

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

A 2000-2025 review of Texas' legislative efforts to address human trafficking, with recommendations on what is needed next to increase impact, including efforts to strengthen:

LOCAL RESPONSE

LEGAL REMEDIES

VICTIM SERVICES

LABOR TRAFFICKING

TRAINING & IDENTIFICATION

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NOTE: The recommendations made in this report are the result of a comprehensive review of Texas' legislative history to date, along with an analysis of all the data gathered for the Engage Together Project Reports for North Texas, and the needs shared by local anti-trafficking organizations.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Engage Together Project for North Texas is made possible by a grant from the Adair Foundation, and is accomplished in collaboration with many partners, including especially the task force and coalition leadership working across North Texas: 5 Stones Task Force, C7 Human Trafficking Coalition, and the North Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking. Additional local support and leadership for this project include Southern Methodist University's Office of Engaged Learning & SMU's Human Trafficking Data Research Project, Unbound Now, and The Net FW. National partners include Belmont University's Data Collaborative, Pomerol Partners and Qlik. Special thanks also to the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Dark Watch.

Learn more about each of these partners by going to the Project website at engagetogether.com/dfw.

Purpose

This report is a supplemental resource to Engage Together® Project reports for Texas. It provides a comprehensive overview of Texas’ legislative history on human trafficking from 2000 to 2025. It includes major statutory developments, victim protections, law enforcement changes, and significant legislative reforms, organized chronologically, with recommendations for next steps.

ICONS: To help with your review, we’ve included the following icons next to each legislative summary to serve as visual cues regarding the focus and/or intended purpose of each effort.



Victim Rights



Criminal Justice



Minors-Focused



Labor Trafficking



Industry-Focused



Training & Education

Review this Legislative Report alongside the full North Texas Community Assessment reports and the Directory for a clearer picture of the current strengths, gaps, needs, and opportunities to enhance your efforts to end and prevent human trafficking.



SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS

Use these reports to catalyze deeper conversations, greater collaborations, and strategic planning for your local communities and state.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The following pages provide a comprehensive overview of Texas' legislative history to address human trafficking from:

2000-2025



House Bill 2096 (78th Leg., Chapter 641) – Texas' first trafficking law established Texas as one of the first states to enact a trafficking law. Criminalized **trafficking of persons under Penal Code §20A:**

- Defined **“forced labor or services”** narrowly (threats, restraint, or withholding ID/property);
- Defined **“traffic”** as transporting, enticing, recruiting, harboring, or obtaining another person through deception, coercion, or force;
- Made it an offense to traffic a person for **forced labor/services** or **sex offenses under Chapter 43;**
- Set penalties as a **second-degree felony**, elevated to a **first-degree felony** if the victim was under 14 or died.

Effective September 1, 2003.



House Bill 1121 (80th Leg., Chapter 849) – Amended the 2003 trafficking law, strengthening prosecutions and victim protections.

- Requires judges, upon a prosecutor's request, to make and record a finding when a victim in a case has been trafficked or severely abused. **Criminal Code Art. 42.0191;**
- Expanded **Penal Code § 20A.01** to penalize those who **benefit from participating in a venture** that traffics a person and amended the offense to clarify that the definition of “forced labor or services” includes conduct under the offense of prostitution and broadened the definition, and **raised the age of a minor victim** from 14 to 18 for first degree penalty. **Penal Code § 20A.01;**
- Required judges to enter special findings in cases involving human trafficking victims. **Family Code Sec. 54.04;**
- Directed the Attorney General and Health and Human Services Commission to study and report on Texas's trafficking laws and victim services by September 1, 2008;
- Mandated certain **lodging establishments deemed a “common nuisance”** for prostitution/trafficking must post notices about the national human trafficking hotline. **Civil Practice and Remedies Code Sec. 125.002.**

Effective June 15, 2007.

House Bill 1751 (80th Leg., Chapter 1206) – Created a law which imposed a \$5 per-customer fee on sexually oriented businesses and directed that revenue go to victim services, Business & Commerce Code § 102.101 (Note: Now codified under **Business & Commerce Code § 102.054** and the fee has been raised to \$10). Additionally, created a Sexual Assault Advisory Program Fund via **Government Code § 420.008**, to fund sexual assault prevention and human trafficking victim assistance grants. **Note:** This was repealed September 1, 2013.

Effective January 1, 2008.

Senate Bill 1287 (80th Leg., Chapter 155) – Mandated that any business with a liquor license is required to place a Notice on Human Trafficking Sign in Spanish and English. **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 104.07**, and providing a hotline for victims, **Occupations Code § 455.207.**

Effective September 1, 2007.

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2007



Senate Bill 11 (80th Leg., part of Chapter 258) – This broad homeland security bill included anti-trafficking measures in line with Chapter 849. Allowed judges to authorize the use of wire taps for human trafficking cases, **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 18.20**. *Effective September 1, 2007.*

2009



House Bill 533 (81st Leg., Chapter 309)– Established a civil cause of action for trafficking victims, allowing them to sue traffickers (or those who knowingly benefit from trafficking) for damages in civil court. This addition ensures victims can recover actual damages, attorney’s fees, and even exemplary damages from their traffickers, independent of any criminal prosecution. **Civil Practice & Remedies Code §98.002**. *Effective June 19, 2009.*



House Bill 639 (81st Leg.) - Created sweeping changes regarding human trafficking:

- Established the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force under the OAG. Government Code § 402.035;
- Required new officers first licensed after January 1, 2011 to complete a one-time, four hour basic education and training program on human trafficking via the police commission. Additionally, the commission shall make available to each officer a voluntary advanced education program on trafficking of persons, sex trafficking, and compelling prostitution. **Occupations Code § 1701.258**;
- Required officers who are seeking an intermediate or advanced proficiency certificate must complete human trafficking course. Occupations Code 1701.402 (**Note**: This is been recodified under **Occupations Code § 1701.258**;
- Established a **Trafficking of Persons Investigation and Prosecution Account** in the General Revenue Fund to award grants to law enforcement and NGOs combating trafficking. **Code Crim. Proc. art. 56.54**, **Note**: This was repealed as of January 1, 2021;
- Directed the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission to **study alternatives to prosecuting minors** for prostitution acts (temporary provision, expired June 1, 2011);
- Created a **defense to prosecution** for prostitution if the person engaged in it while being a trafficking victim. **Penal Code § 43.02(d)**;
- Increased penalties: trafficking involving a child under 18, compelling prostitution, or sexual performance by a child became a **first-degree felony**, regardless of whether the actor knew the child’s age. **Penal Code §§ 20A.02, 43.05, 43.25**;
- Required the task force to **collect and publish human trafficking data**, collaborate with agencies/NGOs, conduct awareness campaigns, and train law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and medical professionals. **Gov’t Code § 402.035(c)–(d)**.

Effective September 1, 2009.



House Bill 1372 (81st Leg., Chapter 372) - Amended **Code of Criminal Procedure § 56A.001** to include a person who is the victim of the offense of trafficking of persons in the definition of “victim” for purposes of state law relation to the rights of crime victims.

Effective June 19, 2009

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2009



House Bill 4009 (81st Leg., Chapter 1002)- Required HHSC to create a victim assistance program for domestic trafficking victims. *Note:* Previously was § 531-381-531.386 before it was codified as **Government Code §§ 526.071-526.076**. *Effective September 1, 2009.*



Senate Bill 379 (81st Leg., Chapter 1350)- Requires the Texas Fusion Center’s gang division to submit annual statewide assessments on criminal street gangs, specifically including strategies to deter gang involvement in human trafficking, and directs law enforcement and justice agencies to provide needed information under federal intelligence rules. The first annual report must be submitted no later than September 1, 2010. **Government Code § 421.082** *Effective September 1, 2010.*

2011



House Bill 2014 (82nd Leg., Chapter 515) - Expanded protections and legal remedies for victims.

- Created refusal of **permits/licenses for 3 years** if prior application involved trafficking of persons. **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 11.44(b)**;
- Created refusal of mixed beverage/private club permits for 1 year if cancellation due to trafficking of persons. **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 11.46(c)**;
- Created a civil penalty in lieu of suspension may be denied for trafficking violations. **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 11.64(a)**;
- Established a refusal of retail/wine/beer permits for 1 year if cancellation due to trafficking of persons. **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 61.42(c)**;
- Created bail restriction applied to trafficking of persons cases involving children under 14. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 17.153(a)(4)**;
- Created a mandatory restitution required for child victims in trafficking convictions. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42.0372**;
- Established **community supervision restriction** applied to trafficking involving sexual conduct. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42.12 13B(b)(5)**. *Note:* This has been repealed as of January 1, 2017;
- Established that forfeiture applies to property used in or gained from trafficking of persons. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 59.01(2)(F)**;
- Established that criminal history records must include victim age in trafficking cases. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 60.051(g)(7)**;
- Mandated that courts must report trafficking case filings. **Government Code § 71.0353**;
- Mandated that DPS must collect statistics on trafficking of persons offenses. **Government Code § 411.042(b)(2)(C)**;
- Created parole restrictions expanded to include trafficking convictions. **Government Code § 508.187(a)(6)**;
- Established that grants may fund trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and victim services (up to \$10M annually). **Government Code § 772.006(e)-(f)**;
- Enhanced penalties for the sale or purchase of child if linked to trafficking. **Penal Code § 25.08(c)**.

Effective September 1, 2011.

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House Bill 2329 (82nd Leg., Chapter 1008) – Strengthened victim privacy and safety by providing for **confidentiality of identifying information** about trafficking victims, shielding victim records from public disclosure. **Code of Criminal Procedure arts. 57D.02. Note:** This was effective until January 1, 2021. Additionally, improved enforcement of protective orders for trafficking victims, ensuring violations can be prosecuted and victims can obtain long-term orders. **Code of Criminal Procedure ch. 7B. Effective September 1, 2011.**



House Bill 3000 (82nd Leg., Chapter 1, Section 8) - Created the new offense of **Penal Code § 20A.03 “Continuous Trafficking of Persons.”** If a person commits two or more trafficking offenses during a period of 30 days or more this offense is applicable. It carries a minimum 25-year prison term. Further it added continuous trafficking to the list of crimes with no statute of limitations, **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 12.01**, and tightened bail **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 17.15** by creating the need for a judge’s approval. *Effective September 1, 2011.*



Senate Bill 24 (82nd Leg., Chapter 1) – Differentiated **“sex trafficking” vs. “labor trafficking”** in statute, adding separate legal definitions. Increased penalties for certain offenses (for example, raising **Compelling Prostitution of a Minor** to a first-degree felony). **Penal Code §§ 20A.01–20A.02, § 43.05.** Required convicted human traffickers to register as sex offenders when the crime involved sexual exploitation. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 62.001.** With this addition, came a ripple effect regarding sex oriented businesses. Sex offenders may not own or operate sex oriented businesses 102.002, or be in contact with one 102.003. Additionally, **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 62.001** included numerous other provisions: e.g., making repeat trafficking convictions eligible for automatic life sentences, expanding asset forfeiture and training, and incorporating the Task Force’s 2011 report recommendations. **Government Code § 402.035. Effective September 1, 2011.**



House Bill 427 (83rd Leg., Chapter 427)- Amended **Texas Human Resources Code § 42.0531** to let nonprofit facilities in large border-county cities provide up to 15 days of emergency shelter and care for children ages 13–17 who are victims of human trafficking under Penal Code § 20A.02. *Effective September 1, 2013.*



House Bill 1272 (83rd Leg., Chapter 297) – Continued the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force and **expanded its duties. Government Code § 402.035. Effective September 1, 2013.**



House Bill 2725 (83rd Leg., Chapter 365) – **Exempted records of trafficking victim shelters from public disclosure** under Texas open records law. This was to keep shelter locations and client information confidential. **Government Code § 552.138.** It also directed the state to establish **minimum standards for facilities providing care to trafficking victims. Human Resources Code § 42.042. Effective September 1, 2013.** *Continued on next page.*

2013



House Bill 3241 (83rd Leg., Chapter 1066) — Created a state-level civil **RICO cause of action** enabling the Attorney General or local prosecutors to sue person or enterprises engaged in trafficking-related racketeering. **Civil Practice & Remedies Code Chapter 140.** **Note:** This was recodified to **Civil Practice and Remedies Code Chapter 140** in 2015 via **Senate Bill 1296.** *Effective September 1, 2013.*



Senate Bill 92 (83rd Leg., Chapter 186) – Authorized local juvenile boards to establish specialty diversion, **Family Code § 51.04**, “**Trafficked Person**” court programs. *Effective September 1, 2013.*

2015



House Bill 10 (84th Leg., Chapter 332) – Created another sweeping set of laws regarding human trafficking.

- Removes limitations period for compelling prostitution of a minor. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 12.01(1);**
- Expands **crime-victims’ compensation** so participation in criminally injurious conduct doesn’t bar awards if it resulted from force, fraud, or coercion in trafficking cases. **Code Crim. Proc. arts. 56.41(b-1), 56.45(b);** **Note:** This was repealed effective January 1, 2021;
- Bars denial/reduction of compensation based on illegal activity if the activity resulted from force, fraud, or coercion in specified trafficking contexts. **Code Crim. Proc. art. 56.45(b).** **Note:** This was repealed effective January 1, 2021;
- Requires Supreme Court judicial training to include family violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and child abuse content. **Government Code § 22.011;**
- Updates Court of Criminal Appeals training mandate; sets minimum hours including trafficking/child-abuse topics and specific subject matter. **Government Code § 22.110;**
- Expands Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force membership/duties; adds agency liaisons; data collection; training; media awareness; sexually-oriented business/Internet-related trafficking review. **Government Code § 402.035;**
- Creates the Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit within the Governor’s Criminal Justice Division; outlines duties and inter-agency coordination. **Government Code § 772.0062;**
- Clarifies continuous trafficking: two or more acts over 30+ days against one or more victims. **Penal Code § 20A.03(a);**
- Creates “Accomplice Witness” Testimony and Immunity to Penal Code §20A. It allows anyone involved in a trafficking offense to be required to testify, gives them immunity from being prosecuted for anything they admit, and allows a trafficking conviction to be based on solely the testimony. **Penal Code § 20A.04;**
- Increases penalties for prostitution when the person solicited is or is believed/represented to be under 18 (felony of the 2nd degree). **Penal Code § 43.02(c).**

Effective September 1, 2015

House Bill 11 (84th Leg., Chapter 333) – Created the **Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime (HTTOC) section, Government Code § 402.038**, within the OAG. Focused on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases and coordinating with federal and local authorities. *Effective September 1, 2015.*

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House Bill 188 (84th Leg., Chapter 146) – Extended the OAG’s Task Force timeframe and **expanded its membership**. Added new members (such as additional state agencies and non-profits) and duties, ensuring more comprehensive stakeholder representation in anti-trafficking policy. **Government Code § 402.035**. *Effective September 1, 2015.*

House Bill 968 (84th Leg., Chapter 283) - Added **Civil Practice and Remedies Code § 98.0025** holding individual shareholders or members personally liable when a business entity is used for human trafficking. If a corporation, LLC, or similar entity is found liable under this section, a shareholder or member who **caused the entity to be used for trafficking and personally benefitted from it is jointly and severally liable**. *Effective September 1, 2015.*

House Bill 2455 (84th Leg., Chapter 564) – Directed the Office of Court Administration to create a task force on uniform crime reporting for family violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking under **Government Code § 72.034**. **Note:** This task force sunsetted September 1, 2007. *Effective September 1, 2015.*

House Bill 2511 (84th Leg., Chapter 1078) – Created the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Business Partnership Program, **Government Code §405.023**, in the Secretary of State’s office. Participating businesses must adopt a zero-tolerance policy, train employees on trafficking awareness, and assist with public awareness campaigns, and in return the state awards an official certificate of recognition to highlight those efforts. *Effective September 1, 2015.*

House Bill 1446 (84th Leg., Chapter 924) - Created the Governor’s Program for Victims of Child Sex Trafficking, **Government Code § 772.0063**, to provide comprehensive, individualized rehabilitation and treatment services for child victims of trafficking offenses under Penal Code § 20A.02(a)(7) or (8). The governor is to appoint a program director to coordinate with law enforcement, state agencies, and service providers to identify eligible victims and assign caseworkers to develop customized service plans addressing each victim’s medical, psychological, safety, and housing needs.



House Bill 29 (85th Leg., Chapter 685) – Expanded the Task Force’s membership (adding representatives from judiciary, additional agencies, etc.) and made the Task Force permanent by repealing its sunset date. **Government Code § 402.035**. Implemented various small reforms to victim services and criminal procedure (for example, making it easier for trafficking victims to get compensation and to vacate certain convictions). *Effective September 1, 2017.*

Senate Bill 2039 (85th Leg., Chapter 762) – Directed the state education commissioner, in collaboration with the OAG’s Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, to develop optional trainings on preventing sexual abuse and sex trafficking for use in school health curricula. **Education Code § 28.017**. Required every school district to adopt a policy on sexual abuse and trafficking prevention – including staff training and reporting procedures. **Education § 38.0041**. Extended the sunset of the state’s Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force to September 1, 2019. **Government Code §402.035**. *Effective September 1, 2017.*

2017



House Bill 2552 (85th Leg., Chapter 858) – Required signage about human trafficking assistance to be posted at certain businesses and facilities – including abortion clinics, hospital emergency rooms, and cosmetology establishments – to raise awareness and reporting. **Health & Safety Code §§ 241.016, 245.025.** Increased penalties for illicit massage businesses and expanded the list of places considered “common nuisances” due to trafficking. **Occupations Code § 1602.408, § 455.155.** Additionally, it created **Penal Code § 21.18**, establishing a new offense for intentionally threatening, by coercion or extortion, to commit certain sex- or trafficking-related crimes in order to obtain sexual acts, intimate visual material, or anything of value. *Effective September 1, 2017.*

