

# **Human Trafficking**

A Working Philosophical Framework for Domestic and  
Sexual Violence Advocates and Agencies



mcedsv

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## **Why A Philosophical Framework**

A philosophical framework is a writing format and analytical tool that provides a scaffold to support us as we come to understand complex issues. There are several elements in a philosophical framework paper:

1. Defining essential terms
2. Critically analyzing key concepts
3. Developing a thesis, theory, or position statement

This framework is useful to discuss the difficult issue of human trafficking. Unlike scholarly publications, this paper will not present original research; instead, this framework will seek to lay out the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence's position on human trafficking while providing key concepts for domestic and sexual violence agencies and activists to consider when addressing this issue.

This paper is designed to provide domestic violence and sexual violence service providers a foundation of knowledge to integrate anti-human-trafficking analysis into their work and services to combat such violence while maintaining a survivor-centered focus.

## **The Role of MCEDSV in Ending Human Trafficking**

### **Our Mission:**

MCEDSV is dedicated to the empowerment of all the state's survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Our mission is to develop and promote efforts aimed at the elimination of all domestic and sexual violence in Michigan.

### **Our Vision:**

MCEDSV is Michigan's catalyst for creating empowered and transformed individuals, communities, and a society committed to building a lasting legacy of equality, peace, and social justice, where domestic and sexual violence no longer exists.

### **Our Commitment:**

MCEDSV is committed to helping bring an end to human trafficking that involves domestic and sexual violence in Michigan and globally while empowering survivors and communities. MCEDSV currently provides several resources to help achieve this goal.

*Training:* MCEDSV provides large statewide trainings and small, closed trainings that are generally aimed at domestic and sexual violence service providers on topics ranging from the basics of human trafficking as it may come up while serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence to utilizing trauma-informed care and harm reduction practices with survivors. MCEDSV will also customize a training upon request.

*Technical Assistance:* MCEDSV provides one-on-one technical assistance to member and affiliate programs. MCEDSV also provides assistance to non-members who are working with

survivors or survivor-serving programs.

*Legal Advice:* MCEDSV has two attorneys on staff, including the Executive Director, who can provide legal advice around issues of human trafficking where they come up in serving victims of crime including domestic and sexual violence. In addition, MCEDSV has a close working relationship with the University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic.

*Public Policy Work:* Policy advocacy has been a key component of MCEDSV's work and we have been involved in a variety of initiatives that focus on human trafficking legislation and policy in Michigan.

## **MCEDSV Position on Human Trafficking**

The Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV) believes that human trafficking are closely related to domestic and sexual violence. MCEDSV recognizes that not all survivors of human trafficking experience sexual or domestic violence. However, there are many survivors of human trafficking that do. Therefore, MCEDSV is working to integrate human trafficking in all visioning, training materials, technical assistance, advocacy, and public policy initiatives.

MCEDSV has adopted and advocates the use of the best practices for medical service providers that is outlined in the AMA Journal of Ethics, which focuses on a human rights framework of service and emphasizes human dignity and harm reduction. This framework eliminates the artificial distinction of type of victimization and instead seeks to deal with the harm caused by the trauma, allowing a unified service delivery approach that emphasizes the dignity of each survivor.

It is our position that all professional services provided to victims of human trafficking and all staff involved with the provision of such services should be trained and grounded in a victim-centered frame of reference, one which is culturally-relevant and gender-sensitive to the victim and which is evidence-based. This frame of reference must be informed and shaped by the trauma it seeks to serve, and it must also include the essential components of prevention and identification of trafficking.

*Principal Beliefs:*

- Human trafficking can be more fully understood when the lessons learned by the movement to end domestic and sexual violence are applied.
- Human trafficking exists in the interconnected systems of oppression and violence at the interpersonal, community, and systemic levels.
- Survivors of domestic and sexual violence are vulnerable to human trafficking; similarly, survivors of human trafficking are vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence.
- Survivors of human trafficking are often survivors of domestic and sexual violence—regardless of whether both forms of victimization are initially clear or obvious.
- Domestic and sexual violence are often tactics used strategically by traffickers, intimate partners, friends, and relatives to control individuals involved in human trafficking
- Individuals in the sex trade (whether trafficking survivor, sex worker, or both), people with criminal records, undocumented people, people with addictions, people who are HIV+, queer people, Indigenous people, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, people with disabilities,

survivors of multiple forms of violence, and racialized people are worthy of human love, human dignity, compassion, and advocacy.

- The unique experiences of oppression, violence, service provision, and the criminalization of individuals are dependent on their identity and location.

### *Direct Actions:*

- We support intersectionality, harm reduction, and trauma-informed practices.
- We reject and work against all models that could bring harm to survivors.
- We work to eliminate stigma, barriers, and violence experienced by survivors in all community and system responses.
- We work and advocate for survivors to be in leadership roles and at the center of our work to design programs and initiatives to serve victims of human trafficking, and we work to support one another, person to person and agency to agency, in this work. This movement was built by survivors for survivors and should always remain so.
- We work to end all forms of violence against all people, not just some forms of violence against some people.

## **Introduction**

Human Trafficking (HT hereafter) has become a household term due to concentrated media coverage and awareness campaigns over the last 17 years. Unfortunately, the depiction of HT in the media and awareness events is often factually inaccurate and fraught with prejudices and misconceptions of the

crime. Such depictions are often disempowering and oppressive to the survivors. They also generate moral panic in communities rather than support for survivor-centered action. This sense of panic has guided the anti-trafficking movement to support harmful tactics to address trafficking, including an overreliance on criminalization and policing without any survivor-based supportive framework. Most initiatives that are currently in place in the United States are funded and focused on law enforcement responses (local, state, and federal) to human trafficking. Support systems for victims are frequently absent or secondary to the law enforcement responses, and in some cases, these support systems hinge upon a criminal justice outcome in direct opposition to clear evidence of the best practices for serving survivors. This has created a singular societal system response to HT survivors, one which leaves most victims without their basic needs met and which leaves many additional victims traumatized by a criminal justice response that has not been centered or focused on the supports required for the victim. Supportive systems for HT survivors are desperately needed: services that prioritize their needs and wants while ensuring they are treated with dignity, autonomy, and compassion.

Against this backdrop, the empowerment and survivor centered philosophy of the domestic and sexual violence movement is urgently needed to influence the anti-HT movement. Domestic and sexual violence service providers are uniquely qualified to serve survivors of trafficking who experience domestic or sexual violence. They already have an understanding of trauma, survivor-centeredness, and autonomy, as these same issues come into play for victims of those crimes. Domestic and sexual violence service providers often have access to much-needed resources for the victim, including housing, food, advocacy, and legal assistance. In addition, trafficking survivors

are often survivors of multiple forms of violence including domestic and sexual violence. The overlap between domestic and sexual violence and HT is manifest in many survivor stories. Domestic and sexual violence service provision is based on serving the whole person and recognizes the unique lived experiences of survivors.

