



A Window into ECM Task Forces Engaging Lived Experience Experts

FOUNDATIONS EDITION

The Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking

is a U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) grant-funded program that brings together key partners to develop, expand, or strengthen multidisciplinary task forces to address human trafficking. With this approach, local, state, or tribal service providers; law enforcement; prosecutors; and other collaborators can:

- Identify victims of trafficking,
- Access a comprehensive array of service options, and
- Seek justice for victims by implementing victim-centered and trauma-informed investigations and prosecutions.

THE WINDOWS SERIES



Foundations Edition



Case Spotlight Edition



Disciplines Edition

INTRODUCTION

The **Windows Series** offers insights into the ECM model and task forces with examples from the efforts of ECMs nationwide. These examples showcase different structures, successes, innovations, and ideas that:

- demonstrate a commitment to addressing serious crime and supporting victims and survivors;
- illustrate the spectrum of activities and approaches employed by the ECMs;
- share successful strategies to encourage stakeholder cooperation;
- enhance public awareness by highlighting the nature and scope of work;
- offer a behind-the-scenes look at the field and its day-to-day work to a wider audience.

The **Foundations Edition** looks at how different task forces have approached or implemented key parts of the ECM model, including co-leadership models, enhanced collaborative efforts, engagement with lived experience expertise, statewide efforts, and efforts to identify and respond to labor trafficking.

ENGAGING LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTS

Partnering with lived experience experts promotes meaningful engagement between the survivors that task forces serve and task force members. Many task forces struggle to engage with lived experience experts because they fear doing something wrong or beginning too quickly and inadvertently causing harm due to insufficient preplanning.

This Window offers insight into some of the ways ECM task forces have gone about including and partnering with individuals with lived experience.

Tarrant County Human Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | Tarrant County Sheriff's Office & Unbound Now



GEOGRAPHY | Tarrant County, TX, and the surrounding area

The Tarrant County Human Trafficking Task Force actively integrates survivors in their efforts. Before engaging with survivors, the Task Force spent time discussing and planning to ensure there was clarity on duties, compensation, and contract language. They then identified and recruited survivor leaders through victim service provider partners who had worked with them on previous projects.

The Task Force invited survivor leaders to join the Training & Outreach Committee, outlining their commitment to embed survivor leaders in the Task Force. Rather than having them take on more limited roles, such as reviewing materials, they prioritized engagement in outreach and training efforts from start to finish. This effort included asking about types of training to conduct, developing presentations, identifying sectors that need training, and participating as trainers, if they wanted.

From there the task force continued to integrate survivors into their work, and the survivor leaders began attending and participating in quarterly meetings, developing trainings, and assisting on other projects. The survivor leaders worked on programmatic frameworks, including assessing

The **Tarrant County Task Force** has actively integrated survivor leaders throughout their efforts. By providing tailored support and skill development, the task force recognizes and honors the unique experiences of survivor leaders, fostering meaningful participation in developing trainings, programmatic frameworks, and public events.

and addressing referral gaps between law enforcement and victim service providers and program evaluation. If the survivor leaders did not have a background in a particular skill, the task force worked to develop and train on that skill so the survivor leader could confidently perform the work.

Survivor leaders' current work with the task force includes debriefing on projects, preparing for public-facing events, and receiving event details. Organizationally, the task force is transparent with survivor leaders about any staffing or programmatic changes. Task force staff recognize survivor leaders bring unique experiences they must honor, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

One project of note is the North Texas Human Trafficking Survivor Council, created by Unbound Now, Mosaic Family Services, Polaris, and survivor leaders. The council aims to confront systemic obstacles to services and advocate for sustainable, survivor-centered approaches that honor an individual's customs and traditions. The project goals are to:

- create a training curriculum to incorporate within the council,
- support survivors to build professional skills and gain financial stability, and
- increase partnerships and collaboration within the North Texas anti-trafficking community.

The project also includes developing, planning, and implementing programs focused on survivors and the North Texas community, including anti-trafficking organizations and task forces, to incorporate survivor voices into relevant state protocols and procedures.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Paola Chavez; May 2024.

Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | Cook County State's Attorney's Office & The Salvation Army STOP-IT Program



GEOGRAPHY | Cook County, IL; Northern District of Illinois

In recognition of how significantly lived experience experts could drive and impact the task force's work, in 2020 the **Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force** (CCHTTF) established the Gap Analysis and Treatment Equity (GATE) subcommittee, which "consists of human trafficking survivors who inform and collaborate with CCHTTF to offer their expert perspectives on matters surrounding anti-human trafficking best practices," as stated on the CCHTTF website (Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force, 2023).

The **Cook County Task Force** created a specific subcommittee to help integrate survivors' voices. Members of the committee are compensated and represent both sex and labor trafficking experiences. The committee offers input on a variety of task force projects, programmatic frameworks, and public events.

In developing the subcommittee, CCHTTF prioritized a variety of experiences to ensure representation from individuals with both sex and labor trafficking lived experience. Members of the committee were initially identified and recruited from established survivor leaders in the field and former clients of victim service provider members of the task force. GATE members are compensated for their work and have completed project tasks like analyzing gaps, evaluating consistency in treatment, consulting with the social media team, and developing standards for organizations requesting survivors as speakers.

One recent project in 2023, paired the GATE subcommittee and the task force with a local artist to develop an outreach campaign. The GATE subcommittee emphasized that outreach messaging must address

overlapping life experiences and use language and imagery that would reach potential victims of trafficking. The resulting language on the campaign materials is “Do I Feel Safe?” and “It’s My Right.” This campaign has been shared on billboards and at various locations throughout Chicago. It includes a QR code for services available, including food banks, housing support organizations, domestic violence shelters, legal assistance, and more. CCHTTF hopes this campaign will develop an entry point for individuals who may not see themselves as victims of trafficking. The GATE subcommittee’s guidance and contributions were critical in the development and effectiveness of these outreach materials.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Anna Pastor and Summar Ghias; March 2024.

North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | North Dakota Attorney General’s Office & Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota



GEOGRAPHY | North Dakota

The **North Dakota Task Force**

has a Lived Experience

Subcommittee that the task force developed through a series of engagement steps with lived experience. The task force discussed creating such a committee for several years before taking the first official step

of engaging survivors. During those years they spent time planning, discussing issues including compensation, hiring practices, and the type and scope of work that might be appropriate for the committee. In 2020, more substantive efforts began with Task Force members reaching out to

The **North Dakota Task Force**

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individuals with lived experience who had received services affiliated with the task force and had expressed interest in further engagement.

These individuals were offered an opportunity to provide compensated, anonymous feedback and input through questions asking about positive and negative experiences with victim service providers, law enforcement, and the general public. The overarching theme of this effort was uncovering what individuals with lived experience would want those groups to know about their experiences and needs.

The responses provided a great deal of insight for task force members and led them to follow up with those that filled out the questionnaire with the hope of hosting an in-person, survivor-led event. Seven of the questionnaire respondents partnered with the task force to help plan, develop materials, and ultimately host a panel for the community. Instead of sharing details of trafficking experiences, the panel focused on informing attendees of the existing barriers and system changes that would better support survivors.

Through and following their work on the panel event, the Task Force formalized the Lived Experience Subcommittee, with the seven panel participants as its initial members. Members represent both sex and labor trafficking experiences. The subcommittee functions as an advisory board, and the task force contracts with each member to serve on the subcommittee. In addition to financial compensation, each member's contract includes free and anonymous therapeutic services from a network of trauma-informed counselors, if needed.

Subcommittee members continue to work and build out the structure of the committee in a way that works for the committee members. This includes how to cultivate and maintain a safe and open environment and how to address conflict. The subcommittee has also worked on other important efforts of the task force including exploring the meaning of justice for survivors, developing presentations for legal groups and conferences, providing training to key partner agencies, and developing outreach messaging.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Emily Schwartz, March 2023.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Engaging lived experience experts from a project's start helps to ensure it aligns with the needs of impacted communities.
- Engaging with many lived experience experts and providing varying types of engagement based on strengths and interests ensures task forces incorporate a variety of experiences.
- Thoughtful planning for integrating lived experience including roles, scope of work, compensation, and additional support, can mitigate confusion and frustration and support a healthy collaborative experience for all MDT members.
- External support can be useful for lived experience experts if their work brings up trauma.

REFERENCES

Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force. (2023). *The Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force* [Home page]. <https://www.cookcountytaskforce.org>