



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING
IN OUR BACKYARD**
www.InOurBackyard.org

IN OUR BACKYARD

January 2019

Central Oregonians Understanding of Human Trafficking

**Authored by Nita Belles, In collaboration with
Donna J. Casey, Assistant Professor,
Central Oregon Community College**

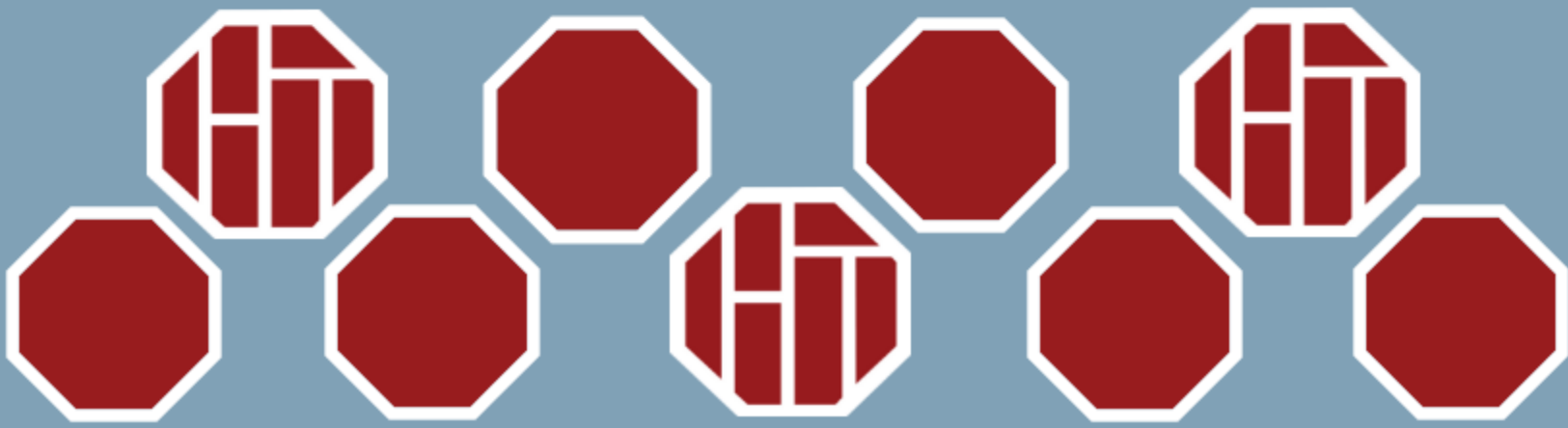


Table of Contents

- 3 Executive Summary
- 4 Abstract
- 5 Overview of Survey & Participants
- 6 Service Provider Response
- 7 Community Member Response
- 7 Discussion
- 8 Next Steps & Conclusion

Executive Summary

In order to better inform our community about the realities of human trafficking (HT) in Central Oregon, Nita Belles of IN OUR BACKYARD partnered with Donna J. Casey at Central Oregon Community College to survey service providers and community members about their experiences intersecting with victims of HT. The survey focused on what role training played in recognizing victims of HT, and whether participants had tools to screen for and report if they had contact with any victims of labor or sex trafficking.

315 people, including 79 service providers and 236 community members, were surveyed in Central Oregon.

The majority of service providers surveyed were non-profit professionals (30%), and the majority of community members surveyed were students at COCC (71%).

Three central themes emerged from this study:

1. The lack of training is contributing to missed opportunities for victims to be recognized and connected to services.
2. A vetted screening tool and reporting protocol is needed allow all service providers access to trauma informed care for HT victims.
3. Community members are in overwhelming agreement that prevention education is needed in Central Oregon schools.

The three themes suggest that Central Oregonian residents, whether serving victims of HT or intersecting with them in the community, desire to possess the knowledge and skills to recognize and report HT in our backyard. Because even one victim is too many.

Central Oregonians Understanding of Human Trafficking

Authors: Nita Belles, Donna J. Casey, & IN OUR BACKYARD

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Human Trafficking (HT) is not unique to big cities like Portland or Eugene/Springfield but is hidden in plain sight in smaller cities like Bend and Redmond, and even in rural areas such as La Pine, Prineville, and Burns. The goal of this study was to ascertain the level of understanding of HT among the population of Central Oregon. This was in order to demonstrate the need for both community-wide and sector-specific training to meet the needs of the victims/survivors, and reduce the incidence of this crime. Two specific objectives were (1) to identify barriers to identification and knowledge gaps to determine training needs of service providers that may intersect with HT victims and survivors and (2) to measure the level of community awareness of HT and frequency of intersection with victims.

