

ANNUAL
REPORT

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

**2019 HUMAN
TRAFFICKING**



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



The Attorney General's Office
protects Ohio and its families.

Our actions are driven by their interests,
guided by the rule of law
and the relentless pursuit of justice.

We seek to constrain evil and empower good,
without partisan preference
or subjective judgment, as defined
by the law and by the Constitutions
of the United States and Ohio.



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

March 2, 2020

My fellow Ohioans:

According to the history books, slavery in the United States ended more than 150 years ago, with the conclusion of the Civil War and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

Although these events ended the open selling of human beings, they did not stop the illicit market. The exploitation of vulnerable people for labor and sex continues.

The world's oldest profession, as prostitution has been called, is not a chosen vocation at all. It is slavery, with the slavers using emotional and psychological manipulation, economic dependence, drug addiction and violence to compel victims to engage in involuntary sex with paying customers.

The slavers take the profits while the victims suffer the degradation, the diseases, the drug dependence and the beatings that keep them enslaved.

Other vulnerable people, often refugees and immigrants, are compelled to work long hours in harsh conditions, trapped by debt, threats and isolation that prevent them from escaping their bondage.

These evils continue, right under our noses, in our neighborhoods and behind the facades of seemingly normal businesses.

Our understanding of the dynamics of these forms of slavery has evolved. Where once we regarded prostitutes as lawbreakers responsible for their crimes, we now understand that, overwhelmingly, they are victims. It is the people who exploit them who are the criminals, whether they be the customers who buy sex or the slavers who supply that demand.

The goal of the Ohio Attorney General's Human Trafficking Initiative is to end labor and sex trafficking in the state by building awareness, empowering Ohioans to act in their communities, helping victims, and ensuring that traffickers and johns are brought to justice.

To the victims, we are saying, "We're here to take you home."

To the traffickers, we are saying, "We're here to take you down."

Many strides were made during the past year.

Law enforcement task forces organized by the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission worked diligently throughout the year, successfully netting scores of traffickers and johns, and rescuing victims.

New legislation to strengthen our laws and toughen penalties for traffickers is working its way through the Ohio General Assembly.

An inaugural Human Trafficking Summit, planned last year and presented on Jan. 9, 2020, brought together a sold-out crowd of survivors, recovery experts, law enforcement, social workers and other healers eager to learn best practices, share lessons learned and celebrate victories. Most of all, the summit served to unite an army of compassion and liberation.

This annual report benchmarks our progress in the fight to eradicate this evil from Ohio.

Let us continue to work together so that, from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, our state becomes a sanctuary for survivors and a torment for traffickers.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Yost". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is the illegal use of vulnerable people to make a profit. It is a modern-day form of slavery, a societal scourge that knows no boundaries. Human trafficking, whether it involves sex or labor, is happening right now in Ohio's cities, suburbs and rural areas – basically, everywhere. Ohio ranks among the top 10 worst states in the nation for human trafficking. No community within our borders is immune.

In Ohio, labor trafficking is defined as “involuntary servitude.” Sex trafficking, according to state law, is compelled sexual activity for hire.

Sex trafficking can include prostitution, but prostitution does not necessarily constitute sex trafficking. The distinction between the two is easily remembered as “2 vs. 3”: Unlike prostitution, human sex trafficking must involve a third-party beneficiary, meaning that someone besides the person receiving the sexual act is involved. Commonly, the third party – the one who profits – is a pimp, boyfriend, girlfriend, friend or relative.

For adults and those ages 16 and 17, Ohio law requires law enforcement to show that victims were compelled by a third party to engage in involuntary sex with paying customers. For those 15 and younger, prostitution involving a third-party beneficiary automatically constitutes sex trafficking, with or without compulsion.

In March 2019, AG Yost testified before the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee in support of Senate Bill 13, which would change current law so that 16- and 17-year-olds are treated the same as all other minors.

One prevailing mental image of sex trafficking shows a young woman in chains. Another might depict a white van pulling into a store parking lot and kidnapping young people. These perceptions, however, are mostly myth. Many human traffickers, in fact, are boyfriends or girlfriends who use the relationship to develop rapport and trust with their victims before trafficking them.

Globally, human trafficking is a multimillion-dollar industry that robs children, teenagers, women and men of their freedom. There are an estimated 24.9 million victims of human trafficking worldwide.

