

Member Report

2024

An analysis of Freedom Network USA member services
provided from **January 1, 2021**, to **December 31, 2022**



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About Us

Freedom Network USA (FNUSA) is the largest coalition working on human trafficking in the United States. We mobilize our collective strength to build a transformative approach to anti-trafficking work that is grounded in anti-racism and anti-oppression. FNUSA was founded in 2001 as a coalition of direct service providers working to pass and implement the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. FNUSA is now a nonprofit agency that advocates for comprehensive federal policy, provides training and technical assistance to the field, and works to create community and build the capacity of our members and allies.

About Our Members

Currently, FNUSA members work in **30 states, one territory**, and over **75 cities, including Washington DC**, with **61 organizations** and **40 individual experts**. All members either have lived experience of trafficking or work directly with trafficking survivors in the US.


FNUSA members work in...

 30 states

 1 territory

FNUSA members comprise...

 61 organizations

 40 individual experts

Members include survivors, legal and social service providers, researchers, advocacy organizations, and expert consultants. Organizational members vary in size, budget, populations served, and services provided. We support our members through training, technical assistance, and capacity building to build an effective and inclusive anti-trafficking movement.

About the Report

This report examines services provided by FNUSA's members **from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2022**. The information was self-reported by members through a simple survey instrument. Not all members responded to the survey, nor were all members able to provide all of the requested information about all of the clients they served. No personally identifying information was gathered while developing this report; therefore, it is impossible to determine whether these numbers include clients served by more than one agency. Despite these limitations, we believe that this report contributes to the national understanding of the diversity of trafficking and the needs of survivors in the United States. We hope that it helps to develop and support the human trafficking research agenda to inform more effective services for trafficking survivors. FNUSA welcomes new members each year; therefore, the number of members has increased compared to the previous report.

Letter from the Executive Director

No one escaped the global COVID-19 pandemic untouched, and human trafficking survivors and service providers were no exception. Isolation, economic devastation, illness, and caretaking responsibilities fell exceptionally hard on those who were already trapped in a cycle of exploitation and abuse. Vulnerabilities increased dramatically, while resources and support became harder to access. Service providers struggled to radically transform their programs to add safety measures and new resources. With the pandemic transforming into an endemic disease, programs have continued to incorporate new approaches to safety, security, and support that are accessible and flexible for staff and survivors alike.



Concurrently, social justice movements and organizations have been challenged to grow and develop. There is a growing movement toward isolationism, conservatism, racism, transphobia, and hate throughout the world, especially in the US. Bathroom and book bans, state-sponsored cruelty at the Southern border, and voter suppression are increasing. Black, Indigenous, Immigrant, and LGBTQIA and Two Spirit communities are under attack; the same communities that are already at the highest risk of human trafficking.

This report shows the harm being done and the strained system that is working to mitigate the impact of these forces. We are increasing our capacity, improving our responses, identifying our mistakes, and making the changes needed to heal our communities. This is not easy work, and it will not be completed soon, but it is necessary and critical work. And we don't have to do any of it alone. We are growing stronger and more resilient. We are unlearning the harmful patterns of the past and embracing new ways to be honest and transparent. To show up for each other, and persist even when success escapes us.

I'm so incredibly proud to be among those working against the tide of hate. Please join us.

Jean Bruggeman

Executive Director, Freedom Network USA

The Lingering Impact of a Pandemic

Advocates in the network struggled to support survivors with the social, emotional, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis during this period. The communities that were hit the hardest and are recovering the slowest are often the communities that are most vulnerable to human trafficking. Undocumented immigrants, people of color, and other marginalized groups experience poverty at higher rates and encounter discrimination in economic and social systems that increase their risk. The reality of this overlap has led to an increase in requests for assistance and more significant needs for those who are already receiving services.

FNUSA Members
served **6,023 clients**
in 2021-2022.

Advocates reported long wait lists for services and a lack of resources to support clients. For the first time, attorneys reported they struggled to find social service agencies that would accept new referrals. Legal providers rely on social workers to find safe and stable housing, healthcare, transportation, child care, public benefits, and much more. Social service organizations reported that, during the same time period, their organizations experienced a high staff turnover as reports of burnout from advocates skyrocketed. This phenomenon was reported in different regions across the country.

“Cast received **2,210 hotline calls** from **Oct 2021-Sept 2022**, a **196% increase** from two years prior (1,136 calls from Oct 2019 to Sept 2020).”

