

# Implementing a Multidisciplinary Oversight Body to Improve Outcomes for Transition Aged Youth Victims of Human Trafficking

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**November 2020**

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Suggested citation: Russo, S., & Wendt, S. (2020). *Implementing a Multidisciplinary Oversight Body to Improve Outcomes for Transition Aged Youth Victims of Human Trafficking*. WestEd.

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# The Steering Committee

As part of the pilot program, WestCoast Children’s Clinic (WCC) developed the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is a multidisciplinary oversight body comprising service provider partners who serve non-systems involved transition aged youth (TAY) in Alameda County. The Steering Committee members represent one mental health organization, one legal services organization, three healthcare organizations, one housing organization, one homeless services organization, and one county-level government agency. These partners were identified prior to the Landscape Analysis WCC conducted in 2019 as part of their pilot program (see the brief titled “Implementing a Landscape Analysis to Identify Partners in Improving Outcomes for Transition Age Youth Victims of Human Trafficking”<sup>1</sup>). The Steering Committee ensures that identification and response protocols are established for non-systems involved TAY. The purpose of this brief is to describe the Steering Committee’s process, perceived outcomes, and successes and challenges.

To learn about the Steering Committee, WestEd conducted an interview with the WCC staff member who leads the Steering Committee; the interview occurred in April 2020, six months after implementation of the Steering Committee began in October 2019. WestEd also conducted interviews with eight Steering Committee members in May 2020. Each interviewed Steering Committee member represented a unique organization. The interviewed Steering Committee members have diverse service provision backgrounds, including referral agencies, housing services, hospital services, domestic violence services, and legal services. Interview questions for both the WCC staff member and Steering Committee members addressed perceived roles; engagement and recruitment processes; experience of a typical Steering Committee meeting; perceived Steering Committee impact, outcomes, successes and barriers to implementing the Steering Committee; and experience with other pilot program activities. The April and May interviews served as baseline data collection; WestEd will conduct interviews with the same individuals six months after the baseline interviews to examine change over time.

WestEd also observed one virtual Steering Committee meeting in May 2020, documenting meeting structure, attendance, how often members spoke, how members responded to questions and prompts, roles within the meeting, and familiarity among members. WestEd also reviewed Steering Committee agendas to understand the progression of topics discussed and to confirm the meeting structure.

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<sup>1</sup> Russo, S., & Wendt, S. (2020). *Implementing a Landscape Analysis to Identify Partners in Improving Outcome for Transition Age Youth Victims of Human Trafficking*. WestEd.

The following sections discuss findings from the interviews, observations, and document reviews. The brief begins with a description of the Role of the Steering Committee, followed by Recruitment of Steering Committee Members, Meeting Structure, and then Perceived Impact and Outcomes of the Steering Committee on the Network of TAY Service Providers and the TAY. Next, we discuss Members' Engagement in Other Pilot Program Activities, Tips and Successes, and finally the Lessons Learned and Barriers for developing and implementing the Steering Committee.

## Role of the Steering Committee

The following sections discuss members' perceptions of the purpose of the Steering Committee, the Steering Committee's role in developing the Service Coordination Team, and the impact of COVID-19 on the Steering Committee's development of the Service Coordination Team.

### Members' perceptions of the purpose of the Steering Committee

WCC's objectives for the Steering Committee were developing a multiagency protocol for serving non-systems involved TAY and developing the Service Coordination Team. Steering Committee members' description of their roles were aligned with WCC's intended roles for the Steering Committee. In most cases, members were aware of the purpose of the Steering Committee and their role within the committee. All eight interviewed Steering Committee members understood that they were a part of the Steering Committee to serve non-systems involved TAY. Most described their role as a thought partner or having an advisory component, while representing and coordinating their services and/or the youth they serve. A couple of members did not feel that they knew their role very well. These members were either new to the Steering Committee or felt that they needed more time on the Steering Committee to articulate their personal role. Steering Committee members also reported additional roles as part of the Service Coordination Team.