2019



House Bill 1771 (88th Leg.)– Prohibited prosecuting or referring juveniles to juvenile court for prostitution, recognizing that minors in the sex trade are victims of trafficking or exploitation. Instead, they must be treated as children in need of services, not delinquent offenders. **Family Code § 51.03(b).** *Effective September 1, 2019.*

House Bill 2059 (86th Leg., Chapter 796)– Required certain health care professionals to take human trafficking prevention training as a condition of license renewal. **Occupations Code § 116.001 - 116.003.** Other than doctors and nurses, all health care practitioners who receive a license under Title 3 are required to receive human trafficking training. Through this bill, the Provider Guidebook: Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in Texas was created. *Effective September 1, 2019.*

House Bill 2613 (86th Leg., Chapter 412) – Established the offense of operating a “stash house” used for trafficking or organized crime (Penal Code § 20.07) and authorized asset forfeiture from these operations, directing proceeds to support trafficking survivors. **Penal Code § 20.07.** It also clarified that human trafficking is a distinct offense, expanded “contraband” under Code of Criminal Procedure art. 59.01(2) to include any offense under Chapter 20A, and reorganized Chapter 43 so that any felony—or property used to facilitate it—qualifies as contraband. Additionally created subsection (t) explaining how funds shall be allocated in asset forfeiture cases. Forfeiture proceeds from certain prostitution and human-trafficking offenses must be used for direct victim services, either by the agency itself or through a local nonprofit. This use is considered an official law-enforcement or prosecutorial purpose. **Code of Criminal Procedure art. 59.01(2).** *Effective September 1, 2019.*

House Bill 2747 (86th Leg., Chapter 1136)– Required all massage establishments and schools to post multilingual signs (in English, Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin) with information on services for trafficking victims and a hotline number. **Occupations Code § 455.207.** The signage must be conspicuously displayed, aiming to enable victims (or concerned patrons) to seek help. *Effective September 1, 2019.*

House Bill 3800 (86th Leg., Chapter 1303) – Improved data collection by mandating that certain law enforcement agencies and prosecutors report human trafficking cases to the state. **Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 2.305.** Ensures more accurate statewide statistics on trafficking offenses and outcomes, feeding into the Coordinating Council’s efforts. *Effective September 1, 2019.*

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2019



Senate Bill 20 (86th Leg., Chapter 413) – Made it **easier to clear criminal records** for offenses committed under duress by trafficking victims (expanded access to **orders of nondisclosure**). **Government Code § 411.0728**. Increased criminal penalties for traffickers, particularly targeting those who use the internet/online marketplaces for trafficking. **Penal Code § 20A.02**. *Effective September 1, 2019.*

Senate Bill 72 (86th Leg., Chapter 66) – Established the **Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council**. **Government Code § 402.034**. This council, led by the OAG, brings together state agencies to develop and implement a unified five-year strategic plan to prevent trafficking. *Effective September 1, 2019.*



2021



House Bill 390 (87th Leg., Chapter 47) - Required **all commercial lodging establishments (hotels, motels, inns)** in Texas to provide annual **human trafficking awareness training for employees** and to **post signs in employee areas** with guidance on recognizing and reporting trafficking. OAG was tasked with approving training programs and producing the signage. This law ensures hotel staff (who may encounter trafficking victims) are informed “eyes and ears” in spotting trafficking. **Business & Commerce Code § 114**. *Effective January 1, 2022.*

House Bill 1540 (87th Leg., Chapter 807)– This trafficking law (the Texas Task Force’s 2021 recommendations) introduced wide-ranging reforms.

- Expanded “coercion” for trafficking to include seizing IDs/government records, causing intoxication without consent, or withholding alcohol/controlled substances from a chemically dependent victim. **Penal Code § 20A.01(1-a)**;
- Added definitions for “premises” and “school” used for trafficking enhancements. **Penal Code § 20A.01(2-a), (2-b)**;
- Updated sex-trafficking cross-references to include solicitation and online promotion offenses. **Penal Code § 20A.02(a)(3) & list incl. §§ 43.021, 43.031, 43.041**;
- Created a 25-to-life enhancement when trafficking occurs on school premises/within 1,000 feet, or during an official school/UII event. **Penal Code § 20A.02(b-1)**;
- Made trafficking a first-degree felony if the victim was recruited/obtained from a shelter or residential treatment center serving runaway youth, foster children, the homeless, or victims of trafficking, domestic violence, or sexual assault. **Penal Code § 20A.02(b)(4)**;
- Required schools to post warning signs about the increased penalties in § 20A.02(b-1). **Education Code § 37.086**;
- Required courts to report monthly counts of trafficking, solicitation of prostitution, prostitution, and compelling prostitution cases. **Government Code § 71.0353**;
- Allowed trafficking victims to proceed under a pseudonym and keep identifying info confidential in civil suits under Chapter 98. **Civil Practice and Remedy Code § 98.007**;
- Simplified civil racketeering: racketeering occurs if a person/enterprise commits any offense under Chapter 20A; expanded civil remedies/penalties. **Civil Practice and Remedies § 140A.002; § 140A.102(b)-(d)**

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- Eased nuisance abatement against massage/illicit-sex venues and allowed attorney's fees for the prevailing party. **Civil Practice & Remedies Code §§ 125.0017, 125.004(a-1)-(a-3), 125.005, 125.070(d);**
- Bar/restaurant permitting consequences now explicitly include sites tied to trafficking allegations/cancellations. **Alcohol Beverage Code §§ 11.44(b), 11.46(c), 61.42(c);**
- Increased grade for certain "interference with child custody/harboring"-type offenses when done with intent to commit trafficking. **Penal Code §§ 25.08(c), 25.081(c).**

Effective September 1, 2021.



