



August 29, 2016

## SNAPS In Focus: Addressing the Needs of Human Trafficking Victims

Over the years, I have written numerous messages through our *In Focus* series about certain subpopulations including survivors of domestic violence, youth experiencing homelessness, and persons experiencing chronic homelessness. Today I want to talk about victims and survivors of human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking come from all walks of life and can be anyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or citizenship status. While not new, the intersection between human trafficking and homelessness has become evident in recent years and HUD is working closely with its federal partners to ensure access to its programs for this vulnerable population.

In opening remarks of the Administration's [\*Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017 \(Federal Action Plan\)\*](#), President Obama stated, "Human trafficking is a denial of our common humanity and an affront to our ideals as Americans." Victims of human trafficking are often in need of numerous types of emergency and long-term services such as case management, shelter/housing, health care, mental health and substance abuse treatments, etc.

The *Federal Action Plan*, released in January 2014, is a five-year plan that seeks to:

1. Align efforts by promoting strategic and coordinated services for victims at the federal, regional, state, territorial, tribal, and local levels.
2. Improve understanding by expanding and coordinating human trafficking-related research, data, and evaluation to support evidence-based victim services.
3. Expand access to services by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to increase victim identification and expand availability of services.
4. Improve outcomes by promoting effective, culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed services that improve the short- and long-term health, safety, and well-being of victims.

HUD has been involved in the interagency efforts to address the needs of victims of human trafficking and meet the objectives of the *Federal Action Plan* since 2014. Examples of some of the work that HUD has contributed to date include the following:

- HUD established a Departmental-wide working group on human trafficking committed to providing guidance on all of HUD's programs outlining how survivors of human trafficking are eligible for assistance and removing barriers whenever possible. Examples of specific guidance that we have provided to the homeless assistance grants programs are:



- In the [FY 2015 Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Program NOFA](#), HUD directed CoCs to ensure that organizations serving survivors of human trafficking are included in the CoC planning body;
  - Also in the FY 2015 CoC Program NOFA, HUD clarified that persons who are fleeing or attempting to flee human trafficking, including sex trafficking, could be considered homeless under Category 4 of the homeless definition when certain conditions apply; and,
  - Recognizing that youth experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, [HUD published guidance in 2015](#) that clarified how youth meet HUD’s definition of homelessness and included specific references to youth fleeing or attempting to flee their housing or place they are staying because of trading sex for housing and human trafficking.
- In April, HUD participated on a panel at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Freedom Network Conference. The Freedom Network is a national alliance of advocates committed to improving the federal and local response to human trafficking in the United States. The more than 300 conference participants included survivors, social service providers, law enforcement officials, attorneys, faith leaders, government officials, educators, researchers, students, and other anti-trafficking stakeholders.
  - HUD partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Trafficking in Persons to host a series of listening sessions with homeless services providers and human trafficking advocates and service providers. These listening sessions provided critical feedback to HUD and HHS which we plan to use to develop guidance joint guidance.
  - Last week, [HUD, DOJ, and HHS released a joint letter](#) providing information regarding access to federally funded life-saving services and housing for immigrants. This letter reminds housing and service providers that they must not turn away immigrants experiencing homelessness or victims of domestic violence or human trafficking, on the basis of their immigration status, from certain housing and services necessary for life or safety – such as street outreach, emergency shelter, and short-term housing assistance including transitional housing and rapid re-housing funded through the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and CoC Programs.
  - In July, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Board of Commissioners approved a housing pilot for survivors of human trafficking. 60 tenant-based vouchers will be available over the next three years—providing access to permanent housing for survivors of labor and sex trafficking. The pilot is the first of its kind in the country and the planning of this pilot was a public/private collaboration between HHS, HUD, CHA, Heartland Alliance, and Salvation Army. The initiative stems from the *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States* and shines a light on the stabilizing potential of permanent housing in an anti-trafficking context. For this population, housing could provide the intervention necessary to help victims escape and to prevent re-trafficking and other forms of abuse. The implementation of this process will include an evaluation phase and a referral process that will include local Human Trafficking service providers in addition to Heartland.



To learn more about Human Trafficking service providers and resources for survivors in your area, you can visit the [Freedom Network's website](#). The Freedom Network USA is a national alliance of experienced advocates working with survivors of all forms of human trafficking to ensure that trafficked persons have access to justice, safety, and opportunity.

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center also has a [directory of providers](#) and you can find [Department of Justice's Office of Victims of Crime \(OVC\) funded providers](#) on the OVC's interactive map.

As always, thank you for your efforts to address the needs of persons experiencing homelessness in your community. HUD will continue to provide updates on our work related to human trafficking on the [HUD Exchange](#).

Ann Marie Oliva  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs