

Michigan Human Trafficking  
Health Advisory Board  
2020 and 2021 Annual Report

Pursuant to Public Act 461 of 2014, the members of the Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board developed this annual report to detail the Board's activities and recommendations for improving health and mental health services for victims of human trafficking. The report is submitted to the chairs of the committees concerned with health policy of the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives.

## Message from the Chair

Honorable Lawmakers,

I am proud to share the attached 2020 and 2021 report for the MI Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board. This report outlines the board's activities throughout the 2020 and 2021 calendar years.

Human trafficking is an emerging field in healthcare, and our board members are working hard to stay up to date on the latest developments in this field. In addition, many of our Board members are diligently working to raise awareness of human trafficking and the needs of survivors among members of the healthcare community.

The 2020 year was a period of transition for the Health Advisory Board as the Board adjusted to remote meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing of the Board was transitioned to the Division of Victim Services in December of 2020. The 2021 year saw a resurgence of Board activities as staff and Board members adjusted to work and remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 year also was a year of planning for the Board as work on several larger multi-year projects began.

Many thanks to MDHHS for continuing to be a valuable partner, resource, and ally in proactively addressing concerns raised by Board members. The Board is also deeply grateful to other organizations for their assistance in fulfilling its mission.

Finally, thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as chairperson of this extraordinary board.

Respectfully,



Jayashree (Jay) Kommareddi, Chairperson

MI Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board

## Board Members 2020

**Chairperson Jayashree Kommareddi**, of Grand Blanc, represents individuals with experience and expertise in the fields of human trafficking prevention and intervention.

**Sheila Meshinski**, R.N., of Macomb, represents registered professional nurses with experience in an emergency department, emergency room, or trauma center of a hospital.

**James Blessman**, M.D., of Detroit, represents individuals licensed to practice medicine and was recommended by the Speaker of the House.

**Brigette Robarge**, of Belleville, represents human trafficking survivors.

**Ruth Rondon**, of Wyoming, represents human trafficking survivors.

**Subburaman Sivakumar**, M.D., of Northville Township, represents individuals licensed to practice medicine and was recommended by the Senate Majority Leader.

**Stacy Doctoroff** is a licensed therapist and will represent mental health professionals on the board.

**Debi Cain** is the director of the Division of Victim Services at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). She serves as a representative of MDHHS.

**Jooyeun Chang** is Senior Deputy Director for MDHHS's Children's Services Agency, where she oversees the state's child welfare system, including Children's Protective Services, the foster care system, adoption services and juvenile justice programs. She serves as a representative of MDHHS.

## **Board Members 2021**

**Chairperson Jayashree Kommareddi**, of Grand Blanc, represents individuals with experience and expertise in the fields of human trafficking prevention and intervention.

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**James Blessman**, M.D., of Detroit, represents individuals licensed to practice medicine and was recommended by the Speaker of the House.

**Brigette Robarge**, of Belleville, represents human trafficking survivors.

**Rodica Richmond**, of Linden, represents human trafficking survivors.

**Subburaman Sivakumar**, M.D., of Northville Township, represents individuals licensed to practice medicine and was recommended by the Senate Majority Leader.

**Stacy Doctoroff** is a licensed therapist and will represent mental health professionals on the board.

**Debi Cain** is the director of the Division of Victim Services at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). She serves as a representative of MDHHS.

**Demetrius Starling** is Senior Deputy Director for MDHHS's Children's Services Agency, where she oversees the state's child welfare system, including Children's Protective Services, the foster care system, adoption services and juvenile justice programs. He serves as a representative of MDHHS.

**Contents**

Executive Summary .....7

Introduction .....8

Background .....9

2020/2021 Board Activities .....10

Conclusion .....13

Acknowledgements .....14

## **Executive Summary**

Human trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, or if the individual induced to perform a commercial sex act is under 18 years old. Human trafficking is a serious public health issue, and the healthcare community can play an integral role in confronting it.