House Bill 2633 (87th Leg., Chapter 704) - Established new support infrastructure for trafficking victims.

- Created a **Trafficked Persons Program Account** in the general revenue fund; specifies revenue sources (state portal donations, Tx DMV transactions, specialty plates, gifts, interest). **Health & Safety Code § 50.0153;**
- Established the **Trafficked Persons Grant Program** with eligibility criteria (immediate trauma support, wraparound services via CSTT/Governor's program, safe & constitutionally secure shelter). **Health & Safety Code § 50.0155(b);**
- Permitted HHSC to **directly provide services** funded by the account if resourced. **Health & Safety Code § 50.0157;**
- Updated **juvenile-court referral** to programs for children believed to be trafficking victims (using CCP art. 56B.003 definition). **Family Code § 54.04012(b);**
- Authorized HHSC to use account money to **establish/operate facilities** for child & youth trafficking victims. **Family Code § 264.004(d);**
- Expanded Secretary of State's partnership and added a **public-awareness duty** (cap \$100k) to promote donations to the account. **Government Code §§ 405.023(b), 405.024;**
- Required DIR to offer **donation option on the state portal** and coordinate with Tx DMV/DPS to maximize donations. **Government Code § 2054.252(h)-(i);**
- Updated juvenile-board **trafficked persons program** eligibility & referral sources; allowed qualified facilities to seek grants. **Human Resources Code § 152.0017(a),(c);**
- Added voluntary donation prompts at vehicle registration, driver's license, and commercial driver's license transactions. **Transportation Code § 522.0296;**
- Created **"Stop Human Trafficking" specialty license plates**, revenue to the account. **Transportation Code § 504.675;**
- Required HHSC to **study & report** best practices for permanent, safe housing for child/youth trafficking victims with the report being due on December 1, 2022.

Effective September 1, 2021.

House Bill 3721 (87th Leg., Chapter 280) - Required the updating of multiple signage requirements:

- Required human-trafficking sign must also include **DPS suspicious-activity reporting contact info.** **Alcoholic Beverage Code § 104.07;**

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- **Required** sign must (1) be bilingual, (2) include **NHTRC phone + website**, and (3) include **DPS suspicious-activity contact**; AG sets design/content/display by rule. **Business & Commerce Code § 102.101**;
- **Required** sign languages include **English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin (+ others by rule)**; must include a **trafficking hotline** and **DPS contact**; conspicuous display. **Occupations Code § 455.207(b)**;
- **Required** in-room sign must include a **trafficking hotline** and **DPS suspicious-activity contact** when nuisance alleged under §125.0015(a)(6) or (7). **Civil Practice & Remedies Code §125.002(f-1)**;
- Required, in transportation hubs, AG-prescribed sign must include the **NHTRC, DPS contact, and key trafficking indicators**. **Government Code §402.0351(b)**;
- Required sign must also include **DPS suspicious-activity contact** (hospitals/abortion facilities to comply). **Health & Safety Code §245.025(a-1)**;
- Required cosmetology facilities sign (English/Spanish/Vietnamese) must include a **trafficking hotline** and **DPS contact**. **Occupations Code §1602.408(c)**.

Effective September 1, 2021.

Senate Bill 1831 (87th Leg., Chapter 1049) - Formally called the *No Trafficking Zone Act*. It added additional changes to the law in several ways.

- Increased criminal penalties for certain trafficking offenses, especially when committed near schools or during school events;
- Required schools to post warning signs about the increased penalties under trafficking laws, specifying placement of signs: along school property boundaries, at entrances, and along access ways, and established sign requirements: English and Spanish, minimum size 8½×11 inches, must cite statute and penalties;
- Required driver education and driving safety courses must include human trafficking prevention content;
- Required certain businesses/facilities (hospitals, cosmetology facilities, massage establishments, tattoo studios, sexually oriented businesses, alcoholic beverage premises, and transportation hubs) must post human trafficking awareness signs. Signs must provide victim resources, hotline/web contact information, and key indicators of trafficking. Signs must be in English, Spanish, and other languages as appropriate;
- Created a new subsection (b-1) under Section 20A.02 making trafficking/solicitation of a minor a first-degree felony if committed within 1,000 feet of a school or at school-related events;
- Increased punishment for certain prostitution/online solicitation offenses if committed during school hours, knowing the victim is enrolled in a school, or on school premises/events.

Effective September 1, 2021

House Bill 2313 (88th Leg., Chapter 713) - Required all **Transportation Network Companies** (e.g. ride-share drivers for Uber/Lyft) must provide state-approved annual human trafficking prevention training. Each TNC must ensure new drivers have access to the training before driving and must annually refresh drivers' training. **Occupations Code §2402.1075**. *Effective September 1, 2023.*

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House Bill 3553 (88th Leg., Chapter 451) - Amended **Texas Penal Code § 20A.01(b-1)** to designate trafficking crimes occurring **on or within 1,000 feet** of a school, higher education institution, or school-sponsored event as **first degree felonies punishable by 25 to 99 years or life imprisonment**. *Effective September 1, 2023.*



House Bill 3554 (88th Leg., Chapter 452) - Amended Penal Code 20A, **removing overlapping or conflicting provisions** and aligned penalties, ensuring that all forms of human trafficking are uniformly punished as severe felonies. **Penal Code § 20A.02**. *Effective September 1, 2023.*



House Bill 3536 (88th Leg., Chapter 606) - Amended **Property Code §93.013(a)** to clarify that property owners can remove such tenants without civil liability for breach of lease and even allows lease termination if a massage business on the premises is found to be out of compliance with state anti-trafficking laws. *Effective September 1, 2023.*



