

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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Policy Analysis Report

To: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
From: Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office
Re: Human Trafficking in San Francisco
Date: October 30, 2024



Summary of Requested Action

Your office asked the Budget and Legislative Analyst to analyze how the City and County of San Francisco allocates funds toward anti-human trafficking measures and programs. This analysis includes a comparison of spending trends, funding sources, and collaborative initiatives in San Francisco with those of neighboring counties.

For further information about this report, contact Fred Brousseau, Director of Policy Analysis, at the Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office.

Executive Summary

- Human trafficking is a crime defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. This exploitation can take various forms, including forced labor, services, or commercial sex acts, and may involve child exploitation.
- The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) adopted in 2000 was the first federal law to focus specifically on human trafficking. It was enhanced by subsequent federal laws and, in 2005, the California State Legislature passed the California Trafficking Victims Protection Act which includes provisions against forced labor and services, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and trafficking involving minors. Penalties include significant prison sentences, fines, and mandatory sex offender registration for certain offenses.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline reports that California had 1,128 cases in 2023, approximately 12 percent of all U.S. cases identified for that year and roughly equivalent to California's share of the U.S. population. The Hotline does not report incidents by city.

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- San Francisco law enforcement activity related to human trafficking is low, as shown in Exhibit A. The San Francisco Police Department report there were an average of 44 human trafficking incidents each year between 2018 and 2023 but, together with other law enforcement agencies, presented only an average of 3.2 human trafficking cases to the District Attorney’s Office each year. Of those presented cases, charges were filed by the District Attorney for an average of 1.8 cases per year. Of the 11 human trafficking cases filed by the District Attorney between 2018 and 2023, five have resulted in conviction, three cases (from 2022 and 2023) are pending, and the remaining three have either been dismissed post-filing or resulted in another non-conviction action.

Exhibit A: Average Annual Number of Human Trafficking Incidents, Cases Presented to and Charges Filed by the District Attorney, in San Francisco, 2018-2023

Year	SFPD Incident Reports	Cases Presented to the DA’s Office	Charges Filed by the DA’s Office
2018	111	8	6
2019	52	3	1
2020	25	4	1
2021	35	1	0
2022	19	2	2
2023	20	1	1
Total	262	19	11
Annual Average	44	3.2	1.8

Source: San Francisco Police Department Crime Data Dashboard, San Francisco District Attorney’s Office Data & BLA Analysis

- National studies have identified significant gaps in reporting and identification of human trafficking incidents and crimes in the United States, leading to substantial undercounting in official data. In a 2020 study, the National Institute of Justice reported the FBI’s national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) may significantly understate the extent of both labor and sex trafficking and suggested that only 6 – 18 percent of actual cases were captured in incident data in three studied jurisdictions. Applying these rates to San Francisco’s incident data for 2018 – 2023 results in a much higher number of incidents.
- As shown in Exhibit B, applying this nationally estimated undercount rate to San Francisco, there would have been an average of between 243 and 728 incidents per year between 2018 and 2023 rather than the actual average reported of 44 incidents per year. Since arrests and cases prosecuted are subsets of the number of incidents, one can conclude that more of those would have also occurred.

**Exhibit B: Potential Magnitude of Undercounted
 Human Trafficking Incidents in San Francisco, 2018-2023**

Year	SFPD Incidents Reported	# of Incidents if Undercount = 6%	# of Incidents if Undercount = 18%
2018	111	1,850	617
2019	52	867	289
2020	25	417	139
2021	35	583	194
2022	19	317	106
2023	20	333	111
Total	262	4,367	1,456
Annual Average	44	728	243

Source: San Francisco Police Department Crime Data Dashboard & BLA Analysis

- Human trafficking underreporting is attributed by experts in the field to the hidden and complex nature of these cases, with victims often unwilling to assist law enforcement as witnesses for a variety of reasons including being dependent on their traffickers for their livelihood, possibly engaging in criminal activity while they are also victims and being part of a vulnerable population that mistrusts law enforcement. This speaks to the importance of law enforcement officers receiving training in human trafficking, particularly working effectively with victims/witnesses.

Law Enforcement

- Exhibit B above also shows a decline from 2018 when 111 human trafficking incidents were reported to 20 incidents in 2023. The San Francisco Police Department has limitations in pursuing human trafficking cases in that there is only a small Special Victims Unit specializing in these types of cases.
- The Department has one Inspector-Sergeant leading the Special Victims Unit's efforts on human trafficking cases, with one Sergeant reporting to them. However, these two individuals also manage cases involving stalking, elder abuse, and financial abuse, as well as both sex and labor trafficking.
- Besides staffing limitations, the Department does not have a formal human trafficking protocol detailing approaches to investigations, case management, prevention, victim support, and coordination with other City and external agencies. We found such protocol documents in place in Alameda and Santa Clara counties.
- Formalized Department-wide human trafficking training is not in place at SFPD. Such training would be valuable for rank-and-file officers who may be encountering

undetected human trafficking situations in the course of their regular duties such as pursuit of drug dealing and prostitution crimes that involve trafficking victims who are reluctant or unwilling to serve as witnesses.

Human Trafficking Services Issues

- Anti-human trafficking activity for the City and County of San Francisco (City) is centralized in the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) whose main mission is gender-based. The Department leads efforts to combat trafficking, though its focus has traditionally been on women's issues, potentially leaving gaps in services for male and nonbinary trafficking victims. DOSW is also tasked with leading the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking.
- DOSW administers two multi-year grant programs, one with a value of \$7 million funded by the California Department of Social Services over three years, or an average value of \$2.3 million per year. These grant funded programs support Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) through the San Francisco Safety, Opportunity, and Lifelong Relationships (SOL) Collaborative.
- DOSW also manages the Gender-Based Violence Portfolio with a value of approximately \$38 million over five years, of which approximately 10 percent, or \$3.7 million of that fund is allocated to human trafficking services. This translates to approximately \$740,000 per year for human trafficking-related services through these grants. The current Gender-Based Violence Portfolio is set to expire at the end of FY 2024-25, and, in September 2024, the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) issued a new five-year Request for Proposals to continue the work.
- **Little activity by the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking in recent years:** Created in 2013, the Mayor's Task Force was a key mechanism for interagency coordination but has been largely inactive since 2019. Without a functioning Task Force, interdepartmental collaboration has weakened, leading to diminished activity and effectiveness in addressing human trafficking comprehensively across City agencies. The Task Force also faces challenges in maintaining up-to-date human trafficking data and in fostering interagency collaboration.
- **Absence of a human trafficking protocol:** Neither the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking or any other City entity has created a strategic plan to guide City efforts at enforcing human trafficking laws and providing support services to its victims. A strategic plan adopted in Santa Clara County provides a framework for providing anti-human trafficking services across the jurisdiction.

- **Victim Services Challenges:** The City's approach to victim services is fragmented. The District Attorney's Office maintains a Victim Services Division to provide support services to victims of crimes as they are being prosecuted as well as others who are victims but are not associated with prosecutions. However, because it's part of the criminal justice system, some victims are reportedly reluctant to make contact with the agency. Some victims may seek out services on their own from community-based organizations while others may not be aware of these organizations.
- **Other Department involvement:** Departments like the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) and the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) play supportive roles with the potential for identifying workplaces where human trafficking is occurring, but their involvement is limited. For instance, SFDPH's Massage Program, which regulates massage parlors and has played a secondary role in identifying trafficked workers in these establishments, has lacked funding for this purpose since 2019, reducing its impact.
- **Role for the new Office of Victim and Witness Rights:** The City created a new Office of Victim and Witness Rights pursuant to the adoption of the Proposition D ballot initiative in 2022. The Office has a number of roles laid out in the City's Administrative Code but because of its focus on victims of crime, could also be a more effective location for administering the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, which is now being performed by DOSW, and for heading a process to develop a Citywide strategic plan to combat human trafficking.
- **Community-based organizations:** Community based organizations provide support services to human trafficking victims, some with City funding, but data on the number of clients served and services received is not consistently collected and analyzed by City staff to ensure effective services are being provided.

Policy Options

The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) should:

1. Consider Increasing Dedicated Staffing: SFPD should consider increasing the number of full-time staff dedicated exclusively to human trafficking cases within the Special Victims Unit (SVU). The current staffing level is inadequate to handle the complexity and volume of all human trafficking cases, limiting comprehensive investigations. Transfers of existing staff should be considered first before proposing additional positions for this purpose.
2. Establish Human Trafficking Protocols: SFPD should develop formal human trafficking protocols, modeled after those in Alameda and Santa Clara counties, to standardize responses and improve case management. These protocols

should include victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches, as well as proper evidence collection procedures.

3. Provide Specialized Officer Training: SFPD should provide continuous, specialized training for all officers on identifying human trafficking cases, proper evidence collection, and victim interaction. This will ensure that trafficking victims are identified even during routine law enforcement activities. SFPD should train at least one officer from each station extensively on human trafficking to serve as a specialized point of contact, ensuring a more effective response and increased case identification across the City. Furthermore, SFPD should leverage the expertise of community-based organizations (CBOs) that could potentially provide this specialized training. Engaging with such CBOs can help alleviate the Department's capacity limitations and foster stronger partnerships with community stakeholders.
4. Monitor the Impact of New Protocols and Training: SFPD should regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any newly implemented protocols and training programs. This will allow for data-driven adjustments to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking cases.

The San Francisco District Attorney's Office (SFDA) should:

5. Strengthen Collaboration with SFPD: SFDA should work closely with SFPD through joint training sessions, regular case reviews, and coordinated task forces. This will ensure that cases are thoroughly investigated and prepared for prosecution, improving prosecutorial outcomes for human trafficking cases. The DA's Office should also explore federal funding resources, such as the Department of Justice's Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Grant from the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), to support its anti-human trafficking efforts, leveraging these grants to enhance both victim services and law enforcement capabilities.

The new Office of Victim and Witness Rights (OVWR) should:

6. Reignite and Administer the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking: The Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking should be fully transitioned to the OVWR by October 2025. The Task Force should be reactivated and restructured to include representatives from all relevant City agencies and community organizations. Additionally, consideration should be given to securing dedicated funding to support the Task Force's activities, similar to models used in other jurisdictions.

7. Separate from staffing needed for OVWR's responsibilities approved by the voters in 2022, the Office should request one additional position to ensure adequate staffing and capacity to manage the expanded scope of work transferred from DOSW effectively.
8. Develop a Strategic Plan for the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking: A comprehensive strategic plan should be developed to guide these efforts, ensuring clear goals, resource allocation, and successful implementation. This strategic planning process should begin immediately and be completed within six months, ideally by hiring a third-party consultant to expedite the process.
9. Co-locate Anti-Trafficking Services: The co-location of both labor and sex trafficking initiatives within the newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights should be pursued. This aligns with best practices that suggest co-locating services can enhance collaboration and improve support for victims.
10. Improve Data Reporting: The Mayor's Task Force, under OVWR, should prioritize improving data collection and reporting practices across all agencies involved in anti-human trafficking efforts. This includes standardizing definitions and data collection methods to better track human trafficking trends in the City.

