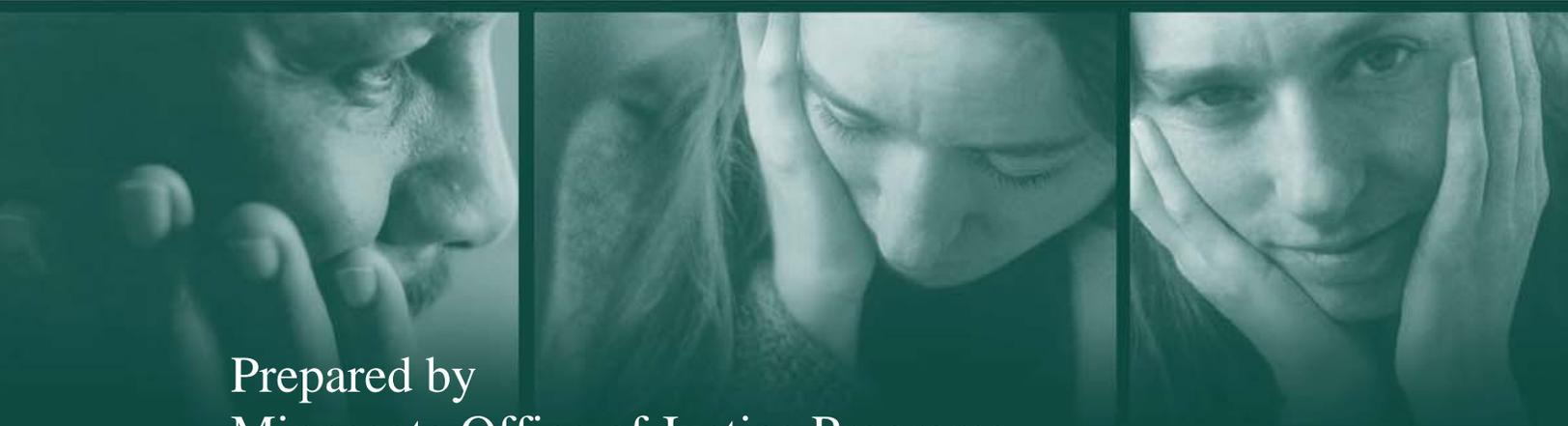


# **Minnesota's Human Trafficking Task Force**

A Report to the Minnesota Legislature

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# Introduction

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In 2006, the Legislature passed Minnesota Statute section 299A.79 requiring the commissioner of public safety to develop a plan to address current trafficking and prevent future human trafficking in Minnesota. This plan, at a minimum, must include:

1. ways to train agencies, organizations and officials involved in law enforcement, prosecution and social services,
2. ways to increase public awareness of human trafficking, and
3. procedures to enable the state government to work with non-governmental organizations to prevent trafficking.

In addition, this legislation requires the commissioner to review existing services and facilities to determine if trafficking victims' needs can be met through these services, and to determine ways to coordinate the following services:

- Medical and mental health services
- Housing
- Education and job training
- English as a second language
- Interpreting services
- Legal and immigration services
- Victim compensation.

In order to develop a comprehensive plan to address the complicated issue of trafficking and the needs of trafficking victims, the commissioner created, per Minnesota Statute section 299A.7955, a human trafficking task force. This task force is to advise the commissioner on a statewide trafficking assessment and on the commissioner's plan to address human trafficking and prevent future trafficking in Minnesota.

# Task Force Membership and Structure

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The legislation requires a 22-member task force comprised of representatives from a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies. The current membership of the human trafficking task force includes representatives from the following governmental agencies:

- Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association
- Minnesota Sheriffs' Association
- Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- St. Paul Police Department
- Hennepin County Attorney's Office
- Ramsey County Attorney's Office
- Minnesota Attorney General's Office
- United States Attorney's Office
- Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans
- Minnesota Chicano-Latino Affairs Council

It also includes representatives from the following non-governmental agencies:

- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Civil Society
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Breaking Free
- Minnesota Council of Churches
- Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute
- Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
- Deborah E. Powell Center for Women's Health

This comprehensive membership will ensure that the work of the task force is informed from a variety of perspectives on both a policy and practice level.

The task force met for the first time on September 28, 2006 with Mary Ellison, deputy commissioner of Public Safety, welcoming the members. Danette Buskovich of the Office of Justice Programs will be staffing the task force with Charlie Petersen of the Management Analysis and Development facilitating and coordinating the meetings. During this first meeting, the task force selected two co-chairs and agreed to quarterly meetings. There was also discussion of forming subcommittees as their work progresses.

