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AWARENESS, ASSESSMENT, ASSISTANCE: COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES THROUGH EDUCATION REFORM

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Awareness, Assessment, Assistance
Combating Human Trafficking in the United States Through
Education Reform

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Awareness, Assessment, Assistance

Combatting Human Trafficking in the United States Through Education Reform

Many Americans believe that slavery was eradicated from the United States with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. But the reality is that modern slavery, especially in the form of human trafficking, is still a prevalent and pressing issue both in the United States and beyond. Human trafficking is a global practice that harms and targets approximately 30 million individuals worldwide (Lowman, 3), and this number is only growing in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the vulnerabilities it has caused (Bigio & Vogelstein). Contrary to common misconceptions, human trafficking exists and has an extensive network within the United States. According to the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report from the U.S. Department of State, cases of human trafficking have been recorded in all of the fifty states, along with the U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. A 2020 analysis of data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 10,583 situations of trafficking, and 16,658 individual victims within the United States in the year 2020. These numbers were analyzed by the Polaris Project, a nonprofit organization that works to combat and prevent sex and labor trafficking in North America, and because the data was collected from the trafficking hotline, it is reasonable to project that many more instances of trafficking in which no one contacted the hotline exist throughout the country (Polaris Project). Human trafficking is not limited to sex trafficking. In fact, there are numerous other manifestations of the issue, which includes forced labor—both in illicit and legal fields of work (United States Department of State, 2021). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines human trafficking as:

“a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age;

or b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.” (22 U.S.C. § 7102(9)).

While many forms of trafficking exist, the most prevalent forms within North America are sexual exploitation, which accounts for approximately seventy percent of detected trafficking victims, and forced labor, which accounts for approximately twenty percent according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Bigio & Vogelstein). However, because these statistics are based only on the data available regarding government-detected victims, many victims of trafficking in other forms may remain undetected. These other forms of human trafficking include forced begging, domestic servitude, forced marriage, and organ trafficking.

Due to a lack of education on the realities of human trafficking, many Americans remain unaware of this growing threat within the United States. In the year 2021, non-governmental organizations noted that misinformation concerning human trafficking was rapidly spreading in America, amplified by the use of social media. This misinformation impeded trafficking prevention efforts by promoting a false narrative and hindering law enforcement with false information (United States Department of State, 2021). One common misconception is that all victims of trafficking are individuals who have been abducted or who are completely distanced from society, when in reality there is far more variety in human trafficking. For example, a victim of trafficking may be a minor still living in their parents’ home, but who is being coerced into commercial sex acts. Additionally, trafficked individuals may be forced into labor in fields that have some degree of “public visibility” including restaurants, hotels, and factories.

Human trafficking hurts the United States morally, socially, economically, and developmentally, and changes in policy and practice must be instituted to fight the effects of this despicable industry. In order to reverse the steady increase in the human trafficking industry, the United States must employ new tools and tactics to raise awareness, support victims of trafficking, and prevent future trafficking victims from being targeted. To directly combat the negative effects of misinformation that allow traffickers to go unnoticed and victims unsupported, the United States should increase its understanding of human trafficking through anti-trafficking education methods. The question that then arises is: what method of anti-human trafficking education would be the most effective in combatting human trafficking in the United States?

For the purposes of this paper, anti-trafficking education reforms within four sectors will be evaluated: professional counseling, the healthcare system, the public education system, and law enforcement. Educational change in the field of professional counseling concentrates on informing counselors on how to recognize risk factors and indicators relating to trafficked individuals, and how to employ trauma-informed intervention strategies to support victims. Within the field of healthcare, reforms will prioritize better educating and equipping healthcare workers and hospitals, especially those in emergency care, to identify trafficking situations and care for victims. Reforms based in the public school system would implement a public school anti-trafficking education curriculum to establish an informed general public and mobilize citizens to speak out against trafficking. And the final category of educational reform, which is based in law enforcement, will focus on modernizing and expanding training and education requirements for law enforcement officers that address the intricacies of the issue of trafficking and equip law enforcement officers both to apprehend traffickers and to protect victims.

