

# Evaluation of Processes, Lessons, and Results from the National Judicial College's Human Trafficking Leadership Conference and CDL Public Awareness Campaign

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## **Disclaimer**

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## Executive Summary

The 2024 *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign* facilitated by The National Judicial College (NJC) with support from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is the first nationwide program of its kind to develop and pilot a curriculum-driven judicial leadership initiative that empowered judges to conceptualize, implement, and describe the outcomes of local human trafficking awareness campaigns in their jurisdictions. Through this initiative, judicial leaders explored innovative curriculum elements, including empathy exercises, survivor testimonials, and breakout sessions designed to foster collaboration and actionable strategies. Importantly, this applied leadership program gave judges the tools and resources necessary to create impactful human trafficking and Commercial Driver License (CDL) holders' public awareness action plans tailored to the realities of their courts. Remarkably, the program resulted in significant improvements in the participants' understanding of the complexities of human trafficking and gave judicial leaders the confidence to actively confront human trafficking within their courts, communities, local governments, states, and across the United States.

### Program Stages

This groundbreaking pilot program was divided into four stages: Stage 1- Best-Practice Research and Creating a Program Design Workgroup; Stage 2- Workgroup Collaboration, Program Design, and Judicial Leader Recruitment; Stage 3- Facilitation of the Judicial Leadership Program; and Stage 4- Evaluation of the Course Materials, Empathy Exercise, and Public Awareness Campaign.

**Stage 1- Best-Practice Research and Creating a Program Design Workgroup:** The foundational step of this program began with a convergence of applied social science researchers, the NJC's instructional designers, and human trafficking prevention organization stakeholders. Social science researchers at the NJC conducted in-depth assessments of best practices in human trafficking prevention, including a careful review of the 2019 Department of Transportation Advisory on Committee on Human Trafficking Final Report, "Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector." The NJC staff reviewed best instructional practices for facilitating human trafficking prevention courses based on the outcomes of previous educational efforts. The NJC also reached out to notable stakeholders, including those from TAT (formerly Truckers Against Trafficking), Human Trafficking Institute (HTI), Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), Courage Worldwide, Awaken, the Reno Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) team, and

professors from renowned universities to collaborate in this initiative and invited them to share community-based best practices for combating human trafficking. Throughout several strategic meetings and discussions, each actor detailed best practices to confront and prevent human trafficking and became the leadership program “workgroup” for this initiative.

### **Stage 2- Workgroup Collaboration, Program Design, and Judicial Leader**

**Recruitment:** Over the span of months and multiple meetings, the workgroup (the NJC social science researchers, instructional designers, and community stakeholders) combined the best practices for human trafficking prevention from their respective specialties and conceptualized a 4-day judicial leadership program that not only informed participants of the realities of human trafficking but also provided judges with skill sets to create their own public awareness campaigns. The pilot program was designed to achieve seven central goals:

1. Augment judicial awareness of human trafficking and establish judicial leadership in public awareness campaigns.
2. Position judges as catalysts for systemic change within their communities and empower them to educate their peers and communities on trafficking issues.
3. Establish a consistent, victim-centered framework for handling trafficking cases across jurisdictions.
4. Support judges in delivering fair and objective rulings.
5. Develop and pilot a judicial approach to trafficking that mitigates cognitive and procedural challenges.
6. Reinforce jurisprudential consistency across jurisdictions.
7. Support community-based anti-trafficking initiatives by encouraging judges to build partnerships with local organizations, law enforcement, and advocacy groups. These partnerships help connect trafficking survivors with essential support services and establish a collaborative, community-based response to trafficking.

The workgroup devised a variety of instructional strategies to achieve these goals, such as a human trafficking empathy exercise, presentations from human trafficking survivors, lectures from human trafficking prevention stakeholder organizations, and a visit to a local organization that supports survivors leaving trafficking. The workgroup also formulated a mechanism to recruit and select potential judicial leaders throughout the nation who were committed to ending and preventing human trafficking in their jurisdictions and invited them to participate in the judicial leadership program. At the same time, the social science researchers created a schedule of periodic follow-up evaluations to explore the outcomes of the judicial leader’s public awareness projects.

**Stage 3- Facilitation of the Judicial Leadership Program:** From May 7-10, 2024, Researchers, stakeholders, and instructors facilitated the first *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and CDL Public Awareness Campaign* in the Reno, Nevada campus of the National Judicial College. Judicial leaders experienced a combination of traditional adult instructional training courses and new experiential learning strategies that ranged



from introductory sessions covering human trafficking basics, in-depth presentations on trauma-informed judicial practices, and FMCSA regulations to survivor-centered “hands on” approaches. The program also featured panel discussions that provided participants with insights from the public (e.g., FMCSA and Reno law enforcement), nonprofit (e.g., HTI, Courage Worldwide, Institute for Shelter Care, and Awaken), and private sectors (e.g., TAT, CVSA, and AAMVA), which allowed participants to recognize how a multilayered network of stakeholders is necessary to prevent and combat human trafficking within the commercial driving industry and beyond.

An integral part of the Leadership Program was the creation of localized public awareness campaigns on human trafficking. The judicial leaders collaborated with the program facilitators in creating initiatives to enhance judicial and community education, strengthening collaboration with law enforcement and advocacy groups, and developing and promoting human trafficking tools, thanks to the training they received throughout the program. Once the judicial leaders returned to their courts, it was up to them to conduct the public awareness campaigns, and they succeeded beyond initial expectations.

**Stage 4- Evaluation of the Course Materials, Empathy Exercise, and Public Awareness Campaigns:** A series of adult instructional outcome evaluation strategies were employed during and after the program. At the conclusion of the program, judicial leaders were asked to share their impressions. Many described a new or renewed commitment to combating human trafficking, an expanded understanding of its scale and complexity, and a strong belief that this training should be made available to all judges. While participants acknowledged the program was challenging, they overwhelmingly agreed it was well worth the effort.

Over the following year, judicial leaders implemented their public awareness campaigns, and NJC researchers conducted follow-up evaluations of their progress. The NJC’s applied social science researchers assessed both the outcomes of the leadership program and the impact of the awareness campaigns at six- and twelve-months post-instruction. The findings confirmed the program’s success. One judicial leader, for example, was able to identify a victim of trafficking in court as a direct result of the training. Remarkably, more than 95% of participants reported plans to continue their localized awareness campaigns indefinitely.

In addition, NJC researchers and a judicial fellow evaluated the empathy exercise in shorter-format learning experiences and compared the results with those of judicial leaders who had completed the full pilot program. While all groups demonstrated gains, the most significant and lasting impacts were observed among participants in the longer-format program.

## **Evaluation Results**

### **Evaluation of the Course**

After the pilot program, the judicial leaders were asked to describe their impression of the event. Notably, the judicial leaders detailed a new or renewed dedication to combating human trafficking, an increased awareness of the size and scope of human trafficking, and the belief that this opportunity should be made available to all judges. Judicial leaders also noted that it was a challenging program but well worth the effort:

*The course was magnificent. The small class size and setting, coupled with well informed, energetic instructors and coordinators who are passionate about the topic created the perfect "safe space" for open discussion and engagement. I'm excited to execute my individual action plan to educate others and combat human trafficking. Every judge should take this course because human trafficking is everywhere.*

*This course covers many, many areas of the law. Every Judge should take this course to be more familiar with this underlying issue and have tools for their toolboxes to better serve their constituents with these real-life dilemmas. Fascinating reality issues to be addressed appropriately in and out of court. Best course ever! Loved speakers who expressed their real-life experiences and knowledge.*

*This class is a must for any judge in any jurisdiction. While it is an intense course, the materials and knowledge that you will gain will be invaluable.*

*I really felt like I got an overall boost in knowledge and re-motivation to continue the work. I really appreciated the time devoted to the de-brief Friday morning so that I could think through some action items. While the survivor portions were intense, they really contributed to the class. I know that was hard for them to do.*

Over the following year, the judicial leaders executed their public awareness campaigns, and the NJC researchers followed up on the results of their efforts at six and twelve months post-instruction. The program was an extraordinary success according to the participants. In fact, a judicial leader importantly recognized a victim of trafficking amidst the court proceedings thanks to the program's lessons:

*I had a victim disclose labor trafficking in open court. The city attorney did not believe that labor trafficking was a form of human trafficking. I knew what to do because of the course! The survivor is now doing well.*

Another judicial leader noted, "everything I learned at The National Judicial College has been incredibly helpful, and I am so proud that I was able to participate in this training." Remarkably, more than 95% of the participants expressed that they planned to continue their localized human trafficking awareness campaigns in perpetuity.



## Evaluation of the Public Awareness Campaigns

***Enhancing Judicial and Community Education:*** An important goal for the public awareness campaigns centered on enhancing judicial and community education on human trafficking. Course participants utilized their leadership and outreach skills to disseminate vital information on the realities of human trafficking for their courtroom workgroup peers; city, state, and national officials; and their constituents.

### ***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following education strategies:***

- Coordinated with local District Court Associations to schedule Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) sessions. Over 100 judges enrolled in a human trafficking and preventing masking training scheduled for 2025.
- Presented a number of human trafficking awareness sessions to educators, parents, and community leaders. Feedback indicated visible emotional engagement and a greater understanding of human trafficking indicators among participants.
- Regularly shared course information and progress on public awareness campaigns with judicial peers and related stakeholders in the legal system (e.g., prosecutors, defense attorneys, and court clerks).
- Held in-court trainings for every new law enforcement officer, city attorney, probation officer, clerk, and code officer to discuss trafficking dynamics and guidelines for handling trafficking cases in the courtroom.
- Facilitated a statewide training given to district attorneys, defense attorneys, and law enforcement.
- Conducted trainings on human trafficking detection for frontline workers likely to see human trafficking victims outside of the legal system (including medical staff (in cooperation with the American Medical Association) and hotel staff).

### ***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following education strategies:***

- Conducted Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) sessions on human trafficking and preventing masking for over 100 judges from local District Court Associations.
- Conducted training on human trafficking, FMCSA rules on human trafficking, and preventing masking for other offenses specified in 49 CFR 383.51 for all 20 judges in the Colorado Administrative Hearing Section (these judges possess jurisdiction over traffic cases across the state).
- Conducted training on human trafficking, FMCSA rules on human trafficking, and preventing masking for other offenses specified in 49 CFR 383.51 to police officers, sheriffs' officers, and Highway Patrol officers statewide.
- Added a module on preventing masking in human trafficking cases to existing training curricula. This training will be delivered to judges and law enforcement officers across the state.

- Received a \$225,000 grant in collaboration with Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) to embed human trafficking training for judges, juvenile probation officers, juvenile department of corrections, court-appointed special advocates (CASA), and detention officers.
- Planned presentations to be conducted in late 2025 for District Court judges and Sheriff officers.

***Strengthening Collaboration with Law Enforcement and Advocacy Groups:*** Another central goal for the public awareness campaigns was centered on strengthening and improving collaborations between the criminal justice actors and the local advocacy groups.

***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following outreach strategies:***

- Successfully initiated connections with local law enforcement groups—including Sheriff and police officers—for human trafficking-focused training, providing materials on human trafficking detection and case studies of local human trafficking arrests.
- Established relationships with local human trafficking task forces, actively participated in meetings with local task forces, and reviewed human trafficking screenings to deepen mutual understanding of the issues.
- Trained a pre-trial committee—consisting of staff members from the local courts, law enforcement agencies, jails, prisons, parole and probation offices—on how to implement a validated screening tool for human sex trafficking involvement at the point of initial engagement with the criminal system.

***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following outreach strategies:***

- Worked on funding to re-print quick indicator cards for law enforcement officers across the state, as the hundreds of cards were distributed, and new requests for cards came through.
- Continued relationships with local human trafficking task forces, actively participating in meetings and screenings to keep up with up-to-date information on the topic.
- Continued the screening tool trainings with the pre-trial committee noted at the 6-month follow-up.

***Developing and Promoting Human Trafficking Tools:*** Importantly, the judicial leadership program encouraged participants to create and implement human trafficking prevention and detection tools that worked with the realities of their jurisdictions.

***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following tools:***

- Worked with a local nonprofit organization to include human trafficking resources with free toiletry items that the group was dispensing to its clients.
- Made strides to plan and create national and state-specific human trafficking-focused bench cards in collaboration with national and local partners.

***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following tools:***

- Continued to include human trafficking resources along with the free toiletries that the previously mentioned nonprofit was dispensing.
- Created national and state-specific human trafficking-focused bench cards in collaboration with national and local partners, which are now being distributed nationwide.
- Implemented the use of a validated human trafficking screener tool at system intake (i.e., at jail or prison intake, and before first hearing) so that potential human trafficking victims in this jurisdiction are identified before their first meeting with a judge.

**Evaluation of the Empathy Exercise:**

The workgroup devised an empathy exercise to help judicial leaders understand the limited choices that victims possess if they attempt to leave their traffickers. Findings from pilot studies in Nevada, South Carolina, and Montana demonstrate that the empathy exercise is highly effective in increasing judicial awareness and sensitivity, while also revealing the empathy gap that can arise when judges are unfamiliar with the lived experiences of trafficking victims. Judges who completed the exercise reported substantial gains in their understanding of trafficking, their ability to recognize victims in their courtrooms, and their confidence in making a meaningful difference in trafficking cases.

At the same time, the exercise underscored key challenges in fostering judicial empathy, highlighting the need for expanded training, inclusion of diverse victim narratives, and trauma-informed judicial practices. A comparison of outcomes between Nevada's intensive 3.5-day curriculum and the shorter two-hour sessions in South Carolina and Montana showed that while even brief interventions produced measurable benefits, the exercise was far more impactful when paired with extended instruction.

**Best Practices and Recommendations for Practitioners**

Through research, collaboration with the working group, and evaluation of the pilot program, the National Judicial College developed the following best-practice recommendations for educating judges on adjudicating human trafficking cases involving CDL holders and commercial motor vehicles:

- **Expand training on FMCSA regulations to all judges, not only those handling traffic cases.** Human trafficking cases involving commercial motor vehicles are most often adjudicated by felony or general jurisdiction judges, who

- must understand the correct application of 49 CFR 383.51 during the sentencing phase.
- **Ensure all judges and court staff are trained to recognize signs of human trafficking.** Victims frequently appear in court as defendants, making early identification critical.
  - **Provide judges and court staff with connections to local survivor resources.** Courts should be supported in developing clear plans and procedures to assist identified victims with the help of local organizations.
  - **Educate judges and staff on all relevant human trafficking laws, including restitution.** Continued human trafficking training will help increase compliance with restitution requirements and better support survivors.
  - **Foster judicial empathy toward survivors.** Training should highlight the complex challenges survivors face when attempting to leave traffickers.
  - **Promote trauma-informed court practices.** Courtrooms should be designed to minimize re-traumatization of victims and survivors.
  - **Cover a comprehensive set of training topics, which at a minimum may include:**
    - Definitions of key human trafficking terminology
    - Federal and local laws on human trafficking
    - FMCSA regulations and restitution requirements
    - Familial, sex, and labor trafficking
    - Distinctions between trafficking and smuggling
    - The impact of judicial emotions and experiences on decision-making
    - Strategies for managing strong negative emotions and compassion fatigue
    - How to build trauma-informed courts
    - How to detect possible human trafficking in court settings
    - How to create effective programs and procedures for resolving trafficking cases once identified
  - **Design trainings with an emphasis on practical tools and evaluations of their efficacy.** Judges should leave with actionable resources to apply in their own courtrooms. Time for reflection on implementation should be built into the curriculum, and carefully planned training evaluations should assess the efficacy with which judges apply these skills in practice, their successes, and limitations. It is important to normalize the utilization of a wide variety of evaluation methods that fully explore the outcomes of the interventions that the judiciary enacts as a result of training programs.

### **Following Steps**

Motivated by the success of the judicial leaders' public awareness campaigns, the NJC expanded its human trafficking prevention and detection efforts to include an additional 135 judges across South Carolina and Montana, and compared them to the Nevada sample collected during the *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign*. These trainings resulted in improvements in the participants' knowledge and information about human trafficking

(averaging a 27.6% increase in knowledge across experiences). Importantly, participants also felt more capable of making a difference in trafficking cases due to the training.

Should the NJC receive critical funding to continue this important work, we intend to develop additional experiential learning strategies, such as empathy exercises that feature labor trafficking victims; refine and implement workshops to train additional judicial leaders committed to preventing and detecting human trafficking; and develop training materials that can be widely disseminated across all actors of the criminal justice system.

### **Limitations and Needs for Improvement**

The judicial landscape is in constant motion, as judges transition between roles, retire, or newly enter the profession. This fluidity underscores the importance of ensuring that every judge—regardless of tenure—has access to high-quality, timely training. Well-trained judges not only strengthen the integrity of the judiciary but also directly benefit the individuals who appear in their courtrooms.

Yet, access to training remains uneven. A 2025 judicial needs assessment conducted by the National Judicial College revealed that many judges face significant financial barriers to attending educational programs, with limited funds available for judicial training nationwide. Continued grant assistance is therefore essential to sustain and expand these efforts, ensuring that judges from all jurisdictions have the resources needed to participate.

Although the Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program was a resounding success, important lessons emerged. Participants expressed a desire for extended time on certain topics and for additional support in processing the emotional intensity of the subject matter. Judges also reported several barriers in conducting their public awareness campaigns, including difficulty finding suitable points of contact within law enforcement, the ethical challenge of reconciling judicial roles with active participation in task forces, and the lack of accurate and localized data necessary to refine bench cards and tailor resources to specific jurisdictions. In some cases, legislative constraints on sentencing conditions and professional transitions further complicated efforts to sustain leadership projects over time.

These insights present an opportunity not only to refine future program design but also to highlight the critical need for ongoing investment. With additional support, programs can be adapted to help judicial leaders overcome these limitations, strengthen their partnerships, and create durable anti-trafficking initiatives. By addressing both the successes and the challenges, the path forward becomes clear: empowering judges with knowledge, resilience, and practical tools ensures that they can continue to lead with compassion and effectiveness in the fight against human trafficking.

## Conclusion

The 2024 *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign*, facilitated by The National Judicial College (NJC) with support from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), represents a pioneering step in positioning judges as catalysts for systemic change in the fight against human trafficking. By combining research-driven curriculum design, survivor-centered instruction, and applied leadership opportunities, the program not only deepened judicial understanding of the complex realities of trafficking but also equipped participants to create sustainable, community-based solutions. The public awareness campaigns that followed demonstrate the unique ability of judges to convene stakeholders, foster collaboration, and embed trafficking prevention into the fabric of their jurisdictions.

While the program faced natural limitations—such as resource constraints, ethical considerations in judicial engagement with law enforcement, and the ongoing challenge of tailoring tools to diverse jurisdictions—it provided unambiguous evidence that judicial leadership is both impactful and necessary. The overwhelmingly positive participant feedback, the documented improvements in judicial knowledge and confidence, and the continuation of projects well beyond the initial training all underscore the program's lasting value.

