to be trained on the administration of the tool as they also screen youth within their caseloads.



\*UAC stands for Unaccompanied Alien Minor

Upon identification of a child as a victim of CSEC, Lead Agencies assess the child to determine the most appropriate placement. The current mechanism for assessment of

placement is through an MDT staffing and the use of the Level of Care Placement Tool. The Level of Care Placement Tool considers factors that help determine the most appropriate placement for a youth including runaway history, foster care history, current involvement with a gang and/or trafficker, current substance use, behavioral and psychiatric history, positive support systems, location considerations such as court involvement, and readiness to receive services. Youth with high-level needs, such as substance abuse or mental health treatment, often require a higher level of targeted care such as a substance abuse treatment facility or a residential treatment center. Youth with a good support system at home may be best served with specialized community-based wrap-around services. Those CSE youth who may need a structured living environment and are ready to receive services may be a good fit for a safe house.

MDT staffings include Department staff, such as investigators and their supervisors, regional Criminal Justice Coordinators, regional Human Trafficking Coordinators, DJJ staff, service providers, law enforcement, Guardians ad Litem, and other parties as required by section 409.1754, Florida Statutes. These staffings include a discussion among the parties present to determine the specific service needs for the child. The staffings are guided by the Department's Human Trafficking MDT Staffing Form and result in a service plan being developed for each child. In compliance with the changes to statute created by Chapter 2017-23, Laws of Florida, the Human Trafficking MDT Staffing form was updated to include information necessary to complete a follow-up with all verified CSE survivors six months after the close of the investigation. This section is sent to the Department's Regional Human Trafficking Coordinators, who complete the six-month follow-up.

Reported information from the Lead Agencies across the state for SFY 2021-2022 shows that a total of 505 youth were evaluated for placement in a safe house or safe foster home. Of these 505 youth, 61 (12 percent) were placed in a safe house or safe foster home based on the evaluation. The Central Region Lead Agency reported the most youth placed in a safe house or safe foster home with 19 youth placed.

Of the 505 youth evaluated for a safe home placement, 444 were not placed in a safe house or safe foster home for a variety of reasons. For some of them, a safe house was not a recommended level of care, as they needed to be placed in a substance abuse treatment program, mental health facility, or were placed in DJJ commitment programs. There were 25 youth not placed in a safe house because they were on runaway status. There are cases where a child may still be placed in a safe house or safe foster home after recovery from a runaway episode or upon discharge from a juvenile justice facility or higher-level mental health facility. Many of these youth are referred to specialized non-residential services in the community to address their needs as a victim of CSEC. The Lead Agency reported that 510 youth were referred to specialized community-based services, which includes youth with verified cases and some with cases in which CSEC was suspected.

At this time, Florida Network of Youth and Family Services (Florida Network) has built capacity to serve CSE youth through training, policy, and utilization of the HTST. The Department works with Florida Network and other community members to provide

additional trainings to the state's various residential settings to expand the capacity for emergency placements of CSE youth. When children enter out-of-home care, they are assessed for specialized placement needs, and are placed in the most appropriate available placement option. Placement in a specialized CSEC home is subject to multiple factors based on the home's current residents' needs and individual needs of incoming youth.

Finding the best suitable place for youth victimized by CSE is vitally important as placement stability is a key factor for successful initiation and implementation of needed services. Sometimes finding the right home can take several days or weeks, depending on multiple factors. Available programs that focus on the specific trauma needs of these children have their own individualized intake and assessment processes, often requiring an interview with the child and a willingness of the child to participate in the program. Limitations on placement can include factors such as gang affiliation and commonality of exploiter—meaning these types of factors must be considered in determining placement and the current population of the safe house or CSEC program. Youth who have a shared gang affiliation or a conflicting gang affiliation, or youth who have shared exploiters, often cannot be placed together due to the degree of conflict it may cause in the home. Safe homes frequently refuse youth who engage in recruitment activity, who display a significant history of violence, or who have complex unmet needs such as active drug use or non-compliance with mental health treatment. The DCF-FSU workgroup (described on page 16 below) is working on possible remedies to assist this population.

### **Expenditures for Human Trafficking**

Three million in recurring funds has been appropriated annually through the General Appropriations Act to serve the needs of youth who were survivors of sexual exploitation and had been adjudicated dependent or who were the subject of an open investigation due to allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. As directed by the legislature, the funds are provided to the lead agencies for costs associated with placement and services for sexually exploited youth.

The Lead Agency reported expenditures totaling \$3,479,115 on CSEC services and placements for 86 youth during SFY 2021-2022. Families First Network had the highest reported expenditures for CSEC services at \$510,253. Of the payments reported for CSEC services, the average annual cost of care for an individual client was \$40,455.