In October 2014, Governor Rick Snyder signed the Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board Act into law. The act established the Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board, a public advisory body housed in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and comprised of health and mental health professionals, human trafficking prevention experts, government agency representatives, and survivors of human trafficking. The Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board's mission is to improve the quality of and access to health and mental health services for victims of human trafficking.

This is the Board's fifth annual report submitted to the legislature. The report includes a summary of activities by the Board in 2020.

### **2020 and 2021 Activities:**

- Continued coordination with the Department of the Attorney General's Commission on Human Trafficking
- Developed Human Trafficking resource for individuals seeking benefits from DHHS programs.
- Participation in the Michigan Human Exploitation Advisory Team Coalition (H.E.A.T.)
- Planned for a Resource Directory for Human Trafficking Service Providers
- Human Trafficking Public Awareness Campaign
- Planned for a Survey of Health Providers
- Started Efforts to Develop a Policy/Protocol Toolkit for Health Providers
- Reviewed Human Trafficking Training for Health Providers

### **Guest Speakers and Presentations at the Board Meetings:**

- Kelly Carter, Assistant Attorney General, the Chair of Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission
- Heather McCauley, ScD, School of Social Work, Michigan State University, Understanding Victims'/Survivors' Perceptions of Accountability, Justice, Safety, & Care Seeking Research
- Susan Tippet and Michelle Most, Ascension Genesys Hospital
- Sarah Prout Rennie and Merkeb Yohannes, Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV)

## Introduction

In 2014, a 21-bill legislative package overhauling the human trafficking chapter in Michigan's laws was signed into law by Governor Rick Snyder in 2014. One of these bills, Public Act 461 of 2014, established the Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

The Human Trafficking Health Advisory board is comprised of nine members including representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, medical professionals, mental health professionals, human trafficking survivors, and human trafficking prevention and intervention experts.

### **Public Act 461 of 2014 charges the Board with five essential duties:**

1. Collect and analyze information about available health services for trafficking survivors;
2. Identify government agencies that are involved with issues related to human trafficking and coordinate the dissemination of information about health services to trafficking survivors;
3. Meet with local health agencies to review health services and establish a program to make survivors more aware of available services;
4. Establish a program to improve public awareness about available health services for survivors; and
5. Review existing state laws and administrative rules relating to health services for survivors.

**2020 Meeting Dates and COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:** The Board planned four meetings during the 2020 calendar year but was only able to meet twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic emergency also impacted assigned MDHHS staff ability to co-chair and coordinate the Board. Subsequently, due to ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, coordination duties for the Board were officially shifted to staff at Division of Victim Services in late 2020.

- March 26, 2020 (canceled due to COVID-19 Pandemic)
- June 18, 2020 (canceled due to COVID-19 Pandemic)
- September 17, 2020 (remote meeting)
- December 14, 2020 (remote meeting)

**2021 Meeting Dates and COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:** The Board met four times during the 2021 Calendar Year.

- March 21, 2021 (remote meeting)
- June 10, 2021 (remote meeting)
- September 30, 2021
- December 9, 2021



## Background

The issue of human trafficking has received increased attention by the public in recent years. While the number of human trafficking cases in the United States remains unclear, we know that people are being trafficked in communities—large and small, affluent and poor, rural and urban—across the country. Members of our communities are being exploited at the hands of profiteers and robbed of their most fundamental right—freedom. Michigan is no exception to this crime.

Human trafficking is no longer viewed as solely a law enforcement issue. Rather, experts on human trafficking now recognize that healthcare professionals can play an important role in both identifying and assisting victims of trafficking. Studies have shown that most of the human trafficking victims report seeing a healthcare professional at some point while being trafficked. Unfortunately, many healthcare professionals lack the training to identify victims. Everyday healthcare professionals have an opportunity to empower victims to leave their traffickers, and we should give them every possible resource to do this.