Unfortunately, domestic and sexual violence service providers have not had strong guidance on the integration of HT into their programming. This document will lay a foundation for domestic and sexual violence service providers in Michigan to ensure a shared understanding regarding the intersections of domestic and sexual violence and HT and to actively promote institutional supports for survivors of HT within our movement.

This paper is divided into three parts:

**Part 1:** *Introduction to Human Trafficking*

The first part of this paper will focus on HT and the misconceptions that are often associated with HT. This will be particularly helpful for engaging your community in conversations on HT and to combat negative and harmful programming around HT.

**Part 2:** *Critique of the Current Response to HT*

The second part will focus on the responses to HT that fail to center the needs of survivors, like the rescue and restore model of service provision and over dependence on the criminal justice system. This section will also focus on the role of domestic and sexual assault programs. This section will pay close attention to addressing and confronting issues of mission drift and philosophical divergence in the domestic and sexual violence movement.

**Part 3:** *Moving Toward an Anti-Violence Movement*

The last part will focus on where we go from here. This section will also use the theory of intersectionality and philosophies of harm reduction and trauma-informed care to lay a foundation for addressing HT in Michigan when it arises in the domestic and sexual violence context.

## **Part 1: Introduction to Human Trafficking**

### **Defining Human Trafficking**

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was signed in 2000 under the Clinton Administration and has since been reauthorized and expanded by the Bush and Obama administrations in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013. The federal definition of HT separates sex trafficking and labor trafficking as the two forms of trafficking defined in the United States. The TVPA states:

*"Sex trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; and*

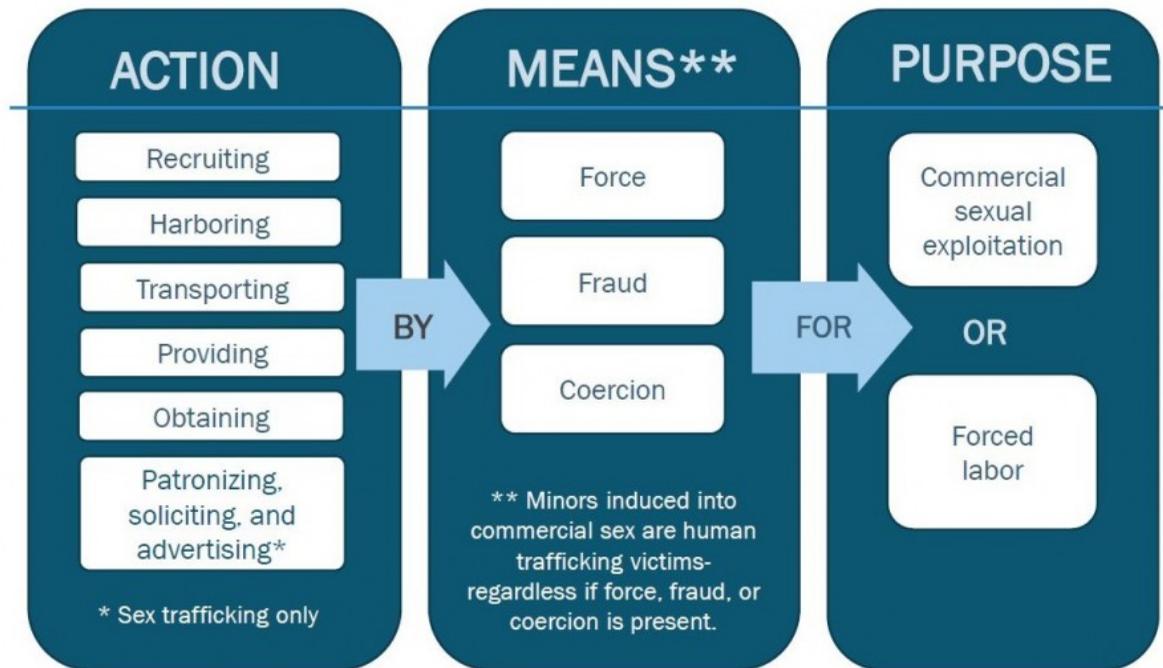
*Labor Trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery."*

The separation of trafficking survivors by primary victimization has been highly contested by activists, survivors, and academics as artificial, as survivors lived experiences more often reflect both types of victimizations, as well as additional traumas, such as intimate partner violence. Moreover, the construct created by this language also creates an artificial

hierarchy of responses to survivors, when best practices indicate that all trauma should be treated with survivor-led harm reduction and trauma-informed care.

**Additionally, as cited by the TVPA, the emphasis on force, fraud, and coercion** are often highlighted as the key components for defining and identifying HT. Focusing on the mechanics of the perpetrator of victimization (force, fraud and coercion) is more useful in serving victims than focusing on the purpose of the victimization (sex vs. labor). That is whether someone is victimized for the purpose of slave labor or sexual slavery is not as helpful as understanding that there is a commonality of experiences between victims in their experience of having been forced, coerced, or tricked into some form of compelled service. Force, fraud and coercion are also tactics used in domestic violence and sexual assault and illustrate the commonality of perpetrator tactics and the DV/SA movement's unique ability to respond to and combat them.

As an important aside, it should be noted that the physical movement of the survivor is not necessary to prove trafficking under the law. The word trafficking often creates some initial confusion for people as they hear "traffic" and think of cars moving along a road instead of traffic or trafficking, meaning dealing or trading in something illegal.



## The AMP Model

The graphic above is the Act, Means, and Purpose Model or AMP Model.<sup>1</sup> The model uses the legal definition of HT to create a visual and may help others understand the legal definition. While this visual can be useful to discuss HT, please note that there will be survivor experiences that will not fit neatly within this model. It is important to remember that this is only a tool; it is not meant to limit our understanding of the complexity of survivors' lived experiences or deny their victimization. This can be one of the most complex issues that advocates for survivors of domestic and sexual violence navigate. Survivors may not meet the legal definition of victimization but they most certainly have been

<sup>1</sup> This graphic is available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/what-is-human-trafficking>

victimized.

## **Victims/Survivors**

It is important to make note of the language of victim and survivor. Trafficking discourse is dominated by the words “victim” as “victim of human trafficking” is a defined term in the TVPA and there are specific legal remedies attached to that term. Victim has been a contested word in the domestic and sexual violence movement and advocates and survivors began using the term survivor to highlight the person’s resilience. Victim and survivor are often treated as perfect opposites of each other or as a binary. However, as we have already emphasized, most terms or issues are not easily categorized. Some survivors would disagree with one or both terms or would choose to call themselves something different, and their choice should be honored. In addition, the conversation around victim and trafficker(s) may not reflect the experience of all those who have suffered trafficking. For example, some people in the sex trade are not/were not coerced by an individual but still experience violence and oppression.

Trafficking survivors are often those most disenfranchised and oppressed in our society. This means people of color, undocumented people, displaced people and refugees, Indigenous people, queer and gender non-conforming folk, transgender people, women, youth and elders, people with disabilities and/or mental illness, people with addictions, people with criminal records, and people who have experienced trauma. These are the people who are most disenfranchised, marginalized, and oppressed. And yet, paradoxically, these are the individuals most often screened out of services and supports or described as

difficult cases. Domestic and sexual violence service providers know that the more oppressions and vulnerabilities a survivor experiences the more obstacles they will face in accessing services to meet their complex needs and goals.

## **Different Forms of Human Trafficking**

There is an overemphasis on sex trafficking in the media, criminal justice systems, and public policy arenas. Sex trafficking is typically depicted in graphic, sensationalized detail that sells books, movies, and gets clicks on news articles. The sensationalized retelling of survivor's trauma is used exploitatively to justify "draconian solutions."<sup>2</sup> In addition, mission statements, funding streams, and programming may be dedicated to sex trafficking survivors only, and leave out labor trafficking survivors altogether, even if they are also survivors of sexual violence. The domestic and sexual violence movement has been guilty of this as well in attempting to only address sex trafficking in their programming while excluding labor trafficking survivors. In this practice, survivors and communities have suffered. While federal and state laws define HT in two separate categories, this does not mean the survivors themselves are easily separated into these categories.

Examples of possible labor in which HT can exist are below; this list is not exhaustive:

- Street-based sex work
- Domestic work (child care, elder care, cooking, cleaning)
- Exotic dancing

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald Weitzer. "The social construction of sex trafficking: Ideology and institutionalization of a moral crusade." *Politics & Society* 35, no. 3 (2007): 448.

- Home health aides or Health services
- Drug trade
- Modeling
- Restaurants, bars, and the food industry
- Mail order bride services
- Begging
- Online commercial sex work
- Webcam or pornography work
- Construction
- Janitorial and cleaning work
- Factory work
- Agriculture and animal husbandry
- Landscaping
- Hospitality industry
- Traveling sales crews
- Beauty parlors, nail salons, spas, and massage parlors
- Carnivals, circus, or fairs

HT flourishes in spaces that are already stigmatized, such as sex work or undocumented labor, because ostracized populations have fewer options and supports and are therefore more vulnerable. This is why survivor-centered, trauma-informed services are so crucial. In the HT context, stigmatizing individuals based on narrow conceptions of eligibility or worthiness can be especially damaging. The survivors that service providers may encounter and work with may or may not fit the legal definition neatly. In those moments it is more valuable to listen to the survivor rather than any identification tool that could be provided.

The American Medical Association has adopted a survivor-centered approach in addressing the ethics of appropriately treating human trafficking survivors. Victims of human trafficking

interact with the health care system before, during, and after the period of victimization. Over the last few years, there has been significant discussion in the medical community regarding the most beneficial framework for medical professionals to address human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a human rights issue. International human rights law has declared the “fundamental immorality and unlawfulness of one person appropriating the legal personality, labor, or humanity of another”; arguably, there is no act more dehumanizing and exploitative than the trafficking of another human being. The particular human rights violated in cases of trafficking include the right to liberty and security; the right not to be submitted to slavery, servitude, forced labor, or bonded labor; the right not to be subjected to torture, punishment, or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment; the right to be free from gendered violence; the right to freedom of movement; the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and the right of children to special protection.<sup>3</sup>

Fundamental to a rights-based approach is the core concept of “strengthening the capacities of rights holders [the trafficking survivors] to secure their rights”. This conversation mirrors the one being held in our movement and the broader HT and service-provision community as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> Hanni Stoklosa, Aimee M. Grace, and Nicole Littenberg. “Medical education on human trafficking.” *AMA journal of ethics* 17, no. 10 (2015): 914.

## A Warning on Statistics

Much of the statistical data that has been published regarding HT is inaccurate and inflammatory. For example, Kevin Bales estimated in his 1999 book *Disposable People* that there were “27 million slaves in the world today.”<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, this number was extrapolated from multiple research papers, news reports, governmental reports, and international surveys, and cannot provide an accurate estimate of the number of people currently in HT situations in 1999 or in 2017. Data collection on trafficking has not improved since the publication of Bales’ now widely-quoted book. Several reasons exist for this. One is that many countries, including the U.S., conflate undocumented migration and sex work with trafficking regardless of whether it is the choice of the individual or not. This can be shown in the inconsistency in reports that use terms like sex trafficking, labor trafficking, modern slavery, or forced migration, as synonyms.<sup>5</sup> The first estimate of the number of trafficking survivors who enter the U.S. every year in HT situations was made in 1999 at 50,000-70,000 people. This number was presented to the United States Congress by the Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>6</sup> This number was later revised to be 18,000-20,000 people entering the U.S. in 2003.<sup>7</sup> The number

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<sup>4</sup> Kevin Bales. *Disposable people: New slavery in the global economy*. Univ of California Press, 2012: 8.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Laczko, and Marco A. Gramegna. "Developing better indicators of human trafficking." *The Brown Journal of world affairs* 10, no. 1 (2003): 181.

<sup>6</sup> Johnny E McGaha and Amanda Evans. "Where Are the Victims-The Credibility Gap in Human Trafficking Research." *Intercultural Hum. Rts. L. Rev.* 4 (2009): 242.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

dropped again in the 2004 Trafficking in Person's Report to 14,500-17,000 people.<sup>8</sup> The lack of accurate data and widely varying numbers harms the overall response to HT and does not create sustainable responses. Instead, inaccurate data has inflamed moral panic on how many people are being victimized and created quick policy responses that decentered survivors and further harmed and oppressed people.

HT is underreported for many reasons, from not knowing how to report to distrust of law enforcement. Statistical data on HT in the U.S. is usually focused on reports made to law enforcement, which means that there is a portion of data that is not collected or depends on law enforcement officials making the correct identification of cases. This is problematic as law enforcement personnel may not be properly trained to identify HT survivors and may arrest the survivor. In addition, those in the sex trade and people who are undocumented frequently experience increased sexual and physical violence by law enforcement officials with little recourse. While trafficking survivors may seek social services or legal support, they might never be identified as survivors because of implicit biases possessed by program staff or the survivors' preference not to talk about the more taboo aspects of their lives.

This is a caution to be wary of statistics that perpetuate bad data and stereotypes about. It is important not to share statistics carelessly, and to review the methods used to generate these numbers. If there is no available method underlying a study or a statistic has been extrapolated from other reports, then it is safe to assume this is bad data. It may be possible to have more reliable data but it is unlikely that we will ever have a true account of the number of people who are victims/survivors of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 250.

human trafficking.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, we have to understand the benefits and limitations of statistical data; focusing on achieving an accurate number is a small portion of the work that needs to be done in anti-oppression and anti-violence work.

## **The Problem of the Supply and Demand Model**

HT is often framed in terms of supply and demand and these usually coincide with statistical data. The supply and demand model is as simple as its name implies, that there is a supply of vulnerable people (undocumented individuals, youth, impoverished people, etc.) and there is a demand (men who want to buy sex, employers who want cheap, controllable labor) for services. The trafficker is a business owner in this model who recruits the supply and creates or feeds the demand.

