



**Safe Harbour: NY Fast Facts:
Building and working with task forces in response to human trafficking**

Components of a multi-sector response to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and human trafficking might include¹:

- Local, State, and Federal law enforcement;
- State social service agencies;
- Local, State, county and Federal prosecutors;
- Defense attorneys;
- Judges;
- Nongovernmental social service and advocacy organizations;
- Victims/survivors;
- Child welfare;
- Juvenile Justice;
- Health care providers;
- Mental health care providers;
- Educators;
- Researches and academics;
- Social activists;
- Homeless advocates;
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) advocates;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Private sector;
- Public officials; and
- Media.

Key features found in multidisciplinary child maltreatment task forces include²:

- A commitment from the all team members (the multidisciplinary team approach will not succeed unless all members are committed to its success and believe that it is worthwhile);
- Clear definitions of the roles and responsibilities of each of the involved agencies and professionals;
- Creation of a clear mission statement which represents shared values;
- A regular process for review and discussion of cases and issues and a culture that allows for respectful disagreement and questioning of one another;

¹ Clayton, E., Krugman, R., & Simon, P. (Eds.). (2013). *Confronting commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States*. Washington D.C: The National Academies Press.

² *Ibid.*



Office of Children and Family Services

- A written agreement specifying the ways in which team members will communicate and coordinate regarding cases and victims;
- Open and respectful communication among all partners; and
- Joint training and team social activities.

Common challenges facing task forces include³:

- Lack of training;
- Lack of shared frameworks and data systems;
- Lack of sustained funding;
- Communication barriers; and
- Limited resources, especially for rural and tribal communities.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)⁴:

- MOUs should define the roles, responsibilities, and responses to human trafficking of each participating organization.
- Response plans should be realistic and achievable based on the resources and capabilities of each organization.
- The simpler the agreements and the clearer the expectations are, the easier it will be for agencies to sign on with minimal language change in the legal review process.
- When there is resistance or discomfort with signing an MOU the facilitator should invite the agency's executive to point out specific area(s) of the document that present challenges. These clauses should be revised together in a way that is mutually agreeable.
- If an agency or organization is unable or unwilling to sign a formal agreement and their cooperation with work group is essential, an unsigned document can be issued to ensure an understanding of the type of involvement that is expected from their participation.
- For examples of a Human Trafficking Task Force MOU, reference the following links:
 - https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/media/5.7/bjasamplecomprehensivehftf_mou_.pdf
 - https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/media/5.7/austin%20mou%20coalition_1009200921134700.pdf
 - https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/media/5.7/orange%20county%20memorandum%20of%20understanding_2010.pdf

Meeting dynamics⁵:

The meeting environment should be a welcoming and safe space to allow for free expression and discussion of concerns. In addition, meetings should:

- Start and end on time.
- Begin each meeting with introductions, including each participant's name, role, and organization;

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Office of Victim of Crimes (OVC) & the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). (2011). Anti-Human trafficking Task Force Strategy and Operations e-Guide. Retrieved from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/Default.aspx>

⁵ *Ibid.*



Office of Children and Family Services

- Meet with consistency; the frequency of the meeting should be determined by the group's established goals and coordinating timelines. For newly formed Task Forces, it is recommended that a meeting be conducted at least once a month for the first 6 months.
- Be facilitated by an agenda; each meeting should have an agreed upon facilitator who is responsible for preparing and circulating an agenda. Agenda items should be solicited in advance of each meeting.
- Routinely remind members of the group's commitment to respect confidentiality, especially when discussing cases.
- Include ongoing training; Task Force meetings are a continuous learning environment. Regular and brief updates are ideal as they require the trainer to be concise that is relevant, applicable, and practical.
- Share information; while it is understood that some information cannot be shared due to confidentiality agreements, some level of information needs to be shared on all sides so that everyone remains informed.
- Institutionalize feedback; develop and refine methods to solicit and incorporate feedback from members on a regular basis.
- Ensure projects and special tasks are accomplished through subcommittee assignments based on the group's action plan. Each task should have a scheduled report-back period to the larger group.