Each of these fields plays a role in combating trafficking in the United States, and each of them would likely benefit from improved education and training. But in which of these sectors would education reform create the *most* positive change towards the prevention and elimination of trafficking, in the *most* effective way? The answer to this question will be evaluated using four factors that will be applied to each of the proposed trafficking prevention education sectors. The first is efficacy, which is the policy's ability to achieve the result of combatting human trafficking in the United States. The second is cost efficiency, which measures the value of a policy by weighing its financial costs alongside the projected positive outcomes. The third criterion is practical feasibility, which is an assessment of the policy's viability. The fourth and final factor that will be considered is political and public acceptability, which concerns how the general public would receive the policy, as well as the legality of the policy. These four criteria—efficacy, cost efficiency, practical feasibility, and political and public acceptability—will be used to analyze each human trafficking prevention education area of reform and determine which method best fulfills these criteria.

The first field in which to consider human trafficking prevention education reform is the field of professional counseling. Counselors, specifically those employed at schools and who specialize in working with adolescents, have a unique opportunity to directly interact with potential trafficking victims, and therefore play a vital role in victim identification. Improving trafficking-awareness training and education would allow counselors to prioritize and provide trauma-informed care and would better equip them to recognize and report instances of trafficking. While public awareness and advocacy against human trafficking are growing, the field of professional counseling still experiences a notable scarcity of literature specifically designed for human trafficking education. This research gap limits counselors' abilities to

support and identify trafficking situations (Browne-James). An advantageous shift in the field of professional counseling training and education would be towards a focus on recognizing the risk factors that heighten the probability for persons to be trafficked along with the indicators that they are already being trafficked. Counselors must be aware of these factors and indicators in order to effectively combat the trafficking situations that their clients may be experiencing. This shift would require research efforts that will shrink the information gap and inform practical changes in counselor education programs.

In order to adequately address the issue of human trafficking, counseling education programs must include material specifically designed to teach prospective counselors how to spot risk factors that may increase their client's vulnerability to being trafficked, how to employ trauma-informed intervention strategies to support and help the potential victims, and how to empower and encourage at-risk individuals to recognize their own potential trafficking situation. From the existing research literature available on human trafficking risk factors, these factors are known to include a person's status within a sexual or gender minority, a history of substance abuse, past experience of physical or sexual abuse, homelessness, low socioeconomic status, and experience with the youth judicial system (Browne-James). The process of recognizing and caring for individuals who fit into this list is extremely complex as there are many intersectional nuances that link these experiences. For example, "[LGBTQ] persons experience homelessness at higher rates, are more likely to abuse substances, report higher rates of mental health issues, and experience greater rates of physical and sexual abuse compared to their heterosexual peers" (Browne-James). It is vital that counselors are equipped and educated on these nuances, relationships, and risk factors in order to provide care to at-risk individuals. Along with a counselor's unique position to directly support victims of trafficking, there is also the very real

and very grave potential for a counselor to internalize a false perception of human trafficking in their client, based on misinformation and miseducation. With a limited understanding of the complexity and multidimensionality of the human trafficking issue, a counselor may fail to identify a victim of trafficking, simply because they do not fit the “standard” perception of what a human trafficking victim looks like. This also has the disastrous potential to minimize or invalidate the victim’s own perception of their experience. Beyond recognizing risk factors, another important aspect of counseling education involves identifying indicators in the event that an individual is already being trafficked. Counselor education programs must equip counselors to consider possible indicators, which include sudden disconnection from family, friends, and community, dramatic changes in behavior, a history of unexplained absences from school, evidence of mental and physical abuse, a change in hygienic practices, a noticeably dominant partner or companion, unstable or unsuitable living conditions, evidence of being coached on what to say, and lack of personal possessions and freedom of movement (Department of Homeland Security). Another layer of complexity is that many victims are hesitant to speak out about their situation. Professional counselors are strategically positioned to support victims of human trafficking, and in order to effectively use this position, they must be extensively educated on the realities of trafficking along with training in empathy, compassion, and sensitivity to unique situations.