The Department on the Status of Women should:

11. Develop a Sustainability Plan: DOSW should develop a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term viability of anti-trafficking programs, particularly the SOL Collaborative, beyond current funding that is set to expire in December 2025.
12. Support the Mayor's Task Force Transition: DOSW should actively support OVWR during the one-year transition period of the Mayor's Task Force. This support will ensure continuity, knowledge transfer, and the seamless integration of existing processes and resources.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) should:

13. Evaluate Healthcare Provider Training: SFDPH should evaluate its current training programs for healthcare professionals to ensure they are adequately equipped to identify and respond to human trafficking cases. Medical providers play a critical role in detecting signs of trafficking, such as abuse, malnutrition, or trauma.
14. Evaluate the Massage Program: DPH should assess the Massage Program's effectiveness in addressing human trafficking, focusing on challenges like worker reluctance to report trafficking due to immigration fears and difficulty assessing establishments. This evaluation should ensure at-risk individuals are identified, with resources meeting their needs. If funded, the program should include metrics to evaluate the impact on worker safety, awareness, and reporting.

Collaboration between the Environmental Health Branch (EHB) and Community Health Equity & Promotion (CHEP) should be closely aligned with the Mayor's Task Force on Human Trafficking efforts.

The San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) should:

15. Develop Labor Trafficking Protocols: OLSE should develop specific protocols to integrate with their current labor law enforcement activities to detect labor trafficking, and coordinate efforts with other City departments.
16. Engage in Interagency Coordination: OLSE should ensure continued involvement in the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking to address labor trafficking issues in coordination with other City agencies and law enforcement.

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Introduction: Human Trafficking

Definition of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a crime involving the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. This exploitation can take various forms, including forced labor, services, or commercial sex acts.

The crime is characterized by the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel individuals into situations against their will, except in the case of minors involved in commercial sex, where coercion is not a prerequisite for it to be considered trafficking and a crime. Human trafficking is a global issue affecting people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds, and it can occur in both legal and illegal industries.

Forms of Human Trafficking, as defined by the U.S. Department of State¹

- **Forced Labor**, also known as labor trafficking, occurs when individuals are coerced, deceived, or threatened into providing labor or services against their will. This crime involves the recruitment, harboring, or transportation of a person through force, fraud, or coercion with the intent of exploitation. Tactics used by traffickers can include threats, withholding of wages, confiscation of identification documents, and psychological manipulation. Forced labor can happen in any industry, whether legal or illegal, including agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic work.
- **Domestic Servitude** is a specific form of forced labor where individuals are compelled to work in private homes. Victims are often isolated and controlled by their employers, who may restrict their access to food, transportation, and communication. This isolation makes it difficult for law enforcement and labor inspectors to detect abuse, and foreign domestic workers are particularly vulnerable due to language barriers and lack of support networks.
- **Child Forced Labor** involves the exploitation of children through coercion or threats, compelling them to work in conditions that are often illegal and harmful. Children are targeted because of their vulnerability, and they may be denied education, food, and rest. This form of labor is a violation of both national and international law.
- **Sex Trafficking** occurs when individuals are forced, coerced, or deceived into engaging in commercial sex acts. This crime involves the exploitation of victims in various settings, such as brothels, hotels, or private residences. In cases involving

¹ U.S. Department of State. "About Human Trafficking." United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/#understanding>.

children, the element of coercion is irrelevant as minors cannot legally consent to commercial sex.

- **Child Sex Trafficking** is the use of children in commercial sex activities. In these cases, the law does not require proof of coercion or deception, as the exploitation of minors for sex is inherently illegal.

Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000

The federal definition of human trafficking is dictated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000. This law provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing human trafficking in the United States, defining severe² forms of trafficking in persons, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Under the TVPA, trafficking is categorized into two severe forms:

1. **Sex Trafficking:** This involves the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for commercial sex acts. Such acts must be induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or involve a person under the age of 18, who cannot legally consent to such acts (22 USC § 7102).
2. **Labor Trafficking:** This encompasses the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, aiming to subject them to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 USC § 7102).

The Action-Means-Purpose (AMP) Model is a framework used to understand and identify human trafficking as defined by U.S. federal law. Exhibit 1 below details the AMP model.

Exhibit 1: Action-Purpose-Means Model

Action	Means*	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Induces• Recruits•Harbors•Transports•Provides•Obtains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Force•Fraud•Coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Commercial Sex (Sex Trafficking)•Labor/Services (Labor Trafficking)

Source: Polaris Project, National Human Trafficking Resource Center

² The use of "severe" emphasizes that these forms of trafficking involve significant violations of human rights and personal freedom. It distinguishes these acts as particularly egregious crimes that warrant special attention and severe penalties under the law. The term also serves to differentiate these more extreme forms of exploitation from other labor violations or exploitative practices that may not rise to the level of human trafficking as defined by the TVPA.

Notes: *Minors induced into commercial sex are human trafficking victims – regardless if force, fraud, or coercion is present.

This model breaks down the elements of trafficking into three distinct categories: Action, Means, and Purpose. Each of these components must be present in a situation to classify it as human trafficking. Action refers to the specific acts that traffickers undertake to engage with their victims. Means describes the methods employed by traffickers to control or compel victims. Purpose is the goal of the trafficker, which is to exploit the victim for sex and/or labor trafficking.

Complexities of Human Trafficking and Impacts on Response Efforts

Human trafficking presents significant challenges across various aspects of response efforts, including data collection, prosecution, and victim support. The hidden nature of the crime and the diverse forms it takes—from labor exploitation to sex trafficking—make it difficult to accurately assess its prevalence and to effectively combat it. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing more effective strategies to address human trafficking at all levels.

Challenges in Data Collection, Reporting, & Identification

Human trafficking is inherently a hidden crime, often involving vulnerable populations who are isolated and controlled by traffickers. Victims may be reluctant to come forward to authorities due to fear of retaliation, mistrust of government officials, or lack of awareness that they are being trafficked. For law enforcement, human trafficking cases are complicated by the fact that victims of trafficking may also be engaged in criminal activity such as prostitution. These factors lead to significant underreporting, making it difficult to gather reliable data about the extent of the problem and to determine if sufficient resources have been allocated to combat the crimes and support the victims. Additionally, the variability in data collection methodologies across different organizations and agencies results in inconsistencies and gaps in the data, further complicating efforts to assess the true prevalence of human trafficking. The reliance on reported cases only means that many instances of trafficking remain undocumented.

According to a 2020 report from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), there are significant gaps in reporting and identification of human trafficking incidents in the United States, leading to substantial undercounting in official data. Specifically, NIJ reported the FBI's national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) may significantly understate the extent of both labor and sex trafficking, with estimates suggesting that only 6-18 percent of actual cases are captured³. According to the report, undercounting is attributed to several key issues:

³U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Gaps in Reporting Human Trafficking Incidents: Implications for Policy and Practice. NIJ Grant No. 252520. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/252520.pdf>

- **Inadequate Training and Identification:** Many law enforcement officers struggle to identify human trafficking cases, often misclassifying them as other crimes. This challenge is exacerbated by a lack of specialized training and the complexity of trafficking crimes, which often involve subtle forms of coercion that are difficult to detect and may result in the victims also breaking the law such as in cases where trafficked individuals are working as prostitutes due to coercion.
- **Victim Reluctance and Reporting Delays:** Victims of trafficking are often hesitant to disclose information about their traffickers, which complicates the identification process. Additionally, the recognition of trafficking victims frequently occurs only at later stages in the criminal justice process, further hindering accurate reporting.
- **Lack of Reporting Infrastructure:** In many jurisdictions, there is insufficient infrastructure for properly recording and reporting trafficking offenses. This includes a lack of specific offense codes in incident reports and a general hesitancy to classify juvenile cases as trafficking due to additional reporting requirements.

Impacts on Prosecution

The prosecution of human trafficking cases is equally challenging due to the complex nature of the crime. Traffickers often operate within sophisticated networks, making it difficult for law enforcement to identify and apprehend them. Moreover, the burden of proof in trafficking cases is high, requiring evidence of coercion, fraud, or force, which can be difficult to obtain, especially when victims are traumatized and may not be able or willing to provide clear testimony. Additionally, victims may be hesitant to cooperate with authorities as witnesses due to fear of deportation, retribution from traffickers, being criminalized for activities they were coerced into, such as sex work, and because they may have intimate relationships with their traffickers.

Broader Impacts on Response Efforts

The nuances of human trafficking also affect the broader response efforts, including victim support and prevention strategies. The diverse forms of trafficking require tailored approaches that consider the specific needs and circumstances of victims. However, the lack of comprehensive and accurate data hinders the ability of service providers to allocate resources effectively and design interventions that address the unique challenges faced by trafficking survivors. Moreover, the stigma associated with trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, can prevent victims from seeking help, further complicating efforts to provide them with the necessary support and services.

Distinguishing Voluntary Sex Work from Exploitation

The distinction between consensual sex work and sex trafficking is important. Voluntary sex work involves individuals choosing to engage in commercial sex and being free to exit from it on their own volition, while sex trafficking involves coercion and exploitation and situations where the workers may not be able to exit the work without retribution from their traffickers.

In San Francisco, legal, political, and cultural changes have emerged regarding the distinction between voluntary sex work and exploitation. Legally, California's Senate Bill 357, passed in 2022, decriminalized loitering for prostitution. A San Francisco Board of Supervisors resolution in early 2023 urged California elected officials to consider legalizing sex work, although it faced challenges due to a lack of consensus within the sex worker community (File #23-0179). The City has also implemented various strategies to address prostitution concerns, such as increasing police enforcement and proposing new safety measures in affected neighborhoods. Culturally, there is a growing public awareness of the need to differentiate between consensual sex work and trafficking, with advocacy groups educating the community and shifting law enforcement focus toward targeting buyers rather than sex workers. The ongoing debate over decriminalization versus legalization reflects a broader movement to recognize sex work as legitimate labor and protect the rights and safety of sex workers, while also addressing the unintended consequences of anti-trafficking laws.

Human Trafficking in the United States

Prevalence & Characteristics of Human Trafficking in the United States

It is estimated that thousands of individuals are trafficked annually for both sexual and labor exploitation, although precise statistics remain challenging to determine due to the concealed nature of the crime and inconsistent data collection methods. However, based on federal government data sources, the prevalence and characteristics of this crime are as follows:

- **Prevalence:** The National Human Trafficking Hotline, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and managed by the Polaris Project, a nonprofit organization, serves as a key resource in the national anti-trafficking effort. Since its inception in 2007, the National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified 100,891 cases of human trafficking nationwide involving approximately 197,000 victims. The Hotline reported 9,619 human trafficking cases in 2023. Of the 9,619 identified cases, 5,572, or 58 percent, were sex trafficking cases, 1,158, or 16 percent, were labor trafficking cases, and 1,021, or 11 percent, were both sex and labor trafficking cases. The remaining 15 percent of cases were not specified⁴. These Hotline statistics are based on cases reported by victims or others and do not correspond to arrests or prosecutions. Many cases are reported without follow up legal enforcement.
- **Types of Exploitation:** The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) identify sex trafficking as a predominant form,

⁴ National Human Trafficking Hotline. (n.d.). Statistics. Retrieved from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics>

with labor trafficking also being significant, particularly in industries like agriculture and domestic work.

- **Gender and Age:** Human trafficking affects individuals of all genders and ages, but women and girls are disproportionately impacted. The DOJ reports that a significant number of trafficking victims are female, particularly in cases involving sex trafficking. Children, especially those in vulnerable situations such as those in the child welfare system, are also at high risk.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Certain populations are more vulnerable to trafficking, including undocumented immigrants, runaway and homeless youth, and individuals with a history of abuse or substance use disorders. The HHS emphasizes that these vulnerabilities are often exploited by traffickers to recruit and control victims.
- **Geographic Distribution:** According to statistics provided by the National Hotline, human trafficking cases are reported across the United States, with certain high population states like California, Texas, and Florida having higher numbers of reported cases. This distribution is influenced by factors such as population size, economic conditions, and proximity to international borders.
- **Prosecution Rates:** According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report, "Human Trafficking Data Collection Activities, 2023", the number of individuals prosecuted for human trafficking in FY 2020-21 more than doubled compared to FY 2010-11, rising from 729 to 1,672 cases nationally. Additionally, 2,027 individuals were referred to U.S. attorneys for human trafficking offenses in FY 2020-21, a 49% increase from FY 2010-11. The difference between cases identified by the Hotline presented above and prosecutions reported by BJS reflect the difficulties and limitations of enforcing human trafficking laws: many reported cases are not prosecuted.

Federal Laws and Activities

The legal framework of human trafficking in the United States has evolved significantly over the years, with a focus on strengthening federal laws, increasing protections for victims, and enhancing prosecution efforts. This framework is rooted in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in 1865.

Prior to 2000, the Department of Justice (DOJ) addressed human trafficking cases through a patchwork of federal statutes related to involuntary servitude and slavery. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) established the first comprehensive federal framework specifically designed to combat human trafficking through the "3 P's": protection, prevention, and prosecution. It provided increased protections for trafficking victims, including eligibility for

federally funded services, and created immigration protections like the T and U visas⁵. The Act also strengthened prevention efforts through international initiatives and established the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It enhanced prosecution by adding new criminal provisions and mandating restitution for victims.

Since the passing of TVPA, the evolution of U.S. anti-trafficking legislation has progressively expanded protections for victims and increased accountability for traffickers. Early laws focused on criminalizing trafficking and enabling victims to seek justice, while subsequent reauthorizations extended jurisdiction, created grant programs for victim services, and targeted forced labor and fraudulent recruitment. Legislation in the 2010s introduced measures to combat trafficking in supply chains and bolster survivor protections. More recent initiatives, such as the 2021 National Action Plan, emphasize prevention, partnerships, and data-driven strategies to disrupt trafficking networks and reduce demand. Summaries of the subsequent federal legislation are provided in Appendix I.

Enforcement of federal human trafficking laws is primarily conducted by the Department of Justice and the FBI. In addition, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security (HSI) division conducts national and international investigations of human trafficking, child sex tourism, and forced child labor. Federal laws apply when human trafficking occurs across state or international borders. State laws are what are most commonly enforced by municipalities, such as the City and County of San Francisco, but federal jurisdiction can also be triggered if local authorities request assistance for larger, more complex cases that require federal resources or expertise and for trafficking cases that cross state lines.

Human Trafficking in California

In 2005, five years after the first major federal anti-human trafficking legislation (TVPA) was enacted, the California State Legislature passed the **California Trafficking Victims Protection Act** (codified as **Penal Code Section 236.1**). This state law was created to align with the TVPA and provide state-level criminalization of human trafficking. The law includes provisions against forced labor and services, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and trafficking involving minors. Penalties include significant prison sentences, fines, and mandatory sex offender registration for certain offenses.

⁵ T visas are granted to victims of human trafficking who assist law enforcement in detection, investigation, or prosecution of trafficking, providing temporary residency and a path to permanent status in the U.S. U visas are offered to victims of certain crimes, including trafficking, who have suffered physical or mental abuse and can assist law enforcement, allowing them to stay in the U.S. for up to 4 years and potentially obtain permanent residency.

In 2012, seven years after California Penal Code Section 236.1 was passed, the voters passed Proposition 35, the "**Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act**". This proposition significantly amended and expanded the definition of human trafficking within California Penal Code Section 236.1 to include crimes related to the production of child pornography and increased penalties, including enhanced prison sentences, fines, and mandatory sex offender registration for traffickers, especially those involved in trafficking minors.

In 2014, the state legislature adopted Senate Bill 855, the **Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Program**. This bill included provisions to create the CSEC Program under the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The program was designed to provide funding to counties for training and services aimed at identifying, protecting, and serving children who are victims or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. San Francisco's use of this funding is described in a later section of this report.

Additional legislative actions in California collectively, from 2015 through 2019, enhanced the legal protections and support systems for human trafficking victims while also strengthening the state's ability to prosecute traffickers. The laws extended the time frame within which victims could file civil lawsuits, provided mechanisms for the Department of Fair Employment and Housing to pursue civil actions on behalf of victims, and protected victims' identities during legal processes. Additionally, they established special legal defenses and processes for trafficking victims coerced into committing crimes and ensured that minors and other victims receive necessary support services.

Jurisdictional Roles in Human Trafficking State Law Enforcement

Enforcement and prosecution of human trafficking and other state law violations in San Francisco are primarily handled by local law enforcement agencies, including the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) and the San Francisco District Attorney's Office (SFDA). The SFPD investigates human trafficking incidents, and when arrests are made, they report these cases to the District Attorney's Office, which decides whether to file charges and prosecute the case based on the evidence presented.

However, the California Attorney General's Office typically does not handle day-to-day enforcement of state law in San Francisco unless there are special circumstances, such as cases involving multiple jurisdictions, statewide significance, or when requested by local authorities. The Attorney General's Office may also get involved in certain high-profile human trafficking cases, but this is not routine for most local trafficking incidents.

As discussed previously, federal authorities, including agencies such as the U.S. Attorney's Office, FBI and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), typically become involved in human trafficking

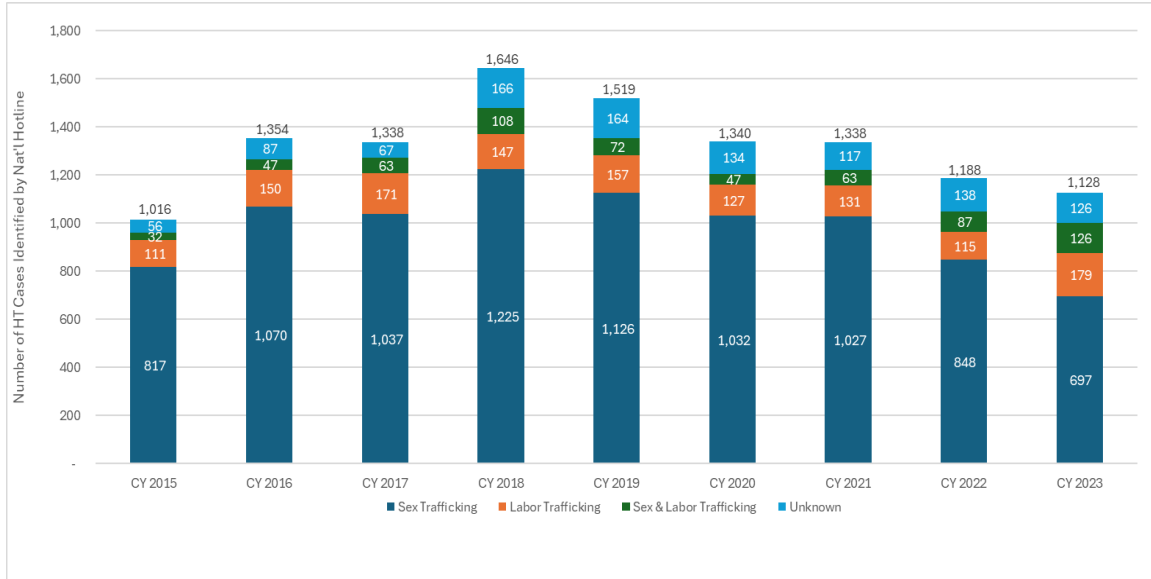
cases when they cross state lines, involve international trafficking, or when local authorities request assistance for large, complex cases.

California Leads in Human Trafficking Cases, but Recent Data Shows a Decline in Identified Cases

California is a significant hub for human trafficking in the United States, consistently reporting the highest number of cases among all states. In 2023, the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified California as the state with the highest number of identified trafficking cases, with 1,128 cases or about 12 percent of all U.S. cases identified by the Hotline that year, roughly equivalent to California's share of the U.S. population. This share, however, marks a decrease from earlier years, as California accounted for approximately 18 percent of the nation's trafficking cases in 2015.

The state's high number of cases is largely attributed to its large population, extensive immigrant communities, and major transportation networks, which facilitate the movement and exploitation of victims. Despite the relatively high numbers, historical data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline indicates a notable decline in the total cases reported in California in recent years. Exhibit 2 below details the cases identified by the Hotline in California from 2015 through 2023, categorized by type of exploitation. The cause of the decline in reported cases is not reported. It could reflect an actual decrease in human trafficking activity, but another likely explanation is that the number of cases reported has declined for reasons cited above including unwillingness on the part of trafficking victims to report their situation and the challenges law enforcement faces in making arrests and prosecuting these cases.

**Exhibit 2: National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics:
 Identified Cases in California by Case Type, 2015-2023**



Source: National Human Trafficking Hotline & BLA Analysis

As shown in Exhibit 2, sex trafficking cases consistently made up the majority of cases between 2015 and 2023 in California, peaking in 2019 with 1,225 cases, but declining to 697 cases by 2023. Labor trafficking cases exhibited more variability, with an increase noted in 2023 to 179 cases from 115 in 2022. The total number of cases across all categories peaked in 2019 at 1,646 before gradually decreasing to 1,128 by 2023.

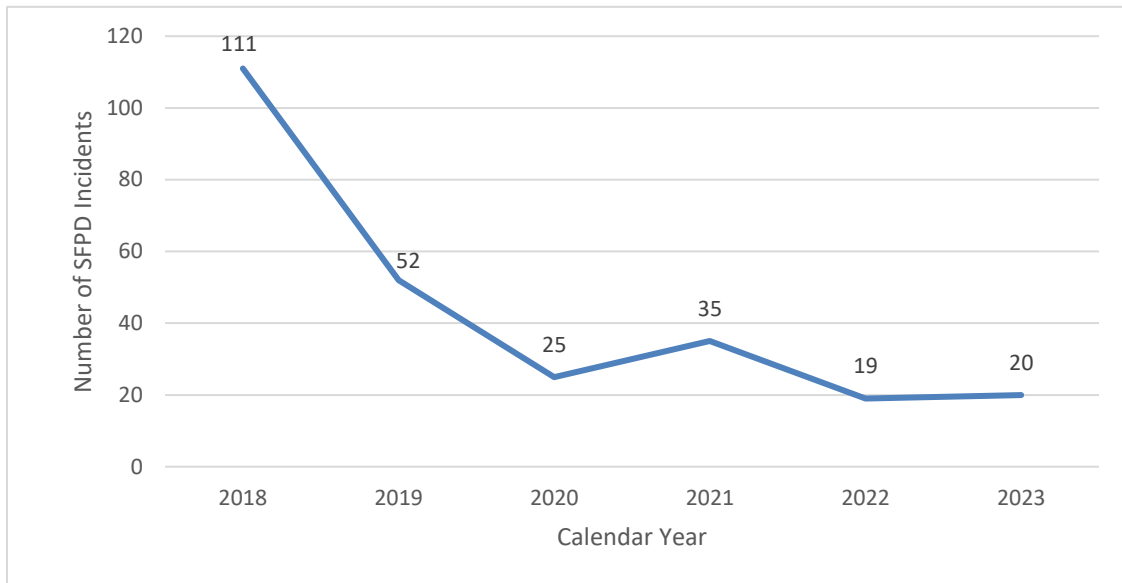
Cases are reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in a variety of ways including phone calls, text messages, letters, and other methods. Reported cases can cover violations of both federal and state laws. Cases identified through this reporting process are not the same as arrests or cases prosecuted though those cases may also have been reported to the hotline.

