



Howard County Task Force on Human Trafficking

Minutes (draft)

April 9, 2014

10:30 a.m.

C. Vernon Gray Conference Room

Members Present: C. Vernon Gray; Steven Hess, U.S. Attorney's Office; Jennifer Ritter, Office of the State's Attorney; Capt. Ellsworth Jones, Howard County Department of Police; Lt. Glenn Case, Howard County Department of Police; Restia Whitaker, Howard County Public School System; James Fitzgerald, Howard County Sheriff; Karen Butler, Howard County Department of Social Services; Lois Mikkila, Howard County Department of Citizen Services; Sara Cochran, HoCo AGAST; Suellen Seigel, Howard County Commission for Women; Colleen Nester, Howard County Health Department.

Staff Present: Mary Toth, Office of Human Rights; Meredith Beach, Howard County County Council

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

Amanda Walker-Rodriguez, Human Trafficking Advisor, GOCCP provided overview of development and increase of human trafficking cases:

- First year only had a hand full of cases;
- There are four vice detectives in Baltimore County working on human trafficking cases;
- Trained detectives to understand force, fraud and coercion, and understand the relationship between the trafficker and victim;
- In Baltimore County there are number of massage parlors;
- See a lot of force, fraud and coercion in age of 18-21 where victims are being forced into prostitution;
- Discussed a massage parlor owner who has had several cases against her, but she appealed the case and the victims did not testify on the appeal, opened another massage parlor, has been charged several times but continues to run a brothel/massage parlor;
- Ms. Walker-Rodriguez is working with the Governor's office to help coordinate agency response.

General discussion about changes to forfeiture law. Howard County currently has a case pending. The money collected through the state law goes into the general funds, does not go to victim services. Mr. Hess discussed the federal forfeiture law which allows sharing of proceeds between federal government and local jurisdiction.

Awo-Sarpong, Senior Attorney, U.S. EEOC (refer to handout). Provided an overview of labor trafficking.

- Labor trafficking is defined as using someone else's labor through force, fraud or coercion;
- Employers obtain victims through recruiting and soliciting people from overseas and assist them in obtaining visa;
- EEOC has jurisdiction when employer has 15 or more employees, County has jurisdiction when employer has 5 or more employees;
- Complaint has to be filed with EEOC within 180 days of incident occurring;
- EEOC is often dealing with victims who do not what their rights are;
- Case could take 3-4 years from the time a complaint is filed to when the case goes to court;
- Indications of victims is isolation, papers confiscation, employees live onsite.

Jeanne Allert, Founder & Executive Director, The Samaritan Women. The Samaritan Women provides long term living space for adult victims of sex trafficking; see trafficking out of homes in Howard County more than brothels; provided overview of prostitution versus trafficking; 75% of victims are U.S. citizens and between the age of 18 and 25; traffickers look for multiple layers of vulnerability; have to look at the victim population from Howard County, but also the demand population; survivors who come from outside of the area do better at Samaritan Women; number one cause of death of prostitutes is suicide; a prostitutes average life span is 34.

At the conclusion of the presentations, the next meeting was set for May 21, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.