- **California**

“There are long waitlists to get clients connected to case management services, which are essential and can make providing legal services really challenging when those needs aren’t being met.”

- **Illinois**

Advocates noted that government system backlogs have led to substantial challenges, especially for immigrant survivors. Many immigration application processes were halted during the pandemic and then intentionally slowed down by an Administration that was hostile to immigrants, which exploded already existing wait times. In 2021, survivors had to wait an average of 18 months for a decision on their T Visa application¹. These delays had significant consequences for survivors

¹ The T Visa is specifically for human trafficking victims in the US. <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/historic-pt>

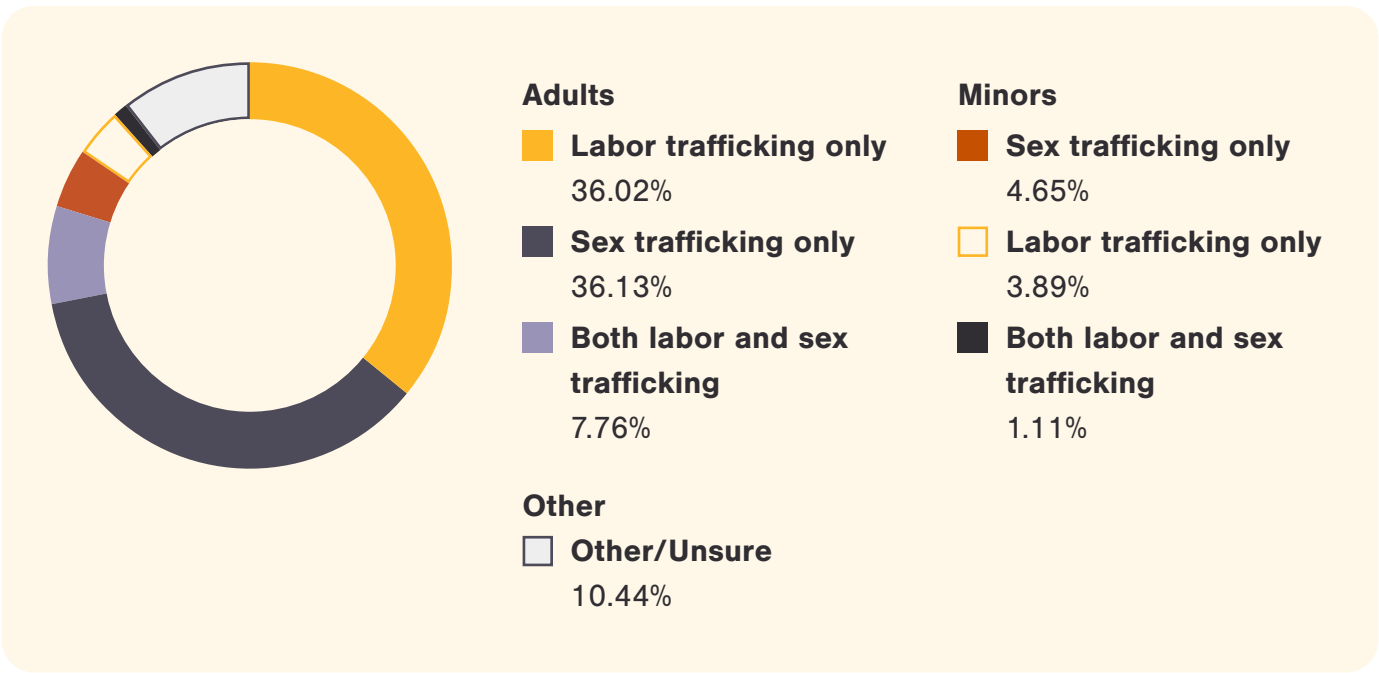
who, in most states, do not qualify for social services and cannot legally work until their visa is approved. This leaves survivors with little to no options for basic needs like housing or food and no protection from ongoing abuse and exploitation.

“A big challenge was that the wait time for all immigration applications took much longer than before. As a result, it consumed much more financial resources from our program to continue to support the clients with basic needs, paying their rent, medical-related fees, work permit renewal, etc. Many consulate offices in multiple countries were either closed or not processing T Visa cases because of the pandemic. Interviews scheduled with the consulates kept getting postponed countless times, and some countries told us that they won’t process our cases until at least 2023.”

