



Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

Springtime in Texas feels like the state takes a long, colorful breath after winter. Bluebonnets blanket highways and open fields welcome us into a refreshing new season. As we enter this new season, let us take time to reflect on the work that we've done as we refuel our passion and efforts to become a state where children and youth are free from sexual exploitation.

In this Spring edition, you will find information and resources for Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, a snapshot of the number of youth served through key programmatic initiatives of the CSTT, a powerful article by Toni McKinley in our new *Survivor Voices* section, partner spotlights, and various learning opportunities around the state.

As always, thank you for partnering with us in this important work.

Texas is grateful for you,

The Child Sex Trafficking Team

Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month

April is around the corner, as is our observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month. There are strong intersections between child sex trafficking, child abuse, and sexual assault.

- **Child sex trafficking is a form of child abuse**, and is codified as such under [Section 261.001](#) of the Texas Family Code.
- **Child sexual abuse increases vulnerability to exploitation.** The [National Survivor Study](#), published by Polaris in 2023, found that of 450 trafficking survivors surveyed, a staggering 84% experienced sexual abuse in their childhood.
- **Sexual violence is present within human trafficking.** A global study published by the [Journal of Migration and Health](#) in 2021 found that 25% of female trafficking survivors experienced sexual violence during their exploitation. Additionally, the [National Human](#)

[Trafficking Hotline](#) reported that from January 2020 through November 2022, 10% of sex trafficking victims who contacted the National Human Trafficking Hotline experienced sexual abuse (6,909 victims), either prior to their trafficking experience or as a method of control during the trafficking experience.

Next month, we proudly stand alongside survivors, organizations, and communities who work tirelessly to prevent child abuse and sexual assault. Click below to learn more about Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month and see the resources section of this newsletter for additional prevention information.

[Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) [Sexual Assault Prevention & Awareness Month](#)

2026 National Crime Victims' Rights Week



Crime Victims' Rights Week

Every April, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) leads communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW).

Through NCVRW, we honor victims and survivors, recognize the professionals and volunteers who provide critical services to victims of crime, and raise awareness about crime victims' rights and services.

In 2026, NCVRW will be observed on April 19-25 with the theme – **Listen. Act. Advocate. Protect victims, serve communities.**

For more information about NCVRW and activities around the county, visit the [OVC website](#).

For resources and information for crime victims, please see the Office of the Attorney General's [Crime Victims' Services webpage](#).