### The Steering Committee develops a multiagency protocol that establishes identification, referral, and intervention pathways for the Service Coordination Team

The main role of the Steering Committee was to develop the identification, referral, and service coordination protocol for the Service Coordination Team. The Service Coordination Team comprises members from the organizations who sit on the Steering Committee. The Service Coordination Team intends to meet approximately bi-weekly to coordinate the services of non-systems involved TAY. We further differentiate between the roles of the Steering Committee and the Service Coordination Team in the "Service Coordination Team" section later in this brief. The process of developing the Service Coordination Team protocol began with identifying the gaps in the community to troubleshoot any potential challenges, needs for resources, and work in the community that would help serve non-systems involved TAY. The Steering Committee capitalizes on the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of its members in addressing varying trends, resources, challenges, and solutions for non-systems involved TAY. Each of the members' perspectives are unique in part due to the youth served by their organizations. For example, all youth served in WCC's mental health programs are enrolled in Medi-Cal, but that may not be the case for the youth served by other organizations. The multiple perspectives foster a more nuanced and

inclusive understanding of what youth at risk of human trafficking experience and the available resources for these youth.

The Steering Committee worked together to define the Service Coordination Team's youth identification and referral processes. The development of these processes took place both during and outside Steering Committee meetings. At the first Steering Committee meeting, WCC introduced the pilot program, discussed the purpose of the Steering Committee and Service Coordination Team, and shared the objectives of the Steering Committee. In the next two meetings, over a period of five months, the Steering Committee addressed aspects of data sharing, memoranda of understandings (MOUs), referral pathways, and protocol development. By the fourth Steering Committee meeting, approximately seven months after the first meeting, the Steering Committee had developed a service coordination flow chart. Upon approval of the flow chart, the meeting shifted to addressing the needs of individual youth and the impact of COVID-19 on youth and services.

During in-person meetings, WCC shared physical copies of draft protocols and referral pathway documents with attendees and asked for input and feedback. WCC also used this time to have members share updates from the field and challenges related to the development of the protocol. When WCC identified Steering Committee work that needed to be completed but there was not enough time during the meetings, WCC sent draft protocols and referral pathway documents to members via email as meeting follow-up materials with identified tasks. Steering Committee members reviewed these documents and completed tasks before identified deadlines or before the next meeting.

### **The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Steering Committee's development of the Service Coordination Team**

The COVID-19 pandemic has known and anticipated effects on youth and the organizations that serve them. In response to COVID-19, an additional task for WCC and the Steering Committee was to prepare a temporary model of the Service Coordination Team that is compliant with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and prioritizes health and safety. California's stay-at-home order beginning in March 2020 prompted the shift from the initially planned team-model to a more one-on-one model, in which WCC staff served as a hub, working with individual Service Coordination Team members to process referral requests and service coordination. WCC communicated and organized this change with the Steering Committee with the intention of returning to the team-based model, following the end of the shelter-in-place order and changes to CDC guidelines that support in-person group meetings.

WCC and the Steering Committee also planned for the effects of COVID-19 after the shelter-in-place order ends. WCC emphasized the importance of internal planning regarding this matter before engaging with other organizations for service coordination. WCC worked internally and with the Steering Committee to address what had changed since the shelter-in-place order, how the changes affect their work, and any new needs that developed as a result of COVID-19. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, WCC and the Steering Committee continued with their development of the one-on-one hub model for the Service Coordination Team, providing support to meet youth needs and completing the MOUs to prepare for the start of the Service Coordination Team's team-based model. More information on the Service Coordination Team will be available in a future brief.

