



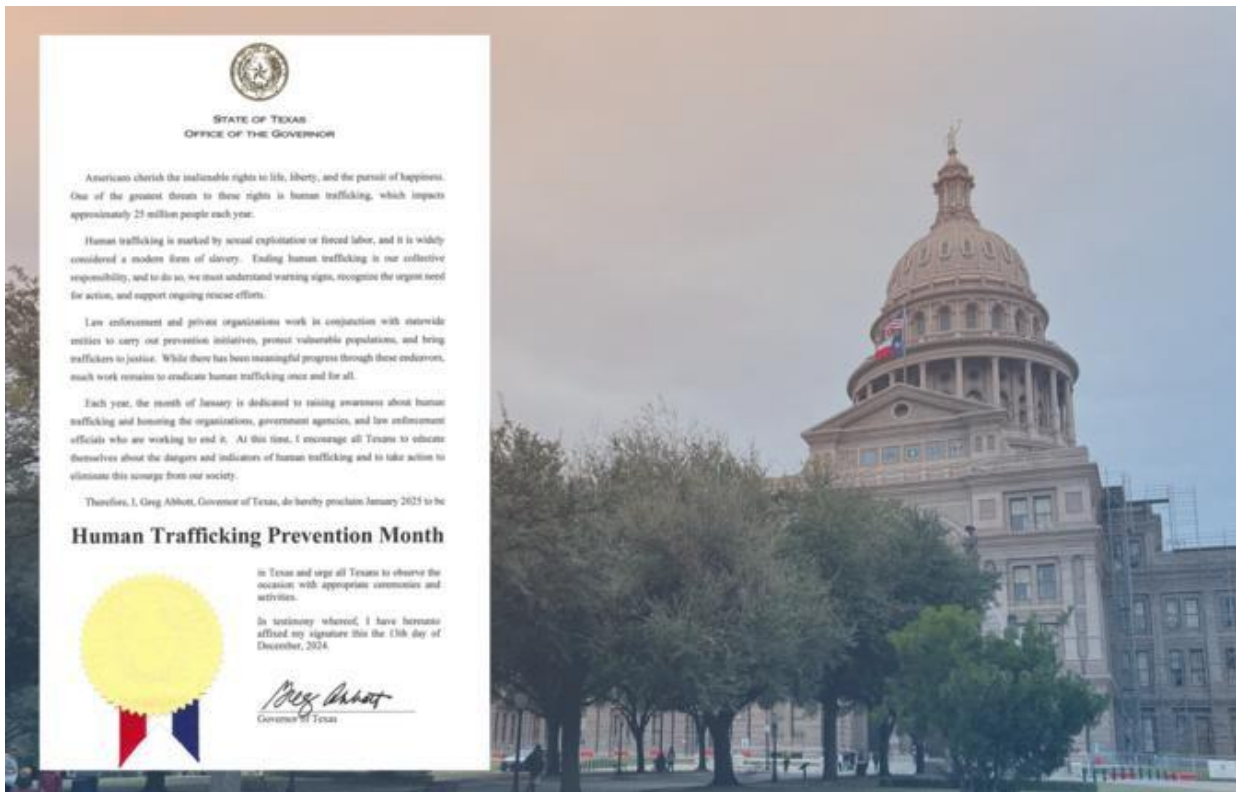
## Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

Greetings,

On December 13, 2024 Governor Abbott proclaimed January 2025 to be [Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#) in the state of Texas. In this special edition newsletter, we've highlighted events and activities that will be taking place around the state during the month of January as well as resources and ways to report suspected human trafficking activity. We are committed to addressing human trafficking during all twelve months of the year and invite you to join us in reaffirming that resolve in 2025.

Sincerely,

The Child Sex Trafficking Team



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## GRACE Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking

**January 6 - 12, 2025**

Every January, the Governor's Response Against Child Exploitation (GRACE) hosts a Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking. Faith communities across Texas are encouraged to unite in prayer, become better educated about human trafficking, and discern opportunities to prevent exploitation and support survivors.