### **Human Trafficking Screening Tool Validation**

In 2014, the Florida Legislature enhanced services and provisions for commercially sexually exploited children with the passage of Chapter 2014-161, Laws of Florida, that further expanded upon the tenants set forth in the Florida Safe Harbor Act of 2012. A key provision of the new law included that the Department, in collaboration with the DJJ, develop a set of instruments to better identify, assess the needs of, and placement of these children. In 2015, the Department, in partnership with DJJ, developed a Human Trafficking Screening Tool and, after piloting its use, the tool was

implemented statewide in January 2016. In its 2016 report, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability recommended that the Department gather systematic feedback from users about the screening instrument and validate the Tool when sufficient data and support became available.

The Department partnered with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (FICW) to complete a review of the tool and make recommendations for its improvement. FICW began collaborating with the Department to validate the Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST, Tool) in 2017. In 2019, FICW researchers conducted psychometric testing with the HTST using a non-random sample of 248 completed assessments from disparate areas of Florida. Ultimately, the Tool was unable to be validated due to lack of reliability. FICW provided the need for improved data collection and consistent application of the tool as needs to support further efforts towards ability to validate the tool.

The most recent Stage 3 of the study concluded in March 2022 and the final report provided to the Department. The Tool still was unable to be validated due to continued inconsistency in application and data collection. FICW provided the following list of recommendations for the Department to improve the Tool's reliability:

- Recommendation 1: The Institute recommends the Department develop a robust training catalogue, to include additional content on how to administer the Tool.
- Recommendation 2: The Institute recommends the Department include text boxes for each major section to document contextual information.
- Recommendation 3: The Institute recommends the Department make the HTST an electronic tool.
- Recommendation 4: The Institute recommends the Department determine how to best assess risk among particularly vulnerable populations.
- Recommendation 5: The Institute recommends the Department consider the addition of items to provide context to the evidence of forced tattooing/branding subsection.
- Recommendation 6: The Institute recommends the Department could consider rewording certain items or response options.

During the Summer 2022, the Department's Human Trafficking Unit held a series of meetings with FICW research staff and stakeholders to discuss the recommendations and decide on the action steps moving forward. The Department's plan includes convening a focused team of experts to review the tool and recommendations to create a formal plan forward for consideration by Department leadership and the Human Trafficking Council.

The Department and DJJ are currently working on an initial plan of action for Fall 2022 to make improvements. These actions align with the recommendations in the 2022

## OPPAGA Annual Report on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Florida:

- Edit the Tool's existing language
- Add text boxes for recording additional contextual information
- Add more inclusive demographic options into the demographic section of the Tool
- Develop and deliver new training sessions on the updated Tool to all child protective investigators (CPIs) and dependency case managers (DCMs) who already have been certified as a person allowed to do this screening
- Provide updated training to all newly certified CPIs and DCMs
- Develop a series of short additional, topic/section specific trainings available to screeners on demand either through webinar mode or as a podcast. These trainings will provide additional tips and insights on completing the interview with input from experienced CPIs, survivors of CSEC, and other relevant experts

### **Caregiver Support Intervention**

The Department has been working on implementation and evaluation of a new type of intervention for families of CSE youth. The program was developed by clinical staff of Images of Glory (IOG), a trafficking safe house based in Orlando, Florida. The evaluation research project is being carried out by the University of South Florida (USF) Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Risk to Resilience Research Lab. This program focuses on addressing many of the challenges of family reunification. Its overall goals include providing the child with strong familial support, bringing to light the child's experiences, helping the child and parents come to terms with human trafficking experiences, and preparing the child and family for integration into a post-trafficking lifestyle. Family reunification sessions range from 8-12 sessions and last about an hour long. Sessions can be completed over telehealth and in-person. The program details have been disseminated to service providers across the state and the first phase of the project began in August of this year.

### **Services and Resources Committee**

The Department's Secretary continues to serve as a Chair of the Services and Resources Committee of the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking. The Committee meets once every quarter and focuses on identifying gaps in service delivery to minor and adult survivors of human trafficking across Florida. In the past 12 months, the Committee chose to focus on a particular topic of interest for each meeting to gain deeper understanding of barriers to effective services. The past year's discussions focused on labor trafficking in Florida, intersection of substance abuse and human trafficking, family engagement and support for caregivers of trafficked youth, and the availability of services for adult survivors. The Committee is dedicated to increasing interagency collaboration in addressing identified gaps in services for survivors and their families.



## **DCF-FSU workgroup**

In January 2021, the Department partnered with the Florida State University (FSU) to convene a work group focused on addressing safety and treatment needs of verified CSEC survivors who frequently go missing from care with subsequent returns to sexual exploitation. It is of vital importance to respond appropriately to the needs of these survivors by providing the right services at the right time. At the end of April 2021, there were 39 dependent youth who have experienced sex trafficking, have persistently rejected services, and have returned repeatedly to life-threatening commercial sexual exploitation. In many cases, service providers are unable to successfully engage these children in services due to the very short period the children spend with them in between runaway episodes. In many cases, all possible placement options and treatment plans have been exhausted. The work group on child sex trafficking continued to meet monthly this year and is examining new models for improved care of child sex trafficking survivors. The work group has had presentations from experts in diverse disciplines and is now in the process of formulating recommendations for Florida policymakers.