It is common to see policies or initiatives that purport to target the “demand” side of sex trafficking, which is usually focused solely on men who purchase street-based sex work. The end demand approach is often to arrest these men and publicly shame them, requires them to pay a fee, or attend “John” schools.<sup>10</sup> The premise is that if men stop purchasing sex, trafficking would no longer exist. However, there is no evidence that this is the case. Even more to the point, there is little discussion on addressing the demand side of labor trafficking.

Ending demand is often exclusively applied to sex work, however a more effective model is based in harm reduction. End demand policies often harm survivors and sex workers alike. Emi

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<sup>9</sup> Loring Jones, David W. Engstrom, Tricia Hilliard, and Mariel Diaz. "Globalization and human trafficking." *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare* 34 (2007): 108

<sup>10</sup> Emi Koyama. "War on Terror and War on Trafficking: A Sex Worker Activist Confronts the Anti-Trafficking Movement" Portland: Confluere Publications, 2011: 20

Koyama puts it plainly in her essay *War on Terror and War on Trafficking: A Sex Worker Confronts the Anti-Trafficking Movement*: “‘end demand’ campaigns are harmful to women because it diminishes their bargaining power, forcing them to do more for less money, with more dangerous johns, under less safe environments”<sup>11</sup>. We should avoid the temptation to champion end-demand rhetoric and campaigns as an easy solution because they tend to re-victimize and disempower survivors, especially those with oppressed identities.

End-demand campaigns fail to understand the complexity of HT and do not address the root causes of HT which is an interrelationship of complex global dynamics.

## **Causes of Human Trafficking**

When examining the root causes of HT most of the literature on international cases of trafficking will focus on poverty, undemocratic governments, and gender inequality, while U.S.-based causes may be poverty, sexual exploitation, or violence in the home. The focus on the vulnerabilities of some individuals is important but fails to examine the larger structural barriers and causes of trafficking. The structural causes of HT are complex and interconnected systems of oppression.

Understanding individual vulnerabilities is key to providing trauma-informed care and building supportive programs. But we should try to understand these vulnerabilities without falling into the trap of allowing the survivor to be shamed, re-victimized or blamed for their experiences. This is achieved most successfully when service providers understand and advocate for large scale solutions to how and why these vulnerabilities exist and are exploited and in survivor-centered individualized services that

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 22.  
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respond to each person's actual needs.

In addition, as advocates against HT we must have an anti-oppression framework for our analysis and response to HT; failure to do so has already resulted in harmful initiatives and a lack of support for survivors. Examples of this include the increased criminalization of HT that has resulted in survivors being arrested, detained, and/or deported and the creation of service provision that is focused on rescuing and restoring survivors.

## **Part 2: Critique of the Current Response to HT**

### **The Ideal Victim of Human Trafficking**

Throughout our cultural zeitgeist, the media and therefore our cultural norms have created an idealized version of what a victim can or should look like. Ideally, she will have been kidnapped and chained into sex slavery. If this is domestic trafficking, the victim is portrayed as middle class, if she is undocumented, then the victim has been ripped from her village to be sold into slavery in the United States or another Westernized country. She will also have fought to some extent or attempted escape. Idealized victims of human trafficking are young women or children; usually white or light skinned; heterosexual; virginal, innocent, youthful; physically attractive by European standards; only trafficked for the purposes of selling sex; forced, either physically by beatings, chains, or by sexual assault to work in the sex trade; may be a victim of multiple assaults or forms of violence while trafficked; and they are passive in their own lives and are happy to be rescued and readily accept all services. This portrait of an “ideal victim” creates a dangerous separation between victims deemed worthy of our support and services and people who should not receive support or should be criminalized.<sup>12</sup>

This ideal victim mythology is harmful and misleading. It ignores the very human and nuanced lives that victims lead. Moreover, the ideal victim is a social construction of victimhood that is crafted by the dominant culture and therefore reflects the dominant culture’s oppressive beliefs, reinforcing and marginalizing anyone who doesn’t fit these ideals. Unfortunately

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<sup>12</sup> Jo Doezema. "Who gets to choose? Coercion, consent, and the UN Trafficking Protocol." *Gender & Development* 10, no. 1 (2002): 20-27.  
*MCEDSV April 2017*

once the image has been created or revised the people and the systems that the victim will interact with such as law enforcement, medical, and mental health services, will hold victims to this image causing additional harm. If victims are found lacking in the ideal victim image then they will not be believed and are at risk for further victimization from their community and systems.

As aforementioned, the ideal victim of human trafficking must fit into these categories to be believed and gain support.<sup>13</sup> The standards of victimization are nearly impossible to meet for people of color, LGBTIQ2S individuals, and people with disabilities, undocumented or migrant populations, and those already criminalized.<sup>14</sup> If someone has been trafficked and they do not fit this image they may be vulnerable to re-victimization by the systems and people they encounter.

For example, consider the case of a woman who is an undocumented immigrant living in poverty. Because of her financial pressures, she agrees with her boyfriend that he will put pictures of her online and then arrange "dates" where she will offer sex for pay. But after a few such "dates," her boyfriend stops giving her any money. When she tells her boyfriend that she no longer wants to sell sex, her boyfriend physically threatens her and says she must continue and that he will call immigration authorities and report her if she does not. It is highly unlikely she would feel safe reporting to the local law enforcement for fear of arrest or deportation. She may even have

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<sup>13</sup> Carolyn Hoyle, Mary Bosworth, and Michelle Dempsey. "Labelling the victims of sex trafficking: Exploring the borderland between rhetoric and reality." *Social & Legal Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 322.

<sup>14</sup> Sule Tomkinson. "THE MULTIPLICITY OF TRUTHS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING: BEYOND "THE SEX SLAVE" DISCOURSE." *CEU Political Science Journal* 01 (2012): 52.

encountered a law enforcement official and, perhaps, may even have been raped, extorted, or assaulted by them. She will also be unlikely to seek medical help as she will not have insurance or may fear law enforcement being called. She may never tell her family or friends about her situation because they may disown or blame her. The ideal victim looms over all victims and reinforces their self-blame and silence. Ultimately we can conclude that "by creating 'ideal types' of trafficked women who are 'stolen' from their homes, or coerced into leaving, and imprisoned in brothels oversimplifies our understanding of the range of causes and experiences of trafficking."<sup>15</sup>

Domestic and sexual violence service providers are uniquely aware of the presence of and harm caused by the ideal victim narrative and have fought since the beginning of the movement against these harmful representations. It is time for the DV/SA movement to reject this projection of the ideal victim onto trafficking as well.

