PRESS RELEASE

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2016 HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM REPORT DOCUMENTS ORIGIN
OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS AND
PERPETRATORS IN ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) Assisted 225 Human Trafficking Victims in 2015;
With Addition of Costa Mesa and Santa Ana Police Departments, OCHTTF Gains Leverage to Expose and Shut Down
Sex Trafficking Corridor Through Anaheim, Costa Mesa and Santa Ana

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Released today, the 2016 Human Trafficking Victim Report reveals that the coordinated efforts
of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) is aggressively targeting traffickers and providing help to
victims, yet points to the need for greater collaboration among local law enforcement and service organizations because
Orange County remains a destination for sex and labor traffickers.

Last year, OCHTTF aided 225 human trafficking victims, raising the total number of victims OCHTTF has assisted since
2004 to more than 580 sex and labor trafficking victims. For the past four years, OCHTTF has produced the Human
Trafficking Victim Report to raise awareness of this often-invisible crime and promote collaborative models to thwart its
traction. In addition, this year’s report focuses on victim origin to show the scope and range of where domestic trafficking
victims may have originated.

“Over the years, OCHTTF has grown organically to respond to the needs of the victims, as well as the concerns of the
community we serve,” said Lita Mercado, Director of Victim Assistance Programs, Community Service Programs (CSP).
“Although local law enforcement and prosecutors have made extraordinary efforts to pursue justice for the victims,
Orange County remains a place where acts of violation and violence exist as an underground phenomenon. Only by
working together can we transform Orange County into a place that doesn't tolerate human trafficking and helps victims
regain some measure of hope in this world again.”

Mercado also stressed the importance of growing OCHTTF to encompass more law enforcement agencies.

“By tracking victim origin data, we've learned that 78 percent of sex trafficking victims originated outside of Orange
County,” she said. “Meaning that perpetrators lured them to our community or otherwise forced their movement here to
satisfy demand for commercial sex. With law enforcement from Costa Mesa and Santa Ana coming onboard, the
collaborative power of OCHTTF has been strengthened to stem the tide of human trafficking in these cities, but to clamp
down countywide, we'll need to see invested collaboration from all local law enforcement and service organizations.”
By the Numbers: Human Trafficking in Orange County

Consistent with demographics from previous reports, the majority of the 225 victims counted in the 2016 Human Trafficking Victim Report were female. Only 8 percent of victims self-identified as male, with 2 percent of individuals identifying as transgender. Among the total number of victims, 79 percent were adults. Seventy-five percent of total victims were exploited for sex trafficking, with another 22 percent enslaved for labor trafficking. Two percent of the demographic identified in the report were victims of both sex and labor trafficking.

The total number of new human trafficking victims assisted in 2015 was 137, or 61 percent of the overall total. Among these new survivors identified, 92 percent were female and 7 percent were male; 79 percent were adult, and 21 percent were reported as minors.

A Look at Domestic Victim Origin

New this year, the 2016 Human Trafficking Victim Report attempted to provide OCHTTF’s best estimation of the origin of U.S. victims, specific to city, county or state, as part of the metadata compiled.

“A stable environment rarely exists for a person trafficked for the purposes of commercial sex, and movement is a constant way of life,” Mercado explained. “It’s difficult to pinpoint the victim’s location of origin, as many are transient or come from unstable homes being bounced around to different living situations. But it’s important to understand their background to help OCHTTF partners understand how predators prey upon these victims.”

Data compiled between 2012 and 2015 revealed that only 22 percent of trafficking victims originated from Orange County. The majority (56 percent) came from other counties in California, while the remaining 22 percent hailed from 21 other states.

The data showed that victims originated from 72 cities across California, with Los Angeles, Sacramento, Anaheim, Fresno, Santa Ana, San Diego, Long Beach, Fullerton, San Bernardino and Hawthorne ranking as the top 10 origination cities. Orange County cities included Aliso Viejo, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Dana Point, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Habra, Laguna Niguel, Mission Viejo, Newport Beach, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Juan Capistrano, Stanton and Westminster.

The data reported, however, doesn’t reflect the total number of victims assisted over the years, as all weren’t recorded or the locations were unknown.

In addition, the report also mapped the origins of perpetrators of human trafficking in Orange County. According to data collected by the Orange County District Attorney’s Office (OCDA), of the 183 perpetrators of known origin prosecuted between 2012 and 2015 across nine states, 20 percent originated from Orange County, 71 percent from other counties in California and 9 percent from outside of California.