People of any age, race, sex or socioeconomic status can fall victim to human trafficking, but certain factors have been shown to make individuals more vulnerable. The nonprofit Polaris, which operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, identifies the following as significant risk factors:

- Substance use
- Mental health concerns
- Recent migration or relocation
- Involvement with the child welfare system
- Being a runaway
- Homelessness

AG YOST'S HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE

Not long after taking office as Ohio's 51st attorney general, Dave Yost established the fight against human trafficking among the top priorities of his administration. To that end, he created the Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI), whose mission is to end labor and sex trafficking statewide by building awareness, empowering Ohioans to join the battle within their communities, helping victims, and ensuring that traffickers and johns are brought to justice.

As part of the initiative, AG Yost created a team within the Crime Victim Services Section of the Attorney General's Office (AGO). The team members collaborate with social-service agencies, state and federal agencies, law enforcement agencies on all levels, nonprofit organizations and anti-human trafficking coalitions. They have conducted both basic and advanced training for such agencies as well as businesses, community groups, Rotary clubs and more.

Priorities of the HTI

Ending both sex trafficking and labor trafficking in Ohio are priorities of the HTI, which on the broadest level aims to equip all Ohioans with the necessary knowledge and resources to recognize the warning signs of human trafficking and report any suspicious activities to the proper authorities.

More specifically, the HTI team has established the following strategies:

- Focus on prevention and education to stem the victimization of one human being for another's profit. These efforts include helping youths and raising awareness among them.
- Promote legislative policy to ensure that Ohio is doing what it can to fight trafficking.
- Assist and train task forces and prosecutors to build human trafficking cases and develop more task forces throughout the state.
- Streamline how victims and survivors access services, with an emphasis on identifying and closing gaps in wraparound services.
- Reinforce collaboration and discussion among Ohio stakeholders to strengthen and unify community responses to human trafficking.

Because resources and awareness vary widely throughout the state, the connections that the HTI team makes as it travels Ohio are becoming a valuable resource. As team members learn of successes by certain organizations in particular areas, they work with those groups to spread "best practices" to other communities so that all Ohioans can benefit from effective strategies and shared wisdom.

The HTI team

The members of the HTI team:

- **Jennifer Rausch**, legal director, focuses on education and helps task forces and prosecutors build better cases. She previously led the Special Victims Unit at the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office.
- **Jomel Aird**, director of victim services, works to connect and strengthen human trafficking services throughout the state. Before joining the AGO, she worked as a victim advocate for the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force and the Salvation Army, as well as the Palm Beach County's State Attorney's Office.
- **Emily Billman**, anti-human trafficking coordinator, helps identify gaps in victim services and spread awareness statewide. The 2019 graduate of Miami University has led street outreach teams in Columbus for the anti-trafficking organization Out of Darkness.

HTI's partners within the Attorney General's Office

The fight against human trafficking is a highly collaborative effort involving the AGO, social-service agencies, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations and anti-human trafficking coalitions throughout the state. Within the AGO, the HTI team works with the following partners:

- **Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission:** In late 2019, AG Yost reconvened the Ohio Human Trafficking Commission, which originated with Attorney General Richard Cordray and was then reconstituted by Attorney General Mike DeWine. The commission's size and subcommittee structure are still evolving, but diversity in membership remains the goal, with representation likely from the General Assembly, law enforcement, social-service agencies, schools and religious groups. AG Yost also plans to add a new voice to the group: survivors of human trafficking.

The commission, set to meet quarterly, is charged with working collaboratively with the attorney general's HTI team and its partners to help develop ideas for ending human trafficking. At the Dec. 5, 2019, meeting of the group, AG Yost shared some of his priorities. Chief among those: a reduction in the demand for paid sex and improvements in Ohio's statewide reporting process for human trafficking.

- **Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OOCIC):** Led by the attorney general, OOCIC provides structure and support to local law enforcement agencies in Ohio that have uncovered organized criminal entities within their jurisdictions. As a primary tool, OOCIC uses special task forces, which it forms by pairing law enforcement agencies together to combat the criminal enterprises. Multiple task forces target human trafficking in Ohio.