## **Traffickers in the Media**

There has been little research on traffickers<sup>16</sup> and the media and the criminal justice system in tandem with the media has produced an image of traffickers that is stereotypically racist and classist. Men of color, particularly black men, are depicted as traffickers and while black men can be traffickers it is unlikely that the majority or all traffickers are black men. Men of color who are born outside of the United States and speak another

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<sup>15</sup>Carolyn Hoyle, Mary Bosworth, and Michelle Dempsey. "Labelling the victims of sex trafficking: Exploring the borderland between rhetoric and reality." *Social & Legal Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 314.

<sup>16</sup> Jo Goodey. "Human trafficking Sketchy data and policy responses." *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 8, no. 4 (2008): 429.

language are also frequently depicted as traffickers in the media. Organized crime syndicates or gangs, usually run by men of color, are often discussed by the media and the government as the cause of human trafficking. While organized crime may play a role in human trafficking for some survivors and in some locations it is not the sole or even primary cause of human trafficking. Creating the image of traffickers through these stereotypes is unfounded, perpetuates systems of oppression, and does nothing to contribute to survivor services or a long-term solution.

The temptation to associate black men with trafficking is especially pernicious. Black men are more likely to be arrested in the United States and currently make up 35% of the prison population, almost 3 times their percent of the general population.<sup>17</sup> Black men may be trafficking victims or the family members, intimate partners, or friends of those involved in the sex trade (both voluntarily and involuntarily) and because of racism and the mass incarceration of black bodies, they may be labeled “pimp.” The dialogue around pimp is laced with racist and classist ideologies and has become a common pop culture reference that is used in anti-trafficking materials. Domestic and sexual violence service agencies should be aware to actively challenge racist representations of survivors and traffickers. This representation benefits perpetrators by creating a standard they must meet to be considered perpetrators that many will not meet, effectively erasing them from the conversation.

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Judicial Statistics. (December 2016):6. Prisoners in 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p15.pdf>

## Perpetrator Dynamics

Going beyond the media portrayals, traffickers are most likely people of the same race or ethnicity as the survivor.<sup>18</sup> This is especially relevant for survivors who are from other countries outside the U.S., as traffickers are more likely to speak their language and understand their culture. Traffickers will exploit language and culture in order to gain and maintain control. Traffickers are similar to intimate partners who batter, and in some cases are one and the same. Traffickers use tactics of isolation, intimidation, coercion, violence, sexual assault, financial exploitation, and threats to maintain power and control over survivors. Traffickers often exploit the most human qualities of survivors, qualities like love and friendship to gain entry and maintain power and control. This is one of the reasons that survivors can find it so difficult to leave trafficking situations; because they may have a bond with the trafficker, they may feel indebted or dependent on the trafficker, or they may love them. Domestic and sexual violence service providers have years of experience in dealing with intimate and interpersonal forms of violence that often leave the survivor feeling responsible for the violence and/or tied to the perpetrator. Below is the human trafficking Power and Control Wheel modeled off of the Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel, developed by domestic violence survivors. As you can see much of the same behavior of perpetrators of domestic violence exist in HT situations.

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<sup>18</sup> Polaris Project. *Typology of Modern Slavery*. (2017). Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery.pdf>



This wheel was adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project's Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel, available at [www.theduluthmodel.org](http://www.theduluthmodel.org)

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## The Issue of Consent

Consent is often used to determine if a survivor of trafficking is, in fact, 'a survivor.' This occurs through screening to see if the survivor meets the legal definition of HT and if they consented to any of the violence and oppression they experienced. The conversation around consent is most prevalent in the times when identifying survivors is unclear or does not fit the ideal victim narrative of HT. If it can be determined that this individual consented at some point in their victimization, their victimization is denied. However, consent or the absence of consent does not exist in absolutes. It should be noted that most survivors may not identify themselves as victims lacking agency because they did make choices for themselves.<sup>19</sup> Survivors may consent to some things but be forced or coerced into others; does this consent to one thing mean they are deserving of the violence and oppression they experienced? Of course not; this is victim blaming and domestic and sexual violence service providers are equipped to recognize the multitude of ways that consent can be used against survivors.

Totalizing consent on either spectrum is disempowering to survivors and removes their autonomy and resiliency. Breaking down the false binary of consent is valuable in serving the whole person. Consent becomes less of the identifier of victimization and more an opportunity to dialogue with the survivor about their experience. When survivors have to choose between exploitive labor and homelessness then there is a larger systemic problem beyond this one person's choice (or lack thereof).

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald Weitzer. "The social construction of sex trafficking: Ideology and institutionalization of a moral crusade." *Politics & Society* 35, no. 3 (2007): 453.

## **Confronting Stigma**

Human trafficking is a complex issue that produces emotional or moral responses from individuals, policy makers, and the criminal justice system. While outrage against the violence and oppression of trafficking is laudatory and valid, we need to be cautious about creating policies and practices based on our individual ideas of morality. HT brings to the forefront some of the most controversial issues in our society; the sex trade, substance use, criminalization, and immigration.

However focusing on the controversy and morality of any one issue removes the conversation from a human dignity and harm reduction framework and causes us to further create an unnecessary and false hierarchy of pain rather than be of service to the victim. Individuals who are trafficked are often the most exploited and vulnerable in our society; they may be sex workers, have criminal records, suffer from a drug addiction, and/or be undocumented. These individuals are more likely to be arrested, refused service by hospitals, denied access to shelters and outreach services, and shamed for their experiences. To do anti-violence work is to fight the social injustice that trafficking survivors experience not just by the traffickers but by the systems that should be able to support and protect them. It is therefore fruitless to analyze these individual victims complex exploitation, it is enough to know that they have in fact been exploited and work to hold the perpetrator accountable while providing meaningful, trauma-informed services to the victims.

## **Rethinking the Rescue and Restore Model**

The mainstream anti-trafficking movement has failed to address the complexity of HT and to confront its own moral or

political agendas that dictate initiatives. The anti-trafficking movement was not started by survivors and has not been survivor-centered, which is evident in the widespread support of a rescue and restore model. Rescue and restore often refers to agencies or initiatives that focus on removing individuals from situations that may or may not be HT through raids, outing of traffickers, purchasing of individuals, or assisting in escapes.<sup>20</sup> Raids or surveillance tactics may be employed by community based groups who partner with law enforcement or paramilitary forces<sup>21</sup> but also may do the work without police. While these tactics may help some survivors, they often result in survivors being removed from their situation without their consent or any support plan. In addition, these strategies do not get to the root causes of HT such as systemic oppressions. Removing someone from an exploitative system does not address the supports required after their removal or their vulnerability to exploitation that put them at risk in the first place. Survivors who are rescued in the U.S. may be forced into detention because of a lack of available shelter or housing or because they are under 18, furthering their victimization. Even if they are not detained they may be placed in homeless or domestic violence shelters that are ill equipped to provide them trauma-informed care while being forced to participate in a criminal justice system. Rescue and Restore is the antithesis to a harm reduction framework that emphasizes the self-directed needs of the survivor first and does not seek to impose a solution upon them.