To build on this success, additional funding and support are essential. Expanding the curriculum to include new empathy exercises, refining judicial tools, and scaling the program to reach more judges nationwide will ensure that this work continues to transform not only courtrooms but also the communities they serve. Ultimately, the program affirmed that judges, when equipped with the right tools and partnerships, can play a decisive role in preventing human trafficking, supporting survivors, and safeguarding justice.



## Introduction

The National Judicial College's (NJC) *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign* developed, facilitated, and evaluated the outcomes of a first-of-its-kind pilot for a curriculum-driven judicial leadership initiative that empowered judges to conceptualize and implement mission-focused human trafficking awareness campaigns in their jurisdictions. This program was supported by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), a decades-long partner of the NJC. The program enhanced judicial understanding of actionable strategies to prevent and detect human trafficking within the commercial driving industry and across the entire criminal justice system. The leadership program and the judicial leaders who graduated from the program were an unprecedented success. At the one-year evaluation of the program's outcomes, evidence indicated that judicial leaders went above and beyond any initial expectations for their public awareness campaigns. They trained actors across the entire criminal justice system, local and state governments, and their constituents on human trafficking detection and prevention; devised new tools and mechanisms to aid survivors of human trafficking through the justice system; and began long-standing partnerships with local organizations to improve outcomes for human trafficking survivors.

The NJC proudly presents this report, which provides a detailed overview of the four stages that structured the initiative—beginning with best-practice research and the creation of a program design workgroup, followed by collaborative program design and judicial leader recruitment, the facilitation of the Judicial Leadership Program, and ultimately the evaluation of the program's public awareness campaigns. In addition to outlining these stages, the report highlights best practices for facilitating judicial leadership programs, identifies the key steps necessary to conduct mission-driven and outcome-focused initiatives, and discusses the limitations and areas for improvement observed throughout the process. The report concludes with reflections on lessons learned and recommendations for strengthening future efforts. We hope that this is only the first of many programs to instruct, inspire, and evaluate how training motivated judicial leaders across the country can result in groundbreaking initiatives that help the judiciary, the criminal justice system, community organizations, and citizens.

## Stage 1- Best-Practice Research and Creating a Program Design Workgroup

The foundational step of this program began with a convergence of applied social science researchers, the NJC's instructional designers, and human trafficking prevention organization stakeholders. Social science researchers at the NJC conducted in-depth assessments of best practices in human trafficking prevention. Researchers reviewed key documents such as the 2019 Department of Transportation Advisory on Committee on Human Trafficking Final Report, "Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector" and the United Nation's 2010 "Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons" as well as more specific peer-reviewed studies including Dr. Jeanne Allert's 2021 dissertation on familial human trafficking "A Mixed-Methods Descriptive Study of Domestic Minor Familial Sex Trafficking through the Lens of Justice Professionals" and Dr. Richard Weiner and colleagues forthcoming manuscript "Emotion Regulation Reduces Victim Blaming of Vulnerable Sex Trafficking Survivors."

The NJC staff also reviewed best instructional practices for facilitating human trafficking prevention courses based on the outcomes of previous educational efforts. For more than a decade, the NJC has focused efforts to train judges across the nation on human trafficking by providing them with state-specific and nationally relevant information to confront this problem in their courts, jurisdictions, and communities.

At the same time, the NJC reached out to notable stakeholders, including those from TAT (formerly Truckers Against Trafficking), Human Trafficking Institute (HTI), Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), Courage Worldwide, Awaken, Institute for Shelter Care, and the Reno Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) team. The NJC also sought out distinguished professors Dr. Joseph Vitriol (Lehigh and Harvard Universities) and Dr. Richard Weiner (University of Nebraska, Lincoln) to collaborate in this initiative and invited them to share community-based best practices for combating human trafficking. Throughout a series of strategic meetings and discussions, each actor discussed and shared their knowledge of tried-and-true best practices to confront and prevent human trafficking.

***The workgroup aptly identified three main barriers related to human trafficking and road safety.*** First, an important barrier is the insufficient availability of, and limited awareness regarding, resources that can be used to assist trafficking survivors. Second, another challenge is the widespread misconceptions concerning human trafficking that result in these cases going unrecognized or misidentified. For example, human sex trafficking crimes are often criminally charged as domestic violence or prostitution

offenses when these cases are brought before the court. Lastly, labor trafficking offenses are frequently misclassified as wage disputes, poor working conditions, or voluntary employment. These misinterpretations are often exacerbated by pervasive stereotypes and misconceptions among legal professionals, such as the belief that individuals choose their circumstances or can easily escape trafficking environments. These misconceptions complicate judicial compliance with existing regulations, particularly 49 C.F.R. 383.51, which mandates the lifetime suspension of a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) when the holder is convicted of a severe form of human trafficking while operating a commercial motor vehicle (CMV). The punitive severity underscores the gravity of the offense. Under Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) guidelines, human trafficking is one of only two offenses in which a first infraction leads to a lifetime suspension of a CDL. This element alone makes judicial compliance with the law imperative.

***The workgroup also identified three primary factors that complicate an appropriate judicial response to criminal human trafficking charges.*** First, the provisions for human trafficking differ from other offenses under federal and state masking regulations, requiring judges to use their discretion to determine whether a conviction constitutes a *severe* human trafficking offense as defined by 22 U.S.C. 7102(11)<sup>1</sup> or a less significant offense that does not warrant mandatory license revocation. Second, unlike other offenses under 49 C.F.R. 383.51, which result in license suspension regardless of whether the infraction occurred in a personal or professional vehicle, human trafficking violations only result in license-related penalties if committed in a professional vehicle. Third, cases involving CDL holders most frequently fall under the jurisdiction of traffic court judges, who are most often targeted for training in FMCSA regulations. However, cases involving criminal human trafficking charges are more likely to be felony-level offenses requiring adjudication by felony or general jurisdiction judges. These judges often lack FMCSA training and, therefore, may fail to include CDL suspension notifications to defendants at or before sentencing. In response to these challenges, a curriculum was crafted to provide judges with a fundamental understanding of human trafficking in its various forms and to address the identified barriers during stage 2.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/7102>

## **Stage 2- Workgroup Collaboration, Program Design, and Judicial Leader Recruitment**

Once the workgroup (the NJC social science researchers, instructional designers, and community stakeholders) formalized and committed to this project, and shared their in-depth knowledge of human trafficking, they began the process of organizing and integrating the best practices for human trafficking prevention from their respective specialties into workable instructional and outcome-based solutions. These strategies were combined with adult professional instructional pedagogy for the judiciary, developed by the NJC over the previous 6 decades, and helped detail seven central goals for the program:

1. Augment judicial awareness of human trafficking and establish judicial leadership in public awareness campaigns.
2. Position judges as catalysts for systemic change within their communities and empower them to educate their peers and communities on trafficking issues.
3. Establish a consistent, victim-centered framework for handling trafficking cases across jurisdictions.
4. Support judges in delivering fair and objective rulings.
5. Develop and pilot a judicial approach to trafficking that mitigates cognitive and procedural challenges.
6. Reinforce jurisprudential consistency across jurisdictions.
7. Support community-based anti-trafficking initiatives by encouraging judges to build partnerships with local organizations, law enforcement, and advocacy groups. These partnerships were intended to help connect trafficking survivors with essential support services and establish a collaborative, community-based response to trafficking

The summation of this extensive collaborative work resulted in a 3.5-day pilot judicial leadership program that informed participants of the realities of human trafficking and provided judges with applied expertise to create their own public awareness campaigns back home. The program's agenda was structured to include introductory sessions covering human trafficking basics, followed by in-depth presentations on trauma-informed judicial practices, FMCSA regulations, and survivor-centered approaches. The workgroup also identified essential stakeholder organizations to participate in the initiative, created background and reference materials, selected and recruited presenters, and developed a cohesive agenda. Additionally, the curriculum reviewed all maskable



offenses under 49 C.F.R. 383.51, including the importance of imposing an administrative driver's license suspension even when the defendant faces incarceration.

### ***Judicial Leader Recruitment***

To gauge interest among potential judicial leaders, the NJC put out an open call for interest in joining the program. The response was overwhelming, with more than 70 responses in 72 hours. Based on this large discrepancy between budget and interest, the workgroup, including the social science researchers, created a mechanism to select potential judicial leaders throughout the nation who were committed to ending and preventing human trafficking in their jurisdictions and invited them to participate in the judicial leadership program. This process selected a total of nine judicial leaders from diverse roles, geographical regions, and experience with human trafficking and FMCSA regulations. An additional three judicial leaders agreed to self-fund for the opportunity to participate, leading to a total of twelve judicial leaders. At the same time, the social science researchers created a schedule of periodic follow-up evaluations to explore the outcomes of attending the pilot program and the judicial leader's public awareness projects.

## Stage 3 Facilitation of the Judicial Leadership Program

From May 7-10, 2024, researchers, stakeholders, and instructors facilitated the *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and CDL Public Awareness Campaign* in the Reno, Nevada campus of the National Judicial College. Judicial leaders experienced a combination of traditional training courses and new experiential learning strategies that ranged from human trafficking basics and in-depth discussions on trauma-informed judicial practices to FMCSA regulations. The program also featured panel discussions that provided participants with insights from the public (e.g., FMCSA and Reno law enforcement), nonprofit (e.g., HTI, Courage Worldwide, and Awaken), and private sectors (e.g., TAT, CVSA, and AAMVA), which allowed participants to recognize that multifaceted stakeholders working together are needed to address human trafficking within the commercial driving industry and beyond.

### ***Curriculum and Program Topics: Stand-Alone Presentations, Hands-On Experiences, and Breakout Sessions***

#### ***Stand-Alone Presentations***

Stand-alone presentations are the more traditional instructional strategies centered on a judicial/subject matter expert's presentation of their in-depth knowledge on human trafficking topics. A detailed summary of the program's standalone sessions, which includes a summary of the main topics covered and the reactions to the presentations, can be found in **Appendix I: Stand-Alone and Panel Presentations**. The course included the following stand-alone presentations:

- *NJC's Journey with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration*
- *Umbrella Issues: Human Trafficking Overview*
- *Judging Sex Trafficking Survivors: The Roles of Law, Stereotypes, Emotion and Knowledge*
- *Preventing Human Trafficking in the Commercial Driving Industry*
- *Street View: Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Interdiction*
- *Human Trafficking Happens...Everywhere: A Cross-Sectional Conversation*
- *Familial Trafficking in America: A National Study*
- *Tackling Complex 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment Issues Involving Commercial Vehicles*
- *The Big Payback: Human Trafficking Victim Restitution*



- *Building What Works: Effective Human Trafficking Programs, Campaigns, and Initiatives*
- *Blind Spots: Decision Fatigue and Bias.*

### ***Experiential Learning/Hands-on Experiences:***

Tackling a problem as deeply entrenched and complex as human trafficking required an unconventional approach, which combined traditional lectures, experiential learning opportunities/hands-on experiences, and direct interaction with individuals and groups affected by this issue. Curriculum elements included an exploration of preconceived notions and stereotypes that allowed judges to examine their own misconceptions. A further example of experiential learning is an empathy exercise in which participants adopted the perspective of a trafficked teen girl and discussed how the experience affected them. Similarly, it was important for participants to hear survivors' testimonials detailing the profound harm they have suffered and the changes they would like to see in the justice system. A detailed summary of the program's Experiential Learning/Hands-on Experiences, which includes a summary of the main topics covered and the reactions to the presentations, can be found in **Appendix II: Hands-On Experiences**. The course included the following experiential learning/hands-on experiences:

- *Perspective Reimagining: In Their Shoes- Commercial Drivers and Human Trafficking Victims*
- *Up Close and Personal: The Awaken Reno Experience*
- *America's Road Team: Perspective for Judges Handling CDL Cases*
- *Survivor Panel*

### ***Breakout Sessions***

When dealing with emotionally laden subjects such as human trafficking, it is essential to create an environment of trust so that participants have the emotional safety necessary to learn about and explore these topics. To facilitate deeper exploration and problem-solving, the workgroup organized breakout sessions focused on specific topics central to the judicial response to human trafficking. The breakout sessions were designed to leverage participants' expertise in key areas, helping to identify actionable solutions for complex legal and regulatory challenges related to trafficking cases.

Participants were pre-assigned to breakout groups to ensure balanced representation from different sectors of the judiciary, and facilitators rotated among groups to encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue; all judicial leaders participated in each breakout session. The design of each session aimed to conclude with practice-oriented recommendations that

judges could apply within their courts, fostering best practices and consistency in handling trafficking cases. A key objective was to use findings from these sessions to inform evidence-based judicial education and to guide policy reform for more effective trafficking-related laws and regulations. A detailed summary of the program's Break-Out Sessions, which includes a summary of the main topics covered and the reactions to the presentations, can be found in **Appendix III: Facilitated Breakout Sessions**. The program included the following breakout sessions:

- Where Do We Go from Here? Creating an Effective Outreach Plan and Campaign to Combat Human Trafficking and Masking
- Training Colleagues and Staff to Recognize Signs and Symptoms of Human Trafficking
- Piloting Alternative Sentencing for Non-Masking Offenses
- Action Plan to Mitigate Blind Spots

Throughout and following the series of sessions, judicial leaders participated in multiple forms of reflection on their overall experience of the program. Their feedback highlighted both the depth of the learning and the personal impact of the training. Many described how the program strengthened their commitment to addressing human trafficking in their courts, expanded their understanding of the issue's complexity, and equipped them with practical tools to take back to their jurisdictions.

## Stage 4- Evaluation of the Course Materials, Empathy Exercise, and Public Awareness Campaigns

### Overall Summary of Evaluation Results

An extensive protocol of adult instructional outcome evaluation strategies was employed during and after the pilot program. At the culmination of the pilot program, the judicial leaders detailed a new or renewed dedication to combating human trafficking, an increased awareness of the size and scope of human trafficking, and the belief that this opportunity should be made available to all judges. Judicial leaders also noted that it was a challenging program but well worth the effort:

*The course was magnificent. The small class size and setting, coupled with well informed, energetic instructors and coordinators who are passionate about the topic created the perfect "safe space" for open discussion and engagement. I'm excited to execute my individual action plan to educate others and combat human trafficking. Every judge should take this course because human trafficking is everywhere.*

*This course covers many, many areas of the law. Every Judge should take this course to be more familiar with this underlying issue and have tools for their toolboxes to better serve their constituents with these real-life dilemmas. Fascinating reality issues to be addressed appropriately in and out of court. Best course ever! Loved speakers who expressed their real-life experiences and knowledge.*

*This class is a must for any judge in any jurisdiction. While it is an intense course, the materials and knowledge that you will gain will be invaluable.*

*I really felt like I got an overall boost in knowledge and re-motivation to continue the work. I really appreciated the time devoted to the de-brief Friday morning so that I could think through some action items. While the survivor portions were intense, they really contributed to the class. I know that was hard for them to do.*

Over the following year, the judicial leaders executed their public awareness campaigns. The applied science researchers evaluated the outcomes of the judicial leadership program, and the results of the program awareness campaigns at 6- and 12-months post-instruction. The program was an immense success according to participants. In fact, a judicial leader importantly recognized a victim of trafficking amidst the court proceedings thanks to the program's lessons:

*I had a victim disclose labor trafficking in open court. The city attorney did not believe that labor trafficking was a form of human trafficking. I knew what to do because of the course! The survivor is now doing well.*

Another judicial leader noted, “everything I learned at The National Judicial College has been incredibly helpful, and I am so proud that I was able to participate in this training.” Remarkably, more than 95% of the participants expressed that they planned to continue their localized human trafficking awareness campaigns in perpetuity.

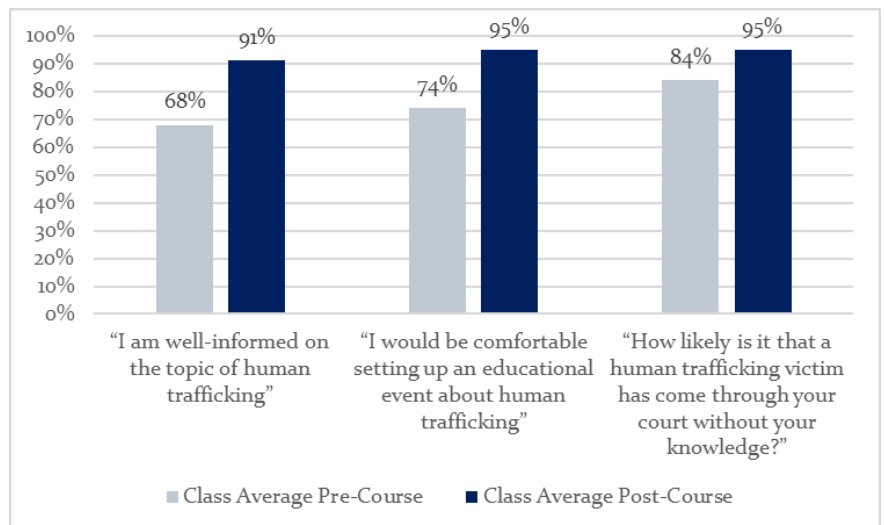
The applied science researchers also conducted a series of evaluations on the outcomes of the program materials, ***including pre- and post-tests during the program and in-depth evaluations of the empathy exercise across several sites, in addition to the follow-up evaluation of the judicial leader’s public awareness campaigns at 6 and 12 months.***

### Pre and Post-Tests During the Program

#### ***General attitudes and perceptions on human trafficking***

In addition to being a comprehensive educational experience, this program was designed to track attitudes and perceptions related to human trafficking before and after the course. We asked the judicial leaders to affirm or deny the following questions/statements:

- “I am well informed on the topic of human trafficking.”
- “I would be comfortable setting up an educational event about human trafficking.”
- “How likely is it that a human trafficking victim has come to your court without your knowledge?”

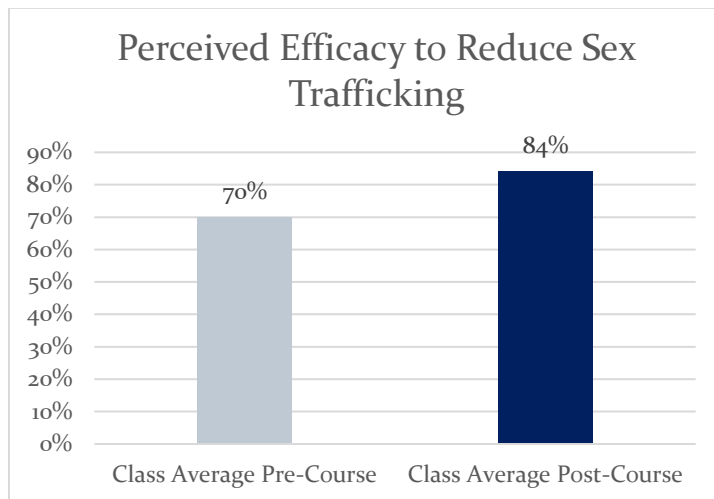


Participants demonstrated feeling more informed on human trafficking after the course, more comfortable in setting up an educational event on the topic, and also recognized that they may have missed trafficking victims in their courts in the past.