While it's highly likely that counseling education reform would be beneficial in identifying and treating human trafficking victims, education changes in this particular field may not be the most effective out of all of the alternatives. To evaluate the efficacy of these reforms, one must consider whether they would actually achieve the end goal of combatting human trafficking in the United States. Educating counselors on identifying risk factors and indicators of

trafficking, as well as on how to care for trafficked persons, would allow them to be attentive to developing trafficking situations and directly support the victim. However, simply identifying these situations would not directly prevent trafficking. Additionally, many victims of trafficking will never have access to a counselor, and therefore these reforms will only affect a select percentage of trafficked persons. Anti-human trafficking efforts in counseling are prevention-based, it can help educate individuals to not fall prey to traffickers, but counselors are unlikely to have much interaction with active victims.

To evaluate the cost-efficiency of these educational changes, one must weigh the necessary financial costs needed to institute these changes alongside the predicted advances towards the goal of combatting human trafficking. In order to close the information gap that is present in anti-human trafficking literature for professional counselors, studies on identification strategies, risk factors, and trauma-informed care modalities would need to be conducted and, therefore, funded. Further funding would be required to institute these reforms in counseling education programs. However, the projected outcome—an informed and qualified population of professional counselors who are prepared to support victims of trafficking—is an extremely valuable and worthwhile goal. One concern about cost efficiency to keep in mind is that these reforms would only affect a select group of victims; those with access to professional counseling.

In regards to the third criterion, practical feasibility, education reform in this field would be sufficiently viable. There are many groups that function to educate counselors, and these groups would be the origin of reform. A greater wealth of anti-human trafficking research would benefit education programs nationwide.

The fourth, political and public acceptability, would likely not be much of an issue in the case of these reforms. Because these reforms specifically intend to further the education of

professionals in a certain field, it's unlikely that the general public would present any backlash. These reforms would also be well within legal boundaries. While education reforms in the field of professional counseling have many benefits and should be considered as a means of fighting human trafficking, the main fact that these reforms would only help a select few trafficked persons decreases their effectiveness.

Another field in which to consider human trafficking education reform is the field of healthcare, specifically in the hospital setting. Much like professional counselors, healthcare workers hold a unique position in that they may directly interact with trafficked persons. Healthcare professionals play a critical role in helping victims escape trafficking, especially in the emergency room and other acute care environments. Victims may seek healthcare when they are being trafficked, and traffickers may even send victims to hospitals to treat their medical ailments. Emergency health professionals are the primary healthcare providers acting as access points for victims while they are still in trafficking situations. Despite this, a mere 4.8% of emergency care providers "reported confidence in their ability to identify [human trafficking] victims" (qtd. Scannell, 118). Without nurses and healthcare providers who are readily able to recognize forensic and behavioral evidence of human trafficking in their patients, many victims of trafficking will never have access to the support and resources needed for them to leave their situation. For many victims, opportunities to escape their traffickers are extremely limited, and healthcare providers need to be prepared to make the most of any opportunity they may be presented with. Education on human trafficking awareness, identification, and protocol for nurse practitioners and other healthcare providers must be emphasized within healthcare education programs. Some necessary elements include educating nurses on the realities and complexities of human trafficking, how to identify victims using forensic interview methods, recognizing

physical indicators, trauma-informed care modalities, how to assess the patient's safety, and the protocol for nurse intervention (Scannell, 120). Each of these elements would aid in facilitating timely and efficient identification of at-risk patients and would help healthcare workers to provide the best possible care for these patients. Emergency care providers are often the primary, and potentially the only, access to the healthcare system a human trafficking victim may have. Nurses and doctors who are educated and equipped to identify, assess, and intervene can increase the efficiency of trafficking detection within hospitals and other healthcare establishments.