## Recruitment of Steering Committee Members

WCC reported that all Steering Committee members were individuals and/or organizations that WCC had in mind before conducting the landscape analysis. WCC considered the addition of one organization that they identified in the landscape analysis as well as through word of mouth from other organizations. WCC considered engaging this organization because of the organization's services—providing shelter to domestic violence and human trafficking victims—and the perceived alignment of their work and the work of the pilot program. Prior to convening the Steering Committee, WCC believed that the organization would bring a unique perspective to the pilot work as a housing provider for adult human trafficking victims. After several attempts to connect with the organization via email and receiving no response, this organization was not included in the Steering Committee. However, after convening the Steering Committee, WCC recognized that the perceived gap was filled by another organization that provides similar services and thus provides a perspective from that area of work. WCC noted that this one organization that did not respond to the invitation was the one organization with which WCC did not have a prior relationship. As WCC launched the Service Coordination Team, WCC reached out to this housing organization again and, this time, established a partnership and potential referral source.

To recruit Steering Committee members, WCC began the process by sending an email invitation to individuals with whom they had existing relationships through previous work; these invitations were tailored to each individual. The invitation emails followed a general outline that: (1) introduced the pilot program, (2) introduced the Steering Committee, (3) briefly described its purpose, (4) invited the invitee to join, and (5) asked the invitee to respond as soon as possible. A couple of members described follow-up phone calls, during which WCC provided more information about the pilot program. One member said that WCC personally invited her to join the Steering Committee during a group session of service providers, during which WCC took inventory of services of the group. Another member had already planned to be a part of the Steering Committee because her organization was written into the pilot program grant. A couple of members were referred to the Steering Committee by their supervisors who had received the invitation to join the Steering Committee. The newest Steering Committee member was one of said members and was also new to her organization's position. Due to her recent onboarding to her position within her organization and on the Steering Committee, at the time of the interview she was unable to provide information about the Steering Committee and was unclear of her role.

### Steering Committee members had previous relationships with WCC

Most Steering Committee members had previous relationships working with WCC. One member reported that their organization had also previously worked Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSSEY), which is a subgrantee of WCC for the pilot program. Multiple members reported previously working with WCC to develop and/or pilot the Commercial Sexual Exploitation - Identification Tool (CSE-IT).<sup>2</sup> The individuals who were new to their respective agencies did not have

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<sup>2</sup>The CSE-IT is an evidence-based, universal screening tool that identifies youth with clear indicators of exploitation. The CSE-IT was created by WCC in 2014, informed by the experiences of youth and young adults. It is designed to be used in any setting serving youth and young adults, including homeless shelters, mental health agencies, juvenile or criminal justice settings, and child welfare. WCC also developed a version for medical providers, called the CSE-IT: Healthcare.

previous experience working with WCC and were unaware of whether their organizations had previously worked with WCC.

### **Need for additional members**

WCC leads the Steering Committee in collectively brainstorming members' needs during meetings. Steering Committee members described a process of having group conversations about who else to bring to the table, a process which for many members felt complete. Many members described "exhausting their list" and were unable to identify any additional members who would bring added value to the Steering Committee.

Although most Steering Committee members considered the committee to be complete, a couple of members had recommendations for additional members. One member suggested including the presence of young people. Another member recommended bringing on a young women's development and advocacy organization that has a prominent presence in the community. One member who provides housing services suggested more housing support. She reported that the need for housing identified through the Steering Committee exceeded her organization's capacity. Another member similarly anticipated the need for more housing providers at the table by the time the Service Coordination Team is implemented.

Additionally, the Steering Committee is in the process of connecting with a newly opened local community center. WCC was interested in expanding their outreach through this project and engaging the local community center in the Steering Committee.

### **Including survivor voice in the Steering Committee**

Approximately ten months into the implementation of the Steering Committee, WCC invited a Survivor Consultant to participate in the Steering Committee. The Survivor Consultant serves a flexible role, engaging in multiple aspects of the pilot program. WCC plans for the Survivor Consultant to assist with outreach to youth and to participate in the Steering Committee as a full team member, providing ongoing feedback and suggestions. WCC intends for the Survivor Consultant to raise questions that providers might not consider from a provider's lens, so that the pilot program includes multiple perspectives. The Survivor Consultant will also be involved in discussions between the Steering Committee and Service Coordination Team to communicate feedback and facilitate any changes to better serve non-systems involved TAY. Thus far the Survivor Consultant has reviewed WCC's youth outreach tools and lead efforts to collect youth feedback for improvement, such as conducting focus groups with youth. WCC emphasized the importance of keeping the Survivor Consultant engaged in the pilot program work to obtain ongoing feedback.