In addition to failing to meaningfully address survivors' needs, the Rescue and Restore framework has also affirmatively harmed some survivors. This sometimes happens when survivors

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew J Pullins. "Rescuing Victims of Human Trafficking: Strategies and Solutions." (2016).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8.

may be placed in safe houses where they are kept after the trafficking raids by police. At these houses, they may learn or cultivate already acquired skills for the production of goods like jewelry, clothes, bags, or hygiene products.<sup>22</sup> While not all of these programs are exploitative, it has been documented that some of these programs exploit the survivors and prevent them from seeing their families.<sup>23</sup>

## **Criminalization and the Criminal Justice Response**

Law enforcement has been on the front lines in policing trafficking as well as participating in the exploitation and violence of trafficking victims, sex workers, and undocumented people. There is a strong law enforcement presence in the anti-trafficking movement which focuses on the criminalization of traffickers and rescue of trafficking victims. Often initiatives and programming for trafficking survivors are structured exclusively around a criminal justice response. This includes situations where survivors may be forced to participate in a criminal legal case against traffickers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The tactic of making trafficking victims/survivors into producers and consumers may be helpful but often fails to create survivor-centered support and care. This model also allows the survivors to be exploited by white and U.S.-based groups who sell the products and profit from them, all while building an image of themselves as saviors.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Bernstein. "Militarized humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary anti trafficking campaigns." *Signs* 36, no. 1 (2010): 65.

<sup>24</sup>Alexandra Pierce and Suzanne Koepplinger. "New language, old problem: Sex trafficking of American Indian women and children." *Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Retrieved January 10 (2011): 5.*

For noncitizen survivors, this is particularly challenging because they can apply for T Visas to allow them to stay in the U.S. for their safety but in most cases they are required to comply with reasonable requests made by law enforcement or prosecutors.<sup>25</sup> While law enforcement may be supportive and willing to provide this, it creates a space of risk and danger for survivors. In communities where law enforcement are not trained they may be unwilling to assist survivors or in other cases survivors may be forced to participate in a criminal legal case in order to stay in the U.S. This often subjects the survivor to further harm, especially absent supportive services or safety planning, and forced criminal justice cooperation can place the survivor or their family in further jeopardy of violence or death.

Unfortunately, in addition to these challenges, trafficking survivors are often criminalized by law enforcement in other ways, from being charged with prostitution, drug possession, or being undocumented, and even trafficking themselves in some cases. The over reliance on the criminal justice system has had unintended consequences, often harming survivors and those most vulnerable in society.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Jennifer K Lobasz. "Beyond border security: Feminist approaches to human trafficking." *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 332. Notably, the cooperation requirement does not apply to minors or in instances where the applicant can show that she did not cooperate for good cause.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Bernstein. "Militarized humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary anti trafficking campaigns." *Signs* 36, no. 1 (2010): 57.

## **The Role that Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs Can Play**

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Movement was created by survivors for survivors. These programs have developed an empowerment model that focuses on the survivors' resilience and autonomy within the service provision. While the rescue and restore model places the advocates or law enforcement as experts on HT and what should be focused on or provided, both the empowerment and harm reduction models believe survivors are the expert on their lives. DV/SA agencies are already expertly trained and rooted in the philosophy of the empowerment model therefore ensuring HT survivor's voice is primary and supported with informed decision making. In addition, DV/SA programs are trained on trauma-informed care and response which is ideal for working with HT survivors.

There is an important, if often misunderstood connection between the domestic and sexual violence movement and the anti-trafficking movement. Many trafficking survivors are victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and may be trafficked by those closest to them like parents, intimate partners, and relatives. In addition, trafficking survivors are most often women and children, two of the most oppressed groups in our society, who are most likely to be victimized in the home. Further, survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault may also have experienced labor trafficking or may even have been victimized physically or sexually by their labor traffickers. The mainstream domestic and sexual violence movement has kept the issue of human trafficking as a peripheral interest in spite of the fact we are a movement to end violence against women for a variety of complex reasons. However, this choice has harmed survivors of trafficking and it is time that the movement ensure that

trafficking survivors have access to the expertise, compassion and advocacy of the DV/SA movement.

Funding has often driven DV/SA programming, often defining both advocacy efforts and services eligibility. Funders' expectations on who survivors can and cannot be has often led to DV/SA programs eliminating human trafficking survivors from eligibility. Inadvertently, funders have created standards that further stigmatize survivors, especially trafficked survivors, because of their experiences and identities.

For example, survivors who are involved in the sex trade may have extensive criminal records of prostitution, drug charges, or even violent crime charges arising out of their victimization. Survivors screened as criminals are characterized by DV/SA shelters and outreach services as outside funder requirements and therefore ineligible for services. In addition, survivors who are undocumented often face fear of deportation and DV/SA programs are unprepared to adequately address those fears within current service delivery models. All of these barriers can be addressed by domestic and sexual violence service agencies expanding their service delivery model and layering funding to ensure trafficking survivors can be served.

## **Intersections with Domestic and Sexual Violence**

Human trafficking often involves domestic and sexual violence. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence can experience trafficking. Power and control are key elements in domestic and sexual violence and in HT. HT survivors can be in an intimate partner relationship where they become victims of extortion and are forced to engage in the sex trade for money or drugs, work long hours, hold multiple jobs, or use their illegal status for criminalized activity. In DV/SA agencies these

experiences may be labeled as sexual violence or financial exploitation but they are HT as well.

- Survivors may have experienced HT in the past but are now in an abusive relationship. While they may present to DV/SA agencies as survivors of intimate partner violence, they may also be experiencing trauma from a past human trafficking experience.
- Survivors may be coerced into working in the sex trade by their intimate partner to get extra money or drugs.
- Survivors may be working while undocumented or in exploitative conditions and sexually assaulted by their employer. They may not be able to go to law enforcement, medical care, or a shelter because of their immigration status or threats from their employer.

The victimization and violence that all survivors suffer is numerous and it is important that DV/SA service providers are able to provide the support and services they need and deserve. To do this, DV/SA providers should acknowledge that survivors cannot be seen only through a lens of eligibility.

## **On Philosophical Divergence and Mission Drift**

Ultimately, our collective mission is to eliminate all forms of domestic and sexual violence and this certainly includes many instances of HT. Leaders in the domestic and sexual violence movement who want to deny the intersections of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence are only helping to further fragment the movement and diminish survivor's rights. Survivors of sex and labor trafficking are often also survivors of sexual violence, physical violence, and emotional violence and are

deserving of our time, services, supports, and advocacy. To say otherwise is to deny survivors access to supports and care and perpetuate a myth of an ideal or real victim of violence. Instead we must seek to complicate our analysis and response. Lena Palacios addresses this in her piece, *"Ain't No Justice... It's Just Us" Girls Organizing against Sexual and Carceral Violence*: "In order to understand violence against girls as a fundamentally heterogeneous phenomenon that requires a heterogeneity of interventions, it is essential to go beyond such universalizing constructions of interpersonal partner violence to consider how sexual, institutional, and structural violence work together."<sup>27</sup> We as a movement have to do better for survivors and be better for our communities. If the domestic and sexual violence movement aims to be an anti-violence movement then we must be against all forms of violence, including HT. If we compromise on this premise, then we risk compromising survivors' lives.