Although improved and updated human trafficking education strategies for healthcare providers would greatly improve trafficking detection in these circumstances, these reforms are not the primary choice based on effectiveness, and in many regards, rely first on law enforcement reforms. The efficacy of enacting educational changes within the healthcare field is based on these changes' ability to achieve the goal of combatting human trafficking in the United States. While a nurse's ability to detect human trafficking scenarios and intervene on behalf of their patients is extremely valuable and worthy of educational emphasis, the efficacy of that intervention is reliant on the next step in the process, which is the involvement of law enforcement authorities. So without law enforcement education reform, the actual goal of these healthcare education advancements—combating human trafficking—may not be accomplished. Therefore while increased human trafficking education for healthcare providers would be effective and worthy of consideration as an anti-trafficking measure, its dependence on law enforcement reforms makes educational shifts in the latter field more efficient than in the former. Another factor to consider is that while more potential victims would likely interact with nurses and emergency room providers than with the previously discussed professional counselors, there are still many victims who will never have access to hospitals.

In regards to the second evaluation criterion, cost efficiency, the financial costs needed to enact this change is rooted in the costs for the development and institution of new training practices for nurses and other healthcare providers. In order to increase healthcare practitioners' identification ability and improve awareness across the country, significant academic changes would need to be established nationwide. This means curriculum reforms for colleges, universities, medical schools, and hospital training programs that shift focus onto specific strategies and modalities for identifying and treating victims of trafficking. These curriculum changes would require funding, both for the necessary research and compilation of information, as well as for the practical institution of the reformed curriculum. In weighing these projected costs against the efficacy factor, it's valuable to note that while education reform in this field is worthy of funding, the actual ability of healthcare reforms to enact change may be less than reform within other fields.

While expanding education for healthcare providers is a viable prospect, the criterion of feasibility does raise some concerns. The practical burdens of enacting education reform that would create widespread change are not to be disregarded. Instituting new curriculums in colleges, universities, medical schools, and hospital training programs would be extremely difficult to regulate and requires many separate organizations and facilities to synchronously enact their reforms. While small scale changes and expanded curricula in select healthcare-education programs would be beneficial, in these instances the goal of combatting human trafficking in the United States may only be met in certain regions and by certain individuals.

Much like in the previous anti-trafficking education alternative, the fourth criterion of political and public acceptability would not likely be of much concern. Shifts of focus within

academic literature and programs are legally acceptable and are unlikely to arouse public dissent. Education reform within the field of healthcare that better educates and equips healthcare workers and hospitals to identify trafficking scenarios would be a valuable step toward the goal of eradicating the issue of human trafficking from the United States. But due to the fact that healthcare education reform relies on the justice system for its efficacy in achieving the goal, along with the practical issues with enacting change in this field, reform in healthcare would not be the most effective overall.

Another alternative method is based in the public education system. Implementing an anti-trafficking education curriculum in public schools could aid in equipping and mobilizing the general public against human trafficking. Trafficking exists all over America, despite popular misconceptions. The disheartening, but prevalent, reality is that K-12 school locations have become “active recruiting grounds for traffickers” (Salas & Didier). As the trafficking industry changes with the times, and as traffickers adopt strategies involving social media and technology to lure young victims, it is vital that educators, students, and parents be informed and aware of the realities of the modern trafficking landscape. Similar to the issues facing other demographics such as counselors, law enforcement officers, and healthcare professionals, misperceptions and stigma regarding human trafficking are widespread within the school system, among both teachers and students. One of the most damaging myths surrounding human trafficking includes misconceptions that trafficking is a foreign issue, not an American one. The first aspect of instituting reforms from within the public school system requires expansion of training and education for teachers, built on the knowledge that many teachers may be the first points of intervention for school-age victims seeking help. For many young victims of human trafficking, educators are the “frontline” of prevention (Lemke). Knowledge of indicators of trafficking

situations, which include, but are in no way limited to signs of trauma, sudden behavioral changes, or an older and dominant partner, should be taught to school administrators, teachers, and students, so that young victims of trafficking can be identified by those who they are around the most (Salas & Didier).