To hire a Survivor Consultant, WCC developed a position description which described WCC and its mission, the pilot program and the Steering Committee, the Survivor Consultant position, consultant responsibilities, qualifications and experience, compensation and working conditions, contractor expectations, and information to submit an application. WCC distributed the job description widely through their networks, leveraging a state-level commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) action team as a recruiting resource. WCC received several applications and interviewed three individuals. WCC reported that they selected the final Survivor Consultant because the individual was engaging in the interview,

confident in sharing opinions and raising questions, and provided the type of feedback they were seeking for the pilot program. The individual had experience working for a community-based organization serving human trafficking survivors, had training, was perceived by WCC as “warm” and “enthusiastic,” and had an interest in pursuing this line of work as a career.

## Steering Committee Meeting Structure

WCC’s development of the Steering Committee followed the phases of developing group dynamics: forming, storming, norming, and performing. WCC noted that the “forming” phase “took a while,” during which the first couple of meetings and emails between meetings involved assessing how the group was going to work together. WCC emphasized that the process of creating a shared understanding as a necessary step the development process. After the Steering Committee completed the “forming” phase, WCC described that the Steering Committee was able to easily begin and hold productive conversations and that members were comfortable and equally informed. When Steering Committee documents were ready for members to review and provide specific areas of feedback, the Steering Committee shifted into the “performing” phase. During the “performing” phase, members engaged in more targeted and active discussions during meetings. WCC noted that the production of documents and tasks related to providing feedback facilitated member engagement.

Steering Committee members described meetings as following a “consistent” and “well organized” structure. Prior to meetings, WCC emails members with the upcoming meeting’s agenda and minutes from the previous meeting. Pre-meeting emails might also include documents for members to review and edit (e.g., MOUs, protocols). WCC leads the meeting, beginning with introductions, check-ins, and updates from each of the members about trends they are noticing with the youth they serve. Then, members can share information that they feel will be beneficial to youth. WCC follows the agenda closely and facilitates any discussion around each of the items. Most members reported that WCC facilitates meetings well and the WCC leader is “very organized” and “prepared.” WCC creates to-do lists during meetings, and members sign up to complete specific items. WCC takes notes during the meetings and minutes are sent to members prior to the next meeting. Most communication within the Steering Committee outside of meetings is via email, with phone calls used when individually preferred. The structure the members described was nearly identical to the meeting WestEd observed in May 2020. In that meeting, all eight attending members spoke at least once, indicating that members had a level of comfort with each other and were engaged.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Steering Committee meetings were hosted in person at WCC’s facilities and the facilities of a partner organization. Upon California’s state-wide shelter-in-place order beginning in March 2020, WCC shifted to conducting meetings virtually, using the video conferencing platform Zoom, until the CDC and shelter-in-place guidelines allow for in-person meetings.

## Perceived Impact on Network of TAY Service Providers

Although early in implementation, the WCC staff and the Steering Committee members described the perceived impacts of the Steering Committee on the network of TAY service providers. These impacts include improving professional relationships among service providers and improving access to



resources. Most Steering Committee members expect additional impacts as their work together continues.

### **Discussing and defining service provider roles in the community reinvigorated relationships between WCC and other organizations**

WCC reported that the process of developing and implementing the Steering Committee invigorated longstanding relationships between providers and agencies that had been previously stagnant. Specifically, the process of mapping resources and defining service roles within the community initiated and fostered relationship rebuilding. For example, through the Steering Committee, WCC revived a relationship with a local sexual violence crisis response organization. To reinvigorate this relationship, WCC and this organization participated in conversations that clarified each other's specific roles in the community and for what purposes each organization would be called for services. Communicating and understanding who does what in the community was a key factor in renewing relationships between service providers who serve TAY.