Senate Bill 1527 (88th Leg., Chapter 93) -



- Enlarged the **Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council** by adding the Texas Education Agency and Texas Dept. of Transportation as members (recognizing the role of schools and highways in combating trafficking). Directed the Task Force to examine the link between trafficking and illicit massage businesses and moved certain provisions (like “no-trafficking zones” around schools) into proper statutes for better enforcement; **Government Code § 402.035**;
- Clarified that **ignorance of a victim’s age or disability is no defense** for traffickers. **Penal Code § 20A.02(a)(5)**;
- Ensured any trafficking of children or adults with significant disabilities is a **first-degree felony**. **Penal Code § 20A.02(b)(1)**;
- Created explicit criminalization of **child grooming** behaviors and harsher punishment for traffickers who use excessive force or violence. **Penal Code § 15.032**;
- Required that convicted traffickers have a **special driver’s license notation**. **Code of Criminal Procedure § 42.016**;
- Expanded Hearsay Statements of Certain Abuse Victims to apply to an offense “if committed against a child younger than 18 years of age or a person with a disability.” **Code of Criminal Procedure 38.072**;
- Expanded which trafficking offenses against minors qualify, allowing prosecutors to introduce prior conduct or related acts as evidence in appropriate cases. **Code of Criminal Procedure 38.37**.

Effective September 1, 2023.



House Bill 742 (89th Leg., Chapter 375) - Established **Health and Safety Code § 763.001**, stating that all non law enforcement responders are to complete HHSC-approved training on identifying and responding to human trafficking victims, with oversight and course approval managed by the executive commissioner. *Effective September 1, 2025.*

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House Bill 1778 (89th Leg., Chapter 788) - Texas again broadened and amended several statutes.

- Expanded the monthly court filing report to include prostitution-related offenses (promotion/online promotion/aggravated promotion/compelling), alongside trafficking. **Government Code § 71.0353(a)**;
- Added the **Office of Court Administration** to the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council. **Government Code § 402.034(c)**;
- Required the task force to include an **AG addendum** of findings/recommendations in its biennial report. **Government Code § 402.035(g)**;
- Clarified the definitions of **cosmetology facilities** and **body-piercing studios** for signage regarding human trafficking purposes. **Government Code § 402.0351(a), (a-1)**;
- **Moved and expanded** trafficking case reporting from CCP Art. 2A.205 into the Government Code; names covered agencies (incl. DFPS, TDLR, OCA, TDCJ, TJJD, TABC, DPS), sets **semiannual** reporting, prescribes **data fields**, protects certain identifiers, and authorizes AG rule-making and third-party assistance. **Government Code § 402.0352**;
- Created a **statewide human-trafficking data repository** at the AG to analyze reports and make policy/enforcement/service recommendations; bars personal identifiers; allows higher-ed/nonprofit contracts; feeds into the task-force report. **Government Code § 402.0353**;
- Required **human-trafficking training** for **tattoo** and **body-piercing** studio employees; at least one course must be free; DSHS posts approved list; studios must also post the required signs. **Health & Safety Code § 146.0075**;
- Required **continuing education on identifying/assisting victims** for licensees under the cosmetology/barbering commission. **Occupation Code § 1603.302**;
- Updated **trafficking of persons** to incorporate solicitation/online promotion offenses and clarifies that for child/disabled-victim subsections, guilt **does not depend on knowledge** of the victim's age/disability; also covers receiving benefits from those ventures. **Penal Code § 20A.02(a)(3),(5)-(8)**;
- Reenacted/updated penalty provisions: certain subsections are **first-degree felonies**; 25-to-life if **any part of the offense** occurs on/near specified school-related premises or transport, or during school/UIL events; expands listed premises (incl. shelters, juvenile facilities, bus stops, **school buses**). **Penal Code § 20A.02(b), (b-1)**;
- Repealed a prior 2023 amendment to CCP Art. 2.305 to harmonize with the new reporting framework. (Act of 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., ch. 93, § 4.01 repealed).

Effective September 1, 2025.

House Bill 2306 (89th Leg., Chapter 587) - Amended **Government Code § 508.145** that an inmate is not eligible for release on parole if they are under sentence of death, serving a sentence of life imprisonment without parole, or serving a sentence for **Trafficking of Persons Penal Code 20A.02** or **Continuous Trafficking of Person Penal Code 20A.03**.

Effective September 1, 2025.

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Senate Bill 1212 (89th Leg., Chapter 806) - Amended Penal Code § 20A.02 to expand the definition of Trafficking of Persons to include **children or disabled individuals** for forced labor or sexual exploitation, **regardless of whether the offender knew the victim's age or disability**. Broadened the offense to cover online promotion and related sexual crimes, increased penalties for trafficking near schools, shelters, or youth facilities to a first-degree felony punishable by up to life in prison, and extended special courtroom protections to victims in these cases. *Effective September 1, 2025.*



Senate Bill 11 (89th Leg. Chapter 14) - Created affirmative defense for those who commit certain offenses as a **direct result of being victims of human trafficking or compelling prostitution**. It allows defendants to show that their conduct occurred only because of **force, fraud, or coercion**. The defense does not apply to the state's more serious violent crimes under Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42A.054(a), unless the actor is charged only as a party to that offense under Section 7.01, but ensures that trafficked persons forced into illegal acts are treated primarily as **victims rather than offenders**. *Effective December 4, 2025.*

LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages provide recommendations for Texas' legislature to consider in order to strengthen its efforts to end and prevent human trafficking, and to care well for all those impacted by it, especially in the areas of:

LOCAL RESPONSE

LEGAL REMEDIES

VICTIM SERVICES

LABOR TRAFFICKING

TRAINING & IDENTIFICATION

Recommendations to strengthen:

LOCAL RESPONSE

Strengthen Prosecution Support and Case Coordination

Local human trafficking task forces play a key role in identifying and addressing trafficking but often lack the tools, training, and resources for complex, multi-jurisdictional cases. Without consistent support, investigations stall and traffickers evade accountability. A statewide support program would give all task forces access to shared technology, specialized training, and joint operations funding, while creating clear structures for case coordination (led by law enforcement) and care coordination (led by service providers) at the local level.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION	Establish a Statewide Task Force Support Program under the OAG to fund joint investigations, digital evidence tools, prosecutor coordination, and trauma-informed training. Support localized response teams with two tracks: case coordination (law enforcement-led) and care coordination (provider-led).
LEAD	Office of the Attorney General + Regional Prosecutor Alliances + Texas District and County Attorneys Association.
MODEL(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's regional model• Georgia's Human Exploitation and Trafficking Unit
MECHANISM	Authorize OAG to certify and fund regional and local task forces using appropriations and forfeiture proceeds. Require annual reporting on investigations, prosecutions, and multi-county case outcomes.