Implementing a public school trafficking education curriculum would likely achieve the goal of creating a more informed general public on the realities of human trafficking, while simultaneously equipping them to recognize trafficking situations around them. The efficacy of this proposition is based on a new public school curriculum's ability to mobilize the general public, in schools and beyond, against human trafficking. If teachers and students are able to detect trafficking within their schools and communities, they would then be able to alert authorities of the at-risk individuals and hopefully aid in helping the victims leave their traffickers. These students, with their knowledge of human trafficking and its indicators, would grow into a new generation of educated individuals who can aid in combatting trafficking for years to come. One caveat to note is that much like the previous two human trafficking prevention alternatives, public education-based preventative measures rely on the involvement of legal authorities. In order to effectively combat trafficking in the United States, an educated and aware public must work to support and assist an equipped and informed law enforcement system. Preventative training within schools should be in collaboration with law enforcement personnel (Salas & Didier).

The cost-efficiency of these education reforms revolves around the funding needed for drafting and implementing improved and updated human trafficking prevention education material in schools. In order to enact the desired shift in educational focus, significant human trafficking literature would need to be made available to schools, both for the education of the

teachers and for the students. Reform of school curriculum would require funding, not only for the process of researching and selecting the best human trafficking education materials but also for the process of practically instituting the new curriculum in schools. To have a nationwide impact, this addition to public education must be encouraged across the country. While the benefits of public education reform regarding human trafficking prevention would likely make financial burdens worth the cost, the actual ability of these reforms to directly prevent trafficking is less than that of reforms within other fields, such as law enforcement.

The feasibility of public education-based human trafficking prevention will be evaluated next. If sufficient funds could be acquired the process of establishing new educational material and implementing it in schools would likely follow a similar pattern that past educational reforms have used. The act of introducing specific topics of education to schools is not without precedent. For example, in California, a pre-existing law had been established that required school districts to teach awareness and prevention of sexual abuse, harassment, and assault. Later another law followed the same path, but with the addition of human trafficking prevention training (Salas & Didier).

The matter of public acceptability plays a key role in the evaluation of public education-based human trafficking prevention. While most people would agree that human trafficking should be prevented, some parents may raise concerns that their school-age children are being exposed to the topic of human trafficking. Implementing a new human trafficking focused curriculum that would likely not be taught by trafficking specialists also invites the risk of a teacher covering this volatile topic poorly. Anti-trafficking education material has, in the past, tended to exude a negative perception of women, immigrants, and other minorities (Lemke). If the influx of new educational material is not carefully vetted, these contentious

trends toward human trafficking misconceptions and away from evidence-based indicators could pose an issue. Material such as this would likely draw criticism from the public, especially from parents. Human trafficking education reforms would likely be instituted by individual school districts, so as to stay well within the realm of constitutionality and state and local autonomy. However, by leaving the decision whether or not to implement new curricula up to local districts, the viability of nationwide change decreases. In conclusion, while the value of creating an informed public by reforming human trafficking prevention education in the public school system is considerable, the effectiveness of these reforms relies on law enforcement and invites public backlash.

Upon evaluating each of the fields, the most effective reform in anti-trafficking education to combat human trafficking in the United States was found to be within the law enforcement field. The role of law enforcement is to protect the people, and therefore to fight against human trafficking. However, according to a report from Northeastern University and the Urban Institute, many local criminal justice officials are poorly informed on the issue and do not possess the resources or information needed to “effectively identify and prosecute cases of human trafficking” (Farrell et al.). The variability and complexity of the human trafficking issue require law enforcement officers to be well versed in its dynamics, signs, and manifestations. It is vital that law enforcement personnel be thoroughly educated on both state and federal laws associated with human trafficking, how to identify and interact with victims, how to legally go about apprehending the traffickers, how to respond to reports of suspected trafficking, how to employ therapeutically-conscious investigative strategies, and how to protect the victims (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, vii). The local police force is often the first line of defense for trafficking victims, and if officers are educated and equipped to

communicate with victims and detect perpetrators, they can play a valuable role in fighting against modern-day slavery.

