

# GEORGIA'S LABOR TRAFFICKING UPDATE

*Georgia's Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force*

**2023**  
REPORT



This document was created as part of the deliverables of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Georgia's Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force Work Group 6: Foreign Born and Labor Trafficking.





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# INTRODUCTION



Labor trafficking is the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining persons for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, to subject them to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Labor trafficking is the most prevalent form of human trafficking worldwide, with an estimated 27.6 million victims exploited in economic activities.

Georgia has prioritized a comprehensive approach to human trafficking by expanding its focus to all forms of human trafficking, including the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), adult sex trafficking, and labor trafficking (both agricultural and non-agricultural). Accordingly, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)'s Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force created Work Group 6 (WG 6) in 2018 to address domestic and international labor trafficking, as well as other forms of trafficking involving foreign-born individuals.

In 2019, WG 6 hosted a Labor Trafficking Roundtable at which key stakeholders from public agencies and private organizations discussed the current status of labor trafficking

in Georgia and sought ways to collaborate in eliminating this form of exploitation and providing services to affected individuals. Suggestions and ideas arising from those conversations were summarized and published in [\*Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report\*](#). This report was the first of its kind in Georgia and marks a renewed commitment to ending all forms of human trafficking in the state.

The report focused on expert responses to the following key questions:

- 1. How do we increase awareness of labor trafficking?**
- 2. How do we better serve victims of labor trafficking?**
- 3. How can we capture data on labor trafficking?**
- 4. What can be done on the state level?** <sup>2</sup>

The 2020 report concluded with specific recommendations and action steps to guide our state in its effort to combat labor trafficking and support survivors of all ages and nationalities.





The following document is intended to provide an update to the *Georgia Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report* by outlining the progress made in each of the four previously identified challenge areas. This update highlights the State's efforts to enhance its anti-labor trafficking response and provides helpful tools for professionals working in the anti-human trafficking field.



# UPDATES IN GEORGIA'S ANTI - LABOR TRAFFICKING RESPONSE

## Question 1: How do we increase awareness of labor trafficking?

By promoting broader awareness of the issue and increasing outreach efforts to at-risk populations is critical to our efforts to combat labor trafficking in Georgia.

## Action Steps from Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report:

- Create Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that can be shared and adapted for local communities.
- Curate a list of common myths and misconceptions about labor trafficking.

## Progress

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet addressing the following:
  - What are the common signs or indicators of labor trafficking? What industries are affected? What makes someone vulnerable to labor trafficking? How does labor trafficking affect our community? What are the penalties for traffickers? What should a community member do if they suspect someone is being trafficked for labor?
- A list of myths and misconceptions addresses the common misunderstandings about labor trafficking and provides accurate information on the nature of this crime.
- Additionally, utilizing the materials developed by WG 6, CJCC has created and delivered multiple awareness trainings that provide an overview of labor trafficking, Georgia's anti-labor trafficking response, and community and state-level responses. For more information about these training sessions and upcoming opportunities, please visit our website for more information.





## **Question 2: How do we better serve victims of labor trafficking in Georgia?**

Interagency and cross-sector collaboration between Georgia law enforcement, first responders, medical professionals, prosecutors, and victim service providers are critical to our ability to effectively identify victims and serve survivors.

### **Action Steps from Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report:**

- Establish a multi-disciplinary coalition, specifically designed to identify and serve survivors of forced labor.

### **Progress**

- Agriculture Labor Trafficking Task Force:

With the support of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation (HGBF), CJCC established a multidisciplinary task force, specifically designed to address agricultural labor trafficking in Georgia's farming regions by enhancing investigative resources and promoting a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and comprehensive approach to identifying and serving survivors of forced labor in the agricultural section. Funds support data-driven and proactive criminal investigations, prosecutions, outreach, advocacy, task force coordination, data analysis, emergency assistance, housing, training, and recovery services for survivor stability. This project is a representation of our State's efforts to encourage cross-sector, multidisciplinary collaboration as this project is supported by experienced victim-serving agencies, and state and federal law enforcement partners who will provide expertise, and access to resources, such as immigration and interpretation services. The project is housed under the Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking and intersects frequently with WG 6.





## Action Steps from Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report:

- Develop a statewide model screening tool that can be adapted for use by various sectors in our community.

## Progress

### • Human Trafficking Screening Tool:

To better assist law enforcement in being able to appropriately identify foreign-born trafficking victims and connect them to the correct services, WG 6 has developed a human trafficking screening tool for at-risk adults and minors. This tool will guide law enforcement through the initial stages of victim identification, verifying elements of trafficking and connecting them to appropriate resources and support. To access these tools, please visit our [website](#).