Establish Statewide Victim Care Coordination Standards

Survivors often face inconsistent care and limited coordination across agencies. Statewide standards would help ensure all victims receive trauma-informed support, regardless of location. By drawing on local insights from service providers and law enforcement, Texas can better identify where services are lacking and guide resources where they're most needed — without adding burdensome reporting requirements.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION	Direct HHSC and OAG to issue statewide care coordination standards, including referral protocols and case management guidelines, informed by local insights to help identify service gaps and prioritize support.
LEAD	Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) + Office of the Attorney General (HTTOC) + Local service providers and law enforcement
MODEL(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minnesota "Safe Harbor" Protocol Guidelines — outlines regionally adapted, survivor-centered care coordination.• New Jersey Human Trafficking Victim Care Protocol - outlines a coordinated, multi-agency response with required referrals, safety planning, and case tracking
MECHANISM	Adopt coordination standards through HHSC rulemaking and OAG guidance. Allow regional partners to adapt implementation, while aligning with core statewide practices. Use existing grant programs to support coordination staffing, service mapping, and cross-agency training.

LOCAL RESPONSE (CONT.)

Catalyze Multi-Sector Engagement

Texas can strengthen its human trafficking infrastructure by expanding collaboration beyond government agencies to include businesses, civic groups, and faith-based organizations. While public-private partnerships have existed since 2015, codifying them permanently and creating clear participation pathways would sustain engagement and innovation. Expanding eligibility, establishing a multi-sector advisory council, and incentivizing corporate contributions would ensure a coordinated, sustaining statewide response across industries and communities.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Amend Gov't Code §405.023 to make the Texas Human Trafficking Business Partnership Program permanent, expand eligibility to civic and faith-based partners, and add tax incentives for corporate donations to the Trafficked Persons Program Account (Health & Safety Code §50.0153).

LEAD

Office of the Governor (OOG) + Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts + Governor's Coordinating Council

MODEL(S)

- [Ohio – Anti-Trafficking Advisory Council](#) with multi-sector representation. Ohio Rev. Code §109.66.
- [Minnesota “No Wrong Door”](#)

MECHANISM

Integrate civic, business, and faith-based partners into the Coordinating Council, with annual reporting and recognition incentives for private-sector contributions and community collaboration.

Recommendations to strengthen:

LABOR TRAFFICKING RESPONSE

Develop a Comprehensive Labor Trafficking Response Strategy

Labor trafficking remains under-recognized and underreported across Texas. Victims are often exploited in industries that span agriculture, construction, restaurants, domestic work, and by subcontracted businesses, yet lack visibility, tailored services, or consistent support. Texas has made significant investments in addressing sex trafficking, and there is an opportunity to build the same level of coordination around labor trafficking. Efforts related to enforcement, training, and survivor care currently occur across multiple systems, and a statewide, multi-agency strategy could help align these pieces — ensuring regulatory agencies are equipped to recognize labor trafficking, investigators can coordinate across jurisdictions, and survivors can access housing, medical, legal, and wage-recovery support. By integrating these efforts into a single strategic plan, Texas can improve detection, hold traffickers accountable, and ensure that every labor trafficking survivor has a clear pathway to safety and recovery.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Mandate the creation of a Comprehensive Labor Trafficking Strategy coordinated by the Office of the Attorney General and Health and Human Services Commission. The strategy would minimally include:

- Targeted training requirements for regulatory and frontline agencies
- Multi-agency enforcement coordination protocols
- A statewide referral and care framework for survivors, including housing, legal aid, and trauma-informed services

LEAD

Office of the Attorney General (HTTOC) · Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) · Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) · Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)

MODEL(S)

- [California Labor Trafficking Strategy \(2020\)](#) — integrates training, licensing oversight, survivor services, and regional coordination
- [Minnesota Safe Harbor Expansion \(Labor Pilot\)](#) — includes cross-sector training and culturally responsive care
- [Illinois Labor Trafficking Response Plan - Cooke County Task Force](#)
- [Washington State's Labor Trafficking Response Plan](#)

MECHANISM

Authorize the Governor's Coordinating Council to publish a biennial Labor Trafficking Plan and implementation report. Require each participating agency to appoint a labor trafficking lead, adopt aligned training and referral protocols, and identify gaps in enforcement and service coverage. Allow use of existing funds (e.g., HHSC grants, workforce programs, Trafficked Persons Program Account) to support care and outreach specifically for labor trafficking survivors.

Recommendations to strengthen:

LEGAL REMEDIES

Establish Specialized Recovery Courts For Trafficking Survivors

Many survivors cycle through criminal or juvenile courts for conduct connected to their exploitation. While diversion programs exist, outcomes depend on local discretion. Specialized recovery courts, modeled after drug or veterans' courts, can provide structured support, restorative justice, and accountability tailored to trafficking survivors. This would reduce recidivism, conserve judicial resources, and connect participants directly with housing, counseling, and workforce services.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Authorize counties to create Specialized Human-Trafficking Recovery Courts under Chapter 122, Government Code.

LEAD

Office of Court Administration + Texas Judicial Council + Local Juvenile and Criminal Courts

MODEL(S)

- [Florida G.R.A.C.E. Courts](#) - Court system for child victims of human trafficking
- [Davidson County, Tennessee "Athena Court"](#)

MECHANISM

Use existing funding from forfeiture cases to fund; require multidisciplinary staffing teams (judge, prosecutor, defense, advocate, clinician).

