

INTRODUCTION: The Office for Victims of Crime at the U.S. Department of Justice and the Office on Trafficking in Persons [OTIP] at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are pleased to share this conversation between OVC Director, Kristina Rose, and OTIP Director, Katherine Chon, about a joint Federal effort to develop standards of care for service providers supporting human trafficking survivors. These standards will be a set of guidelines that providers can consult to improve the quality and consistency of their responses. Directors Rose and Chon discuss how the anti-trafficking field has evolved over decades, how their respective offices serve survivors of human trafficking, and why these standards are needed. This joint effort will begin with a competitive funding opportunity that will be advertised on ovc.ojp.gov, ojp.gov, acf.hhs.gov/otip, and grants.gov upon release. Let's listen in!

KRISTINA ROSE: So, Kat, we recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act or, as we like to say the TVPA, and you've been working in this field from the very beginning. How have you seen things evolve, especially in terms of services for survivors?

KATHERINE CHON: Thank you, Kris. It's incredible that there's already been 20 years of efforts and progress on the issue of human trafficking. I know. I recall in my early years, we understood so much less back then. So that means we just know more.

Earlier on, most people's concept of who's impacted were primarily foreign Nationals who may have come from another country and trafficked here. And over the years we realized it was much more of a diverse set of populations at high risk for human trafficking.

We know that there are so many different victim service needs, from access to justice, to navigating the very complex health and human service system, the criminal justice system. So, we are continually hearing from advocates and victim service providers and survivors that housing, mental health, and substance use, and jobs are the top needs for survivors of trafficking and that those things haven't changed.

But the other aspect of what's changed in the field is that there are so many more systems of care, so many more sectors and industries involved on human trafficking. I remember working on one of the first Department of Justice-funded community task forces on human trafficking and, at that time, we were like, trying to get child welfare on board and bring together various levels of law enforcement and bring service providers together. And then now, you know, child welfare is much more engaged, the local school systems are engaged, workforce development programs are engaged, and even businesses and industries are much more engaged, ranging from transportation, to hospitality, to the finance sector. So, it really has developed into a[n] all hands-on deck mission for--certainly for the United States and we see this in other parts of the world as well.

KATHERINE CHON: So, Kris, you've also had a very long and diverse history working on behalf of victims of crime, including victims of human trafficking. And I know that OVC has been funding anti-trafficking service providers for over 20 years now. So, you've also experienced this evolution in the field. So, when you're thinking about where OVC has invested over time, what have you seen as being the greatest sources of support and where are you currently providing services?

KRISTINA ROSE: When I first came to OVC and was working on human trafficking and overseeing the folks that we had doing that work--at the time, we thought we had a

decent amount of funding. And when I look at the funding that we had then and the funding that we have now and the investment that Congress has made in human trafficking and most of that going into victim services, it's pretty amazing.

Right now, at OVC, we are managing almost 450 active awards. We have grantees in almost every state and territory in the U.S. So, we have seen the need grow and the awareness grow. And as that awareness grows, of course, we get more and more applications for funding. The grantees provide us with lots of great information about the people that they're serving and the types of services that they're providing. And, in 2020, we were able to provide services, through OVC's human trafficking funding, to more than 11,000 victims just in that year. And that included persons that identified as survivors but also those that were at risk for human trafficking.

One of the areas where we have really seen consistency is in the profile of the individuals that our grantees are serving. It's been fairly consistent, where 75 percent or so, of the clients that we've been serving are adults; with 25 percent being minors or under the age of 18. And we have also seen the percentage of U.S. citizens versus foreign Nationals stay fairly consistent with about 63 percent U.S. citizens and 35 percent, right around there, foreign Nationals. I think we have a ways to go to help male survivors or individuals who identify as male. So, I don't think we do nearly enough for them. And, again, you know, an issue that you and I have discussed before and we've been trying to solve for many years is, you know, how can we help more labor trafficking victims. You know, I think that some of the areas have evolved. But, as you said earlier, I do think that a lot of things remain the same and especially with the services that we offer. Although housing seems to have risen to the top and there seems to be a lot more attention and focus on being able to ensure that trafficking victims have housing support.

So, Kat, we've decided to partner on this really exciting project around standards of care. And why do you think that now is the right time for developing this product, specifically around human trafficking victims?

KATHERINE CHON: We're ready for it. I think the field is ready for it. We're hearing from survivors that they're looking for it. And, you know, I'm really excited, Kris, that we're partnering with you and the team at DOJ because we also fund many of the same organizations in communities, whether it's in urban settings, or suburban, or rural settings. And collectively, we cover the whole country. States are doing more, community-based and faith-based organizations are doing more, victim assistance programs are reaching more victims and survivors of trafficking, and we also see that survivors themselves are reaching out for help. So, through the National Human Trafficking Hotline they receive thousands of calls every single year; thousands directly from survivors of trafficking, understanding that they can access resources and seeking some type of support.