Law Enforcement and Prosecution of Human Trafficking in San Francisco

The following section summarizes the data collected on human trafficking incidents, case filings, and case resolutions in San Francisco between 2018 and 2023. The data is presented through three exhibits, each highlighting different aspects of law enforcement and prosecutorial efforts.

Exhibit 3 provides an overview of the number of human trafficking incident reports filed by the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) between 2018 and 2023. Incident reports can serve as an early indicator of human trafficking activity and law enforcement’s efforts to identify potential victims and traffickers. Arrests by the Police Department, however, are generally a subset of incidents.

Exhibit 3: San Francisco Police Department Human Trafficking Incident Reports, 2018-2023



Source: San Francisco Police Department Crime Data Dashboard

As can be seen in Exhibit 3, the number of human trafficking incidents reported by the Police Department is low. Further, between 2018 and 2023, human trafficking incident reports in San Francisco saw a significant decline, with 111 incidents reported in 2018, followed by 52 in 2019, 25 in 2020, 35 in 2021, 19 in 2022, and 20 in 2023. This downward trend in reported incidents raises concerns regarding the potential under-identification and reporting of human trafficking cases due to reasons cited above in our discussion of national estimates that human trafficking cases are underreported throughout the U.S. It could also reflect a change in policies and priorities at the Police Department and/or disruptions in practices caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Exhibit 4 outlines the number of human trafficking cases that an arresting agency presented to and were subsequently filed by the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office from 2018 to 2023. The filing rate indicates how many cases proceed from investigation to prosecution.

**Exhibit 4: Police Department Human Trafficking Arrests
Presented to and Filed by the District Attorney 2018-2023**

Arrest Year	Cases Presented	Cases Filed by SFDA	Annual Filing Rate
2018	8	6	75%
2019	3	1	33%
2020	4	1	25%
2021	1	0	0%
2022	2	2	100%
2023	1	1	100%
Total Cases & Average Filing Rate	19	11	58%

Source: San Francisco District Attorney’s Office

Note: Of the 19 cases presented to the DA’s Office, 14 were presented by the SFPD, 2 were presented by the San Francisco Sheriff’s Office (one in 2018 and one in 2022), 2 were presented by the DA’s Office themselves (2018), and one was presented by another arresting agency in 2019.

Between 2018 and 2023, the number of human trafficking cases presented to the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office (SFDA) fluctuated, with 19 cases presented overall and 11 cases filed, resulting in an average filing rate of 58 percent. With such low numbers of cases, it is difficult to identify trends over these years. However, for all types of cases during those years, the District Attorney filed approximately 58 percent of cases, according to the Office’s data dashboard. What is notable is the low number of cases in general, perhaps reflecting the general pattern throughout the U.S. of underreporting human trafficking cases, as discussed above.

Exhibit 5 provides the resolution of human trafficking cases over a six-year period, illustrating outcomes such as convictions, dismissals, or other non-conviction DA actions, which reflect the effectiveness of the prosecution process.

**Exhibit 5: San Francisco District Attorney’s Office
Human Trafficking Case Resolutions, 2018-2023**

Case Resolution	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Conviction	2	3	0	2	1	0	8
Dismissed Post-Filing	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other DA Office Action	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	4	4	0	2	1	0	11*

Source: San Francisco District Attorney’s Office

*Note: One additional case was resolved during the reporting timeframe, bringing the total number of resolutions to 12. However, due to one case being sealed, specific details regarding its resolution are not available.

The resolution of human trafficking cases in San Francisco from 2018 to 2023 shown in Exhibit 5 also shows low numbers, indicating challenges in identifying cases, making arrests, and prosecuting cases. Over the six-year period, there were only a total of 11 resolved cases*, with 8 resulting in convictions, or 67 percent. In 2020 and 2023, no cases were resolved, and in 2022, only one case led to a conviction. Dismissals were minimal, with no dismissals post-filing from 2019 onwards.

Assuming that human trafficking cases are underreported in San Francisco as has been found nationwide in federal studies, the low number of incidents, arrests, and prosecutions in San Francisco may reflect the general difficulty of detecting human trafficking cases with standard approaches. Additionally, the District Attorney’s Office reports that cases may be difficult to file due to reliance on victim cooperation.

SFPD & District Attorney Staffing Dedicated to Human Trafficking

The SFPD has one Inspector-Sergeant leading the Special Victims Unit's (SVU) efforts on human trafficking, with one Sergeant reporting to them. However, these two individuals are not exclusively focused on human trafficking; they also manage cases involving stalking, elder abuse, financial abuse, as well as both sex and labor trafficking. Historically, SFPD reports this team of two was composed of five full-time Sergeants. According to SFPD, due to an all-time shortage of officers affecting overall staffing levels, reassignment of sworn officers from administrative and investigative functions to patrol duties was necessary. SFPD acknowledge that the current staffing level in SVU is insufficient to adequately address the volume and complexity of human trafficking cases, which impacts staff’s ability to conduct comprehensive investigations.

The DA's Office also reports staffing challenges affecting their ability to handle human trafficking prosecutions. The Child Abuse and Sexual Assault Unit, which handles sex trafficking cases, among others, includes one managing attorney, six line attorneys, 2.5 victim advocates, and two investigators. As it relates to sex trafficking cases, the Child Abuse and Sexual Assault Unit expressed satisfaction with the current staffing levels of attorneys and victim advocates but noted that the number of investigators is insufficient to handle their workload effectively. They explained that, while their current team is manageable for now, an increase in sex trafficking cases would require additional attorneys and victim advocates to meet demand. Additionally, the Division reported that their staff responsible for handling other types of cases are insufficiently resourced. The White-Collar Crimes Division, which handles labor trafficking cases, has one attorney and one investigator⁶ dedicated to wage theft and labor trafficking cases. The limited resources make it difficult to pursue pro-active in-depth investigations into labor trafficking operations, which often require substantial coordination with other departments and detailed forensic analysis to uncover coercive labor practices. Staff members have indicated that the current resources are insufficient to conduct thorough investigations and hold traffickers accountable.

According to a report produced by the DA's Office and included in the Mayor's Task Force meeting minutes from December 13, 2017, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office identified significant gaps in the detection and prosecution of human trafficking, with only nine cases presented in 2017, and just one case advancing to prosecution. To address these challenges, the District Attorney's Office proposed the creation of a dedicated Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) comprised of ten positions, including investigators, victim services advocates, and prosecutors. This unit would focus on proactive investigations, victim-centered support, and data-driven strategies to increase the prosecution of both labor and sex traffickers.

Law Enforcement Human Trafficking Protocols & Training

The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) currently lacks a formal protocol for addressing human trafficking, unlike counties such as Santa Clara and Alameda, which have established comprehensive guidelines to guide their law enforcement efforts. The Alameda County Human Trafficking Law Enforcement Protocol and the Santa Clara County Law Enforcement Human Trafficking Protocol both provide structured approaches for the identification, investigation, and support of human trafficking victims. These protocols emphasize a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach that seeks to protect victims while ensuring the effective prosecution of traffickers.

⁶ According to DA staff, approximately two-thirds of the investigator FTE will be funded through a Department of Industrial Relations grant beginning FY 2024-25. This position has not yet been hired.

The Alameda County Protocol outlines clear steps for law enforcement officers when encountering potential trafficking situations, emphasizing the importance of early identification, collaboration with service providers, and specialized investigative techniques. It also highlights the need for continuous officer training to effectively recognize and respond to trafficking cases.

Similarly, the Santa Clara County Protocol standardizes the response to human trafficking across all law enforcement agencies within the county, providing detailed procedures for handling both labor and sex trafficking cases. It underscores the importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration with victim services agencies and others, proper evidence collection, the use of interpreters, and maintaining ongoing contact with victims to ensure comprehensive support and effective prosecution.

The Department acknowledges that while the Department does not have a formalized protocol in place, the Department does have basic criteria and screening tools for assigning trafficking cases to SVU. The Department also released Department Notice 24-108 in June 2024 covering "Prostitution-Related Enforcement". Most of the Notice lists Penal Code sections that the Department deemed "common prostitution related offenses". The Notice, however, does also include a short section titled "Identification of Human Trafficking Victims", that states "Members are required by law to use due diligence to identify all victims of human trafficking". The section related to identifying human trafficking victims is summarized as follows:

- When detaining a suspect for a prostitution-related offense, officers must assess whether the individual is a victim of human trafficking.
- They should ask directly if the person is a trafficking victim.
- If there is reasonable belief or a report that the suspect is a trafficking victim, officers must immediately contact the Special Victims Unit (SVU) during business hours, or the Department Operations Center (DOC) after hours.
- Suspected trafficking victims should not be arrested for prostitution offenses. If no signs of trafficking are present, officers may consider arresting the individual for a prostitution-related offense.

Perhaps more important than whatever additions in staffing may be appropriate for SFPD's Special Victims Unit, the need for across-the-board human trafficking training for rank-and-file patrol officers and their managers could be equally or more important for identifying and recovering human trafficking victims. Since many human trafficking victims have contact with law enforcement due to association with other crimes such as prostitution and drug sales, it is important that all officers are able to detect signs of human trafficking in such cases and obtain needed victim support service resources to help victims, who may also be involved in criminal activity, extricate themselves from their circumstances and serve as witnesses against their traffickers. SFPD staff has expressed a need for more comprehensive training on human

trafficking for its rank-and-file officers but has indicated that it currently lacks the capacity to implement such training internally.

Research published in 2018 in the National Institute of Justice Journal analyzing SFPD's human trafficking incident reports found that the Special Victims Unit (SVU) often labels certain operations as human trafficking without clear evidence, undermining the accuracy of SFPD's data. The report also noted that while SFPD has improved in identifying trafficking cases overall, the challenges within SVU highlight the need for more precise protocols and training. Without these, the department risks presenting insufficient evidence to the District Attorney to support case filing and/or effective prosecution due to improper evidence collection and inadequate victim support, which are crucial for successful case outcomes.

Given that SFPD currently lacks a protocol similar to those in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties, implementing a comparable framework could significantly enhance the Department's ability to identify and investigate human trafficking cases, improve collaboration with service providers, and lead to more effective prosecution of traffickers while ensuring victims receive the support they need. More human trafficking training for officers outside the SVU would also help identify and pursue more cases since human trafficking is often identified by law enforcement in the course of pursuing other crimes.⁷

Santa Clara County's Law Enforcement Investigating Human Trafficking (LEIHT) Task Force

Collaboration between the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) and the San Francisco District Attorney's Office (SFDA) is critical in effectively addressing human trafficking cases. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of trafficking, successful investigations and prosecutions require seamless coordination between law enforcement and prosecutorial entities. Drawing from the practices of Santa Clara County's Law Enforcement Investigating Human Trafficking (LEIHT) Task Force, the SFPD and SFDA could benefit from adopting a more integrated approach that incorporates joint task forces, specialized training, and a victim-centered prosecution model.

