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## Collaboration Strategies to Help Survivors of Human Trafficking Overcome Barriers to Economic Mobility

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*The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.*

Promoting economic mobility for vulnerable populations involves addressing housing, employment, physical and/or behavioral health, education, and other barriers, and requires effort from the entire community. The involvement of diverse organizations is especially necessary to address the complex barriers faced by survivors of human trafficking.

If your expertise lies in providing housing assistance, consider partnering with a local entity that understands survivors' social service needs. If your organization provides employment, health, or other social services to survivors of trafficking or any vulnerable population, consider partnering with a housing organization or with an [EnVision Center](#) to co-locate housing and service assistance. If your organization is not engaged in either area, contact organizations providing direct services to determine how resources you can offer may help fill gaps in local services.

Below are some ways to collaborate with community partners to build comprehensive support networks that will help survivors of trafficking achieve self-sufficiency.

### Understand the Housing and Service Landscape in Your Community

Know the key stakeholders: Which organizations offer resources that may help trafficking survivors achieve economic mobility? Consider convening stakeholders, including non-federally funded organizations, to better understand their strengths and potential contributions, or connect with an existing group, such as a Continuum of Care. Eligibility for programs will vary based on legal status, income, health status and diagnosis, and other factors.

### Important early partners in the effort to aid and empower survivors:

- [The National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) can provide referrals to local anti-trafficking organizations.
- [EnVision Centers](#) are demonstration sites that provide communities with a centralized hub for assistance in four areas: economic empowerment, educational advancement, health and wellness, and character and leadership.
- [Continuums of Care \(CoCs\)](#) are networks of people and organizations in a defined geographic area responsible for coordinating the response to homelessness. Nearly all

funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) flows through CoCs.

Consider including the following partners based on survivor needs, local context, and organizational capacity:

**Service Providers:**

- Anti-trafficking organizations and intimate partner violence service providers
- EnVision Centers, employment assistance centers, educational and training entities
- Early childhood and child care providers, including Head Start
- Community health centers, health care providers, and clinicians
- Mental health agencies and substance use treatment providers
- Law enforcement and legal aid organizations
- Public benefit agencies for cash assistance, food stamps, etc.
- Foster care programs and youth services providers
- LGBTQ service agencies and mentorship/peer support agencies
- Refugee service providers and ethnic community groups
- Organizations providing transportation and credit repair agencies

**Housing Providers:**

- Continuums of Care, including rapid re-housing and supportive housing programs
- Private sector landlords and multifamily housing properties
- Public housing authorities
- Emergency shelter operators and domestic violence shelters
- Transitional housing providers
- Eviction prevention programs
- Runaway and homeless youth programs
- Maternity group homes

## **Work Together to Identify and Address Barriers to Economic Mobility**

Each survivor has different strengths and needs. Collaboration and knowledge sharing among community partners can help survivors identify and access services and networks to overcome barriers to employment or economic mobility.

For example, research indicates that evictions can lead to increased unemployment. Therefore, assistance accessing potential housing benefits is a critical step to economic mobility for some individuals. Other survivors may have criminal records (including convictions tied to their experiences with exploitation) or limited employment history, education, or training. Others may lack credit, have disabilities, or face physical and/or behavioral health challenges (including those stemming from their trafficking experience) that make it difficult to work or require them to seek child care.

Not every organization in your community will be able to address all of these barriers. Partnerships with stakeholders across the community can make it easier for survivors to access existing networks of services tailored to their needs.

## Reach Beyond Traditional Partners

When addressing the housing and service barriers to economic mobility for vulnerable populations, consider partnering with non-traditional groups and organizations. New partners may identify unused resources and expand opportunities to address the unique needs of vulnerable populations, especially survivors of human trafficking.

- Engage the **business community**. Private sector partners may have insight into employment opportunities or educational and training requirements for survivors to qualify for jobs with growth opportunities. They may also be able to mentor survivors as they seek employment or begin working. In addition, employers may be able to improve their hiring processes to increase accessibility for survivors.
- Identify **private landlords and local government agencies** who may be interested in providing access to housing and unused property. They may be able to partner with community agencies such as shelters or other programs that provide support services to their residents who are survivors.
- **Faith-based communities and organizations** may already focus on employment, housing, or self-sufficiency of vulnerable populations other than trafficking survivors. They may have unique contributions to offer, such as potential job leads or other resources from their members. Faith-based partnerships expand access to resources and networks that can increase survivors' access to employment opportunities, support services, and funding for needs that exceed the resources or expertise of other organizations.
- **EnVision Centers** may have recommendations to improve the economic mobility of trafficking survivors, such as helping housing organizations establish or strengthen survivor-informed services.

## Partner with Local Workforce Agencies

Once survivors are ready to enter or re-enter the workforce, connect with your local [workforce development board](#) or American Job Center. The workforce development board directs federal, state, and local funding to local workforce development programs. The board also oversees your local [American Job Center](#), where job seekers can get employment information, learn about career development and training opportunities, and connect to programs in their area. American Job Centers serve both [adults](#) and [youth](#), including [youth experiencing homelessness](#).

## Join Advisory Boards

Aim for cross-sector representation on advisory boards and decision-making entities. For example, anti-trafficking service providers could participate in a Continuum of Care. A faith-

based group providing rental assistance could join the Board of Directors of an organization that provides case management to survivors. Consider adding one or more survivors of human trafficking to your board.

## Work Together to Raise Public Awareness

Community partners can develop or share resources about human trafficking with organizations and the public, including how to identify survivors and connect them to services. Federal resources include the [Faith-Based and Community Toolkit](#) from the Department of Homeland Security's [Blue Campaign](#) and materials from and the Administration for Children and Families' [Look Beneath the Surface](#) campaign.

## Cross-Train Members and Staff

Conduct trainings for your partners so they understand the services you provide and potential collaboration strategies to serve survivors. Training may include information on eligibility and effective referral processes, indicators that a survivor may need services, and how organizations can help survivors overcome barriers to economic mobility.

Members or staff in your organization may benefit from learning about services provided by community partners and when and how to make referrals. For example, an anti-trafficking organization may provide [training on trauma-informed services](#) or self-sufficiency strategies to partner agencies, while a housing provider may offer training on survivor eligibility for homeless assistance programs.

## Collect Data, Conduct Screening, and Provide Referrals

Organizations serving survivors of trafficking may consider collecting information on housing status and housing needs during intake. Similarly, housing organizations, such as those providing emergency shelter or transitional housing, may want to work with anti-trafficking experts to [screen for trafficking victimization](#) in a sensitive, trauma-informed manner.

Once your organization has gathered information about the needs and risk factors of the individuals you serve, develop internal guidelines for enrolling survivors, which may include response protocols and client consent forms. Develop Memoranda of Understanding or referral protocols with partner organizations who provide additional [trauma-informed support](#) to survivors. Educate partners on program screening criteria, including the definition of human trafficking and eligibility considerations based on legal status, household size, or other characteristics. Consider joining regional or national referral networks such as the [Safe Shelter Collaborative](#), which aims to find shelter faster for survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

*These strategies offer a starting point for developing a collaborative network of multi-disciplinary community partners to help survivors of human trafficking overcome their traumatic experiences. Together, we can provide crucial services such as job training skills, access to*

*employment, housing assistance, and other help to address barriers to economic mobility for survivors.*