



Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

As we embark upon fall, our team is celebrating cooler weather and rolling up our sleeves to begin a new fiscal year! As you all do the same, please take some time to read our September edition of the CSTT Newsletter.

This edition informs you of updates and additions to our team, celebrates another successful launch of Care Coordination to serve children and youth in West Texas, and equips you with information about great training opportunities.

As we enter this season of gratitude, we want to take a moment to sincerely thank each of you for your unwavering dedication to protecting, supporting, and advocating for those impacted by sexual exploitation. Your efforts to identify survivors, ensure justice, promote healing, and safeguard the well-being of children and transition-age youth are making Texas a stronger and safer place. We deeply appreciate you and all that you do.

CSTT New Team Structure

When the CSTT was first implemented in 2016 and began to build capacity to serve trafficked youth across Texas, we utilized a regional staffing approach which was a critical foundational component of our statewide strategy. The Regional Administrators (RAs) helped us build a strong partnership network across key communities and were instrumental in the launch of our primary strategic interventions, CSEY Advocacy and Care Coordination.

To prioritize the standardization and strengthen the consistency and impact of our core strategies, CSTT is shifting to a new structure where statewide leads will oversee key areas and collaborate with partners across Texas.

Effective August 1st, our team has two new lead positions:



Strategic Interventions Lead: Jessica Hess

This position collaborates with the CSTT Administrator and the Deputy Director of Victim Services and Prevention Programs to coordinate state and local services to provide Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocacy and Care Coordination for individual victims of this crime.



Awareness, Prevention and Justice Solutions Lead: Kellye Turner

This position collaborates with the CSTT Administrator and the Deputy Director of Victim Services and Prevention Programs to coordinate statewide efforts to raise awareness, prevent sexual exploitation and promote justice for individual victims of commercial sexual exploitation and child sex trafficking.

With the introduction of these new statewide positions, we have phased out the Regional Advisor roles.

We deeply appreciate the dedication and contributions of Christian Benavides, South Texas Regional Advisor, and Veronica Lowenberg, West Texas Regional Advisor, in helping launch our initial regional strategies. We wish them the very best as they embark on new adventures!

New CSTT Member - Welcome Virginia!



Please join our team in welcoming Virginia Vachon, CSTT's new Program Coordinator!

Virginia is a previous Preschool Teacher with a passion for Child Advocacy. Most recently, Virginia has been independently practicing Graphic Design while raising her family (two teenage boys, a stepdaughter, and a grandchild). Born and raised in El Paso, Texas, Virginia has been in Austin for 25 years.

CSTT Webinar Series

Advancing Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Child Welfare

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

October 22, 2025 | Virtual

Advancing Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Child Welfare will dive into anti-trafficking efforts in child welfare and progress made since the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Service's Human Trafficking (HT) Division will highlight their journey in building a comprehensive child welfare response to human trafficking. Come learn how the HT Division upholds the DFPS mission to build on strengths of families and communities to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, so they may thrive.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

CSE-IT Training Opportunities

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

Texas Network of Youth Services

September 25, 2025 | Virtual

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT) is a research-based screening tool that helps improve early identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY) and is appropriate for any provider serving young people. Participants will learn:

- How CSE-IT integrates with Lighthouse, an innovative software platform that enables users to complete screenings online and access and analyze CSE-IT data at any time;
- Trauma-informed techniques to work with young people who are impacted by or vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation (CSE);
- Strategies to prevent and address CSE;
- And much more!

This training is appropriate for anyone who serves youth, including child welfare workers, probation officers, mental health clinicians, and first responders.

[Register for this Training](#)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) Training for Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Personnel

This CSE-IT training will enable law enforcement and criminal justice personnel to accurately identify indicators of child sexual exploitation, without relying solely on youth self-disclosure, alerting the need for investigation. This training will also provide a framework of language and understanding that will improve law enforcement's communication with service providers and other partners doing collaborative work in human trafficking prevention and identification. This training is eligible for TCOLE credit hours.

**Please note this training is for law enforcement and criminal justice personnel only*

- October 1, 2025 | Fort Worth, Texas | [Register for this Training](#)
 - October 21, 2025 | Kemah, Texas | [Register for this Training](#)
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Learning Opportunities

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Webinar Series

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

As part of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will host a series of informative webinars, with one session scheduled each Friday.

[View the Webinar Schedule](#)

Texas Center's CSEY Symposium: Centering Connection for CSEY

Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (TACFS)

September 29, 2029 | Austin, Texas

This full-day symposium will bring together subject matter experts, service providers, and leaders in the field to engage in rich learning and meaningful dialogue around serving commercially sexually exploited youth.

Participants can look forward to:

- Interactive sessions on key topics in human trafficking
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing on both the challenges and successes in CSEY service provision
- Space to connect and network with fellow providers across the region
- Concrete takeaways and next steps to strengthen services and support for CSEY

The goal is for attendees to leave with a deeper understanding of best practices, a stronger sense of community, and tangible strategies to enhance their work.

[Register for this Training](#)

It's Your Voice: The Victim Impact Statement

Office of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

October 30, 2025 | Virtual

The Victim Impact Statement remains one of the most effective ways for a victim's voice to be heard throughout the criminal justice system. During this webinar attendees will review the history of the victim impact statement, as well as how it is used throughout the criminal justice system. The webinar will also discuss how changes are made to the victim impact statement to include recent changes made to reflect bills passed during the 89th Legislative Session. It is important that all criminal justice and victim services professionals do everything in their power to provide victim/survivors we serve the opportunity to have a voice by exercising their right to complete a victim impact statement.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

Community Spotlight



Members of Paso del Norte Center of Hope from left to right: Gema Campa, Nicole Schiff, Lynette Romero, Alma Cobos, Cynthia Henry, Martha Rodarte, Jazmin Vasquez and Eddie Castaneda

We're excited to announce the official launch of the El Paso County Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Care Coordination Team, led by the Paso del Norte Center of Hope with guidance from the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team. The teams' shared vision is to create a resilient community where all youth affected by exploitation receive compassionate support and effective resources through seamless collaboration and flexible, effective Care Coordination.

With full endorsement and signed protocols from Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), El Paso County District Attorney, James Montoya's Office, El Paso County Juvenile Probation (JPD), El Paso County Attorney, Christina Sanchez' Office, El Paso Center for

Children, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), El Paso Child Guidance Center, Aliviane, Department of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), FBI - Victim Services, Paso del Norte Center at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and a brand-new home for the team secured, this launch marks a major milestone in the mission to collaboratively identify and support CSEY survivors through a Care Coordination Model, providing tailored, trauma-informed resources and crisis intervention, while partnering closely for justice and recovery.

The launch was marked with a lunch, a presentation on next steps, and an open house tour of the new space as El Paso celebrates years of collaboration and hard work.

Human Trafficking Institute's (HTI) Online Safety Guide



“Human trafficking and child exploitation occur in every country around the world, including the United States. When considering the risks of human trafficking and child exploitation, people typically think only about kidnapping or child abduction. Most parents/guardians fail to recognize the most dangerous threat posed to children is part of our everyday lives: the internet. Children are at significant risk for exploitation by traffickers online, specifically behind the screen of their phone, computer, tablet, or gaming device. To better safeguard children from the threats of online exploitation, it is imperative for parents/guardians to understand how traffickers

operate, and the risks to children that stem from internet and social media usage.”, The Human Trafficking Institute.

Please view this [Online Safety Guide](#) published by the HTI to learn more on how to protect children online.

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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