When we think about trafficking specific victim services versus broader victim assistance programs, there's a lot of overlap, a lot of universal needs. And I think both of our agencies in our funding opportunities we've listed the importance of having trauma-informed care, person-centered care, or victim-centered care, culturally and linguistically appropriate services. But I think there's more that we could do to drill down of what those terms really mean. When people step up to want to provide services, they also want to do a good job. They don't want to create any unnecessary harm. They want to be able to do things according to certain standards. And then there's also a lot that we've learned from other victim assistance fields, whether it's in the child abuse and maltreatment space, or domestic violence, or other forms of intimate partner violence,

so, the need is there. There's certainly a will within our Federal agencies. And some of the initial foundational research base is there as well, of what we've learned collectively from grantees and researchers and heard from survivors with both lived and professional experiences.

KATHERINE CHON: So, then Kris, on to--Back to you. What would you like to share about this joint initiative that we are announcing today between DOJ and HHS? And what is the vision that we have for this initiative and what are we building on?

KRISTINA ROSE: Well, it's funny because when the staff first raised with me that they wanted to do standards of care and they wanted to work with HHS, they wanted to work with OTIP, to do this for human trafficking victims, my first question was, but we already have standards of care. The work began on the original standards of care back in 1999 and we have updated it since then. So, the most recent issue of our model standards came out in 2016. And I thought why do we need something else? And there are actually a lot of reasons why it's important to have standards of care just for providers of services to human trafficking victims. The standards of care that were developed by OVC I think set a very good model for us to use and to build from.

I referred to those standards over and over again. They were so useful, especially in determining definitions, I loved the glossary that was in there, and also when I had questions around a particular approach. And when I think about human trafficking victims and the unique needs of survivors and how if a service provider is not aware of these specific dynamics around human trafficking, there's the potential for doing harm. And we know, as you said, that that's not what providers want; they want guidance. And that's really what these standards are. You know, we try to stress that standards are guideposts. It's really guidance to assist providers when they have questions about

which way to proceed, whether they're looking at competency standards, whether they're looking at ethical standards, or professional standards. We just want to make sure, right, that our human trafficking service providers have that resource to go to.

So, what we will do first is we will advertise through a competitive solicitation. And that's something that I'm really excited about working on with you all because I think that we're both going to be able to bring our expertise and our perspectives to this. So, it's going to be a very unique solicitation in that way. Once we make an award, that award recipient will be working with both of us and we will engage our offices to be able to develop the scope and the criteria of the standards that we want to address. And, you know, I've heard you say this before and, you know, we've been saying this for a while, about the importance of survivor voices and persons with lived experience and making sure that they have a seat at the table and we wouldn't have an effective product without that. So, our goal is to gather and speak with as many people as possible and also be able to put out the standards for public comment, so that when we have a final set of standards we can feel really confident that everyone who has wanted to weight has had an opportunity to do that.

We also will be building on some of the newer evidence-based practices. We'll be working with our colleagues at the National Institute of Justice and the research that has been funded over the years. So, I'm looking forward to using the investments that OJP has made--our sister agencies BJA and OJJDP and BJS with some of their statistical reporting--being able to incorporate all of that as well. So, we've got a lot of resources that we're going to be able to leverage to really make this an exciting product.

KATHERINE CHON: Thank you, Kris, for sharing that.

KRISTINA ROSE: So, Kat, what has OTIP developed that you believe will be critical for informing this project?

KATHERINE CHON: I want to start with what you mentioned a few minutes ago, Kris, of bringing those with lived experience into the process to inform what we're doing--what we will do together through these standards of care and then also some historic document. Through the interagency process we've heard from members of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and their recommendations on how both our agencies and others could improve on the service delivery end. And, then, we've funded these--a program called the Human Trafficking Leadership Academy. And this is a program that brings together six individuals with lived experience, six with professional experiences, and typically they're Federal grantees engaged in some type of anti-trafficking work.

We've hosted seven cohorts of these fellows over the past few years. And each cohort, in their leadership development program, as they're learning communications skills and collaboration and partnership skills, and other key tools for their leadership development, they're also addressing some key questions that we had at the Office on Trafficking in Persons. So, for example, you know, what are some recommendations or ideas that fellows had around survivors who also had co-occurring disorders, especially around substance abuse? What were some thoughts or recommendations around having a whole family or two-generational approach to healing from human trafficking? Because obviously trafficking doesn't just impact the individual, but also has an impact on interpersonal relationships and family, whether its biological or chosen families. And, then, more recently, we've brought together survivors and allied professionals around what are some recommendations for how to prevent labor trafficking among families that migrate frequently?