Create a Civil Expungement Process for Survivors

Many trafficking survivors face lasting civil and administrative penalties from acts they were forced or coerced into, when then creates ongoing barriers to access housing, jobs, custody, and benefits. While Texas allows limited criminal record relief, there is no path to clear related civil or administrative records. Because these records extend the harm of exploitation and undermine survivor stability, creating a civil expungement process would remove significant barriers to recovery for survivors of all forms of trafficking.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Establish a civil expungement process allowing trafficking survivors to petition for removal of civil court records, administrative findings, or benefit disqualifications resulting from their exploitation. Require documentation showing the record was tied to trafficking-related force, fraud, or coercion.

LEAD

Texas Legislature + Office of Court Administration + Health and Human Services Commission + DFPS Legal Division

MODEL(S)

- California — allows trafficking survivors to vacate or seal civil nuisance and family court records tied to their exploitation. [AB 262 \(2021\)](#).
- Florida — allows for trafficking survivors to petition to have their records expunged. [Fla. Stat. § 943.0583](#)

MECHANISM

Allow survivors to file petitions in district court with supporting documentation. Require state agencies to honor expungement orders across relevant records and systems.

Recommendations to strengthen:

TRAINING & IDENTIFICATION

Improve Identification Efforts

Early identification is critical — but without clearly communicated and consistent protocols, even well-intentioned professionals may miss signs of trafficking or may not know how to respond when they do see the signs. Texas has strong training models in health care and hospitality, but frontline care sectors like education, juvenile justice, and child welfare still operate without unified guidance on how to identify and respond to trafficking. The state should build a standardized identification framework across these systems — using licensure-tied training, local referral protocols, and trauma-informed practices to ensure consistent victim identification and intervention statewide.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Amend Occupations Code §116.002 to include education, child welfare, juvenile justice, and social services; require training aligned with identification protocols and referral expectations.

LEAD

Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) + Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) + Texas Education Agency (TEA)

MODEL(S)

- Connecticut Identification Law - [CT Gen. Stat. § 46a-170](#)
- Minnesota - [Minn. Stat. § 157.177](#)

MECHANISM

Integrate training completion into professional license renewal, require employer attestation, and create localized curricula through CSTT and HHSC.

Expand Training Across Frontline Sectors

Trafficking is often hidden in plain sight — in motels, work crews, apartment complexes, and storefronts. Local officials such as code enforcement officers, labor regulators, and licensing inspectors regularly encounter potential trafficking but lack the awareness or training to flag concerns. Expanding trafficking awareness in these roles, would help Texas surface more cases in under-identified sectors and build broader community vigilance.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Require human trafficking identification and response training for educators, child welfare staff, juvenile justice personnel, labor and regulatory inspectors, and designated social service providers, tied to licensure, certification, or continuing education.

LEAD

Office of the Governor (CSTT) + Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) + Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) + Texas Education Agency (TEA) + relevant licensing agencies.

MODEL(S)

- [California Dept. of Industrial Relations field inspector protocols](#)
- [Washington State labor-trafficking training model](#)

MECHANISM

Incorporate trafficking modules into onboarding and continuing education policies for state and local agencies; align with regional task force contacts.

Recommendations to strengthen: VICTIM SERVICES

Develop a Survivor Care Fund & Regional Care Centers

Texas can strengthen its continuum of care by investing in regional restoration centers that support survivors of both labor and sex trafficking. These centers would offer 24/7 crisis intake, trauma-informed housing, and long-term reintegration services. While past efforts like HB 10 (2015) and HB 2633 (2021) created funding pathways, current capacity still falls short — especially in rural areas and for adult and labor trafficking survivors. Without access to safe, sustained care, many survivors fall through the cracks or return to unstable environments. A dedicated Restoration Grant Fund, paired with statewide service tracking, would ensure consistent, high-quality recovery support across regions, for all survivors, in every community.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Create a “Restoration Grant Fund” within the Crime Victims’ Compensation Program (Code of Criminal Procedure Ch. 56B) and fund regional centers serving both labor and sex trafficking survivors with crisis intake, housing, and reintegration support.

LEAD

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) + Office of the Attorney General (OAG) + Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

MODEL(S)

- [Florida Stat. §409.1678](#): Funding structure for safe houses and long-term recovery programs.
- [Minnesota Safe Harbor Law](#): Regional shelter and service grants tied to identification rates.
- [Colorado Human Trafficking Council](#) — regional grant strategy and survivor-informed funding design

MECHANISM

Establish the Fund through HHSC rulemaking under Ch. 56B; set minimum service standards, prioritize funding based on regional need, and require performance-based reporting for continuation.

NOTE: Funding these efforts is always a challenge for communities, but there are practical ways to strengthen and sustain support on the ground. We recommend:

- Ensuring asset forfeiture funds are accessible to local precincts and service providers,
- Directing state-level grant funding down to the jurisdictions actively working these cases, and
- Creating clearer, more accessible pathways for victims to access available funds wherever they are in the state.

Here are some examples of states in which asset forfeiture is utilized.

- [Louisiana](#) - Survivor Special Fund in which funds are divided: 25% to the seizing agency or agencies allocated among the seizing agencies in proportion to their participation in the management of the investigation, seizure, and forfeiture; 25% to the prosecuting agency and 50% to the Survivor Special Fund.
- [North Carolina](#) - North Carolina General Assembly allocated recurring funding to the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission (“Commission”) in House Bill 259, Session Law 2023-134. Specifically, Section 16.23.(a), appropriates recurring funds to the Commission to develop and implement a grant program to provide funds to eligible organizations providing direct services to victims of human trafficking.
- [California](#) - California has a Human Trafficking Fund, via the California Victim Compensation Board, which has been specifically noted for creating clear pathways for victims to access funds.

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- Tex. Occ. Code Ann. § 455.155 (West 2017).
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- Act of June 15, 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., ch. 1172, 2007 Tex. Gen. Laws 4075.
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- Act of June 10, 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., ch. 412, 2019 Tex. Gen. Laws 1180.
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