# Law Enforcement Brief: Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach to Responding to Victims

The following checklist provides considerations for law enforcement during interactions with survivors. Taking the following steps can have an impact on the individual's sense of safety.<sup>1</sup>

Immediate concerns

- ■The individual should be removed from immediate danger.
- Any immediate needs relevant to the individual should be prioritized.
- Ensure the individual has food, rest, housing, health care, and transportation.
- •Check in to make sure the individual is hearing and understanding statements or questions.
- Any case involving an individual under 18 years old should be framed as child abuse and a 51A must be filed.

Overarching considerations

- Provide opportunities for empowerment wherever possible.
- ■When possible, allow the individual to meet with an officer whose gender puts them at ease.
- Allow them to have input regarding the location for meetings.
- •Individuals should be informed about their rights and provided information on service providers.
- •Individuals should be provided with realistic expectations of the speed, depth, and breadth of the investigation.
- Any person interacting with an individual should explain who they are and their role.

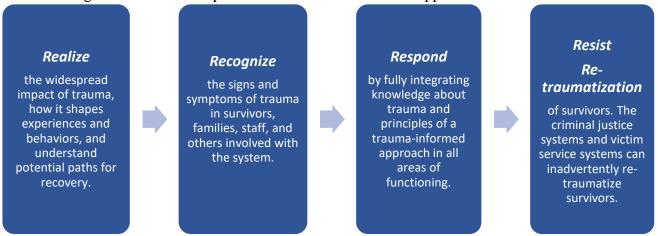
# Best practices for interactions

- Be aware if the individual appears shut down or disconnected, as this could be a sign the individual is overwhelmed.
- Take frequent breaks and consider the individual's needs throughout the interaction.
- Consider your body language, tone, and language.
- Communicate in a nonthreatening, calm, and empathetic manner that avoids blaming language.
- Ask individuals for their pronouns and how they would like to be addressed.
- Be aware that changes in memory may be indicative of a trauma response.
- Be aware of managing your own emotional responses to the individual.

- Interviewing
- It is critical to make the distinction between an interview and an interrogation. An interview is an opportunity for trust and rapport building, and questions should be open ended, allowing for narrative response at the survivors cadence.
- Building trust with the individual will be the foundation of the interview, and victims should not be forced to interview.
- A calm, supportive interview atmosphere should be provided.
- •Consider the method, manner, location, and timing of an interview to prevent re-traumatization. Hold interviews or conversations at a time when the individual feels safe.
- At the outset of the interview process, explain that information is being gathered for law enforcement and investigation purposes.
- ■Be mindful of the number of interviews conducted, the number of people present, and try to record the interview to minimize the number of future interviews.

Adapted from Justice Resource Institute, 'Utilizing Trauma-Informed Approaches to Trafficking-related work.' <a href="https://www.duq.edu/assets/Documents/forensics/Forensic%20Fridays/2018/MAR%209/H-O%20Trauma-Informed%20Case%20Study\_final\_2.pdf">https://www.duq.edu/assets/Documents/forensics/Forensic%20Fridays/2018/MAR%209/H-O%20Trauma-Informed%20Case%20Study\_final\_2.pdf</a>

Having knowledge of trauma and a trauma-informed approach can provide skills needed to work with survivors of human trafficking. **Individual trauma** results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. A **trauma-informed approach** comprises victim-centered practices that acknowledge a victim's trauma, avoids re-traumatization, and allows victims to begin processing their trauma while participating in the criminal justice system. The following elements are incorporated into a trauma-informed approach:



A trauma-informed approach to addressing human trafficking is structured around several key principles:<sup>5</sup>

