



A Window into How ECM Task Forces are Enhancing Collaborative Efforts

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.

ENHANCING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Like all collaborative groups, ECM task forces encounter challenges as they develop, evolve, and expand. These challenges frequently prompt adopting innovative practices and approaches that enhance their capacity for collaboration. This Window highlights how task forces have bolstered their ability to collaborate, build trust, maintain staff consistency in services, and support victims as they navigate the legal process.

Santa Clara County Human Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office & Community Solutions for Children



OTHER FEATURED PARTNERS | South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking; Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office; Homeland Security Investigations; YWCA; Asian Alliance for Community Involvement



GEOGRAPHY | Santa Clara County, CA

Briefing: During anticipated survivor recovery operations, law enforcement partners include advocates from service providers in their preliminary operational briefings. Together, they share all available information, including the number of anticipated trafficking victims and all necessary demographic information to help service providers plan and prepare. On the day of the operation, all agencies involved are onsite for a final briefing, ensuring clear expectations and minimizing communication breakdowns.

The **Santa Clara County Human Trafficking Task Force (LEIHT)** continually enhances its case response through a structured briefing and debriefing process. This approach is modeled after the traditional briefing methods used in law enforcement operations and has expanded to include service providers, thanks to ECM funding. With common goals and deliverables, as well as a dedicated Coordinator serving as a bridge between partners, the process has naturally evolved to strengthen collaboration between law enforcement and service providers.

Debriefing: Debriefing allows the team to reflect on successes and areas for improvement. This happens in two steps: first, an immediate debrief with both law enforcement and service providers once the operation ends, offering space for initial feedback and ensuring any questions are addressed. Later, a formal meeting is held, open to all involved, including leadership from the various agencies.

This process is a collaboration between the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office and Community Solutions. The service provider takes the lead in organizing the meeting, while law enforcement presence alongside service providers models the importance of participation and mutual respect for everyone involved.

Although briefing and debriefing require a time investment, Task Force personnel recognize their critical role in fostering understanding and trust. These processes have improved response coordination, identified operational gaps, and strengthened the collaborative relationship between all partners. By acknowledging their differing perspectives in support of a joint mission, the Task Force sets the tone for a collaborative environment, ensuring that the mission moves forward as a unified team.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Josh Singleton in May 2024.

Westchester County Anti-Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | Westchester County District Attorney's Office & International Organization for Adolescents



OTHER FEATURED PARTNERS | Westchester Jewish Community Services



GEOGRAPHY | Westchester County, NY

In 2015, the **Westchester County** District Attorney's Office created a formal partnership with the leading agency in the county for mental health services, Westchester Jewish Community Services, to have a trauma therapist onsite. Funded by the DA Office's general funds and supplemented with state grant funds from the New York State Office of Victim Services, the

formal partnership and co-location allow prosecutors to introduce victims to trusted therapists in a safe and welcoming environment. Fredric Green, the Chief of Special Prosecutions for the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, highlights the importance of recovery: "[W]hile winning the case and the criminal legal system are key pieces of the process, ensuring the crime victim has the opportunity to heal is equally important" (personal communication, May 29, 2024).

The Office requires therapy to be offered to all special victims, and having the service onsite makes it easier to receive services. Mental health confidentiality standards apply in this context—confidential records are kept offsite, and no information about the therapy is shared with the office. The therapist not only provides therapy to victims of crime but also court

The **Westchester County** District Attorney's Office, the lead law criminal justice partner for the Westchester Task Force, has an embedded trauma therapist that offers therapy, court accompaniment and support as victims navigate the criminal justice system.

accompaniment and support throughout their time in the criminal legal system. Additionally, the therapist offers vicarious trauma training to the DA Office staff. The Special Prosecutions Unit and the entire child abuse multidisciplinary team, including all community partners and one local police department, have received this training and support.

As a result of the office's partnership with Westchester Jewish Community Services and the therapy for special victims, the leadership at Westchester County District Attorney's Office has learned more about trauma and its effects and changed how they prosecute crime. In 2022, the office was approved to hire an additional therapist and now has two trauma therapists onsite who can accommodate therapy in English and Spanish.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Fredric Green in May 2024

Brazos Valley Human Trafficking Task Force



FUNDED PARTNERS | Brazos Valley Sheriff's Office & Unbound Now Bryan College Station (BCS)



GEOGRAPHY | Brazos, Burleson, Robertson Grimes, Leon, Madison, Walker, Lee and Washington counties

Unbound Now is committed to supporting its staff through a comprehensive approach rooted in three core values: hope-driven, service-oriented, and excellence-focused. Staff are offered comprehensive support through internal and external channels. Monthly groups, facilitated by a wellness coach, help staff develop skills in self-care and perseverance.

Participation in these sessions is encouraged, with staff expected to attend at least half annually, although many attend more frequently. Additionally, advocates receive four self-care days annually and participate in biweekly supervision meetings to discuss cases and personal well-being.

The Bryan College Station (BCS) Unbound Now location has expanded this support framework, providing weekly logistics meetings, regular personal check-ins, and quarterly team-building and professional development events. Their focus is on staff connection and empowerment, fostering a supportive environment where an open-door policy encourages ongoing communication and mutual support. The BCS office has also established its own values - unity, hope-driven, and integrity - that guide interactions within the team and with clients and partners, ensuring a trauma-informed approach.

Unbound Now BCS exemplifies best practices in supporting staff and advocates, and made strides across Task Force partnerships, relationships and openness to change by extending their values externally.

Supervisors at Unbound Now BCS incorporate these values into biweekly supervision sessions, where they discuss cases through the lenses of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) and Motivational Interviewing (MI). These sessions help staff develop and apply these skills while addressing any personal impacts of their work.

Externally, Unbound Now BCS extends its trauma-informed practices to partner agencies, offering constructive feedback to improve collaboration and the overall effectiveness of Task Force operations. For example, law enforcement has sought feedback on using a trauma-informed approach in their investigations and Unbound Now staff have offered coaching on ways law enforcement could improve trauma-informed responses. This approach has strengthened relationships and fostered an environment of openness and trust among Task Force partners.

By maintaining their office values and collaboration with others, Unbound Now BCS has made strides across Task Force partnerships and progressed relationships and openness to change. And through these efforts, Unbound Now BCS exemplifies best practices in supporting staff and advocates, ensuring they are equipped to provide high-quality, compassionate care to survivors while maintaining their own well-being.

Unless otherwise cited, this information was provided via an interview with Naomi Rijpstra in May 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Building trust with partners and briefing and debriefing after joint interactions with victims or survivors can feel challenging or even daunting, but serves as a long-term investment that improves the overall functioning of collaborative task forces.
- Embedding partner staff into organizational and day-to-day functions benefits all staff involved, and the victims and survivors being served, and improves interagency relationships and trust.
- Supporting staff and task force members reduces turnover, supports building longer and more trusting relationships, and helps maintain continuity of care with victims/survivors.
- Shared funding between law enforcement and service providers allows a shared commitment to goals.
- A task force coordinator/director can bridge ECM-funded partners and the task force at large and help build and maintain relationships based on trust and mutual respect, among other things.