**MEETING MINUTES \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_March 10, 2025 | 10 A.M.-NOON**

1. **Welcome and introductions: Mary Kate Waggoner**
   1. Attendees: Alyssa Newell, Amanda Becks, Anna Becks, Anna Travis, Amy Roberts-Leyshon, Becca Peckinpaugh, Carol Wygant, Cassandra Hartman, Celeste Prince, Chelsea Gaffey, Christine Hassert, Chrissy Hughes-McAlister, Christina Lapointe Jackson, Christi Bartman, David Thackshire, Dancy D’Souza, Danielle Davis, Eric Matheny, Erin Meyer, Gwen England, Haleigh Young, Harold D’Souza, Hannah Estabrook, James Keen, Jodi Stanton, Jean-Philippe Rigaud, Jennifer Coffindaffer, Jill Jackson, Katie Blankemeyer, Kelli Cary, Kirsti Mouncey, Kristina Nicholson, Kwami Adoboe-Herrera, Latasha Brown, Lesa Gifford, Lily Holderbaum, Linda Majeska Powers, Mark Hoy, Mary Kate Waggoner, Melisa Minier, Michele Sorrell, Michael Bokmiller, Micayla Wilson, Naima Ilmi, Nicolina Nolletti, Rosario Allen, Rebekkah O’Bryan, Rebecca Bundy, Rosa Beltre, Sarah Brown, Somy Thottathil, Samantha Salamon, Tara Alston, Tony Talbott, Tracy Richardson, Veronica Scherbauer, Yuan-Hung Chen
   2. In-person attendees introduced themselves.
   3. Virtual attendees introduced themselves via Teams chat.
2. **Information session on the statewide Human Trafficking Hotline: Mark Hoy, Criminal Intelligence Unit Supervisor, BCI** 
   1. Background and purpose: Ohio’s statewide human trafficking hotline was launched to provide an additional outlet for reporting potential human trafficking to law enforcement and improving collaboration/response efforts.
   2. How it works
      1. Calls come into a central radio room, where call-takers collect as much information as possible, including the date and time and any pertinent data about the caller or the alleged victim(s) and perpetrator(s).
      2. This information is then processed and referred to appropriate agencies – either local law enforcement or a human trafficking task force – depending on the region of the state involved.
      3. The statewide hotline should help speed the identification of patterns, enhance the coordination of efforts, and improve the tracking of ongoing cases.
   3. Progress and statistics
      1. Since the hotline was launched in September 2024, there have been 123 calls, with about 60 actionable tips forwarded to law enforcement partners.
      2. Tips have been referred to various task forces, including those in Central Ohio (24 tips), Miami Valley (10 tips), Summit County, Cincinnati, and others.
      3. Calls have come from outside Ohio, too – including from Georgia and from federal law enforcement agencies.
   4. Tip411 system
      1. A new tip-submission system, Tip411, has been launched, enabling individuals to send tips via text message or app, or through the website. This system allows for increased accessibility and easy follow-up.
      2. The goal is to make the process more accessible and efficient for the public and law enforcement.
   5. Additional information
      1. Mark emphasized the importance of collaboration with law enforcement partners and encouraged feedback from all involved to streamline processes and enhance the hotline's effectiveness.
      2. Mark emphasized that the statewide hotline is specific to law enforcement. It’s meant for investigatory purposes and to connect tips with local law enforcement or task forces. It is not a victim-services hotline. If a victim needs immediate support, such as the help of an advocate or services, other local resources or the national hotline should be contacted.
   6. Questions and answers
      1. Somy Thottathil raised a question about directing emergency-room staff to the statewide hotline when an urgent need for victim services arises. Mark clarified that the hotline is not designed to handle victim services. He recommended continuing to reach out directly to local providers of victim services for cases requiring immediate support and using 911 for emergencies.
      2. There was a question about the relationship between the National Human Trafficking Hotline and the statewide hotline. Mary Kate explained that the national hotline is still the best resource for non-law enforcement-related calls, as it can direct callers to local victim services across the country. Mark mentioned that the national hotline also can refer law enforcement-related tips to the Ohio statewide hotline for further action. Moving forward, the state and national hotlines are expected to collaborate closely on referrals, issue troubleshooting, and services/resources for victims.
      3. Tony Talbott voiced concerns about the confusion that might arise from having both hotlines on outreach materials, as some populations may not want to involve law enforcement. Mark and Mary Kate said both hotlines serve distinct purposes and that clear communication is likely required to ensure that people understand when and how to use each one.