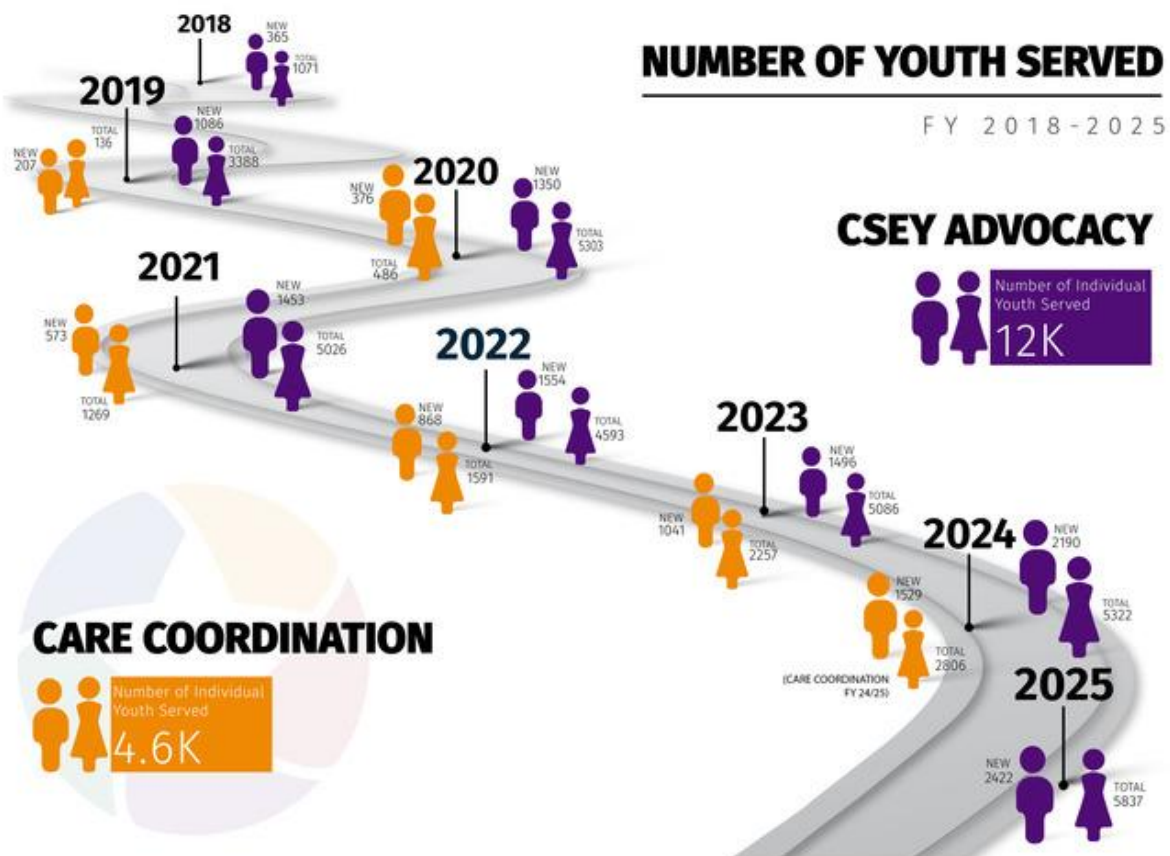
Denim Day 2026

Wednesday April 29

In conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, Denim Day is an opportunity for all individuals to make a social statement by wearing jeans. Denim Day honors a sexual assault victim in France who was found not to be credible by a judge because she was wearing tight-fitting jeans when she was assaulted. Denim Day serves as a visible protest against the misconceptions that continue to surround sexual violence. For more information and how to get involved visit [Peace Over Violence](https://www.peaceoverviolence.org).



The Texas Model for Care Coordination and CSEY Advocacy by the Numbers



As the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team enters its second decade leading Texas' response to child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, we pause to reflect on the progress of our primary youth-serving interventions: Care Coordination and Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocacy. With outstanding dedication and collaboration from many partners across Texas, we have made great strides towards

ensuring service availability throughout Texas for youth impacted by these horrific crimes. Currently, CSEY Advocacy is available in 165 counties, with close to 12,000 children and youth served since 2018, and sixteen Care Coordination teams have been implemented, covering all major metropolitan areas and serving over 4,000 children and youth since 2018. Development of both programs, including additional Care Coordination team launches in 7 counties, will continue in 2026.

Survivor Voices



Relearning Relationships After Trafficking: Healing the Spaces Where Connection Was Broken

By Toni McKinley, LPC-S, ED Magdalene House of Austin, Lived Experience Expert

For survivors of human trafficking, leaving exploitation does not mean life immediately feels safe or whole. While freedom marks the end of control, it is often the beginning of a much deeper journey, learning how to live, connect, and relate again. Relationships — meant to be places of safety and belonging — are often the places where the deepest wounds remain.

Trafficking is not only a crime against the body; it is a crime against relationships, and because the harm occurs in relationships, healing must as well. It exploits trust, manipulates attachment, and rewires how a person understands love, power, safety, and self-worth. Because of this, survivors often find that healing is not just about what happened to them, but about how those experiences shape every relationship that follows.

In my book, *The Freedom Code: A Survivor's Guide to Healthy Relationships After Trafficking*, I describe healing as a process of reclaiming choice, agency, and identity, especially within relationships. Survivors are not broken; they are adaptive. What once kept them alive must now be gently reshaped to help them live. But survival strategies that once kept someone alive can become barriers when trying to build healthy connections. Understanding this is essential, not only for survivors themselves, but for the people walking alongside them. To understand why relationships can feel so complicated after trafficking, we must first understand what trafficking teaches the nervous system about connection.

To access the full article, please click [here](#)

CSTT Monthly Webinar Series

Building Alliances with Youth to Reduce and Prevent "Challenging Behaviors"

Texas Network of Youth Services

March 25, 2026 | Virtual

Join Sedoo Ijir, Director of Practice, and Kirsten Comparetto, Training Specialist Intern, with the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) as they discuss and explore the basis for the display of "challenging" behaviors in youth, such as refusing services, running away, disconnection, disengagement, and conflict. Participants will learn best practices that promote youth-centered approaches, positive youth engagement, authentic relationship-building, and resilience. Through firsthand reflections from youth with lived expertise, participants will strengthen their framework for addressing and mitigating challenges and gain tools to add to their strategic repertoire.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

External Training Opportunities

Child Sex Trafficking: From Suspicion to Disclosure

National Criminal Justice Training Center

April 7, 2026 | Virtual

Learn basic techniques and strategies to enhance the likelihood of obtaining information from possible victims of child sex trafficking. Compare and contrast typical child sexual abuse cases with child sex trafficking (CST) cases and address the different points of entry into the criminal justice and welfare system for CST victims. Understand various disciplines' roles and responsibilities and how they can contribute to a positive outcome of the CST case. Examine question strategy, interview dynamics, language use, and interview suggestions. Discuss the business model of child sex trafficking as it relates to a variety of crimes, including the use of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

[Register for this Training](#)

Child Sexual Abuse – Intersection of Dynamics and Law

Office of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF)

April 9, 2026 | Virtual

Join the Office of the Governor's SASTF for a review of the intersection of child sexual abuse dynamics and the law. This webinar will delve into common characteristics of both survivors and offenders, will explore the short and long-term consequences of sexual abuse on child survivors, and will describe how the law has developed in response to both. Judge Andrew Bench will explain the legal protections provided for child survivors and how judges can create a trauma-informed environment in the courtroom while also upholding their responsibilities to defendants to conduct a fair trial.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