The most recent cohort were addressing questions of how can Federal agencies decrease the barriers for accessing services; services that survivors of trafficking are eligible for, particularly for survivors and communities of color disproportionately impacted by trafficking? So, I think we have a good foundation of areas to explore, of where standards of care could be helpful.

And then the other recent effort from HHS, it was a more than 3-year process, but working with survivors and healthcare providers on what are these core competencies that the healthcare sector can have to better identify and respond to human trafficking. And these are focused more on, well some on knowledge areas, of what do they need to know, and some on practice areas and perhaps some of this could also inform standards of care. And, then, finally one other thing I would mention is that we did support, through one of the HHS Regional Offices based out of Atlanta there was a multi-state southeastern collaboration around, what they called, guiding principles for service delivery. And this was based on what they saw as the primary needs that were--could be universal covering a national response, but also many region-specific needs that they saw regarding service delivery gaps. And then as you mentioned, the long history within the victims of crime field that we can work off of.

So, Kris, what are you most excited about for this effort?

KRISTINA ROSE: Well, you know, to be honest, I'm very excited to work with you Kat. We haven't had an opportunity in a long time to work together; so, I that is just really wonderful and I'm looking forward to that. I'm excited most about how the product that is eventually developed, these standards of care, how much they are going to really help service providers and improve the way that they do their jobs but also create

consistency so that everyone is really working from the same sheet of music. And making sure that we've got a practical framework that really resonates with the field. I'm also really excited, and this is something we haven't talked about yet, but that we will be focusing on responding to the victimization of minors, as well, in these standards. And that's something that I think is going to be very useful to be able to provide that, you know, developmentally appropriate standards for those younger people in trafficking situations. So, I just want to be able to create something that is going to be beneficial to the field, that is going to advance the work, bring some consistency to the work that we do, and, you know ultimately, enable us to, you know, better set individuals on a good path to healing.

KATHERINE CHON: I echo those sentiments, Kris. That's why it's great we're working together on this. I'm excited to work with you, with the team over at OVC. And, you know, as you were talking, I was thinking okay, so, what would this like visually look like in terms of that end impact? And I remember like--in my earlier years in the field, it almost was like a lottery system; like depending on where the referral went to, someone's experience could be very different because the organization may have a certain focus and not--may not have a more comprehensive approach. Or even when I think about those thousands of calls that go into the National Human Trafficking Hotline and then the hotline referring those to local service programs--having that consistency of standard--it shouldn't matter where someone gets placed or connected to. If we can reach that point, where that not only is there an infrastructure of services across every state, but really wherever someone goes they'll be connected to quality care wherever they are.

KRISTINA ROSE: It's like there would really be no wrong door that someone could go through.

KATHERINE CHON: Truly! Yes! Yes! Truly!

KRISTINA ROSE: That would be the best. And it also feels really great to be to be able to support what is a priority for, you know, this Administration, but also something that has just been wanted and needed for so long. So, I feel really good about this and I look forward to working with you.

KATHERINE CHON: One of--The other thing that excites me is bringing together the public safety and criminal justice response with the public health approach to addressing services. And in that combined approach, we really should be able to cover all the different frameworks that different organizations may bring into victim services, whether it's the emergency needs and crisis response, the long-term. So, I do think by working together we will definitely be stronger; stronger together.

KRISTINA ROSE: I couldn't agree more. And that's the beauty of working, you know, agency to agency. And, you know, I hope that we are able to set an example for other offices that are in different agencies that can find ways to be able to bring their different perspectives to bear on a particular topic. It only benefits the field and our agencies to be able to work together.

I wanted to let folks know that they can subscribe to our email list NewsFromOVC by visiting the OVC website at [ovc.ojp.gov](https://www.ovc.ojp.gov). And, you know, maybe even checking out the standards of care that is on our website now, that if they haven't seen it before, to get a sense of what this could be.

KATHERINE CHON: Thank you, Kris. And Just a couple of other resources for people listening in. Anyone can check out [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for upcoming funding opportunities, whether it's from HHS or DOJ or any other part of the Federal Government. There are many opportunities that will be coming out this year. And then on the HHS side, people can learn more and sign up for our newsletter by visiting acf.hhs.gov/otip.

Kris, thank you so much for your partnership in this. I'm so excited to dive into this deeper with you.

KRISTINA ROSE: Me too, Kat. Thank you.