Federal law requires law enforcement officers to provide documentation on the cases of human trafficking they encounter, specifically a brief letter called the Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) endorsement. This LEA endorsement must include information such as “whether the victim had been recruited, harbored, transported, provided, or obtained specifically for either labor or services, or for the purposes of a commercial sex act” (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 4), and all officers must be educated in the specific requirements of this legal process in order to satisfy federal law and continue due process in the prosecution of the perpetrators.

To effectively identify and fight against trafficking, law enforcement must also be aware of the methods of victim recruitment employed by traffickers. These include institutional fronts such as employment agencies, career fairs, modeling agencies, illegal adoptions, and public advertisements, but also may involve more personal contact, such as recruitment through a false friendship or romance (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training 8). The rise of the internet in recent years has also shifted much of the trafficking recruitment process to the online arena. Law enforcement officers have a unique role in fighting against human trafficking as they may experience interactions with both traffickers and their victims in relation to other crimes. For example, human trafficking may be discovered while officers are responding to other calls such as physical or sexual assault calls, domestic violence, kidnapping, complaint or observation of prostitution, theft, suspected narcotic activity, or even traffic stops. Responding officers have the responsibility to think critically and apply their knowledge of trafficking indicators to determine whether a seemingly unrelated 911 call is actually a trafficking situation.

After identifying that human trafficking is at play, officers must also be equipped to communicate with the victims, basing their intervention tactics on the knowledge that victims may have experienced psychological and behavioral conditioning (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 13). The protocol for interacting with victims of trafficking is extremely nuanced, and law enforcement training must prioritize this protocol so that officers can establish rapport and trust in real-time situations. Interviewing techniques, assessment of the victim's situation, and how to properly record statements are also necessary education for law enforcement officers. Law enforcement training must be up to date and applicable to the current climate of the human trafficking issue, which requires a reevaluation of current educational materials, along with the institution of an updated curriculum. For example, law enforcement officers, including those in the cybercrime field, must be prepared to collaborate to combat the rise in online sexual exploitation, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The demand for online sexual interactions experienced a global spike in the year 2020, giving traffickers an easy outlet, the internet, by which to exploit their victims for profit (Bigio & Vogelstein).

Education reforms within the law enforcement sector that focus on improving, expanding, and modernizing human trafficking prevention education for law enforcement personnel is the most effective education-based method of combating human trafficking. These reforms fulfill all four evaluation criteria: efficacy, cost efficiency, practical feasibility, and political and public acceptability. In evaluating the efficacy of the law enforcement education-based approach, it is necessary to determine whether this method would truly fulfill the goal of combatting human trafficking in the United States. One facet of the field of law enforcement that sets it apart from others is that law enforcement personnel are the individuals

responsible for not only recognizing trafficking, but for responding to reports, conducting investigations, arresting suspects, facilitating interviews, and interacting with both the victims and the perpetrators themselves. When counselors, healthcare workers, teachers, and ordinary citizens suspect that human trafficking is taking place, it is law enforcement that responds to their reports, directly defends victims, and apprehends traffickers. Therefore building a more educated, more qualified, more perceptive police force would practically facilitate more detection of trafficking situations, more support offered to victims, and more traffickers and trafficking rings shut down. Law enforcement is involved in more steps of preventing trafficking than other fields, as they play a role in detection, investigation, victim assistance, and trafficker apprehension.