      4. Lily Holderbaum asked whether she could use the statewide hotline when encountering cases outside of Summit County and whether the hotline would direct her to the appropriate resources in other parts of Ohio. Mark confirmed that the hotline can be used for cases outside of Summit County, and it will direct the call to the relevant local resources. Lily inquired whether she should report suspicions to the Summit County Task Force or use the statewide tip line. Mary Kate clarified that the statewide hotline is meant to complement, not replace, local task forces. If the local system is working well, it’s best to continue using that. The statewide hotline serves as an additional resource when direct access to a local task force is unavailable.
      5. David Thackshire raised a concern about victims potentially fearing retribution if they call for help and asked whether there could be an anonymous or inconspicuous way for victims to submit data, such as through a text message or an app. Mark explained that the hotline’s current system allows for anonymous tips via text message, without the need for identification. The system also captures geographic information (latitude and longitude) to help with locating the victim, if necessary – although this is not required for submission.
      6. There was a concern about tracking multiple calls related to the same situation. Mark emphasized that the hotline system is designed to handle multiple tips, and they look for patterns (e.g., same address or details) to identify connections among reports. This collaboration helps ensure that cases aren’t missed and provides multiple perspectives on potential issues. Linda Powers also mentioned that tips come in from different systems, such as HTI’s, and are being routed to the state hotline for tracking and data collection. This ensures all information is centralized, improving the chances of identifying and addressing human trafficking cases effectively.
      7. Harold D’Souza asked about which hotline a community member should contact in Ohio, particularly when trying to report a tip. Mary Kate explained that there are three types of hotlines:
         1. The national hotline is for victim services and emotional support and can refer Ohio-based tips for law enforcement to the state hotline.
         2. The state hotline is specific to law enforcement in Ohio and is useful if there’s no local task force hotline available.
         3. The local task force hotline should be used if it works well for your area, as the state hotline would refer it back to the local one anyway.

The key point is that, regardless of which number is called, the agencies will collaborate to make sure the tip is properly handled.

* + 1. Michelle Hannan asked about how best to communicate the distinctions among the national, state, and local hotlines to the public and NGOs that might not be on the call. Mary Kate confirmed that the communications team is working on how to effectively promote the hotline, with specifics still to be determined. Until then, it’s important to explain the role of each hotline and how they collaborate, ensuring that the right information is being provided to the public. Mark added that when doing training, it's essential to emphasize that the state hotline is a tip line for law enforcement. The national hotline should be used if someone needs victim services and does not want to engage with law enforcement. Michelle suggested that rebranding the hotline as a “tip line” rather than a “hotline” might help clear up confusion.
    2. Mark spoke about the importance of collaboration between state and federal law enforcement when human trafficking victims are being trafficked across state lines. The key is having a point of contact in each state to ensure that the tip is properly investigated and coordinated across states. This collaboration enhances the ability to track and investigate trafficking cases that cross state borders.
    3. David introduced the idea of using technical IT expertise to gather and correlate human trafficking data across organizations in Ohio. The goal would be to create a universal database that would allow different organizations (both on the ground and behind the scenes) to share information more effectively. This would help fill in gaps in information and improve coordination among groups working on anti-trafficking efforts. Mark acknowledged that, although the idea of centralizing data is often discussed, there are complexities involved, especially with law enforcement considerations. He emphasized the importance of collaborating with law enforcement partners and aggregating information in a careful, strategic way.
    4. Harold asked how Ohio law enforcement would handle a tip about an undocumented person working at a restaurant or massage parlor, and whether immediate actions would involve deportation or investigation for potential labor trafficking. Mark clarified that the typical law enforcement approach involves investigation first. They don’t immediately arrest or deport someone without understanding the full context. This includes gathering intelligence, conducting surveillance, and interviewing involved parties to confirm whether there’s a trafficking situation. The goal is to ensure that accurate information is gathered before making arrests, especially in situations involving undocumented persons, to avoid premature actions that could harm potential victims. Harold asked about reports of students on F1 visas who were working and were caught by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and whether that had occurred in Ohio. Mark said that he wasn't personally aware of such a case, but it’s possible. Michelle shared that there have been incidents in which survivors with legal status (e.g., work authorization) were detained and incarcerated while their status was clarified. Linda suggested that if someone has information about a survivor who is being detained or facing deportation, they should contact the tip line to get the information to the right people.
    5. Samantha Salamon asked about the potential impact of HB26, which would require local law enforcement to cooperate with federal law enforcement on immigration matters. She wanted to know how that might affect the hotline and human trafficking investigations. Mark responded that it’s too early to predict what changes would come from the passage of HB26. Currently, there are no indications that law enforcement procedures would change, but this could shift depending on the legislation’s final form. Mary Kate emphasized that regardless of a person's immigration status, the primary concern is the safety and well-being of trafficking victims. The goal is always to connect victims to the services they need, allowing them to rebuild their lives, regardless of their legal status in the U.S.
    6. Mark thanked everyone for their hard work and involvement, acknowledging the often-thankless nature of their work. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of those working in human trafficking prevention and support.
    7. Mary Kate mentioned that if anyone has questions after the meeting, they can reach out to Mark or Linda for further assistance.

1. **Ambassador Advisory Council updates: Mary Kate Waggoner** 
   1. Mary Kate gave a brief update about the Ambassador Advisory Council, noting that the current term will be ending in the summer. Applications for the next term will soon be sent out to the Human Trafficking Commission. The application process will mirror that of previous years, with people either nominating themselves or being nominated for the position.
   2. Linda and Mary Kate will be in touch with applicants.
   3. It is hoped that the next class will be finalized by the upcoming summit.
   4. Current ambassadors can reapply for a second term (limit of two terms). Those who have served two terms will conclude their tenure, including Harold D’Souza, Stephanie Rollins, and Annette Mango. Ambassadors who wish to reapply must submit applications.
   5. Christina Lapointe Jackson asked whether reapplying as an ambassador guarantees reacceptance. Mary Kate mentioned that the details will be discussed further at the ambassador meeting later in the day.
   6. Updates from ambassadors
      1. Harold and Dancy D’Souza announced that Lara Wilken has been named board president of Eyes Open International and that Tracy McGinley has been appointed board vice president.
      2. Annette Mango has been hired by MetroHealth in Cleveland as a peer-support advocate. Today marked her first day in the role, in which she will be working with nurses to support human trafficking survivors. Annette was unable to attend the meeting due to her new job, but her achievement was celebrated by the group.
      3. Christina requested human trafficking hotline bumper stickers for her car, as she travels often. Mary Kate confirmed that bumper stickers are available and will provide the requested quantity.
      4. Several ambassadors expressed excitement and support for the ongoing efforts and updates from the Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI) and Human Trafficking Commission (HTC).
2. **Subcommittee updates: Group** 
   1. Healthcare Subcommittee: Lily said that recent discussions of the subcommittee (which meets on the first Tuesday of the month) focused on:
      1. Improving communication within the health-care system, particularly via electronic medical records, to ensure that safety-related messages can be shared without endangering patients.
      2. Exploring the use of messaging in care plans and other formats, such as posters or booklets, to help health-care providers identify trafficking victims.
      3. David offered his cybersecurity expertise from Cleveland Clinic to assist in adapting systems for better communication and security.
      4. Mary Kate shared that an updated version of the “Facilitator’s Discussion Guide for Health-Care Training Videos” will soon be posted on the HTI website and sent to HTC members.
   2. Law Enforcement Subcommittee: Jean-Philippe (JP) Rigaud shared that the subcommittee, which has been meeting quarterly, has welcomed a dozen new members, although some members have retired or been reassigned. It’s possible that a new subcommittee chair will be appointed soon; the next meeting will be in two weeks. JP noted that meeting attendance had been low but that recent meetings have seen better participation, with up to 14 people present. Recent discussions included:
      1. Networking and collaborating on cases, with a focus on overlapping or regionally relevant task forces.
      2. Continuing conversations about the application of the trafficking hotline, with a focus on ensuring proper utilization within task forces.
   3. Victim Services Subcommittee: Michelle and Rebekkah O'Bryan said subcommittee highlights included:
      1. The statewide service directory is still up and running. Many organizations have passed the self-assessment process and are now listed.
      2. The subcommittee recognized a limitation in the self-assessment process, with some organizations overestimating their readiness or capabilities. To address this, a new step was added, requiring organizations to submit a letter of support from an anti-trafficking organization and an outline of their training plan after passing the self-assessment. Rebekkah shared her excitement over the collaborative nature of the process and how the letters of support showed how much the anti-trafficking field has grown and strengthened in terms of connecting and filling service gaps.
      3. The subcommittee reviewed the first five organizations to submit their information. They found that the criteria needed more clarity, and work will be done in a multi-hour session later this month to refine the language and develop a scoring rubric to clarify expectations.
      4. A reassessment process is required every three years for organizations already listed in the directory.
      5. There is growing concern about the potential changes in federal and state funding for victim-services organizations, and the subcommittee is actively working to address these uncertainties.
   4. Demand Reduction Subcommittee: Tony provided the update.
      1. There has been some delay in progress recently due to the heavy workload in the human-rights sphere.
      2. The demand-reduction team typically meets every two months but, due to scheduling conflicts, canceled that last meeting. The next meeting will take place at 12:15 p.m. on March 19.
      3. About five or six core subcommittee members have been working on research for demand reduction related to both sex and labor trafficking over the past 18 months. A lot of research has been compiled but needs to be better organized and written into a white paper, which will include policy recommendations. Once the white paper is finalized, it will be shared with the HTI team for feedback.