Santa Clara County's LEIHT Task Force is a multi-disciplinary team including law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers, with significant contributions from federal agencies like Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and local partners such as the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office and San Jose Police Department. Key operations of the LEIHT Task Force include Operation Unbound, which led to the recovery of trafficking survivors and the arrest of a

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. National Human Trafficking Prosecution Best Practices Guide (2021).

trafficker, and Operation Lemon Wedge, which focused on demand reduction, resulting in multiple arrests of sex buyers and further investigations. LEIHT states that it prioritizes a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach, working closely with non-profits like Community Solutions to provide survivors with essential services such as legal aid, emergency housing, and counseling. LEIHT is preparing for large-scale events like the 2026 Super Bowl and FIFA World Cup, where human trafficking risks are expected to increase.

Similar to Santa Clara's LEIHT Task Force, the SFPD and SFDA should establish regular case review meetings, where investigators and prosecutors can exchange updates, address potential challenges in building cases, and ensure that all legal avenues are being explored. By fostering a cooperative environment, the City can enhance its ability to hold traffickers accountable while ensuring comprehensive, trauma-informed support for victims throughout the legal process.

In 2021, the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office received the Department of Justice's Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Grant from the Office of Victims of Crime for the Law Enforcement Initiative on Human Trafficking (LEIHT). This three-year grant provided funding for victim services, equipment, and staffing for the Task Force's law enforcement side. Additionally, beginning in FY 2022-2023, the County provided funding to support Task Force personnel. According to a September 2024 Santa Clara County Human Trafficking Task Force memo, these funding sources have greatly improved the Task Force's capacity to investigate human trafficking, recover victims, and apprehend traffickers.

In April 2024, the Office of Victims of Crime approved a no-cost extension, allowing LEIHT to continue using remaining funds from the 2021 grant. In May 2024, LEIHT and Community Solutions reapplied for Tier II of the OVC ECM Fiscal Year 24 grant, with a response expected by September 30, 2024.

The San Francisco District Attorney's Office should consider applying for similar funding in the future to support its anti-human trafficking efforts, leveraging these grants to enhance both victim services and law enforcement capabilities.

Considerations

The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) faces challenges in effectively addressing human trafficking due to staffing limitations, the absence of formal protocols, and lack of training of rank-and-file officers. The Special Victims Unit (SVU) is currently staffed by only one Inspector-Sergeant and one Sergeant who handle trafficking cases alongside other duties (including the case management of stalking, elder abuse, and financial abuse), limiting their capacity to focus on trafficking. Additionally, SFPD lacks formal protocols and specialized training for human trafficking, unlike Alameda and Santa Clara counties, which have structured guidelines that support consistent and effective responses. These limitations in staffing and the absence of

formal procedures likely contribute to the low number of trafficking cases being referred for prosecution, highlighting the need for more systematic approaches within SFPD.

- **Increase Dedicated Staffing:** SFPD should consider increasing the number of full-time staff dedicated exclusively to human trafficking within the Special Victims Unit. Expanding the team would allow for more focused investigations and improved case management, aligning SFPD's capabilities with those of neighboring jurisdictions that have dedicated human trafficking teams.
- **Develop and Implement Formal Protocols:** SFPD should develop and implement formal human trafficking protocols similar to those in Alameda and Santa Clara counties. These protocols should include clear guidelines for the identification, investigation, and support of trafficking victims, emphasizing a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach. Implementing such protocols would standardize responses across the Department and ensure that all officers are equipped with the necessary tools to handle trafficking cases effectively.
- **Enhance Officer Training:** Continuous and specialized training should be provided to all officers within SFPD to ensure they are capable of accurately identifying human trafficking cases in their normal course of duties. Training should cover the nuances of trafficking, proper evidence collection, and best practices for collaborating with victim services. This will help reduce the risk of misclassification and improve the overall effectiveness of trafficking investigations. Additionally, more in-depth training should be provided to at least one representative from each station to ensure that each station has a staff member who is well-versed in the nuances of trafficking. Furthermore, SFPD should leverage the expertise of CBOs that have offered to provide this specialized training. Engaging with these CBOs can help alleviate the Department's capacity limitations and foster stronger partnerships with community stakeholders.
- **Strengthen Collaboration with the District Attorney's Office:** SFPD should work closely with the District Attorney's Office to ensure that cases are thoroughly investigated and adequately supported to lead to successful prosecutions. This could involve joint training sessions, regular case reviews, and the establishment of a task force dedicated to improving prosecutorial outcomes for human trafficking cases. The DA's Office should also explore federal funding resources, such as Department of Justice's Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Grant from the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), to support its anti-human trafficking efforts, leveraging these grants to enhance both victim services and law enforcement capabilities.
- **Monitor and Evaluate the Impact of New Protocols and Training:** Once implemented, the new protocols and training programs should be regularly monitored and evaluated to assess their impact on the identification, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking cases. This will allow SFPD to make data-

driven adjustments to its approach and continuously improve its efforts to combat human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Services in San Francisco

San Francisco's structure around human trafficking services is multifaceted, involving local government agencies, law enforcement, and community-based organizations (CBOs).

As discussed previously, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) is responsible for investigating human trafficking cases and making arrests when warranted primarily through its Special Victims Unit (SVU), though SFPD representatives state that limited staffing has restricted its ability to address all cases effectively. Trafficking cases in which arrests have been made by SFPD are referred to the District Attorney's Office (SFDA), which decides whether to file charges. The SFDA Victim Services Division provides ongoing victim support.

Department on the Status of Women

The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) is tasked with helping transform San Francisco into a fully gender equitable City. Historically, the Department addressed gender-based violence, including human trafficking, within San Francisco. Since 2013, DOSW has led the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, although it has been largely inactive since FY 2019-20, with recent efforts in 2021 and 2023 focused on reviving and reorganizing it to improve the City's response to human trafficking.

DOSW manages two grants that fund services for victims of human trafficking and other related crimes: 1) the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Grants Portfolio, which has historically supported programs for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking and is funded by the General Fund, and 2) a \$7 million California Department of Social Services grant covering a three year period to continue the San Francisco Safety, Opportunity, and Lifelong Relationships initiative (SOL), which funds trauma-informed services for youth at risk of or experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The Department reports that it is transitioning to a role focused on "Watchdog, Advocacy, and Convening" activities, meaning in FY 2025-26 DOSW will not be reissuing its gender-based violence grants portfolio RFP. The Department reports that these duties will be shifting to MOHCD.

Office of Labor Standards Enforcement

The Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) plays a very limited role in trafficking prevention, with responsibilities primarily focused on enforcing labor laws and referring trafficking-related complaints to law enforcement when necessary. OLSE's involvement in anti-

trafficking efforts is typically incidental to its complaint-driven investigations of employer labor law violations. Further, OLSE representatives report that such cases are infrequent, with few cases referred in recent years.

Other City Departments

Other City departments also play peripheral roles in anti-trafficking efforts. The Department of Public Health (DPH), for example, once ran a program to address suspected trafficking in massage parlors, focusing on health compliance and worker protection. Additionally, the Human Services Agency (HSA), the Sheriff's Department, the Adult Probation Department, and others contribute to trafficking-related work through victim services and public safety efforts.

San Francisco International Airport (SFO) has launched an awareness initiative that includes placards in restrooms providing discreet information and resources for victims, including hotlines and QR codes. SFO was the first airport in the U.S. to train aviation personnel on human trafficking awareness, helping staff identify potential trafficking situations and coordinate with local and federal authorities as part of a broader regional effort.

Community-Based Organizations

In addition to City-led efforts, many community-based organizations (CBOs) are conducting anti-trafficking initiatives, including some that are partially funded by the City and others that receive no City funding, also provide critical services to human trafficking victims. These organizations often focus on specific populations or service gaps not covered by City programs, contributing to the overall support network for trafficking survivors in San Francisco.

This network of City departments and CBOs forms the foundation of San Francisco's anti-trafficking efforts. However, each organization's role is limited to its specific focus area, requiring greater interagency coordination to provide a more cohesive response to human trafficking.

The Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking

In March 2013, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee launched the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking to evaluate the City's efforts combating human trafficking and to identify gaps in survivor services. Since its formation, the Task Force has been led by the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) and included representatives from other City departments, law enforcement, and community-based organizations. However, City staff indicate that the Task Force became inactive starting in FY 2019-20, with the last official meeting agenda dated August 28, 2019. In a March 2023 report on human trafficking, DOSW noted efforts to revive the Task Force in 2021 through a series of discussions aimed at updating the City's human trafficking data

reporting and expanding the Task Force's influence. Despite these efforts, DOSW reported to the Board of Supervisors' Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee in March 2024 the need to reorganize the Task Force to make it more effective. Interviews with officials from various City departments, including the San Francisco Police Department, the Department of Public Health, and the District Attorney's Office's Victim Services Division, confirm that the Task Force has not been actively engaged in providing direction for the City's anti-human trafficking efforts or compiling performance metrics since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in late FY 2019-20.

To address the challenges faced by the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking in San Francisco, it is necessary to consider alternative collaborative frameworks and funding mechanisms. The South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking in Santa Clara County provides a relevant case study, as it operates with dedicated funding from the County and the San Jose Police Department. This financial support facilitates coordinated efforts among law enforcement and community organizations, distinguishing it from the unfunded San Francisco task force.

The newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights (OVWR) in San Francisco, created by a vote of the people in 2022, may serve as a suitable location for housing anti-trafficking initiatives. However, given the office's recent formation, the transition may require an adjustment period to ensure seamless integration of responsibilities. This proposal aligns with best practices, as identified by the National Institute of Justice, that recommend co-locating services—specifically both labor and sex trafficking initiatives—to enhance collaboration and support for victims. Further, it would be a more neutral entity than the Victims Services division of the District Attorney's Office, which provides services to victims of human trafficking whether their cases are being prosecuted or not but is part of the criminal justice system. As discussed above, many human trafficking victims are hesitant to interact with law enforcement agencies because of their seemingly complicit roles with traffickers and/or due to their immigration status. By utilizing the existing infrastructure and expertise within the new OVWR, San Francisco could potentially improve its response to both sex and labor human trafficking.

The Task Force should begin transitioning its responsibilities to the new OVWR, with a one-year timeline to ensure proper implementation and alignment of services. OVWR taking on the responsibilities of the Task Force would require the authorization of an additional full-time equivalent (FTE) position at least partially dedicated to this function to ensure adequate staffing and capacity to manage the expanded scope of work effectively.

While the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) has played a significant role in anti-trafficking efforts, it is important to recognize that human trafficking affects all genders, not just women. Trafficking is a multifaceted issue that impacts men, women, and nonbinary individuals alike. The focus of DOSW primarily on women's issues may send an unclear message or inadvertently overlook the needs of male and nonbinary trafficking victims. This further

underscores the need for a more inclusive approach that addresses the full spectrum of trafficking, which could be better achieved through the co-location of services under a broader, gender-neutral framework within the Office of Victims and Witness Rights.

The Task Force should also prioritize working with community-based organizations (CBOs) that are not currently funded by the City to ensure a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing human trafficking. These organizations often have critical grassroots connections and trusted relationships with communities that can help identify and support victims who might otherwise go unnoticed.

Mayor’s Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, Data Collection & Reporting

Since 2015, DOSW has published, on behalf of the Mayor’s Task Force, five annual reports reviewing the scope of human trafficking within San Francisco. A summary of the Department’s annual human trafficking report is presented in Exhibit 6 below.

Exhibit 6: San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, Annual Human Trafficking Reporting, Issued 2015-2023



Source: DOSW Annual Human Trafficking Reports

The Task Force’s reports on human trafficking in San Francisco consistently focus on sex trafficking, with some attention to labor trafficking, highlighting efforts to identify and support survivors through collaboration between government agencies and community-based organizations. Across all reports, the majority of identified survivors are women, many of whom are minors, and a significant number come from marginalized communities, particularly African Americans and immigrants. A recurring challenge noted is the difficulty in data collection, with issues like duplicated data from multiple agencies, underreporting, and varying definitions complicating the accuracy of the reports. The importance of collaboration is a central theme, with the Mayor’s Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking playing a crucial role.

