

A Window into the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force

US V. ANTHONY DONTE COLLIER

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:

- Increase identification of 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 **Case Spotlight Edition** features cases investigated by ECMs, highlighting the range of scenarios as well as the different methods, partnerships and collaborative efforts that go into increasing identification of victims of all ages and of all forms of human trafficking; providing access to services; and conducting victim-centered and trauma-informed investigations to prosecute traffickers.

A CASE OF SEX TRAFFICKING



The North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force identified a sex trafficking scheme, worked as a collaborative to offer services and support to five victims, and achieved a successful federal sex trafficking conviction.

United States v. Anthony Donte Collier



TASK FORCE | The North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force

VICTIMS | 5 (female)

PERPETRATORS | 2



TRAFFICKING | Sex trafficking through force & coercion

PRIMARY CHARGE | 18 U.S. Code § 1591; Sex trafficking

SENTENCE | 40 years & \$38,885.41 in victim restitution

SNAPSHOT | With support from the Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Force funding, the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force successfully investigated and prosecuted a sex trafficking case with five victims at the trial, in part due to committed collaboration and in house expertise contributed by each multidisciplinary partner. In December 2017, Anthony Donte Collier (also known as “Koleone the Great”) was sentenced to 40 years in prison and ordered to pay \$38,885.41 in restitution to five victims he exploited through sex trafficking. This case was made possible through the coordinated efforts of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force (NDHTTF), funded by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Background

The NDHTTF first received ECM funding in 2015. With this award, and the continued support of subsequent funding, the task force established a regionalized, statewide approach to identifying, responding to, and combating human trafficking. This coordinated network continues to bring together local, state, and federal partners, including victim service providers, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and other allied professionals who share the mission of providing comprehensive support to victims while pursuing and prosecuting traffickers.

Case Summary

In 2016, a state probation officer came across a concerning image on the social media of a probationer on his caseload, and subsequent images on the probationer's phone depicting women in demeaning and provocative positions. He had received training on identification of human trafficking, so he shared the pictures with the Moorhead Police Department (MPD), who started identifying potential victims. Due to the expansive nature of this case, involving multiple cities spanning across multiple states, after the initial response, MPD turned the case over to HSI (Homeland Security Investigations). As the lead investigative agency, HSI built the case in coordination with local law enforcement and with forensic support from North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigations (ND-BCI).

Through this collaborative law enforcement effort, a search warrant was obtained for Collier's cellphone, and during the forensic examination, they found concerning images of several women and a minor. They also determined the cellphone was connected to Bitcoin and an online advertisement site for commercial sex, using the same images on Collier's cellphone. The investigation further revealed that Anthony Collier had been recruiting women under false pretenses, stating that he had job opportunities and asking them to sign contracts.

When the individuals were identified and interviewed, they disclosed that Collier physically abused them to compel them to engage in commercial sex acts. The identified victims were introduced to local service providers, the YWCA Cass Clay and Youthworks, to support them with meeting basic needs, case management, counseling, housing, and support through the trial and beyond. Additionally, this case was pivotal in the development and implementation of task force protocols and processes. Notably, the leadership team included survivor subject matter experts. The survivor informed practices assisted the task force in creating positive victim/survivor interactions.

In April 2017, the case went to trial, and the advocates were present with the five victims throughout. This was invaluable, especially when Collier decided to go pro se during the victim testimony, and used inappropriate slurs, was demeaning, and worked to intimidate the victims while they were on the stand. After questioning them, he asked his attorney to resume.

Collier's brother, Antione Collier, was also charged as a co-conspirator in this case. Antione ultimately testified against Anthony, and his prosecution was dropped as a result. After the 11.5-day jury trial, Collier was found guilty of conspiracy to engage in sex trafficking, sex trafficking a child, and four counts of sex trafficking. In December 2017, Collier was sentenced to 40 years incarceration and ordered to pay \$38,885.41 in victim restitution.

Thank you to task force members of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force for contributing case details, insights and lessons learned.

COLLABORATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Law Enforcement and Prosecution

- The probation officer received training on human trafficking, enabling early identification and referral to investigative entities.
- There was cross-agency coordination between local, state, and federal agencies, working together on the investigation and prosecution.
 - Example: When the case moved from state to federal, HSI agents affiliated with the NDHTTF began supporting MPD and listening to jail calls, finding that Collier, even in prison, was directing victims to continue taking dates and having his brother Antoine monitor the victims.
- Technical expertise was required and provided by forensic analysis to collect digital evidence (cellphone, Bitcoin transactions, online ads).
- Dedicated law enforcement professionals went above and beyond (e.g., driving in severe weather) to prioritize safety and access to services.

Victim-Services

- Victims were offered services from multiple agencies, ensuring choice, access, empowerment and respect.
- Recognizing re-traumatization risk during trial testimony, efforts were made to mitigate harm by connecting the victims to advocates with lived experience of human trafficking to provide emotional support and advocacy. The support continued throughout the lengthy trial process.

THE ECM – WHAT MADE THIS COLLABORATION EFFECTIVE

True Multidisciplinary Collaboration: In the case outlined, the task force-funded partners; ND Council on Abused Women’s Services (ND CAWS), YWCA Cass Clay, and Youthworks provided sustained support to victims throughout the investigation, trial, and beyond. The case was investigated by HSI with support from the MPD, and the ND-BCI. The prosecution was led by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, a member of the task force’s executive board.

Strong Partnerships: Building trust with law enforcement took time. Trust was evidenced when one of the victims, who early on had expressed hostility towards law enforcement, was incarcerated in a community over an hour from the metro area. A friend of the victim called law enforcement working the case and stated the victim asked her to call, “because she had no one to call and nowhere to go.” The AUSA, HSI lead, and USAO Victim Witness Coordinator drove through a snowstorm to pick up the victim.

While the team traveled to transport the above-mentioned victim, they were coordinating with the NDHTTF Regional Navigator to identify housing upon her return to the metro area. Because the task force partners prioritized building relationships and trust, the YWCA Cass Clay was able to secure shelter space and quick admission, despite significant barriers. This is a testament to the importance of a multidisciplinary team response.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Training professionals on what trafficking may look like can produce beneficial results when they notice something and can name it.
- Building trust with victims can take time. Understanding this uncertain timeframe and remaining consistent can have a positive impact for the victims and the case. It is important for victims to feel they can trust the advocates, detectives, and prosecutors involved.
- Advocates who focus on each client as an individual with unique experiences and needs are often able to quickly build trust and rapport with victims.
- A commitment to working together across agencies and disciplines, prioritizing relationships and trust building among multi-disciplinary partners, also yields positive results, especially when immediate or challenging needs are identified and sustained partnerships can be supportive in finding creative solutions.

- The presence of advocates with lived experience in the day-to-day activities of the multi-disciplinary team is invaluable in educating other task force members who are working on a case in real time, to better understand needs, language, coercive tactics, and other elements of the case.
- Subject matter experts with lived experience of human trafficking can help shape effective task force responses and protocols.

REFERENCES

U.S. Attorney's Office District of North Dakota. (2017, April 20). Illinois Resident Found Guilty Following Sex Trafficking Trial [Press release]. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nd/pr/illinois-resident-found-guilty-following-sex-trafficking-trial>