

MINUTES

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH HOUSE CHILDREN AND YOUTH PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE AGING, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, LEGISLATIVE AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Meeting Jointly
Wednesday, September 10, 2014
10:00 a.m., Big Mac B
Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee members present: Senator Bart Hester, Chair; Representatives Justin T. Harris, Chair; Charlene Fite, Vice-Chair; and David Meeks, ex officio.

Other members present: Representatives Scott Baltz, Jim Dotson, Mark McElroy and James Ratliff.

Senator Hester called the meeting to order.

Review of the Report of The Arkansas Task Force for the Prevention of Human Trafficking [Exhibit C, C1].

Reagan Stanford, Task Force Co-Chair, Catholic Charities of Arkansas and Will Jones, Task Force Co-Chair and Assistant Attorney General provided a brief summary of the Human Trafficking Report.

Recommendations 1 and 2: “Human Trafficking Hotline and Clearinghouse for Law Enforcement Calls and Records”.

Montie Sims, Chief of Police, City of Dardanelle, and President, Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police discussed the Human Trafficking Hotline and Clearinghouse for law enforcement calls and records. He stated that it is the recommendation that Arkansas should stay with the Polaris Project National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline. The Task Force recommended that the Attorney General’s Office (AG) be the Clearinghouse for the State of Arkansas.

Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 9: “Arkansas Prevention of Human Trafficking Board to License Agencies Working with Human Trafficking Victims, Coordinate Multidisciplinary Teams for Adult Victims, Establish a Pilot Educational Program for those Convicted of Soliciting of Prostitution”.

Angela McGraw, Executive Director, Women and Children First and Reagan Stanford stated that one of the recommendations is creating a licensure for agencies in the state working with human trafficking victims. She recommended assembling multi-disciplinary teams to serve adult trafficking victims and stated that this is a model that has been working in child abuse cases around the state and nationally.

Recommendations 6, 7: “Approve Department of Human Services’ (DHS) Safe Harbor Model Delivery of Service to Minors and Update Medical Facilities’ Policies Related to Human Trafficking Victims”.

Lisa McGee, Deputy Chief Counsel, DHS shared that they had an internal work group to discuss the issues regarding the care of child human trafficking victims. She proposed a budget to add two additional positions to assist with the Request For Proposal for providers of a shelter.

Also discussed were the problems attached to a victim of child human trafficking being able to be charged with a crime.

Recommendations 8: “Require All Medical Facilities to Adopt Policies Similar to the Department of Health Regarding Care and Services for Human Trafficking Victims”.

Bill Temple, Branch Chief, Injury Prevention and Control, Department of Health stated that human trafficking exploits victims through sex trade or through forced labor and puts the victims at very high health risk. The health department provides local health units in all 75 counties in the state of Arkansas with training.

Recommendations 10: “Amend Ark. Code Ann. § 12-19-102(a) (1) to Add to the List of Public Places Required to Post Information About the Human Trafficking Hotline”.

Will Jones shared that currently hotels, motels, and other establishments that have been cited as public nuisances for prostitution, etc. He recommended the addition of state parks, publicly accessible campgrounds, rest parks, and schools from grades 6-12 to the list as they have been identified as other potential locations for human trafficking.

Recommendation 11: “Require Law Enforcement Agencies to Adopt a Policy on Non-Immigrant Status Certification for Non-Citizen Victims of Human Trafficking”.

Reagan Stanford shared the temporary visas status available to victims of crimes. The available options are the “T” non-immigrant status, which is specifically for victims of human trafficking, and the “U” status, which covers several different crimes including human trafficking. These are granted to foreign nationals who have been the victim of a crime, granting temporary status in the United States to aid in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking crimes.

Recommendations 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18: “Provide Human Trafficking Training and Education to Prosecutors, Judges, Court Clerks, Case Workers, Law Enforcement Officers, Intake Officers and Public Defenders”.

Ken Jones, Director, Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training discussed Recommendations 12 & 13 regarding their relation to the Safe Harbor Fund and fines on certain offenses that fund helping victims of human trafficking. He also briefly noted his work with Dr. Cheryl May, Director, Criminal Justice Institute on the development of a law enforcement training program. Gigi Peters, Executive Director, UALR MidSOUTH Center briefly discussed training programs for DHS case workers, other case workers, and all social service providers statewide as they may have contact with or work directly with victims.

Recommendations 14: “Add Human Trafficking Convictions to those Requiring Registration as a Sex Offender under Ark. Code Ann. §§ 12-12-901 et seq”.

Brad Cazort, Repository Administrator, Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC) stated that the General Assembly passed a law last session that created two new crimes: trafficking of a person(s) and patronizing of a victim of human trafficking. ACIC will make a proposal to add these two new crimes to the list of required mandatory sex offender registrants.

Recommendations 19: “Conduct a Statewide Survey of Law Enforcement and Service Providers Regarding Human Trafficking Every Two Years”.

Captain Steven Coppinger, Assistant Division Commander, Criminal Investigation Division, Arkansas State Police and Liaison to the Arkansas State Fusion Center Steering Committee, and Gigi Peters stated that the taskforce was able to host five focus groups statewide at the MidSouth sites. They outlined the sources of the data gathered and the purpose of the study and shared what they would be able to accomplish if the General Assembly agreed to support this committee for a two to four year period.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.