### • Human Trafficking Response Guide:

Work Group 5 (WG 5) represents the law enforcement arm of the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force that focuses on combating the overall lack of education on how to properly investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases in Georgia. WG 5 is currently developing the Georgia Human Trafficking Response Guide which will be designed to equip Georgia's law enforcement, first responders, medical professionals, prosecutors, and victim service providers with the information needed to ensure consistency and success in handling the various elements involved in a human trafficking case.

The goal of this project is to increase the knowledge of professionals working within the criminal justice system and guide them on how to appropriately and effectively respond to human trafficking cases in our state.

### The objectives to support this goal include:

- Highlighting the benefits of a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Outlining best practices for each discipline at every stage of a human trafficking case.
- Providing trauma-informed and victim-centered resources that will enable professionals to ensure that victims are safe, and offenders are held accountable.

WG 6 is assisting in building out the labor trafficking component of the response guide. For more information about this initiative, please visit our [website](#).





### Action Steps from Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report:

- Develop and deliver training to help identify potential cases of labor trafficking and respond with an appropriate trauma-informed approach, specific to law enforcement, first responders, and prosecutors.

### Progress:

- **Human Trafficking Training for Law Enforcement, First Responders, Prosecutors, CPS, and Juvenile Justice:** This comprehensive training is provided to law enforcement, first responders, prosecutors, judges, and victim-serving specialists throughout the state on how to recognize and handle cases involving all forms of trafficking. To address the importance of having Georgia law enforcement and prosecutors trained to effectively recognize and handle cases of labor trafficking, CJCC and partners have expanded the WG 5 law enforcement training to include an in-depth analysis of labor trafficking. For more information about this training and upcoming opportunities, please visit our [website](#).





## OPERATION BLOOMING ONION

Federal authorities in Georgia led a labor trafficking investigation into illegal agricultural labor trafficking involving more than 100 laborers from Mexico and Central America. The exploited laborers were working under brutal and inhumane conditions in southern Georgia. This years-long human trafficking operation is considered one of the largest human trafficking and visa fraud investigations in the country, as the orchestrating crime ring reaped over \$200 million from the illegal scheme. The Department of Justice Southern District of Georgia indicted two dozen people; the defendants were accused of perpetuating the exploitation and are now facing multiple felony charges, including mail fraud and mail fraud conspiracy, forced labor and forced labor conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy, and witness tampering. Two dozen victims were identified who were forced to dig onions with their bare hands, paid 20 cents for each bucket harvested, and threatened with guns and violence to keep them in line. At least two people died on the job and another was allegedly repeatedly raped.

The HGBF Agricultural Labor Trafficking Task Force aided in the response on the day of the operation take-down by providing medical, victim services, and legal services personnel to the receiving location for victims recovered that day. This response exemplifies the benefits of a multidisciplinary coalition, focused specifically on forced labor. Using a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach and effective cross-sector communication, this operation addressed the comprehensive needs of the trafficked individuals while also providing the necessary elements to support law enforcement in building a strong case. Moving forward, the Task Force will use this experience as a model for future operations in order to prioritize efficiency and overall effective 7 service provision.



### Question 3: How do we capture data on labor trafficking?

Access to reliable data is necessary to better understand the scope and dynamics of labor trafficking in Georgia. There is no exhaustive dataset that will individually provide the full picture of labor trafficking, so different complementary data sources must be used in conjunction with one another; because of the limitations of the available data, additional data collection efforts and access to more data sources are needed to identify the risk factors, prevalence, and opportunities for successful prevention and intervention in targeted high-risk communities.

#### Action Steps from Georgia's Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report:

- Develop a centralized reporting system and database for identifying labor-trafficked persons in Georgia.

#### Progress:

**Human Trafficking Data Clearinghouse:** The Human Trafficking Data Clearinghouse is a centralized reporting system and database that works to not only identify persons experiencing all forms of human trafficking but also identify those potential human traffickers themselves. The Clearinghouse aims to provide statewide partners with access to pertinent data for planning purposes: it generates leads for law enforcement investigations, provides relevant information for service providers, and indicates hotspots for exploitation within the state for future action items. Also, the clearinghouse's data and statistics will be collaboratively used by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's (GBI) Criminal Analyst to support proactive data-driven agricultural labor trafficking investigations by building out intelligence reports.