- Washington

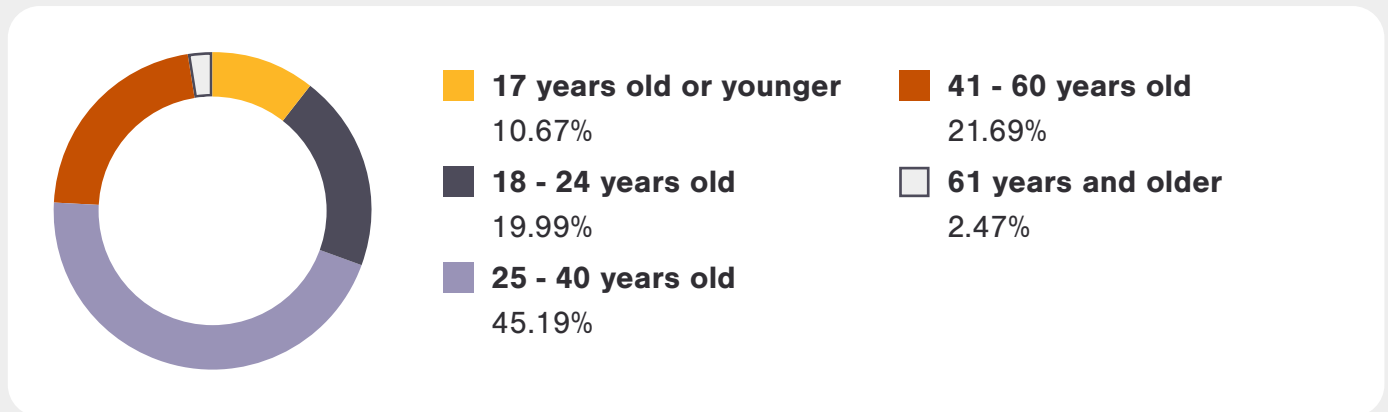
Type of Trafficking

During the reporting period, FNUSA members served an almost even number of sex trafficking and labor trafficking survivors. This is a notable shift from previous reporting years, where members served more sex trafficking survivors.



Age

The survivors served during the reporting period were younger compared to pre-pandemic. There was a significant increase in survivors served who were ages 18-24 and 25-40, while the 40+ categories decreased.



Increase in Unaccompanied Minors

Several members referenced a sharp increase in the number of unaccompanied children served during the reporting period. Unaccompanied minors are children under 18 who cross the US border without immigration status and without a parent or guardian.² These reports are not unexpected, given the influx of unaccompanied children identified at the Southern border almost doubling from 2019 to 2021.³

Unaccompanied children at the Southern border **almost doubled** from 2019 to 2021

These children are disproportionately at risk for human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.⁴ So much, in fact, that special protections for these children have been carved out in the primary human trafficking law, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Displacement, little supervision, trauma, and discrimination are all factors that increase their risk of being exploited. In the time since the reporting period, public outcry on this issue has intensified. In early 2023, [the New York Times published](#) an in-depth investigation of the high prevalence of labor trafficking of unaccompanied immigrant children. Harrowing stories of children working in factories, on dangerous assembly lines, with little sleep, and without proper safety equipment forced lawmakers to consider new protections for these children, but it is not enough.

² <https://immigrantjustice.org/issues/unaccompanied-immigrant-children>

³ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11638>

⁴ Janine Young, Warren Binford, Michael Garcia Bochenek, and Jordan Greenbaum, 2024: Health Risks of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children in Federal Custody and in US Communities American Journal of Public Health 114, 340_346, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2023.307570>