- <u>Safety</u>: It is imperative to ensure the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of survivors.
- <u>Transparency and honesty:</u> To build trust with survivors, transparency, honesty, and clear communication are key. At each stage of the process, information should be communicated to survivors<sup>6</sup> and officers should follow through on statements made.
- <u>Collaboration and empowerment</u>: Law enforcement officers need to understand the importance of power differentials. It is important to restore feelings of self-efficacy and control to victims by providing them with opportunities for choice.<sup>7</sup>
- Equity and Cultural Affirmation: A response to human trafficking should be free from gender discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and value judgements. Officers should acknowledge biases and power dynamics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, HHS (2014) SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Milam, Borrello & Pooler (2017) "The Survivor-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach." *United States Attorneys' Bulletin*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, HHS (2014) SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 9-10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Heffernan & Blythe. "Evidence-Based Practice: Developing a Trauma-Informed Lens to Case Management for Victims of Human Trafficking." Published 1 April 2014. Springer International Publishing. Glob Soc Welf. Also, see SAMHSA and IACP resources

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> When needed, an interpreter will be available to ensure effective communication between the investigative team and survivors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Milam, Borrello & Pooler (2017) "The Survivor-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach." United States Attorneys' Bulletin.

# Commonwealth's Anti-Trafficking Task Force

# **Victim Service Providers Contact Information**

#### **The Eva Center**

Location: Boston, Massachusetts Phone: (617) 779-2133

Website: https://www.evacenter.org/

The EVA Center provides a wide range of continuous and comprehensive services for women exploited through prostitution and sex trafficking.

# **Living in Freedom Together (LIFT)**

Location: Worcester, Massachusetts Phone: (508) 762-9660

Website: https://liftworcester.org/

LIFT is a community of unquestionable support for survivors of the sex trade. LIFT provides community programs and advocacy for survivors.

#### **Garden of Hope**

Location: Queens, New York & Brooklyn, New York Hotline Phone: (718) 886-1960 Phone: (718) 321-8862

Website: https://gohny.org/

Garden of Hope has served hundreds of Chinese-speaking immigrants who are at risk of being trafficked or have been trafficked,

#### Sojourner House

Location: Providence, Rhode Island Hotline 24/7: (401) 765-3232 Main office: (401) 861-6191

Website https://www.sojournerri.org

Committed to ending domestic, sexual violence human trafficking through emergency safe shelter, transitional and permanent housing. Immigration services and case management.

## Boston University School of Law Immigrants' Rights and Human Trafficking Program

Location: Boston, Massachusetts Contact: Julie Dahlstrom Office: (617) 353-2807

Website:https://www.bu.edu/law/current-students/jd-student-resources/experiential-learning/clinics/immigrants-rights-human-trafficking-clinic/

Services: Legal services for trafficking survivors, including immigration legal services, victim rights advocacy, record clearing, and civil legal assistance. We also provide referrals to survivor-led and victim services agencies locally as well as technical assistance about legal issues.

Geographic region: Massachusetts (state-wide)

## My Life My Choice

Location: Boston, Massachusetts Phone: (617) 396-7807 Email: mlmcinfo@jri.org

Website: www.mylifemychoice.org

My Life My Choice provides Survivor-led Mentoring to young victims of commercial sexual exploitation as well as to youth identified as high-risk for exploitation. My Life My Choice accepts referrals for minors (up to age 18) of all genders. To make a referral or learn more go to: <a href="https://www.mylifemychoice.org/get-help-here">www.mylifemychoice.org/get-help-here</a>

## Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN)/Children's Advocacy Center of Suffolk County

Location: Boston, Massachusetts 24/7 Phone: (617) 504-6777

Website: https://www.suffolkcac.org/what-we-do/seen

The SEEN (Support to End Exploitation Now) Program coordinates the multidisciplinary response to child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children across Suffolk County, MA. SEEN receives referrals for high-risk and exploited youth under the age of 18 in Boston, Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. Together with partners, spanning law enforcement, child welfare, medical & mental health providers, and community-based organizations, SEEN is available 24/7 to respond and provide immediate and ongoing case coordination to support multidisciplinary investigations and delivery of services