The importance of services for human trafficking victims such as emergency shelter, case management, health services, legal assistance, and advocacy is consistently emphasized across the reports. However, there are differences over the years. The 2015 report focuses on distinguishing between labor and sex trafficking, highlighting underreporting in labor trafficking. The 2016 report offers more detailed demographic insights, while the 2017 report attempts to quantify the increase in identified cases due to improved service provider capacity. By 2018, the reports provide a broader data collection and comparative analysis over multiple years.

The 2021 report stands out due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection and service provision, leading to a marked decrease in reported cases—only 165 identified by just eight agencies compared to 673 cases identified by 22 agencies in 2017, 529 victims identified from 18 agencies in 2016, and 499 victims identified by 15 agencies in 2015. This stark drop underscores the critical issue with data collection, as fewer agencies contributed data, leading to a likely undercount of the actual scope of trafficking. Despite this, the report emphasizes the importance of capacity building within community organizations, noting that increased funding and resources directly correlate with a rise in identified cases. The 2021 report also offers strategic recommendations, including rebuilding the Mayor’s Task Force, expanding capacity within community organizations, and addressing service gaps to improve data quality and survivor support. These recommendations are particularly urgent given the decline in reporting and identified cases during the pandemic, highlighting the need for renewed efforts to accurately capture the extent of human trafficking in San Francisco.

Though DOSW issued annual reports between 2014 through 2019 and 2023 with data on the City’s anti-human trafficking activities, one of the ongoing critical challenges in San Francisco’s response to human trafficking was and continues to be the issue of data collection and reporting. DOSW reports difficulties in accurately capturing and sharing data on trafficking incidents. Inconsistent definitions, underreporting, and duplicated data from multiple agencies have complicated efforts to assess the true scope of trafficking in the City. These challenges hinder the development of effective strategies and the allocation of resources, making it difficult to fully understand and address the problem.

Inter-agency task forces are considered a best practice, by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Justice, to ensure that appropriate and coordinated approaches are in place to provide supportive services to help recover victims and to hold traffickers accountable for their crimes. The absence of the Task Force’s coordination efforts and ongoing rigorous measurement of human trafficking activity and the City’s response has eliminated critical information about the impact and effectiveness of services provided to curb human trafficking by City agencies and community-based organizations. While the Task Force has made recent efforts to revitalize itself through small circle discussions or focused conversations involving a limited number of stakeholders, the Task Force is not adequately planning coordinated efforts amongst all

stakeholders involved, including victim services, law enforcement, and other external entities, such as state and Federal agencies.

Task Force Strategic Planning

The San Francisco Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking currently operates without a formal, updated strategic plan, which has hindered its ability to effectively coordinate interagency efforts and track progress on key anti-trafficking initiatives. Previous draft strategic plans from the Task Force, while never fully adopted, included important elements such as enhanced interagency collaboration, improved victim support services, and comprehensive data collection initiatives. These drafts aimed to strengthen partnerships among City agencies, law enforcement, and community-based organizations, while also recommending a focus on labor and sex trafficking across all demographics.

To improve upon previous efforts and align with best practices from cities with successful anti-trafficking strategies, the Task Force's future strategic plan should include:

- **Clear Objectives, Accountability and Measurable Outcomes:** Define specific, measurable goals and responsible parties to track progress in areas like victim identification, prosecution of traffickers, and service provision and to ensure someone or some agency is accountable for results.
- **Interagency Coordination:** Establish a formal structure for collaboration between law enforcement, other City departments, and community organizations. This could include regular meetings and shared reporting tools.
- **Comprehensive Data Collection:** Standardize data definitions and collection methods across agencies to ensure accurate tracking of trafficking cases and trends.
- **Focus on Both Labor and Sex Trafficking:** Ensure equal attention to labor trafficking, which is often underreported, alongside sex trafficking efforts.
- **Victim-Centered Approach:** Incorporate trauma-informed practices and ensure that services are accessible to all victims, regardless of gender, age, or immigration status.

A strategic plan incorporating these elements would ensure more effective coordination, improved data accuracy, and a comprehensive approach to addressing human trafficking in San Francisco.

The San Francisco Safety, Opportunities, and Lifelong Relationships (SOL) Collaborative

DOSW also manages the SF SOL Collaborative, which provides trauma-informed services for at-risk youth experiencing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), including housing and mental health support.

The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) received a \$9.3 million grant from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) initially in 2019 to fund the San Francisco SOL (Safety, Opportunities, and Lifelong Relationships) Collaborative. This initiative focused on addressing issues related to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in San Francisco. Designed to develop a continuum of trauma-informed services for youth at risk of or experiencing CSEC, the initiative includes components like the HYPE Center, home-based care placements, and emergency placement services, with an emphasis on regional collaboration and comprehensive support. The state provided an additional \$7 million grant beginning in January 2023 (FY 2022-23). This new funding is intended to continue the project through December 2025 (FY 2025-26) and includes services focused on housing for youth currently being trafficked.

The grant funds the development and implementation of a comprehensive set of services under the Pilot Continuum, which includes:

- **Emergency Placement Model:** Establishing a minimum of two beds for emergency placement for CSE youth, focusing on immediate stabilization and harm reduction.
- **Home-Based Care Placement Model:** Continuing and enhancing a home-based care model, ensuring that Resource Family Homes are available and appropriately trained to care for CSE youth.
- **Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP):** Maintaining a minimum six-bed STRTP for CSE youth, ensuring the program meets all federal and state requirements for trauma-informed care.
- **Services Center:** Operating a 24/7 multidisciplinary services center that provides various on-site services, including mental health, vocational training, and health care, to CSE youth.
- **Coordinated Response Team:** Supporting a multidisciplinary mobile wraparound team available 24/7 to provide specialized services, including mental health and case management, to CSE youth and their caregivers.
- **Evaluation:** A comprehensive evaluation by an independent third-party to measure the effectiveness and impact of the Pilot Continuum, including both interim and final reports.

Per the executed grant agreement and responses from DOSW, the second phase \$7 million budget is allocated as follows for calendar years 2023-2025, with approximately \$2.7 million of the budget having been invoiced to CDSS, as of July 2024:

Exhibit 7: San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, CDSS Grant Award Budget, CYs 2023-2025

Category	Contracted Amount	Invoiced Amount, As of July 2024
Personnel*	\$780,374	\$349,829
Subcontractors	\$6,101,988	\$2,264,588
Indirect Costs	\$81,637	\$43,086
Other Costs	\$36,000	\$6,927
Total	\$7 million	~\$2.7 million

Source: Executed CDSS Grant Agreement & the Department on the Status of Women

*Funds 0.90 FTE of DOSW staff managing initiatives.

As shown in Exhibit 8, DOSW reports the following allocation of the \$6.1 million in CDSS grant funding subcontracted to community-based organizations across calendar years 2023 through 2025 and shown as the amount for Subcontractors in Exhibit 7. Expenditures for these grants average approximately \$2 million per year.

Exhibit 8: Three Year Allocation of CDSS State Grant by DOSW for the SOL Collaborative, CY 2023-2025

Subcontractor	Service	Contracted Amount	Invoiced through July 2024
Freedom Forward	Supports the HYPE Center, a low barrier multi-service center located at 198 Potrero Avenue, serving all at-risk youth, including those at risk of or experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.	\$2,071,301	\$987,438
UC Berkeley, Human Rights Center	Independent evaluation of youth outcomes and the overall continuum as required by the Grant.	\$1,295,209	\$465,339
West Coast Children’s Clinic	Mental health and service coordination throughout the continuum and provides training, technical assistance, and case consultations as needed.	\$825,249	\$378,177
Inquiring Systems, Inc – Village is Possible	The emergency placement component, Youth Stabilization Pathway, by providing peer staffing support in the placement. Additionally, the grant supports youth engagement through events and activities.	\$524,999	\$154,936
Seneca Family of Agencies	The home-based care component, FAM (family & me), for existing foster families within Seneca’s Resource Family program.	\$453,660	\$185,566
Alternative Family Services	The emergency placement component, Youth Stabilization Pathway, enhanced intensive foster care program model in addition to elements of the home-based care component, FAM (family & me), by providing alternative/secondary caregivers to youth placed in the emergency placement.	\$305,691	\$48,808
Ruby’s Place	The emergency placement component, Youth Stabilization Pathway, transitional housing program model, and short-term residential therapeutic programs.	\$200,001	\$13,143
Family Builders	The home-based care component, FAM (family & me), for existing foster families.	\$50,000	\$16,585
Legal Services for Children	Supported the emergency placement component of the grant by conducting outreach through annual convenings and youth focus groups, ensuring that youth perspectives were incorporated into the design and implementation process. DOSW reports this contract has been closed.	\$15,000	\$14,597
	Subcontractor Funds	\$5,741,110	\$2,264,589
	Unencumbered Funds	\$360,878	
	Total	\$6,101,988	

Source: Department of the Status on Women

The three-year \$7 million grant from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) enables the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) to continue to enhance the San Francisco SOL Collaborative through December 2025. This funding supports trauma-informed services for at-risk youth, maintains the necessary infrastructure for comprehensive care, and provides for an independent evaluation of the program's impact. Additionally, the grant funds a portion of a City employee's salary at DOSW. When asked about plans for sustaining these efforts after the funding period ends, the Department reported they are unable to maintain funding, as the current support comes from state funds. Sustaining the initiative would require financial backing from other agencies.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Grants Portfolio

DOSW awards City grants to various organizations and programs that support survivors of gender-based violence, including human trafficking. The grants are funded through the City's General Fund, and DOSW typically issues a Request for Proposals to invite organizations to apply for its Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Grants Portfolio grant funding. The current GBV portfolio includes awardees of a five-year RFP cycle ending in FY 2024-25. According to DOSW, the entire GBV portfolio for the 5-year RFP cycle thus far is \$37,697,585, and approximately 10%, or \$3.8 million, of the funding has been awarded as contracts exclusively for trafficking services. This amounts to average GBV grant expenditures of \$760,000 per year for human trafficking related services.

As shown in Exhibit 9 DOSW reports approximately \$2.9 million in annualized funding granted to the following CBOs that serve human trafficking victims and other women in vulnerable circumstances for the five-year RFP cycle. DOSW reports the dollar amount listed in the annualized base contract amount, and this amount does not include cost of living adjustments nor potential add-backs. The first four CBOs on the list have contracts exclusively designated for trafficking services, providing approximately \$677,000 of annualized funding. The last five CBOs provide services related to gender-based violence, including trafficking, providing approximately \$2.2 million of annualized funding; although, these dollar amounts may include funding that directly supports human trafficking services, as well as funds allocated for broader gender-based violence initiatives. Some overlap may exist between services aimed specifically at human trafficking victims and those addressing other forms of gender-based violence.