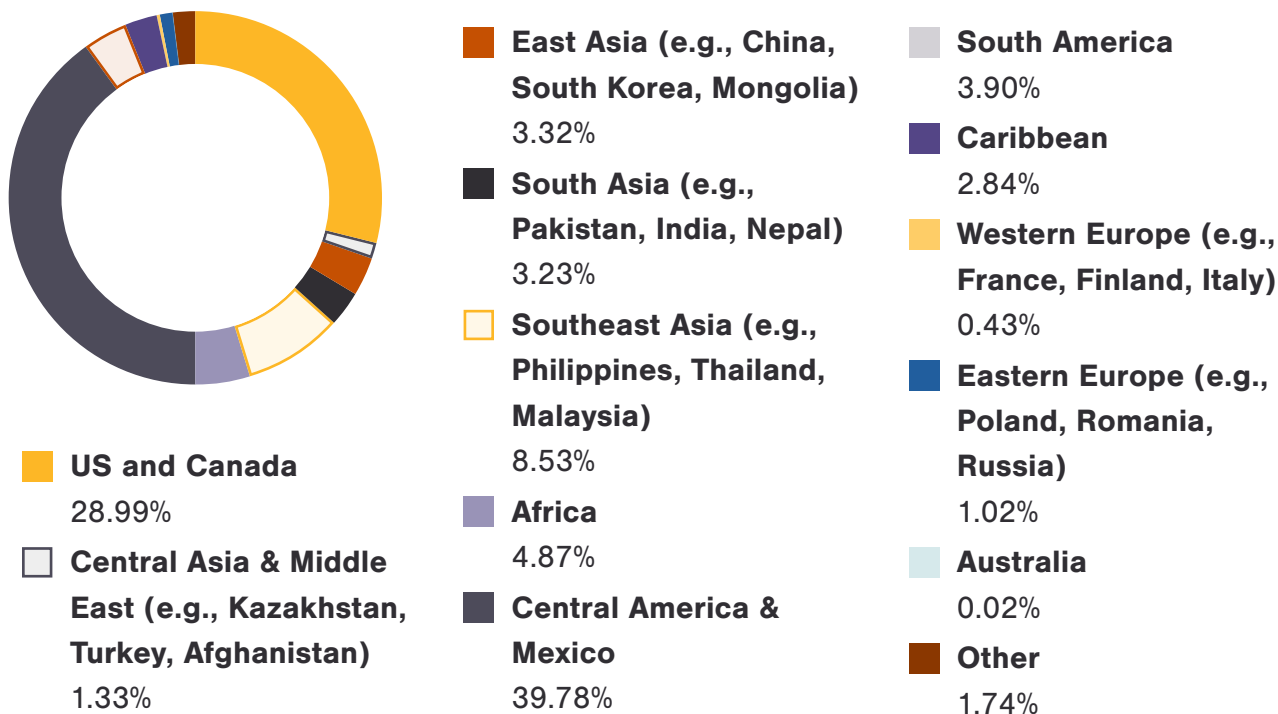
Anti-trafficking programs have had to learn new strategies and carve out new collaborations to support these children. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is the primary agency responsible for their care. Many anti-trafficking agencies do not have experience working with ORR or lack an understanding of the rules and regulations that apply to this program. These children typically have significant needs that anti-trafficking organizations must navigate and respond to quickly, with insufficient resources and guidance.

“There’s been an increase in the number of cases involving minors, particularly unaccompanied.”
- **California**

“We have seen an increase in Unaccompanied Children, many that do not have immigration relief options.”
- **Georgia**

Country of Origin

Our members are serving more immigrants than ever, with 71% of the reported survivors hailing from outside the US. The percentage of survivors born in the United States fell by almost 10% from the last reporting period, from 38% to just 29%.



Forced Criminality

Several members noted that many of the survivors they work with have criminal records for crimes they were forced to commit by their trafficker. A criminal record can negatively impact a survivor long after their trafficking experience. Safe and consistent housing, a well-paying job, and many other protective factors are out of reach for survivors with a criminal record. This makes it very hard for them to move forward and increases the risk that they will be trafficked again in the future.

Almost every state in the country has a post-conviction relief law, which helps survivors remove some, or all, of these charges in some capacity.⁵ However, many of these laws only allow charges associated with sex work or “prostitution” to be removed. Many survivors have criminal records that are not covered under these laws, including theft, drug charges, and driving offenses. This gap is particularly hard on labor trafficking survivors, who are generally not eligible for any relief. At the federal level, there is no criminal record relief for survivors who are convicted of crimes.

“Access to federal vacatur - we have seen an increased need to obtain federal vacatur because of the lack of willingness of federal prosecutors to communicate, collaborate, or have empathy to HT survivors being forced to commit crimes.”

- **California**

“After nearly a year of gathering documents, preparing the petition, and communicating with the local district attorney’s office, vacatur was finally granted in December 2022. This client is currently finishing school to pursue a career in healthcare, and having the collateral consequences of her victimization removed from her record will be imperative to her ability to begin her career and successfully create the life she wants to live.”