OCHTTF Expands Law Enforcement Collaboration

CSP cofounded OCHTTF in 2004, kicking off the anti-human trafficking work in Orange County. In 2010, the Anaheim Police Department (APD) took over the helm of the law enforcement component of the OCHTTF. Anaheim’s strong commitment to combat human trafficking led to a paradigm shift in how law enforcement approaches traffickers and their victims. Working together with CSP, APD developed and implemented the “victim centered” model for human trafficking investigations, dramatically changing the way law enforcement interacts with anyone identified as being a victim of human trafficking. At the same time, APD developed new investigative techniques focused on rescuing victims of human trafficking and ultimately holding those truly responsible accountable for their crimes. The success of this new approach soon led APD to joining forces with the Orange County District Attorney’s Office to increase prosecution efforts for the traffickers. Based on the scope and magnitude of the trafficking problem in Orange and surrounding counties, APD took steps to create a multi-jurisdictional team to address the issue. Today, APD is the lead law enforcement agency and hosts
the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force dedicated to proactive investigations of human trafficking in Orange County, as well as assisting other law enforcement agencies with trafficking investigations. It is through this collaborative effort that OCHTTF continues to have demonstrated success in rescuing victims and bringing traffickers to justice.

Once again this year, OCHTTF is accelerating its ability to tackle the enormity of human trafficking by embracing the collaboration of new partners, with the Costa Mesa and Santa Ana police departments joining other multijurisdictional partners convened to combat human trafficking in Orange County. These law enforcement agencies chose to partner with OCHTTF to complement the anti-human trafficking work underway in their own cities.

“Costa Mesa Police Department decided to join the OCHTTF to enhance our efforts to identify and rescue victims of sex trafficking,” said Costa Mesa Police Department Chief of Police, Robert Sharpnack. “Together, we’re confident we can work with OCHTTF to bring those responsible for these insidious crimes to justice. Given that the majority of victims and perpetrators don’t originate from Orange County but come here to meet the underground demand for commercial sex, we are stepping up our efforts to ensure that Costa Mesa and all of Orange County is no place for them to hide.”

“We welcome our partners from Costa Mesa and Santa Ana to the task force,” said APD Chief of Police Raul Quezada. “As OCHTTF grows, so does our ability to root out traffickers and prosecute them. Over the past six years, Anaheim has focused on reducing their ability to traffic victims through two main arteries that crisscross Orange County: Beach and Harbor Boulevards. But simply sending them out of Anaheim into neighboring Costa Mesa or Santa Ana doesn’t get us closer to our goal of preventing human trafficking from occurring at all. Working together, however, the combined efforts of the Anaheim, Costa Mesa and Santa Ana police departments can effectively shut down this human trafficking corridor on Harbor Boulevard. However, the issue goes beyond these two corridors to local hotels and motels throughout the county, as well as residential brothels and other venues. This crime requires the commitment of broad and varied resources as evidenced by the makeup of the Task Force, now comprised of personnel from the Anaheim Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Costa Mesa Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, Irvine Police Department, Orange County District Attorney, Orange County Sheriff’s Department, Santa Ana Police Department, and the United States Attorney’s Office. Thankfully, this regional commitment to addressing this scourge in Orange County is making a difference. We are a national model demonstrating that well-designed and coordinated collaboration is the single best approach to a complex crime and social issue such as human trafficking. As a result, we’re now able to send a stronger message to perpetrators of human trafficking that Orange County is not a place they can profit from their abuse.”

Survivors Urge Victims to Seek Assistance

The 2016 report also provided an avenue for survivors of human trafficking assisted by OCHTTF to communicate with other victims by providing statements in their own words.

When asked to write something to new victims who are trying to get help – or afraid to seek assistance, one survivor wrote, “Don’t be afraid to come out and seek help because there’s an institution that helps victims like you. All you have to do is give them your full cooperation.”

In the report, OCHTTF also highlighted some community partners whose collaborative efforts have furthered the mission of the task force, including Friends Church and Richfield Church in Yorba Linda, Cottonwood Church of Los Alamitos and Orange-based Sisters of St. Joseph.

“These partners go above and beyond what is required of their organization as they assist victims of human trafficking in Orange County and find ways to fill in gaps in services as needed,” Mercado said.

The 2016 Human Trafficking Victim Report is a compilation of data collected from APD, California Highway Patrol, Community Service Programs, FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, Irvine Police Department, OCDA, Orange County Sheriff’s Department, The Salvation Army, Santa Ana Police Department, and United States Attorney’s Office.
“This year alone, we have rescued more than three times the number of kids than we did last year. We are seeing more gang members and armed felons who are exploiting these vulnerable victims,” stated District Attorney Tony Rackauckas. “Any traffickers should know that we are relentless down in Orange County and that they should listen to their colleagues who are complaining about the Task Force. If you are trafficking and exploiting humans in Orange County, we are going to prosecute you until you go to prison.”

About Community Service Programs
Community Service Programs (CSP) is a nonprofit agency which impacts lives by sheltering children, supporting victims, counseling families, resolving conflicts, and educating our communities. CSP’s model programs assist over 125,000 community members annually, including abused children, struggling families, acting out adolescents, victims of crime, and those in need of mediation services. For more information on CSP and its programs, visit cspinc.org.

About the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force
The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) is a multidimensional anti-human trafficking effort of over 60 agencies including law enforcement, victim service providers, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, government agencies and the community. The OCHTTF is committed to combating all forms of human trafficking, rescuing victims, prosecuting offenders, advocating on behalf of victims, raising community awareness and strengthening collaborative partnerships. For more information on the OCHTTF and resources, visit ochumantrafficking.com.

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