Even as we have become increasingly aware of the need, we have been mired in inaction. There are two primary reasons why. First, some domestic and sexual violence leaders and the broader mainstream domestic and sexual violence movement, not to mention an on-going conversation of whether or not DV/SA providers actually have the capacity to do this segment of work. In addition, with the HT rhetoric creating such a divide within the domestic and sexual violence movement, national and state leaders have been reluctant to push the conversation forward and have provided little to no direction leaving local service providers to deal with the fraught issues of HT on their own.

Experience teaches us that, too often, concern over mission drift has been used a device in non-profit based organizations to

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<sup>27</sup> Lena Palacios. "AIN'T NO JUSTICE... IT'S JUST US" *Girls Organizing against Sexual and Carceral Violence*. *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*. Berghahn Books. (2016): 281.

remain narrowly focused. The positives of a narrow focus may be a highly effective program and stable funding sources. Yet the negatives of narrowing or refusing to expand the focus of our mission often results in disconnection with our communities, a focus on institutional preservation, and more people being deemed ineligible of our supports. This may be the case for HT survivors because they do not meet a narrow definition of domestic and sexual violence or a legal definition of HT. We, as activists, advocates, and survivors, often seek to bring control and stability to societal violence and oppression and that may be helpful momentarily but we cannot allow this need for control to harm survivors.

As a leader in the anti-violence movement MCEDSV is taking the position that human trafficking survivors are often also domestic and sexual violence survivors and that all survivors in Michigan need and deserve services. We further state that the DV/SA movement is comprised of the most experienced professionals to adopt a survivor-centered, human dignity-based, empowerment/harm reduction framework and that we should begin that leadership within our own communities.

### **Part 3: *Moving Toward an Anti-Violence Movement***

Anti-violence activists know that violence manifests itself in many forms. It can range from an intimate partner abusing the survivor to the lack of social support from families, friends, workplaces, and faith communities. Violence can also come from the state and from programs that seek to help survivors. Such systemic violence occurs when the state or program denies that a person was victimized in the first place, when it deems a particular survivor unworthy of support, or when it purports to “fix” a survivor based on its own values. This systemic violence is especially visible in the lived experiences of poor people, people of color, queer people, Indigenous people, unauthorized immigrants, and displaced people, etc. Ultimately, intimate partner violence, community violence, and systemic violence are cogs in a single wheel that work together to harm people.

Having recognized this, we are aware that the wrong “help” can actually hurt. As a movement, we endeavor to learn from past mistakes. As we chart a path towards an end to violence, we rely on several guideposts: intersectionality, trauma-informed care, and harm reduction. Each is discussed in more detail below.

#### **Using an Intersectional Lens**

Intersectionality is a theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in her article *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*.<sup>28</sup> Crenshaw used

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<sup>28</sup>Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A

the term intersectionality to examine the lived experience of black women in the United States who experienced oppression as a woman and as a black person to say the oppression experienced was uniquely black women's. Crenshaw drew on a long history of black feminist theory for this analysis.

Intersectionality has now become a common word in feminist theory and social justice movements. Intersectionality is about reflection on oneself and the society. Intersectionality does not stop at self-reflection but instead mobilizes these theories and analyses for social transformation. Intersectionality is a revolutionary theory about seeing the whole person and seeking to eliminate the interpersonal, community, and systemic oppression they face. Intersectionality becomes the foundation that we use for anti-violence work as it centers individual survivor experience in a broader analysis of systems of oppression.

With the theory of intersectionality, anti-violence movements and activists can develop a critical lens to view the current anti-trafficking movement to develop more caring, respectful, and liberating practices for survivors and communities. If we wish to empower survivors and build communities where violence is rejected, we must address violence that happens between individuals, but also violence that happens within communities and at the systemic level.

## **Becoming Trauma-informed**

The phrase "trauma-informed care" has been thrown around a lot in recent years, but it is more than just a catchphrase. Being trauma-informed is distinct from merely having empathy. Instead, being trauma-informed is about having an understanding

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black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *U. Chi. Legal F.* (1989): 139.

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of the individual trauma that people face and how this is situated in time, space, and history. The graphic below from Trauma-Informed Oregon's website on the Principles of Trauma-Informed Care<sup>29</sup> demonstrates the importance of being committed to trauma-informed work but also having an understanding of oppression and historical trauma and how this may affect individual lives. Trauma-informed becomes a way of being and how we move through the world. To be trauma-informed is to center the relationship with the survivor and advocate as equals while honoring the survivor as a whole person.

Advocates know trauma can manifest itself in many different ways depending on the person and on their experiences. This means that our practices must be flexible enough to meet the needs of many different survivors and individualized for each person's experience. This can feel intimidating and/or overwhelming because it requires service providers to focus and tailor their efforts versus having a structured approach. However, an agency can design policy after policy hoping to control crisis or manage outcomes and still there will be new people, new situations, and new reactions. Attempting to control or manage crisis is common in our work as we want to mainstream responses, assist as many people as possible, and limit some of the crisis we and our coworkers absorb into ourselves. Unfortunately, a one-size-fits-all approach often falls short, and we end up harming those who slip through the cracks.

Instead we should appreciate trauma in all its messiness and treat people as individuals who are experiencing trauma from interpersonal, community, and systemic violence. When we do this, we give ourselves permission to develop a more nuanced

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<sup>29</sup> This website is available here:

<http://traumainformedoregon.org/resources/trauma-informed-care-principles/>

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analysis and response to violence in our communities. We also give ourselves more room to address individual and collective trauma and develop work that will more likely help empower survivors.

## Embracing Harm Reduction

Harm reduction operates from the principle that people know how to make themselves safer and make the best choice for themselves.<sup>30</sup> Harm reduction is about accomplishing small goals that respect the individual's autonomy and honoring their resiliency. It does not attempt to "fix" them.<sup>31</sup> Emi Koyama puts it best: "instead of waiting for new researchers to tell us which direction we need to push survivors to, we should adopt, as a fundamental principle, that survivors can decide for themselves what should be done in order to be safe, and stop pressuring them in any direction."<sup>32</sup> Harm reduction is empowerment-based advocacy as it centers the survivor as the expert of their own life.

What is important about harm reduction is that it centers the individual needs of the person in that time and space. This allows for flexibility and creativity for advocates and the person they are working with. It could be about limiting the amount of drugs used, limiting calls they answer from their assailant, or creating a safety plan for leaving an abusive situation. Advocates could also try to incorporate safety planning outside traditional checklists

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<sup>30</sup> Learn more about harm reduction principles from the Harm Reduction Coalition at <http://harmreduction.org>

<sup>31</sup> Bernadette, Pauly. "Shifting moral values to enhance access to health care: Harm reduction as a context for ethical nursing practice." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 195-204.