However, the healthcare professional's role does not end once a victim has been identified. Viewing human trafficking from a health lens necessitates addressing the physical and behavioral health consequences of human trafficking. The needs of trafficking victims are complex, and the factors affecting physical, mental, and emotional health are often interrelated. To properly address these complex needs, healthcare professionals must collaborate with other resources and providers in their communities. The Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board recognizes this need for cooperation and the Board has made a conscious effort to partner with other government agencies, community non-profits, healthcare organizations, and, most importantly, survivors of human trafficking. No one person, provider, or organization can address all of the needs of trafficking victims, but through education, training, and coordination we can develop a network of services for survivors that can empower victims and survivors to live healthy, independent lives.

## 2020/2021 Board Activities

During 2020 and 2021 members of the Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board have worked on a number of initiatives outlined below:

**Continued coordination with the Department of the Attorney General’s Commission on Human Trafficking.** Leadership from the Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board and the Commission on Human Trafficking met to coordinate activities in early winter of 2020, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Board continued to participate in sub-committee work with the Commission including Victim Services and Resource and Funding subcommittees. A Victim Services Subcommittee Listening Tour was planned in collaboration with University of Michigan, Community Technical Assistance Collaborative. The goal of the listening tour was to contribute to Michigan’s existing data by analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating the unique knowledge and expertise of survivors through survivor advocacy. The collaborative completed the first two phases of the project and assisted in the creation of “Human Trafficking Policy and Best Practice Guide for Focus Groups” and “Survivors Listening Tour: Focus Group Facilitators Guide”. Due to pandemic restrictions, the project was paused as it necessitated in- person engagements.

**COVID-19 Networking Calls.** Staff and Board members participated in a number of remote networking and resource sharing meetings with Human Trafficking survivors, victim service providers, and the Human Trafficking Taskforces across Michigan. These meetings gave participants an opportunity to share resources, emerging concerns, and strategies for responding to Human Trafficking during COVID-19.

**Developed Human Trafficking resource for individuals seeking benefits from DHHS programs.** In consultation with the Health Advisory Board, Division of Victim Service Staff worked with DHHS working group to draft recommendations for responding to individuals who disclose trafficking on their application for benefits through MI-Bridges. Recommendations included updating the information booklet provided to Benefits applicants and development of a resource/brochure that can be provided to individuals who disclose trafficking. These recommendations and resources are currently under review.

**Participation in the Michigan Human Exploitation Advisory Team Coalition (H.E.A.T.).** Board members participated in Michigan H.E.A.T., an organization that was created to bridge the gap between professionals and survivors in the Human Trafficking community. The Michigan H.E.A.T. Coalition assists professionals in the development of programs, policies, and legislation to better assist the human trafficking community. It is comprised solely of survivor leaders in Michigan. The Michigan H.E.A.T. Coalition is working to raise awareness on the equality model and the dangers of decriminalizing legalization of prostitution.

**Planned for a Resource Directory for Human Trafficking Service Providers.** DVS staff performed an electronic survey of programs across the state that perform some level of victim services for survivors of Human Trafficking. Survey data revealed an incomplete and evolving levels of service available for victims. It was determined that a list of Human Trafficking service providers should be published but limited to those funded by the Division of Victim Services or the Federal Office of Victims or Crime. Release of the resource directory was postponed pending the completion of an anticipated 2022 funding awards in Michigan targeting services to Human Trafficking Victims.

**Human Trafficking Public Awareness Campaign:** The Board consulted on media campaign supported by the Division of Victim Services to promote the National Human Trafficking Hotline run by Polaris. The Campaign resulted in almost 10 million total impressions. It included human trafficking posters targeting laundromats, barbershops, nail salons, gas stations and convenience stores. The campaign also digital posts on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram. The campaign promoted the national human trafficking hotline.

