

# Ending Child Sexual Exploitation in Texas

Governor Abbott's Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) was created by the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2015) to coordinate a holistic response to child sex trafficking in Texas. CSTT is a division within the Public Safety Office and its mission is to build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, and leverage collaborations to:

- **Protect** children and youth by building their awareness of and resilience to exploitation and by curbing demand for commercial sex;
- **Recognize** exploitation by raising public awareness and implementing screening tools to identify potential victims;
- **Recover** victims with protective and empowering collaborative multi-disciplinary responses and specialized advocates;
- **Support healing** of survivors through a variety of trauma-informed and responsive services and supports; and
- **Bring justice** for survivors by providing them with empowering services and resources to achieve freedom from harms caused by exploitation and by supporting investigations and prosecutions of exploiters.



## CSTT Guiding Principles:

- We treat individuals who have experienced exploitation as victims and survivors, not perpetrators.
- We are collaborative.
- We are survivor informed.
- Our systems and programs prioritize the needs of children and transition-age youth who are at risk of or have experienced exploitation and strive to give equal access to services regardless of system involvement.
- We seek to prevent exploitation by educating the public, supporting protective factors for all children and transition-age youth, and by building resiliency among the most vulnerable.
- Our approaches, systems and services are trauma-informed, responsive, and include trust-based relationships.
- We develop and support community-based, sustainable resources and services.
- We are committed to long-term individualized services, including planning for, and re-engaging with, children and transition-age youth after relapse.
- We research the causes of and effective responses to exploitation and we evaluate and continuously improve our activities.
- We work to prevent and reduce demand for exploitation and to hold all exploiters, including facilitators and those who benefit from exploitation, accountable.

**PROTECT** Child sex trafficking is not limited to any race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or zip code. Traffickers prey upon vulnerability, and children and youth are inherently vulnerable. Sadly, exploiters can often be the very people our children trust – friends, romantic partners, family members, teachers, and others.

**RECOGNIZE** Victims of sex trafficking are often hiding in plain sight due to fear or shame and many do not even realize they are being victimized for a variety of reasons.

CSTT works to educate the public about the indicators of trafficking and continues to promote and implement the [Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool \(CSE-IT\)](#), a research-based screening tool that improves early

identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY) up to age 25. The CSE-IT is used by hundreds of child-serving professionals to identify likely victims. Since 2016, over 189,000 screenings were conducted with 9.7% scoring as “Clear Concern”, the highest probability for having experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Youth who score Clear Concern are presumed victims and eligible for a wide array of grant funded services. CSE-IT data reflects the number of screenings conducted, not the number of individuals screened. We are confident these numbers reflect youth who are screened multiple times.

First Lady Cecilia Abbott, CSTT, the Department of Family & Protective Services, and a variety of faith leaders across the state collaborate to raise awareness and inspire action to end human trafficking. To learn more about the GRACE initiative, please visit <https://gov.texas.gov/grace>



**GRACE**  
Governor's Response  
Against Child Exploitation



**RECOVER** CSTT has worked to build collaborative and coordinated responses for exploited youth. Key elements include Care Coordination and specially trained Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocates. CSTT has led the statewide implementation of multi-disciplinary Care Coordination teams to ensure that services are coordinated and available for every child from early intervention (emerging and identified risk), through active investigation, and follow-up care. CSEY Advocates respond to calls from first responders and others to provide crisis intervention, ongoing case management, and a healthy, supportive long-term relationship for survivors. These advocates work under a set of minimum standards and best practices developed by CSTT and Praesidium.

**CSEY Advocacy Agencies Providing Crisis Response, Long-Term Supportive Relationships & Case Management in 161 Counties**

**NORTH**

- [A21](#) (Cooke & 2 nearby counties)
- [Traffick911](#) (Dallas & 5 nearby counties)
- [Unbound Now](#) (Tarrant & 7 nearby counties)

**SOUTH**

- [BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread](#) (Cameron & 17 nearby counties)
- [BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread](#) (Aransas & 13 nearby counties)