### **The Steering Committee serves as a referral source and brings awareness to additional resources**

Some members mentioned that the Steering Committee serves as another source for referrals to their organizations. While this is beneficial for increasing youth access to resources, for a few organizations, the increased visibility and referrals from the Steering Committee have brought to light some of their own organization's challenges and shortcomings. One member expressed that their organization has limited capacity to address all the youth the Steering Committee refers. Another member expressed that their intake processes are not TAY friendly and are a barrier when engaging TAY into their network. Another member noted that the Steering Committee brings awareness to additional resources and supports, but this causes some confusion regarding how to determine what resource is most appropriate for their referrals.

### **A few months of Steering Committee implementation is too early to for members to assess perceived impact**

Given that these were baseline interviews conducted in the early stages of implementation, most of the members believed it was too early to assess impacts. Nearly half of the Steering Committee members reported uncertainty as to the impact of the Steering Committee on the network of service providers who serve non-systems involved TAY. One member said she may feel this way because she has worked with the organizations in the Steering Committee before and thus is still waiting for any additional collaboration or relationship building that might result from the Steering Committee participation to come to fruition.

Though multiple Steering Committee members reported that the Steering Committee has not been implemented long enough to assess the Committee's impacts on collaboration, some members already appreciate the opportunity to work with new people. One member said this newfound collaboration has exposed her to more resources for clients (e.g., mental health, food, housing, and workforce

development services). Another member said that new collaborations among organizations were forming in the beginning, but the inconsistent attendance of certain members hindered the progress.<sup>3</sup>

## Perceived TAY Outcomes of Steering Committee

Most members mentioned increases in effective collaboration as an outcome of participation in the Steering Committee; this increased collaboration should result in more available services, more efficient service delivery, and ultimately better outcomes for the TAY the Steering Committee are serving. More specifically, reported anticipated outcomes include increased visibility of services, an increase in collective resources, improved service coordination and provision to TAY, efficient protocol and workflow processes (specifically the Service Coordination Team’s referral process), CSE-IT training for organizations for better identifying TAY at risk or victims of human trafficking, and collaborations on funding. Members anticipated additional positive outcomes as the Steering Committee continues to develop and convene.

## Steering Committee Members’ Engagement in Other Pilot Program Activities

**CSE-IT Training/Technical Assistance:** CSE-IT training/technical assistance is available to the Steering Committee members and their organizations. WCC conducted a CSE-IT training in March 2020, hosted by one of the Steering Committee organizations, for all Steering Committee members and their staff. Two Steering Committee members and their staff from two organizations attended. Both Steering Committee members expressed positive reviews of the training. These members had already been trained in CSE-IT but attended to bring their staff who needed to be trained. Neither of these members have personally used the CSE-IT tool since the training. Nearly all Steering Committee members had been trained to use the CSE-IT in previous years. One member from a healthcare setting mentioned that prior to the pilot program, she could not participate in CSE-IT training because it was cost-prohibitive for her organization. As part of the pilot program, WCC offers CSE-IT training free of charge, which made it more accessible for her organization. No Steering Committee members have participated in any CSE-IT technical assistance services thus far.

**Service Coordination Team:** All Steering Committee organizations are part of the Service Coordination Team, except for the one county-level government agency. This agency continues their role as a thought partner and providing oversight on the Steering Committee, but rather than sitting on the Service Coordination Team, they facilitate referrals from SafetyNet.<sup>4</sup> All Steering Committee organizations are

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<sup>3</sup> This barrier is discussed in more detail in the “Lessons Learned and Barriers” section.