- **Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI):** BCI's agents provide staffing, technical expertise and technological resources to the human trafficking task forces and local law enforcement agencies. BCI's Crimes Against Children Initiative helps local authorities investigate and prosecute those who commit crimes against children, including human traffickers, sexual abusers and other offenders. Additional resources are provided through BCI's Cyber Crimes, Criminal Intelligence and Technical Operations units; manpower for human trafficking investigations and prosecutions; forensic analysis; training and technical assistance; equipment loans; and victim advocacy. BCI is also responsible for aggregating human trafficking data reported by local law enforcement agencies through the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway. Those numbers are then reported in the AGO's Annual Report on Human Trafficking.
- **Ohio Peace Office Training Academy (OPOTA):** OPOTA trains law enforcement officers to both identify and investigate cases of human trafficking throughout Ohio. Since Ohio's Safe Harbor Law was enacted in 2012, all new peace officers have been required to participate in an OPOTA-approved course on human trafficking. A committee of subject matter experts is working to update that course curriculum for release in 2021.

Human Trafficking Summit 2020

Given the high priority that AG Yost has placed on the fight against human trafficking in Ohio, the attorney general, not long after taking office, committed his office to planning and presenting a statewide Human Trafficking Summit.

The HTI team spent the last quarter of 2019 organizing the inaugural event, which took place on Jan. 9, 2020, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The summit drew the maximum 600 participants and a waiting list of 100. Workshops included "Labor Trafficking 101," "The Story of Rahab," "The Importance of a Multidisciplinary Team" and "Specialty Dockets: Rethinking Justice." Each of the sessions provided a way for attendees to collectively identify gaps in Ohio's battle against human trafficking and to share success stories, lessons learned and best practices.

Planning for the 2021 summit is underway, with the goal of expanding the programming and securing a larger venue to accommodate more participants and additional workshops. As a forum for collaboration among survivors, advocates, law enforcement officials and community stakeholders, the summit from year to year should grow only more robust, yield a growing number of effective strategies, and serve as an ever-valuable resource.

PROPOSED STATE LEGISLATION

In November 2019, AG Yost teamed with a bipartisan group of state lawmakers in announcing major legislative initiatives targeting human trafficking in Ohio, including a measure centering on the AG's priority goal of reducing the demand for paid sex. The proposed legislation separates the buying and selling of sex into different criminal offenses; establishes a criminal offense for knowingly receiving proceeds from a prostitute; and creates a public registry for arrests of johns, pimps and traffickers.

"Basic economics works under the premise of supply and demand – and right now we have a demand problem in Ohio," Yost said. "Our goal is to reduce the demand and, in return, rescue victims from this modern-day slavery."

Here is a status report (as of February 2020) on the legislation:

- **Receiving proceeds:** Prohibits a person from receiving money, or anything else of value, from a prostitute engaging in sexual activity and makes it a felony-level offense. The bill also adds "receiving proceeds of prostitution" to the list of crimes that can warrant RICO charges.

The point: The law changes would help officers charge pimps and get them off the streets.

Status: Introduced as HB415 by Rep. Jena Powell

- **Establishing a public "johns" database:** Creates a "sexual exploitation database" that lists the names of those convicted of prostitution-related offenses – specifically, people who buy sex in Ohio. Their names remain on the registry for five years after their conviction and are automatically removed unless the johns reoffend.

The point: Making names of "johns" an easily accessed public record would likely discourage people from buying sex. "The buyers of sex are never forced into it and are never victims," Attorney General Yost said. "They are sating their own appetites at the expense of another human being, predators who take what they want without regard to the costs of their feeding."

Status: Introduced as HB431 by Reps. Cindy Abrams and Rick Carfagna

- **"Soliciting" vs. "engaging":** Separates the two sides of the transaction into distinct parts: basically, *buying* and *selling*. The bill also increases the penalty for paying a person for sexual activity, with stronger punishment for those engaging teens ages 16 and 17 or anyone near a church or school.

Key definitions in the legislation: *Buying*, or "engaging in prostitution," is a new charge defined as "inducing, enticing or procuring another to commit sexual activity." *Selling*, or "soliciting for prostitution," is defined as anyone who "knowingly solicits another to engage in a sexual activity for hire in exchange for the person receiving anything of value from the other person."

The point: Currently, the victims of human trafficking and those buying them face the same charge of “soliciting.” This long-overdue change would subject buyers to tougher penalties and treat victims more fairly.