**EAST**

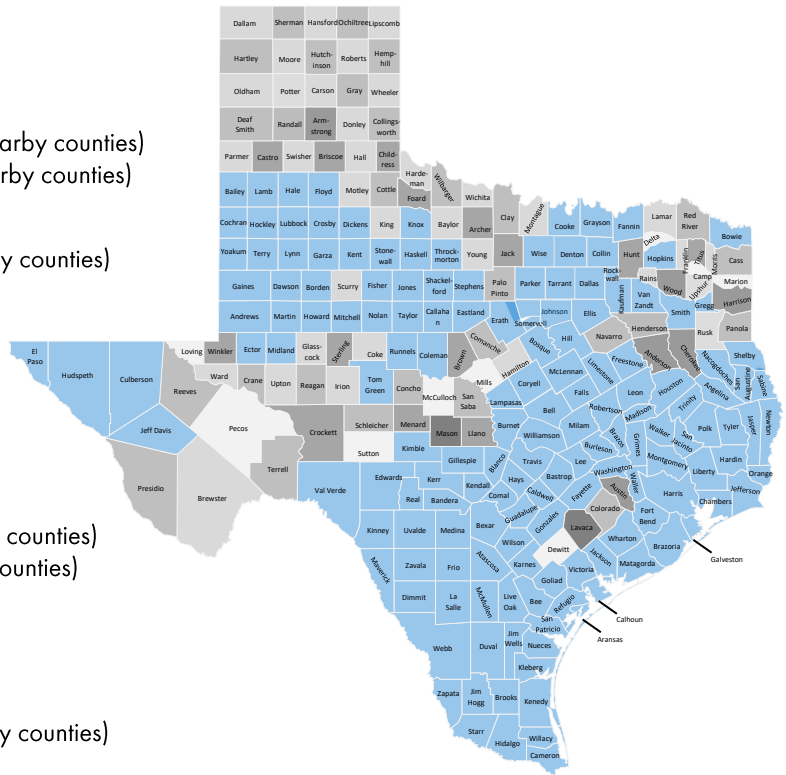
- [BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread](#) (Harris & 10 nearby counties)
- [Embracing Freedom](#) (Jefferson & 5 nearby counties)
- [The Landing](#) (Harris & 7 nearby counties)
- [Unbound Now](#) (Brazos & 7 nearby counties)
- [Unbound Now](#) (Angelina & 13 nearby counties)
- [Unbound Now](#) (Brazoria & 3 nearby counties)
- [YMCA International](#) (Harris & 7 nearby counties)

**WEST**

- [Paso del Norte Center of Hope](#) (El Paso & 3 nearby counties)
- [Regional Victim Crisis Center](#) (Taylor & 16 nearby counties)
- [Voice of Hope](#) (Lubbock & 21 nearby counties)

**CENTRAL**

- [AWARE Central Texas](#) (Bell & 4 nearby counties)
- [BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread](#) (Bexar & 21 nearby counties)
- [SAFE CARES](#) (Travis & 2 nearby counties)
- [Thriving Hearts](#) (Gonzales & 1 nearby County)
- [Unbound Now](#) (Travis & 4 nearby counties)
- [Unbound Now](#) (McLennan & 6 nearby counties)



### Care Coordination

- Bexar County
- Denton County
- Ellis County
- Galveston County
- Harris County
- Jefferson County
- Lubbock County
- McLennan County
- Midland County
- Taylor County
- Travis County
- Williamson County

### Juvenile Justice-Based Programs

- Dallas County Assessment, Stabilization, and Advancement Program for Trafficked Girls (ASAP) (Dallas County)
- Harris County Juvenile Probations (GIFT) Program (Harris County)

### Emergency Shelters

- Family Ties (Waller County)
- Heart of Texas Region MHMR (McLennan County)
- Jonathan's Place (Dallas County)

**SUPPORT HEALING** CSTT funds organizations to help develop an array of victim-centered, trauma-informed services to meet the immediate and long-term needs of survivors.

### Residential Programs for Youth

- New Life Ministries (Nueces County)
- Unbound: The Reagan Home (McLennan County)
- One Voice Home (Lubbock County)

### Community-Based Services for Youth

- Arrow Child and Family Ministries (Harris County)
- Family Counseling Services of Lubbock (Lubbock County)
- Poetic (Dallas County)
- Ransomed Life (Bexar County)
- United Against Human Trafficking (Harris County)
- YMCA International Counseling (Harris County)

### Drop-In Centers

- **Austin:** SAFE
- **Dallas:** New Friends New Life
- **El Paso:** El Paso Center for Children
- **Fort Worth:** The Underground
- **Killeen:** CTYS' Project Hope
- **Waller:** Family Ties