The cost-efficiency of educational reform for law enforcement personnel regards the financial costs necessary to assemble research and data on human trafficking into educational materials that would be available to law enforcement training programs. Because of the delicacy and diversity of the issue of human trafficking, training regarding responding to trafficking must be drafted with intentionality and care. This would require teams of experienced law enforcement officials working in conjunction with psychologists, law experts, and other public servants, that could create educational material that would best equip other law enforcement personnel. Not only would the formulation of a reformed curriculum require funds, but the practical institution and distribution of the curriculum would also necessitate further financial support. But when considered in conjunction with the projected efficacy of the plan, preparing the law enforcement sector to practically combat human trafficking across the nation is well worth the cost needed to fund this project. Although a complete cost analysis has not been done, it is important to note that the financial implications for educational reform in any sector, law

enforcement, counseling, healthcare, and the school system, would likely require similar funding, as they all have similar needs. Therefore because the projected cost is similar, the cost efficiency of each potential sector of reform is measured by how much practical change would come from that reform. Essentially, because of the financial similarity of the four alternatives, the efficiency aspect of each reform has more weight than specific cost analysis would in determining the best option.

Education reform for law enforcement personnel is a feasible plan and could be accomplished if funded appropriately. The first step would be collecting data from law enforcement officers and other related professions in order to create factual, up-to-date training programs for law enforcement personnel. The second would be to compile this data and conduct reviews of the new educational literature. Next, the materials would need to be distributed to police training organizations. Because anti-trafficking training, although it is less modernized and thorough, is already available to law enforcement, there is a system already in place to administer an anti-trafficking curriculum. This preexisting standard would allow for a smooth institution of new educational tactics.

Due to the fact that education reform within the field of law enforcement training is simply an expansion and modernization of previously employed training practices, the issue of public acceptability would not greatly affect this plan. The general public would be unlikely to dissent against more education and training for law enforcement. All citizens would benefit from a more informed police force and the potential of these reforms to stop human trafficking makes them very attractive in most people's eyes. Specifically, the proposition of educational reforms for law enforcement is encouraged by the many calls for police reform that were heard in 2020.

Not only that, but educational reform in this field is well within the bounds of legality, and therefore would not raise legal concerns.

Improving and modernizing education for law enforcement is the most effective educational method of combatting human trafficking because it addresses and fulfills the criteria of efficacy, cost efficiency, practical feasibility, and political and public acceptability. One of the main differences that characterizes this sector versus the others is that law enforcement officers are uniquely positioned to detect, respond to, investigate, and shut down trafficking.

After reviewing the potential effects and practical requirements for education reform within each of the sectors, education reform for law enforcement has been determined to most effectively combat human trafficking in the United States. While the issue of human trafficking is a cultural, societal, and even moral issue, practically addressing human trafficking begins with law enforcement. Law enforcement officers are truly the front line for preventing trafficking, as they interact with both victims and perpetrators to identify, investigate, and take action. The Polaris Project analyzed data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline that recorded the access points—“the systems, institutions, or people the likely victim of trafficking interacted with or had access to during the exploitative situation or immediately after/upon escape” (Polaris Project)—that victims who interacted with the hotline had access to in the year 2020. The research showed that from a data pool of 4098 victims, 23.4% of victims’ first access points were interaction with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. In contrast, only 18.7% of the victims had health services as their access point, 12.6% had access to general social services, and 4.6% had access to education. While this data sample of individuals is not exhaustive, it provides insight into trends in human trafficking victim access points. Of each of the four sectors, law enforcement filled the role of first access point in more cases than any other sector.

Education reform within the law enforcement sector fulfills the evaluation requirements of efficacy, cost efficiency, feasibility, and acceptability. That being said, the United States would ideally employ a multi-disciplinary approach to combating trafficking, one that informs counselors, healthcare providers, and the general public on and mobilizes them against human trafficking. Having more educated and attentive individuals looking out for signs of trafficking, who then can turn to a well-trained and equipped police force, can only aid in the fight against human trafficking. But the abilities of these individuals to recognize signs of trafficking must be backed by law enforcement that is ready to collaborate with them, take action against the perpetrators, and practically support the victims.

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