Status: Initially introduced as HB128 by Rep. Kyle Koehler

- **Companion bill:** Summarizes the above three bills

Status: Introduced as SB247 by Sens. Tim Schaffer and Teresa Fedor

Other human trafficking measures supported by AG Yost and the Human Trafficking Initiative:

- **Protect Trafficked Minors Act:** Ensures that Ohio law treats 16- and 17-year-olds the same as younger victims of human trafficking – all minors. It also requires that any child charged with a prostitution-related offense or thought to be a victim of human trafficking be assigned a guardian ad litem in addition to a lawyer, and adjusts the process by which the charge can be set aside for diversion actions.

The point: Current law treats 16- and 17-year-olds like adults, not like the minors they are, when they are charged with soliciting.

Status: Introduced as SB13 by Sen. Teresa Fedor, passed by the Senate, being considered by the House

LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

As noted, the fight against human trafficking in Ohio is a highly collaborative effort encompassing a wide range of resources statewide. For its part, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office offers investigative resources through regional human trafficking task forces that are overseen and supported by OOCIC; provides training to law enforcement officers through OPOTA; and provides case support through resources housed in BCI, including the Crimes Against Children Unit and the Criminal Intel Unit. To help educate the public on the scope of the problem in Ohio, BCI also annually reports statewide statistics on human trafficking, as provided by local law enforcement agencies.

Human trafficking task forces

During 2019, three OOCIC human-trafficking task forces operated in the state: the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, with the Columbus Division of Police as the lead agency; the Cuyahoga Regional Human Trafficking Task Force, led by the Cuyahoga County Sheriff’s Office; and the Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force, led by the Mahoning County Sheriff’s Office.

Collectively in 2019, these task forces arrested more than 200 people, rescued 120 human trafficking victims and referred almost 250 others to services. Here are notable successes logged last year by the task forces:

- **April 2019:** Two of the leaders of a sex trafficking ring in central Ohio were sentenced, with Curtis Gossett receiving 13 years in prison and Jeffrey Bagley 10 years. An investigation led by the Central

Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force had shown that both men recruited women from the streets and jails, used drugs to control them and sold them for commercial sex.

“Women who are sold in the sex trade often think no one will believe them,” AG Yost said. “These convictions are proof positive that there is justice. Our work here is not done.”

- **May 2019:** The Mahoning County Human Trafficking Task Force teamed with the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force on a sting operation aimed at online sexual solicitation of minors. The effort resulted in the arrest of 16 men on felony charges of importuning, attempted unlawful sexual conduct with a minor and possession of criminal tools.

“This trap will be laid time and time again until the message reverberates: *Don’t buy sex in Ohio*,” AG Yost said. “Task forces are a force multiplier, and their success is evident in the number of criminals taken off the street.”

- **July 2019:** Two multi-agency operations timed to the 2019 Major League Baseball All-Star Game in Cleveland yielded a combined 49 arrests.

Operation Homerun – a prostitution-demand initiative conducted by the OOCIC, the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force and the Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force, with help from various other agencies – resulted in the arrests of 21 men on charges of soliciting for prostitution.

“There’s no safe haven for these crimes in our state,” AG Yost said, “and my office and our local law enforcement partners are committed to keeping it that way.”

The AGO and myriad other agencies likewise teamed on Operation Triple Play, which was focused on those seeking to engage in sexual activity with individuals they believed to be minor children. Triple Play led to the arrests of 28 people on felony charges of attempted unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, importuning, possession of criminal tools and attempting corruption with drugs.

“Online predators are a hidden threat to children throughout this community,” the attorney general said. “The success of this operation should serve as a stern reminder to perpetrators: If you attempt to exploit children online, we will catch you.”

- **July 2019:** The Cuyahoga Regional Human Trafficking Task Force assisted in the recovery of 18 potential victims of human trafficking from various Asian massage parlors in northeastern Ohio. The victims were referred to social services.
- **September 2019:** Operation Fourth and Goal, led by the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, resulted in the arrests of 104 people on various misdemeanor and felony charges. The operation, involving more than 30 law enforcement agencies and all three human trafficking task forces, spanned three counties: Franklin, Delaware and Fairfield.

“When you hear a man talking about buying sex, he never says, ‘I’m buying a woman.’” AG Yost said. “He talks about a whore, a slut, a piece – and that’s because saying what is really happening is too

close to the truth for them to handle. People who think and talk like that know in their heart of hearts – it’s slavery.”

In part, Fourth and Goal targeted those seeking to engage in sexual activity with individuals they believed to be minor children, resulting in the arrests of 24 people on felony charges of importuning and attempted unlawful sexual conduct with a minor. One individual faces an additional charge of attempted rape; another faces an additional charge of disseminating matter harmful for juveniles. Those charges, too, are felonies.