- **Wisconsin**

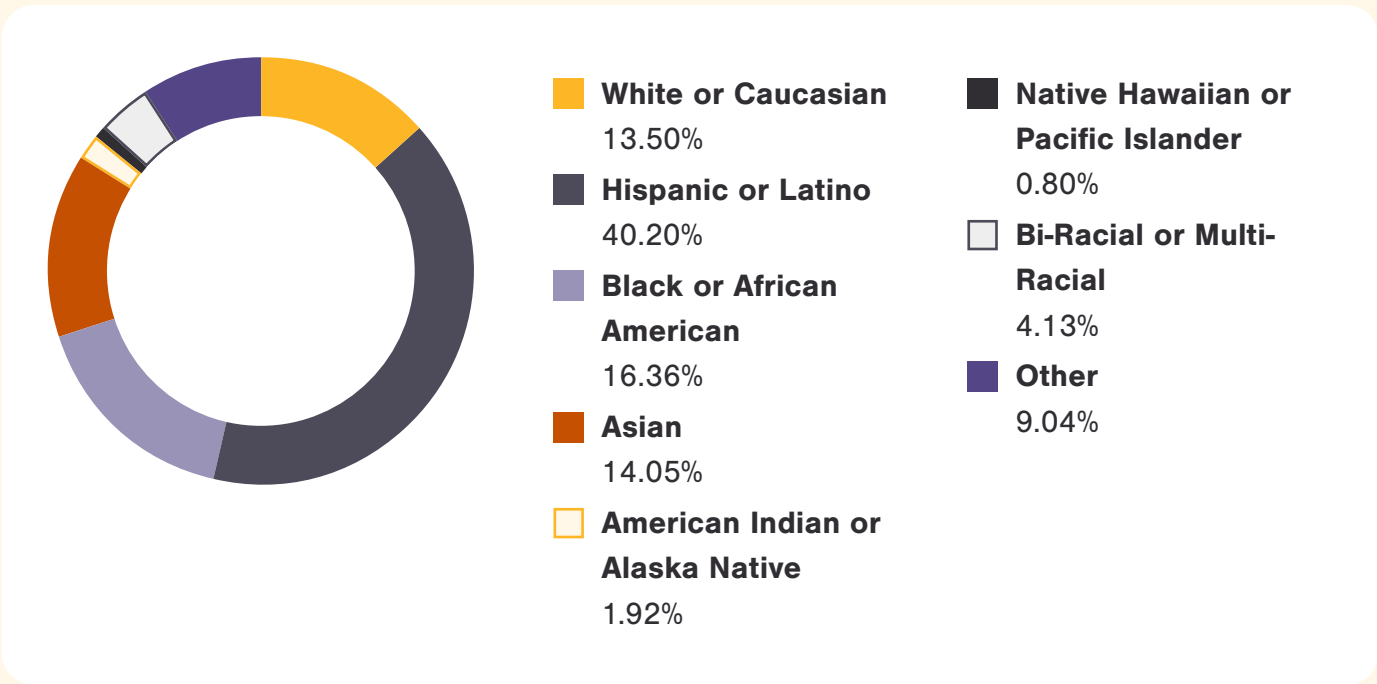
“We were able to pass an expanded vacatur law in New Jersey. It was passed by the legislature in December 2021 and signed into law in January 2022.”

- **New York**

5 <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/advocacy/survivor-reentry-project/>