<sup>32</sup> Emi Koyama. "Toward a Harm Reduction Approach in Survivor Advocacy" *Survivor Project*, Spring 2001.

that focus on perpetrator-generated risks and instead focus on life-generated risks. Examples could be “do you have the medications you need?” or “let’s go over your rights if you are stopped by police.”

Domestic and sexual violence advocates are familiar with the need to plan and create new options for survivors who are in or have left abusive situations. The choices that survivors make are not judged, even if they decide to return to the assailant. Instead there is a commitment to empowering survivors to make their own choices (even if they are limited or risky). This relationship between advocate and survivor is perhaps the most important facet of implementing harm reduction.<sup>33</sup> By focusing on harm reduction, the advocate can create a safe, nonjudgmental space where healing can begin at survivor’s direction.

## Being a People-Based Movement

These principles of intersectionality, trauma-informed care, and harm reduction all depart from a central assumption that people are whole beings, not checklists of problems that need to be solved. In summary, this work is people-based. There is a lot of language around being evidence-based, strengths-based, empowerment-based, etc. While these are important objectives



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<sup>33</sup> Young Women’s Empowerment Project. “Girls Do What They Have to Do to Survive: Illuminating Methods used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal” 2009.

for our work, they should always be partnered with people-based because you cannot effectively and appropriately meet any of these other goals without centering survivors. Approaching our work with intersectionality, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care allows us to focus on individual needs and supports while seeking to address the larger systemic oppression and violence that harm this person.

Specifically, we offer the following practical tips for making your work more people-based:

- Make all services and initiatives flexible and “people based” by critically examining the ways your services, funding, and staffing can create limitations and barriers for survivors. Actively seek to remove those barriers.
- Understand the intersectionality of the survivors you serve, yourself, your community, society, and the anti-violence movement.
- Pay attention to space, make it welcoming, safe, and accessible.
- Provide basic needs: i.e., clothes, food, condoms, etc. without judgement or restrictions.
- Where possible, avoid separating services into silos, for example, “domestic violence only, sexual assault only” as survivors will have multiple traumas and concerns to be addressed.
- Remove compliance-focused or abstinence-only programming.
- Continuously seek funding that is not state or federal funding and funding that will support the needs of survivors that fall in the gaps of current funding streams.
- Provide materials in other languages and build strong relationships with translators. Also be mindful of disability

inclusion including issues of print-size, reading level, screen readers, and braille when developing materials wherever possible.

- Develop culturally-sensitive programs in partnership with survivors and your community.
- Foster community and peer-led programming for survivors.
- Seek to address violence on all levels; interpersonal, community, and systemic.

## Conclusion & Call to Action

Embracing intersectionality, harm reduction, and trauma-informed practice is key to supporting and organizing survivors toward their liberation. These key philosophies are the foundations of our collective movement that seek to center survivors and their lived experience. In embracing these philosophies we move away from siloing and creating hierarchies of survivors while moving into space for individual and community transformation. Angela Davis gave an address in 1987 and published the address in *Women, Culture and Politics*; in the piece she calls us to action: "As we further shape the theoretical foundation of the anti-rape movement and as we implement practical tasks, let us constantly remind ourselves that even as individual victories are claimed, the complete elimination of sexist violence will ultimately depend on our ability to forge a new and revolutionary global order, in which every form of oppression and violence against humankind is obliterated."<sup>34</sup> We call upon these words 30 years later to remind us of the work that still needs to be done and commit to seeking an end to all forms of violence

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<sup>34</sup> Angela Y Davis. "We Do Not Consent: Violence Against Women in a Racist Society." *Women, Culture, and Politics*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 51.

against all people, not just some forms of violence against some people.

## **Specific Recommendations**

Given the patterns of victimization that often happen in HT, MCEDSV believes that survivors of HT who have suffered domestic or sexual violence already fit within the mission of your services, and that you are likely seeing individuals who are coping with HT in your work. The recommendations below are some steps to help you more fully integrate anti-human trafficking work into your agency. This may be challenging but remember that you are not alone in this work. MCEDSV is making this commitment with you. If at any point in your process you would like MCEDSV to help, please contact us, we want to support you.

### *Guiding Principles:*

- Survivors are the center of this work and should be at the center of programmatic development, policy change, and agency practices. This means that is about and for them, by them.
- Survivors should have their autonomy and resilience respected by the agency and staff.
- Survivors know how to make their own decisions and make decisions for their safety.
- Survivors should not be pressured, manipulated, or forced to do anything they do not want to do.
- Survivors should have a clear understanding of the systems that they will interact with and those that are most likely to re-victimize them.
- Survivors may have multiple oppressions and violent experiences and they should be treated for their whole

person.

- Survivors should not be fit into services but services should be made to fit for survivors.
- Staff, agencies, and communities need to address implicit bias, moral agendas, and discriminatory practices in order to transform themselves and their communities.
- Survivors and staff are partners in the healing process and the relationship between advocates, advocates and survivors, and amongst survivors are the core to creating lasting community change.
- Harm reduction and trauma-informed care is the service delivery model for all survivors of violence.

### *Practical Steps:*

- Recognize that you are most likely serving survivors of trafficking already. This also means that you are most likely not meeting all of the needs of these individuals. Recognizing the whole person will help your service be trauma-informed and survivor-centered.
- Research trafficking using the frameworks of this document and avoid inaccurate data and inflammatory publications. There is a lot of bad media coverage and research out there, be critical of any work that you find.
- Make a commitment to integrating trafficking into your program. This is vital to ensure that survivors of trafficking will be centered in your work.
- Meet with all staff, board members, volunteers, interns/externs, and survivors in your community. Anyone who is a part of your agency should be involved in learning more about trafficking and making the commitment to integrating trafficking into the agency.

- Actively address bias and stigma in your own agency and community about trafficking, sex work, and immigration.
- Know that there will be difficult discussions about these controversial issues and how your agency should address them. Remember you and everyone at your organization are there for survivors, not to live up to any particular individual's ideas of morality.
- Begin the process of changing missions, visions, and policies. Integrating trafficking into the agency will require a deep look at the current structure of the agency to make sure it is accessible, safe, and empowering for trafficking survivors and all survivors.
- Seek out funding for your program that will allow you to be flexible and adapt to the needs of all survivors.
- Create a plan with all staff, board members, volunteers, interns/externs, and survivors involved for the implementation of the integration. This may be a long-term plan or an immediate plan, you and your agency are the only ones who can determine the best course of action.
- Implement your plan. Remember that there is no perfect model of implementation and there will likely be flaws and mistakes. Models of human trafficking service provision are new in the nation and we do not know the long term effects of these models. However, we can lean on the knowledge we have gained in the domestic and sexual violence field.
- Evaluate yourself, the staff, and agency. Listen to the feedback from the survivors and your community. Evaluation should also seek to measure the community change on this issue and for survivors.

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