The database is under the maintenance of CJCC's Statistical Analysis Center (GASAC). This unit is an embedded action research partner for the Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking and will employ data-driven decisions based on a shared understanding of the prevalence, scope, and nature of human trafficking. For more information about this initiative, please visit our [website](#).



#### Question 4: What can be done on a state level?

Labor trafficking cannot be addressed without cross-sector collaboration between institutions and organizations across the state. On a statewide level, public-private partnerships, multidisciplinary teams, task forces, and inter-agency collaboration with law enforcement, first responders, medical professionals, prosecutors, and victim service providers are critical to our ability to identify victims and serve survivors.

#### Action Steps from Georgia's Roundtable Report:

- Identify funding for research, direct services, and the creation of systems to bolster the State's ability to identify and serve victims

#### Progress:

- **Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking Task Force:** In 2019, CJCC was awarded \$1.7 million to create, oversee, and coordinate an Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Task Force that would work to:
  - Support law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies to build capacity and operational effectiveness in their response to human trafficking
  - Prioritizes survivors' voices, as victim-serving agencies are brought on
  - Provide a holistic response that is trauma-informed, victim-centered, and proactively identifies and serves all victims of all types of human trafficking.
- Thus, in partnership with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and key victim-service partners, Georgia's Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking Task Force (Coalition) was created. The Coalition is the first state-level law enforcement-based task force solely focused on human trafficking and serves the two equal-purpose areas of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking of minors and adults. Its goal is to create a unified, trauma-informed, and comprehensive response to all forms of human trafficking in Georgia so that victims are safe, and offenders are held accountable.
- The Coalition and state partners plan to improve and expand statewide training to law enforcement, and key stakeholders that will address all forms of labor trafficking to better support and empower victims of trafficking, as well as facilitate effective investigations. For more information about this initiative, please visit our [website](#).





### **Human Exploitation and Trafficking (H.E.A.T) Unit:**

In 2020, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) with support from the Coalition and ECM grant launched the H.E.A.T Unit. The H.E.A.T. unit focuses on the statewide enforcement efforts against all forms of human trafficking, had has dedicated special agents coordinating the investigations and rescuing of victims. Additional resources for agriculture labor trafficking specific agents have been provided by Howard G. Buffett Foundation. This unit was instrumental in the Georgia Youth Peach Club case.

### **Georgia Peach Youth Club Case:**

In 2021, GBI, with the assistance of the Office of the Attorney General, indicted and arrested a total of 14 suspects on 15 charges of human trafficking, racketeering, criminal street gang activity, charity fraud, and money laundering. The charges regarding human trafficking specifically allege that the defendants operated a human trafficking ring under the guise of a fraudulent charity known as Georgia Peach Youth Club of America Inc. in order to fund criminal street gang activity. The Georgia Peach Youth Club of America Inc. claimed to be a work and recreation program for minors against gangs, gun violence, and drugs, that provided a safe and productive way to keep vulnerable children safe and off the streets. However, according to the indictment, the group was acting as a human trafficking ring that was used to fund criminal street gang activity. To this date, 26 child victims who worked for GPYC have been interviewed<sup>4</sup> and more than 150 child victims have been identified. <sup>5</sup>



## Action Steps from Georgia's Roundtable Report:

- Identify funding for research, direct services, and the creation of systems to bolster the state's ability to identify and serve victims (e.g. creation of a labor trafficking hotline).

## Progress:

- **Statewide Hotline Number and Website: (866) ENDHTGA/ ENDHTGA.org.**

In coordination with state partners, CJCC facilitated the creation of a statewide human trafficking hotline to serve as a one-stop shop to answer questions and offer assistance related to trafficking. This hotline is a vital resource that provides information to law enforcement when there is suspicion of sexual and/or labor exploitation of minors or adults, as well as connects individuals to services and resources in and outside the state. Trained law enforcement agents, advocates, and first responders are available 24/7 to answer calls. The hotline is also available in Spanish. Additionally, in partnership with GBI, CJCC will create and make available a text version of the hotline for easier access.

OVERVIEW MEMBERSHIP

1-866-ENDHTGA

SUBCOMMITTEES GET HELP



## GEORGIA COALITION TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Creating and supporting  
strategic partnerships to end  
human trafficking in Georgia.*



## Action Steps from Georgia's Roundtable Report:

- Shift statewide prosecutorial practices that focus on holding traffickers and businesses engaged in labor exploitive practices accountable.