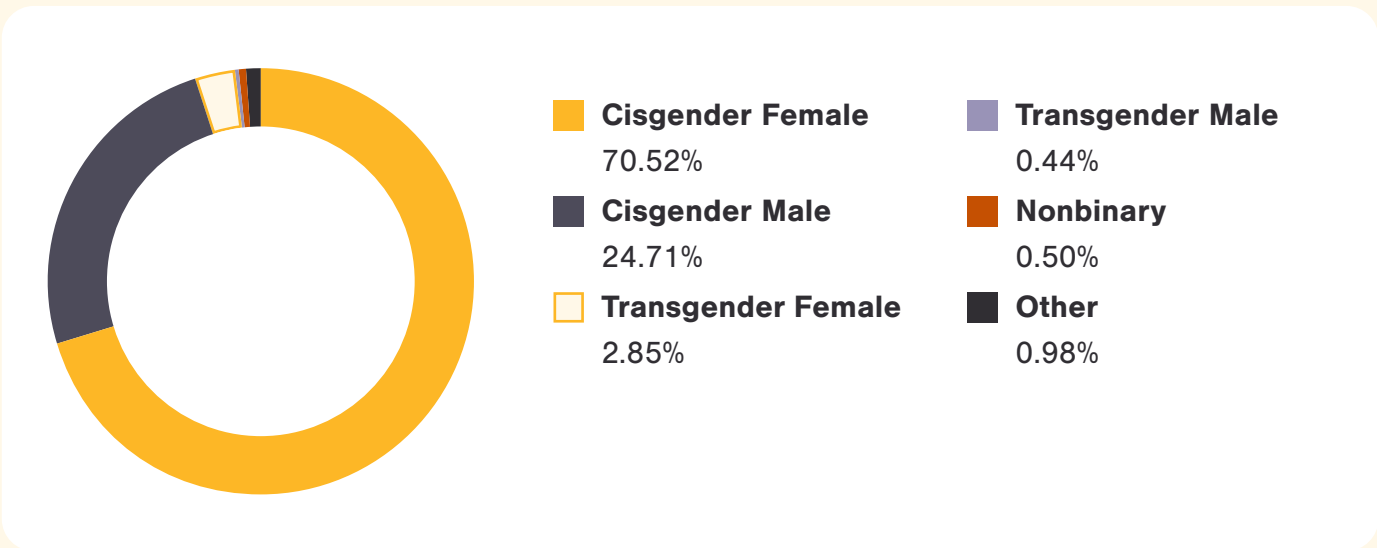
Race/Ethnicity

Members overwhelmingly served survivors of color during the reporting period. Only 13.5% of survivors identified as White or Caucasian, which showcases the vulnerability of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.



Gender

There was little change in the breakdown of survivors’ reported gender in this reporting period compared to our last report. Members continue to disproportionately serve Cisgender Females. Identification tends to be lower in the other categories.



Challenges for the LGBTQIA+ Community

It is well documented that the LGBTQIA+ communities are at an increased risk of human trafficking, especially young people. One study of homeless youth found that those who identified as LGBTQIA+ were twice as likely to experience human trafficking than their non-Queer counterparts.⁶ These young people find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons, but often, it is because their parents or guardians kicked them out because of their sexuality. With few resources and no stable home, they do what they have to in order to survive.

















During the Trump Administration, the amount of anti-trans and discriminatory legislation passed at all levels of government increased significantly. According to the ACLU, between 2020 and 2021, the number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced doubled, and the number of bills that became law increased from 3 to 19.⁷ This increase in hate-based public policy is troubling and has been accompanied by an increase in discriminatory language used in public discourse. This only increases the risk of trafficking for this population by leaving them with fewer safe options for support. Members reported that the LGBTQIA+ survivors they serve struggled with these realities during the reporting period, especially those with intersectional identities.

The number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced **doubled** between 2020 and 2021.

“Our LGBTQI survivors of color faced an enormous amount of heightened homophobia, transphobia, and racism during this reporting period.”
- California

Services

FNUSA members provide a wide range of services to survivors of human trafficking. The most common include:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Case Management |  Education Access |  Technical Assistance |
|  Legal Services |  Expert Testimony |  Policy Advocacy |
|  Counseling |  Community Education |  Referrals |
|  Housing |  Criminal Justice Advocacy |  Research |
|  Medical Referrals |  Training |  Safety Planning |
|  Employment Assistance | | |

6 <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ht/murphy-labor-sex-trafficking-homeless-youth.pdf>

7 <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/anti-lgbtq-laws-red-states/>

Challenges with Services

Members specifically cited a lack of mental health services and worsening access to safe and affordable housing as their largest challenges. Individuals seeking mental health services soared in 2020, and practitioners were unable to meet the growing needs.⁸ Members cited long wait lists and unaffordable care options for survivors. Worse still, members noted that mental health professionals who provide language access are even more scarce, leaving immigrant survivors with almost no support in addressing their mental health needs.

Housing affordability continues to decline in most regions and is the most commonly reported challenge for members. High rents and poor housing service infrastructure are reported from high-density areas like New York City to more rural locations in southern Illinois. Shelters can be unsafe or unsuitable for some survivors, including families or transgender individuals. Long-term housing options are almost nonexistent, and programs do not have the funding to support rental assistance. Until government officials and advocates define solutions for homelessness and housing insecurity, human trafficking survivors will continue to be in precarious situations, even if they manage to escape their trafficker.

“The national and statewide affordable housing crisis was and remains one of the most significant challenges to supporting survivors in securing housing, even as survivors continue to identify housing as their number one goal.”