Exhibit 9: Five Year Funding for Gender-Based Violence Portfolio Subcontractors Serving Victims of Human Trafficking, Five-Year RFP Cycle Ending FY 2024-25

Community-Based Organization	Service	Annualized Funding
CBOs with Contracts Exclusively for Trafficking Services		
San Francisco SafeHouse Transitional Housing	Transitional housing, offering secure and confidential housing for 12 women at a time, with a mission to empower and support women experiencing housing instability and sexual exploitation.	\$293,324
San Francisco SafeHouse Hope Center Drop-In Program	Supports a safe environment for women who have experienced homelessness and sexual exploitation, offering gender-responsive and trauma-informed care.	\$90,798
Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center (LYRIC), SF SAYFTE	Provides intervention and advocacy for youth at risk of or experiencing sex and labor trafficking, offering emergency housing, case management, and community-building activities.	\$216,180
Huckleberry Youth Programs	Huckleberry’s Advocacy and Response Team (HART) program provides a continuum of services for youth at risk of commercial sexual exploitation.	\$77,377
Subtotal		\$677,679
CBOs Providing Services for Gender-Based Violence, Including Trafficking		
Gum Moon Women’s Residence Hall	Transitional housing for immigrant women who are survivors of domestic violence and trafficking.	\$177,599
Asian Women Shelter	A 24/7 residential shelter program for survivors of domestic violence and trafficking.	\$305,948
Bay Area Legal Aid	Provides legal assistance, community education, and technical training for survivors of gender-based violence, including trafficking.	\$289,042
Mary Elizabeth Inn (MEI)	Offers property management and support services for 58 permanent supportive housing units, serving formerly homeless single adult women, including trafficking survivors.	\$1,077,328
Nihonmachi Legal Outreach (API Legal Outreach)	Provides comprehensive legal assistance to survivors of violence, including trafficking, primarily serving underserved Asian/Pacific Islander communities.	\$393,933
Subtotal		\$2,243,850
Total Overall		\$2,921,439

Source: Department of the Status on Women

DOSW's FY 2023-24 Executive Summary report provides a detailed overview of the Department on the Status of Women's (DOSW) Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Grants Portfolio as it undergoes a significant strategic transition. Historically, the GBV Portfolio has been a crucial element of DOSW's work, focusing on grant-making for programs addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.

One of the key points highlighted in the report is DOSW's strategic shift from being a general grant-making agency to assuming a more focused role as a "Watchdog, Advocacy, and Convening organization." Starting in FY 2025-2026, DOSW will no longer reissue its GBV grants portfolio RFP in the traditional manner. Instead, the Department is shifting its focus to broader initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of women, girls, and nonbinary people through health and safety, economic security, and civic engagement and political empowerment.

Despite this shift, the report emphasizes that DOSW will continue to invest in programs dedicated to combating gender-based violence, but these efforts will be aligned with its broader goals. The Department plans to address existing performance and effectiveness issues within current contracts and identify appropriate homes for these services within other departments that possess relevant expertise and better funding capacity.

In September 2024, the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) issued the Community Development RFP for FY 2025-30, and included within the RFP is the GBV portfolio. According to MOHCD, a budget of approximately \$8.5 million will be allocated for grants specifically dedicated to the gender-based violence portfolio. Additionally, MOHCD intends to have two full-time equivalent positions fully dedicated to staffing the portfolio.

Considerations

DOSW has historically played a central role in addressing gender-based violence and human trafficking within the City, focusing on the needs of women, girls, and nonbinary individuals. However, with the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking being inactive since FY 2019-20, there has been a gap in consistent interagency collaboration, which is crucial for addressing the complex issue of trafficking. Additionally, the recent establishment of the Office of Victims and Witness Rights presents an opportunity for centralizing anti-trafficking efforts, but the transition to this new structure may require an adjustment period to ensure the integration of responsibilities without disrupting services.

- **Strengthen Interagency Collaboration and Strategic Planning:** The newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights (OVWR) should reactivate and restructure the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking to include representatives from all relevant City agencies and community organizations. This would enhance coordination and information sharing necessary for addressing human trafficking effectively. Additionally, consideration should be given to

securing dedicated funding to support the Task Force's activities, similar to models used in other jurisdictions. Specifically, OVWR should receive at least an additional one full-time equivalent (FTE) position that would be dedicated to the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking. A comprehensive strategic plan must be developed to guide these efforts, ensuring clear goals, resource allocation, and successful implementation. The Task Force is currently housed in the Department on the Status of Women, and the responsibilities should be fully transferred to OVWR by October 2025. However, the strategic planning process should begin immediately and be completed within six months, ideally by hiring a third-party consultant to expedite the process.

- **Co-locate Anti-Trafficking Services:** The co-location of both labor and sex trafficking initiatives within the newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights should be pursued. This aligns with best practices that suggest co-locating services can enhance collaboration and improve support for victims.
- **Develop a Sustainability Plan:** With the current funding from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) set to end in December 2025, it is necessary for DOSW to develop a sustainability plan for the SOL Collaborative. This plan should explore potential new funding sources, partnerships, and opportunities for integrating these efforts with other City departments to ensure the long-term viability of these services.
- **Enhance Data Reporting and Accuracy:** The Mayor's Task Force should prioritize the improvement of data collection and reporting processes. This includes re-engaging all relevant agencies in the data collection effort, standardizing reporting practices across departments, and ensuring that the annual reports are comprehensive and reliable. This will provide a more accurate picture of human trafficking in San Francisco and support data-driven decision-making. Regular audits of the data and increased transparency in reporting could also help to rebuild trust and improve collaboration among stakeholders.

The Department of Public Health (DPH)

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) addresses human trafficking through healthcare provider training, patient education programs, permitting services, and community collaboration. SFDPH trains healthcare providers to identify and assist trafficking victims and works with the San Francisco Unified School District to integrate human trafficking education into school curricula under the California Healthy Youth Act. The Community Health Equity and Promotion Branch supports community health and healthcare access efforts, while the Massage Program regulates massage establishments, focusing on compliance and worker protection.

The Massage Program

The Massage Program is a program within the San Francisco Department of Public Health's Environmental Health Branch (EHB) that determines compliance with pertinent City health regulations and issues permits to massage establishments. The program was established in response to numerous complaints about massage parlors, particularly those suspected of operating as fronts for illegal activities such as the sex trade and human trafficking. The program focuses on regulating massage establishments by ensuring compliance with health and safety codes, identifying unpermitted or illegitimate businesses, and supporting workers, many of whom are undocumented and primarily from the Chinese community.

In addition to performing enforcement actions like health regulation compliance and issuing fines, the Massage Program adopted a more supportive approach by collaborating in past years with the Community Health Equity & Promotion Branch (CHEP). This collaboration aimed to provide workers who might be being trafficked with access to essential resources, such as housing assistance, health and safety guidance, career counseling, and legal support. The program also made efforts to shift fines from individual workers to business owners, particularly when workers were found to be unlicensed, and offered workshops as an alternative to paying fines. The initiative ran actively for about four years before losing its funding in 2019.

Considerations

According to the U.S. Department of Justice's National Human Trafficking Best Practices Guide, healthcare institutions play a pivotal role in identifying victims. Medical professionals are often in a position to notice signs of abuse, malnutrition, and trauma, which could indicate trafficking. Training these professionals to recognize such indicators and properly screen patients can significantly enhance victim identification. We recommend that the Department of Public Health (DPH) evaluate its current training programs to ensure that healthcare professionals are adequately equipped to identify and respond to human trafficking cases.

Given the challenges encountered, such as worker reluctance to provide information about their traffickers due to immigration fears and difficulty accessing certain establishments, the City should evaluate the effectiveness of the Massage Program intervention in mitigating human

trafficking risks. The program's success depends on the thorough identification of at-risk individuals and the availability of adequate resources to meet their needs. Additionally, if funding is secured and the program is continued, there should be a mechanism for assessing the impact of these workshops on reducing human trafficking, as well as ensuring that the collaboration between EHB and CHEP is closely aligned with broader anti-trafficking efforts in San Francisco.

The Office of Labor Standards Enforcement

The Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) has a limited role in anti-human trafficking efforts in San Francisco. OLSE reports the Office proactively investigates City labor law compliance, such as prevailing wage and the Minimum Compensation Ordinance, but the Office does not have the statutory authority to proactively conduct criminal investigations. Although, when trafficking concerns arise, OLSE refers cases to the Police Department. The Office's work is frequently complaint-driven for private employers; OLSE investigates worker complaints, often received from third parties like coworkers, customers, or advocacy groups but does not proactively initiate human trafficking investigations. The Office estimates processing up to three such cases over the last eight years.

OLSE is also responsible for enforcing the Sweatfree Contracting Ordinance, which includes staffing the Sweatfree Procurement Advisory Group and managing a \$75,000 contract for conducting site visits and investigations, including potential overseas investigations in collaboration with the City of Los Angeles, aiming to prevent sweatshop labor conditions in the manufacturing of goods procured by the City. This work directly ties into human trafficking prevention, as sweatshop labor is often linked to labor trafficking, where individuals are forced to work under exploitative conditions.

Considerations

To effectively involve OLSE in combating human trafficking through labor standards in San Francisco, the Department should develop detailed labor trafficking detection guidelines. Detecting potential human trafficking could be integrated with OLSE's existing labor law violation investigations, when the Office engages with employers and has an opportunity to identify signs of labor trafficking operations.

Drawing upon the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Labor Trafficking Protocol Guidelines and initiatives taken on by the Santa Clara County OLSE, the San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement could effectively incorporate several aspects to enhance its efforts in combating human trafficking.

- **Prevention and Community Education:** The Office can partner with community organizations to provide community education and awareness campaigns, collaborating with community-based organizations to identify and address vulnerabilities that may lead to trafficking.

- **Identification Tools and Training:** Developing and implementing tools and best practices for assessing potential trafficking situations can be managed by the Office. This includes training for law enforcement and other first responders to recognize signs of labor trafficking.
- **Victim Support Services:** While the Office may not directly provide victim services, it can ensure that victims have access to culturally appropriate services, including legal and immigration assistance, and coordinate with other agencies to address physical and mental health needs.
- **Accountability Protocols:** Establishing protocols for criminal and civil accountability of traffickers, and working with federal agencies to pursue remedies, can be part of the Office's oversight responsibilities.
- **OLSE Participation in the Mayor's Task Force.** Previous annual human trafficking reports and minutes from the Mayor's Task Force meetings confirm that the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) was previously involved in the Task Force's activities. We recommend that OLSE continue its involvement in the reignited Mayor's Task Force, under OVWR, and assume responsibility for overseeing labor trafficking issues to ensure coordinated enforcement of labor trafficking protocols.

Other Community-Based Support Services

San Francisco SafeHouse purchased 101 Gough Street to develop a 22-unit permanent supportive housing facility, aimed at providing a safe and stable environment for trafficked or sexually exploited women and their children. In February 2024, SafeHouse purchased the building for \$4 million, with a \$1.5 million down payment and \$2.5 million seller financing over 2.5 years. The building requires a minimum of \$4 million in rehabilitation work but is anticipated to open in 2025. SafeHouse reports that the initial purchase of the building was funded through its own resources, though the organization hopes to offset the rehabilitation costs by securing funds from Proposition A Affordable Housing Bond, once those funds are released. SafeHouse is also seeking private funding and has created a capital campaign to help cover the rehabilitation costs.

The San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking (SFOAHT) is particularly focused on collaboration, education, and advocacy. SFOAHT organizes events such as conferences and training sessions to raise awareness and educate both the public and professionals about human trafficking. The organization also facilitates networking among law enforcement, government agencies, and service providers to promote best practices and policy solutions in addressing trafficking across the Bay Area. SFOAHT operates a human trafficking hotline serving trafficking victims within the Bay area. SF SafeHouse reports that the organization acts as a fiscal sponsor for SFOAHT's human trafficking hotline. SafeHouse helped SFOAHT secure funding from the California Office of Emergency Services and receives passthrough funds, which are then disbursed to SFOAHT for the hotline's operation.

