

# National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative

November 3, 2021

National Advisory Committee on the  
Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States

Esteemed National Advisory Committee Members,

In September 2020, the NAC published its interim report, *Best Practices and Recommendations for States*, which contains **127 recommendations to states for how they should** respond to the sex trafficking of children and youth within their jurisdictions. The NAC also issued a corresponding survey that asked each state to evaluate their efforts related to each of the NAC's 127 recommendations, noting that those survey responses will be used to inform the NAC's final report to Congress.

The National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative (the Collaborative) is comprised of 25 member states, which are represented by those creating and implementing policy and practice addressing human trafficking for their state's child welfare system. Our membership bears the responsibility for implementing as many as 65 of the 127 recommendations outlined in the NAC report. In many states we are also charged with responding to the NAC survey.

The Collaborative has taken action to help support states' responses to the survey. In April 2021, the Collaborative convened a meeting to review the NAC report recommendations and survey, with support from a NAC member and representative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Trafficking in Persons (OTIP). The Collaborative also encouraged members to participate in presentations hosted by the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center on the survey.

Despite best efforts, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) by October 1, 2021 have significantly impacted many members' ability to provide thoughtful, specific, and comprehensive responses to the more than 100 recommendations. Additionally, because it was written without the input of child welfare experts, there has been some confusion regarding how to interpret certain recommendations and survey questions.

We, the Collaborative's Steering Committee, recognize that a report of this type has the opportunity to make tremendous impact on the direction of federal policy and resource allocation for years to come. We understand the important role of the NAC and we appreciate the reports' emphasis on child welfare's role in identifying and serving this population. In light of this, we want to voice our concerns regarding the minimal engagement of child welfare agencies in the development of the NAC's recommendations, as well as the difficulties members experience completing survey responses in a way that would provide an accurate reflection of current state-level efforts and needs. We are particularly concerned about the potential impact of a final report to Congress, designed to guide federal policy for years to come, being published based on incomplete reflections of state-level efforts.

# National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative

We encourage the NAC to engage critical stakeholders like state and tribal child welfare partners as their work continues to ensure meaningful and pro-active participation that will provide a more accurate picture of current efforts and needs.

Enclosed is an overview of National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative. The Collaborative's Steering Committee welcomes any and all opportunities to engage with the NAC and OTIP to provide insight on behalf of state child welfare agency's experiences and needs, and in setting goals and national priorities for this most at-risk population.

In partnership,



Bethany Gilot  
National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative  
Steering Committee Chair



Madeline Hehir  
National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative  
Steering Committee Member  
New York State Office of Children and Family Service



Sarah Ladd  
National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative  
Steering Committee Member  
Minnesota Department of Human Services



Blanca Denise Lance  
National Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Collaborative  
Steering Committee Member  
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Enclosed

cc: Katherine Chon, Director of the Office on Trafficking in Persons  
Administration for Children and Families



# **NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE ANTI-TRAFFICKING COLLABORATIVE**

## **Why was the Collaborative formed?**

In recent years, state, county, and tribal child welfare agencies across the United States have initiated or strengthened strategies to address human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Much of this work has been initiated in response to new federal requirements such as the Family First Prevention Services Act, Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, and Trafficking Victims Protection Act. The Collaborative was formed to provide a space for child welfare professionals to discuss efforts to address human trafficking within child welfare, share resources, and learn from each other.

## **What does the Collaborative do?**

The Collaborative meets virtually on a bimonthly basis to hold targeted conversations on how members are addressing child trafficking through the child welfare system in their respective states. Discussions are often topical and focus on policy and practice related to child protection screening, investigations, case management, placement, training, multidisciplinary approaches, specialized residential and community-based services, and other related topics. The Collaborative provides an open learning environment for asking questions and brainstorming solutions to complex problems within the child welfare sector's response to trafficking.

## **Who participates in the Collaborative?**

Those creating and implementing state-level child welfare policy and practice addressing human trafficking. In certain states, regional, county, or tribal participation may also be appropriate.

## **What resources are offered?**

The Collaborative offers many resources and benefits to members and the public. In addition to valuable information-sharing on the calls, it also serves as a place to share state and national resources, research, and lessons learned. The Collaborative prioritizes evidence-based, trauma-informed, survivor-centered, and youth-focused approaches. Leveraging the Collaborative's resources, members implement solutions with wide-ranging impact to children, families, and systems.

## **Our mission:**

**Equip child welfare policymakers through the sharing of knowledge, resources, and tools to create and implement child welfare anti-trafficking policies and practices to improve outcomes.**

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Q.** Who is involved in this group?

**A.** As of May 2021, the Collaborative has members representing the child welfare system in 25 states. Members may also include professionals who formerly led state-level child welfare anti-trafficking policies and practice. As needed, the Collaborative also invites topical experts, researchers, federal partners, and other key stakeholders to participate in meetings.

**Q.** How is contact information handled by the Collaborative?

**A.** Contact and other information shared by members is only available to its membership.

**Q.** Who do I contact if I am interested in learning more and/or joining the Collaborative?

**A.** Email [CWAnti-TraffickingCollaborative@outlook.com](mailto:CWAnti-TraffickingCollaborative@outlook.com) to schedule a meeting to learn more about the group.