- **Maine**

“Some of the biggest challenges we face serving clients include that often, vulnerable trafficked clients cannot afford to live in a safe place in South Florida due to sky-high rents and lack of affordable housing. We have seen clients stay with their abusers or in a household where they are not very welcome because they have no other choice.”

- **Florida**

“For mental health services, clients may be connected to available resources, but there are limits that include long wait times, no language accessibility (for clients who speak other languages besides English), and too high of a cost to take consistent sessions”

- **Washington**

8 <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2022/11/mental-health-care-strains>

Members

Alabama

[Southern Poverty Law Center Immigrant Justice Project](#)

Arizona

Ethereal Bein, Individual Member

[Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project](#)

[International Rescue Committee Phoenix](#)

Arkansas

Annie Smith, Individual Member

California

[Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach](#)

[Asian Women's Shelter](#)

[Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking](#)

Chris Castillo, Individual Member

Dr. Rachel Robitz, Individual Member

Helen Stiver, Individual Member

[International Rescue Committee Northern California](#)

[Justice at Last](#)

[Katharine and George Alexander](#)

[Community Law Center](#)

[Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles](#)

Norma Bastidas, Individual Member

[Opening Doors, Inc.](#)

Rafael Bautista, Individual Member

[Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative at](#)

[Loyola Law School](#)

Susie Baldwin, Individual Member

[Verity](#)

Colorado

Billie Jo McIntire, Individual Member

Patricia Medige, Individual Member

Rebekah Layton, Individual Member

[Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network](#)

Connecticut

[Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants](#)

Alicia Kinsman, Individual Member

Florida

[Americans for Immigrant Justice](#)

[Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#)

Daniela Deas, Individual Member

[Florida Legal Services](#)

[Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.](#)

[International Rescue Committee Florida](#)

[VIDA Legal Assistance](#)

Georgia

Dan Werner, Individual Member

[Tapestri, Inc.](#)

Illinois

[Heartland Human Care Services](#)

[International Organization for Adolescents \(IOFA\)](#)

Julissa Ponce, Individual Member

[Legal Aid Chicago](#)

[Metropolitan Family Services](#)

[National Immigrant Justice Center](#)

Kentucky

Kristina Smith, Individual Member

Louisiana

Leanne McCallum, Individual Member

Maine

[Preble Street](#)

Maryland

[Ayuda](#)

[HopeWorks](#)

Lauren Anderson, Individual Member

[The Human Trafficking Prevention Project](#)

[UMD Safe Center](#)

Massachusetts

Anastasia Lynge, Individual Member

Ashleigh Pelto, Individual Member

Hanni Stoklosa, Individual Member

Michigan

[YWCA Kalamazoo](#)

Minnesota

[International Institute of Minnesota](#)

Missouri

[International Institute of St. Louis](#)

New Jersey

Anita Teekah, Individual Member

[Volunteer Lawyers for Justice](#)

New York

Amy Fleischauer, Individual Member

Andy Stowers Forest, Individual Member

Emily Warfield, Individual Member

[Erie County Bar Association Volunteer
Lawyers Project, Inc.](#)

Florrie Burke, Individual Member

[International Institute of Buffalo
International Rescue Committee
Headquarters](#)

Kate Mogulescu, Individual Member

[Legal Aid Society of NYC](#)

[My Sisters' Place](#)

[Safe Horizon](#)

[Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice
Center](#)

[Womankind](#)

[Worker Justice Center of New York](#)

North Carolina

[Justice Matters](#)

Ohio

[Advocating Opportunity](#)

Oregon

Sara Aguilar, Individual Member

Puerto Rico

Justice Rivera, Individual Member

Texas

[American Gateways](#)

[Baylor College of Medicine](#)

Ingrid Guerrero Rodriguez, Individual Member

[Mosaic Family Services](#)

Yuririra Guerrero Rodriguez, Individual
Member

Utah

Annie Fukushima, PhD., Individual Member

Vermont

[Give Way to Freedom](#)

Virginia

Ayuda

International Rescue Committee Richmond

Janie Chuang, Individual Member

Washington

API Chaya

Cindy Liou, Individual Member

International Rescue Committee WARN

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

Sabra Boyd, Individual Member

Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman, Individual Member

Washington, D.C.

Ayuda

Denise Brennan, Individual Member

Fainess Lipenga, Individual Member

Human Trafficking Legal Center

Mariah Grant, Individual Member

Wisconsin

Family Support Center

Lara Gerassi, Individual Member

Legal Action of Wisconsin

LOTUS Legal Clinic



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