The second meeting, which met on November 29, focused on developing the task force's definition of human trafficking. Members believed this to be an important first step as this definition will inform the work of the task force, shape the scope and direction of the work, and serve as the basis for all discussion.

Members submitted their working definitions, or the statutes under which they operate, prior to the meeting and then used them as a basis for discussion. The task force has determined that:

*Human Trafficking means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, enticement, provision obtaining or receipt of any person by any means for the purpose or facilitation of sexual or economic exploitation.*

*This definition presumes that:*

- *traffickers exploit vulnerable people and victims of human trafficking can be any age, gender or nationality,*
- *human trafficking is exploitation-based and not transportation-based, and*
- *the deception, fraud and coercion inherent in human trafficking makes victim consent irrelevant and not a defense for those charged with trafficking crimes.*

## **Task Force Initiatives**

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During the September 28 meeting, members outlined their expectations for the task force. Members would like the task force to develop a common language and understanding of the issue, and to be a task force that is culturally competent, action-oriented, and working toward prevention and intervention for both international and domestic human trafficking. The members also discussed the work they would like to accomplish. This work is outlined under each of the legislatively-mandated plan components.

### **Data Analysis**

*“The commissioner shall analyze the data collection in section 299A.75 to develop a plan to address current trafficking and prevent future trafficking in this state.”*

The human trafficking task force believes in evidence-based interventions and an understanding of human trafficking in Minnesota based on sound statistical data. Task force members would like to generate statistics and help to develop reliable, accessible and centralized data. Members believe that funding and best practices are tied to understanding the issue of trafficking in our state and that good data informs good strategies for prevention, intervention, and service planning. The task force members believe that good data is based on both qualitative and quantitative sources. Special attention must be paid to defining the problem of trafficking, understanding the barriers that exist in finding victims, and determining the service needs of victims.

## **Training Plan**

The commissioner's plan must include *“ways to train agencies, organizations, and officials involved in law enforcement, prosecution, and social services”* this should include, *“methods used in identifying trafficking victims, including preliminary interview techniques and appropriate interrogation methods, methods for prosecuting traffickers, methods for promoting the rights of trafficking victims...and methods for promoting the safety of trafficking victims.”*

The human trafficking task force will develop agency and provider training, and will examine different models of service provider collaboration to ensure improved jurisdictional coordination at the local, state and federal levels. Collaborations must be built on respect for multi-disciplinary perspectives focused on the social and human costs of trafficking.

## **Public Awareness Initiative**

The public awareness initiative must, at a minimum, address, *“the risks of becoming a trafficking victim, common recruitment techniques; use of debt bondage, blackmail, forced labor and services, prostitution, and other coercive tactics, and risks of assault, criminal sexual conduct, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, and psychological harm; crime victims' rights, and reporting requirement activities involved in trafficking.”*

The human trafficking task force will focus its efforts on prevention and intervention through education and identifying champions within diverse communities to ensure public awareness campaigns that reach the intended target with a message that is effective. The task force first developed a statewide definition of trafficking (see page X). It plans on examining the aspects of our culture that promote human trafficking. In addition, it plans on increasing the public awareness of victim resources and work toward increasing the trust victims have in the system so that they fully utilize the resources currently available. All of this will move Minnesota toward an educated and motivated community with no tolerance for human trafficking.

While the work of the task force is to determine a plan to address human trafficking in Minnesota, it is important to note, that if adopted, implementing this plan will likely involve the dedication of resources. Minnesota has many resources currently in place, but initiatives that raise public awareness, and bring victims and offenders to the attention of law enforcement will result in increased investigations and prosecutions. These are very complicated crimes that require comprehensive and coordinated investigations. In addition, service organizations may see an increase in the number of victims seeking assistance. The task force has not developed any budgets to address these potential needs, nor does it suppose to know what resources will be needed.

# Next Steps

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While the task force has only been able to meet twice before the completion of this report, the work accomplished so far is in alignment with the legislation governing its mission:

1. The task force has the required membership<sup>1</sup>
2. The task force has an operational structure
3. The task force has begun identifying the work to be accomplished in the areas of data analysis, training and public awareness on this issue.

The task force will be meeting again in February. During that meeting, members will hear presentations on the human trafficking work occurring in Minnesota and will determine membership on various sub-committees to begin formulating the required plan to address trafficking in our state.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been discussion amongst task force members that the task force may not be entirely representative of our diverse community. Members will be exploring this issue at future meetings to ensure that the work and recommendations of the task force is culturally appropriate and competent.