<sup>4</sup> SafetyNet is a multidisciplinary team launched in 2011 by the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office and is designed to provide an immediate response to CSEC in Alameda County, starting at the moment of their identification and throughout their potential interface with any system. This includes but is not limited to youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system, social services, other government agencies, law enforcement, and/or community-based agencies. The participating agencies are the Alameda County Public Defender’s Office, Alameda County Probation Department, Bay Area Women Against Rape,

considered referral sources for the Service Coordination Team, meaning the organizations provide client cases who need service coordination. The same organizational representatives who are on the Service Coordination Team do not necessarily also sit on the Steering Committee. Staff who have more leadership and management roles serve on the Steering Committee as thought partners and provide oversight. By comparison, staff who are more field facing with youth serve on the Service Coordination Team. For example, a healthcare organization's clinical director would be a Steering Committee member; whereas their health navigator, who directly works with clients, would be on the Service Coordination Team. Steering Committee members were aware of the Service Coordination Team's purpose in that it is a space where referrals are shared, but there was some variability in the understanding of their role in the process. As mentioned previously, there were changes to the Service Coordination Team implementation plan because of COVID-19; this could be one reason why there is some lack of clarity on roles and purpose of the Service Coordination Team. Some Steering Committee members reported that they have already started the referral process, but there has yet to be follow up about those service connections.

## Tips and Successes

WCC shared strategies and resources that were beneficial in the development and implementation of the Steering Committee, which facilitated successful engagement, collaboration, and protocol development.

### Prior experience working with multidisciplinary teams doing similar work was helpful

WCC has 10 years of experience and leadership in working with multidisciplinary teams to respond to sexually exploited youth in Alameda County. For example, WCC is an active member of the multidisciplinary team, SafetyNet. In addition, WCC has prior experience developing multiagency protocols. WCC facilitated the development of an interagency CSEC protocol in Alameda County and Sacramento County to leverage state funding dedicated for a CSEC program in child welfare. For this CSEC program, WCC facilitated a multiagency process with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Alameda County Probation Department, MISSSEY and 10 other stakeholder agencies to develop a protocol for a DCFS-led multidisciplinary response to sexually exploited youth. When interviewed, WCC reported that their prior experience with multidisciplinary teams benefited the development and implementation of the Steering Committee.

### Having prior close relationships with organizations facilitated engagement

WCC relied on existing relationships to develop the Steering Committee. WCC had prior relationships with many of the Steering Committee members, some of them closer than others. The previous relationships were a defining factor in the successful engagement of the Steering Committee. The one

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Behavioral Health Care Services, East Bay Children's Law Offices, MISSSEY, Oakland Unified School District, Project Permanence, and WCC.

organization that did not engage with the Steering Committee was the only organization WCC did not have a prior relationship with. The organizations were aligned in their excitement and strong beliefs that the Steering Committee work will benefit their clients and that clients will receive necessary services.

### **Commitment to a culture of collaboration across all membership levels**

The development and function of the Steering Committee benefit from members' prior experiences, but also the commitment of its leadership and members to the work and to collaboration. WCC emphasized that organizations that are only focused on their individual role or work did not contribute to this committed culture of collaboration. From the beginning, bringing individuals and organizations to the table who uphold a culture of collaboration was important for the success of the committee. WCC's leadership reflected and supported a culture of collaboration. WCC practiced strategies that fostered engagement from Steering Committee members. The facilitation of meetings prioritized clarity and follow-up emails to encourage more input and feedback from Steering Committee members. Whether or not the requests for feedback resulted in comments or responses, these intentional practices of engagement contributed to the collaborative atmosphere.

### **MOUs with Steering Committee members**

MOUs between the Steering Committee members' organizations were necessary to efficiently facilitate referrals for individual cases to the Steering Committee. WCC was successful in developing MOUs with all Steering Committee members for the pilot program. At the third Steering Committee meeting in February 2020, WCC shared an MOU outline with attendees and received verbal affirmation that members understood the MOU. Revisions were made to the MOU documents through July 2020. WCC included time to collectively review MOU updates in Steering Committee meetings. WCC finalized the MOUs in July 2020.

### **The Steering Committee's multiagency protocol identified areas of integration with other multidisciplinary teams**

Early in protocol development, WCC prioritized the integration of the Steering Committee's multiagency protocol with other multidisciplinary teams in the field, including DCFS and SafetyNet. Proper integration minimizes duplication and ensures effective county-wide coordination. WCC began this process at the first Steering Committee meeting. WCC sent members copies of existing protocols, MOUs, and confidentiality agreements and together identified areas of overlap to avoid and gaps where WCC's Steering Committee can contribute.