Judicial leaders were also asked several questions that explored shifts in attitudes on human trafficking during the course. These questions came from a study validated on a general adult population authored by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson.<sup>2</sup> These questions centered on 4 topics:

- Perceived efficacy to reduce sex trafficking
- Awareness of human trafficking
- Perceptions of difficulty for survivors to leave trafficking
- Attitudes towards helping survivors

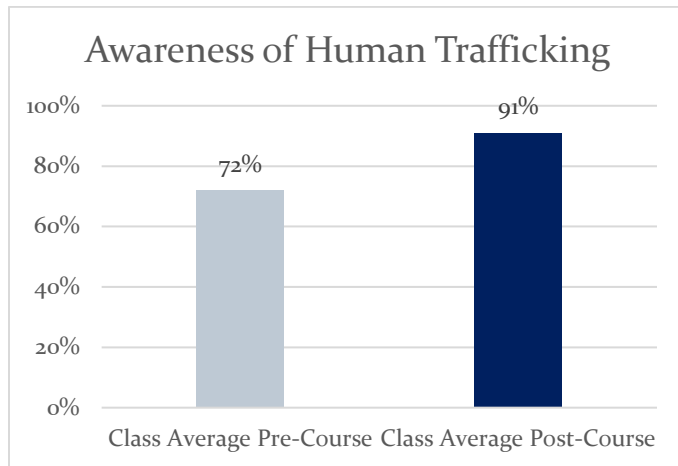
All of the measures improved on the post-test, except for attitudes towards helping survivors, which remained the same.



Questions from this scale included items such as “I am able to raise public awareness about trafficking” and “I can make a difference for trafficked persons.” Participants reported significantly higher perceived efficacy after course completion.

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<sup>2</sup> Houston-Kolnik, J. D., Todd, N. R., & Wilson, M. (2016). Preliminary validation of the sex trafficking attitudes scale. *Violence Against Women*, 22(10) 1259 –1281. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1077801215621178>



Questions from this scale included items such as “I am aware of organizations that work against trafficking” and “I have heard about sex trafficking in the news.” Participants reported significantly more awareness of human trafficking after course completion.



Questions from this scale included items such as “A person who is trafficked has been deceived or forced into the situation” and “It is not a person’s choice to be trafficked.” Participants reported somewhat more awareness of the difficulties survivors face in leaving human trafficking after course completion.

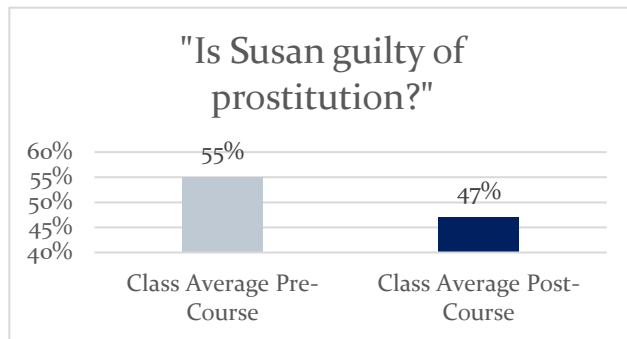
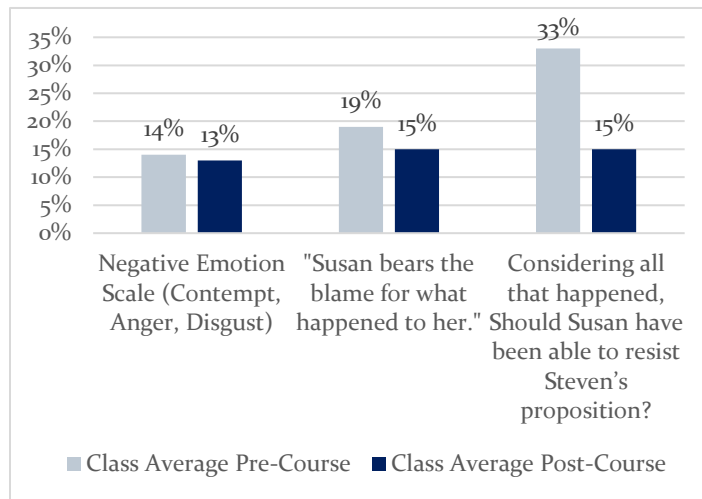


### ***Pre and Post-Test Responses to in-class Vignette “The Story of Steven Bolden and Susan Oliver”***

All of the participants read the same vignette based on a real case, “**The Story of Steven Bolden and Susan Oliver**” ([Appendix IV: The Story of Steven Bolden and Susan Oliver](#)), prior to and after the course. The vignette details a coercive relationship that becomes human sex trafficking. Participants then responded to questions that were sorted into four groups:

- Negative emotional response
- Survivor blame
- Survivor disposition
- Defendant disposition.

On the post-test, we see that participants blame the victim less and are also less likely to blame them for being coerced into human sex trafficking.



Finally, participants were asked if Susan was guilty of prostitution during her relationship with Steve. Overall, participants found Susan somewhat but not significantly less guilty of prostitution after completing the course. Participants were also asked, “Is Steve guilty of sex trafficking Susan?” Before and after the course, all participants found Steve guilty.

### ***Course Pre- and Post-Test Conclusion***

Participants in this course started with a relatively high level of knowledge about human trafficking and empathy towards survivors. Upon course completion, most participants felt better informed, more aware of human trafficking, better able to put on an educational event, and had increased their understanding of the difficulties survivors face in leaving human trafficking. Although prior experiences and knowledge created differences in judges before the course started, many of those disparities disappeared or shrank after course completion.

## In-Depth Evaluation of The Human Trafficking Empathy Exercise

Human trafficking cases present emotionally and psychologically complex challenges for judges and legal professionals. Judicial decisions often shape the lives of trafficking survivors, yet many judges struggle to fully understand victims' lived experiences. Without this understanding, decision-making may inadvertently retraumatize victims, misinterpret their actions, or fail to recognize the coercion and trauma at play.

To address this critical empathy gap, we developed an innovative "empathy exercise" designed to immerse judges in the realities of trafficking victims' experiences. **For an in-depth review of the results, please see [Appendix V: State-Specific Exercise Empathy Exercise Results and Recommendations](#).** Using an interactive "choose your own adventure" format, participants navigated the difficult choices faced by Maria, a 16-year-old trafficking victim, based on a real case. This exercise allowed judges to step into Maria's shoes, grappling with the psychological toll, survival instincts, and deep-seated mistrust of authority that often drive trafficking victims' decisions.

Participants navigated 16 decision points, each represented by a physical station, to simulate Maria's journey ([Appendix VI: Empathy Exercise Decision Point One](#)). Choices at each station determined Maria's outcomes, leading to one of four possible endings. The arrangement of the stations was intentionally disordered, mirroring the confusion and frustration often faced by victims. To provide a dual perspective, participants completed the exercise twice:

1. Victim's Perspective: Making decisions as they believed Maria would, considering her circumstances.
2. Personal Perspective: Making choices they would personally select if in Maria's position.

The exercise concluded with a facilitated debrief session, where participants reflected on their experiences, emotions, and insights.

### ***Piloting the empathy exercise across three states***

To ensure its effectiveness and gather real-world feedback, we piloted the exercise three times across three states—South Carolina, Montana, and Nevada—working with 150 judges from diverse backgrounds. The feedback gathered from these sessions confirmed our hypothesis that a notable empathy gap exists in the legal system regarding the trauma and decisions faced by trafficking victims. For example, as some judges noted:

*This exercise was eye-opening; understanding Maria's choices required us to confront the limits of our own judgments and biases.*

Importantly, judges reported that the empathy exercise deepened their understanding of victims' experiences, fostering greater sensitivity and consideration in their judicial decision-making. As some judges noted:

*I hadn't realized how mistrust of authority is often ingrained in victims, making their choices more about survival than we might initially assume.*

*This experience reminded me how vital it is to understand not just what victims are saying but what they're not sharing, often out of fear or trauma.*

*Nevertheless, many judges struggled to even imagine being in a victim's shoes:*

*I have never been in a position like that; I have a solid support system and can't imagine making choices like that.*

*Grew up in a loving environment and didn't have to experience this.*

*Hard to imagine someone dealing with so much trauma.*

The empathy exercise is not just a training tool—it's a critical intervention aimed at addressing a significant gap in how human trafficking victims are understood and treated in the legal system. The varying levels of empathy observed in participants, as reflected in our survey results, prove the existence of this empathy gap—showing that, while some judges and legal professionals can easily connect with the trauma of trafficking victims, others struggle to fully appreciate the complexity of victims' choices. However, the exercise has proven to be effective in bridging this gap. Participants who engaged with the scenarios showed greater insight into the factors influencing victims' decisions and were better able to understand how important it is to approach these cases with compassion and careful inquiry.

### ***Lessons and Next Steps:***

The empathy exercise provided judges with a unique and transformative opportunity to step into the shoes of a trafficking victim, fostering a deeper understanding of the psychological, emotional, and situational complexities that shape victims' choices. The study highlighted areas for further exploration, including ways to encourage judges with relatable individual experiences to share their insights in training sessions and whether supplemental education on psychological coercion could help those who struggled to relate to Maria's experience. Some judges expressed difficulty in fully empathizing with Maria, which underscores the need for the exercise to be refined and expanded. The next round of empathy exercises should include a wider range of trafficking situations, including victims across various demographics, incorporate technology, utilize feedback to revise and edit the tool, and expand to additional training opportunities.

## Public Awareness Campaigns at 6 and 12 months

### ***Enhancing Judicial and Community Education:***

An important goal for the public awareness campaigns centered on enhancing judicial and community education on human trafficking. Course participants utilized their leadership and outreach skills to disseminate vital information on the realities of human trafficking for their courtroom workgroup peers; city, state, and national officials; and their constituents.

### ***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following education strategies:***

- Coordinated with local District Court Associations to schedule Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) sessions. Over 100 judges enrolled in a human trafficking and preventing masking training scheduled for 2025.
- Presented a number of human trafficking awareness sessions to educators, parents, and community leaders. Feedback indicated visible emotional engagement and a greater understanding of human trafficking indicators among participants.
- Regularly shared course information and progress on public awareness campaigns with judicial peers and related stakeholders in the legal system (e.g., prosecutors, defense attorneys, and court clerks).
- Held in-court trainings for every new law enforcement officer, city attorney, probation officer, clerk, and code officer to discuss trafficking dynamics and guidelines for handling trafficking cases in the courtroom.
- Facilitated a statewide training given to district attorneys, defense attorneys, and law enforcement.
- Conducted trainings on human trafficking detection for frontline workers likely to see human trafficking victims outside of the legal system (including medical staff (in cooperation with the American Medical Association) and hotel staff).

### ***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following education strategies:***

- Conducted Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) sessions on human trafficking and preventing masking for over 100 judges from local District Court Associations.
- Conducted training on human trafficking, FMCSA rules on human trafficking, and preventing masking for other offenses specified in 49 CFR 383.51 for all 20 judges in the Colorado Administrative Hearing Section (these judges possess jurisdiction over traffic cases across the state).
- Conducted training on human trafficking, FMCSA rules on human trafficking, and preventing masking for other offenses specified in 49 CFR 383.51 to police officers, sheriffs' officers, and Highway Patrol officers statewide.

- Added a module on preventing masking in human trafficking cases to existing training curricula. This training will be delivered to judges and law enforcement officers across the state.
- Received a \$225,000 grant in collaboration with Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) to embed human trafficking training for judges, juvenile probation officers, juvenile department of corrections, court-appointed special advocates (CASA), and detention officers.
- Planned presentations to be conducted in late 2025 for District Court judges and Sheriff officers.

***Strengthening Collaboration with Law Enforcement and Advocacy Groups:***

Another central goal for the public awareness campaigns was centered on strengthening and improving collaborations between the criminal justice actors and the local advocacy groups.

***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following outreach strategies:***

- Successfully initiated connections with local law enforcement groups—including Sheriff and police officers—for human trafficking-focused training, providing materials on human trafficking detection and case studies of local human trafficking arrests.
- Established relationships with local human trafficking task forces, actively participated in meetings with local task forces, and reviewed human trafficking screenings to deepen mutual understanding of the issues.
- Trained a pre-trial committee—consisting of staff members from the local courts, law enforcement agencies, jails, prisons, parole and probation offices—on how to implement a validated screening tool for human sex trafficking involvement at the point of initial engagement with the criminal system.

***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following outreach strategies:***

- Worked on funding to re-print quick indicator cards for law enforcement officers across the state, as the hundreds of cards were distributed, and new requests for cards came through.
- Continued relationships with local human trafficking task forces, actively participating in meetings and screenings to keep up with up-to-date information on the topic.
- Continued the screening tool trainings with the pre-trial committee noted at the 6-month follow-up.

### ***Developing and Promoting Human Trafficking Tools:***

Importantly, the judicial leadership program encouraged participants to create and implement human trafficking prevention and detection tools that worked with the realities of their jurisdictions.

#### ***In the first 6 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following tools:***

- Worked with a local nonprofit organization to include human trafficking resources with free toiletry items that the group was dispensing to its clients.
- Made strides to plan and create national and state-specific human trafficking-focused bench cards in collaboration with national and local partners.

#### ***In the first 12 months, judicial leaders accomplished the following tools:***

- Continued to include human trafficking resources along with the free toiletries that the previously mentioned nonprofit was dispensing.
- Created national and state-specific human trafficking-focused bench cards in collaboration with national and local partners, which are now being distributed nationwide.
- Implemented the use of a validated human trafficking screener tool at system intake (i.e., at jail or prison intake, and before first hearing) so that potential human trafficking victims in this jurisdiction are identified before their first meeting with a judge.

## **Summary of Best Practices to Pilot a Judicial Leadership Public Awareness Campaign**

Through research, collaboration with the working group, and evaluation of the pilot program, the National Judicial College developed the following best-practice recommendations for educating judges on adjudicating human trafficking cases involving CDL holders and commercial motor vehicles:

- **Expand training on FMCSA regulations to all judges, not only those handling traffic cases.** Human trafficking cases involving commercial motor vehicles are most often adjudicated by felony or general jurisdiction judges, who must understand the correct application of 49 CFR 383.51 during the sentencing phase.
- **Ensure all judges and court staff are trained to recognize signs of human trafficking.** Victims frequently appear in court as defendants, making early identification critical.



- **Provide judges and court staff with connections to local survivor resources.** Courts should be supported in developing clear plans and procedures to assist identified victims.
- **Educate judges and staff on all relevant human trafficking laws, including restitution.** Continued human trafficking training will help increase compliance with restitution requirements and better support survivors.
- **Foster judicial empathy toward survivors.** Training should highlight the complex challenges survivors face when attempting to leave traffickers.
- **Promote trauma-informed court practices.** Courtrooms should be designed to minimize re-traumatization of victims and survivors.
- **Cover a comprehensive set of training topics, at a minimum including:**
  - Definitions of key human trafficking terminology
  - Federal and local laws on human trafficking
  - FMCSA regulations and restitution requirements
  - Familial, sex, and labor trafficking
  - Distinctions between trafficking and smuggling
  - The impact of judicial emotions and experiences on decision-making
  - Strategies for managing strong negative emotions and compassion fatigue
  - How to build trauma-informed courts
  - How to detect possible human trafficking in court settings
  - How to create effective programs and procedures for resolving trafficking cases once identified
- **Design trainings with an emphasis on practical tools and evaluations of their efficacy.** Judges should leave with actionable resources to apply in their own courtrooms. Time for reflection on implementation should be built into the curriculum, and carefully planned training evaluations should assess the efficacy with which judges apply these skills in practice, their successes, and limitations. It is important to normalize the utilization of a wide variety of evaluation methods that fully explore the outcomes of the interventions that the judiciary enacts as a result of training programs.

## Following Steps

Motivated by the success of the judicial leaders' public awareness campaigns, the NJC expanded its human trafficking prevention and detection efforts to include an additional 135 judges across South Carolina and Montana, and compared them to the Nevada sample collected during the *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign*. These trainings resulted in improvements in the participants' knowledge and information of human trafficking (averaging a 27.6% increase in knowledge across experiences). Importantly, participants also felt more capable of making a difference in trafficking cases due to the training.

Should the NJC receive critical funding to continue this important work, we intend to develop additional experiential learning strategies, such as empathy exercises that feature labor trafficking victims; refine and implement workshops to train additional judicial leaders committed to preventing and detecting human trafficking; and develop training materials that can be widely disseminated across all actors of the criminal justice system.

## Limitations and Needs for Improvement

The judicial landscape is in constant motion, as judges transition between roles, retire, or newly enter the profession. This fluidity underscores the importance of ensuring that every judge—regardless of tenure—has access to high-quality, timely training. Well-trained judges not only strengthen the integrity of the judiciary but also directly benefit the individuals who appear in their courtrooms.

Yet, access to training remains uneven. A 2025 judicial needs assessment conducted by the National Judicial College revealed that many judges face significant financial barriers to attending educational programs, with limited funds available for judicial training nationwide. Continued grant assistance is therefore essential to sustain and expand these efforts, ensuring that judges from all jurisdictions have the resources needed to participate.

Although the *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program* was a resounding success, important lessons emerged. Participants expressed a desire for extended time on certain topics and for additional support in processing the emotional intensity of the subject matter. Judges also reported several barriers in carrying out their public awareness campaigns, including difficulty finding suitable points of contact within law enforcement, the ethical challenge of reconciling judicial roles with active participation in task forces, and the lack of accurate and localized data necessary to refine bench cards and tailor resources to specific jurisdictions. In some cases, legislative constraints on sentencing conditions and professional transitions further complicated efforts to sustain leadership projects over time.

These insights present an opportunity not only to refine future program design but also to highlight the critical need for ongoing investment. With additional support, programs can be adapted to help judicial leaders overcome these limitations, strengthen their partnerships, and create durable anti-trafficking initiatives. By addressing both the successes and the challenges, the path forward becomes clear: empowering judges with knowledge, resilience, and practical tools ensures that they can continue to lead with compassion and effectiveness in the fight against human trafficking.

## Conclusion

The 2024 *Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Public Awareness Campaign*, facilitated by The National Judicial College (NJC) with support from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), represents a pioneering step in positioning judges as catalysts for systemic change in the fight against human trafficking. By combining research-driven curriculum design, survivor-centered instruction, and applied leadership opportunities, the program not only deepened judicial understanding of the complex realities of trafficking but also equipped participants to create sustainable, community-based solutions. The public awareness campaigns that followed demonstrate the unique ability of judges to convene stakeholders, foster collaboration, and embed trafficking prevention into the fabric of their jurisdictions.

While the program faced natural limitations—such as resource constraints, ethical considerations in judicial engagement with law enforcement, and the ongoing challenge of tailoring tools to diverse jurisdictions—it provided clear evidence that judicial leadership is both impactful and necessary. The overwhelmingly positive participant feedback, the documented improvements in judicial knowledge and confidence, and the continuation of projects well beyond the initial training all underscore the program's lasting value.

To build on this success, additional funding and support are essential. Expanding the curriculum to include new empathy exercises, refining judicial tools, and scaling the program to reach more judges nationwide will ensure that this work continues to transform not only courtrooms but also the communities they serve. Ultimately, the program affirmed that judges, when equipped with the right tools and partnerships, can play a decisive role in preventing human trafficking, supporting survivors, and safeguarding justice.

## Appendices

### Appendix I: Summary of Stand-Alone and Panel Presentations

The Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and CDL Public Awareness Campaign included a series of stand-alone presentations and panel discussions designed to equip judicial participants with a comprehensive understanding of human trafficking as it intersects with the commercial driving industry. These sessions delivered comprehensive foundational instruction, analyzed regulatory frameworks, and examined the multidimensional legal and psychosocial challenges faced by trafficking survivors.

Each presentation offered a focused look at specific aspects of trafficking, from understanding FMCSA regulations affecting Commercial Driver's License (CDL) holders to trauma-informed practices for the judiciary. Subject matter experts in human trafficking prevention, law enforcement, and advocacy offered interdisciplinary perspectives on best practices and emerging challenges, emphasizing the importance of a multidisciplinary approach. These sessions not only established a knowledge base but also introduced practical tools and strategies to help judges navigate the complexities of trafficking cases within their courtrooms.

Panel discussions supplemented the stand-alone presentations by bringing together representatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. These panels fostered strategic dialogue on cross-sector collaboration and highlighted the need for ongoing judicial leadership in anti-trafficking efforts. By hearing directly from stakeholders—including survivor advocates, industry professionals, and regulatory experts—participants gained insights into the broader ecosystem surrounding trafficking and the pivotal role the judiciary plays in supporting survivors and upholding justice.

#### **NJC WELCOME & ORIENTATION: NJC'S JOURNEY WITH THE FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION – PATRICK GRIMES**

##### **Welcome and Overview**

Patrick Grimes formally inaugurated the Human Trafficking Leadership Conference and CDL Public Awareness Campaign at The National Judicial College (NJC)<sup>3</sup>, welcoming participants to the event. In his introduction, he explained that the goal was to engage judicial participants not only cognitively but also emotionally by evoking feelings of sadness and anger toward the issue of human trafficking. This emotional engagement was seen as a powerful tool for motivating participants to confront the complex challenges surrounding human trafficking in their jurisdictions and to consider practical solutions for addressing them.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.judges.org>

## **Intersection of Federal Motor Carrier Regulations and Anti-Trafficking Efforts**

A central theme of importance of judicial education on these regulatory frameworks to better align legal oversight with trafficking prevention strategies. Grimes also underscored the commitment of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to combating human trafficking, which is evidenced by the lifetime suspension of the CDL upon conviction of a severe form of trafficking in persons involving a commercial motor vehicle.

### **Engaging Judges: Key Stops**

The session was structured to guide judges through several key thematic pillars for combating trafficking. The first segment encouraged judges to reflect on actions they could implement in their home communities, focusing on leveraging local resources and fostering partnerships to support anti-trafficking initiatives. The second segment explored alternative sentencing options, particularly for non-violent, non-maskable offenses in commercial transportation, particularly those excluded from 49 C.F.R. 383.51. Judges were urged to consider rehabilitation-focused sentencing alternatives that could deter future involvement in trafficking-related activities while reducing recidivism.

Another critical focus was the mitigation of blind spots. Judges were prompted to reflect on their own potential blind spots and how these unconscious influences might affect their decision-making in human trafficking cases. The presentation emphasized the need for judges to have the tools to identify and mitigate these challenges in their courtrooms, fostering more equitable and objective rulings. The session also highlighted the necessity of training colleagues and staff to recognize the signs of trafficking. This approach also encouraged judicial participants to assume pedagogical and policy-oriented leadership roles in educating their peers, ensuring that everyone involved in the judicial process—from clerks to law enforcement officers—are equipped to detect and respond to trafficking situations effectively.

### **Tools for Measuring Impact**

To ensure the conference's effectiveness, the session also introduced evaluation metrics and reflective tools for measuring participants' engagement and the event's impact. Judges were encouraged to maintain diaries to document their reflections throughout the conference and to participate in pre- and post-surveys to measure how their understanding of trafficking had evolved. Additionally, course evaluations would gauge the overall success of the event, providing valuable insights into how the content and discussions might be applied in practice.

Patrick Grimes' keynote served to equip judges with evidence-based tools needed to address human trafficking in their courtrooms and communities. By focusing on fundamental areas—such as leveraging community resources, exploring alternative

sentencing options, addressing unconscious bias, and training legal professionals—the session provided a comprehensive framework for judicial action against trafficking. Furthermore, the presentation underscored the unique role that federal motor carrier regulations play in this issue, linking the trucking industry to both the problem and the solution of human trafficking.

### **UMBRELLA ISSUES: HUMAN TRAFFICKING OVERVIEW – HON. GAYLE WILLIAMS-BYERS, RET.**

#### **Introduction and Objectives**

Judge Gayle Williams-Byers, the NJC’s judicial fellow, delivered an insightful overview of human trafficking, aiming to equip participants with a comprehensive, practical understanding of human trafficking and courtroom-applicable strategies. She emphasized three key objectives: identifying and defining the various forms of human trafficking, recognizing the widespread nature of labor trafficking, and developing judicial techniques to combat trafficking effectively.

#### **Defining Human Trafficking**

Judge Williams-Byers presented the legal standard of human trafficking adopted by FMCSA as the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through force, fraud, or coercion. She clarified that the sole exception to this definition is a commercial sex act with a minor, which is always considered sex trafficking regardless of force, fraud, or coercion. Emphasizing that human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, she clarified the distinction from human smuggling noting that trafficking does not necessarily require crossing international borders. Instead, it is defined by the presence of control features—such as force, fraud, or coercion—over victims.

#### **Focus on Labor Trafficking**

Judge Williams-Byers emphasized that discussions of sex trafficking often overshadow labor trafficking despite the latter being the more prevalent form. Labor trafficking typically occurs in industries such as hospitality, agriculture, construction, domestic servitude, and restaurants. Workers in these sectors are often subjected to exploitative labor practices including wage theft, harsh working conditions, and limited legal protections, especially among migrant populations where language barriers are prevalent.

#### **Key Takeaways for Judges**

Judge Williams-Byers outlined five essential lessons for those looking to reduce human trafficking. First, she stressed that awareness is essential because "the eye doesn’t see what the mind doesn’t know." Judges, she emphasized, must be vigilant in identifying indicators such as branding tattoos, limited movement, and individuals lacking agency or control over their personal or necessary belongings such as identification documents or money. Second, awareness alone is insufficient—action must follow. She urged judges to use their position to convene local leaders and engage communities in addressing trafficking. Third, Judge Williams-Byers called for judges to challenge uninformed narratives, especially the



notion that trafficking is limited to sex work. Trafficking, she reminded participants, spans various industries, including nail or hair salons, massage parlors, and agriculture. Fourth, she advised judges to resist the practice of "othering" trafficking victims and instead recognize them as members of their own communities and pointed out the importance of becoming familiar with local cases. Finally, she encouraged judges to understand the economic impact of their decisions, explaining that consumer behavior can inadvertently sustain exploitative labor markets and help buttress trafficking behavior.

### **Practical Steps for Judges**

Judge Williams-Byers recommended several practical strategies that judges can adopt in their courtrooms to address human trafficking. She advised that, depending on the case, judges may ask specific questions to uncover the realities of a victim's situation, such as where they live, who controls their schedule, and whether they have regular access to healthcare or contact with family. She also emphasized the importance of courtroom observation literacy, and situational awareness especially when a potential victim is accompanied by someone who may exert (non-physical) control over them. She suggested that judges use sidebar conversations or private discussions to gather information discreetly. In cases where trafficking is identified, she recommended rehabilitation programs or modified release conditions as sentencing alternatives to traditional punishment. She underscored the importance of collaboration with local law enforcement, prosecutors, and social service providers to ensure proper support for victims.

Judge Williams-Byers' presentation offered a comprehensive framework for judges to understand and navigate the complexities of human trafficking and take active steps to address it within their courtrooms. By leveraging their authority and fostering community partnerships, judges can play a pivotal role in combating human trafficking and protecting vulnerable populations.

### **JUDGING SEX TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS: THE ROLES OF LAW, STEREOTYPES, EMOTION, AND KNOWLEDGE – DR. RICHARD WIENER**

Dr. Richard Wiener, a professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, presented a comprehensive empirical analysis of how stereotypes, emotions, and legal knowledge shape the judgment of sex trafficking survivors. Dr. Wiener's presentation aimed to uncover the psychological and societal barriers that prevent a victim-centered approach to human trafficking cases and to propose strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

### **Victim-Centered Approach to Human Trafficking**

Dr. Wiener opened his presentation by advocating for a victim-centered approach to human trafficking, emphasizing the "Three P's"—Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution. He explained that this approach, which originated in Scotland's 1990 Zero Tolerance Campaign, focuses on preventing victimization, providing protection and assistance to victims, and prosecuting offenders. Dr. Wiener argued that a shift toward this approach is essential for advancing justice and support for trafficking survivors.



## **Obstacles to a Victim-Centered Approach**

Dr. Wiener explored the psychological and societal obstacles that hinder a victim-centered approach. He emphasized that stereotypes, emotions, and a lack of knowledge about trafficking often cloud human judgment. Dr. Wiener pointed out that in the United States, there is a persistent societal tendency to view trafficking survivors as offenders rather than victims. Deep-seated stereotypes, negative moral emotions, and confusion about the difference between prostitution and trafficking drive this misperception.

## **Stereotypes and Moral Emotions**

Dr. Wiener delved into the interplay between stereotypes and moral emotions and how they shape the judgement of trafficking survivors. He explained that stereotypes about victims, such as perceptions of low feelings of *warmth* towards a victim and a low level of *competence*, lead to negative judgments and increased certainty of arrest. Dr. Wiener used the Stereotype Content Model to illustrate how these perceptions frame the societal view of survivors, often resulting in feelings of contempt and anger rather than empathy. He argued that these emotional responses are significant barriers to recognizing survivors as victims rather than criminals.

## **Legal Confusion Between Prostitution and Trafficking**

Dr. Wiener addressed the blurred lines between prostitution and trafficking, noting that this confusion further exacerbates the misjudgment of survivors. He discussed how U.S. legal frameworks simultaneously criminalize sex work and yet attempt to protect trafficking victims, creating a paradox that complicates the legal and social response to survivors. Dr. Wiener emphasized that this legal ambiguity leads to inconsistent judgments and hinders the effective prosecution of traffickers.

## **Research on Public Judgment of Sex Trafficking Survivors**

Dr. Wiener presented findings from his research<sup>4</sup>, which examined the public judgment of sex trafficking survivors. He described in detail a study in which participants were asked to evaluate a fictional case based on the real-life *United States v. Bell* (2014)<sup>5</sup>. The study manipulated the perceived vulnerability of the survivor and their history of prostitution to assess how these factors influenced judgments. The results showed that participants were more likely to favor arrest when they perceived the survivor as less vulnerable and when the survivor had a history of prostitution.

## **Role of Emotion Regulation in Judgment**

Dr. Wiener explored the role of emotion regulation in shaping judgments about survivors. He hypothesized that training individuals to regulate their negative moral emotions—

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Wiener, R. L., Berry, M. C., Wertheimer, J., Petty, T., & Martinez, J. (2021). The public's judgment of sex trafficked women: Blaming the victim?. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 27(3), 529 - 545. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000352>

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-8th-circuit/1674615.html>

such as disgust and contempt—could lead to more objective and fair judgments. His research demonstrated that when participants were trained to use cognitive reappraisal and motivational reframing techniques to decrease negative emotions, their judgments of survivors became more compassionate and less punitive.

Dr. Wiener emphasized the need for comprehensive training that includes stereotype debunking, legal education about the distinctions between prostitution and trafficking, and emotion regulation strategies. He argued that such training is crucial for law enforcement personnel, judges, attorneys, and other stakeholders who are involved in trafficking cases. By addressing the psychological and legal barriers to a victim-centered approach, Dr. Wiener's presentation called for a fundamental shift in how society and the legal system treat sex trafficking survivors.

### **PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE COMMERCIAL DRIVING INDUSTRY** **– AARON ANN COLE-FUNFSINN, DYLAN WECHT**

Dylan Wecht from TAT<sup>6</sup>, formally known as Truckers Against Trafficking, presented an in-depth exploration of the role that the commercial driving industry plays in preventing human trafficking at the National Judicial College Human Trafficking Leadership Conference 2024.

#### **Defining Human Trafficking**

Wecht commenced by defining human trafficking, emphasizing its recognition by federal authorities as a form of modern-day slavery. He elaborated on the Department of Justice's definition of human trafficking<sup>7</sup>, which involves the coercion or forceful exploitation of individuals for labor or commercial sex. Wecht underlined that victims of trafficking can come from any background, cutting across various demographics and socio-economic statuses, thus requiring an inclusive approach to identification and prevention.

#### **Legal Framework and Regulations**

Wecht examined the legal frameworks governing the prevention of human trafficking within the commercial driving industry. He focused on the FMCSA rule (49 C.F.R. § 383.51), which mandates a lifetime disqualification for any commercial driver convicted of using a commercial motor vehicle for human trafficking. Wecht explained that this regulation forms part of a broader legislative effort, including the "No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act," designed to ensure that individuals involved in such heinous crimes are permanently barred from operating commercial vehicles.

#### **Vulnerabilities and Industry Challenges**

Wecht identified several vulnerabilities within the commercial driving industry that traffickers exploit. He noted that truck stops and rest areas are often high-risk zones for

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<sup>6</sup> See : <https://tatnonprofit.org>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking>

trafficking activities due to their transient nature and the isolation of drivers from regulatory oversight. Wecht stressed that traffickers can exploit the industry's vast network of transportation routes to move victims across state lines with minimal detection. Additionally, he highlighted how the industry's reliance on subcontracted labor and the presence of undocumented workers can further complicate efforts to monitor and prevent trafficking.

### **Training and Awareness**

Wecht emphasized the critical role of training and awareness in combating human trafficking within the commercial driving industry. He underscored the importance of educating commercial drivers about the indicators of trafficking and how to report suspicious activities. Wecht highlighted successful initiatives like TAT, which trains drivers to recognize and respond to trafficking scenarios. He advocated that mandatory anti-trafficking training within the CDL certification process could significantly enhance the industry's capacity to act as a frontline defense against trafficking.

### **Case Studies and Interdiction Strategies**

To illustrate the practical application of these regulations and training, Wecht presented several case studies where vigilant commercial drivers played a crucial role in identifying and rescuing trafficking victims. These case studies demonstrated the effectiveness of a victim-centered approach, where law enforcement and industry professionals collaborate to ensure the safety and well-being of trafficking victims. Wecht emphasized that attention to detail during routine inspections and interactions often leads to the discovery of trafficking operations as well as successful interdiction.

### **Role of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement**

Wecht underscored the critical roles of the judiciary and law enforcement in enforcing regulations and ensuring that traffickers are held accountable. He discussed how prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials must be well-versed in the specific challenges posed by trafficking behavior within the commercial driving industry. Wecht argued that a coordinated approach—involving stringent enforcement of disqualification laws, thorough investigations, and rigorous prosecutions—is essential to dismantling trafficking networks and protecting victims.

Wecht called for a comprehensive and coordinated holistic cross-sectoral strategy to prevent human trafficking within the commercial driving industry. He emphasized that through proper regulation enforcement, targeted training, and collaborative efforts among industry stakeholders, significant progress can be made in identifying and preventing trafficking activities. Wecht's presentation served as both an informative overview and a call to action for professionals in the judicial and transportation sectors to actively combat human trafficking.

**STREET VIEW: HUMAN EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING (HEAT)  
INTERDICTION –SERGEANT KELLIE DUNN, DETECTIVE ERIC EVANS, DETECTIVE  
ALEXIS MARTINEZ, ALECIA HARDIMAN, VICTIM ADVOCATE, RENO POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, HEAT UNIT**

**Reno Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit: An Overview**

The Reno Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit within the Reno Police Department<sup>8</sup> presented an overview of how their operational strategies and multidisciplinary approach improves law enforcement practices in handling trafficking victims and perpetrators. The unit includes three members of law enforcement and a victim advocate. Their main activities consist of arresting traffickers and buyers (“Johns,”), providing victims with resources, facilitating outreach to the community (including schools, parents, and nonprofit groups), proactively attempting to separate victims from their traffickers, and conducting undercover operations.

**Victim-Centered Approach to Policing**

The foundation of HEAT’s approach is the belief that sex workers are victims of exploitation and abuse rather than criminals to be prosecuted. The primary goal is to separate them from their exploiters to ensure safety while focusing on police efforts to prosecute traffickers. The unit members pointed out that traffickers control their victims by fulfilling their basic survival needs and offering love and protection—often absent from the victims’ previous experiences. Consequently, when victims’ fundamental emotional and material needs are met, they are more able to leave their exploiters.

**Building Trust and Support for Victims**

Victims are often reluctant to trust authorities, making sustained interaction with the HEAT team—especially with their victim advocate—essential for building willingness to accept help and leave their traffickers. The advocate establishes contact with victims when they are first involved with the HEAT team, and even when they refuse help, victims are encouraged to maintain an open channel of communication with the advocate.

However, this trust is compromised when inconsistent practices by other members of the police force result in arrest or mistreatment of victims. Therefore, interdepartmental cooperation and coordination between the police encountering victims on the street and the HEAT team is vital to the success of their approach.

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<sup>8</sup> See: [https://www.washoesheriff.com/outreach/press\\_releases/2023-0524-Human-Exploitation-and-Trafficking-HEAT-Detectives-and-Regional-Narcotics-Unit-RNU-arrest-Reno-man-on-sex-and-drug-charges.php](https://www.washoesheriff.com/outreach/press_releases/2023-0524-Human-Exploitation-and-Trafficking-HEAT-Detectives-and-Regional-Narcotics-Unit-RNU-arrest-Reno-man-on-sex-and-drug-charges.php)

## **Understanding Victim Behavior: Trauma and Manipulation**

To effectively understand victims' behavior and foster trust, it is essential to adopt a trauma-informed lens that considers their psychological state. Many victims experience severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—reliving the abuse, rape, and violence they endured. Survivors may also exhibit trauma-bonding behaviors—such as being in love with their traffickers and seeking to protect them. Often, victims do not perceive themselves as victims but rather see themselves at fault because they have been coerced into putting guns, cars, and other items in their names or perpetrating crimes such as robbery. As a result, they often refuse to cooperate with the police.

Understanding and recognizing these psychological and behavioral dynamics enables law enforcement and the judicial system to interpret what might appear to be irrational behavior by victims as a response shaped by their abuse and PTSD rather than as noncompliance, willful defiance, combativeness, or criminal complicity.

## **Traffickers as Master Manipulators**

Judges and others within the court system should be mindful that traffickers are master manipulators and may attempt to offload responsibility to victims or claim that they also are victims deserving of leniency.

## **HEAT Team Outreach and Operations**

The HEAT team engages in outreach with at-risk and trafficked youth to keep track of the online forums being used for recruitment. They also conduct undercover operations designed to catch “Johns” and traffickers in the act of recruitment or solicitation.

## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAPPENS... EVERYWHERE: A CROSS-SECTIONAL CONVERSATION – LIZ WILLIAMSON, JENNY WILLIAMSON, SERGEANT KELLIE DUNN, DETECTIVE ERIC EVANS, DETECTIVE ALEXIS MARTINEZ, ALECIA HARDIMAN, VICTIM ADVOCATE, RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT, HEAT UNIT**

This cross-sectional conversation included a presentation from Courage Worldwide,<sup>9</sup> along with a survivor of familial sex trafficking, followed by a Q&A session with Courage Worldwide, the sex trafficking survivor, and the Reno HEAT (Human Exploitation and Trafficking) unit.

## **Challenges in Supporting Survivors**

Survivors of human trafficking, particularly juveniles, face profound psychological trauma including complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) due to the sustained exposure of abuse and coercion they have experienced. A high percentage of juveniles have

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<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.courageworldwide.org>

experienced sexual abuse within familial or domestic contexts, which leads to a deep mistrust of authority complicating their ability to engage with support systems or trust those offering assistance. Additionally, long-term mental health facilities for minors are not only costly but also scarce. Group homes are often unsuitable settings for trafficking survivors, and many judges are reluctant to place children in long-term programs, especially given the failure of foster systems and the closure of group homes. For survivors leaving their traffickers—especially familial traffickers—the emotional process can be similar to a divorce laden with complexity and psychological strain. Moreover, adult survivors often require legal protection from their traffickers, such as obtaining restraining orders, which prohibit them from independently navigating the judicial system.

### **Judicial and Legal System Involvement**

Judges and legal professionals are encouraged to reconsider the language used when referring to survivors of trafficking. Terms like "child prostitute" should be removed from judicial vernacular, as it lacks legal standing, context and justification and serves to retraumatize victims by failing to acknowledge their victimhood. In court, judges are encouraged to adopt a trauma-informed judicial approach and recognize that the behavior survivors exhibit—such as being uncooperative witnesses—can be a direct manifestation of the psychological trauma they have endured. For instance, survivors may not present as the "ideal" witness due to the emotional toll the trafficking has taken on them. To prepare for the courtroom or trial experience, Judges should endeavor to ensure that restraining or no contact orders are strictly enforced, with violation responses including appropriate sanctions such as bond revocation, contempt penalties or additional criminal charges to ensure survivor safety. Additionally, defense attorneys must be better informed and trained about trafficking-related issues. The current state of defense attorney training on this important topic presents a significant obstacle in effectively handling these cases even in light of many defense attorneys demonstrating reluctance to receive education on the subject, perpetuating stereotypes and creating systemic gaps and a feedback loop of misunderstanding trafficking cases.

### **Programs and Resources**

There are substantial gaps in long-term programs designed to assist trafficking survivors. Over the years, long-term programs have been condensed into shorter periods, often lasting only 3-6 months, which is insufficient for full recovery, psychological stabilization, and social reintegration. Advocates are working hard to push for extended programs that provide the necessary support and additional resources. The Safe at Home program allows survivors to change their names and maintain anonymity, allowing them to start over. Confidential mailboxes are another protective intervention designed to help survivors securely receive information and resources without endangering themselves. Collectively, these programs equip survivors with essential tools to protect themselves and establish a sense of safety.



## **Trauma-Informed Practices**

Understanding trauma and how it manifests in survivors is essential for professionals within the justice system. Judges should adopt a trauma-informed judicial stance recognizing that survivors may be reliving their trauma and require ongoing support. Many survivors experience persistent psychological hypervigilance, as though they are still in danger, even if they have physically left their trafficker. Simple yet effective tools such as offering sketchbooks or aromatherapy in the courtroom were suggested as ways to help survivors manage their PTSD and anxiety. Furthermore, it is essential to ask survivors what specific support they need, rather than making assumptions, and to offer reassurance that their psychological safety and emotional well-being is a priority. This compassionate, survivor-centered approach not only fosters a safer environment but also helps in addressing the complex emotional needs of trafficking survivors.

## **Practical Advice for Legal Professionals**

During the Q&A portion, specific practical guidance was given to judges on trauma-informed questioning strategies when engaging with survivors. Instead of direct, potentially retraumatizing questions, judges were advised to focus on more general aspects of the survivors' lives, such as their employment, housing situation, and family relationships. Such questions can help uncover underlying trafficking situations while avoiding putting the survivor in additional danger. Smaller or under-resourced agencies, were also advised to form interagency partnerships with larger organizations like the FBI or regional law enforcement to combat trafficking more effectively, particularly when resources are limited. Labor trafficking—an underreported and harder-to-detect form of trafficking—was highlighted as an area that requires distinct investigative tactics compared to sex trafficking.

## **Costs and Complexities of Trafficking**

A notable point of discussion addressed the transactional nature of trafficking, in which the value of a trafficking transaction often correlates to the exploitability value of the victim's involvement—referred to as the "secret." Traffickers manipulate and coerce their victims into illegal activities, such as robbing clients, as a means to survival. These complex dynamics make it harder for survivors to disentangle themselves from trafficking situations. Moreover, traffickers often appear better in court than the survivors do, leveraging their practiced manipulator skills. Particular emphasis was given to the need for enhanced prosecutorial education and training particularly in the area of understanding the complex dynamics and realities of trafficking cases.



## **FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING IN AMERICA: A NATIONAL STUDY – DR. JEANNE ALLERT**

### **Introduction**

Dr. Jeanne L. Allert, the founder and executive director of the Institute for Shelter Care<sup>10</sup>, delivered an in-depth evidence-based presentation titled "Familial Sex Trafficking for Judicial Professionals." Her background includes founding The Samaritan Women, a restorative care program for female survivors of domestic sex trafficking, along with extensive involvement in national research and training efforts to improve access to and quality of care for survivors of exploitation. Her academic qualifications include a Master's in Education, a Master's in Divinity, and a Doctorate in Psychology focusing on trauma.

### **Research Study**

Dr. Allert explained the motivation for her research study, drawing from her experience operating a multi-phased restorative care program between 2007 and 2018, during which 96% of the survivors were victims of childhood sexual abuse, and 11% had mothers who were prostituted persons. She cited a 2017 study by the International Organization for Migration, estimating that family members and/or caregivers facilitate 41% of child trafficking cases<sup>11</sup>. Dr. Allert emphasized the need for enhanced familial trafficking research, as law enforcement colleagues frequently discussed it, despite the lack of broader attention.

Her research employed a mixed-method descriptive study to understand the prevalence of familial trafficking in America, the unique characteristics of familial trafficking, and the challenges these cases present across victim identification, investigation, prosecution, and victim services. The study involved a survey with 68 validated responses from 24 states and 11 interviews with respondents who had extensive experience with trafficking cases. The survey encompassed 3505 sex trafficking cases between 2018 and 2021, with 917 familial cases involving 900 minor victims.

### **Familial Trafficking as Organized Abuse**

Dr. Allert described familial trafficking as a form of organized abuse involving mental, physical, and/or sexual abuse within a secretive system, often occurring within family units or more extensive networks. Unlike other forms of sexual abuse, familial trafficking is characterized by multiple offenders and victims engaged in a coordinated orchestration of the abusive acts.

### **Characteristics and Types of Organized Abuse**

The presentation outlined the characteristics of organized abuse, such as the presence of specific members, rules, and language. Victims frequently undergo environmental grooming, and perpetrators are protected over victims, using fear to maintain control.

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<sup>10</sup> See: <https://instituteforsheltercare.org>

<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://www.iom.int/news/family-members-linked-nearly-half-child-trafficking-new-iom-polaris-data>

This environment often leads victims to self-silence due to a lasting fear of surveillance and control. Dr. Allert categorized organized abuse into network abuse, institutional abuse, ideological/ritual abuse, and familial abuse. Each category involves unique dynamics and challenges, with familial abuse characterized by extensive victimization over prolonged durations within family systems.

### **Defining Familial Sex Trafficking**

Dr. Allert defined familial sex trafficking as a specific subtype of sex trafficking where a family member facilitates sexual access to a child in exchange for something of commercial value. Family members can include biological, custodial, and even foster relationships. She then outlined and described the challenges in identifying victims of familial trafficking, which include societal lack of awareness, victims' reluctance to report, and the failure to present victims with appropriate or properly contextualized screening questions. Many victims do not exhibit the typical indicators featured in public awareness campaigns. Instead, signs such as excessive school truancy, child welfare involvement, and emergency room visits are often indicative of familial trafficking cases.

### **Mandatory Reporters**

Dr. Allert emphasized the lack of systemic training among mandated reporters on identifying and responding to human trafficking. Despite the critical role in recognizing victims, only a small percentage of mandated reporters had received training on familial trafficking. She presented a study indicating that while most mandated reporters would report familial exploitation, fewer were likely to report cases involving adolescents engaged in pornographic imagery or exchanging sex for money or goods. Misconceptions about adolescent prostitution further impede and complicate reporting as well as victim intervention efforts.

### **Victim and Perpetrator Profiles**

Dr. Allert discussed how victims of familial trafficking are often younger and predominantly female. The most common perpetrator profile includes biological mothers, followed by stepfathers or mother's boyfriends, with perpetrators often having a unique relationship with the victim, which adds complexity to the abuse dynamics. Dr. Allert further explained that familial trafficking cases frequently involve acute poverty, substance abuse, neglect, domestic violence, and other criminal activities within the home. These risk factors exacerbate the vulnerability of victims and complicate intervention efforts.

### **Challenges to Investigation**

Dr. Allert highlighted that investigating familial trafficking cases presents multifaceted challenges, including lack of evidence, victim compliance, and the secretive nature of transactions. Justice professionals often face difficulties in prosecuting cases based solely on testimony, as victims may not present typical signs of trafficking. Dr. Allert offered practical advice for investigators, emphasizing the importance of addressing victims' basic needs and building trust. She emphasized that a deep understanding of the complex

familial power dynamics and the provision of consistent long-term support during the judicial process is paramount.

In her conclusion, Dr. Allert summarized the significant prevalence of familial sex trafficking, the typical perpetrator profiles, and the primary motives behind the abuse. She advocated for better training for mandated reporters, more research into familial trafficking, and more robust support systems for victims throughout the judicial process.

#### **WHAT'S UNDER THE HOOD...AND EVERYPLACE ELSE? TACKLING COMPLEX 4TH AMENDMENT ISSUES INVOLVING COMMERCIAL VEHICLES, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND NEW TECHNOLOGY – HON. CHRISTOPHER J. TURNER**

Judge Christopher J. Turner, representing the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA)<sup>12</sup>, presented a rigorous legal analysis of complex Fourth Amendment issues related to commercial vehicles, human trafficking, and emerging technology. This presentation, delivered as part of the CVSA's educational initiatives, aimed to equip law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial professionals with the knowledge necessary to navigate the unique legal challenges posed by commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operations.

##### **Search and Seizure in Commercial Vehicles**

Judge Turner began by outlining the fundamental differences between how the Fourth Amendment applies to commercial motor vehicles compared to non-commercial vehicles. He emphasized that while people have a right to be secure against unreasonable searches and seizures, the courts have established that CMVs are subject to a reduced expectation of privacy due to their highly regulated nature. Turner discussed how this legal principle allows for warrantless inspections of CMVs under certain conditions, a concept that is crucial for law enforcement officers and judicial professionals to understand when dealing with CMV-related cases.

##### **Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause**

Judge Turner delved into the concepts of reasonable suspicion and probable cause, explaining how they apply differently in the context of CMVs. He defined reasonable suspicion as a legal standard based on articulable facts that a person is engaged in illegal activity, which justifies a brief investigatory stop. In contrast, probable cause necessitates a reasonable belief that a crime has been committed and is necessary for a more intrusive search or arrest. Judge Turner illustrated these concepts with practical examples, emphasizing the evidentiary importance of meticulous documentation by law enforcement officers to build a compelling case that can withstand judicial scrutiny.

##### **The Regulatory Framework and Inspections**

Judge Turner examined the legal framework governing CMV inspections by highlighting key court rulings that have helped to shape current practices. He referenced seminal

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://www.cvsa.org>

decisions such as *United States v. Herrera*<sup>13</sup> and *New York v. Burger*<sup>14</sup>, which establish that CMVs can be subject to regulatory inspections without warrant, provided the inspection meets specific criteria. Judge Turner explained that such inspections must be conducted as part of a regulatory scheme with a substantial government interest—such as ensuring road safety—and must impose clear limits on the discretion of inspecting officers to prevent abuse of power.

### **The Role of CVSA and Operational Policy 4**

Judge Turner discussed the CVSA's role in establishing standards for CMV inspections through Operational Policy 4, which outlines the certification requirements for inspectors and the levels of inspections they are authorized to conduct. He emphasized that CVSA-certified inspectors can conduct warrantless inspections without reasonable suspicion or probable cause, provided they adhere to the scope of their certification. Using Kansas as an example, Judge Turner illustrated how various jurisdictions adopt and enforce these federal guidelines, ensuring consistency in CMV inspections across states.

### **Challenges in Human Trafficking Cases Involving CMVs**

Judge Turner addressed the unique juridical and procedural complexities that arise in human trafficking cases involving CMVs. He explained that while CMVs are subject to reduced privacy expectations, the discovery of contraband or trafficking victims during an inspection must still adhere to Fourth Amendment protections. Judge Turner underscored the importance of targeted law enforcement training to recognize the signs of trafficking and to conduct inspections within the bounds of the law to ensure that any evidence obtained is admissible in court.

Judge Turner called for continued education and training for law enforcement and judicial professionals to ensure that they are well-equipped to handle the complexities of CMV-related cases, particularly those involving human trafficking. He reiterated that understanding the nuances of Fourth Amendment law as it applies to commercial vehicles is essential for upholding justice while effectively regulating the commercial trucking industry.

### **THE BIG PAYBACK: HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM RESTITUTION – LINDSEY LANE**

Lindsey Lane, the Director of Strategic Engagement at the Human Trafficking Institute, delivered a comprehensive presentation titled "The Big Payback: Human Trafficking Victim Restitution" at the National Judicial College Human Trafficking Leadership Conference 2024. Lane aimed to elucidate the significance of restitution for human trafficking victims, detailing what restitution entails, the types of harm it addresses, and the legal frameworks governing restitution in both federal and state courts.

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-10th-circuit/1166029.html>

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/482/691/>

## **What is Restitution?**

Lane began by defining restitution as a court-ordered mandate requiring a defendant to financially compensate the victim for losses directly related to the crime. She explained that restitution encompasses reimbursing victims for expenses directly caused due to the crime, including medical expenses, lost wages, property damage or loss, physical and psychological care, funeral expenses, and costs related to investigation and prosecution, such as daycare or missed work. Lane emphasized that restitution does not cover pain and suffering, taxes, interest, penalties or fines, attorney's fees, or expenses for accountants or other professionals needed to pursue recovery of financial losses.

## **Restitution for Victims of Human Trafficking**

Lane detailed the various forms of harm that human trafficking victims endure and explained how restitution seeks to address these damages. She categorized the harms into four (4) main areas: physical, financial, psychological, and property damage. Physical harm includes continued care for injuries from abuse, reproductive health issues, and injuries from dangerous working conditions. Financial harm encompasses debts from medical expenses, work-related costs, identity/name changes, and image removal from the internet. Psychological harm involves therapy and rehabilitation programs, while property damage includes personal property like electronics, identification, and clothing.

## **The distinction between Criminal Restitution and Civil Remedies**

Lane distinguished between criminal restitution and civil remedies, explaining that criminal restitution focuses on compensating or restoring victims for losses directly related to the crime. Criminal restitution includes lost wages, counseling, property damage, medical expenses, and funeral costs. Exempt from consideration are any costs related to pain and suffering, taxes, interest, and penalties. Lane highlighted that in federal courts, restitution is mandatory under 18 U.S.C. § 3664<sup>15</sup>, with the U.S. Probation Office being responsible for calculating the amount based on victim impact statements and related financial costs.

## **Restitution in Federal and State Courts**

Lane presented data indicating that in 2023, federal courts ordered mandatory restitution in 48% of human trafficking cases, a slight decrease from 49% in 2022<sup>16</sup>. She highlighted various states with specific restitution statutes for human trafficking victims, including South Carolina, New Mexico, Mississippi, Indiana, and Tennessee. Additionally, she noted that other states, such as Kentucky, Washington, Oregon, and Colorado, have general restitution statutes applicable to all crimes, including human trafficking.

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<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/3664>

<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://traffickinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2023-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Spreads-LR.pdf>

## **Determining Restitution**

Lane explained the procedural framework of restitution assessment, which involves verifying whether the requesting party is a qualified victim, the timing of restitution determination (judgment, sentencing, or restitution hearing) and whether the requested amount includes qualified expenses such as physical harm, property damage, psychological harms, and financial harms. She emphasized the importance of considering the defendant's ability to pay restitution, especially in cases of indigency or incarceration and ensuring that payment terms are clearly outlined in the judgment or a separate restitution order.

## **Requesting Restitution**

Lane discussed the roles of various parties involved in requesting restitution, including the victim, prosecutor, and judge. She noted that victims may be unrepresented, vulnerable, seeking closure, or unavailable. Prosecutors representing the state must establish elements of the crime without necessarily having access to detailed victim information. Judges, meanwhile, must navigate ethical boundaries and statutes to ensure fair restitution orders.

## **Role of the Judiciary**

Lane emphasized the judiciary's pivotal role in the entire process of victim restoration, from investigation and victim services to prosecution, conviction, sentencing, and aftercare. She asserted that restitution plays a role in restoring victims by addressing the financial motives behind trafficking, creating a deterrent effect, and promoting a holistic recovery for survivors.

## **Case Study: State v. Applewhite**

Lane presented a comprehensive case study of *State v. Applewhite*<sup>17</sup> to illustrate the complexities and challenges in prosecuting human trafficking cases. In this case, the defendant was charged with 67 counts, including 18 for human trafficking, and received a 230-299 years' imprisonment in addition to a restitution order of \$608,000 for the victims. The case study highlighted the collaborative efforts required to ensure victim safety and support throughout the trial process.

Lane emphasized the importance of restitution, which serves the dual purpose of providing restoration to trafficking victims and deterring future crimes. She encouraged judicial professionals to understand and effectively implement restitution orders to support victim recovery and justice. Lane underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to eliminate trafficking and ensure complete victim restoration.

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<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.nccourts.gov/documents/appellate-court-opinions/state-v-applewhite-4>



## **BUILDING WHAT WORKS: EFFECTIVE HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS, CAMPAIGNS, AND INITIATIVES – JAKE ELOVIRTA**

Jake Elovirta, Director of Enforcement Programs at the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), presented a comprehensive overview of effective human trafficking prevention programs, campaigns, and initiatives during the National Judicial College's 2024 Human Trafficking Leadership Conference. Elovirta's presentation focused on the strategies and collaborations that have proven successful in combating human trafficking within the commercial vehicle industry.

### **About CVSA**

Elovirta began by introducing the CVSA, a nonprofit organization that unites local, state, provincial, territorial, and federal commercial motor vehicle safety officials and industry representatives. CVSA's mission is to enhance commercial motor vehicle safety and enforcement across North America through guidance, education, and advocacy. Elovirta highlighted the organization's commitment to preventing commercial motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities and emphasized that collaboration between government and industry is crucial for improving road safety and saving lives.

### **Human Trafficking Prevention Program**

Elovirta provided an overview of CVSA's Human Trafficking Prevention Program, which operates with a heightened focus during January, February, and March. The program includes various outreach initiatives aimed at educating commercial vehicle drivers and industry stakeholders about the signs of human trafficking and how to report suspicious activities. Elovirta discussed the program's collaborative efforts with organizations like TAT, which is designed to provide training and resources to commercial drivers, empowering them to act as the "eyes and ears" on the road in the fight against human trafficking.

### **Outreach and Resources**

Elovirta delved into the extensive outreach materials and resources developed by CVSA to support the Human Trafficking Prevention Program. He showcased how these materials are distributed across multi-channel platforms, including CVSA's website, social media, and targeted campaigns, to maximize awareness and ensure all stakeholders can access the necessary tools and information to identify and prevent trafficking. Elovirta emphasized the necessity of these resources being readily accessible and widely available to enhance their effectiveness.

### **Collaboration with Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT)**

Elovirta highlighted the vital collaboration between CVSA and TAT, an organization dedicated to training and mobilizing the commercial transportation sector and energy industries to combat human trafficking. This partnership has been instrumental in developing training modules and distributing them to drivers across North America. Elovirta noted that the success of these collaborations is evident in the increased number



of drivers who have reported human trafficking incidents, leading to the rescue of victims and the arrest of traffickers.

### **Foreign National Illegal Trucking**

In addition to the Human Trafficking Prevention Program, Elovirta addressed the emergent challenges associated with the foreign national illegal trucking operations. He explained that these operations often involve “hotshot” carriers, small-scale trucking companies operating outside regulatory compliance. These carriers pose significant risks, not only because of their unsafe practices but also because they can be involved in trafficking activities. Elovirta emphasized the need for increased law enforcement awareness and coordination to address this issue and highlighted ongoing investigations that have already resulted in significant enforcement actions.

### **Outreach Summary and Impact**

Elovirta concluded the presentation with a impact-focused summary of the outreach efficacy and metrics. He provided analytic data showing the effectiveness of targeted campaigns, such as the EYEQ LOCAL and EYEQ LATINO initiatives, which aimed to reach commercial drivers through geofencing, targeted Facebook posts, and other digital platforms. These efforts resulted in tens of thousands of engagements, significantly raising awareness among drivers and the broader commercial vehicle community. Elovirta stressed that these initiatives are vital in fostering a culture of vigilance and responsibility within the industry.

Elovirta emphasized that building effective human trafficking prevention programs requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, collaboration, and enforcement. He reiterated that CVSA’s ongoing efforts, in partnership with organizations like TAT, are crucial in the fight against human trafficking within the commercial vehicle industry. Elovirta’s presentation underscored the importance of continued innovation and collaboration to ensure that these programs remain effective and responsive to the evolving challenges of human trafficking.

### **BLIND SPOTS: DECISION FATIGUE AND BIAS – DR. JOSEPH VITRIOL**

Dr. Joseph A. Vitriol, an assistant professor in Organizational Behavior at Lehigh College, delivered an insightful presentation titled “Bias Blind Spots for Victims of Human Trafficking.” With expertise in understanding the causes, consequences, and solutions to bias within political, legal, and organizational contexts, Dr. Vitriol aimed to elucidate the concept of bias blind spots, their significance, and the actionable steps to mitigate them.

### **Misconceptions and Stereotypes**

Dr. Vitriol commenced by addressing the widespread misconceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes surrounding human trafficking. He emphasized that such biases profoundly influence the perception and judgment of victims, often leading to detrimental outcomes. He noted that common stereotypes label victims as “bad girls,” “criminals,” or “illegal

immigrants," which not only exacerbate victim-blaming tendencies but also diminish empathy and understanding towards those affected.

### **The Science of the Human Mind**

Delving further, Dr. Vitriol explored the psychological processes that underlie these biases, often operating subconsciously. He emphasized the importance of understanding these processes to mitigate bias effectively. He explained that bias is a systematic source of error that causes deviations from objectivity, impacting perception, attribution, reasoning, decision-making, and policies. This understanding is crucial as it highlights the pervasive nature of bias and its detrimental consequences.

### **Consequences of Bias**

The presentation further illustrated the significant consequences of bias. Bias leads to the attribution of negative traits, the elicitation of negative moral emotions, and a tendency to explain behaviors through personal rather than situational factors. These cognitive distortions result in reduced empathy and increased culpability attributed to victims, further entrenching negative stereotypes and misconceptions.

### **Illustrating Bias Blind Spots**

Dr. Vitriol utilized various visual illusions and psychological experiments to demonstrate how context and preexisting beliefs shape perception and judgment, effectively illustrating the concept of bias blind spots. These demonstrations underscored the need for heightened awareness and reflection to counteract these biases.

### **Strategies to Reduce Bias**

Dr. Vitriol proposed several strategies to address and reduce bias. He emphasized the importance of noticing and naming biased thoughts or behaviors, as acknowledging bias is the first step towards avoiding its recurrence. Monitoring and seeking interpersonal feedback was highlighted as a crucial practice for detecting and addressing biases. Developing implementation intentions—if-then plans to act more thoughtfully in situations where bias might be activated—was recommended as an effective strategy.

Dr. Vitriol also advocated for cognitive strategies such as stereotype replacement, individuation, and perspective-taking as crucial practices. Stereotype replacement involves actively substituting stereotypical responses with non-stereotypical ones, while individuation focuses on recognizing and valuing individual characteristics over group-based generalizations. Perspective-taking, which entails imagining oneself in another person's situation, was highlighted as a powerful tool for enhancing empathy and understanding.

He emphasized that bias is not an unchangeable trait but rather a cognitive challenge that can be managed and overcome with awareness and commitment. Dr. Vitriol encouraged participants to adopt and practice the strategies discussed, fostering a more empathetic and unbiased approach in their professional and personal lives. Participants were urged to self-reflect on their biases and consider their broader implications for judgments and interactions with victims of human trafficking. This call to action aimed to empower



stakeholders to be proactive agents and contribute to a more just and equitable society by recognizing, managing, and eliminating bias.

## Appendix II: Summary of Hands-on Experiences

To deepen judicial participants' understanding and engagement with human trafficking issues, the Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and CDL Public Awareness Campaign included a range of hands-on experiences. These interactive sessions were designed to move beyond theoretical knowledge, offering participants direct, experiential insights into the realities faced by trafficking survivors and the challenges of identifying and addressing trafficking within judicial contexts.

Hands-on experiences included empathy-building exercises and survivor testimonials. Through these activities, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own biases, develop trauma-informed responses, and practice applying a survivor-centered approach to trafficking cases. This immersive approach helped judges connect emotionally with the material, fostering empathy and a deeper awareness of the complexities surrounding trafficking.

These experiences were integral to the program's goals, equipping participants with practical skills and insights they could apply directly within their courtrooms and communities. By engaging judges in realistic, emotionally resonant exercises, the program aimed to strengthen their capacity to lead effective, compassionate responses to human trafficking cases.

### **PERSPECTIVE REIMAGINING: IN THEIR SHOES – COMMERCIAL DRIVERS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS – AARON ANN COLE-FUNFSINN, DYLAN WECHT, HON. GAYLE WILLIAMS-BEYERS**

#### **Empathy Exercise Overview**

The empathy exercise was designed to immerse judges in the shoes of a 16-year-old human trafficking victim to help them understand the difficult choices such victims face. Inspired by the "choose your own adventure" style books and reading materials, and the *In Her Shoes*<sup>18</sup> domestic violence activity, the exercise consisted of scenarios where participants made choices for the victim, Maria. Each choice led to different outcomes, with participants physically moving through 16 randomly placed stations throughout the learning environment, each station representing a decision point. These stations were intentionally disordered, creating confusion and frustration to mirror the experience of trafficking victims. There were four possible endings, each illustrating different outcomes based on the selected situational choices.

Participants were instructed to go through the exercise twice—once by making decisions they thought Maria would make and again by making decisions they would personally choose in her situation. This dual perspective allowed participants to contrast their judgments with the decisions a trafficking victim might make under extreme pressure and

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<sup>18</sup> See: <https://wscadv.org/training-kits/in-her-shoes/>

fear. The exercise concluded with a debrief session, where participants reflected on the experience and its emotional impact.

### **Debrief Insights**

During the debrief, participants discussed their experiences of trying to put themselves in Maria's shoes. Many found it difficult to fully empathize with her situation, particularly when considering factors like her age and gender. On a scale from 1: *strongly disagree* to 7: *strongly agree*, participants felt it was difficult to put themselves in Maria's shoes ( $M = 4.43$ ).

### ***Empathy and Perspective Challenges***

For some participants, especially those who have never experienced the vulnerabilities of being a young woman in a precarious situation, fully engaging with Maria's perspective proved challenging. Law enforcement professionals, in particular, noted their tendency to detach from traumatic situations due to their emotional training. This created a barrier to truly understanding the complexities Maria faced, such as being pregnant while trafficked.

### ***Complexity of Choices***

The exercise illuminated the limited and challenging choices available to victims of human trafficking. Participants realized that Maria, like many victims, might have a history of negative experiences with authority figures, which could explain why she would avoid seeking help. These past traumas often push victims to make decisions based on survival, even if it means avoiding those who might be able to help them. The exercise highlighted that victims are often "hardwired" to distrust systems that have harmed them, complicating their decision-making process.

### ***Importance of Judicial Inquiry***

Participants acknowledged that judges often lack access to all the information needed to understand a victim's background and motivations fully. The exercise emphasized the importance of asking more profound questions in court to uncover the underlying realities of a victim's experience. Understanding what a victim prioritizes—whether survival, safety, or trust—is essential for judges to make informed decisions about the case. Judges were reminded that victims may not present their full stories, and it is up to the judicial system to probe deeper.

### ***Survival and Trust***

A central theme of the exercise was how trafficking victims are often forced to choose between survival and trust. Their decisions are frequently shaped by the need to protect themselves in a world where they have been repeatedly exploited. Participants recognized that these choices are not simple and that victims often rely on their past experiences of pain and betrayal when deciding whom to trust.

### ***Ethical Challenges***

The debrief also addressed the ethical challenges judges face when trying to uncover the whole truth behind a victim's situation. Participants discussed the difficulty of respecting a victim's autonomy while still seeking justice, especially when victims are reluctant to disclose sensitive information. There was also an acknowledgment of the obstacles in finding the right balance between gathering necessary details and avoiding retraumatizing the victim.

The empathy exercise served as a powerful tool to help judges and legal professionals better understand the complex and often heartbreaking choices that trafficking victims must make. It underscored the importance of empathy, thoughtful inquiry, and ethical decision-making when dealing with trafficking cases. By placing participants in Maria's shoes, the exercise shed light on the emotional and psychological toll that trafficking takes on victims and the critical role judges play in ensuring their stories are understood and fairly adjudicated.

The empathy exercise underscored the deeply onerous and often distressing decisions trafficking victims must navigate daily. Through the simulated experience, participants gained insights into the challenging scenarios that force victims like Maria to make choices based on survival, frequently at the expense of personal safety or well-being. As one participant reflected, "This exercise was eye-opening; understanding her choices required us to confront the limits of our own judgments and biases." Another noted, "I hadn't realized how mistrust of authority is often ingrained in victims, making their choices more about survival than we might initially assume." Judges and legal professionals highlighted the exercise's effectiveness in fostering a sense of empathy for victims, recognizing that survivors' decisions are rarely straightforward. "This experience reminded me how vital it is to dig deeper in court, to understand not just what victims are saying but what they're not sharing, often out of fear or trauma," one judge remarked. The exercise reinforced the ethical responsibility judges carry in approaching such cases with empathy, careful questioning, and a commitment to uncovering the broader story.<sup>19</sup>

### **UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL: THE AWAKEN RENO EXPERIENCE – JESSICA CISNEROS**

#### **Visit to Awaken Reno: Challenges Victims Face**

During the Human Trafficking Leadership Conference and CDL Public Awareness Campaign, participants visited Awaken Reno, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting victims of human trafficking. The visit, along with the presentation, provided a comprehensive overview of the significant challenges victims face when attempting to escape their traffickers. These challenges include psychological manipulation, physical isolation, restricted movement, and a lack of resources and support. Victims are often subjected to threats and intimidation, economic dependency on their traffickers, and a deep sense of stigma and shame. Additionally, many victims are unaware of available

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<sup>19</sup> For an in-depth examination of additional empathy exercise pilots, see XXX

resources, face legal obstacles, and encounter cultural and language barriers. Traffickers frequently monitor their victims, making escape attempts even more difficult.

### **Economic Impact of Human Trafficking and Political Challenges**

The presentation further examined the economic dimensions of human trafficking, emphasizing both the financial toll on victims and the economic motives that drive traffickers. Traffickers exploit their victims for profit, creating a cycle of dependency that often traps individuals in abusive situations for extended periods of time. The financial benefits traffickers gain—often through forced labor, illegal activities, and commercial sexual exploitation—serve as powerful incentives to perpetuate this manipulation. In turn, victims frequently emerge from trafficking situations in severe debt, lacking financial independence, and facing barriers to employment, housing, and social reintegration.

The presentation also highlighted political challenges, such as the reluctance of some local politicians to take meaningful action against trafficking. This issue is particularly pronounced in Nevada, where legal brothels and a permissive stance toward strip clubs, complicate efforts to prosecute sex trafficking. The overlap between legal and illegal sex work creates an environment where exploitation can be hidden under the guise of legality, reducing accountability for traffickers. In some cases, this reluctance stems from a conflict of interest; for example, a strip club owner in Reno—who also serves as a high school girls' track and field coach—illustrates the troubling normalization and acceptance of these exploitative industries in certain communities. This lack of political will contributes to legislative gaps and fosters an environment in which trafficking can thrive, even within regulated industries.

### **Resources for Survivors and Unintended Consequences**

In addition to these issues, the presentation offered an in-depth analysis of the resources available to survivors. While some resources produced positive outcomes, others have unintentionally benefited traffickers. For example, a drop-in program offering free food and showers was exploited by traffickers, who brought their victims to access these services, thereby reducing their own costs of maintaining control over them. This example highlights a significant challenge in providing services to victims while avoiding further exploitation.

### **Support for Survivors: Education, Housing, and Childcare**

The presentation also emphasized the importance of education, housing, and childcare in survivors' recovery process. Awaken has found that it typically takes about two years of consistent support to help someone entirely leave trafficking. They noted that for a victim to escape their trafficker successfully, the support previously provided by the trafficker must be replaced by another person or institution until the survivor is self-sufficient.



## **Judicial Interest in Anti-Trafficking Operations**

The judges in attendance were particularly interested in the operational aspects of organizations like Awaken. They sought detailed information on how these organizations secure funding, the dangers associated with frontline work, and the stringent screening processes for employees and volunteers to ensure safety and effectiveness. Moreover, they were eager to understand how they could personally support these organizations and explore strategies to scale up these efforts to reach more victims and enhance the overall impact of anti-trafficking initiatives. Following the visit, many judges reported feeling more informed and optimistic about the experience, noting a significant increase in their understanding of the complexities of combating human trafficking.

### **AMERICA'S ROAD TEAM: PERSPECTIVE FOR JUDGES HANDLING CDL CASES – INADALY, EMILY PLUMMER**

#### **Trucking Inspection Experience**

During the session, two experienced truckers provided judges with a firsthand look at the complexities of a commercial trucking inspection. This hands-on demonstration offered the judges a thorough understanding of the inspection process, emphasizing the importance of ensuring trucks comply with strict safety regulations. The truckers explained that inspections cover various aspects of the vehicle, including the condition of the tires, brakes, and the securement of the transported load. They also shed light on the complexities of smuggling, explaining how goods and people can be transported illegally using semi-trucks.

The truckers further discussed the different rules and regulations that carriers impose regarding passengers in commercial trucks. Most carriers require passengers to be reported and documented, and law enforcement can verify passenger authorization with the carrier during inspection. Understanding these rules allows law enforcement to ensure that passengers are properly accounted for, contributing to the overall safety and legality of commercial trucking operations.

#### **Cultural and Legal Insights**

The session also explored the cultural aspects of the trucking industry, specifically its connection to commercial sex and human sex trafficking. The truckers shared their insights into the prevalence of sex trafficking at certain truck stops, which have become known as hubs for illegal activities. While some of these actions are visible to fellow truckers, many remain hidden, making detection difficult for law enforcement and other drivers.

An important legal complication is that truck stops are private property, which limits law enforcement's ability to question truckers or investigate without permission. The truckers

emphasized the vital role that fellow drivers can play in spotting and reporting trafficking, given their frequent presence at high-risk locations like rest areas and truck stops.

The truckers also highlighted the work of TAT, which now includes diverse groups that extend beyond truckers and is a key organization in the fight against human trafficking. TAT trains truckers to recognize signs of trafficking and report suspicious activity. The truckers explained how TAT has raised awareness within the industry, leading to numerous cases of trafficking being reported by truck drivers. By illustrating the trucking industry's role in combating trafficking, the truckers stressed the need for broader societal involvement in addressing this serious issue.

### **Safety and Driving Regulations**

Another session's primary focus was safe driving practices and the specific challenges truckers face on the road. The truckers discussed the importance of abiding by Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations, emphasizing how it reduces traffic accidents and keeps the road safer. The truckers, who had multi-million accident-free miles on their records, talked about how bad drivers can ruin the reputation of all truckers and how removing them from the industry is essential. They noted that masking violations leave harmful and dangerous drivers on the road, underscoring the need for strict enforcement of safety regulations to prevent such issues.

To help the judges better understand the physical limitations of commercial vehicles, the session included a demonstration of blind spots and safe stopping distances. The truckers explained that the size and weight of semi-trucks make it difficult to stop quickly, especially at high speeds or in poor weather. They also demonstrated the blind spots—areas around the truck that are hard for the driver to see—which significantly increase the risk of crashes if other drivers are unaware of them. By experiencing these limitations firsthand, the judges gained valuable insights into how these factors affect driving behavior and decision-making, providing important context for future cases involving truck crashes or violations.

Participants, especially traffic court judges, expressed a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by truck drivers during traffic stops and vehicle inspections. They also observed how concealing items and people in a large commercial vehicle was relatively easy, further appreciating the role of commercial drivers in combating human trafficking. Many judges reported feeling more informed and better equipped to share the road safely with truck drivers, having gained a greater awareness of blind spots, stopping distances, and the unique responsibilities of commercial drivers.

## **SURVIVOR PANEL – JILL TOLLES**

### **Survivor Panel Overview**

Moderated by Jill Tolles, the Survivor Panel featured two survivors of human trafficking who shared their personal experiences of victimization with the group. The panel aimed to give the survivors a platform to express their frustrations with the justice system in relation to how it handles trafficking cases. They posed thought-provoking questions to the group, challenging the norms surrounding the treatment of both victims and traffickers within society and the legal system.

### **Key Themes from the Survivor Panel**

#### ***Disparities in Punishment***

A major frustration voiced by the survivors was the disparity in sentencing between trafficking victims and their traffickers. In some cases, victims end up serving more time than those who trafficked them. This injustice emerged as a central issue, and the survivors emphasized that traffickers should not be allowed to enter into plea deals which reduce, amend or dismiss charges without victim input. They argued that traffickers should face harsher penalties and should not have their criminal records sealed or expunged due to the fact that their actions have lasting impacts on the victims' lives.

#### ***Frustration with Buyer Accountability***

The survivors expressed profound anger about how buyers—the individuals who exploit trafficking victims (i.e. “Johns” in sex trafficking cases)—are often able to return to their everyday lives without any meaningful punishment. One survivor highlighted the hypocrisy of a buyer justifying his actions by saying, “She’s just a prostitute” while going home to his wife at night. The survivors questioned why society allows these men to hide their actions and escape meaningful consequences for abusing women and children. The survivors called attention to the link between pedophilia and trafficking, particularly when buyers exploit minors.

This discussion raised broader questions about the cultural acceptance of men objectifying women and children. The survivors expressed frustration that men receive little more than a “slap on the wrist” and are permitted to continue living their lives despite the fact that they have brutalized others.

#### ***Cultural Criticism and Societal Norms***

The survivors raised concerns about the way society normalizes and perpetuates the objectification of women. They questioned the legitimacy of legal industries such as pornography, stripping, and prostitution and how these contribute to a culture that devalues women and teaches men that it's acceptable to exploit women and children. One

survivor stated, “If you cosign a little bit, you cosign everything,” emphasizing that tolerating any level of exploitation allows it to persist at all levels.

The survivors also noted the absence of rehabilitation programs to help buyers and traffickers change their behavior, which could address the root causes of exploitation. The panel called for a deeper reflection on the role of the media and societal attitudes in shaping men’s views of women and perpetuating these cycles of abuse.

### ***Testifying and Confidentiality Issues***

A major concern raised by the survivors was the lack of confidential mechanisms to testify against traffickers. Many victims are reluctant to come forward due to the overwhelming shame they feel and the fear of retribution from traffickers and their associates. The survivors noted that the legal system often claims to support victims but is woefully inadequate in providing the necessary protection or assistance to face these real dangers that arise from cooperating with criminal prosecution of a trafficker.

The fear of being targeted for testifying, both by the trafficker and their family or friends, creates additional trauma for survivors. One survivor shared that despite the system claiming to be “for you,” it doesn’t help with the real emotional and physical threats victims face in court.

### ***Struggle for Normalcy***

The panel closed with a poignant reflection on the desire for normalcy. One survivor described feeling alienated from everyday life and questioning why they could not just be like other people. For this survivor, it was a miracle even to reach the point of asking for help, highlighting the immense barriers—both internal and external—that trafficking survivors face in seeking justice and healing.

## Appendix III: Facilitated Breakout Sessions

The Human Trafficking Judicial Leadership Program and CDL Public Awareness Campaign included a series of facilitated breakout sessions designed to encourage in-depth exploration of key challenges and solutions related to human trafficking cases within the judiciary. These sessions allowed participants to engage in focused discussions on specific topics, leveraging their expertise and perspectives to generate actionable strategies for handling trafficking cases more effectively.

Each breakout group centered on a critical area impacting judicial responses to trafficking, including legal compliance, bias reduction, community partnership building, and trauma-informed practices. Guided by experienced facilitators, participants collaborated to identify barriers, share best practices, and propose solutions that address the unique complexities of trafficking cases.

The breakout sessions provided an opportunity for judges to actively engage with their peers, fostering a collaborative environment where ideas could be exchanged, and innovative approaches could be developed. These sessions were instrumental in helping participants translate program insights into practical, real-world applications for their courtrooms and communities, ultimately advancing a more consistent, compassionate judicial approach to human trafficking.

### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?: CREATING AN EFFECTIVE OUTREACH PLAN AND CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MASKING BREAKOUT GROUPS**

The ultimate purpose of the breakout groups was to encourage participants to critically examine the materials they were given throughout the course and synthesize them into actionable plans. Participants rotated between each breakout group and could ask questions about the materials or pose other questions directed at a specific presenter. Participants reported that this process allowed them to better conceptualize how they would utilize the information from the conference in their daily lives. The goal of this exercise was to move from learning to actionable implementation.

#### **Discovering and Utilizing Resources in Your Local Community**

This breakout group aimed to help judges identify and access resources within their communities to develop programs combating human trafficking in their jurisdictions. Moderated by Judge Williams-Byers, this section focused on identifying challenges and actionable steps. Critical themes during this breakout session were resource development and awareness, community and professional training, collaboration and partnerships, and challenges and solutions.

## **Resource Development and Awareness**

The groups emphasized the importance of raising awareness about human trafficking through community engagement. Suggested strategies included op-ed news segments, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with location organizations like chambers of commerce, health departments, and educational institutions. Strategies also included the creation and distribution of resources to larger communities by getting buy-in from various sectors such as education, law enforcement, and local businesses. Partnerships with universities, student organizations, and local colleges were highlighted as effective avenues for developing resources and training individuals to advocate and spread awareness about human trafficking.

## **Community and Professional Training**

The groups underscored the need for ongoing, multidisciplinary training for professionals, including judges, attorneys, clerks, law enforcement, and social services. Annual training programs—such as those with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)—were recommended to teach empathy and other fundamental skills. Participants also discussed the need for specialized training in grant writing to secure funding for these initiatives.

## **Collaboration and Partnerships**

Various partnerships were suggested, including those with child welfare agencies, bar associations, and faith-based organizations. Specific examples include a community-wide lunch and learn, the Washington Defenders Association (WDA), and Friends of Sexual Assault Survivors (FOSA). Some groups also recommended building relationships with media outlets to improve public understanding and trust regarding human trafficking issues.

## **Challenges and Solutions**

Resource scarcity, particularly for adult victims, was noted as a significant challenge. Participants emphasized the need for improved data tracking to better inform resource allocation. Suggestions include leveraging existing networks to identify funding opportunities and working to shift public attitudes toward trafficking victims through engagement with churches, universities, and social services.

## **TRAINING COLLEAGUES AND STAFF TO RECOGNIZE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

This breakout group was designed to help educate participants on the signs of human trafficking. Moderated by Aaron Ann Cole-Funfsinn, Esq., this section focused on empowering judges to identify and address human trafficking. Key themes that emerged during this breakout session were judicial awareness and action, community and legal



education, tools and resources, legal and systematic considerations, and bias and perception.

### **Judicial Awareness and Action**

Participants discussed the importance of asking more detailed questions in court to uncover potential human trafficking situations. This includes considering dual tracks (administrative and criminal) for addressing CDL disqualifications related to trafficking. Judges need to be informed about the implications of license disqualifications and the importance of applying these at sentencing for other offenses. There was also discussion about the threshold for judges to deny motions to dismiss charges and the importance of not overlooking potential trafficking cases.

### **Community and Legal Education**

Engaging community groups, such as Kiwanis clubs, to raise awareness about human trafficking was suggested as a valuable strategy. Judges and lawyers could benefit from regular presentations on human trafficking, similar to HEAT team initiatives. Timing these educational efforts to coincide with local events could make the issue more relevant to the community.

### **Tools and Resources**

Developing a checklist or scorecard was proposed to help judges, law enforcement, and probation officers identify potential trafficking situations and mitigate bias. This tool could be used to standardize the identification process and ensure consistency across cases. Emphasis was also placed on sharing existing training resources and ensuring continuity in anti-trafficking efforts, particularly when trained personnel transition to other roles.

### **Legal and Systemic Considerations**

Participants recognized the coercive nature of human trafficking, particularly how traffickers manipulate the legal system to protect themselves. Strategies to counteract this, such as fostering collaboration with prosecutors, were discussed. Additionally, understanding the visa program for trafficked individuals was noted as important for providing support and protection to victims.

### **Bias and Perception**

The need for bias training, especially in the context of viewing trafficking as a “victimless crime,” was highlighted. Ensuring that all professionals involved in trafficking cases are aware of the signs and nuances of trafficking is essential. The importance of recognizing inflection points in cases—pivotal moments where different decisions could lead to better outcomes—was also discussed as a key area for judicial education.

## **PILOTING ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING FOR NON-MASKING OFFENSES**

### **Involvement of Key Stakeholders**

The breakout session emphasized the need for key stakeholders, including probation officers and the Department of Corrections (DOC), to be integral participants in combating human trafficking. Additionally, leaders of key policy-making agencies, including the DOC, Department of Transportation (DOT), mental health, and aging departments, were identified as critical players due to their interaction with vulnerable populations.

### **Alternative Sentencing Approaches**

A major focus was placed on the use of alternative sentencing, particularly therapeutic approaches for cases involving drug addiction, mental health issues, and family services. Participants suggested convening judicial panels to discuss current alternative sentencing options, including specialized dockets such as drug and mental health courts and dockets designed for sex offenders. Furthermore, partnerships between court community service and CDL/trucking schools were proposed. The session also underscored the need for continuous training for judges, prosecutors, and public defenders, emphasizing improving pre-sentence evaluations and Presentence Investigations (PSI) reports to ensure the needs of victims and defendants are fully considered.

### **Education and Training**

Comprehensive education and training were essential for all legal and enforcement professionals involved in trafficking cases. The session discussed the importance of incorporating human trafficking topics in regular training for judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and law enforcement. Additionally, specialized training was recommended for mental health professionals conducting evaluations of traffickers and buyers.

### **Victim Support and Restorative Justice**

Supporting victims through restitution and restorative justice was a primary concern. The group discussed the importance of collaborating with the DOC (Department of Corrections) and prosecutors to ensure that victims are properly compensated for losses via court restitution orders related to damages. Additionally, close cooperation between prosecutors and public defenders was emphasized as vital for pretrial release programs to effectively support both defendants and victims. The group also proposed creating options for expungement courts to provide relief for victims seeking a fresh start. Expanding community partnerships, particularly faith-based organizations and local shelters, was suggested to enhance support systems for survivors.

## **Traffickers and Buyers: Sentencing and Rehabilitation**

The group engaged in extensive discussion on addressing traffickers and buyers, particularly regarding sentencing and rehabilitation. Strict probation conditions were recommended, such as GPS tracking, no contact orders, and restrictions on access to locations where victims are vulnerable, like parks or movie theaters. The session stressed the importance of registering those involved in trafficking minors as sex offenders and enforcing mandatory sentences for buyers of minors. There was debate over whether “Johns” could be rehabilitated, with some participants arguing that arrest alone might serve as a deterrent, while others expressed skepticism about rehabilitation, especially in cases involving pedophilia or deeply rooted behaviors.

## **Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment**

The session emphasized the importance of providing comprehensive mental health and substance use treatment to both traffickers and buyers. Participants agreed that mental health professionals conducting evaluations require specialized training to make accurate recommendations. The group favored a “soft handoff” approaches for substance use treatment, allowing individuals to transition from treatment to supervision with minimal disruption. However, strict consequences for treatment violations were recommended, including re-arrest and jail time for non-compliance.

## **Family and Juvenile Support**

Support for families and juveniles was a significant focus of the session. Participants suggested creating comprehensive alternative sentencing programs for families, which would include services such as parenting training, financial management assistance, and supervised visitation. For juveniles, particularly runaways involved in trafficking, the importance of local law enforcement and non-profits in deterrence efforts was emphasized. These organizations could play a vital role in prevention and treatment, ensuring that juveniles receive the necessary support to avoid re-victimization.

## **ACTION PLAN TO MITIGATE BLIND SPOTS**

### **Understanding Bias and Misconceptions**

The session began by highlighting the widespread myths and misconceptions surrounding human trafficking victims, such as labeling them as “bad people,” “criminals,” or assuming they chose that lifestyle. These biases significantly impact how victims are perceived and treated, often resulting in victim blaming. For example, trafficked individuals are sometimes incorrectly judged as being complicit in their situation due to stereotypes about prostitution, drug addiction, or immigration status.

The session also emphasized the importance of recognizing that trafficking victims are not criminals but are coerced and exploited. Harmful stereotypes—such as assuming personal responsibility for their victimization—diminish empathy and sensitivity toward their situation. This contributes to increased moral blame and a decrease in providing necessary support to victims.

### **Bias Blind Spots and How to Address Them**

Another key point centered on bias blind spots—the psychological processes that lead people to form judgments based on subconscious biases without being fully aware of them. The discussion explored how systematic errors in perception and attribution lead to biased decision-making, particularly in legal contexts where objective judgment is crucial. Participants noted that biases persist because people are not always aware of what influences their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Recognizing the existence of these biases, even in well-intentioned individuals, is the first step toward mitigating them.

### **Techniques for Reducing Bias**

Several strategies were discussed to help judges and legal professionals overcome bias, particularly when handling cases of human trafficking. When biased thoughts or behaviors are noticed, individuals are encouraged to label them as such and then replace stereotypical responses with more individualized assessments. This approach involves actively avoiding assumptions based on race, gender, or class and focusing on the unique circumstances of each person involved. Legal professionals are urged to focus on the individual characteristics of people rather than categorizing them based on generalized group assumptions, promoting a deeper understanding of each person's unique background and context. Encouraging judges and other legal practitioners to put themselves in the shoes of trafficking victims helps foster empathy and a more nuanced understanding of their experiences.

### **Breaking the Bias Habit**

The final part of the session discussed the *Breaking the Bias Habit* model, a process designed to recognize and reduce bias in decision-making. This model involves moments where bias may influence decisions, labeling biased thoughts and actions, actively working to control and reduce the impact of bias in decision-making, continuously monitoring personal biases through feedback, and adopting practices that help prevent future biased decisions.

In conclusion, the groups discussed how critical it is to recognize and mitigate bias in legal settings, especially when dealing with vulnerable populations like human trafficking victims. By implementing these strategies, legal professionals can improve fairness and ensure that the needs and rights of victims are better understood and protected.

## Appendix IV: The Story of Steven Bolden and Susan Oliver

U.S. v Bell, 761 F.3d 900 (8th Cir. 2014)

Susan meets Steven: Steve Bolden met Susan Oliver in a bar in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on a summer evening in 2016. Susan was sitting at the bar when Steve walked in and sat down next to her. After a few drinks Steve started telling Susan all about his troubles. He claimed that he was lonely and in the process of divorcing his wife. Susan listened sympathetically and tried to comfort him. She told him a great deal about herself and especially how much she hated her bank job. The two got together several times after their meeting at the bar and before long were involved in an intimate relationship. The relationship paused for a short while (5 weeks) during which time Susan went on a trip to visit her family. Susan had enjoyed a stable and healthy family life. When the relationship resumed Susan spent a great deal of time with Steve thinking that they were becoming a closely-knit couple.

Susan goes to work for Steven: Several weeks into the renewed relationship, Steve told Susan that in the long run he wanted to take care of her, eventually get married and have children with her. Steve explained that in the short run, he wanted to take Susan away from the job that she hated and said that he could do that if she was willing to work for him having sex occasionally with other men for money. Steve promised to take care of everything and give her everything she wanted and needed. Susan believed Steve and engaged in sexual acts with other men, giving up all the money she earned to Steve who took care of all her needs. Steve took Susan on trips up and down the east coast acting as both her manager and as her boyfriend. The two continued their relationship and as it deepened Susan grew dependent upon Steve for food, shelter and all her other needs. During this time Susan earned over \$50,000 for Steve working for him in the commercial sex trade. Steve advertised Susan on local webpages and arranged for her to meet men and have sex for money.

Steve became more and more controlling and told Susan that she couldn't talk to any other men beside the ones that he had arranged for her to service. Before long Susan grew tired of the arrangement and began to verbally "smart off" to Steve. When she did so Steve hit Susan and demanded that she treat him with the respect that he deserved. Once when Susan complained that she did not want to be with men at truck stops, Steve made her strip down and hit her with his belt. After that Susan went to visit the men that Steve had arranged for her to see at the truck stops because she didn't want to get hit any more.

Steven starts a relationship with Mary: About this time, Steve started to see another woman, Mary and initiated an intimate relationship with her as well. Mary had been involved in the commercial sex trade voluntarily before she had met Steve. He made the same promises to her that he had made to Susan. He told Mary that he only wanted to be with her but that he first needed her to make money for him by engaging in sex acts with

a few other men, for money. Mary travelled with Steve to several east coast cities in different states to earn money for him. During this time, Steve continued his relationship with Susan. Steve told Mary that this would only be for a short time and then she could stop at which time he would only be with her and she wouldn't have to engage in sex for money anymore. When Susan found out about Mary, she was furious. She and Steve got into a verbal fight over Mary at which time Susan threatened to call the police on him. Steve slapped Susan around and told her that if she ever called the police on him, he would kill her family including her young child.

The police investigation: At this point Susan and Mary decided to leave Steve and ran away to try to live on their own. Susan found it very difficult to be without Steve, she missed him, and eventually came back asking for his forgiveness and promising never to run away again. Shortly after this happened Steve arranged for Susan to engage in sex for money at a local hotel in a small town in Maryland. Steve had advertised the Susan on a website known for finding women for commercial sex. Steve drove Susan to the hotel but were surprised by police officers instead of customers. The police officers had set up a sting operation using the website, which Steve used for advertising women.

The police arrested Steve and detained Susan for questioning. The police learned a great deal about Susan. First, they learned that Susan grew up in a middle-class neighborhood outside of Chicago where she had graduated from high school and college. Her parents were teachers who had provided a wholesome and financially stable home life for their two daughters, Susan and her younger sister Amy. After graduation from college Susan worked as a bank teller in her home town establishing herself as a stable young adult. One day she decided to leave her home town to take a bank job in Pittsburgh that she learned about through a friend who she worked with in her hometown bank.

The police also learned that when Susan arrived in Pittsburgh, she found out that the new job fell through and she was flat broke. She hung out with friends at local bars and was desperate for money. She fell in with some women who encouraged her to join them in occasionally engaging in sex for money. Eventually she too sold herself sexually to make money.

The end of the story: Susan was desolate when the police arrested Steve. She had no job and was desperate.”



## Appendix V: State-Specific Exercise Empathy Exercise Results and Recommendations

Human trafficking cases present emotionally and psychologically complex challenges for judges and legal professionals. Judicial decisions often shape the lives of trafficking survivors, yet many judges struggle to fully understand victims' lived experiences. Without this understanding, decision-making may inadvertently retraumatize victims, misinterpret their actions, or fail to recognize the coercion and trauma at play.

To address this critical empathy gap, we developed an innovative empathy exercise designed to immerse judges in the realities of trafficking victims' experiences. Using an interactive "choose your own adventure" format, participants navigated the difficult choices faced by Maria, a 16-year-old trafficking victim based on a real case. This exercise allowed judges to step into Maria's shoes, grappling with the psychological toll, survival instincts, and deep-seated mistrust of authority that often drive trafficking victims' decisions.

### Empathy Exercise Overview

The empathy exercise was structured to replicate the chaotic and distressing experiences of trafficking victims. Participants navigated 16 decision points, each represented by a physical station, to simulate Maria's journey (See Appendix VI for decision point one). Choices at each station determined Maria's outcomes, leading to one of four possible endings. The arrangement of the stations was intentional disordered, mirroring the confusion and frustration often faced by victims.

To provide a dual perspective, participants completed the exercise twice:

1. Victim's Perspective: Making decisions as they believed Maria would, considering her circumstances.
2. Personal Perspective: Making choices they would personally select if in Maria's position.

The exercise concluded with a facilitated debrief session, where participants reflected on their experiences, emotions, and insights.

### Pilot Testing and Expansion

To ensure its effectiveness and gather real-world feedback, we piloted the exercise three times across three states—South Carolina, Montana, and Nevada—working with 150 judges from diverse backgrounds. These pilots provided invaluable insights that helped refine the exercise and evaluate its impact. The feedback gathered from these sessions confirmed our hypothesis that a notable empathy gap exists in the legal system regarding the trauma and decisions faced by trafficking victims. Importantly, judges reported that

the empathy exercise deepened their understanding of victims' experiences, fostering greater sensitivity and consideration in their judicial decision-making.

A multi-phase research approach was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the empathy exercise in judicial training. Initially, a qualitative pilot study was carried out in Nevada, where judges engaged in the empathy exercise and offered detailed feedback on their experiences. This preliminary study enabled researchers to refine the structure and content of the exercise based on participants' insights.

Following the qualitative phase, quantitative follow-up studies were completed in Montana and South Carolina to systematically evaluate the exercise's impact. These studies utilized pre- and post-course surveys to measure changes in judicial awareness, understanding of human trafficking, and perceived ability to effect change in trafficking cases. The findings from these pilots substantiated the effectiveness of the empathy exercise and provided essential data for its continued development and expansion.

### **Instructional Approach Across States**

The educational components of the empathy exercise varied across the three pilot locations:

**Nevada:** The training in Nevada was distinctly different, as it took place during the four-day Human Trafficking Leadership Conference and CDL Public Awareness Campaign. Unlike the other locations, this session was designed for a national audience, incorporating in-depth discussions on federal policy, interagency collaboration, and judicial strategies for handling trafficking cases. Over the course of four days, a small group of judges received a detailed and immersive education on the empathy exercise, allowing for deeper engagement and discussion.

**South Carolina & Montana:** In these states, judges participated in a structured training session covering the realities of human trafficking, including global and domestic trends, victim demographics, key indicators, and the economic and systemic factors driving trafficking. Following this overview, judges engaged in the empathy exercise, which guided them through Maria's story, allowing them to experience the complex and difficult choices faced by trafficking victims. The training lasted two hours—one hour dedicated to a human trafficking overview and one hour for the empathy exercise and debriefing.

### **Nevada Results (n = 15)**

Conducted with 15 judges at the National Judicial College's Human Trafficking Leadership Conference, the exercise was preceded by an educational briefing that explored the realities of human trafficking, including common victim profiles, key trafficking indicators, and the economic forces sustaining the crime.

Key findings from the study indicated:

- A 33.8% increase in judges who felt well-informed about human trafficking post-exercise.
- A 13.1% increase in judges recognizing that trafficking victims likely appeared before them without their knowledge.
- A 17.1% increase in judges' belief that they could make a difference in trafficking cases.

### Participant Debrief Reflections

The extensive debrief sessions conducted after each exercise provided profound insights into participants' experiences and takeaways, emphasizing the exercise's significant impact on their understanding of trafficking victims' complex realities. These discussions were essential in helping participants process the emotional and intellectual challenges they faced during the activity and uncover the key lessons they learned.

The debrief emphasized the importance of thoughtful judicial inquiry in trafficking cases. Judges often lack full access to a victim's background and motivations, which makes it crucial to ask deeper, more nuanced questions in court. Participants grappled with the ethical challenges of uncovering critical information while respecting a victim's autonomy and avoiding retraumatization. This led to recognizing the need to foster a courtroom environment where victims feel safe sharing their experiences, even if it requires persistent and empathetic questioning.

### Key Insights from the Debrief:

- **Confronting Blind Spots in Judicial Decision-Making:** Participants recognized that their own preconceptions could shape how they interpret victim behavior, highlighting the importance of self-reflection in judicial practice.
  - *"This exercise was eye-opening; understanding Maria's choices required us to confront the limits of our own judgments and biases."*
- **Recognizing Victim Mistrust of Authority:** Judges gained a deeper understanding of how victims' decisions are often shaped by survival instincts rather than a lack of cooperation, reinforcing the need for sensitivity and patience in judicial interactions.
  - *"I hadn't realized how mistrust of authority is often ingrained in victims, making their choices more about survival than we might initially assume."*
- **Commitment to Trauma-Informed Inquiry:** Participants emphasized the importance of asking deeper, more nuanced questions to uncover the full context of a victim's experience, rather than relying on superficial narratives.
  - *"This experience reminded me how vital it is to understand not just what victims are saying but what they're not sharing, often out of fear or trauma."*

### Montana Results (n = 86)

Quantitative data from 86 judges provided key insights into the effectiveness of the empathy exercise. The survey data indicated statistically significant improvements in participants' perceptions and understanding of trafficking victims.

Key findings from the study indicated:

- A 34.8% increase in judges who felt well-informed about human trafficking post-exercise.
- A 5% increase in judges recognizing that trafficking victims likely appeared before them without their knowledge.
- A 2.9% increase in judges' belief that they could make a difference in trafficking cases.

Challenges to empathy clustered around the following themes:

**1. Lack of Personal Experience:** Many participants found it difficult to relate to Maria's situation due to a lack of personal exposure to similar circumstances.

- *"Foreign concept"*
- *"Never been in this situation"*
- *"Unable to relate to her situation"*
- *"I've never been in that situation"*
- *"I have never been in a position like that; I have a solid support system and can't imagine making choices like that."*

**2. Empathy and Effort to Understand:** Some participants made an effort to empathize, despite the challenges.

- *"Difficult to put yourself in someone else's shoes"*
- *"I have met people like her and understand this happens"*
- *"No understanding of any of this lifestyle"*

**3. Professional Background Knowledge:** Participants with a professional background related to law enforcement or exposure to similar cases shared insights but still faced challenges in fully empathizing.

- *"In my former life, as law enforcement, I have seen interactions that Maria had with Robert."*
- *"I don't have this experience. But I would be scared"*
- *"Limited overlap of life experience"*
- *"Personal youth experiences"*
- *"Grew up in a living environment and didn't have to experience this"*

### South Carolina Results (n = 49)

Conducted with approximately 49 judges, the exercise was preceded by a briefing on the realities of human trafficking, including common victim profiles, trafficking indicators, and the economic factors driving the crime. Participants then navigated Maria's story by moving through decision stations placed around the room, each presenting difficult choices faced by trafficking victims.

Key findings from the study indicated:

- A 14.3% increase in judges who felt well-informed about human trafficking post-exercise.
- An 11.1% increase in judges recognizing that trafficking victims likely appeared before them without their knowledge.
- A 9.2% increase in judges' belief that they could make a difference in trafficking cases.

Challenges to empathy clustered around the following themes:

1. Lack of Personal Experience: Many participants had never encountered situations similar to Maria's, making it difficult for them to relate to her choices and circumstances.

- *"Never experienced anything like it."*
- *"I have never been exposed to anything like her situation."*

2. Perceived Personal Agency: Some judges viewed themselves as capable and self-reliant, which made it difficult for them to understand Maria's sense of helplessness.

- *"Not a sense of helplessness like Maria."*
- *"Because I know how the legal system works and would not be afraid."*

3. Disconnection from Maria's Reality: Participants with vastly different upbringings or environments struggled to imagine themselves in her position.

- *"Because I've never been put in any of her life situations and I am not even sure if I know anyone personally that has."*
- *"I can't imagine having to be brought up in that type of environment."*

4. Difficulty Processing Trauma: Some judges found it challenging to comprehend the level of trauma Maria endured, making it harder to empathize with her decisions.

- *"Hard to imagine someone dealing with so much trauma."*

## Why This Empathy Exercise Matters

The empathy exercise is not just a training tool—it's a critical intervention aimed at addressing a significant gap in how human trafficking victims are understood and treated in the legal system. For too long, legal professionals have been making decisions based on limited knowledge or understanding of the complex, often traumatic experiences that trafficking victims endure. This has caused victims, who are often treated as mere subjects of legal procedures, to feel unseen and unheard. This empathy gap has profound consequences, influencing everything from sentencing to how victims are treated by law enforcement and in the courtroom.

This exercise directly targets this gap by placing legal professionals in the shoes of trafficking victims, allowing them to experience firsthand the psychological, emotional, and situational constraints that victims face. By immersing judges, prosecutors, and other legal professionals in realistic scenarios where they must make decisions based on the victim's perspective, the exercise encourages participants to see the world through the eyes of those they are tasked with serving. The varying levels of empathy observed in participants, as reflected in our survey results, prove the existence of this empathy gap—showing that, while some judges and legal professionals can easily connect with the trauma of trafficking victims, others struggle to fully appreciate the complexity of victims' choices.

Moreover, within the studies, the exercise has proven to be effective in bridging this gap. Participants who engaged with the scenarios showed greater insight into the factors influencing victims' decisions and were better able to understand how important it is to approach these cases with compassion and careful inquiry. This deeper understanding helps shift the mindset from a rigid legal framework to one that considers the emotional, psychological, and social context of the victim's life. The feedback from participants emphasizes how the exercise enhances empathy, providing participants with a more holistic view of trafficking cases that moves beyond the surface-level facts and into the personal experiences that shape a victim's actions.

This matters because empathy in judicial decision-making is not just a luxury—it's a necessity. Judges who understand the psychological and emotional weight of trafficking can make decisions that are more compassionate, thoughtful, and effective. They are more likely to implement trauma-informed practices, ensure that victims' voices are heard, and issue restitution orders that reflect the tangible losses victims have suffered. The exercise fosters a shift from viewing victims as cases or statistics to seeing them as individuals with complex stories, which ultimately leads to better outcomes for both victims and the justice system.

## Lessons Learned

The study also highlighted areas for further exploration, including ways to encourage judges with relatable personal experiences to share their insights in training sessions and



whether supplemental education on psychological coercion could help those who struggled to relate to Maria's experience.

The exercise also highlighted areas for further improvement. Some judges expressed difficulty in fully empathizing with Maria, which underscores the need for the exercise to be refined and expanded. In response, we propose broadening the scope of the exercise to include a diverse range of victims and types of trafficking, such as labor trafficking and familial trafficking. By providing a more comprehensive set of scenarios, we can help judges develop a fuller understanding of the wide variety of experiences trafficking victims face.

### Next Steps

Building on the success of this exercise, we are moving forward with the next phase of development, which will focus on expanding its scope and accessibility to reach a broader audience and provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the experiences of trafficking victims. Our key steps include:

- 1. Designing Scenarios for a Wider Range of Trafficking Situations**  
The current exercise primarily focuses on sex trafficking, but future iterations will expand to include labor trafficking, familial trafficking, and international trafficking. Each of these forms of exploitation presents unique challenges, and incorporating diverse scenarios will help judges and legal professionals better understand the complexities of trafficking cases.
- 2. Creating Exercises Featuring Victims from Diverse Demographics**  
To reflect the full scope of human trafficking, we will include victim profiles that vary by age, race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. By highlighting the different ways trafficking affects diverse populations, we aim to eliminate biases and stereotypes that may influence judicial decision-making and foster a more equitable legal process.
- 3. Incorporating Technology through a Mobile or Web-Based Application**  
To make the empathy exercise more accessible and scalable, we will develop a mobile or web-based application that allows judges and legal professionals to engage with the exercise anytime, anywhere. This digital platform will include progress tracking, personalized feedback, and interactive decision-making features to enhance engagement and learning.
- 4. Incorporating Feedback and Iteration**  
Ongoing feedback will be critical as we expand and refine the exercise. We will conduct regular assessments through surveys, focus groups, and user interviews to measure the exercise's impact and identify areas for improvement. This process will ensure that future versions remain relevant, engaging, and effective in enhancing judicial understanding of trafficking cases.
- 5. Partnerships for Expansion**  
To maximize the reach and impact of the exercise, we will seek partnerships with judicial training programs, legal organizations, and universities. By integrating the

exercise into formal training curricula and professional development courses, we can ensure that it becomes a standard resource for legal professionals handling trafficking cases.

By expanding the scope of the exercise, leveraging technology, and integrating user feedback, we will create a transformative and scalable tool that equips legal professionals with the knowledge and empathy needed to make more informed decisions. With the support of key stakeholders and funding partners, this initiative will help judges and legal professionals not only understand but truly empathize with trafficking survivors, ultimately contributing to a more just and compassionate legal system.

### **Empathy Exercise Conclusion**

The empathy exercise provided judges with a unique and transformative opportunity to step into the shoes of a trafficking victim, fostering a deeper understanding of the psychological, emotional, and situational complexities that shape victims' choices. Through immersive decision-making, participants gained firsthand insight into the trauma, survival instincts, and systemic barriers that often define a trafficking victim's experience. The exercise challenged participants to reconsider assumptions, confront biases, and reflect on the role of judicial decision-making in trafficking cases.

Findings from the Nevada, South Carolina, and Montana pilot studies demonstrate that the exercise is not only effective in increasing judicial awareness and sensitivity but also highlights the empathy gap that exists when judges are unfamiliar with the lived experiences of trafficking victims. Judges who participated in the exercise reported significant increases in their understanding of trafficking, their recognition of victims in their courts, and their confidence in making a difference in trafficking cases. At the same time, the exercise revealed key challenges in judicial empathy, emphasizing the need for expanded training, diverse victim narratives, and trauma-informed judicial practices.

As the empathy exercise continues to evolve, its impact will extend beyond individual training sessions. By refining and expanding the exercise—including broadening its scope to cover labor and familial trafficking, incorporating diverse victim demographics, and developing a scalable digital platform—this initiative will ensure that more legal professionals have access to critical training that deepens their understanding and enhances their ability to respond effectively to trafficking cases.

This project serves as a powerful reminder of the judiciary's responsibility to approach trafficking cases with sensitivity, compassion, and a commitment to uncovering the broader truths that shape victims' lives. By reimagining perspectives and fostering judicial empathy, legal professionals can contribute to a more just, informed, and trauma-responsive legal system, ensuring that trafficking survivors are treated with the dignity and understanding they deserve.

## Appendix VI: Empathy Exercise Decision Point One

*Content Warning: Description of violence and human sex trafficking involving a minor.*

### **Station 1: Background of Maria. (GROUP ALL TOGETHER)**

Even before Maria was trafficked by Robert, no one could say she had an easy life. Her father was convicted of murder when she was very young and was serving a life sentence in prison. Maria's mother was an alcoholic who could never drink enough Crown Royal. Maria ended up living with her elderly grandmother because she didn't have a stable home environment. As a young teenager, Maria started using drugs after selling herself for sex to buy clothes and makeup that her grandmother couldn't afford. She really didn't like cocaine, but it numbed her and disconnected her from her reality of having sex with strangers. She was excessively truant and absent from school and ultimately dropped out during her sophomore year.

Maria started running away at the age of 16. She started hanging out with an older group of guys, and really clicked with one, Robert. He had a real job as a semi-truck driver. He was 34 years old and could take good care of her. Maria thought she was in love. He was the first person to make her feel safe in a long time.

It was a normal relationship at first. Robert told Maria he loved her, and he called her "beautiful." He bought her everything she wanted, even a puppy, which her grandmother never allowed her to have. Maria named the puppy "Rosie" and loved it more than anything else in the world. Sometimes Robert would lose his temper. He didn't like other men staring at Maria, and money was a little tight sometimes. But Maria had Rosie and Robert, and for the first time in a long time she felt like she had a real family.

Maria moved in with Robert to save money. Things were still going well. Then one day Robert suggested Maria could help with rent and fuel for his semi by "doing what she used to do." When Maria said she didn't want to have sex for money anymore, Robert grabbed her by the throat and threw her against a wall. When she ran, he tried to hit her with his car.

For months, Robert drove Maria and Rosie to truck stops and rest stops in his semi-truck. Men bought Maria for sex over and over again, paying \$25 or \$30 each time, and Robert kept the money. Sometimes the buyers are violent with Maria, and Robert doesn't try to protect her. Once Maria thought a buyer had broken her arm. Robert twisted that arm and told her to get her ass to the next truck. Maria tried to run away again, but this time Robert held onto Rosie and threatened to break her tiny neck if Maria even thought about leaving again. That's when Maria stopped trying to run.

Eventually both Robert and Maria are arrested at a truck stop. Maria is arrested for prostitution and Robert is arrested after a truck driver sees him punching Maria in the face and chest. Both are taken to jail. For the first time in a long time, Maria is separated from Robert.

**First Choice:**

- Does Maria ask for a public defender and try to fight the prostitution charge? If so, go to **Station 2**.
- Does Maria call her grandmother for help? If so, go to **Station 3**.