      4. Michelle Sorrell praised Tony’s leadership and the subcommittee’s commitment to finding evidence-based solutions. She praised Tony for his dedication.
   5. Public Awareness Subcommittee: Lara Wilken gave the update.
      1. The subcommittee, which meets on the last Monday afternoon of the month, recently reviewed and updated resources on the HTI website. The two key resources being worked on are:
         1. Apps to Watch For: A resource linked to a more comprehensive Parent Resource Guide.
         2. Parent Resource Guide: A guide for parents and caregivers that covers topics such as artificial intelligence, gaming, conversation starters, and technology use.
      2. These projects are being led by volunteers with peer reviewers both within and outside of the subcommittee. Anyone interested in being a peer reviewer was encouraged to join. The subcommittee is also working with five ambassadors, who bring valuable insights and experiences to these projects.
      3. Upcoming projects include:
         1. Creating a public-awareness video.
         2. Developing a virtual resource library on the HTI website for targeted entities.
         3. Providing resources specifically for labor trafficking survivors.
         4. Supporting the Attorney General’s HTI and Communications teams in promoting the Ohio Human Trafficking Hotline.
      4. Mary Kate provided a brief update regarding the Public Awareness Impact Survey:
         1. The second round of the survey has been distributed. Results are due to be included in the 2024 Annual Report.
         2. Preliminary data shows positive progress, including some counties that previously reported no training activities now showing progress in training efforts.
      5. Lara ended her update with a message of gratitude, quoting professional cyclist Kristin Armstrong: “When we focus on gratitude, the tide of disappointment goes out and the tide of love rushes in.”
   6. Legal and Legislative Subcommittee: Samantha Salamon provided the update.
      1. The subcommittee meets from 11 a.m. to noon on the third Thursday of the month – a new time this year designed to accommodate more participants. Additional updates and work plans for the subcommittee will be discussed at the next meeting.
      2. Main goals for 2025:
         1. Focusing on local legislation and zoning regulations to combat illicit massage businesses (IMBs). The subcommittee is working on developing a template resolution that can be presented to local zoning commissions to tighten regulations for opening massage businesses.
         2. Increasing the educational requirements for nurses, especially related to human-trafficking awareness. The subcommittee aims to collaborate with the Healthcare Subcommittee to identify barriers and craft legislative solutions.
         3. Working to eliminate barriers that survivors face when applying for victim compensation.
      3. The subcommittee remains open to discussing other immediate issues and welcomes participation from members with new ideas.
   7. Research Data and Gap Analysis Subcommittee: Kirsti Mouncey reported on the subcommittee’s progress.
      1. It has been working to gather better prevalence data on human trafficking in Ohio.
      2. It had guest speakers in 2024 and has been reviewing national and state best practices in data collection.
      3. It has had some attrition but is looking to expand, with a meeting scheduled for 2 p.m. on March 19. Kirsti encouraged anyone interested in data to attend the meeting.
      4. It is supporting a pilot project, led by Rosario Allen at the University of Toledo, on trafficking-data collection. Rosario provided a detailed update on the pilot project:
         1. The first year of data collection resulted in 350 surveys, with over 50% of surveys identifying potential victims of human trafficking.
         2. The project is now moving into northwest rural areas (Ottawa, Putnam, Allen, Seneca, and Sandusky counties).
         3. The project team is partnering with local agencies and awaiting approval to continue from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
         4. The team is using QuestionPro for data collection and has developed a Focus Youth Screener that has already been activated to collect data. This has led to an increase in identifying familial trafficking and online trafficking. The Focus Youth Screener is expanding to more counties, including Wood County, and will now include the Focus Adult Screener.
         5. The Path Program has hired two part-time coordinators and a crisis coordinator to provide interventions and services for youth victims of trafficking.
         6. The team has also been in discussions with the Toledo Youth Commission to implement the screener more widely.
3. **General HTI updates: Mary Kate Waggoner** 
   1. An annual report for 2024 will highlight subcommittee achievements, collected data, and upcoming initiatives.
   2. The 2025 Human Trafficking Summit is scheduled for July 30, with workshop proposals due by April 7.
4. **Upcoming trainings and developments: Group**
   1. Kelli Cary, from the Governor’s Human Trafficking Task Force, discussed the task force’s new "Identifying and Responding" training, focused on educating professionals working in juvenile justice and child welfare. Kelli also shared the group’s focus on creating a screening tool for child-service agencies, specifically for missing youth in care.
   2. The Governor’s HT Task Force is coordinating an “Advancing Human Trafficking Investigations and Prosecutions” training for May 15, with registration opening soon.
   3. Rosario is participating in the Glass City Marathon to raise funds for the REACH coalition’s survivor emergency fund. She encouraged others to join if interested.