Methods: A survey was given to community members, including statistics students at COCC, and select service providers* in Central Oregon that worked in sectors that were likely to intersect with victims of HT.

Results: Of 636 survey recipients, 315 responded. 25% of respondents (79) were service providers, and 75% (236) were community members. The results resoundingly indicate a need in the following areas: (1) Training to aid in the identification of HT victims, (2) Vetted screening tool used uniformly across sectors, (3) Information about whom to contact upon identification, and (4) The inclusion of an age-appropriate curriculum on HT in local schools.

Conclusions: Both service providers and community members demonstrate gaps in knowledge of HT, specifically how to identify and report suspicions thereof. This correlates directly with a lack of awareness, training and consistent response protocols. Targeted training for each sector is crucial to improve identification and connection to service for victims of HT to aid in their recovery process. Training for the purpose of identification must occur in conjunction with prevention education for youth to interrupt the cycle of this atrocity.

* This study was not a random sample, but a voluntary response sample (in the case of service providers and community members), and a mandatory sample the case of COCC students. The limitations of the extrapolation to the Central Oregon population have been duly considered. The results are viewed as a glimpse into the Central Oregon experience.

* Service provider is defined as: social worker, therapist, social service professional, Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) employee, mental health professional, health care professional, teacher/professor, law enforcement and non-profit professional.

Definitions

According to the Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, human trafficking or “severe forms of trafficking in persons” under federal law includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking:

Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.

Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Study Population

Service providers were selected in sectors that would be likely to intersect with victims of human trafficking including social workers, therapists, social service professionals, DHS employees, mental health professionals, healthcare professionals, teachers, law enforcement, and non-profit professionals.

The survey was given to 400 service providers and 236 community members, including 224 students in statistics and probability classes at COCC. Students were required to take an online version of the survey and all others were offered a \$200 raffle incentive to participate. The survey was offered through the IN OUR BACKYARD newsletter and events, however many participants who began the survey did not complete it and their results were not included in this report.

Survey

The survey was titled “Human Trafficking in Central Oregon.” Participants were aware this study was meant to gather information about HT in the region. The definitions for labor and sex trafficking were given at the beginning of the survey. Demographic information about the respondents was optional and all information about respondents was kept confidential. Initial questions determined whether the respondent was a service provider or community member. Subsequent questions were asked to determine whether the respondent had encountered victims of HT, how many and what ages, and if they had a reporting protocol. Questions were also posed to determine how they were able to identify potential victims, and whether they had training to be able to do so accurately. The last question posed to community members was whether the respondent believed having an age-appropriate curriculum for K-12 students should be included in local schools.

Results

Demographics

This survey was optional for 412 of the respondents and required for 224 COCC students. The study received a total of 79 responses out of 400 for service providers (for whom the survey was optional), a response rate of 19%. Demographics for service providers are provided in Table 1. The highest percentage of respondents were non-profit professionals (30%), followed by health care professionals (22%), and school-based professionals (13%). There was a total of 315 responses.

Table 1 Respondent Demographics- Service Providers

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Law Enforcement	3.90%	3
▼ Child Protection Services	0.00%	0
▼ Government Agency	5.19%	4
▼ Non-Profit Based Professional	29.87%	23
▼ Health Care Professional	22.08%	17
▼ Mental Health Provider	5.19%	4
▼ School Based Professional	12.99%	10
▼ Juvenile Justice	0.00%	0
▼ Religious Leader or Religious Volunteer	7.79%	6
▼ Volunteer	2.60%	2
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 10.39%	8
TOTAL		77

Service Provider Response

The following results are based on responses of 79 service providers:

- **35%** have encountered a potential HT victim. 55 contacts with adult labor trafficking victims; 107 with adult sex trafficking victims; 7 with child labor trafficking victims; 22 with child sex trafficking victims. A total of 191 potential HT victims were identified by 28 service providers.
- **18% do not know whom to contact** if they encountered a potential HT victim.
- **58% report that they could not identify a victim** of human trafficking.
- **66% report that their agencies do not have a screening tool to identify victims of HT.**
- **23%** report that their agencies have professional **staff knowledgeable** about how to serve victims.
- **32%** report their agencies are part of a network servicing this population.
- **62%** have had **no training** regarding human trafficking.
- 100% of those with training feel it was beneficial.
- 85% say training to identify victims would be helpful.