Join GRACE for a virtual interfaith launch event on Monday, January 6th at 7:00 p.m. on Facebook. Texans can also use the hashtag #TXPraysToEndHT on social media to share their support for the Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking.

During this week of prayer, Texans of all faiths and religious backgrounds are encouraged to pray about the issue of human trafficking in whatever manner

they choose. In a spirit of solidarity and interfaith collaboration, GRACE members humbly offer these daily intentions for those Texans wishing to focus their prayers. Beginning Tuesday, January 7th, a new video featuring different faith leaders and survivors will be posted on the Office of the Governor's Facebook page to guide viewers through the day's intention.

- **Monday, January 6th:** Pray that the demand for human trafficking will decrease and that all who may be vulnerable to trafficking receive the help, love, and support they need to prevent them from experiencing victimization.
- **Tuesday, January 7th:** Pray that our hearts and minds will be open to recognizing the signs of human trafficking in our communities, and that Texans will have the awareness and courage to speak up when they see behavior that puts others at risk.
- **Wednesday, January 8th:** Pray for trauma-informed, victim-centered, innovative investigations that successfully recover those being trafficked.
- **Thursday, January 9th:** Pray for complete healing for all who are currently being exploited, or who have been exploited in the past.
- **Friday, January 10th:** Pray that child welfare workers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and all others involved in the justice system will have the strength to endure, and that justice prevails.
- **Saturday, January 11th:** Pray that children, women, and men who are currently being exploited will find safety quickly, and that they are able to remain safe as they start to heal.
- **Sunday, January 12th:** Pray for discernment on the actions you can personally take to prevent human trafficking.

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## Human Trafficking Awareness Day



This January, in recognition of Human Trafficking Prevention Month, we invite you to attend the **Human Trafficking Awareness Day event** at the Texas Capitol. The event will take place on **Friday, January 10th, at 10:30 AM** at the South Steps.

This impactful gathering will feature distinguished speakers, including a representative from the Office of the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force, the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team, and a Survivor Leader. Sponsored by Senator Huffman, the event highlights the collective efforts to combat trafficking and honors the voices of survivors and

advocates who inspire change.

Let's come together to raise awareness, stand against trafficking, and empower those impacted by this issue. We hope to see you there!

For more information, contact Toni McKinley at [toni@magdaleneaustin.org](mailto:toni@magdaleneaustin.org).

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## Wear Blue Day

January 11 marks National Human Trafficking Awareness Day — a vital opportunity to shine a light on an important cause! Join us in wearing blue to show solidarity and raise awareness about the fight against human trafficking. Whether you're at work, home, or out with friends, snap some pictures of yourself and those around you donning blue attire. Let's flood our social media feeds with positivity and purpose! Share your photos using the hashtag **#WearBlueDay**, tag DFPS **@TexasDFPS**, and together, we can spread awareness and inspire change. Remember, every small action counts, and your support matters!

Email your photos to [HumanTrafficking@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:HumanTrafficking@dfps.texas.gov)

Check out the [Wear Blue 2024 Photo Gallery](#).

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## **DFPS Lunch and Learn Series**

Join the Department of Family and Protective Services every Thursday in January as DFPS hosts webinars with subject matter experts over the lunch hour to speak about various human trafficking intersections and topics.

### **How to Activate Faith Communities to Protect Their Children**

Speaker: Jo Lembo

January 9, 2025

During this 50-minute interview style presentation, Jo Lembo, retired Director of Faith Initiatives for Shared Hope International, talks about her experience training individuals and church communities on how to recognize the signs of trafficking.

### **Child Exploitation: Parenting in the Digital Age**

Speaker: Brandon Poor

January 16, 2025

This presentation gives a detailed overview of the dangers facing children on the internet today, and some of the scary realities that parents must grapple with having kids in the internet age. Trends in the child exploitation field, including the rising sextortion epidemic will be discussed, as well as the applications that are most used by online predators, and how to prepare to defend against their attacks. Approaches to online safety, and resources to learn more to equip yourself will also be provided.

### **Groomed To Hide It: Challenges of Victim Identification in Sex Trafficking Cases**

Panelists: Sgt. Jake Boyd, Yvette Christy, and Carrie Wright

Facilitator: Ada McCloud

January 23, 2025

Join DFPS for an insightful panel discussion that delves into the deceptive tactics employed by human traffickers to exploit vulnerabilities in their victims. The panel features a survivor of sex trafficking who will shed light on the grooming processes that keep victims hidden and ashamed. In addition, our panel of experts will discuss efforts taken by law enforcement to effectively identify and recover those affected by trafficking. This essential conversation aims to equip anti-trafficking investigators, advocates, and professionals with the knowledge needed for better victim identification and support.

**Caught in the System: The Intersection of Human Trafficking and Forced Criminality**

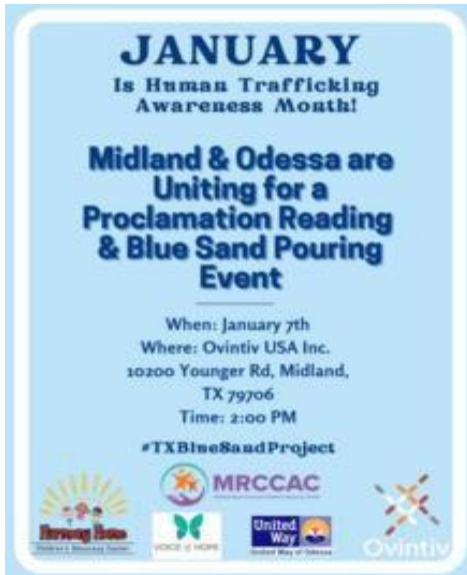
Speaker: Bekah Charleston

January 30, 2025

The Human Trafficking Division of DFPS is excited to have Bekah Charleston, Founder of Bekah Speaks Out, for the last Lunch and Learn. After enduring a decade of abuse and exploitation, she built a career dedicated to the empowerment of Survivors and focused on community collaboration at all levels. Join DFPS as Bekah explains the intersection of human trafficking and forced criminality.

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**Human Trafficking Prevention Month Activities  
Around the State**



## Blue Sand Event

January 7, 2025

Midland, Texas

Join the Midland Rape Crisis Center and Children's Advocacy Center, Harmony Home Children's Advocacy Center, Voice of Hope Lubbock, United Way of Odessa, and Ovintiv for a proclamation reading and the Blue Sand Pouring Event.



## Project Protect Our Children

January 25, 2025

Kingwood, Texas

Project Protect Our Children (PPOC) invites you to join us in a mission of paramount importance: protecting our most vulnerable population — our children. PPOC is a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing child sex trafficking, exploitation, and abuse through proactive community engagement, preventative educational programming, awareness, and empowerment opportunities. To bring awareness to Human Trafficking Prevention Month, Project Protect Our Children is hosting an [inaugural gala](#) on January 25, 2025, at the Kingwood Country Club.



## Unbound Now

January 28 - 29, 2025

Nacogdoches, Texas

Unbound Now's East Texas office, alongside the Nacogdoches Sherriff's Office and the Nacogdoches Law Enforcement Foundation will be hosting *Hope in the Pines*, a conference to address human trafficking in their community. Speakers at this conference include Kellye Turner, East Texas Regional Advisor for the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team, Sergeant Tarik Muslimovic of the Arlington Police Department's HEAT Unit, and

Assistant Attorney General Brody Burks of the Office of the Attorney General's Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime division.

*This conference is TCOLE eligible.*



## The Children's Assessment Center

The Children's Assessment Center in Houston, Texas will be hosting six different virtual and in-person training opportunities on human trafficking that participants can attend at their convenience. To view the training calendar, please click [here](#).

## Human Trafficking Prevention Month Agency Spotlight

The Office of the Attorney General's (OAG) Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime (HTTOC) Division was established in 2023 to fight and end human trafficking in the State of Texas through aggressive criminal prosecution and civil actions to hold offenders accountable. Through the civil side of their division led by Assistant Attorney General, Alicia Crowley, HTTOC works to identify and shut down Illicit Massage Businesses throughout Texas. An Illicit Massage Business (IMB) is a massage establishment that serves as a front for a commercial sex operation, often involving victims of human trafficking.

Throughout the state, there are approximately over 1,000 IMBs and unfortunately, they are very easy to set up due to the low overhead and infrastructure. HTTOC works directly with landlords through their Landlord Engagement Program to notify the landlord that there is an IMB operating on their premises. These notifications come in the form of a letter that is sent from

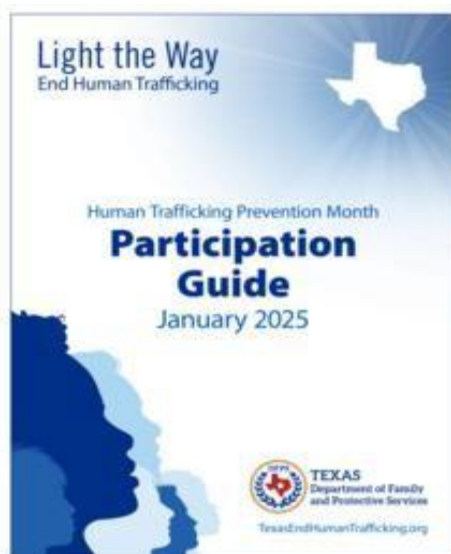
the OAG that includes evidence of the IMB, a list of landlord responsibilities, and next steps for the landlord. After the letter is sent, the landlord has ten days to contact the OAG to begin removing the illicit business.

Since November 2023, HTTOC has shut down 18 IMBs and sent out 67 letters to landlords resulting in 4 nuisance abatement lawsuits. Recently, the OAG helped shut down [Essence Massage](#) and [Sun Spa](#) in Austin, Texas after investigating and finding evidence of illicit sexual and criminal activity.

You can report suspicious activity directly to the Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime Division by sending an email to [humantrafficking@oag.texas.gov](mailto:humantrafficking@oag.texas.gov) or by calling at (512) 463-1646.

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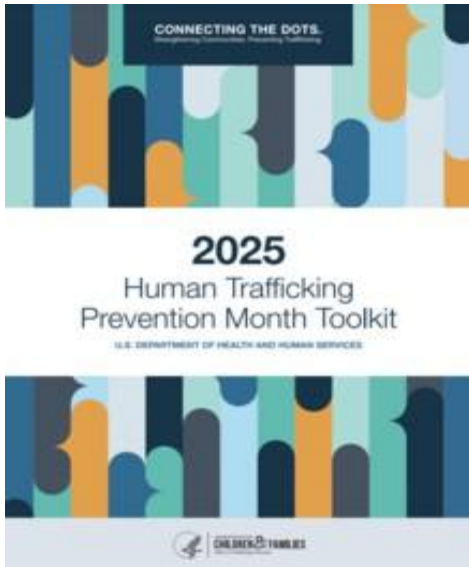
## Resources



### **2025 Human Trafficking Prevention Month Participation Guide**

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

The [Participation Guide for Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#) provides ideas that anyone can implement - individuals, groups, organizations, businesses, and communities of faith. This guide provides a variety of activities hosted by DFPS, and highlights information from the Office of the Governor and the Office of the Attorney General, as well as the Blue Campaign.



## **2025 Human Trafficking Prevention Month Toolkit**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The [Human Trafficking Prevention Month Toolkit](#) is designed to educate and equip individuals and organizations with the tools they need to share resources, raise awareness, and foster meaningful connections to prevent human trafficking. It is structured around four key focus weeks to ensure clear messaging and effective resource-sharing.

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### **Report Human Trafficking**

If you believe a someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

[iWatch Texas](#) – Tips made to iWatch are investigated by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) – Call the toll-free hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Tips made to the hotline are reviewed and routed to local law enforcement. This hotline also offers 24/7 confidential support for survivors.

[Texas Child Abuse Hotline](#) - Report child neglect and abuse, including sexual exploitation of a child, to the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.



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