## Progress:

- **GBI Legal Division:** Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 35-3-3, the Legal Division was established as an independent division within the GBI, effective July 1, 2020. The Division is supervised by the Legal Division Director and is divided into three sections: Prosecutorial Liaison Section, Legal Advisor Section, and Compliance Section. It is through the Prosecutorial Liaison Section that the Agency supports the Anti-Labor Trafficking initiatives. The Prosecutorial Liaison Section is tasked with providing legal and prosecutorial support to the GBI and local jurisdictions to combat public corruption, election crimes, human trafficking, and gangs. Attorneys are authorized to serve as Special Assistant United States Attorneys, District Attorneys, or Solicitors General at the request of any appropriate agency and the approval of the Director. For more information about this Division, please visit their [website](#).
- **GBI Special Prosecutor:** On July 1, 2022, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation welcomed Diane McLeod as the Special Prosecutor assigned to the Prosecutorial Liaison Section. In this role, the Special Prosecutor is dedicated to provide prosecution support to agricultural human trafficking initiatives. Within the GBI, the Special Prosecutor works closely with the [Human Exploitation and Trafficking \(HEAT\) Team](#) to prosecute those engaged in trafficking a vulnerable population. The Special Prosecutor offers advice and assistance to the HEAT Team in ongoing investigations to include providing field agents with relevant case law, statutes and resources. Further, the Special Prosecutor looks at data and trends from the Department of Labor and local law enforcement to identify potential trafficking operations. The Special Prosecutor also has formulated working relationships with federal prosecutors and agencies to provide resources to support investigations and prosecutions.



## Georgia's Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force:

Housed under CJCC, the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force continues to provide a unified, statewide response that addresses the need for a multidisciplinary approach to protecting the citizens of Georgia from perpetrators and systems of exploitation while working to support the recovery of adults and victims of all forms of trafficking to ensure that they are ready for a successful future. The Task Force operates by a targeted, strategic framework that consists of nine individual Work Groups addressing the five elements of the trafficking continuum:



### The 9 Work Groups of the Statewide Task Force are as follows:

1. Community Awareness and Education
2. Youth Aware and Safe
3. Deterring Traffickers and Buyers
4. Keeping At-Risk Youth Safe
5. Apprehending, Investigating, and Prosecuting
6. Foreign-Born and Labor Trafficking
7. Survivors Supported and Protected
8. Survivors Recovering and Thriving
9. Examining Domestic Adult Sex Trafficking

Annually, each Work Group develops and implements innovative projects designed to identify a gap or limitation in the states' existing activities, services, and anti-trafficking response to produce impactful outcomes and ensure that multiple aspects of human trafficking are being addressed.

Overall, the Task Force's participation encompasses state, local, and federal government, law enforcement, victim service providers, and non-governmental organizations who collectively work together to address the needs of trafficking victims and assist in the enhancement of the state's anti-trafficking response.

For more information about the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force, please visit our [website](#).





## Action Steps from Georgia's Roundtable Report:

- Empower business communities to engage in anti-labor trafficking practices

## Progress:

- **Work Group 6: Foreign-Born and Labor Trafficking:** Housed under the Statewide Task Force, Work Group 6 (WG 6) is focused on examining underserved and/or previously unidentified victims of human trafficking, including foreign-born victims of labor trafficking. As the labor trafficking arm of the Statewide Task Force, WG 6 has and will continue to prioritize enhancing Georgia's anti-labor trafficking response. Since the release of the *2020 Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report*, WG6 has been purposely working towards accomplishing the action steps and recommendations still lacking, as well as proactively highlighting areas of weakness and gaps in our state's anti-labor trafficking response.
- Currently, WG6 is in the process of developing a project that will empower businesses to engage in anti-labor trafficking practices. This project will provide a framework to address and support the businesses known to be vulnerable to labor trafficking in Georgia and equip business leaders with training, resources, and guidance on how to assess, update and/ or create their own company culture, policies, and procedures that address and prevent labor trafficking within their processes.
- For more information about Work Group 6 and this initiative, please visit our [website](#).



# AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

This report has outlined the various projects and initiatives that Georgia is implementing that promote a comprehensive response to all forms of human trafficking. As the State continues to prioritize its commitment to addressing the challenges associated with combating labor trafficking, the following are identified areas of focus.

1

Strengthen and/ or develop anti-labor trafficking policies on the state and local levels.

2

Develop and provide streamlined, statewide labor trafficking training for professionals, particularly law enforcement.