WCC also worked with Steering Committee members to clarify the purpose of their developed referral pathway and what processes to follow. If a member had a question regarding whom to send a referral to, WCC identified which pathways were appropriate, while providing the Service Coordination Team services as a catch-all net for any TAY referrals that are in question. WCC emphasized to the Steering Committee that members should not worry about determining the "correct" referral pathway. WCC would be open to receiving any referral for TAY and would determine how to refer the youth.

## **The Steering Committee improved awareness of challenges in the County**

One success of the Steering Committee thus far is improving awareness and knowledge of challenges in the County, including housing gaps. Initially, WCC and Steering Committee members were under the assumption that there were ample housing programs in Alameda County. Through the Steering Committee work, WCC and members learned that there are many barriers to accessing these programs and gaps in services within the housing continuum. The housing organizations on the committee provided other members insights into these challenges.

## **A multidisciplinary oversight body streamlined efficient referral processes**

Many referrals for clients were based on the general knowledge of an organization's services that sometimes lacked specific details about eligibility for services. For example, an organization may refer a youth to a housing organization, with the general knowledge that the housing organization serves exploited youth; however, the housing organization may have specific service requirements, such as only serving youth who are trying to exit trafficking. This information could be shared in a team-based multidisciplinary setting to streamline referral efforts and decrease youth wait time for to receive services. A multidisciplinary oversight body can provide a larger knowledge base and reduce time spent learning organizations' services and requirements, creating a more efficient referral process. The Steering Committee developed a referral process that is faster and prevents the misplacement of client referrals due to misunderstanding of services.

## **Lessons Learned and Barriers**

During the development and implementation of the Steering Committee, WCC and Steering Committee members experienced challenges, most of which stemmed from limitations related to time, capacity of members, and funding.

### **Engagement process took longer than anticipated**

WCC reported that the engagement process took longer to begin and complete due to other project work as well as the nature of engagement taking time. A long engagement process delayed the Steering Committee development timeline by approximately two months.

### **Inconsistent attendance of members**

Multiple Steering Committee members mentioned that inconsistent attendance was a barrier. One Steering Committee member observed that while a handful of organizations were consistent in attendance, other organizations were less frequently present. One reason for inconsistent attendance was that meeting times conflicted with members' work schedules and commitments. For example, one member mentioned that she did not have the capacity to attend meetings due to work commitments. Another member works in a hospital, and to attend Steering Committee meetings, she must cancel clinical hours

and take paid time off. Another reason for inconsistent attendance was that the travel to the meeting location was not convenient for some members. One member mentioned that it was difficult to her to attend meetings because it was an hour-long drive. She preferred online meetings with quarterly in-person meetings. As noted earlier, the Steering Committee shifted to conducting virtual meetings after the stay-at-home order in March 2020 and plans to continue for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. One Steering Committee member mentioned that inconsistent attendance of organizations, particularly leadership, resulted in difficulty in driving the intended changes to serving non-systems involved TAY. Another member mentioned that inconsistent attendance also hindered the progress of collaboration among members.

### **Navigating another resource with specific eligibility requirements**

One member mentioned that although the Steering Committee is successful in serving as another resource for TAY, she experienced frustration with having to navigate the various criteria and requirements of other resources and multidisciplinary teams. She noted that the Steering Committee and the Service Coordination Team only served non-systems involved TAY, echoing the perceived barriers and fragmentation of services based on age and system involvement. To avoid confusion and frustration, she would prefer a system for which there would be a single number to call for serving youth who are at risk or victims of human trafficking. This is not a critique of the Steering Committee specifically nor its referral process for the Service Coordination Team, but a member's observation of the current landscape of services and multidisciplinary teams for serving youth who are at risk or victims of human trafficking.

### **Sustainability after grant period**

Additionally, one member mentioned the ending of the grant period and the uncertainty of the Steering Committee's sustainability due to funding as a potential barrier.