



## Office of the Texas Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team

Greetings,

Welcome to the September edition of the Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) Newsletter.

In this edition, you'll meet our new program coordinator, explore the work of our CSTT Regional Advisors, gain insights into the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) trainings and screenings across the state, and discover various training opportunities to support your anti-trafficking efforts.

Thank you for the work you do to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth and for your steadfast commitment to serve survivors on their path towards healing and justice!

Texas maximizes positive outcomes for children and youth through partnership and collaboration, and we are grateful to do this work with you!

The Child Sex Trafficking Team

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### **New Team Member**



## **Welcome, Makaela!**

Program Coordinator

Hi everyone, I am Makaela Gude, and I am thrilled to introduce myself as part of this amazing team! I am from North Houston, from a small suburban town named New Caney, Texas. I recently graduated in May 2024 from Texas State University with a degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Forensic Psychology. In my last semester, I had the incredible opportunity to intern with the National Juvenile Justice Society, a victim's advocacy nonprofit network, where I worked as a Project Management and Research Intern. Following graduation, I joined the Office of the Governor as an intern for Texas Crime Stoppers, leading to my current role, Program Coordinator, for the Trafficking and Sexual Violence Prevention Programs. This is my first position as a postgraduate, and I am excited to embark on this journey with all of you. I look forward to contributing to our team and learning from each of you.

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## **New CSTT Strategies**

The CSTT was created in 2015 by the 84th Legislature to coordinate a holistic response to child sex trafficking in Texas. The team works statewide to improve system responses, regionally to develop continua of care, and locally to implement the coordination of care for children and youth who are at risk of or have experienced commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking.

To enhance the work of the CSTT both regionally and locally, the team utilizes five regional advisors (RAs). CSTT RAs collaborate closely with community stakeholders to build capacity to protect, recognize, recover, support healing, and bring justice for children and youth affected by commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The CSTT RAs bring a diverse set of expertise to the team, that benefits the regions they support and strengthens statewide strategies.

We are extremely grateful for the leadership and expertise the CSTT RAs bring to the team!



**Christian Benavides**

South Texas Regional Advisor

Recognition and Policy Lead



**Veronica Lowenberg**

West Texas Regional Advisor

Prevention, Residential and Drop-In Center Lead



**Jessica Hess**

Central Texas Regional Advisor

Support Healing Care Coordination and CSEY Advocacy Lead



**Kellye Turner**

East Texas Regional Advisor

Recover and Bring Justice Lead



**Rebecca Uresti**

North Texas Regional Advisor

Recover and Bring Justice Lead

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## The Commercial Sexual Exploitation - Identification Tool (CSE-IT)

We cannot solve a problem that we cannot see, and unfortunately, commercial sexual exploitation often goes unrecognized. The CSE-IT was developed to increase the visibility of and improve our response to children and youth who are at risk of, have been, or are currently being exploited. [Research](#) for the validation of the tool indicates that most youth are exploited two or more years before being referred for services, do not self-identify as victims, and are unlikely to make an outcry. Screening allows for earlier identification using research-based indicators of exploitation and creates opportunities for earlier intervention.

In Texas, a total of 165,137 CSE-IT screenings have been conducted and entered into the [Lighthouse platform](#), with a breakdown of 16,328 Clear Concerns (10%), 24,186 Possible Concerns (15%), and 124,623 No Concerns (75%).

The Child Sex Trafficking Team has trained close to 2,500 individuals on the use of the CSE-IT. These individuals trained are from a wide variety of organizations, including Child Placing Agencies, Community Based Care, schools, CSEY Advocate agencies, Drop-In Centers, Long-term Residential Centers, Child Advocacy Centers, CASA programs, and many other non-profit organizations.

In May 2024, the Child Sex Trafficking Team launched the initial CSE-IT for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice personnel training in Brazoria

County. There were twenty-eight officers trained in this TCOLE certified course. Currently, trainings for the Houston Police



Department, the Williamson County Sheriff's Office, the Harris County Sheriff's Office, and the Laredo Police Department are being planned. Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice personnel that would like to participate in TCOLE Certified CSE-IT training should contact the CSTT directly. Please note that you can register for upcoming trainings below in our Learning Opportunities section!