3

Continue to secure and allocate funding and resources for labor trafficking victims, survivors, and professionals working in the field such as mental health services; medical identification, and safe and affordable housing access.

4

Continue to increase public awareness about labor trafficking in Georgia.

5

Empower and engage the business sector to engage in fair anti-labor practices and create no-tolerance zones within their practices and processes.

6

Continue to foster cross-sector, multi-disciplinary collaboration and, partnership.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECOGNITION

We would like to recognize the following key players that are dedicated to combating human trafficking within our state. We greatly appreciate their continued support in this fight.



Tapestri is a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to ending violence and oppression in immigrant and refugee communities using culturally competent and linguistically appropriate methods. As advocates for immigrants and refugees affected by human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, and exploitation, Tapestri uses education, community organizing, direct services, and advocacy to improve the lives of those it serves. Our name, Tapestri, symbolizes the different threads of society coming together to form a safe cover to protect its many-colored communities. For more information, please visit their [website](#).



Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network (GAIN) was founded in 2005 in response to a critical lack of representation for asylum-seekers within one of the toughest immigration courts in the nation. Their project's scope was to provide quality pro bono representation to asylum-seekers seeking refugee in the U.S. After achieving 501(c)(3) status in 2009, GAIN expanded its legal programming to include immigrant survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes through its Victims of Violence program. Through these two flagship programs, they continue to impact access to justice for vulnerable immigrants and fight for our vision of safety, freedom, and opportunity for all. Since its inception, GAIN has helped over 5,000 people and provided over 15 million dollars in pro bono legal services. For more information, please visit their [website](#).



Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) works to protect the well-being and rights of children as they migrate alone in search of safety. Within their work, KIND has developed a comprehensive approach to address the multi-faceted needs of unaccompanied migrant children once they are in the U.S. Not only do children come with their need for legal services, but also for the deep traumas caused by the violence and fear experienced during their forced migration. Their comprehensive approach includes legal and social services, policy and advocacy, COVID- 19 response. For more information, please visit their website.





Catholic Charities Atlanta provides transformative services that enable families to overcome barriers and achieve self-sufficiency. They have been serving our community for nearly 70 years,

offering a wide range of holistic services to help families become self-sufficient. For victims and survivors of crime, they offer internal and external referrals for additional resources, mental health counseling, assistance with public benefits, and free and low-cost immigration assistance for VAWA, U-Visas, T-Visas, family petitions, removal of conditions, work authorizations, and much more. For more information, please visit their [website](#).

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**TAHIRIH  
JUSTICE  
CENTER**

The Tahirih Justice Center is a national, nonprofit organization that serves immigrant survivors fleeing gender-based violence. Tahirih works to dismantle the laws, practices, and attitudes that leave immigrant survivors

vulnerable to abuse. They provide each survivor with the resources they need to secure personal protection and support their agency in their healing journey and take an interdisciplinary approach to secure justice for survivors. Through free legal and social services, policy advocacy, and community outreach and training, they protect and expand legal rights for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence seeking safety in the U.S. For more information, please visit their [website](#).

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The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) is an independent, statewide agency that supports the state's criminal justice system in the areas of criminal investigations, forensic laboratory services, and computerized criminal justice information. GBI's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit takes the lead in providing the GBI and the state with the resources needed to crack down on human trafficking and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and victims are safe. For more information, please visit their [website](#).

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Georgia's Attorney General's Office aims to serve the citizens of Georgia by providing legal representation of the highest quality to the agencies, officers, and employees of state government and by honorably and vigorously carrying out the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the Attorney General. Its

Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) takes the lead on human trafficking instances across the state and is focused on holding buyers and traffickers accountable, but also working collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners to support and serve victims. For more information, please visit their [website](#).





The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) financially and programmatically supports innovative programs and services to improve criminal justice and empower victims in the state of Georgia. Within its various focuses, CJCC houses the Human Trafficking Unit which takes the lead on administratively supporting and coordinating antitrafficking efforts across the state, including the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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A special thanks to the members of Work Group 6 of the Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force and all of their hard work and dedication to the coordination and development of this report.

#### **WG6 Member Organizations:**

- Catholic Charities Atlanta
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach, University of Georgia
- Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- Dalton State College
- Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network
- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Harmony House Child Advocacy/Sexual Assault Center
- Homeland Security Investigations
- International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children
- Kids in Need of Defense
- Mosaic Georgia
- Tahirih Justice Center, Atlanta
- Tapestri, Inc.



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