**Planned for a Survey of Health Providers.** The Board planned for a 2022 survey of Michigan hospitals to assess the status of policy and protocol to respond to Human Trafficking victims. It is anticipated that survey results will provide a snapshot of healthcare practices in Michigan hospitals related to human trafficking and be a springboard for future technical assistance and protocol development efforts.

**Started Efforts to Develop a Policy/Protocol Toolkit for Health Providers.** The Board participated with DVS staff in planning for the development of a Human Trafficking Toolkit for Health Providers. The aim of this Toolkit is to document the protocol development process used by Ascension Genesys Hospital in creating policy and procedures for identifying and responding to victims of human trafficking. The Toolkit will be developed by the Michigan Public Health Institute with advice from the Board during the 2022 calendar year and will be used to informing the work of other health providers looking to improve their response to human trafficking victims.

**Reviewed Human Trafficking Training for Health Providers.** The Board began the process of reviewing human trafficking training available online for health providers. Once training review is completed recommended trainings will be available on the Board's MDHHS website.

#### **Guest Speakers and Presentations at the Board Meetings:**

- **Kelly Carter, Assistant Attorney General, the Chair of Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission (the Commission):** Ms. Kelly Carter presented to the Board reviewing the collaborative work between the Commission and Board. Ms. Carter provided and update on a package of proposed legislation including thirty bills falling into four categories: training mandates, criminal justice reforms targeting

accountability, expanding protections for victims, and modernizing definition of prostitution.

- **Heather McCauley, ScD, School of Social Work, Michigan State University.** Ms. McCauley presented research findings “Understanding Victims’/Survivors’ Perceptions of Accountability, Justice, Safety, & Care Seeking.”
- **Susan Tippett and Michelle Most, Ascension Genesys Hospital.** Ms. Tippett and Ms. Most presented on the Ascension Mid-Michigan Human Trafficking Hospital Emergency Room Pilot Program that was funded by a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) grant. The program developed and implemented a regional standard hospital emergency room protocol to identify, assess, treat, and refer victims of Human Trafficking who came into emergency rooms. Red flags, control indicators and physical indicators were used to identify victims of Human Trafficking in hospital emergency rooms. Subject Matter Experts conducted trauma informed interviews with patients to assess if Human Trafficking was an issue.
- **Sarah Prout Rennie and Merkeb Yohannes, Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV).** Provided a presentation on the Human Trafficking Toolkit for Domestic & Sexual Violence Agencies. The Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV) has been a collaborative partner with the University of Michigan Law School’s Human Trafficking Clinic. Professor Elizabeth Campbell requested a toolkit be created that represents how MCEDSV programs and the human trafficking movement can work together to leverage their resources to recognize and support survivors of human trafficking. The toolkit supports intersectionality, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed practices that prioritize the reduction of harm.

## **Conclusion**

The Board's activities described in this report represent one piece of the much larger picture of confronting human trafficking in Michigan. Healthcare professionals play a vital role in identifying and supporting victims/survivors of human trafficking. The mental, physical, and emotional consequences of human trafficking on victims/survivors are complex and creating victimcentered, trauma-informed services that effectively meets their needs requires collaboration and coordination across disciplines. To this end, much of the work in this report would not be possible without the essential input and cooperation of the board's partners throughout Michigan. This report builds on best practices from across the country to ensure the board is implementing evidence-based, collaborative approaches to serving victims of human trafficking. The board believes that through the work described in this report, healthcare professionals will have the opportunity to achieve their field's highest aim: empowering some of our society's most vulnerable individuals to lead healthy, thriving lives.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Human Trafficking Health Advisory board would like to thank the following organization for their partnership in 2020:

- Michigan Attorney General Human Trafficking Commission
- Heather McCauley, ScD, School of Social Work, Michigan State University
- Susan Tippet and Michelle Most, Ascension Genesys Hospital.
- Sarah Prout Rennie and Merkeb Yohannes, Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV)