

A group of people are seated around a long table in a meeting room. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is prominently displayed in the center-left area.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL TO ADDRESS SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

BIENNIAL REPORT | *January 2022-2024*

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll
CHAIR

Vilma Uribe
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Submitted pursuant to [Executive Order No. 611](#)

Presented to: Governor Maura T. Healey

Presented by: Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking

Council Chair: Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll

Executive Director: Vilma Uribe

December 12, 2024

Foreword

On behalf of the members of the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking, I am pleased to present our biennial report summarizing the work and recommendations of the Council's subcommittees from January 2022-2024. This report outlines our recommendations to prevent and address Gender-Based Violence – domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

Within these pages, you will find a comprehensive overview of these issues backed by data and firsthand accounts. More importantly, this report offers concrete, actionable recommendations that, if implemented, have the potential to significantly reduce the prevalence of these crimes and improve support for survivors.

As you review these findings and recommendations, please remember that behind every statistic is a human story – a life forever altered by violence and exploitation. Your response to this report will directly impact these stories.

Let this report serve not just as a document but as a call to action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, reading "Kim Driscoll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kim" and last name "Driscoll" clearly legible.

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll

Chair, Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking

Acknowledgments

This report represents the collective effort of many dedicated individuals and organizations across Massachusetts. We are deeply grateful to the members of our seven subcommittees, who contributed countless hours to research, analysis, and strategic planning. Their expertise and commitment to evidence-based solutions have been invaluable to this work.

We especially thank our partner organizations, including state agencies, SADVHT providers, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations. Their willingness to share data, insights, and resources has strengthened this report immeasurably. We particularly acknowledge the contributions of frontline service providers, who offered crucial perspectives from their direct work with vulnerable populations.

Finally, we are grateful to the Office of the Governor for its ongoing support of the Council, and to the dedicated staff members who coordinated the complex logistics of this collaborative effort. A special thanks to our interns, Komal Pandit and Sophia Sinagra, Team LG, Cabinet Affairs, and Legislative Affairs, who have been supportive throughout this process.

Thank you for all that you do and for supporting survivors one recommendation at a time.

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Mission, Purpose, and History

Mission

The Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking's (GCSADVHT), also known as the "Council," mission is to advise the Governor on how to help residents of the state live a life free of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking by improving prevention for all, enhancing support for affected individuals and families, and insisting on accountability for perpetrators.

Purpose

The GCSADVHT's purpose is to identify best practices that are efficient and effective in advancing the Council's mission and recommend ways of replicating and extending these best practices across all agencies and entities engaged with combatting the problems of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking across the state.

The Council shall consider methods of improving awareness of and access to services for those groups that may under-report incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking, set goals, and report biennially on the Council's progress.

History

Massachusetts has long recognized the critical importance of addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Over the past three decades, executive orders have established and evolved a high-level council to provide expert guidance and recommendations to the state's governors and key cabinet members.

1990: Initial Legislative Action

Under Governor Michael Dukakis, the legislature created a specialized committee to advise the Secretary of Public Safety on developing law enforcement response policies for domestic violence cases.

1992: Governor Weld's Commission

Governor William Weld re-established a commission within the Executive Office of Public Safety to broadly advise the administration on preventing and addressing domestic violence across the state.

1993: Expanded Mandate

Governor Weld expanded the commission's scope to encompass all aspects of domestic violence, recognizing its complex, multifaceted nature. Subsequent orders under Governors Romney, Patrick, and Baker refined the council's role and positioned it within the Governor's Office.

2023: Executive Order No. 611

Governor Maura Healey issued [Executive Order No. 611](#), reaffirming and reconstituting the council with an expanded mandate to address sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking.

Leadership and Structure

Executive Leadership

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll leads the Council, while Vilma Uribe serves as the executive director, ensuring that its initiatives thrive and make a meaningful impact for survivors across the state.

Operational Structure

The Council operates through seven specialized subcommittees: Assessment and Response, Early Interventions, Economic Mobility, Housing Stability, Human Trafficking, Military, Veterans, and Families, and RESPECTfully. Six subcommittees develop policy and programmatic recommendations, while the RESPECTfully subcommittee implements a youth-focused campaign promoting healthy relationships. Each subcommittee meets monthly and consists of appointed members and subject matter experts who review current policies and resources to develop strategic recommendations addressing gender-based violence in Massachusetts. This report highlights the recommendations of the six subcommittees charged with providing recommendations.

Membership Composition

The Governor's Council (GCSADVHT) includes three member types: **public members** appointed by the Governor for two-year unpaid advisory terms, **ex officio members** who are state officials serving during their time in office, and **subcommittee members** who are experts invited by leadership to contribute specialized knowledge. This structure combines public and government expertise to address sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. See **Exhibit D** for complete membership details.

Ex Officio Members (2023-2025)

Secretaries

Edward Augustus, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

Jon Santiago, Executive Office of Veteran Services

Kate Walsh, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Lauren Jones, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MassDOT

Patrick Tutwiler, Executive Office of Education

Terrence Reidy, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Yvonne Hao, Executive Office of Economic Development

Designees

Alvina Brevard, Director of Special Projects

Andrea Gayle-Bennett, Deputy Secretary

Staverne Miller, DCF Commissioner

Alix Boren, Deputy General Counsel

Meghan Haggerty, Chief Operating Officer

Abigail Fee, General Counsel

Lisbeth Pimentel, Deputy Chief of Staff

Andrew Bridges, Associate Deputy Commissioner

Appointed Members (2023-2025)

Audrey Morrissey, My Life My Choice

Corinn (Nelson) Crowninshield, MA Probation Services

ADA Courtney Cahill, Bristol County DA's Office

David Adams, Emerge

DA David Sullivan, Northwestern DA

David Eng, MassHousing

David Rini, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Hema Sarang-Sieminski, Jane Doe Inc.

Elizabeth Dineen, YWCA of Western MA

Emily Rothman, Boston University School of Public Health

Isa Woldeguiorguis, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Jennifer Snook, Attorney General's Office

ADA Jennifer Sprague, Plymouth County DA's Office

Joelle Ridell, Advocate

Ret. Judge J. Thomas Kirkman, Safe Havens

Katelyn Fabbri, Executive Office of the Trial Court

Kim Dawkins, Pathways for Change

Krystyna Boisjolie, RFK Community Alliance

Liam Lowney, Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance

Lisa Goldblatt-Grace, My Life My Choice

Lysetta Hurge-Putnam, Independence House

Malcolm Astley, Lauren Dunne Astley Memorial Fund

Megan McLaughlin, Sex Offender Advisory Board

Michelle Linn, Advocate

Nancy Alterio, Disabled Persons Protection Commission

DA Paul Tucker, Essex County District Attorney's Office

Ret. Chief Robert Ferullo, Municipal Police Training Committee

Sabrina Cazeau-Class, Disabled Persons Protection Commission

Shaplaie Brooks, MA Commission on LGBTQ Youth

Stacy Malone, Victim Rights Law Center

Stacy Reed-Barnes, RIA

Stephanie Brown, Casa Myrna Vasquez

Suzanne Dubus, Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center

Tom King, MA Children's Alliance

Council Accomplishments

Overview

In 2024, the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence regularly convened meetings for both the full Council and its subcommittees. The Council also launched several initiatives focused on improving the lives of survivors across the state. These initiatives aimed to gather valuable insights that would enhance Massachusetts' efforts to prevent violence and support survivors, while also advancing the Council's key strategic goals. Additionally, significant legislation was enacted to strengthen protections and support for survivors of GBV.

Core Meeting Structure

The Council adopted a structured meeting schedule to ensure consistent communication and progress throughout the year. Co-chair meetings took place bi-monthly on the second Monday at 2:30 PM, allowing leadership to align strategies and address emerging issues. Full Council meetings, also held bi-monthly, united all stakeholders to review progress, share updates, and make important decisions. Meetings in August were typically suspended due to historically low attendance during that month. Subcommittee meetings were held monthly to facilitate the development of the Council's recommendations.

Roundtables

Survivor Listening Session (June 2024)

On June 20, 2024, in partnership with the Institute for Community Health, the Council held a Survivor Listening Session at MassBay Community College. This full-day session offered survivors a dedicated space to share their experiences and provide recommendations. The insights gathered from this session played a crucial role in shaping the Council's December 2024 recommendations.

Immigrant and New Arrival Communities Roundtable (August 2024)

On August 19, 2024, the Council, in collaboration with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Office of Refugees and Immigrants, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, hosted a virtual roundtable focused on improving support for survivors from immigrant and new arrival communities. The session brought together state leaders and community organizations to identify service gaps and enhance resource coordination. Participants discussed strategies for improving culturally responsive services and ensuring language access, with a strong emphasis on collaboration between state agencies and community-based organizations.

Campus Sexual Assault Law/Title IX 5th Anniversary Roundtable (September 2024)

On September 20, 2024, the Council, in collaboration with Senator Moore and Representative Farley-Bouvier, commemorated the 4th anniversary of Massachusetts' Campus Sexual Assault Law in Boston. This roundtable focused on assessing the law's implementation, challenges, and areas for improvement. The session featured discussions led by the Department of Higher Education's Campus Safety and Violence Prevention team, as well as feedback from legislators, student survivors and organizers, and campus safety advocates, helping to shape future directions for campus sexual assault prevention.

LGBTQIA+ Communities Roundtable (September 2024)

On September 26, 2024, the Council hosted a virtual roundtable for LGBTQIA+ SADVHT providers. This roundtable addressed the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ survivors, including issues related to service provision and prevention strategies. The virtual format allowed for broader statewide participation and ensured privacy for sensitive discussions. Key takeaways included recommendations for improving service accessibility and cultural competency in supporting LGBTQIA+ survivors.

Key Initiatives

Human Trafficking Prevention and Response

The development of a comprehensive statewide plan marked a significant step forward in Massachusetts' approach to addressing sex trafficking. This initiative has brought together survivors, law enforcement, social services, healthcare providers, and community organizations to establish a coordinated response. The plan emphasizes prevention, early intervention, and survivor support services. In collaboration with the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Taskforce, the initiative aims to strengthen the state's capacity to identify and address sex trafficking cases while ensuring survivors receive the necessary resources and support for recovery. The plan will be released in 2025.

Law Enforcement Guidelines Update

Beginning in March 2024, the Council's comprehensive update to the Domestic Violence Law Enforcement Guidelines represents a critical shift in how law enforcement responds to domestic violence cases. This update incorporated emerging best practices, recent legal developments, and trauma-informed approaches. The revised guidelines aimed to improve officer response, risk assessment, and coordination with victim service providers. Particular attention was given to cultural competency, language access, and the unique needs of marginalized communities. The update process involved input from a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure an effective, inclusive approach. The updates will be released in 2025.

RESPECTfully Campaign Expansion

In 2024, the RESPECTfully Campaign entered a new phase, expanding its focus to include healthy relationship breakups—both platonic and romantic. This public education initiative primarily targets Massachusetts youth ages 12-18, with secondary audiences including youth-serving organizations, parents, caregivers, and educational institutions. The core message of the campaign emphasizes that respect, consent, honesty, and open communication are fundamental rights in all relationships. To inform the campaign, the RESPECTFully Subcommittee convened

providers working directly with youth and a youth advisory committee to inform and develop the campaign. The new edition of the campaign will launch in early 2025.

Legislation

An Act Making Appropriation for the Fiscal Year 2024

On September 16, 2024, Governor Healey signed a Supplemental Budget, An Act Making Appropriation for the Fiscal Year 2024, which includes VOCA Bridge to enhance support for victims of crime.

VOCA Bridge includes key provisions to strengthen resources for survivors, including:

- Appropriating \$20 million to support vital services for victims of domestic violence and other crimes.
- This is the third installment of \$20M the state has provided to address a \$60M funding gap in the federal Victim of Crime Act.
- This funding will help victim service programs continue to provide essential services to survivors of crime in Massachusetts through FY25.

An Act Criminalizing Sexual Assault by Fraud of a Medical Professional

On August 8, 2024, Governor Healey, signed [An Act Criminalizing Sexual Assault by Fraud of a Medical Professional](#) to strengthen protections for individuals receiving medical or spiritual care.

The law includes several provisions to protect against sexual misconduct by health care providers and clergy, including:

- Establishing new crimes:
 - Indecent assault and battery by health care providers or clergy on patients/clients during treatment, punishable by up to 5 years in state prison or 2.5 years in a house of correction.

- Inducing a patient or client to engage in sexual intercourse through false misrepresentation during diagnosis, counseling, or treatment is punishable by up to 20 years in state prison.
- Eliminates lack of consent as an element of sexual assault or rape prosecution if consent was obtained by false representation from a healthcare provider or clergy member for treatment or counseling purposes.
- Grants victims of sexual assault or rape by medical/healthcare providers or clergy members the right to testify in person at the perpetrator's parole hearing.
- Clarifies the scope of "health care provider" to include licensed professionals such as physicians, dentists, nurses, and therapists.

An Act Modernizing Gun Laws

On July 24, 2024, Governor Healey Signed [An Act Modernizing Gun Laws](#). Here are some key provisions:

- Requires the development of a real- time electronic firearms registration system.
- Requires registration of all firearms manufactured or assembled in Massachusetts.
- Criminalizes creation, sale, or transfer of untraceable firearms, with penalties of 1-1.5 years imprisonment.
- Criminalizes possession of firearms in government buildings, courts, and polling places.
- Creates a new crime for discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a dwelling or other building in use, except with the consent of the owner or legal occupant.
- Expands eligibility to seek an Extreme Risk Protective Order (ERPO) to include law enforcement, licensing authorities, and healthcare providers.
- Updates our Harassment Prevention Order law to provide the same firearm restrictions as an Extreme Risk Protective Order.
- Expands the assault weapons ban to include firearms with assault-style features and prohibits their possession, sale, or transfer, as well as parts that enhance lethality.

Act to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation

On June 20, 2024, Governor Healey, surrounded by survivors, advocates, legislators, and state leaders, signed [An Act to prevent abuse and exploitation](#).

The Act to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation includes key provisions safeguarding protections for survivors and victim including:

- Prohibiting "revenge porn" and deepfakes by banning the non-consensual sharing of explicit images, including computer-generated ones.
- Expanding the criminal harassment statute to prohibit the distribution of sexual images without consent and increases maximum fines for convictions.
- Establishing a diversion program for minors to educate them about the risks of sexting, allowing them to be tried in Juvenile Court for certain offenses.
- Requiring the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to promote age-appropriate instruction on media literacy skills.
- Expanding the definition of "abuse" to include "coercive control" and extending the statute of limitations for certain domestic violence offenses.
- Recognizing that various forms of domestic and sexual violence extend beyond physical abuse.

Recommendations

Formulation Process

Methodology

The GCSADVHT employs an inclusive process beyond leveraging the subcommittees' expertise to develop these recommendations. To develop these recommendations the subcommittees and Executive Director took a multi-pronged approach, including:

- **Council Meetings:** These gatherings facilitated information sharing between survivor-serving organizations and council members.
- **Survivor Listening Sessions:** Survivors and advocates were invited to share their experiences and insights.
- **Roundtable Discussions:** Survivors, advocates, and community leaders convened to discuss challenges and explore potential solutions.
- **Stakeholder Meetings:** Input was gathered from various organizations and individuals involved in addressing these issues.
- **Site Visits:** Crisis centers, shelters, and other frontline service providers were visited to observe intake and support processes.
- **Review of Best Practices:** Best practices from other states and jurisdictions were examined to identify potential model programs.
- **Review of Existing Research:** Research on lethality tools, strangulation documentation, and existing team surveys was analyzed.
- **Mapping of Services:** Current prevention education, victim identification, and support services across Massachusetts were mapped.

By synthesizing information from these diverse sources, the Council formulated the following recommendations for policy and practice improvements, addressing the complex needs of those affected by sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking in Massachusetts. The following two sections outline some of the key findings and outcomes uncovered through this process.

Recommendations Timeline

Initial Development Phase (January 2022-June 2024)

The recommendations development process began with Co-chairs working collaboratively to draft initial recommendations by June 28, 2024. This phase involved extensive research, stakeholder consultation, and analysis of current program effectiveness. Co-chairs were tasked with ensuring recommendations align with current best practices and address emerging needs in the field.

Multi-Level Review Process (August-November 2024)

The review process involved multiple stages of evaluation and refinement. Beginning with the Lieutenant Governor's review in August, the recommendations undergo careful review and revision. Co-chairs had the opportunity to refine their proposals in September based on initial feedback. The Secretariats' reviewed recommendations in October to ensure alignment with broader state initiatives and policies. The final review by the Governor's team in early November focused on implementation feasibility and policy alignment.

Publication and Implementation (December 2024)

The final recommendations, incorporating feedback from all review stages, were published in December 2024. This document will serve as a roadmap for the Council's work in the coming years, outlining specific actions, timelines, and responsibility assignments for implementing new initiatives and improving existing programs.

Key Findings on Survivor Experiences

- **Financial Hardship:** Survivors of abuse confront profound challenges that extend far beyond their immediate traumatic experiences. Financial hardship emerges as a critical issue, with survivors facing significant obstacles including lost income, damaged credit, and restricted access to housing and childcare services.

- **Systemic Challenges:** Systemic gaps compound survivors' difficulties. Jurisdictional challenges and poor communication between systems, such as military and civilian systems, create additional barriers to support. First responders and frontline staff often lack adequate training to recognize signs of abuse and provide appropriate, sensitive assistance.
- **Barriers to Support:** Practical barriers further complicate survivors' paths to recovery. Transportation limitations, language barriers, and complex service access protocols prevent many from obtaining necessary support. The financial dimensions of surviving abuse are particularly devastating, with abusers frequently using economic control as a mechanism of oppression.
- **Catch 22s:** Survivors frequently encounter what can be described as "catch-22" situations, forcing them into impossible choices. These include deciding between seeking personal protection and protecting their children or choosing to pursue legal action against abusers while knowing the process will require repeatedly reliving traumatic experiences through testimony.

The cumulative effect is a complex landscape of challenge where survivors must navigate multiple systemic, economic, and emotional obstacles in their journey toward safety and recovery.

Subcommittee Recommendations

This section highlights the recommendations put forward by the six recommending subcommittees.

Assessment and Response

The Assessment and Response Subcommittee's purpose is to recommend ways to improve criminal justice and community-based responses to address and reduce domestic violence. This includes developing and implementing protocols for assessing domestic violence and strangulation in LE responses to domestic violence crimes, improving the practices of domestic violence high-risk teams, and making recommendations for reducing domestic violence homicides. It is co-chaired by **Courtney Cahill** and **David Adams**.

Background

Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH) is a significant public health and safety issue in the United States. Current national homicide data sources often fail to accurately capture intimate partner relationships, especially those involving former partners (Messing et al., 2021). In

Massachusetts, Jane Doe Inc. (n.d.) reports that since January 1, 2020, there have been 60 domestic violence homicide incidents resulting in 76 deaths, including 60 victims and 17 perpetrators who died by suicide.

Several issues compound the problem of IPH prevention. Many communities, even those with high IPH rates, lack high-risk teams, and those that do often cannot produce annual reports to identify service gaps, particularly for vulnerable groups like women of color, immigrants, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Aromantic (LGBTQIA+) individuals who face higher IPH rates. While over 200 Massachusetts towns and cities use the [Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Protocol](#), resources to evaluate its impact are lacking. Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs (IPAEPs) are underutilized as a preventive resource, and school-based violence prevention programs lack funding for comprehensive education on teen dating violence and domestic abuse. Additionally, there is a lack of consistent policies addressing the needs of high-risk groups, including language interpretation services (Petrosky et al., 2017; Massachusetts Women of Color Network, 2021).

To address these issues, the Assessment and Response Subcommittee (ARS)—a diverse group of over 25 members from various agencies—has developed recommendations based on research into lethality tools, strangulation documentation, and existing team surveys. The ARS aims to establish common standards for the formation, operation, and assessment of high-risk teams.

The subcommittee's efforts have resulted in several key achievements, as outlined below.

1. **Establishment of Standards:** Developed the [High-Risk Team Standards](#) to enhance operational consistency.
2. **Implementation of Risk Assessment Protocol:** Created and implemented the [Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Tool Protocol](#), currently utilized by over 200 cities and towns in Massachusetts.
3. **Collaboration Across Agencies:** Fostered partnerships among police, domestic violence programs, and prosecutors, promoting a coordinated response to domestic violence incidents.
4. **Introduced Strangulation Documentation:** Incorporated the use of a [Strangulation Worksheet for Law Enforcement](#) when responding to domestic violence scenarios, enhancing the response protocol.
5. **Research-Based Recommendations:** Engaged in research into lethality tools and team surveys to establish common standards for high-risk team formation and operations, contributing to informed prevention strategies.

Based on the success of our previous accomplishments and research, the recommendations below aim to reduce IPH in Massachusetts (see below).

Recommendations

Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs

IPAEPs aim to address the root causes of domestic violence by changing offenders' attitudes and behaviors related to power, control, and personal responsibility. These programs go beyond basic safety planning and anger management, emphasizing accountability and working in coordination with other community services. The theory of change posits that by providing effective programming, leveraging a coordinated community response, and mandating completion as a probation condition, IPAEPs can effectively reduce domestic violence recidivism, ultimately saving lives and resources.

Since 1991, Massachusetts has funded IPAEPs. On August 8, 2014, Massachusetts enacted [An Act Relative to Domestic Violence](#) into law. The legislation significantly expanded the role of IPAEPs in addressing domestic violence. To improve the understanding and utilization of these programs, the law mandated training for legal and court personnel on the underlying causes of domestic violence and the availability of IPAEPs. Furthermore, judges were required to assign convicted abusers to IPAEPs as a condition of their sentence. To increase public awareness and access, LE agencies were tasked with providing information about IPAEPs to individuals arrested for domestic violence-related incidents.

In 2015, a mixed-methods study commissioned by the Massachusetts Office of the Commissioner of Probation found that individuals who completed the IPAEP were significantly less likely to re-offend than those who did not. This reduction in recidivism rate is substantial (28 percentage points) and holds true even when considering factors like age, ethnicity, criminal history, and previous restraining orders (Mazzola, 2015). In other words, completing the program reduced the likelihood of future offenses, regardless of other influential variables.

Based on the above, we recommend the following actionable steps for implementing and strengthening IPAEPs:

R1: Increase Referrals to Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs

This is a crucial step in addressing domestic violence. Education programs can help individuals recognize abusive behaviors, understand the dynamics of power and control, and develop healthy relationship skills. By increasing referrals to these programs, we can empower more people to break the cycle of abuse and create safer communities. See below for additional strategies we recommend.

R1A: Launch a Public Awareness Campaign

Enhancing public awareness of IPAEPs is essential. This effort is key to improving knowledge and understanding of IPAEPs as valuable resources for addressing domestic violence. By educating the public about the existence and benefits of these programs, we can encourage individuals to seek help and support.

R1B: Develop a Multi-Sector Training Initiative

Develop and provide expanded training modules on the roles, practices (including risk assessment protocols), and outcomes of IPAEPs in collaboration with community partners. Target a diverse range of sectors, including District Attorneys, clergy, the Department of Children and Families, substance abuse organizations, domestic violence agencies, community mental health providers, healthcare providers, educators, Employee Assistance Programs, general violence prevention organizations, and agencies working with underserved communities (e.g., ESL programs, citizenship classes, community health fairs).

R1C: Strengthen IPAEP Capacity

Increase the capacity of IPAEPs to provide education and foster partnerships with other domestic violence organizations, enhancing their overall effectiveness and reach.

R1D: Enhance Judicial System Awareness of IPAEPs

Increase awareness of IPAEPs as a resource within the family and juvenile courts, ensuring that these crucial components of the judicial system are well-informed about the program's potential benefits.

R1E: Enhance Court Training

Coordinate with Massachusetts Family and Probate Court and Juvenile Courts to provide comprehensive statewide training on the roles, practices (including risk assessment protocols), and outcomes of IPAEPs. This training should target judges, magistrates, clerks, probation officers, and court clinics to enhance their understanding and utilization of IPAEPs as a valuable resource.

R1F: Enhance Probation Officer Risk Assessment Education

Develop and implement a targeted educational program to increase probation officers' awareness and understanding of the risk assessment protocols employed by IPAEPs across all courts.

Additionally, provide statewide training on the Batterer Intervention Risk Assessment and Management protocol used by all IPAEPs in Massachusetts. This training should explain the protocol and highlight how IPAEPs and probation officers can collaborate to manage the risk of high-lethality probationers mandated to IPAEPs.

R1G: Culturally Specific Evaluation Framework

Develop a comprehensive methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of IPAEPs in culturally specific communities, ensuring that the programs are responsive and appropriate for diverse populations.

Domestic Violence High-Risk Teams

A study of urban police data revealed significant gender disparities in intimate partner homicides: 39.6% of female victims were killed by partners, compared to only 3.9% of male victims (Koppa & Messing, 2021). The majority of victims had previous police contact for domestic violence within three years of their deaths, with 91% of women and 73.3% of men reporting such incidents. Notably, 36.7% of male victims and 9.0% of female victims had themselves been suspects in domestic violence cases. Few victims sought protection orders. These findings highlight the critical need for improved risk assessment and intervention in domestic violence cases to prevent homicides.

The data underscores the vital role of high-risk teams in preventing intimate partner homicides. The high rates of prior police contact present a clear opportunity for these teams to identify high-risk cases and implement targeted interventions. Given the frequency of police visits and the complex dynamics where some victims were previously suspects, high-risk teams can offer comprehensive assessments and a nuanced understanding of each situation. The low rate of protection order requests indicates a need for better coordination between legal services and support systems, a gap that high-risk teams are uniquely positioned to address.

Domestic Violence High-Risk Teams (DVHRTs) are specialized, multi-disciplinary units focused on preventing intimate partner homicides by identifying and intervening in the most dangerous domestic violence cases. These teams typically comprise professionals from various fields, including LE, social services, healthcare, and victim advocacy. Their primary objective is to identify, assess, and intervene in situations where victims face the greatest risk of severe harm or homicide. The promise of DVHRTs lies in their ability to provide targeted, coordinated responses to the most dangerous cases of domestic violence. By combining expertise and resources, these teams aim to implement comprehensive safety measures, manage high-risk offenders, and provide crucial support to victims.

Massachusetts has made great strides in the last few years in expanding DVHRTs across the state and providing [recommended best practices](#) for DVHRTs. To further enhance the implementation of high-risk teams across Massachusetts, we recommend the following:

R2: Improve High-Risk Teams

To improve the effectiveness of high-risk teams, we recommend the following.

R2A: Revise Standards for High-Risk Teams

Continue to review and edit the [best practices for DVHRTs](#) to include the requirement of a yearly safety and accountability report that identifies systemic gaps and unmet needs of survivors to be addressed, including those of underserved communities at the highest risk for IPH.

R2B: Increase Diversity in High-Risk Teams

Strategically increase the racial and cultural diversity of high-risk teams, service providers, and first responders; implement the Massachusetts Women of Color Network recommendations from their [2021 Keeping Black Women Alive: Responding to Intimate Partner High Risk in Black Communities](#) report.

R2C: Increase Access to Legal Support

Increase access to trained lawyers for survivors, particularly in high-risk domestic violence cases.

R2D: Increase of High-Risk Teams

Expand high-risk teams, especially in communities with high rates of intimate partner violence, based on need and relevant data.

R2E: Explore Grant Funding for HRT Coordinator

Consider exploring grant funding for a statewide High-Risk Team Coordinator.

R2F: Increase Language Interpretation Access

Develop a plan to increase language interpretation capacity, accessibility, and accountability for police departments, and other agencies that address domestic violence.

Conclusion

The recommendations are based on interdisciplinary partnerships of public and private stakeholders. By implementing these recommendations, Massachusetts can significantly enhance its efforts to prevent intimate partner homicide, protecting some of our most vulnerable residents from harm.

Early Interventions

The Early Intervention Subcommittee was established to identify and highlight the needs of the children and youth exposed to domestic violence in Massachusetts. In response to reported gaps in services and understanding the importance of timely and appropriate interventions across the developmental life course, the subcommittee recommends solutions meant to increase safety and well-being for children and families, emphasizing evidence-based, trauma-informed referrals to services and treatment within all communities. The subcommittee is co-chaired by **Josh Lubbers, Tim Cruz (designee Jennifer Cantwell), and Stephanie Howard.**

Background

Children and teens who experience violence at home, from peers, or in dating relationships often develop serious mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. They may also struggle in school and show aggressive behavior. These symptoms have been directly connected to exposure to violence at home (Kitzmann et al., 2003).

While violence prevention programs have traditionally focused on adults, experts now recognize that violence severely impacts young people too. This has led to increased demand for youth mental health services across the healthcare system. In Massachusetts, MassHealth provides valuable insurance coverage for residents seeking mental health care. However, like many healthcare systems nationwide, access to specialized care remains challenging, particularly for complex situations involving domestic violence, high-conflict divorces, and court-involved families. This points to opportunities to expand specialized mental health services to better serve children and families in these situations.

The Early Interventions subcommittee consists of stakeholders across multiple child and adolescent-related sectors, including mental health providers at the hospital, community mental health, and DV organizational level. In addition, we had input from staff at the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Public Health (DPH), EOE (Executive Office of Education), DOJ (Department of Justice), DA's office of Plymouth County, and from DV prevention-focused groups working on teen dating violence and issues of shame. The group has met monthly for over two years, with weekly meetings towards the end of this process to make recommendations. Data and research were gathered from providers within the above-mentioned organizations, committee members' experiences as leaders in the field and their respective organizations, and related literature.

One of the committee's main goals is to reverse the trend of mental health providers declining to work with clients insured by MassHealth. To achieve this, the subcommittee took action to simplify the documentation process for providers serving MassHealth clients. A key focus was streamlining the [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) assessment](#), a mandatory evaluation for MassHealth clients aged 20 and under.

In response to feedback from providers across the state, the committee successfully advocated for extending the CANS filing period from quarterly to semi-annual. This change maintains the importance of the assessment while significantly reducing administrative burdens on clinicians. By easing these requirements, the committee aims to encourage more providers to continue working with MassHealth clients.

To further support the state's commitment to improving outcomes for children, families, and vulnerable populations, we offer the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The Early Interventions Subcommittee addresses domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. These recommendations are focused on children's exposure to various forms of violence.

R1: Ensure Intimate Partner Abuse Training for Behavioral Health and Education Professionals

Ensure that all staff and treatment providers within the [Behavioral Health Road Map](#) framework, educational system, and community mental health providers receive specific training on IPA in families. This training should be provided as part of the onboarding process and included as a critical component of continuing education training.

The primary goals are to develop a foundational understanding of trauma-focused interventions for child and family victims of domestic violence, the roles of community agencies like DCF, law enforcement, and the court system, the Handle with Care Program, and specialized child and family domestic violence support services, with the ultimate aim of building capacity and skills to reduce harm and increase the availability of skilled clinicians.

R2: Establish A Youth Trauma Care Standards Advisory Committee

Establish a volunteer advisory committee of clinical experts in the field and relevant key stakeholders who will offer guidelines and standards for therapeutic programs serving children and youth who may have been exposed to domestic violence or other forms of violence, such as sexual violence or human trafficking.

The primary goal is to assess the current mental health delivery system for children in Massachusetts, with a specific focus on services and reimbursement provided by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership and Mental Health Road Map to qualified independent clinicians.

The primary goal of this project is to improve the accessibility and quality of mental health services for children in Massachusetts. Specifically, we aim to assess the current state of mental health delivery systems and evaluate the services and reimbursement provided by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership and Mental Health Road Map. Our primary objective is to significantly reduce wait times for access to trauma and IPA-trained clinicians. To achieve this, we will conduct a statewide survey to assess the availability of these specialized services and provide professionals with the latest research and evidence-based training and intervention techniques.

R3: Improve Behavioral Health Workforce Pipeline

Improve workforce pipeline, recruitment, and retention of behavioral health clinicians providing trauma-informed care in community-based and crisis settings through supportive payment models and workforce initiatives. We also recommend the following to strengthen the behavioral health workforce pipeline.

R3A: Improve Access to Trauma-Informed Care Training

Improve access to trauma-informed care training for medical and behavioral health clinicians who work with youth and families. Improve family and caregiver awareness of youth behavioral health resources that provide trauma-informed care to support children exposed to domestic violence.

R3B: Empower Private Practice Providers to Join MassHealth MBHP Networks

Inform and encourage private practice practitioners to join MassHealth, MBHP, and managed care networks to increase access to trauma-informed behavioral health clinicians in the community.

Healthy Relationship Education

K-12 Curriculum

In September 2023, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) unanimously approved an updated comprehensive health and physical education framework, the first time the guidelines had been updated since 1999. The updated framework is inclusive, medically accurate, developmentally, and age-appropriate. It outlines standards for what a comprehensive and LGBTQIA+ inclusive health and physical education program should include, and most notably, these recommendations included age-appropriate standards regarding healthy relationships for learners from kindergarten through high school.

Under Massachusetts state law, all public schools must provide physical and health education. While this requirement is set by law ([G.L. c. 71, §§ 1 and 3](#)), individual school districts have flexibility in how they teach these subjects. Districts can choose to use the educational frameworks provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). These frameworks outline specific grade-level expectations for student learning in health and physical education. Though districts are free to adopt the new framework at any time, DESE designated the 2023-2024 school year as a planning period, with broader implementation beginning in fall 2024. To support this rollout, DESE is currently reviewing curriculum materials for both health and physical education. Based on this review, they will develop a curriculum guide that districts can use as a resource for their programs.

R4: Implement Inclusive Healthy Relationship Education in Schools

To advance healthy relationship education, we recommend supporting the implementation of age-appropriate, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive curriculum and support services throughout the state's school systems focused on building healthy relationships.

Conclusion

The Early Interventions Subcommittee of the GCSADVHT has developed four key recommendations for Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll. These recommendations result from extensive research and careful consideration by the committee's experts. Each proposal has been meticulously crafted to address critical issues in the field of early intervention for sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. The subcommittee's work reflects a deep commitment to providing well-researched and effective solutions to these pressing social problems.

The first recommendation presented suggests thorough training in intimate partner abuse for providers of care. The second recommendation is to create a voluntary committee of experts in the field to meet and establish ways to assist children who have been exposed to domestic violence. The third recommendation is to establish various referral pathways across the state for children and youth who have been exposed to domestic violence. The final recommendation is to continue supporting an age-appropriate, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive curriculum.

Economic Mobility

The Economic Mobility Subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking, and Domestic Violence is focused on increasing the economic success of victims and survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, and trafficking by increasing awareness of and access to available resources in a trauma-informed way. In addition to increased access to resources, an analysis of the benefits cliff and related focus on workforce development were prioritized. Utilizing an accessible and equitable approach, the Economic Mobility Subcommittee hopes to improve economic mobility for all survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, survivors of human trafficking, and individuals with overlapping and/or related vulnerabilities across the state. It is chaired by **Alix Boren**.

The subcommittee hopes to better understand better and create pathways from economic mobility to economic stability to economic success for these populations. To focus its work and adequately evaluate the barriers to economic success for this population, the Economic Mobility Subcommittee identified the following guiding principles:

- Ensuring access to basic needs
- Making sure survivor input is considered and accounted for
- Increasing awareness of available resources (including aggregating resources)
- Ensuring that all work is evidence-based and trauma-informed
- Identifying potential funding sources to support its work

By leveraging available resources, the Economic Mobility Subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking, and Domestic Violence endeavors to create a continuum of economic mobility for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking to support individuals as they move towards economic stability and success.

Background

The financial statistics for victims of sexual abuse and assault, including child sex abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking, are staggering. Studies suggest that the percentage of domestic violence cases that include financial abuse is nearly 99% (Adams et al., 2008). A 2018 study on the economic impact of childhood sexual abuse in the U.S. alone estimated the total lifetime economic burden of child sexual

abuse to be at least \$9.3 billion (Letourneau, 2018). A 2018 study into the lifetime economic burden of intimate partner violence for U.S. adults was published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, and it estimated the lifetime cost of intimate partner violence on an individual basis to be roughly \$103,767 for female victims and \$23,414 for male victims (Peterson et al., 2018). Among other things, these estimates include projected medical costs, loss of productivity, criminal justice efforts, and property loss. Researchers have also found that **U.S. government sources pay approximately 37% of the lifetime burden (\$1.3 trillion)** (Peterson et al, 2018). To help victims and survivors achieve financial stability and reduce government spending, the economic mobility subcommittee has prioritized three key areas: (1) addressing the **cliff effect**, (2) improving **transportation and access to resources**, (3) expanding **workforce development** and related **support services**.

The financial burden of sexual assault, DV, and trafficking is not shouldered exclusively by victims and survivors. Many receive support from federal, state, or local partners. Medicaid, TANF, SNAP Benefits, and public housing are well-known examples of key anti-poverty programs. In some cases, risk or fear of losing these benefits can disincentivize economic growth. This is often referred to as the cliff effect, a benefits cliff, or the “welfare trap.”

A benefits cliff occurs when public benefits fall sharply due to an increase in earned income. Often, the rise in wages followed by the disproportionate drop in benefits leaves individual workers worse off overall, creating financial disincentives to pursue promotional opportunities. Currently the Healey-Driscoll Administration is leading a state-wide effort to understand better the cliff effect with participation from the Executive Offices of Labor and Workforce Development, Health and Human Services, Education, Housing and Livable Communities, and Economic Development, along with many of their constituent agencies, including the Departments of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Unemployment Assistance (DUA), MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS), Higher Education (DHE), Vocational Rehabilitation (MRC) and many more.

While the cliff effect is not unique to victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking, this population faces additional risks and challenges. For example, many victims and survivors are also victims of stalking and utilize address suppression services. As a result, accepting a promotional opportunity could pose a safety risk along with a financial one. Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking should be part of the conversation and related analysis when studying the benefits cliff.

The state has a robust workforce development network that includes partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit partners, and training providers. It also includes MassHire’s network of Career Centers, staffed by state and local partners and strategically located

across the state. These centers provide employment services, resume support, job training, and more. As described herein, leveraging this existing resource and providing trauma-informed training to career center staff could enable better support for survivors and victims.

In addition to the financial burden, victims and survivors face a myriad of related challenges. In cases of domestic violence, many victims are financially dependent on their abusers, which severely limits their economic mobility. Research by the Institute of Women's Policy Research found that 73% of respondents stayed with or returned to an abusive partner due to economic barriers, such as the lack of access to a car (Hess and Del Rosario, 2018). Reliable, safe, and affordable transportation is crucial for survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, and trafficking to rebuild their lives.

Recommendations

The Cliff Effect

The financial burden of sexual assault, DV, and trafficking is significant and not shouldered exclusively by victims and survivors. While abuse or assault can occur anywhere, the numbers are significant among low-income women, and continued violence can make escaping poverty nearly impossible. Violence often interferes with one's ability to work, and in some instances, needing to escape an abuser can make a victim an unreliable employee. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has concluded that improving financial stability could reduce financial dependence on a perpetrator and help reduce intimate partner violence (Niolon et al., 2017). The CDC identifies tax credits or childcare subsidies, TANF, and SNAP as potential supports for victims of domestic violence. While often an essential stopgap, the potential long-term reliance on this public assistance creates a benefits cliff.

The cliff effect keeps many public assistance recipients from working to their highest potential and climbing the career ladder to a livable wage. Conversations about the cliff effect typically focus on recipients of TANF, SNAP, Unemployment Insurance, or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. For individuals who fall off the benefits cliff, the loss of benefits often means they cannot sustain themselves on their new "total resources" (benefits + earned income). This means they will either not accept the raise/job or be forced to quit later and cycle back into benefit programs.

The state is reimagining the [Learn2Earn Program](#), which includes the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security, Executive Office of Education, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities—to assess longitudinal data better and combat the cliff effect.

In 2022, the Economic Mobility Subcommittee conducted focus groups that highlighted the distinct economic challenges experienced by survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. The findings revealed that conventional economic and workforce solutions, including approaches to mitigate the benefits cliff, may not be effective.

For many survivors, pursuing career advancements that enhance visibility can pose significant safety and financial risks. Additionally, economic abuse and the urgent need to leave unsafe situations frequently lead to severe financial instability, increasing the reliance on public assistance programs. As a result, survivors may find themselves trapped in a cycle where career or income advancement leads to a loss of vital benefits, compromising their ability to support themselves and their children.

To address the challenges faced by victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking, we recommend the following policy and programmatic changes that recognize the unique needs of victims and survivors.

R1: Integrate Survivor Perspectives in Benefits Cliff Analysis and Funding

The Economic Mobility Subcommittee recommends that survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking be part of the conversation and related analysis when studying the benefits cliff and that funding be obtained or allocated to support this work.

Transportation

Access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation is essential for victims and survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, and trafficking. Abusers may monitor a survivor's whereabouts or control their finances, making working, getting help, and saving money for relocation nearly impossible. In many cases, lack of access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation leaves survivors financially reliant on their abusers, perpetuating cycles of continued abuse. As many jobs still require an in-person presence, the lack of transportation options limits victims' and survivors' abilities to obtain and maintain reliable employment, further exacerbating financial dependence. In recognition of this problem, in 2019, the National Sheriff's Association partnered with a rideshare company to provide transportation funds and assistance to Sheriff's offices, agencies, or shelters working with survivors of domestic violence and abuse and provided grants to Orange County, FL; Niagara County, NY; Fayette County, KY; and Oakland County, MI to provide rides to survivors (Lyft, 2020; National Sheriffs' Association, n.d.).

Massachusetts

Massachusetts supports survivors with specific help from the public transportation authority in the eastern region of the state. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has partnerships with multiple shelters and social services organizations that distribute fare products among the communities that they serve.

Meanwhile, for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) participates in [the Address Confidentiality Program](#) administered by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. This program is offered to confidentially maintain the address of a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking who has been accepted into the program. The ACP provides a way for survivors who have recently relocated to use a confidential address to protect them from those who endanger them. When accepted into the program, the survivor is provided with a substitute address to protect their information in transactions with the RMV and other state entities. The substitute address is only a mask, and members of the ACP staff will forward mail to the participant's actual address. The RMV can only provide the services of the ACP to people who are accepted into the program. Individuals must apply with an application and the help of an application assistant certified by the Secretary of the Commonwealth or can also reach out to the ACP by contacting an agency or nonprofit program that provides counseling, referral, shelter, or other specialized services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Although the Massachusetts public transportation network - the MBTA and the fifteen Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) - serve residents across the state (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.), gaps exist in some regions. To address the transportation challenges survivors and victims may face, we recommend the following:

R2: Offer low-or no-cost public transit to survivors

Include survivors as a priority population for MassMobility to offer fare subsidies and vouchers.

Additionally, the subcommittee recognizes that this solution will not support all survivors. Some victims and survivors do not live close to reliable public transportation, others have trauma that precludes them from utilizing busy public transit, and others still may not have a schedule that allows them to rely on public transit. For these reasons, we recommend the following:

R2B: Identify Alternative Transportation Solutions for Survivors

To increase access to transportation for survivors, in collaboration with EOPSS, MassDOT should consider partnering with a ride-share company or applying for a grant like those identified above.

Housing

While access to housing has been identified as an important barrier to economic mobility, the Housing Subcommittee of this Council focuses on it. We defer to its recommendations.

Childcare

Access to reliable childcare is essential for domestic violence survivors seeking safety and independence, as well as all parents across the state. We commend the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for expanding access to reliable childcare for survivors of domestic violence. In promulgating the new Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) regulations, EEC added families experiencing domestic violence as a priority access category related to the CCFA waitlist.

Workforce Development Services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (“WIOA”) supports the state’s MassHire network, which includes the MDCS, MassHire’s statewide network of Career Centers—staffed by state and local partners, MassHire Workforce Boards, and the MassHire State Workforce Board (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.). In addition to supporting employers and the business community, these resources are designed to help job seekers access employment, training, education, and related support services to succeed in the labor market. In addition to the employment and training services that the MassHire Department of Career Services provides across the state, MDCS also provides targeted employment and training services to Veterans. Federal funds support dedicated staff across the state to help veterans transition to civilian employment and to provide Priority of Service to veterans and their eligible spouses (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.). As a result of these additional resources and specialized staff training, MassHire is better able to serve its vulnerable veteran population.

Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and trafficking share many of the same vulnerabilities as veterans. A longitudinal study comparing female survivors of childhood sexual assault and Vietnam-era veterans showed that traumatic violence preceded Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD) and that in each group, symptoms persisted (Cameron, 1994). Sexual assault survivors in both the military and civilian populations show a higher lifetime rate of PTSD for both men (65%) and women (49.5%) (Disabled American Veterans, n.d.). Another (non-military) study evaluating the impact of sexual assault on female college students found that two-thirds of participants reported a negative impact on their academic goals, and nearly 25% of degree-seeking students either did not complete their degrees or were no longer enrolled at the university where the assault took place (Potter et al., 2018). To improve access to the workforce, we recommend the following:

R3: Improve Workforce Access for SADVHT Victims and Survivors

Many victims and survivors lack the education and training resources needed to succeed in the workplace, and most employers lack the trauma-informed training necessary to support them adequately (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In collaboration with SADVHT providers, MassHire could provide victims with trauma-informed training resources and wraparound support services, and it could partner with nonprofits to educate employers. This would increase employment outcomes and related opportunities, thus increasing economic mobility.

R3A: Enhance MassHire System Training

To improve workforce support for survivors and victims, we recommend that the MassHire system implement regular trauma-informed training for MassHire system employees to enable direct service providers to better support victims of SADVHT.

Support Services

R4: Increase Financial Wellbeing of SADVHT Survivors

Gender-based violence economically impacts survivors and victims through healthcare costs, lost wages, job instability, and financial insecurity. Marginalized populations face disproportionate, intersecting economic adversities rooted in systemic oppression, creating complex economic hardships that hinder financial recovery (Koss et al., 2017; Loya, 2014b; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).

Conduct research to design a pilot program that provides flexible financial assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking through combined state and private funding. The study should examine methods for distributing survivor-directed aid through mechanisms such as direct cash transfers and refundable tax credits, while establishing clear eligibility criteria and impact metrics. Key research components should include evaluating distribution methods, measuring program effectiveness, and assessing potential for scalability to inform broader implementation.

R5: Expand Domestic Violence Workplace Training and Policies

Additionally, Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (EOLWD), through its many touchpoints with the business community, could encourage domestic violence training and related workplace policies. Such training could be incentivized through a tax credit or required by regulation. Domestic Violence Employment Policies could be required to be conspicuously posted at all workplaces (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.). The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) recommends that all employers have a workplace policy specifically addressing intimate partner violence (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2022). Prioritizing education and prevention could help mitigate some of the costs already shouldered by the government and taxpayers while creating a safer environment for victims and survivors.

R6: Include an Economic Mobility Sub-Subcommittee on Each Subcommittee

Economic Mobility touches every aspect of the Council's work. The Council should consider requiring an economic mobility sub-subcommittee on each subcommittee and/or requiring each subcommittee to consider the continuum of economic mobility in its recommendations.

Conclusion

To increase economic mobility for victims and survivors and help mitigate the governmental financial burden, the economic mobility subcommittee recommends that its recommendations be adopted to increase access to transportation and other resources and workforce development services for survivors and that victims and survivors be prioritized as part of ongoing research on the cliff effect.

This should be done in a trauma-informed way that strongly considers survivor input and prioritizes all survivors across the state.

We are also excited to announce that starting in 2025, **Frank Zona**, owner of Zona Salons, will serve as co-chair of the Economic Mobility Subcommittee with Alix Boren.

Housing Stability

The Mission of the Housing Stability Subcommittee (HS) is to develop creative housing, housing stability, and homelessness prevention strategies for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking (SADVHT). We work to fulfill this mission through training, collaboration initiatives, and policy change. HS' recommendations include expanding the training opportunities available to advocates (on housing) and housing providers (on SADVHT), expanding housing resources available to survivors, and changing state housing policies to expand housing protections for survivors. The subcommittee is co-chaired by **David Eng**, **Kara Pillsbury**, and **Stephanie Brown**.

Background

Safe, affordable housing is the cornerstone of survivors' ability to leave an abusive relationship and to heal from domestic and sexual trauma. 1 in 5 Massachusetts residents experiencing homelessness report domestic violence as a reason for their homelessness.¹ Nationally, 38% of domestic violence survivors report becoming homeless immediately after separating from their abusive partner.² Nearly 6 out of 10 sexual assault incidents are reported by victims to have occurred in their own home or at the home of a friend, relative, or neighbor.³ Nearly 80% of victims living in public housing wanted to relocate because the perpetrator was nearby but could not.⁴ Additionally, 92% of homeless mothers experience sexual violence in their lifetimes.⁵

In FY23, SafeLink, Massachusetts' 24/7 domestic violence hotline, received 24,910 hotline calls for support and connection to services. Of those calls, 22,545 (or 90.5%) were called primarily for domestic violence emergency shelters. Only 5.1% of callers were connected to a shelter with open space, and 94.9% had no shelter option available. These staggering statistics demonstrate the urgency and prevalence of SDV in Massachusetts, as well as the connection that often presents between housing instability and SDV, and the need for the work of the Housing Stability Subcommittee.

Housing Protections for Survivors in State-Aided Public Housing

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) oversees funding and regulation for 41,500 state-aided public housing apartments designated for families, the elderly, and non-elderly disabled individuals, as well as nearly 11,000 rental vouchers. Each year,

approximately 3,500 vacant units and 500 to 1,000 issued or reissued vouchers become available. Currently, around 240,000 households are on the waitlist for state-aided public housing.

DV Waitlist Priority

EOHLC maintains a waitlist system that prioritizes several priority groups while managing the limited availability of public housing. Local residents, veterans, and individuals facing emergency situations receive priority consideration, with particular emphasis on those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence.

The [domestic violence priority category](#) has been designed with special consideration for the unique circumstances survivors face. To receive the domestic violence priority status, applicants need to provide a personal statement and one supporting document, recognizing that obtaining extensive documentation may be difficult or dangerous in these situations.

LHAs are instructed to consider any circumstances related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking when evaluating applications. This approach recognizes these situations as mitigating factors in the application process, ensuring that survivors have appropriate access to housing assistance while still maintaining the integrity of the waitlist system.

DV Housing Protections in State-Aided Public Housing

Documented survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking who are tenants of state-aided public housing have specific protections outlined in their lease with the local housing authority and in regulation [760 CMR 6.00 Occupancy Standards and Tenant Participation](#).

It is important to note that if a survivor lives in state-aided public housing, their protections differ from those of survivors living in federally funded housing, which abides by the VAWA housing protections (see Appendix: Exhibit A and B for more information).

Recommendations

HS has two work groups, **Housing Policy** and **Training & Collaboration**. These issues were first raised and discussed during those work group meetings. For the state public housing policy recommendation, a smaller group of subcommittee members, including SDV advocates,

legal services, Jane Doe Inc., and Subcommittee Co-Chairs, met over several months to discuss in greater detail. HS' final recommendations are listed below.

Training and Collaboration

Through collaborations among current and former HS members, including the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), MassHousing, and the DPH, well over 1,300 participants have already been trained on the intersection of affordable housing and SADVHT. A comprehensive housing search guide for SADVHT advocates has been developed and broadly shared. A series of training sessions are planned for SADVHT advocates to learn about housing-related resources through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EHS) agencies and EOHLC.

However, with a high turnover rate among both advocate and housing staff, these trainings will need to be regularly repeated and updated whenever program changes and policies occur. To address this issue, the HS recommends the following.

R1: Expand Housing Training Opportunities for SADVHT Advocates

Deliver regular training on the intersection of affordable housing and sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. Due to high staff turnover, ensure these trainings are frequently repeated for both advocates and housing staff.

R1A: Expand Housing Information for Survivors

Create and disseminate housing pamphlets for survivors and ensure translation and printing support for these resources.

Continuums of Care

In addition to these training collaborations, SADVHT advocacy agencies have also begun collaborating with their local Continuums of Care (CoC), a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals, to apply for federal funding to rapidly rehouse and otherwise support survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These collaborations have totaled over \$6M in new federal funds and are now approaching \$12M in CoC funding for survivors in MA.

More SADVHT agencies are interested in exploring these collaborations and applying for these federal resources, but they will need technical assistance.

R2: Provide CoC Technical Assistance to SADVHT Providers

To address this challenge, we recommend providing technical assistance to SADVHT providers on how to apply to CoC processes and training opportunities for providers seeking federal funding.

Access to Housing

Other housing resources have been made available and are being piloted. EOHLC has made available two tranches of mobile vouchers to help survivors in DV emergency shelters move into permanent affordable housing, including 64 MA Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) resources and 50 Moving to Work (MTW) Section 8 vouchers. The New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA) is working on a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) emergency transfer pilot program to help survivors relocate from an unsafe affordable housing unit to another that's owned or operated by a participating housing entity.

As vital resources for survivors made homeless by sexual and domestic violence, HS recommends the following:

R3: Allocate MRVP and/or MTW Section 8

Continue the distribution of mobile vouchers to assist survivors in domestic violence shelters transitioning to permanent housing, ensuring the availability of shelter for those in need. Consider expanding the pool of mobile vouchers, depending on additional federal or state funding.

EOHLC Policy Changes to Expand Housing Protections for Survivors

On state housing policy, housing protections available to survivors (e.g., emergency transfers, eviction protection) vary depending on what housing program they are in. VAWA applies to federal housing programs and provides broad protections. EOHLC has included these broad protections for MRVP. However, other state housing programs do not have these protections. This means that a survivor's ability to keep safe in affordable housing varies significantly depending on what type of housing they live in.

R4: Expand VAWA Housing Protections for Survivors in Massachusetts Public Housing

To strengthen protections for survivors in Massachusetts, the HS recommends expanding the coverage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to include the state's 41,000 public housing units, as feasible. This expansion shall involve several key strategies:

- Enhancing verification procedures to accurately identify DV survivors and streamline the application process.
- Evaluating the impact of self-certification on housing demand and adjusting policies as needed.
- Collaborating with LHAs to prevent evictions when DV is disclosed, ensuring survivors' housing stability.
- Providing guidance to LHAs on offering new leases to program participants in cases of court-approved eviction.
- Developing options for situations where a DV survivor is a household member but not the leaseholder, protecting their rights and access to housing.
- Establishing clear policies and guidelines to safeguard survivors' rights and housing access, including permitting short-term holdover tenancies, and providing resources and support to remaining household members.

The HS is also interested in eventually exploring expansion to all state-funded housing programs, but it understands the breadth of those programs, the complexity involved in making the change, and the development of ways to monitor for compliance.

The HS also recommends that EOHLC consider policies and procedures to ensure VAWA compliance by covered housing providers. As EOHLC considers what specific policies and procedures to adopt, the Subcommittee recommends that EOHLC review the [National Council of State Housing Agencies' list of best practices](#).

See **Exhibit A** (appendix) for a case study explaining VAWA protections and their impact on survivors' lives and **Exhibit B** (appendix) for a comparison of gender-based violence housing protections based on housing type.

EA Family Shelter System

There is a critical connection between the family homelessness crisis and issues related to sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking (SADVHT). EOHLC is taking important steps to address SADVHT head-on. EA providers are continuing to develop their capacity to respond to these cases and are actively working with DTA to conduct necessary assessments. To further strengthen their ability to support survivors, EA providers have expressed the desire to receive additional SDV training. Survivors have also made it clear that they need more comprehensive SDV support. Meanwhile, SDV providers are facing increased demand for shelter and services from homeless survivors. We believe that by working together and integrating SDV expertise, we can create stronger support systems for families.

Domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking organizations have been supporting the Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter team and DTA's Domestic Violence Unit in triaging cases related to survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking in EA

shelters. They would like to continue supporting these efforts and continue collaborating on training to increase the knowledge and capacity of EA shelter providers across the state on domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

Given the similar challenges many SADVHT housing and shelter providers and EA shelter providers face in supporting survivors to find safe and stable housing, domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking providers would like to increase collaboration with EOHLC to coordinate resources and develop best practices when working with vulnerable populations. They would also like to support the development of policies and protocols that address the challenges faced by unhoused survivors.

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Office of Refugees and Immigrants have been very receptive to these efforts. Cross-trainings have already begun, and initial discussions about increased collaboration have occurred between the Council, domestic and sexual violence organizations, and Jane Doe Inc.

R5: Include SADVHT Field in EA Planning Efforts

The Housing Stability Subcommittee respectfully requests that the Administration, as feasible, involve organizations and survivors from the DVSVHT community in these discussions.

Conclusion

To enhance the quality of life and overall well-being of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, we strongly urge the adoption of our housing subcommittee's recommendations. These measures aim to expand access to safe, stable, and affordable housing options in Massachusetts, along with other essential resources. By implementing these recommendations, we can provide crucial support to victims and survivors, enabling them to establish and maintain secure living environments, which are fundamental to their recovery and long-term stability.

Human Trafficking

The Human Trafficking Subcommittee of the GCSADVHT is a group of experts from across Massachusetts. Their mission is to develop solutions that support victims of human trafficking in the state. It is co-chaired by **Secretary Terrence Reidy (designee Lisbeth Pimentel)**, **Lisa Goldblatt-Grace**, and **Glenn Daly**.

Sex Trafficking

Background

Sex trafficking is an egregious form of violence that is impacting members of the state in every community. While Massachusetts has made great strides toward addressing this issue, and while effective services are offered in parts of the state, Massachusetts lacks a coordinated plan to ensure that all sectors work together with a unified road map to end these harms. Victims of trafficking, who are most frequently among the most marginalized in our communities, can fall through the cracks of our systems, while those committing the harm (exploiters and buyers) are not always held accountable. Further, the pipeline for vulnerable children into this abusive industry is well documented, and Massachusetts lacks a more comprehensive statewide prevention strategy.

To address this challenge, Governor Healey signed [Executive Order No. 611](#), officially incorporating human trafficking into the scope of the Governor's Council to address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking in 2023. This move builds on years of anti-sex trafficking efforts in Massachusetts, where efforts had been ongoing since 2015. (Refer to **Exhibit C** in the Appendix for more details.) This section outlines the ongoing process of developing “the Plan,” a 5-year strategic plan, and initial recommendations to address sex trafficking across the state.

The Plan

During its first year, the subcommittee is working to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat sex trafficking in Massachusetts. This initiative combines both research and action-based approaches to address the issue. The strategy operates on three fundamental objectives: (1) **strengthening prevention efforts**, (2) **enhancing support for those impacted by human trafficking**, and (3) **holding perpetrators**

accountable. Through the implementation of these objectives, the Plan seeks to create tangible solutions and concrete steps to fight human trafficking across Massachusetts.

Scope and Components of the Plan

Scope

The scope will encompass a **5-year strategy** focused on addressing both child and adult sex trafficking through a victim-centered, equity-focused approach. It will prioritize inclusivity, covering individuals of all genders, sexual orientations, and racial or ethnic backgrounds, while ensuring comprehensive coverage across all regions of Massachusetts.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) on behalf of the HT Subcommittee has initiated an Inter-agency Service Agreement (ISA) with UMass Chan Medical School, ForHealth Consulting to facilitate the development of the Plan.

Components

- **Literature Review:** Comprehensive review and summary of existing data, reports, and strategic plans related to sex trafficking.
- **Interviews:** Conducting 50-75 interviews with key individuals.
- **Stakeholder Survey:** Gathering insights through a survey distributed to relevant stakeholders.
- **Focus Groups:** Organizing 10 focus groups comprising survivors, law enforcement personnel, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders.
- **Written Report:** Development and approval of a comprehensive written report outlining the findings and recommendations.

Funding

Funding covers two fiscal years from the EOHHS Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) human trafficking line item (4000-0005).

Timeline

The timeline for completing the plan is estimated to be one year. The first six to eight months will include the literature review, data collection, survey, interviews, and focus groups. The following four months will include developing and approving the plan document.

Stakeholder Involvement

The HT Subcommittee is involved in the content and direction of the Plan, thus ensuring that it centers survivor voices and encompasses the perspectives represented by the extensive diversity of the Subcommittee (including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, geography, and sector). The completed Plan will outline multiple specific recommendations to improve the state's response to human trafficking.

Challenges in Developing a Statewide Plan

One major challenge in developing a statewide plan to address the issue outlined above is ensuring that all stakeholders are considered and that the plan addresses as many gaps as possible while remaining feasible. To address this challenge, ForHealth Consulting began its literature review in February of 2024, followed by the development of a survey for stakeholders. ForHealth Consulting has relied on the expertise of the Human Trafficking Subcommittee, most recently requesting that they identify stakeholders, provide input, distribute the survey. The Human Trafficking Subcommittee identified various stakeholders, including survivors, LE, state agency staff, private agency staff, court personnel, and others, to highlight key issues that need to be addressed. These surveys are being followed by focus groups and interviews. The findings from these efforts will be compiled into the 5-year Plan.

Factors Contributing to Sex Trafficking and Areas of Improvement

Sex trafficking, fueled by systemic inequalities and high demand for commercial sex, including child exploitation, takes advantage of vulnerable individuals, often from marginalized communities (Hodge, 2008). A multifaceted approach is necessary to combat this complex issue and address the underlying structural inequities and institutional challenges. To address the complex factors contributing to sex trafficking and the underlying structural inequities and institutional challenges, the committee has identified several key areas for improvement.

Key Areas for Improvement

- Enhancing child services
- Creating a more robust and consistent adult support system
- Improving child-serving systems to focus on prevention and safety

- Incorporating racial equity principles throughout all initiatives
- Ensuring services are inclusive of all genders
- Developing specialized support for LGBTQIA+ individuals
- Establishing comprehensive services across different geographical areas
- Expanding prevention programs
- Implementing comprehensive training programs
- Improving coordination among various agencies and organizations

The committee remains open to exploring additional areas as needed to combat sex trafficking effectively

Strategic Plan Development and Guiding Principles

EOHHS has contracted with ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School to develop a five-year strategic plan (the Plan) that outlines human trafficking prevention and intervention activities across the state, working at the direction of and with the support of the Human Trafficking Subcommittee (HTS) of the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking (GCSADV).

Guiding Principles

The HTS has voted on and approved the following guiding principles:

- Evidence-Based Interventions
- Victim/Survivor Centered
- Culturally Responsive and Equity
- Survivor Engagement/Leadership
- Trauma Informed Care
- Multi-System/Multi-Disciplinary Approaches
- Partnership
- People with lived experience must be central to any effort

Additional Principles

- **We recognize experience and expertise:** HTS members bring deep expertise in human trafficking prevention, intervention, and response. ForHealth Consulting contributes strategic planning and facilitation experience. We will leverage this collective knowledge to develop the plan.
- **We center lived experience:** People with lived experience of human trafficking must be central to any efforts to understand the problem and develop strategies and solutions.
- **We are Action-Oriented:** The strategic plan will be practical and implementable, with clear steps to advance the state's anti-trafficking efforts. It will address barriers and set achievable yet ambitious goals for both immediate and long-term impact.

Roles, Organizational Structures, and Advisory Groups:

The ForHealth Consulting Project Team is regularly seeking information, advice, and feedback from the HTS and its subgroups throughout all phases of project activities.

GCSADVHT: The Plan will be disseminated as a product of the GCSADVHT. The HTS co-chairs will periodically update the GCSADVHT on activities and progress.

Human Trafficking Subcommittee: HTS members have been engaged throughout the course of the development of the strategic plan in all deliverables and activities, including:

- Materials to be included in the literature review and environmental scan
- Development of data collection instruments (surveys, interview questions, focus group guides)
- Providing content for the plan through participation in the survey, focus groups, and interviews
- Development of the plan and recommendations, including the structure and content of the strategic plan

MA Statewide Plan Advisory Group: A Massachusetts Statewide Plan Advisory Group (Advisory Group) is being convened specifically for this project to ensure that people with lived experience related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are directly engaged in providing feedback. The group members are self-selected from the HTS, with the expectation that engagement will include approximately six to ten hours during the six to nine months that the plan is written. Advisory Group members are consulting on key project elements including survey design, lived experience engagement processes, research protocols, evaluation findings, and final HTS recommendations.

Members may become more involved in some aspects of the creation of the Plan, depending on their interests and time constraints. As these activities are part of the involvement in the HTS, no extra compensation is permitted. Activities should occur during regular working hours for those involved. If an Advisory Group member takes on a larger role as needed and appropriate and receives approval from the chairs, this may be compensated.

Working Groups: Depending upon the need, the HTS may establish additional working groups to address specific topic areas within the creation of the statewide strategic plan.

ForHealth Consulting Team: The ForHealth Consulting Team Project Team is responsible for directing all project activities, soliciting feedback and advice, and drafting all deliverables and materials. The ForHealth Consulting Team Project Team members regularly attend HTS meetings and convene and schedule Advisory Group meetings as needed.

Individuals with Lived Experience and other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs): The ForHealth Consulting Project Team is engaging with individuals with lived experience and other subject matter experts (SMEs) to learn more about the state's current strengths, gaps, and areas of improvement in its response to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Individuals who participate in activities that are not part of their professional role are being compensated for their time and participation through a stipend.

Recommendations

Furthermore, to advance the work of the Human Trafficking Subcommittee, we recommend the following.

The Plan

R1: Develop and Execute a Comprehensive 5-Year Strategy to Combat Sex Trafficking

The Human Trafficking (HT) Subcommittee recommends the development and implementation of a five-year plan to address sex trafficking, encompassing both children and adults. This plan aims to strengthen prevention efforts, enhance support for individuals impacted by human trafficking, and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

To support the development of the five-year plan, the subcommittee will continue to convene an Advisory Group consisting of survivors. The subcommittee will engage with these survivors to finalize the plan's recommendations and involve them in the distribution of the final plan.

Human Trafficking and Transportation

The transportation industry, in particular, has been identified as a key access point for traffickers to move victims and conduct their illicit operations (Habermann et al., 2021; Sokat, 2022). Truck stops, rest areas, and transit hubs can all serve as locations where traffickers recruit new victims or facilitate the transport of those who are being exploited. As such, equipping transportation workers with the knowledge and tools to recognize and report suspected trafficking is an important component of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy.

R2: Implement Human Trafficking Awareness Training for Transportation Personnel

MassDOT would like to implement comprehensive human trafficking awareness training for MassDOT personnel, including field staff, maintenance crews, rest area personnel, and transit workers. This targeted training will equip employees with critical knowledge to recognize and report potential human trafficking situations, enhancing safety and support for vulnerable individuals across transportation networks. Some of this work is already underway. Additionally, the RMV plans to launch an initiative to raise awareness about human trafficking. The Registry will print visor cards for commercial vehicles, which drivers may affix inside their vehicles with information regarding how to recognize human trafficking and how to report the activity. The Human Trafficking Subcommittee state chairs will support MassDOT in their efforts to train MassDOT civilian personnel.

By providing frontline workers with the knowledge and skills to recognize and report potential trafficking situations, we can significantly enhance public safety, disrupt trafficker operations, and support victims. This training will not only empower individuals to protect vulnerable populations but also foster collaboration among transportation providers, law enforcement, and social services. Additionally, by raising public awareness and reducing the long-term costs associated with trafficking, we can create a more just and equitable society.

Labor Trafficking

R3: Establish Distinct Sex and Labor Trafficking Subcommittees within the Human Trafficking Subcommittee Structure

The Human Trafficking Subcommittee will officially establish a dedicated Labor Trafficking Subcommittee to work alongside the existing Sex Trafficking Subcommittee. Both subcommittees will meet regularly to coordinate efforts, share intelligence, and develop comprehensive

strategies to combat all forms of human trafficking. This expansion utilizes our established expertise in sex trafficking while enhancing our capabilities to address labor trafficking through targeted stakeholder engagement and focused initiatives. The co-chairs leading the labor trafficking efforts are **Emily Leung**, **Dr. Hanni Stoklosa**, and **Heather Rowe**. We are excited to play a role in bringing about this important systemic change in Massachusetts.

Conclusion

Through the efforts of the Human Trafficking Subcommittee, Massachusetts is on track to make significant strides in combating both sex and labor trafficking. The creation of a comprehensive five-year strategic plan to address sex trafficking and the establishment of a Labor Trafficking Subcommittee marks a vital milestone—one that survivors, advocates, and state agencies have been striving for over the past decade. This plan aims to increase accountability, streamline initiatives, ensure services are allocated where they are needed most, and, most importantly, ensure that survivor voices direct our future actions.

Military, Veterans, and Families

The Military, Veterans, and Families Subcommittee (MVFS) is a dedicated group of advocates, community partners, and key stakeholders in Massachusetts. The subcommittee's goal is to ensure seamless access to domestic and sexual violence prevention and response services for military members (past and present) and their families. This includes comprehensive training for civilian and military entities to ensure that service referrals are trauma-informed, well-equipped, and timely. The MVFS is crucial in coordinating these efforts and ensuring stakeholders are aligned with our mission. It is co-chaired by **Roseann Trionfi-Mazzuchelli**, **Tamara Thompson**, and **Elaine Andrew**.

Background

Massachusetts faces significant challenges with intimate partner violence; approximately 33.9% of Massachusetts women and 31.7% of Massachusetts men experience intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking in their lifetimes. The state also has a substantial military population, including active-duty personnel, National Guard and reserve members, and their families. As of the most recent data, Massachusetts has approximately 4,788 active-duty service members, 2,085 active-duty spouses, and 3,312 active-duty children. Additionally, there are 17,523 National Guard and reserve members, 7,374 National Guard and reserve spouses, and 10,040 National Guard and reserve children.

Sexual and domestic violence affects both civilian and military communities in Massachusetts. In 2023, the state reported 4,060 sex offenses in the military. While the military provides annual training on prevention and response, gaps in data collection and reporting hinder a comprehensive assessment of abuse and crime rates related to military personnel. National Guard and Reserve members face unique challenges, as they may experience sexual assault or domestic violence during active service or inactive duty training.

Military service introduces specific risk factors for intimate partner violence, including multiple deployments, family separation, and potential mental health issues. Although the Department of Defense has implemented prevention and response activities, challenges persist in awareness efforts and information sharing between private and public sectors.

To address these issues, it's crucial to improve data collection, enhance coordination among partners, and educate the public and military personnel about reporting procedures and available resources. Continuous collaboration between military, state, local law enforcement, and state agencies is essential, focusing on data sharing and analysis of prevention, response, and resource utilization. Updating existing agreements with partnering agencies could help address these challenges, potentially including provisions for notifying base installations when military members face domestic or sexual violence charges.

Recommendations

The recommendations below aim to address some of the key challenges mentioned above.

Firearm Access

The 1996 Lautenberg Amendment of the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 significantly expanded restrictions on firearm possession for individuals involved in domestic violence. This law makes it a felony for anyone convicted of a domestic violence offense, even a misdemeanor, or subject to a restraining order for harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner or child, to possess, transport, or receive firearms or ammunition. Importantly, this law applies to everyone, including LE and military personnel.

In addition to federal law, civilian abuse protection orders (CAPOs) may also prohibit firearm possession. When these restrictions apply to military personnel, the armed forces will confiscate government-issued weapons and ammunition, revoke the individual's right to possess them and require the service member to dispose of any personally owned firearms. The military may also place the individual on a "do not arm" list, temporarily restricting access to government-issued weapons.

R1: Enhance Military Status Tracking

To enhance law enforcement's awareness of active military status, we recommend that the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) implement a new standard requiring active-duty military members to register their active status with the RMV.

The recommendation aims to improve law enforcement's response to domestic violence incidents involving military personnel. By identifying a service member's military status, officers can:

1. Identify the individual's military status during initial incident assessment
2. Recognize potential risks associated with military personnel's access to firearms
3. Document the need for firearm removal in the incident report, if applicable
4. Formally notify the service member's commanding officer about the incident and recommended firearm intervention

Upon receiving notification from law enforcement, the commanding officer can:

1. Review the reported incident and associated risk factors
2. Exercise discretionary authority to remove firearms from the service member
3. Prevent the service member's access to additional weapons
4. Initiate appropriate administrative or disciplinary actions consistent with military protocols
5. Ensure victim safety through command-level intervention

This approach creates a coordinated response mechanism that leverages both law enforcement and military command structures to interrupt potential escalation of violence and protect potential victims.

Conclusion

The Military, Veteran, and Families subcommittee has brought forth these recommendations to better serve the members of the military and their families based on each group member's unique expertise. These recommendations generally follow the theme of generating awareness among the military and civilians regarding sexual violence and domestic violence within the military. The recommendations also bring forward ideas that are more military-centric, such as making sure members of the military are given resources that they are knowledgeable of and can access both on and off base. In addition, the suggestion of creating an incentive program where public and private entities can receive recognition for completing certain training is also included.

Impact Metrics

An ongoing evaluation is crucial to measure the impact of these recommendations and identify areas for improvement. To assess the impact of the recommended interventions, the following metrics will be tracked: **a decrease in sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking incidents; increased utilization of reporting and support services; enhanced community awareness and prevention programs; and improved law enforcement response and investigation of related crimes.** The Council will work with state funders to collect and analyze data at multiple levels: individual-level data, program/organization-level metrics, and community-level metrics.

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Appendix

Exhibit A: Case Study Regarding VAWA Housing Protections

Safe and affordable housing is crucial for survivors to live free from abuse. Unfortunately, abuse often results in housing instability, and survivors find themselves having to make impossible choices between safety from violence and maintaining stable housing. Too often, a survivor may obtain an abuse prevention order to secure their physical safety, only to find themselves at risk of losing their housing due to eviction. Survivors face eviction actions for many different reasons that stem from abuse.

Subcommittee members have supported survivors who are at risk of eviction for a variety of reasons. These reasons include instances where the abuser has caused damage to the apartment or where they have been residing with the survivor in violation of the lease and against their wishes. Other reasons for eviction include the abuser's actions in preventing the survivor from being on the lease, engaging in criminal activities that violate the law and the lease, as well as causing noise complaints from neighbors. Furthermore, frequent police or ambulance calls to the home, the survivor's inability to afford rent without the abuser's income, and the abuser stealing the survivor's paychecks and preventing rent payment have also led to eviction threats.

Once survivors are in the eviction process, they are forced into homelessness and face the daunting task of defending the eviction alongside the abuser. They often lack legal representation, while landlords typically have lawyers and tend to win in court. Faced with the possibility of a court-ordered eviction, survivors may feel pressured to agree to leave their homes, even though their best option for affordable housing is often to stay where they are, in familiar neighborhoods with established support networks. This is especially true for survivors living in subsidized housing, such as state public housing or housing subsidized through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.

The legal rights and remedies for survivors in eviction cases depend on whether they live in private housing or public or subsidized housing. Additionally, for those in public or subsidized housing, their rights and remedies will vary based on whether the housing is funded by state or federal funds. Now let us consider Jane's situation:

Jane's Story: Jane resides at ABC Towers, a 60-unit apartment building in Anytown, MA. She shares her home with her husband, Mike, and their two children, Sally and Max. One evening, Mike

becomes enraged and throws furniture around, damaging the walls of the living room. He also physically assaults Jane and then leaves the house, kicking a hole in the door on his way out. The police responded, and Jane obtained an emergency 209A Abuse Prevention Order. This is not the first time such an incident has occurred. A few days later, Jane received a Notice to Quit terminating her tenancy due to the incident.

VAWA-covered Housing: If Jane lives in VAWA-covered housing (i.e., federal or MRVP), the Notice to Quit she receives includes a notice about her rights as a domestic violence victim. From that notice, she will learn that she cannot be evicted for the actions of the abuser, that she has the right to an emergency transfer, and that she can request that the housing authority bifurcate her lease and preserve her own tenancy while removing the abuser. Jane will learn the many ways she can prove she is a victim of domestic violence. She will learn that the information she provides to the housing authority will be kept confidential. She will also learn how she can file a complaint if she believes her rights as a victim of abuse have been violated. VAWA allows Jane to take action to preserve her housing while keeping herself and her children safe.

State Public Housing: If Jane lives in state public housing, state regulations and guidance provide some protection for her as a domestic violence victim. However, the notice terminating her tenancy does not include a notice about these rights. Jane may remember that she received a notice with some information back when she signed her lease or redetermined her rent, but she

probably does not have that piece of paper and almost certainly does not remember what it said. If she does remember, she will know that she cannot be evicted for Mike's actions, but only if she removes Mike from the apartment. She does not have the right to request the lease be bifurcated, which would allow the housing authority to remove Mike from the apartment without requiring Jane to take that action. She may remember that she can request a transfer, but if she read the notice carefully, she would also know that the housing authority is not required to give her that transfer and that she needs to prove that the move would help her to be safer. She will know that she can have her locks changed at her expense. She is left vulnerable to eviction without the more comprehensive protections of VAWA she would have in a federally subsidized apartment.

Private Housing: If Jane lives in private housing with no subsidy, the notice to quit she receives will not include any information about her rights. The only protection from eviction Jane has is if she can show that the eviction is in retaliation for her exercising her right to get an abuse prevention order or getting help from LE, a very difficult case to prove. Under current Massachusetts state law, Jane can be evicted for the actions of her abuser or for no cause at all. She has no right to transfer apartments or bifurcate the lease. She has the right to have her locks changed at her expense but has no way of knowing that. She has a right to break her lease, but again, there is no way she would know of that option, as notification is not required under the law. Jane is left vulnerable, facing almost certain eviction. She may decide to return to the abuser or move

into overcrowded, unaffordable, or unsafe housing to keep some roof over her children's heads. Jane and her children may be physically safe from the abuser after getting a restraining order, but their path toward healing and thriving will be extremely challenging with housing stability.

Escaping an abusive intimate relationship is dangerous and extremely difficult, and the inconsistency of housing protections available to survivors makes finding pathways to safety even more challenging. The most significant gaps in protections for survivors who live in state public housing include the lack of an unqualified affirmative defense to eviction, the lack of a right to a domestic violence safety transfer, no requirement that the housing provider inform tenants of their gender-based violence protections at the time the tenancy is terminated, and no process for bifurcation of a lease to remove an abusive tenant while allowing the survivor and their family to stay in place. Incorporating VAWA protections into the state public housing regulations would address these gaps in protection and harmonize the administration of state and federal public housing for public housing authorities (PHAs) who have both types of housing in their portfolios.

The HS has found it helpful to look at the protection available to survivors in these three distinct types of housing by creating a chart. [Exhibit A: Comparison of Gender-Based Violence Housing Protections Based on Housing Type] Victims living in VAWA-covered housing have meaningfully greater protections than those in state public housing or private housing. 1) The substantive

protections are more extensive. 2) More victims of abuse are entitled to VAWA protection because VAWA's definition of abuse includes victims of economic and technological abuse. At the same time, the state public housing guidance uses the definition found in MA General Laws chapter 209A, section 1, focusing on physical harm. 3) VAWA protections come with the full authority of statutory law. In contrast, current state public housing protections are found in sub-regulatory guidance, which do not carry the same weight as formally promulgated regulations and are more easily changed.

There is no principled justification for state public housing victims' rights being different from those of victims living in federal public housing, Section 8, LIHTC, or even MRVP. Victims' housing rights should be consistent no matter the nature of the subsidy involved. The state should work towards providing VAWA protections to survivors regardless of the housing program in which they live.

Exhibit B: Comparison of Gender-Based Violence Housing Protections Based on Housing Type

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
Definition of Covered gender-based violence	<p>Domestic violence: a pattern of any other coercive behavior committed, enabled, or solicited to gain or maintain power and control over a victim, including verbal, psychological, economic, or technological abuse that may or may not constitute criminal behavior by a current or former partner (including a dating relationship) or co-parent. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(12), (13),(40).</p> <p>Stalking: engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to–(A) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or (B) suffer substantial emotional distress. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(36).</p> <p>Sexual assault: any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks the capacity to consent. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(35).</p>	<p>Abuse is defined by Mass. G.L. c. 209A requires a showing of physical harm or attempt to cause physical harm, fear of imminent physical harm, or sexual assault. Covers abuse by family members, not just intimate partners.</p> <p>[This is impacted by the new law, which includes coercive control; impact TBD.]</p>	<p>G.L. c. 209A definitions</p> <p>[This is impacted by the new law, which includes coercive control; impact TBD.]</p>

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
Defense to eviction	<p>34 U.S.C § 12491(b)(1) Prohibits termination/eviction on the basis that tenant is/has been a victim of DV/SA/Stalking</p> <p>24 C.F.R. 200.5(b)(1)) Clarifies that this protection relates to anything that is a <i>direct result</i> of abuse, not just the abuse itself</p> <p>34 U.S.C § 12491(b)(2)(A)-(B) Incident of actual or threatened DV/SA/S” shall not be construed as a serious or repeated violation of a lease” or “good cause for terminating the assistance, tenancy, occupancy rights of victim/threatened victim</p> <p>34 U.S.C § 12491(b)(3)(A) Criminal activity related to DV cannot be used to evict the victim.</p>	<p>PHN 2020-39: If an existing tenant is a documented victim of abuse/domestic violence/dating violence/sexual assault/stalking and removes the abuser from the unit, the LHA shall not evict the tenant/remaining household members for damage, disturbance, or other lease violation caused by the abuser unless failing to do so could, within an immediate time-frame, result in death or serious bodily harm to persons lawfully on the LHA property, and there are no other actions that could reasonably be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat.</p>	<p>G.L. c. 239, §2A – defense if eviction is in retaliation for reporting abuse to LE/obtaining or enforcing 209A restraining order</p> <p>(This applies to all housing in MA.)</p>
Bifurcation of lease	<p>34 U.S.C § 12491(b)(3)(B)(i) Permits PHA/Owner/Manager to bifurcate lease to evict/remove/terminate the abuser without evicting/terminating/removing the victim.</p>		

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
	Permits victims to establish eligibility for housing if they are not already a participant in the housing program.		
Emergency Transfer	34 U.S.C § 12491(e) Requires an emergency transfer plan that allows relocation to a safe unit that is immediately available internally, and that provides reasonable efforts to help a survivor transfer to an external unit if needed for safety.	PHN 2020-39: EOHLC Form Lease and regulation at 760 C.M.R. § 6.06(4)(q) requires that an LHA must provide reasonable and appropriate assistance to tenants who are victims of domestic violence. Such reasonable and appropriate assistance for victims of domestic violence/abuse (as well as for victims of sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking) may include granting the tenant a transfer for administrative reasons in accordance with the definition at 760 C.M.R. § 5.03.	
Early lease termination	42 U.S.C. § 1437f(r)(5) Allows a Section 8 voucher holder to break a lease for safety reasons during the first year of the lease		G.L. c. (186). §24 Permits early lease termination without financial liability within three months of the most recent act of DV or if the survivor is “reasonably in fear of imminent serious physical harm”; the landlord may request proof (copy of protective order; court record or third-party verification). (This applies to all housing in MA)

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
Lock changes	PIH-2017-08 (HA) Lock changes are one of the mitigating actions United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) suggests to reduce or eliminate “an actual and imminent” threat caused by gender-based violence.	760 CMR 6.06(4)(r) To re-key locks promptly upon request of a household member who has obtained a restraining order which is in force against another household member on account of domestic violence and to waive charges for the cost where circumstances warrant.	G.L. c. 186 §26 Requires Landlord to change locks within two business days of request by a survivor; if the owner fails to change locks, T may change them; the owner’s non-compliance may be liable for damages (the greater of actual or three months’ rent plus attorney’s fees); LL may request proof (copy of protective order; third party verification). (Applies to all housing in MA)
Application for housing	<p>34 U.S.C § 12491(b)(1) Prohibits denial on the basis that tenant is/has been the victim of DV/SA/Stalking</p> <p>24 C.F.R. 200.5(b)(1)) Clarifies that this protection relates to anything that is a <i>direct result</i> of abuse, not just the abuse itself</p> <p>PIH-2017-08 (HA) PHA must assess whether the adverse factor being used to deny housing is a direct result of the fact that the applicant is or has been a victim of gender-based violence. HUD provides examples</p>	PHN 2020-39 When an LHA determines that an applicant may be disqualified for housing because of a lease violation at a prior tenancy, including damage, disturbance, or nonpayment of rent if the applicant shows that the applicant was a victim of abuse/domestic violence/dating violence/sexual assault/stalking and that the lease violation was caused by the perpetrator of domestic abuse or sexual violence, then these facts shall be considered by the LHA as mitigating circumstances	<p>G.L. c. (186). §25 An owner shall not refuse to enter into a rental agreement, nor shall a housing subsidy provider deny assistance, based on an applicant having terminated a rental agreement under section 24 or based upon an applicant having requested a change of locks under section 26.</p> <p>(Applies to all housing in MA)</p>

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
	such as poor credit history, poor rental history, criminal record, and history of non-payment or rent as adverse factors that could be a direct result of gender-based violence and, if so, should not be a basis for denial.	<p>pursuant to MRVP - 760 C.M.R. 5.08(2).</p> <p>Priority 4 is given to applicants who have been displaced or are about to be displaced from their primary residence due to an Abusive Situation. The Policy provides that an applicant is in an Abusive Situation if the applicant or member of the applicant's household is determined by the LHA to be a victim of abuse as defined in the Abuse Prevention Act (G.L. c.209A, §1). Survivors of sexual assault are also eligible if they become displaced as a consequence of sexual violence or stalking.</p>	
Notification of Rights	<p>34. S.C § 12491(d) and 24 CFR 2005(a)(2) - tenants must receive a VAWA notice at the following times:</p> <p>(i) At the time the applicant is denied assistance or admission under a covered housing program; (ii) At the time the individual is provided assistance or admission under the covered housing program; (iii) With any notification of eviction or notification of termination of assistance; and (iv) During the 12-month period following December</p>	<p>PHN 2020-39 Notice of rights is required to be provided to applicants at the time of application via Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Public Housing (CHAMP) and notice of rights is required to be provided to tenants at the time of lease-up and at annual rent redeterminations.</p>	

	Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
	16, 2016, either during the annual recertification or lease renewal process, whichever is applicable or if there will be no recertification or lease renewal for a tenant during the first year after the rule takes effect, through other means.		
Rent Recalculation		In accordance with 760 CMR 6.04(3)(b), there may be good cause for a waiver of any late fees and interest that might otherwise have been charged if the tenant fails to pay the rent until the amount of rent has been recalculated after the removal of an abuser from the household	
Verification of DV/SA/T	34. S.C § 12491 and 24 C.F.R.§5.2007 provide documentation by any of the following: (i) Self-certification form; (ii) Document from a professional who has assisted the victim; (iii) Police or court records; or (iv) Statement or other evidence provided by the victim.	PHN 2020-39 requires that the abusive situation needs to be documented through at least one or more of the following based upon the Applicant's individual circumstances: (i) Medical reports, (ii) Police reports, (iii) Court reports; (iv) Applicant has attempted to get a restraining order; (v) Applicant has filed a civil or criminal complaint against the accused; (vi) Letter from an attorney stating the case; (vii) Letter from counselor; (vii) Psychological	G.L. c. § 186 24(e1) a copy of a valid protection order under chapter 209A or 258E; a record from a federal, state, or local court or LE of an act of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault or stalking and the name of the perpetrator if known; or a written verification from any other qualified third party to whom the tenant, co-tenant or member of the tenant or co-tenants household reported the abuse signed by both advocate and survivor.

Federally Subsidized/LIHTC/MRVP	State Public Housing	Private Housing
Confidentiality	<p>report; (vii) Letter from social service agency; (ix) Detailed third party written explanation of the circumstances that led to Applicant's present housing situation.</p> <p>34 U.S.C § 12491(c)(4) Any information submitted to a public housing agency or owner or manager, including the fact that an individual is a victim of gender-based violence shall be maintained in confidence by the PHA and may not be entered into any shared database or disclosed to any other entity or individual, except to the extent that the disclosure is—(A)requested or consented to by the individual in writing; (B)required for use in an eviction proceeding under subsection (b); or (C)otherwise required by applicable law.</p>	<p>G.L. c. (186). § 24(f) An owner or housing subsidy provider who obtains written proof of status as a victim of abuse shall keep such documentation and the information contained in the documentation confidential and shall not provide or allow access to such documentation in any way to any other person or agency unless the victim provides written authorization for the release of such information or unless required by court order, government regulation or governmental audit requirements</p>

Exhibit C: History of Anti-Sex Trafficking Efforts in Massachusetts

2001

- Latasha Cannon, a 17-year-old girl who was commercially sexually exploited and living in a group home funded by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), was brutally murdered. This event led to the formation of a multidisciplinary coalition initiated by the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Suffolk County, the Suffolk County District Attorney's (DA's) Office, DCF, other service providers, and LE partners. The coalition's immediate goal was to coordinate interventions and develop enhanced programming for children involved with commercial sexual exploitation.
- Roxbury Youthworks created a Child Exploitation Working Group to examine Boston trends and issues regarding child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

2002

- My Life My Choice (MLMC) was founded as the first non-profit in the state dedicated to addressing the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children, motivated in part by the death of Latasha and the subsequent response. MLMC began training child welfare and LE systems to enhance victim identification, improve the response of service providers to exploited youth, and establish a safety net for the most vulnerable young people.
- The Developing Alternatives for Women Now (DAWN) Program was also created, starting as roundtable discussions with community organizations to identify ways to provide support to women charged with prostitution-related offenses.

2004-2008

- The Massachusetts Trial Court initiated a project aimed at changing the perception that "prostitution" was a "victimless crime." The initiative sought to equip court personnel with the skills needed to support both adults and minors affected by the sex industry. This effort included comprehensive training for judges and court staff and targeted work within specific courts to evaluate and improve their response to these issues.

2005

- The EVA Center was founded to support those wanting to exit the sex trade.

2006

- The Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition program at the Suffolk County Children's Advocacy Center developed a protocol and memorandum of understanding that 35 participating agencies signed.

2009

- Massachusetts' first successful prosecution of sex trafficking offenses took place. Eddie Jones and Darryl Tavares were found guilty of conspiring to traffic women in interstate commerce for prostitution and transporting minors in interstate commerce for prostitution. Both were sentenced to 25 years in prison and required to register as sex offenders upon release.
- Amirah, Inc. was founded to provide exit pathways out of the sex trade through residential and aftercare opportunities.

2011

- Governor Deval Patrick signed into law [An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People](#), which established new crimes for sex and labor trafficking, increased penalties for existing crimes, created requirements for reporting of trafficking victims by mandated reporters, provided safe harbor provisions for child victims, established a trust fund for victims using forfeited assets, and mandated an inter-agency task force. The law allowed some discretion for the court to continue with delinquency or criminal complaints for child victims of sex trafficking.

2012

- The Massachusetts Interagency Human Trafficking Policy Task Force (Task Force) was formed and chaired by the state's Attorney General, Martha Coakley. In 2013, [a report with findings and recommendations was released](#) addressing five areas: victim services, demand reduction, data collection and information sharing, education and training, and public awareness. The report also recommended the formation of implementation groups and an implementation plan to advance these recommendations.
- In December, a small group of local women attended a meeting to learn more about the buying and selling of people for sex and how they might organize to help. As a first step in understanding the experiences of adult women and the resources available to them, they conducted a community readiness assessment from January through May 2013, which identified the dramatic needs and gaps in

services across the regions of MetroWest and Central Massachusetts. One year later, RIA House, Inc. (Ready, Inspire, Act) was born as a 501(c)3 public charity organization.

- The Attorney General dedicated an Assistant Attorney General (AAG) to all human trafficking cases. The AAG was assigned to the Enterprise and Major Crimes Division of the Criminal Bureau. Throughout 2013 and 2014, a Human Trafficking Unit was established, and a second Assistant Attorney General was assigned to the Unit.

2014

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families awarded the state a five-year Child Welfare Anti-Trafficking Grant. Through the grant, the Department of Children and Families, SEEN coalition, and MLMC developed a statewide infrastructure including multidisciplinary teams, training, tools, and policy revisions to improve the prevention and intervention of sex trafficking. As a result of this grant, DCF made significant policy changes, including the development of a new 'missing from care' policy and broadening investigations to include accusations involving non-parental perpetrators (see 2016 update).
- Informed by their GIFT Program (Gaining Independence for Tomorrow) that served females, RYI created the Being United in Leading Our Destiny (BUILD) Program. BUILD is one of the state's few programs that support cisgender males, trans, and gender-diverse youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation.

2015

- Then-Governor Charlie Baker signed an Executive Order, re-launching the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, which included a subcommittee on human trafficking.
- The Massachusetts General Hospital Freedom Clinic was launched to provide health care for victims and survivors of human trafficking in the Boston Area. Services include treatment of acute and chronic illness, annual physical examinations, vaccination, mental health services, case management, and infection disease testing and treatment.
- Attorney General Maura Healey changed the Human Trafficking Unit to its Division within the Criminal Bureau of the Attorney General's Office.
- Living In Freedom Together (LIFT), Inc. in Worcester, was founded to provide immediate support and crisis intervention to individuals in the sex trade. The establishment of the Drop-In Center marked the beginning of their journey, offering a safe and welcoming space for those seeking refuge and resources.

2016

- DCF updated its Protective Intake Policy (2016) to include allegations of Human Trafficking-Sexually Exploited Child and Human Trafficking-Labor with a caregiver exception (the only allegations that do not require the naming of a perpetrator). Children who are Missing or Absent policy (2016 and updated 2019)
- The Massachusetts State Police's (MSP) Division of Investigative Services expanded with the creation of The High-Risk Victims Unit (HVRU). The HRVU is comprised of a dedicated team of Troopers responsible for the investigation and enforcement of state and federal crimes involving trafficking and sexual exploitation and strengthening the capabilities of federal, state, and local LE through training and investigative assistance.

2017

- The EVA Center opened one of the first emergency shelter programs for women who want out of the sex trade, as well as their children.

2018

- The Massachusetts state legislature passed a law allowing survivors of human trafficking to seek vacatur of certain prostitution and related criminal convictions to reduce unjust barriers faced because of these convictions¹.

2019

- LIFT expanded its reach and impact by establishing Jana's Place. This initiative was a significant step forward, allowing them to broaden our direct services and provide more comprehensive support to individuals experiencing the intersection of substance use disorder (SUD), mental health disorders (MHD), and exploitation in the sex trade.
- RFK was awarded a grant to provide mentoring services for survivors of commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) and/or HT in 2019 in Hampden County.
- EOPSS was awarded an Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) Federal Grant in partnership with EOHHS to combat the human trafficking of minors. EOPSS, along with the Municipal Police Training Committee, focused efforts to strengthen the LE response to trafficking throughout the state. As part of the grant work, two pilot programs were established with the Worcester and Hampden County District

Attorney Offices in partnership with the MSP HRVU to proactively investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking involving children and youth in identified high-risk areas. The grant also funded training for DCF and other staff, development of training videos for DCF foster parents, development of standards for CAC MDTs

- A National Institute of Justice-funded evaluation of the My Life My Choice curriculum was published. Results indicated that participants reported fewer episodes of sexually explicit behavior at follow-up.

2020

- The Executive Office of Health and Human Services launched a human trafficking grant program through their Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI). The grant program funded three organizations to deliver mentoring services by individuals with lived experience to those identifying as victims and survivors.
- Boston Human Exploitation and Sex Trafficking (BHEAT) was founded to support women at the intersection of opioid use disorder and the commercial sex trade through outreach on the street, the Suffolk County House of Correction, and in Boston area hospitals.

2021

- The state received two awards through the federal Office of Victims of Crime Service for Victims of Human Trafficking competitive grant opportunity. Applicants serving Hampden and Worcester Counties proposed to expand legal and case management services to individuals identified as victims of human trafficking.
- The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security released [Human Trafficking guidelines for LE](#). These guidelines resulted from efforts made by the 2019 OVC grant partners and sub-grantees, as well as feedback from numerous stakeholders (a complete list of contributors can be found on page two of the report). The guidelines address terminology, federal and state law, dynamics of trafficking, including recruitment and challenges to LE, LE response, the role of multidisciplinary teams, investigations, and courtroom testimony. The MPTC approved the topic of "Human Trafficking" to be taught as part of their Mandatory In-Service Training on Human Trafficking for the 2021-2022 training year. The curriculum is comprised of a 3-hour mandatory in-service training on human trafficking through the MPTC. This effort resulted in more than 17,000 state and local LE officers trained on human trafficking by the end of CY2022.

2022

- In August, the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts established a Human Trafficking and Civil Rights Unit within their Criminal Division.

2023

- In January, the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee launched a series of three specialized human trafficking trainings to support officers across the state, partnering with subject matter experts from the Attorney General's Office, State Police, and My Life My Choice. The training covered identifying and responding to human trafficking, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the legal process to certify victims and survivors of violent crimes and human trafficking. Approximately 20,000 officers were provided training across all three courses.
- Due to the success of the federal grant and the pilot programs, an additional \$500K was secured by EOPSS in the FY22 budget to expand efforts to combat human trafficking. The EOPSS Office of Grants and Research established the 2023 Human Trafficking Enforcement and Training Grant (HEAT) Program for MA District Attorney Offices to strengthen their investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and enhance local community relationships.
- Under Governor Maura Healey, the GCSADV was renamed to the "Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking (GCSADVHT)" to incorporate human trafficking as one of its principal purposes officially.
- In response to the evolving needs and challenges, LIFT transitioned into the Safe Exit Initiative (SEI). With this transition, SEI carries forward the impactful work initiated by LIFT with a renewed dedication to ending the sex trade by addressing the systemic causes of exploitation, which include racial and gender inequities.
- RFK worked with Berkshire County DA's office on a grant they were awarded in 2023 to hire a mentor. Mentor began in April of 2023 remotely and then moved to MA in September of 2023 to continue her work in person. RFK also partnered with Kids' Place in the Berkshires.
- Amirah, Inc. established its economic mobility program, augmenting its residential programming, to address the underlying economic vulnerabilities that drive many to and keep many in the sex trade.

2024

- In January, the Human Trafficking Subcommittee of the GCSADVHT began the process of creating a five-year strategic plan to improve the response to human trafficking in Massachusetts.

Exhibit D: Subcommittee Members

<i>Assessment & Response</i>	<i>Assessment & Response</i>	<i>Early Interventions</i>	<i>Early Interventions</i>	<i>Economic Mobility</i>
Courtney Cahill	Katelyn Fabbri	Josh Lubbers	Katie Marcincuk	Alix Boren
David Adams	Katherine Moran	Stephanie Howard	Kiera Bruce	Meghan Haggerty
Angela Davis	Kelly Dunne	Tim Cruz	Kristin Gerritsen	Andrew Bridges
Bethany Stevens	Kelly Tucker	Jennifer Cantwell	Leigh Miller	Clare Namugga
Christine Palladino-Downs	Mark Williams	Abigail Fee	Malcolm Astley	Courtney Cahill
Corinn Crowninshield	Mary Oldberding	Mary McGeown	Michele Penta	Crystal Jackson
David Rini	Maura Landry	Staverne Miller	Neena McConnico	Julia Kehoe
David Sullivan	Maureen Flores	Colleen Nixon	Nicole Modes	Kate Liddy
Ed Karcasinas	Michele Penta	Collette Puleo	Sara Keough	Kim Dawkins
John Hackett	Mithra Merryman	Emma Goldblum	Shaplaie Brooks	Sacha Stadhard
Hema Sarang-Sieminski	Patrick Glynn	Howard Yaffe	Susan Hubert	Stephanie Brown
James Barrett	Quynh Dang	Jess Croker	Tom King	Tara Huard
Jennifer Sprague	Sue English	Katelyn Fabbri		
Jenny Barron	Suzanne McDonough			
Julie Bakoian	Tara Huard			

<i>Housing Stability</i>	<i>Housing Stability</i>	<i>Housing Stability</i>	<i>Human Trafficking</i>	<i>Human Trafficking</i>
David Eng	Esther Rogers	Rachel Heller	Glenn Daly	Emilee Pihl
Kara Pillsbury Johnson	Georgia Aguilar	Rashida Golden	Lisa Goldblatt Grace	Hanni Stoklosa
Stephanie Brown	Hema Sarang-Sieminski	Ronit Barkai	Terrence Reidy	Heather Wightman
Alvina Brevard	Jassie Senwah	Shaundell Diaz	Lisbeth Pimentel	Jennifer Snook
Al Simpson	Jessica Santana	Strong Oak Lefebvre	Abigail Judge	Joan Sham
Amanda Mattingly McGee	Josh Lubbers	Virginia Griffin	Amy Farrell	Judy Benitez Clancy
Anthia Elliott	Judy Benitez Clancy	Wendy Connor	Andrea D'Amato	Kamlyn Haynes
Bill Grogan	Julia Devanthery		Angela Davis	Krystyna Boisjolie
Carmen Nieves	Kathleen Hersey		Ann Bertram	Liam Lowney
Catherine Kay	Linda Garcia		Audra Doody	Lisa Caputo
Cesia Sanchez	Linn Torto		Audrey Morrissey	Lori Ann Beltram
Clare Namugga	Margaux LeClair		Beth Keeley	Marc Sullivan
Crystal Jackson	Maria Crooker		Cecely Reardon	Marcus Puleo
Debbie Piltch	Megan McLaughlin		Courtney Sans	Mary Speta
Diana Santana	Nikia Bodden		Deborah Scott	Megan McLaughlin
Doreen Donovan	Pat Kelleher		Desiree Demos	Mia Alvarado

			Elizabeth Tarrant	Michael Turgeon
			Elizabeth Bouchard	Michael Zontini
<i>Human Trafficking</i>	<i>Military, Veterans, and Families</i>	<i>Military, Veterans, and Families</i>	<i>RESPECTFully</i>	
Nancy Scannell	Elaine Andrew	Kate Tierney	Elizabeth Wrenn	
Nicole Valila	Ro Trionfi-Mazzuchelli	Katelynn Fabbri	Jen Bolton	
Nikki Antonucci	Tamara Thompson	Kristi Holden	Jenna Kapp	
Noshee Mahmood	Andrea Gayle-Bennet	Lisa Ahaesy	Jennifer Williams	
Omar Irizarry	Allyson Fiorello	Mary Decesare	Joe Hungler	
Rachel Niemiec	Ambyr Braxton	Mary Mahan	Juan CarlosRivera	
Samantha Graham	Anna Marie Meola	Mitchell Hanson	Julia Gould	
Sandra Andrade	Anne Banducci	Paul Carew	Julia Gould	
Sheelah Gobar	Ashley Purple	Rachel Desharnais	Kat Everett	
Stacy Reed-Barnes	Ashley Martins	Randi Petricone	Kiera Bruce	
Steven Procopio	Chris Buckley	Sandra Gold	Lysetta Hurge-Putname	
Talia Magnani	Corrinn (Nelson) Crowninshield	Sean Norris	Maria Mombeleur	
Yi Juin Liu	Dean Lucier	Susan McDonough	Mark Bergeron-Naper	

Emma Riley	Tara Huard	Michelle Leonard
Jenny Barron	Yaneriis Dolce	Molly Pistrang-Gomes
Jessica Frost		Nancy Allen-Scannell
Jooma Shehzad		Suzanne Crowther
Karen Dahl		Sydney Carter
		Talia Magnani
		Tanyka Barnett
		Tiffany Chen

Exhibit E: Abbreviations

AAG: Assistant Attorney General

AGs: Attorney General's Office

BHEAT: Boston Human Exploitation and Sex Trafficking

CAC: Children's Advocacy Center

CANS: Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths

CAPOs: Civilian Abuse Protection Orders

CHAMP: Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Public Housing

CoC: Continuum of Care Programs

CSEC: Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

EA: Emergency Assistance

DCF: Department of Children and Families

DOJ: Department of Justice

DPH: Department of Public Health

DTA: Department of Transitional Assistance

DV: Domestic Violence

DVHRT: Domestic Violence High Risk Team

EOE: Executive Office of Education

EOHHS: Executive Office of Health and Human Services

EOHLC: Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

EOLWD: Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development

EOPSS: Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

FY: Fiscal Year

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GCSADVHT: Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking

HEAT: Human Trafficking Enforcement and Training Grant

HRVU: High Risk Victims Unit

HT: Human Trafficking

HTS: Human Trafficking Subcommittee

HUD: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

IPA: Intimate Partner Abuse

IPAEPs: Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs

IPH: Intimate Partner Homicide

LE: Law Enforcement

LIFT: Living in Freedom Together

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Aromantic

*The “+” represents the many other identities that may be part of the community such as pansexual, agender, non-binary, gender fluid, etc., as well as allies of the community.

MassDOT: Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MBTA: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

MDCS: MassHire Department of Career Services

MOVA: Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance

MRVP: Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program

MSP: Massachusetts State Police

MPTC: Municipal Police Training Committee

OVC: Office for Victims of Crime

SADVHT: Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking

SDV: Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

SEEN: Support to End Exploitation Now

SMEs: Subject Matter Experts

VAWA: Violence Against Women Act