Child Sex Trafficking Investigations for Law Enforcement

National Criminal Justice Training Center

May 12, 2026 | Virtual

Child sex trafficking of missing children is among the most challenging of child exploitation crimes to investigate. Examine the complexity of the crime and the business model it operates within, including the roles of the trafficker, trafficker accomplices, and buyers. Identify how each contributes to the commission of the crime and what evidence is available and needed to build cases against them. Recognize the differences between a traditional child abuse suspect interview and a trafficker interview, as well as the distinctions between field and investigative victim interviews. Bring all of these pieces together to build solid cases against those who exploit our most vulnerable children.

[Register for this Training](#)

Level Up Our Impact

Texas Network of Youth Services

June 9-12, 2026 | Austin, Texas

Join the Texas Network of Youth Services for their 43rd Annual Conference on Services to Youth and Families. Attendees will experience an energizing week of cutting-edge training led by expert professionals and young people who have lived expertise in foster care, homelessness, juvenile justice, and other systems.

[Register for this Conference](#)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT) Training Opportunities

Texas Network of Youth Services

April 2, 2026 | 9:00AM-12:30PM [Register for this Training](#)

May 20, 2026 | 9:00AM-12:30PM [Register for this Training](#)

TNOYS' CSE-IT training series occurs monthly at no cost and consists of a three-hour virtual training session that requires active participation and engagement. Throughout the training, participants will learn how to use the CSE-IT and embed the tool within their existing processes, dive deep into understanding complex trauma and potential indicators of CSEY, and discuss the importance of collecting and tracking consistent data on CSEY in Texas. Participants will receive a certificate of completion verifying that they are certified users of the tool and earn three continuing education credit hours.

Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services

April 9, 2026 | 9:00AM

May 14, 2026 | 9:00AM

June 25, 2026 | 9:00AM

July 9, 2026 | 9:00AM

This 4-hour training introduces participants to the foundational knowledge about the exploitation of youth that they will need in order to be able to identify youth at high risk or who may have already experienced exploitation.

Visit their [CSE-IT training portal](#) to sign up.

If you have any questions, please contact csey@tacfs.org

Partner Spotlight



Human Trafficking Institute

In 2025, the Human Trafficking Institute (HTI) launched its Texas Program, a multi-year initiative aimed at enhancing the criminal justice response to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The program emphasizes victim-centered approaches, digital evidence uses, and inter-agency collaboration. Early feedback shows increased confidence and improved coordination among participants. HTI plans to expand its impact across Texas in the years ahead. View the [Human Trafficking Institute 2025 Texas Annual Report](#).



Allies Against Slavery

Through their Lighthouse platform, Allies Against Slavery helps agencies identify possible victims and children and youth at high risk for exploitation, support survivors, and improve anti-trafficking responses. Each year, they publish the State Human Trafficking Report, an analysis of how all 50 U.S. states are addressing human trafficking.

The findings for [Texas](#) reveal:

- Texas has enacted 21 of 25 key anti-trafficking policies (5 prevention, 7 protection, 9 prosecution), placing Texas among the national leaders, particularly with regard to prosecution.
- As one of the first states to criminalize human trafficking (2003), Texas has built one of the nation's most comprehensive policy frameworks.
- Federal prosecution data shows 229 cases (2000-2023) representing 538 defendants and 968 victims—ranking 2nd nationally (9% of all federal cases).
- 76% of cases involved minor sex trafficking, with Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth emerging as key trafficking locations.
- In 2024, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 1,360 reports of trafficking involving 2,439 potential victims in Texas.
- Demand indicators show 1,215,045 commercial sex advertisements and 1,777 illicit massage businesses in Texas, with Houston alone accounting for 445 IMBs.

[2026 State Human Trafficking Report](#)

Resources

Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors Online Directory

The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force has assembled a [searchable on-line directory](#) containing up-to-date information about resources for survivors.

This service provider directory is searchable by organization name, services, and city. Search results may include local and statewide service providers. If you are unsure about which services are included under each category, please visit the [Service Definitions](#) page.

The National Human Trafficking Online Referral Directory

The online [Referral Directory](#) from the National Human Trafficking Hotline is made up of anti-trafficking organizations and programs that offer emergency, transitional, or long-term services to victims and survivors of human trafficking as well as those that provide resources and opportunities in the anti-trafficking field. *If you would like to add your organization to the directory, please review the [National Human Trafficking Referral Directory Guidelines and Expectations](#).*

A21 – Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

A21's Counter-Trafficking Toolkit is a resource for frontline professionals including law enforcement, healthcare, transportation, and others seeking to increase their understanding of human trafficking in the United States. Access the full Toolkit of resources for yourself and your team of professionals.

[Access the Toolkit](#)

[Access the Toolkit for Law Enforcement](#)

Report Human Trafficking

If you believe 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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