Considerations for Strengthening Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

To effectively revitalize San Francisco's Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, it is essential to ensure that community-based organizations (CBOs), such as the San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking (SFCAHT), are meaningfully involved in the process. SFCAHT, for example, plays a vital role in education, advocacy, and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders in the Bay Area. Its participation in the Task Force would bring valuable insights into best practices and community outreach.

Other CBOs in San Francisco that provide direct services to trafficking victims, such as emergency shelters, legal aid, and mental health support, should also have a seat at the table. Their on-the-ground experience can inform the strategic direction of the Task Force by highlighting service gaps, victim needs, and emerging trends in trafficking that may not be captured by government agencies alone. Their participation is also critical in building trust with trafficking survivors, who may be hesitant to engage directly with law enforcement.

Incorporating diverse CBOs in the strategic planning process would ensure a more comprehensive, victim-centered approach. Additionally, the Task Force should consider developing protocols that clearly outline roles for CBOs in supporting victims and collaborating with law enforcement and government agencies. This will enhance the overall coordination, leading to improved outcomes for survivors.

Finally, the Task Force should ensure regular communication and reporting channels between CBOs and government entities to share data, identify service overlaps, and address emerging challenges collectively. Including all relevant stakeholders in the strategic planning process will strengthen the City's overall response to human trafficking.

Conclusion

San Francisco's efforts to combat human trafficking involve multiple City departments and initiatives that provide direct services, develop policies, and raise public awareness. Key players include the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) and the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), both responsible for resource allocation, victim support, and public education. However, the City's strategy suffers from a lack of centralized coordination, leading to fragmented and inefficient efforts.

The San Francisco Police Department and the San Francisco District Attorney's Office face additional challenges in identifying and prosecuting trafficking cases. SFPD's data shows a significant decline in identified cases, dropping from 71 incidents in 2018 to just 8 in 2023, and prosecution rates remain low, with only 11 cases filed over six years. These numbers suggest

underreporting, difficulties in case identification, and reluctance from victims to cooperate due to fear of retaliation or trauma.

Additionally, the lack of consistent collaboration between SFPD and the District Attorney's Office impedes the ability to fully investigate and prosecute trafficking cases. Improved coordination—through joint task forces, regular case reviews, and joint trainings—would ensure that cases are more effectively handled, increasing prosecutorial success and supporting victim recovery.

The diminished activity of the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking further complicates interagency coordination. Best practices from the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking emphasize the importance of collaboration across government agencies and with non-governmental partners to effectively combat trafficking. The plan suggests enhancing community-coordinated responses and incorporating survivor voices to create victim-centered and trauma-informed strategies. Reactivating the Task Force and implementing these best practices could strengthen collaboration among departments, ensuring a more unified and strategic approach to combating trafficking in the City.

Additionally, there is a notable lack of focus on labor trafficking within San Francisco's current anti-trafficking efforts. While sex trafficking cases often receive more attention, labor trafficking remains underrepresented and insufficiently addressed. The federal Office of Justice Programs Human Trafficking Task Force Model recommends establishing sustainable, locally led task forces that emphasize comprehensive victim assistance and sustained law enforcement leadership. One potential solution could be to move the Task Force to the newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights, which, although new, could provide a centralized structure for these efforts. By integrating these recommendations, San Francisco can develop a more holistic and effective response to all forms of human trafficking.

In conclusion, San Francisco's strategy for addressing human trafficking includes direct services, policy development, oversight, contract management, and public awareness initiatives. Challenges remain in maintaining interagency coordination, particularly with the decreased activity of the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking. Strengthening collaboration among departments and ensuring consistent efforts are essential for improving the City's response to human trafficking. Reactivating the Task Force and implementing enhanced protocols and training could help address these challenges.

Policy Options

The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) should:

1. Consider Increasing Dedicated Staffing: SFPD should consider increasing the number of full-time staff dedicated exclusively to human trafficking cases within

the Special Victims Unit (SVU). The current staffing level is inadequate to handle the complexity and volume of all human trafficking cases, limiting comprehensive investigations. Transfers of existing staff should be considered first before proposing additional positions for this purpose.

2. Establish Human Trafficking Protocols: SFPD should develop formal human trafficking protocols, modeled after those in Alameda and Santa Clara counties, to standardize responses and improve case management. These protocols should include victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches, as well as proper evidence collection procedures.
3. Provide Specialized Officer Training: SFPD should provide continuous, specialized training for all officers on identifying human trafficking cases, proper evidence collection, and victim interaction. This will ensure that trafficking victims are identified even during routine law enforcement activities. SFPD should train at least one officer from each station extensively on human trafficking to serve as a specialized point of contact, ensuring a more effective response and increased case identification across the City. Furthermore, SFPD should leverage the expertise of community-based organizations (CBOs) that could potentially provide this specialized training. Engaging with such CBOs can help alleviate the Department's capacity limitations and foster stronger partnerships with community stakeholders.
4. Monitor the Impact of New Protocols & Training: SFPD should regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any newly implemented protocols and training programs. This will allow for data-driven adjustments to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking cases.

The San Francisco District Attorney's Office (SFDA) should:

5. Strengthen Collaboration with SFPD: SFDA should work closely with SFPD through joint training sessions, regular case reviews, and coordinated task forces. This will ensure that cases are thoroughly investigated and prepared for prosecution, improving prosecutorial outcomes for human trafficking cases. The DA's Office should also explore federal funding resources, such as Department of Justice's Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Grant from the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), to support its anti-human trafficking efforts, leveraging these grants to enhance both victim services and law enforcement capabilities.

The new Office of Victim and Witness Rights (OVWR) should:

6. Reignite and Administer the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking: The Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking should be fully transitioned to the

OVWR by October 2025. The Task Force should be reactivated and restructured to include representatives from all relevant City agencies and community organizations. Additionally, consideration should be given to securing dedicated funding to support the Task Force's activities, similar to models used in other jurisdictions.

7. Separate from staffing needed for OVWR's responsibilities approved by the voters in 2022, the Office should request one additional position to ensure adequate staffing and capacity to manage the expanded scope of work transferred from DOSW effectively.
8. Develop a Strategic Plan for the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking: A comprehensive strategic plan must be developed to guide these efforts, ensuring clear goals, resource allocation, and successful implementation. This strategic planning process should begin immediately and be completed within six months, ideally by hiring a third-party consultant to expedite the process.
9. Co-locate Anti-Trafficking Services: The co-location of both labor and sex trafficking initiatives within the newly established Office of Victims and Witness Rights should be pursued. This aligns with best practices that suggest co-locating services can enhance collaboration and improve support for victims.
10. Improve Data Reporting: The Mayor's Task Force, under OVWR, should prioritize improving data collection and reporting practices across all agencies involved in anti-human trafficking efforts. This includes standardizing definitions and data collection methods to better track human trafficking trends in the City.

The Department on the Status of Women should:

11. Develop a Sustainability Plan: DOSW should develop a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term viability of anti-trafficking programs, particularly the SOL Collaborative, beyond current funding that is set to expire in December 2025.
12. Support the Mayor's Task Force Transition: DOSW should actively support OVWR during the one-year transition period of the Mayor's Task Force. This support will ensure continuity, knowledge transfer, and the seamless integration of existing processes and resources.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) should:

13. Evaluate Healthcare Provider Training: SFDPH should evaluate its current training programs for healthcare professionals to ensure they are adequately equipped to identify and respond to human trafficking cases. Medical providers play a critical role in detecting signs of trafficking, such as abuse, malnutrition, or trauma.

14. Evaluate the Massage Program: DPH should assess the Massage Program’s effectiveness in addressing human trafficking, focusing on challenges like worker reluctance to report due to immigration fears and difficulty assessing establishments. This evaluation should ensure at-risk individuals are identified, with resources meeting their needs. If funded, the program should include metrics to evaluate the impact on worker safety, awareness, and reporting. Collaboration between the Environmental Health Branch (EHB) and Community Health Equity & Promotion (CHEP) should be closely aligned with the Mayor’s Task Force on Human Trafficking efforts.

The San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) should:

15. Develop Labor Trafficking Protocols: OLSE should develop specific protocols to integrate with their current labor law enforcement activities to detect labor trafficking, and coordinate efforts with other City departments.
16. Engage in Interagency Coordination: OLSE should ensure continued involvement in the Mayor’s Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking to address labor trafficking issues in coordination with other City agencies and law enforcement.

Appendix I: Summary of Federal Activities Subsequent to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

- **Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 (TVPRA 2003):** This Act refined federal criminal provisions against trafficking, making human trafficking crimes a RICO predicate and allowing victims to sue traffickers in federal court. It established a Senior Policy Operating Group to coordinate federal anti-trafficking activities and required an annual report from the Attorney General on U.S. efforts to implement the TVPA.
- **Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 (TVPRA 2005):** The 2005 reauthorization provided extraterritorial jurisdiction over trafficking offenses committed overseas by federal employees or contractors. It established grant programs for victim assistance and law enforcement and expanded reporting requirements from the 2003 Act.
- **William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA 2008):** This Act introduced new crimes and penalties related to trafficking, expanded protections for T visa holders, and required screening of unaccompanied alien children as potential trafficking victims. It also increased penalties for trafficking-related crimes and imposed liability on those recruiting workers through fraudulent means.
- **Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 (TVPRA 2013):** Focused on eliminating trafficking from supply chains, this legislation required partnerships between the U.S. government and private entities to prevent the use of goods produced with trafficked labor. It also strengthened standards for the elimination of trafficking and extended the statute of limitations for civil actions related to trafficking.
- **Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (JVTA):** The JVTA added legal tools to prosecute sex trafficking customers and advertisers, directed forfeited assets to satisfy victim restitution, and created a mandatory special assessment to fund victim services. It also mandated the creation of a National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, outlines the U.S. government's approach to preventing and responding to human trafficking, focusing on several key areas: enhancing victim identification and support, improving investigations and prosecutions, increasing collaboration across agencies, and promoting public awareness and education. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of data collection and analysis to better understand the scope of human trafficking and to measure the effectiveness of anti-trafficking initiatives. This coordinated approach aims to bring together federal, state, and local efforts to effectively combat human trafficking across the nation.
- **Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017:** This Act increased transparency in federal anti-trafficking efforts and mandated the development of a victim screening

protocol. It required reports on trafficking prevalence and allowed the Attorney General to seek civil injunctions against trafficking activities.

- **Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018:** This Act increased focus on forced labor and required reporting on goods produced through forced labor. It also established a working group on demand reduction and amended the Child Soldiers Prevention Act to include security forces.
- **The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, December 2021:** Issued by the Biden administration, the National Action Plan is a comprehensive strategy aimed at strengthening the U.S. government's efforts to combat human trafficking. The plan is built on four key pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships. It focuses on enhancing victim-centered approaches, increasing support for survivors, and improving the coordination of federal, state, local, and tribal anti-trafficking efforts. The plan also emphasizes the importance of reducing the demand for human trafficking, particularly in labor and sex trafficking, and calls for the integration of anti-trafficking measures into broader efforts to promote equity and justice. Additionally, the National Action Plan prioritizes the use of innovative technologies and data-driven approaches to identify and disrupt trafficking networks, while also ensuring that survivors receive the comprehensive services they need for recovery and reintegration into society.