### Community Case Management and Counseling Programs for Adults

- Family Counseling Services of Lubbock (Lubbock County)
- New Friends New Life (Dallas County)
- Ransomed Life (Bexar County)
- United Against Human Trafficking (Harris County)
- YMCA International Counseling (Harris County)

**BRING JUSTICE** Law enforcement and prosecutors need the appropriate training and tools to effectively investigate and prosecute child exploitation and human trafficking cases. While justice is pursued, it is critical to maintain a victim-centered and trauma-informed response to also ensure the survivor's needs are met. CSTT works to bring justice for victims by providing funding and training to criminal justice partners. This work includes funding specialized investigators, prosecutors, and support positions in Dallas County, Fort Bend County, Harris County, Montgomery County, Tarrant County, and the Office of the Attorney General.

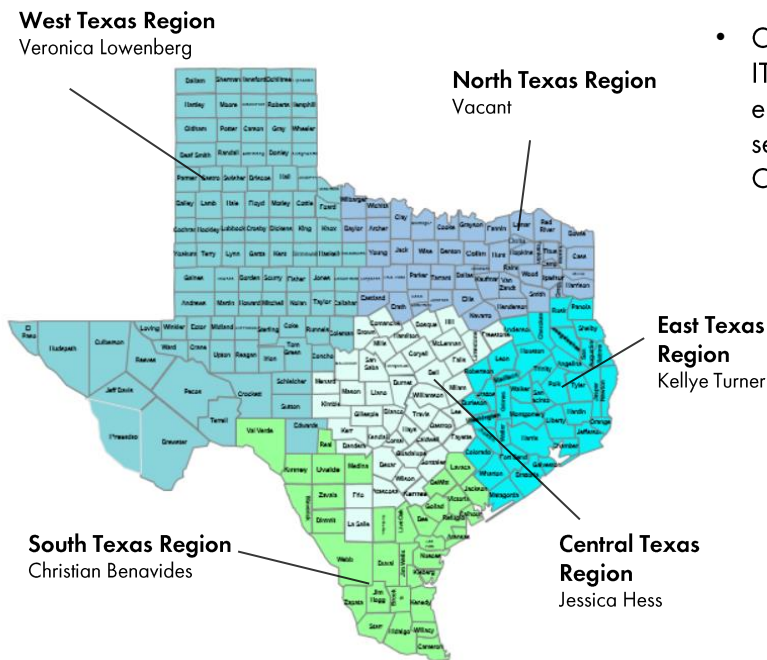
CSTT funds HTI which is an organization dedicated to combatting human trafficking at its source. HTI works within criminal justice systems to equip law enforcement and prosecutors with the training, resources, and expertise needed to identify and prosecute traffickers.

In February 2025, HTI outlines its pilot project in the *Strengthening Human Trafficking Investigations and Prosecutions: HTI's Approach in Texas* webinar. The webinar emphasizes trauma-informed investigations, the role of care coordination, and the importance of CSEY advocacy in building stronger case and achieving justice for survivors. To view this webinar, please visit <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/cstt-webinars>.

## REGIONAL SUPPORT

CSTT's 5 Regional Advisors work with public and private partners to help communities build their continuum of care for survivors and support their prevention, awareness, and justice activities. They provide training on human trafficking, training on the CSE-IT screening tool, strategy sessions with local stakeholders to identify and fill gaps in the continuum of care, and facilitation of Care Coordination development.

### Office of the Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team Regions



## BUILDING EXPERTISE

CSTT offers information resources to enhance expertise and promote research-based programs and practices that prevent child sexual exploitation, help survivors heal and thrive, and bring exploiters to justice:

- A webinar series addressing trends, lessons learned, and promising practices. Visit our [recorded webinars archive](#) and sign up for upcoming webinars.
- [Curated articles and relevant research](#) from peer-reviewed journals supporting CSTT's five overarching goals: protect, recognize, recover, support healing, and bring justice.
- CSTT funds Allies Against Slavery to integrate the CSE-IT screening tool within [Lighthouse](#), a software tool that enables users to complete screenings easily and securely online. Users can access and analyze their CSE-IT data at any time.



Contact us at [CSTT@gov.texas.gov](mailto:CSTT@gov.texas.gov) to get on the newsletter/webinar list, or for more info.