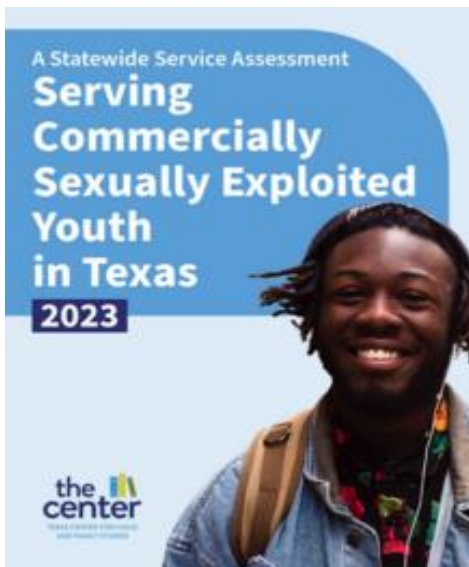
In July 2024 the Child Sex Trafficking Team, in coordination with the Children's Commission, hosted its first CSE-IT training webinar for child protection and juvenile justice judges. The webinar, *A Judicial Discussion on the use of the CSE-IT*, focused on the eight CSE-IT indicators and informed the judges on where screenings are occurring. The plan is to continue coordinating with the Children's Commission to bring this webinar to as many judges as possible.

The Child Sex Trafficking Team has been working closely with school districts to train staff on the use of the CSE-IT, as well as to help implement screening protocols. In collaboration with Region One, the Education Service Center in South Texas, eleven ISDs have been trained on the use of the CSE-IT. Counselors, social workers, nurses, coaches, librarians, and music teachers have been trained.

As we look ahead, the goal is to expand screening sites across various fields, increase the number of CSE-IT trainers across Texas, and expand screenings in state child serving agencies.

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## A Statewide Service Assessment - Serving Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in Texas, 2023



In 2019, the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (the Center), in collaboration with the Office of the Governor and Texas Network of Youth Services, conducted a Statewide Assessment of available services for meeting the comprehensive needs of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY) in Texas. This report reflects a follow-up to the initial Statewide Assessment to discover current trends related to funding, capacity, and eligibility, as well as an updated understanding of ongoing and emerging barriers

[View Report](#)

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## CSTT Monthly Webinar Series

### **Survivor-Informed Practices Among Youth Housing and Homelessness Service Providers: Research Findings and Implications for the Field**

Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)

September 10, 2024 | Virtual

Youth homelessness and housing instability are primary risk factors for the commercial sexual exploitation of youth (CSEY). As a result, youth housing and homelessness services providers are likely to encounter exploited youth in their work, putting them in a unique position to prevent, identify, and address



commercial sexual exploitation. Further, research shows that implementing a survivor-informed approach results in more effective services and better outcomes for youth, which is why the U.S. Advisory Council on Trafficking recommends that housing programs working with exploited youth are survivor-informed. Over the past year, TNOYS listened and learned from both youth and providers to better understand the current state of youth engagement and survivor-informed practices among youth housing and homelessness service providers in Texas. In this webinar, we will present research findings and recommendations that can help providers strengthen their youth engagement and survivor-informed practices. While our research is focused on youth housing and homelessness services, the key learnings and recommendations are highly relevant to providers across youth-focused systems.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

## **Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocacy: Texas' Strategy to Support the Long-Term Healing of CSEY**

Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team

September 25, 2024 | Virtual

Join the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team as we delve into the critical need for specialized advocacy for youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Attendees will gain a comprehensive understanding of what CSEY advocacy entails and its significance in fostering healing and resilience among affected youth. Participants will learn how to access CSEY advocacy for children and transition-aged youth to ensure they receive the support they need. Additionally, the webinar will highlight how CSEY advocates collaborate with other specialized advocates to create a cohesive support network.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

## **Advancing Human Trafficking Solutions: The Human Trafficking Fusion Center and Its Innovative Impact**

## Collective Liberty

November 20, 2024 | Virtual

Join us for an exclusive webinar unveiling the Human Trafficking Fusion Center, a revolutionary tool designed to enhance human trafficking investigations. We'll showcase how this innovative center leverages advanced data analytics and real-time intelligence to empower law enforcement to tackle complex trafficking networks.

Explore:

- **Cutting-Edge Innovation:** How artificial intelligence and machine learning are used to analyze and connect data across jurisdictions and industries to identify trafficking networks;
- **Strategic Impact:** The Fusion Center's role in overcoming current investigative challenges, utilizing advanced technology for groundbreaking results.

Intended for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and data experts, this webinar may also be of interest to anyone who is interested in learning more about how data can be used in the fight against human trafficking. Discover how this initiative is setting new standards and how you can contribute to its success.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

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## Learning Opportunities

### 2024 Anti-Trafficking Conference

Anti-Trafficking International

September 8 - November 9, 2024 | Virtual

*Fee associated with this conference*

This annual event provides attendees with 17 pre-recorded presentations by survivor leaders and human trafficking experts. These presentations will be



available for attendees to view at their leisure for two months, plus two interactive livestream speaker sessions that will be recorded and available to view later.

[Register for this Conference](#)

## **Mental Health Treatment Guidelines for Youth Who Have Experienced Trafficking and/or Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

National Center on Child Trafficking

September 16, 2024 | Virtual

This webinar explores the importance of caregivers and supportive adults in mental health services for youth impacted by human trafficking, including personal and contextual factors to consider in assessing caregivers' potential involvement in treatment, diverse caregiver roles and relationships, and barriers and facilitators to caregiver engagement, including strategies to enhance engagement and support.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

## **Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT) Training for Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Personnel**

Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team

October 9, 2024 | Laredo, Texas

This CSE-IT training will enable law enforcement and criminal justice personnel to accurately identify indicators of child sexual exploitation, without relying solely on youth self-disclosure, alerting the need for investigation. This training will also provide a framework of language and understanding that will improve their communication with service providers and partners doing collaborative work in human trafficking prevention and identification. This training is eligible for TCOLE credit hours.

*\*Please note: this training is for law enforcement and criminal justice personnel only.*

[Register for this Training](#)

## **Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT) Training for Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Personnel**

Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team

October 15, 2024 | Hutto, Texas

This CSE-IT training will enable law enforcement and criminal justice personnel to accurately identify indicators of child sexual exploitation, without relying solely on youth self-disclosure, alerting the need for investigation. This training will also provide a framework of language and understanding that will improve their communication with service providers and partners doing collaborative work in human trafficking prevention and identification. This training is eligible for TCOLE credit hours.

*\*Please note: this training is for law enforcement and criminal justice personnel only.*

[Register for this Training](#)

## **Responding to Sextortion Related Offenses Against Children**

National Criminal Justice Training Academy

October 17, 2024 | Virtual

Sextortion using technology is an increasing trend seen by law enforcement. Sextortion refers to the crime where someone employs an abuse of power, usually a threat to expose explicit images, in order to coerce a person to do something. This 1-day training will identify the methods and tactics used by offenders and describe why youth are vulnerable to these tactics. The training will also explain the long-term impact of these crimes on victims, offer a victim-

centered response, and provide information on reporting these crimes to law enforcement, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the electronic service provider(s). This course will conclude with identifying effective Sextortion prevention messages for youth, parents, and educators.

[Register for this Training](#)

## **Child Sex Trafficking: From Suspicion to Disclosure**

National Criminal Justice Training Academy

November 13, 2024 | Virtual

Learn basic techniques and strategies to enhance the likelihood of obtaining information from possible victims of child sex trafficking. Compare and contrast typical child sexual abuse cases with child sex trafficking (CST) cases and address the different points of entry into the criminal justice and welfare system for CST victims. Understand various disciplines' roles and responsibilities and how they can contribute to a positive outcome of the CST case. Examine question strategy, interview dynamics, language use, and interview suggestions. Discuss the business model of child sex trafficking as it relates to a variety of crimes, including the use of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

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### **CSTT Vision**

A state where children and youth are free from sexual exploitation.

### **CSTT Mission**

To build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, and create new and leverage existing collaborations to prevent child sexual exploitation, to help survivors heal and thrive, and to bring justice to exploiters.

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## Report Human Trafficking

If you believe a someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

[iWatch Texas](#) – Tips made to iWatch are investigated by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) – Call the toll-free hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Tips made to the hotline are reviewed and routed to local law enforcement. This hotline also offers 24/7 confidential support for survivors.

[Texas Child Abuse Hotline](#) - Report child neglect and abuse, including sexual exploitation of a child, to the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.



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