The following barriers to providing services were reported:

- 72% report “Client does not identify as a victim.”
- 69% report “Difficulty identifying victims.”
- 69% report “Clients lack of continued participation.”
- 58% report “Funding.”
- and 54% say “Legislation/Lack of.”

Community Member Response:

The following results are based on responses of 236 community members:

- 9% have encountered a **potential human trafficking victim (almost 1 in 10)**. A total of **51 potential HT victims** were identified.
- **35% do not know whom to contact** if they encounter a potential HT victim.
- **80% report that they could not identify a victim** of human trafficking
- **79%** report that a **list of agencies** that serve HT victims would be helpful information.
- **62%** report that general **training** on human trafficking would be beneficial to everyone in the community.
- **59%** would like to see more exposure of the **National Human Trafficking Hotline**.
- **92%** report it is important to include **age-appropriate curriculum** on human trafficking in our schools.

Discussion

The survey results highlight the importance of education and training for both service providers and community members. A lack of ability to recognize victims of HT and accurately respond/report was evident for both service providers and community members.

For the authors of this survey, the following results stood out:

- A total of 242 potential victims of HT were reported by survey respondents.
- **75%** of respondents (58% of service providers and 80% of community members) report that they **could not identify** a victim of human trafficking.
- **62%** of service providers report that they have had **no training** regarding human trafficking.
- **66% of service providers report that their agencies do not have a screening tool to identify victims of HT.**
- **79%** of community members report that a **list of agencies** that serve HT victims would be helpful information.
- **92%** of community members report it is important to include **age-appropriate curriculum** on human trafficking in our schools.

25% of the respondents reported that they could identify a victim of HT and respondents indicated that they had identified 242 potential victims of HT. A majority (75%) of the survey population indicated that they were unable to identify potential victims. The survey results support the fact that human trafficking is occurring in Central Oregon and yet may be underreported due to lack of training.

Without targeted training for different service provider sectors and the community that may encounter HT victims, those victims may not be identified or connected to services necessary to their recovery.

Next Steps

It is imperative that service providers receive training on how to recognize HT victims specific to their sector. Targeted training will improve the likelihood that service providers can accurately identify victims of HT.

Based on the results of this survey, the authors recommend that an evidence-based screening tool be consistently implemented across sectors in the community.

Collaboration at all levels, between service providers, community members, law enforcement, healthcare, and nonprofits is critical to moving from a general awareness of HT to a trained community that can aid in stopping HT. Training on key indicators of HT, how to accurately identify victims of HT, and to whom a community member should report concerns, is highly recommended. A list of agencies and hotlines for HT victims should be included.

Given that an overwhelming majority of community members indicated that age-appropriate curriculum in the schools was important, the authors recommend that all middle and high schools in the area receive HT prevention education in order to create a less vulnerable youth population and reduce the incidence of HT in Central Oregon.

Conclusion

It is well-documented in a large body of research that human trafficking is a growing problem in the United States, and small cities like those that encompass Central Oregon are not immune to both the recruitment and exploitation of vulnerable people. The survey results support the fact that human trafficking is occurring in Central Oregon and yet may be under-identified and reported. The Central Oregon community is ill-equipped to recognize and respond to victims of HT. It is the recommendation of the authors of this study that more training be conducted to both service providers and the community at-large, and the protocol for reporting be made clear to both parties. Guidelines on recognition and reporting, coupled with an accurate and researched screening tool should be provided to and adopted by the cities encompassed in Central Oregon. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of participants agree that an age-appropriate curriculum on human trafficking should be adopted by local middle and high schools in order to protect our most vulnerable citizens—our children. Because even one victim in our backyard is too many.

IN OUR BACKYARD (IOB) is a national leader with more than a decade of dedication to the fight against sex and labor trafficking. IOB links arms in the fight to dismantle human trafficking by empowering communities to prevent this atrocity and creating access to freedom for victims of HT. Exposed to the devastating realities of HT, IOB Founder Nita Belles was driven to take action to stop the exploitation of children, women, and men. Her book, *In Our Backyard*, has been acclaimed as the primer on human trafficking in America. IOB is known for placing Freedom Stickers in all 50 states and working to eradicate sex trafficking surrounding the Super Bowl for 10 consecutive years. Our vision is a culture where all people are empowered to live in freedom because even one victim of human trafficking is too many.

Questions about this survey? Please contact us info@inourbackyard.org