Additionally, 37 people were arrested on solicitation charges.

Forty-three women were provided with social services.

Law enforcement training

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy continues to train local law enforcement to both identify and investigate cases of human trafficking throughout the state. Under Ohio’s Safe Harbor Law, all new peace officers are required to take an OPOTA-approved course on investigating human trafficking.

In 2019, a committee of subject matter experts is working to strengthen and update OPOTA’s human trafficking training curriculum, changes that will be introduced in 2021.

Also in 2019, a total of 1,369 Ohio peace officers and other law enforcement professionals completed the human trafficking course through OPOTA. That number includes 1,340 new peace officers who took the course as part of required basic training; five law enforcement officers who completed it through eOPOTA, the academy’s online classroom; and 24 who completed the course through an OPOTA instructor-led class.

Law enforcement statistics on human trafficking

The data detailed in this report mirrors the type of data provided in this annual report in previous years. In scrutinizing the information and following up with various agencies required to submit such reports, the attorney general’s HTI team discovered some inherent ambiguities in the reporting form and, as a result, the process. To help shore up the process and strengthen the accuracy of the statewide human trafficking statistics provided each year, the AGO plans to modify the reporting form and the process as quickly as possible.

Ohio law requires local law enforcement agencies to collect data on their human trafficking investigations and forward that information annually to the Ohio Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The data collected for 2019 shows that law enforcement reported 251 human trafficking investigations leading to 166 arrests and 56 successful criminal convictions.

Law enforcement agencies also reported the number of potential victims, traffickers and consumers/johns.

Females were the most commonly identified human trafficking victims reported by law enforcement during 2019. Last year, there were a total of 307 potential victims identified, including 305 potential victims of sex trafficking and four potential victims of labor trafficking. (Note that a single individual could have been a victim of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking.)

| Gender | Number of potential victims |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Female | 280 |
| Male | 27 |
| No gender listed | 0 |

| Age | Number of potential victims |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 15 & under | 30 |
| 16-17 | 26 |
| 18-20 | 40 |
| 21-29 | 104 |
| 30-40 | 74 |
| 41-59 | 25 |
| 60 & older | 0 |
| No age listed | 6 |

| Race | Number of potential victims |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| White | 203 |
| Black | 82 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 14 |
| American Indian/Native Alaskan | 0 |
| Unknown | 6 |

Law enforcement agencies identified 192 suspected traffickers in 2019, including 190 potential sex traffickers and six potential labor traffickers. (Note that a single individual could have been trafficked in both sex and labor.)

| Gender | Number of suspected traffickers |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Male | 151 |
| Female | 41 |
| No gender listed | 0 |

| Age | Number of suspected traffickers |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 17 & under | 2 |
| 18-20 | 12 |
| 21-29 | 53 |
| 30-40 | 70 |
| 41-59 | 40 |
| 60 & older | 5 |
| No age listed | 8 |

| Race | Number of suspected traffickers |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Black | 120 |
| White | 52 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 13 |
| American Indian/Native Alaskan | 0 |
| Unknown | 5 |

Last year, 41 suspected buyers (aka johns) were identified by law enforcement agencies as consumers of sex trafficking. No consumers of labor trafficking were identified in 2019.

| Gender | Number of suspected consumers |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male | 34 |
| Female | 1 |
| No gender listed | 6 |

| Age | Number of suspected consumers |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 17 & under | 0 |
| 18-20 | 0 |
| 21-29 | 5 |
| 30-40 | 7 |
| 41-59 | 17 |
| 60 & older | 4 |
| No age listed | 0 |

| Race | Number of suspected consumers |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Black | 14 |
| White | 14 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 5 |
| American Indian/Native Alaskan | 0 |
| Unknown | 8 |

Social/economic factors contributing to a victim being trafficked, as identified by law enforcement agencies:

- Drug, alcohol or other dependency: 211
- Runaway or homeless status: 31
- Undocumented status: 1
- Oppressed, marginalized and/or impoverished: 174
- Truancy: 12
- Other factors: 41

Trafficking can involve movement of victims across cities, states or the country.

Identified methods of transportation:

- Motor vehicle: 231
- Airplane: 1
- Other: 41



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

ANNUAL REPORT

30 E. Broad St. 23rd Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

800-282-0515

614-466-5610

HTI@OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov

www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov