

TENNESSEE LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

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

TRAINING & OUTREACH

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

MINORS-FOCUSED RESPONSE

SURVIVOR SUPPORT

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

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This report was created as a supplemental resource for the Engage Together Project in Tennessee by the Engage Together team. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of others participating in the Project.

Learn more about the project and partners by going to the Project website at engagetogether.com/tn.

Purpose

This report is a supplemental resource to Engage Together® Project reports for Tennessee. It provides a comprehensive overview of Tennessee’s 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee's legislative history to address human trafficking from:

2000-2025

2008



Public Chapter 1140 (2008) - Known as the **Tennessee Human Trafficking Act of 2008**, established the state's first comprehensive legal framework to combat human trafficking. The law introduced detailed definitions for key terms such as coercion, deception, blackmail, forced labor, and sexual servitude, and created several new offenses, including:

- **Involuntary labor servitude** (§ 39-13-307),
- **Trafficking for forced labor or services** (§ 39-13-308), and
- **Trafficking for sexual servitude** (§ 39-13-309), classifying them as Class C or B felonies depending on severity and circumstances.

It also mandated restitution to victims, established that each trafficking act constitutes a separate offense, and allowed corporations to be held criminally liable when trafficking occurs within the scope of employment. Additionally, the law amended the definition of kidnapping (§ 39-13-303) to better align with trafficking-related false imprisonment. *Effective July 1, 2008.*



2011



Public Chapter 354 (2011) - Added subsection (c) to designate § 39-13-307, 308, and 309 as predicate offenses for judicial forfeiture, allowing seizure of property used in or derived from human trafficking crimes.

- § 39-13-307, enabling seizure of assets used in involuntary labor servitude cases.
- § 39-13-308, allowing forfeiture in trafficking for forced labor or services cases.
- § 39-13-309, making property tied to trafficking for sexual servitude subject to judicial forfeiture.
- § 39-13-312, created to govern distribution of forfeiture proceeds.



Public Chapter 377 (2011) - This act, known as Tennessee's "**Safe Harbor**" law, established the following:

- § 39-13-513, granting **immunity from prosecution for prostitution** to minors under 18, requiring law enforcement to provide the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline** and release the minor to a parent or guardian.
- § 39-13-514, classifying patronizing prostitution from **a minor or a person with an intellectual disability as a Class E felony**.
- § 39-13-512, defining "promoting prostitution of a minor" as involving anyone under 18 or with an intellectual disability.
- § 39-13-515, making the promotion of prostitution of a minor a Class E felony.

Note: The law took effect immediately on May 21, 2011, and applied to offenses committed on or after that date.



Public Chapter 435 (2011) - Created the Resource Act, § 39-13-313, the **Tennessee Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline** within the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI). This established a statewide hotline for tips and victim assistance. *Note: Public Chapter places this originally under 39-13-312 but currently 39-13-313. Effective October 1, 2011.*



Public Chapter 613 (2012) – Created, [§ 39-13-314](#) a **civil** cause of action for trafficking victims. Victims of human trafficking can now sue their traffickers, providing for recovery of actual, compensatory, and punitive damages, attorney's fees, etc. *Effective July 1, 2012.*



Public Chapter 891 (2012) – Amended the prostitution statute, [§39-13-513](#) by adding that it is a defense to prosecution if a person is a victim of human trafficking. *Effective July 1, 2012.*



Public Chapter 963 (2012) – Directed the development of a statewide plan, [§ 71-1-135](#) to assist trafficking victims. Department of Health Services, in collaboration with other agencies was tasked to formulate a comprehensive plan for delivery of services to victims. By July 1, 2013 they were to give a copy of the plan.



Public Chapter 1074 (2012) – Amended [§ 39-13-307](#) to expand and clarify the definition of coercion in involuntary labor servitude cases, by replacing “physical harm” with “**serious bodily harm**”. The law also added two new forms of coercion: **controlling a victim’s access to addictive controlled substances** and **controlling their movements through threats or violence**. In addition, it created a new **aggravating factor** that increases penalties when the victim is under the age of 13. *Effective July 1, 2012.*



Public Chapter 1075 (2012) amended and established:

- [§ 39-13-301](#), defining key terms including advertisement, commercial sex act, and minor.
- [§ 39-13-309](#), broadening the offense of trafficking for a commercial sex act, criminalizing not only the act itself but also recruitment, enticement, or transport for such purposes.
- [§ 39-13-314](#), making it a Class C felony to knowingly advertise commercial sexual abuse of a minor, punishable by at least a \$10,000 fine. Additionally, lack of knowledge of the minor’s age is not a defense unless the advertiser made a bona fide attempt to verify age. If the victim is under 15 or if the offense occurs near schools or other child-centered spaces, is elevated to a Class A felony. *Effective July 1, 2012. Note: This is codified under [§39-13-315](#).*



Public Chapter 242 (2013) – Mandated restitution to trafficking victims via [§ 39-11-118](#). Courts must order traffickers to pay restitution covering the victim’s losses, including the value of the victim’s labor or commercial sex acts, medical and psychological treatment. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 251 (2013) – Amended [§ 24-7-120](#), allowing child victims of trafficking or patronizing prostitution **under the age of 13** to testify in closed-circuit TV outside the courtroom. *Effective July 1, 2013.*

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Public Chapter 278 (2013) – Amended [§ 39-12-203](#) to include trafficking, promoting or patronizing prostitution, and sexual exploitation of minors to the definitions of **“racketeering activity”** and **“unlawful debt”** under Tennessee’s Racketeered Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) laws. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 337 (2013) – Amended [§39-11-502](#) by eliminating the **“mistake of age”** defense for certain prostitution crimes involving minors, [§39-13-309](#). An offender cannot claim they didn’t know the minor’s age in prosecutions for patronizing or soliciting a minor for sex. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 350 (2013) – Amended multiple sections of Tennessee law, [§ 39-13-309](#), [39-13-529](#), [39-17-1003](#), [39-17-1004](#), and [39-17-1005](#), reinforcing that **minors cannot legally consent** to acts of prostitution or to being exploited in pornographic materials. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 415 (2013) – Added human trafficking offenses to the **organized crime (gang)** statutes, [§ 40-35-121\(a\)\(3\)\(b\)](#). *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 416 (2013) – Amended [§ 39-13-309](#) to clarify that a person can be prosecuted for trafficking a minor for a commercial sex act **even if the “minor” is an undercover law enforcement officer**. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 436 (2013) – Expanded [§39-13-528\(a\)](#), establishing that solicitation of a minor for trafficking or commercial sex acts, patronizing prostitution, and other exploitative acts of minors (for any sexual exploitation) face felony charges, effectively closing loopholes. *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 464 (2013) – Created the Tennessee Human Trafficking Task Force (later converted into an advisory committee). This multi-agency task force was charged with developing a state plan to prevent trafficking. (In 2015, this body was moved under TBI and made permanent as an Advisory Council). *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 465 (2013) – Created an offense, [§ 39-13-533](#), **“promoting travel for prostitution”**. Updated [§39-13-309](#) to include anyone who recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, purchases, or otherwise obtains a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. Replaced the definition of **“sexual servitude”** with **“commercial sex act”** and deleted subdivision (4), consolidating terminology in [§39-13-301](#). *Effective July 1, 2013.*



Public Chapter 485 (2013) – Amended [§ 39-13-515](#) by replacing the section in its entirety and defining promoting prostitution as a **Class E felony**, while explicitly stating that when the offense involves a minor, it must be **prosecuted as a trafficking for commercial sex act** under [§ 39-13-309](#). *Effective July 1, 2013.*

2014



Public Chapter 646 (2014) – Amended §39-13-515, the **broader sexual offenses statute**, prohibiting a defendant charged with promoting prostitution from claiming as a defense that “the person they promoted was actually a law enforcement officer” or that a minor victim consented. Essentially, undercover stings and the inability of minors to consent are solidified in law. *Effective July 1, 2014.*



Public Chapter 711 (2014) – Broadened the definition of “**severe child abuse**”, **§ 37-1-102(b)(23)(C)**, to include trafficking related acts. *Knowingly* failing to protect a child from prostitution, or promoting the *prostitution of a child*, is now included as a form of severe abuse in custody/abuse proceedings. This change has implications for terminating parental rights of traffickers or negligent parents. *Effective July 1, 2014. Note:* This is codified as §37-1-102(b)(27)(C).



Public Chapter 722 (2014) – Amended § 40-39-202(20)(A)(xix), requiring that anyone convicted of patronizing prostitution of a minor to be added to the **Sex Offender Registry**. *Effective July 1, 2014.*



Public Chapter 957 (2014) – Reclassified § 39-13-514 patronizing prostitution of minors as trafficking and sharply increased penalties for buyers of trafficked persons. Patronizing a prostitute known or believed to be under 18 became punishable as severe as trafficking: a **Class A felony if the minor is under 18** (up from Class E), and patronizing someone with an intellectual disability became Class B. *Effective July 1, 2014.*

2015



Public Chapter 67 (2015) – Amended § 39-13-513(d), requiring that when law enforcement encounters a suspected minor trafficking victim, they **must** provide the number of the Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline substituting it for the national hotline. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



Public Chapter 469 (2015) – Allowed certain trafficking victims, under **§ 39-13-314**, to **petition off** the Sex Offender Registry, if they can prove they committed the offense as a result of being a trafficking victim. *Effective July 1, 2015. Note:* This has been repealed as of July 1, 2024.



Public Chapter 503 (2015) – Established human trafficking training programs for law enforcement and expanded TBI's capacity, §38-6-114, adding four agents dedicated to trafficking investigations and training statewide over 2016-2017. Granted TBI original jurisdiction for investigating human trafficking offenses statewide. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



Public Chapter 510 (2015) – Created §4-3-3001 converting the earlier task force into the ongoing Human Trafficking Advisory Council under TBI, formalizing that the council (made up of law enforcement, NGOs, prosecutors, etc.) must meet before each legislative session to recommend new laws. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



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2015



Public Chapter 237 (2015) - Under § 36-1-113(g)(11)(A)(ii)(m), added that a parent's conviction of sex trafficking of children (under federal or other state law) is grounds for terminating parent rights. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



Public Chapter 264 (2015) - Amended § 39-13-513(d) authorizing law enforcement officers who encounter a minor suspected of being involved in prostitution or sex trafficking to release the minor to a parent or guardian or transport the minor to a licensed shelter or care facility instead of juvenile detention center. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



Public Chapter 310 (2015) - Amended § 40-2-101(g)(1)(k), extending the statute of limitations (SOL) for **promoting prostitution** of a minor to 25. Matching the extended limits for trafficking and other child sex crimes, recognizing that victims may take years to come forward. *Effective July 1, 2015.*



Public Chapter 435 (2015) - Amended § 40-6-305 authorizing use of **wiretaps** for trafficking cases. *Effective July 1, 2015.*

2016



Public Chapter 634 (2016) - Updated §39-13-309, eliminating two defenses in trafficking prosecutions: (1) the intended victim was a law enforcement officer (i.e. sting operations are not entrapment defenses), and (2) that a minor trafficking victim consented to the commercial sex act. This reiterated that a minor cannot legally consent to being trafficked, and attempting to traffic an undercover officer posing as a minor is still a crime. *Effective July 1, 2016.*



Public Chapter 979 (2016) - Clarified that the offense of promoting prostitution, § 39-13-512, applies only to those who **knowingly** procure or promote another person for sex. It also added: juvenile and family court judges, administrators and court clerks sheriffs' association, Tennessee judicial conference, Tennessee general sessions judges conference, to the list of officials who must receive specialized TBI training on human trafficking. Additionally, it introduced a definition of "**caregiver**" in child welfare laws to **include** traffickers who have custodial control, so that child victims can get services through CPS systems. *Effective July 1, 2016.*



2017



Public Chapter 169 (2017) - Increased the classification of patronizing prostitution, § 39-13-514 (when not involving minors) from a Class B misdemeanor to a **Class A misdemeanor**. *Effective July 1, 2017.*



Public Chapter 292 (2017) - Amended § 37-1-102(b)(22)(C) by updating the definitions of "**child sex abuse**" and "**severe child abuse**" to explicitly include trafficking a child for a commercial sex act. §37-1-102(b)(4) amended "**caregiver**" to potentially include a person who has allegedly used the child for the purpose of commercial sex act; and §37-1-602(a)(3)(C) amended to include the commission of any act towards the child prohibited by §39-13-309. *Effective July 1, 2017. Note: This is now codified as §37-1-102(b)(27)(C).*

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2017



Public Chapter 308 (2017) – Enacted § 10-7-504(t) making the identifying information of minor crime victims, including any **photographic depiction** of a minor trafficking victim, confidential. This statute prevents a minor victim's name, address, or image from being released as a public record, **unless** the court consents. *Effective July 1, 2017.*

2018



Public Chapter 613 (2018) – Made records of human trafficking service providers confidential. § 36-3-623 and §10-7-504. *Effective July 1, 2018.*



Public Chapter 764 (2018) – § 67-4-1201 and § 67-4-1202 created a funding mechanism for victim services via a privilege tax on adult entertainment businesses. *Key provision:* The law formalized that an amount equivalent to the tax collected should support trafficking victim treatment programs. *Effective July 1, 2018* and was repealed on *July 1, 2021.*



Public Chapter 1004 (2018) - Created **Tennessee’s Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** under § 40-38-601 to 40-38-613, offering privacy protections to victims of human trafficking or other sexual offenses. Administered by the **Secretary of State**, the program allows certified victims to use a **substitute address** instead of their actual residence for public records. The law outlines **eligibility, application and renewal procedures, and confidentiality safeguards**, while imposing penalties for unauthorized disclosures. *Signed April 23, 2018 and effective March 1, 2019.*



Public Chapter 1018 (2018) – § 37-1-153(f) established a path for juvenile victims to expunge records of delinquency that resulted from being trafficked. *Effective July, 1, 2018.*



Public Chapter 1019 (2018) – Amended § 39-13-515 allowing for stiffer penalties for prostituting individuals with disabilities. It provided that promoting prostitution of a person with an intellectual disability is punishable as a Class D felony. *Effective July 1, 2018.* *Note: Current statute shows that it is now a Class A felony.*

2019



Public Chapter 123 (2019) - This act strengthened Tennessee’s human trafficking and prostitution laws by expanding definitions, closing loopholes, and clarifying that certain defenses cannot be used. *Effective July 1, 2019*



Public Chapter 199 (2019) – § 40-32-105 expanded criminal record expungement for trafficking survivors, recognizing victims often have multiple related charges (e.g. drug or theft charges coerced by traffickers). *Effective July 1, 2019.*

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2019



Public Chapter 269 (2019) – Amended § 49-6-1304(a) mandating public school’s family-life curriculum to include instruction on **detecting, preventing, and treating child trafficking**. It also required every local school board to ensure teachers receive a one-time in-service training on child trafficking detection and response. *Effective July 1, 2019.*



Public Chapter 356 (2019) – Created §9-4-214 establishing the “Victims of Human Trafficking Fund” in the state treasury. This fund provides grants to agencies that offer comprehensive treatment and support to trafficking victims. The law prioritized experienced anti-trafficking organizations for these grants. *Effective July 1, 2019.*

2020



Public Chapter 602 (2020) – Amended § 4-3-3002(2) adding a position for a representative from the Alcoholic Beverage Commission (ABC) to the state Human Trafficking Advisory Council. *Effective July 1, 2020.*



Public Chapter 607 (2020) – Expanded § 40-35-313(a)(1)(B)(ii) strengthening the definition “**sexual offense**” in Tennessee law to include patronizing prostitution of a minor or person with an intellectual disability. *Effective July 1, 2020.*

2021



Public Chapter 115 (2021) – Amended § 39-11-611 allowing a human trafficking victim to use force, even deadly force, as a defense during an attempt to escape from a trafficker. Created an affirmative defense for **assaultive acts** committed against their trafficker. *Effective July 1, 2021.*



Public Chapter 246 (2021) – Amended § 39-13-513 strengthening Safe Harbor by explicitly **prohibiting charging minors with prostitution or criminal offenses if they are trafficking victims**. It also required law enforcement to notify Department of Children Services (DCS) immediately when a minor is found in prostitution, so the child can be placed in a safe environment. *Effective July 1, 2021.*



Public Chapter 363 (2021) – Amended § 40-2-101 removing the statute of limitations for trafficking offenses against children. For trafficking a child for a commercial sex act committed on or after July 1, 2021, there is **no time limit** on bringing charges.

2022



Public Chapter 983 (2022) – Created § 37-10-502, requiring state agencies to extend services to trafficking victims aged 18-24 victimized as children. DCS and DHS must provide specialized resources for this 18-24 age group of survivors. *Recommendations must be submitted to the Senate and House of Representatives by March 1, 2023.*

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Public Chapter 842 – Established that several state agencies partner with a nonprofit organization specializing in human trafficking advocacy and education and mandated annual training for appropriate personnel.

- Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services; [§ 33-2-1205](#)
- Department of Corrections; [§ 41-1-128](#)
- Department of Human Services. [§ 71-1-127](#)



Public Chapter 984 (2022) – Amended [§ 37-1-603\(b\)](#) creating regional Child Sex Trafficking Response Teams and mandated the District Attorneys General, in partnership with TBI, DCS, the Sheriffs' Association, Chiefs of Police Association, and child advocacy centers, establish formal response teams for CSEC cases. *Effective July 1, 2022.*



Public Chapter 1021 (2022) – Amended [§ 49-6-3004\(c\)\(1\)\(B\)](#) instituting a **mandatory training for school staff**. All Local Education Agency employees who work directly with students must be trained at least **once** every **three years** on human trafficking detection and prevention. *Effective July 1, 2022.*



Public Chapter 1089 (2022) – Created the new Class A felony offense, [§ 39-13-316](#), of **“Aggravated Human Trafficking,”** intending for particularly **egregious** trafficking cases (such as those involving multiple victims, torture, or repeat offenders). The law also specified that anyone convicted of aggravated trafficking must serve a high percentage of their sentences before release. *Effective July 1, 2022.*



Public Chapter 1115 (2022) – Expanded child witness protections, [§ 24-7-120](#), raising the age to 18 under which a trafficking victim's testimony may be taken outside the courtroom. It also made various other changes to clarify trafficking offenses (e.g. aligning state definitions with federal law). *Effective July 1, 2022.*



Public Chapter 177 (2023) – Established the **Tennessee Businesses Against Trafficking (TBAT)** program by amending [§ 38-1-801](#). This law directs the Secretary of State to create a **voluntary** program encouraging private businesses to train employees, adopt anti-trafficking policies, and help identify and prevent trafficking. *Effective July 1, 2023.*



Public Chapter 359 (2023) – Strengthened **victim compensation** by revising the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund through amending [§ 29-13-106](#) to ensure victims of human trafficking offenses are eligible and to streamline their claims. *Effective July 1, 2023.*



Special Session Public Chapter 3 (2023) – During an August 2023 special session on public safety, Tennessee passed a law, [§ 38-6-130](#) requiring the TBI to **submit annual reports on human trafficking crimes and trends** to the Governor and Legislature. *Effective July 1, 2024.*



2024



Public Chapter 545 (2024) – Amended [§ 40-32-105](#) by allowing expungement for individuals convicted of aggravated prostitution under [§ 39-13-516](#) and removes the offense from the definitions of both “sexual offense” ([§ 40-39-202\(20\)](#)) and “violent sexual offense” ([§ 40-39-202\(31\)](#)). The act also repeals [§ 40-39-218](#), eliminating prior restrictions specific to those convicted of aggravated prostitution. Additionally, it amends [§ 40-39-207](#) to allow individuals convicted of aggravated prostitution before July 1, 2024, to petition for removal from the sex offender registry. These changes reflect a shift toward treating aggravated prostitution less as a sex crime and more in the context of coercion and trafficking dynamics. *Effective July 1, 2024.*



Public Chapter 571 (2024) – Amended [§ 49-6-1304](#) requiring age-appropriate education related to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The law mandates that the Tennessee Joint Task Force on Children’s Justice and Child Sexual Abuse, in consultation with the Children’s Services Advisory Council, annually recommend instructional content to the Department of Education. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and public charter schools must incorporate these recommendations and report their curriculum content to the Department of Children’s Services. *Effective July 1, 2024.*



Public Chapter 653 (2024) – Amended [§ 7-51-1408](#) creating **mandatory posting of the Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline** in adult establishments. Every adult cabaret or adult-oriented business in the state must display a standardized sign on all public and employee entrances and restroom doors with the information regarding human trafficking. This law aims to increase victim outreach and public reporting by posting information in venues at higher risk of trafficking. *Effective July 1, 2024*

2025



Public Chapter 424 (2025) – Amended [§ 39-13-311](#) by consolidating statutes [§39-13-308](#) and [§39-13-309](#) and codifying statute definitions within [§39-13-311](#), and additionally created the Class E felony of “human smuggling,” [§39-17-118](#), defined as knowingly transporting or hiding someone in the U.S. illegally for profit. It also established “aggravated human smuggling” as a Class A felony when harm or abuse occurs. The law expanded the definition of human trafficking to include promoting a minor’s prostitution. It also authorized the Attorney General to pursue civil actions against traffickers. *Effective July 1, 2025.*



Public Chapter 19 (2025) – Known as “The Ink of Hope Act”, amended [§ 62-38-204](#) requiring that all tattoo operators or artists shall, before receiving a permit to operate a tattoo establishment or apply a tattoo, shall, before receiving a permit to operate a tattoo establishment or to apply a tattoo, complete up to one (1) hour of online or in-person training, by a nonprofit organization approved by the Tennessee human trafficking advisory council that focuses on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking, how to respond to those signs, how to refer a client to resources for victims of human trafficking, and reporting signs of human trafficking to the Tennessee Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline. *Passed March 3, 2025 and Effective January 1, 2026.*

LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages provide recommendations for Tennessee's 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:

TRAINING & OUTREACH

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

MINORS-FOCUSED RESPONSE

SURVIVOR SUPPORT

Recommendations to strengthen:

TRAINING & OUTREACH

Expand Human Trafficking Hotline Signage Requirements

Current legislation only requires human-trafficking hotline signage in adult-oriented businesses. Victims and survivors are likely to pass through many more places, including hotels/motels, transit stations, rest areas, health clinics, labor sites, convenience stores, bars, and shelters. Expanding signage requirements to these additional establishments will strengthen outreach and identification efforts.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Expand statutory requirements so all designated public-facing businesses and establishments must post standardized statewide human-trafficking hotline signage, with clear placement guidelines and multilingual accessibility.

LEAD

TBI, Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Department of Transportation, Department of Health, local licensing authorities.

MODEL(S)

- [Human Trafficking Prevention Act of 2022](#) - Federal mandate for posting human trafficking hotline signage in federally regulated locations.
- Georgia – [O.C.G.A. § 16-5-47](#)
- Arkansas – [A.C.A. § 12-19-102](#)

MECHANISM

Update statute to define required locations (e.g., motels/hotels, rest areas/truck stops, airports/bus stations, labor agencies, healthcare and social-service facilities, places of assembly or entertainment); provide standardized signage in multiple languages; and include enforcement via business licensing compliance.

Equip Regulatory Agencies with Labor Trafficking Training

Labor trafficking is often hidden in everyday workplaces, and frontline regulatory agencies are best positioned to see the signs. Equipping inspectors and staff of the Departments of Labor & Workforce Development, Commerce & Insurance, and Agriculture with tools and training will strengthen identification, protect vulnerable workers, and hold traffickers and businesses accountable.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Require annual labor trafficking prevention and response training for agencies responsible for enforcing labor standards, licensing workplaces, or inspecting industries where exploitation is most likely.

LEAD

Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Department of Commerce & Insurance, and Department of Agriculture, in partnership with TBI Human Trafficking Unit and survivor-informed training providers.

MODEL(S)

- North Carolina - DOL develops training. [NC Gen. Stat. § 130A-511](#)
- Minnesota – [Labor Trafficking Protocol & Labor Standards Integration](#)

MECHANISM

Standardize labor-trafficking indicator checklists and referral protocols for inspectors; require high-risk businesses to complete annual training at licensure/renewal.

Recommendations to strengthen:

TRAINING & OUTREACH (CONT.)

Expand Required Training to Hospitality & Healthcare Industries

Workers in healthcare (e.g. walk-in clinics and emergency rooms) and hospitality (e.g. lodging, transportation, and personal-services) are often the first community members to encounter human trafficking victims, but most have not received training beyond awareness to recognize or respond to it. Expanding mandatory training requirements to these critical professions and industries would improve identification, intervention, and care.

Recommended Next Steps (Hospitality)

ACTION

Require all businesses and service providers in hospitality, lodging, rideshare, transportation, massage/body-work parlors (and other service sectors deemed high-risk) to deliver human trafficking that is beyond awareness with additional focus on response training for employees.

LEAD

Department of Commerce & Insurance + Department of Labor & Workforce Development + TBI + Department of Transportation

MODEL(S)

- Florida - Hospitality training mandate. [Fla. Stat. § 509.096](#)
- [King County, Washington](#) - Local mandate requiring ride-share drivers to take human trafficking course

MECHANISM

Require hospitality businesses to complete certified HT training at licensing and renewal. Use a standardized, survivor-informed curriculum available online and in multiple languages to educate employees.

Recommended Next Steps (Healthcare)

ACTION

Require all hospitals, clinics, urgent-care centers, and public health agencies to provide human trafficking awareness and response training to all front-line staff (e.g. medical, intake, social work, emergency, etc.).

LEAD

Tennessee Department of Health + Tennessee Bureau of Investigation + Department of Human Services + Tennessee Board of Nursing / relevant licensing boards

MODEL(S)

- Connecticut - requires hospital staff who have contact with human trafficking victims to take required training. [Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 319a-17a-106h\(b\)-\(c\)](#)
- Florida - One-hour mandatory human-trafficking CE for Florida health-care licensees. [Fla. Stat. § 456.0341](#)

MECHANISM

Integrate human trafficking training into licensing/certification requirements for healthcare providers; require initial training and periodic refreshers; use a state-approved, trauma-informed curriculum with emphasis on protocols.

Recommendations to strengthen: **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Establish a Specialized Prosecution Unit

Tennessee has strong human trafficking laws, but prosecutions for the crimes of human trafficking remain very low due to case complexity and limited coordinated support. A statewide specialized prosecution unit (or working group), partnering the TBI, the Attorney General's Office, and the District Attorneys General Conference, would strengthen case strategy and create capacity to successfully prosecute human traffickers similar to models in Georgia, Massachusetts, and Texas.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Establish a statewide Specialized Prosecutorial Task Force on Human Trafficking to coordinate complex case strategy, training, and intelligence-sharing for both sex and labor trafficking prosecutions.

LEAD

TBI + Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference (TNDAGC) + Attorney General's Office.

MODEL(S)

- [Georgia Attorney General's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit](#)
- [Massachusetts AG Human Trafficking Division](#)
- [Texas OAG HTOC Section](#)

MECHANISM

Establish a statewide anti-trafficking prosecution network with regional prosecutors, specialized investigators, survivor-informed advisors, and unified protocols, including data-sharing and annual interagency training.

Expand “Athena Court” for Human Trafficking Survivors Statewide

Davidson County's Athena Court shows how a trauma-informed court model can provide survivors with a restorative path through the criminal justice system. Right now, only those in one county have access to these alternatives. Expanding this approach statewide would help ensure that every survivor in Tennessee has access to this needed resource to help them build healthy and sustainable futures.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Establish a statewide Human Trafficking Survivor Court Program modeled after Davidson County's Athena Court.

LEAD

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) + Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference + Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (HT Unit)

MODEL(S)

- [Davidson County, Tennessee "Athena Court"](#)
- [New York "Human Trafficking Intervention Court" Model \(HTIC\)](#)

MECHANISM

Create an enabling statute or administrative rule allowing counties to adopt the specialty court framework; provide grant funds and bench/counsel training; standardize eligibility criteria, case planning phases, survivor service linkages, and reporting; use centralized technical assistance hub through AOC to support statewide implementation.

Recommendations to strengthen:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CONT.)

Strengthen Confidentiality Protections for Trafficking Survivors

Adult survivors often must testify in open court — exposing them to risk of public identification, re-traumatization, or even re-victimization. Currently, protective-testimony measures (e.g. closed-circuit testimony or CCTV) in TN apply primarily to minors. Extending the option of in-camera or protected testimony to adult trafficking survivors would improve both survivor safety and prosecutorial integrity.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Authorize the use of in-camera testimony or other protective hearing formats for adult trafficking survivors when requested and when a court makes a finding of safety risk or substantial trauma.

LEAD

Tennessee General Assembly + Administrative Office of the Courts + TBI + District Attorneys General Conference

MODEL(S)

- Florida – Requires courtroom clearance during testimony of sex-offense victims upon request, regardless of age. [Fla. Stat. § 918.16\(2\)](#).
- New Jersey - Closed-circuit testimony for adult survivors. [N.J. Stat. 2A:84A-32.4](#)

MECHANISM

Amend TN court-procedure rules (or statutes) to allow protective testimony for adult survivors in qualifying trafficking cases. Establish criteria for when protective measures are available (e.g. victim request + documented safety/trauma concern). Train judges, prosecutors, and court staff about the option and how to evaluate requests in a trauma-informed way.

Ensure Sustainability of the TBI Human Trafficking Task Force

The TBI Human Trafficking Task Force has twice received the federal Enhanced Collaborative Task Force Grant from the U.S. Dept. of Justice. TBI's human-trafficking work is essential to public safety in Tennessee — and must live beyond what federal grants can support. Establishing a state-appropriated funding source to sustain these efforts ensures that the state of Tennessee, not federal grant cycles or allocations, determines the ongoing strength and continuity of its nationally recognized work to end and prevent human trafficking, and to care well for all those impacted by it.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Create a dedicated, state-appropriated funding source to sustain TBI's Human Trafficking Unit and statewide collaborative task force initiatives.

LEAD

TN General Assembly + Governor's Office + TBI + Department of Finance & Administration

MODEL(S)

- Texas – Trafficking of Persons Investigation and Prosecution Account - [Texas Government Code § 772.006](#)
- Montana - Human Trafficking Education Account. [Mont. Code Ann. § 44-4-1504](#)

MECHANISM

Create a General Fund appropriation category for statewide trafficking enforcement and victim-support coordination, with annual reporting to track investigative impact, task-force collaboration, and survivor care outcomes.

Recommendations to strengthen:

MINORS-FOCUSED RESPONSE

Create Specialized Group Homes for Survivors

Trafficked youth face trauma and instability in ways that often make traditional foster or shelter placements unable to meet their safety and support needs. Without specialized care, youth can remain at risk of returning to exploitation. Tennessee can strengthen care for youth who have experienced trafficking by creating small, survivor-care-centered group homes. Models in Florida and New York demonstrate how this type of approach can lead to improved safety and better outcomes.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Establish and license 4–8 bed Specialized Group Care homes with trauma-responsive, survivor-informed services and pathways to safe family-based or independent living.

LEAD

DCS/Child Welfare licensing authority

MODEL(S)

- Florida – Specialized residential homes for CSEC youth. [Fla Stat. § 409.1678](#)
- New York – Safe house programs for trafficked minors. [N.Y. Soc. Serv. Law § 447-a](#)

MECHANISM

Require secure-but-least-restrictive environments, 24/7 trained staff, clinical ratios, survivor-informed programs, education continuity, tech/online safety protocols. Oversight through unannounced inspections and youth grievance systems. Blend Medicaid, child welfare, and state grant funding to support.

Default (Opt-Out) Enrollment for Extend Foster Care

Youth exiting foster care are among the highest-risk populations for human trafficking due to the compounding vulnerabilities that traffickers target, including especially lack of connection to supportive community, homelessness, and unmet needs. In 2025, Tennessee extended foster care benefits to age 23, but it still requires young adults to “opt-in” to receive these benefits. In practice, this creates a high drop-off point right when exploitation risks are highest too. Florida reduces this vulnerability by automatically enrolling eligible youth in extended foster care benefits and allowing them to “opt-out” if they choose. Tennessee can adopt this model to ensure young adults maintain access to critical housing, financial support, and case management, closing a major vulnerability traffickers exploit.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Amend §37-2-604 to make extended foster care up to age 23 a default enrollment for all eligible young adults, with the option to opt-out.

LEAD

General Assembly – Children & Family Affairs Committee + DCS

MODEL(S)

- [Florida PESS](#)
- [Georgia Transition from Foster Care Program](#)

MECHANISM

Automatically enroll eligible youth aging-out and provide written notice 90 days before 18th birthday. Youth remain enrolled unless they proactively opt out.

Recommendations to strengthen: **SURVIVOR SUPPORT**

Strengthen Pathways to Success for Survivors

Tennessee has taken important steps to support survivors as they transition into safety and stability. Still, many face ongoing challenges in rebuilding their education, careers, and financial independence. By strengthening and formalizing a statewide Pathway for Success for Survivors program, Tennessee can better connect survivor services with job training, tuition support, and real pathways to employment. Integrating these opportunities into our existing workforce and education systems, while ensuring they are trauma-informed, would help survivors not only recover, but also thrive and build secure futures.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Create a multi-agency program for trafficking survivors integrating vocational training, tuition assistance, and employment partnerships.

LEAD

Department of Labor & Workforce Development + Department of Health + Department of Human Services + DCS

MODEL(S)

- Washington State – Statewide coordination committee including workforce & re-entry focus. [WA RCW 7.68.801](#)
- Florida - Linking DCF and CareerSource Florida to employment supports. [Fla. Stat. § 409.1754](#)

MECHANISM

Dedicated grants for local coalitions; employer tax credits for certified trauma-informed hires; portable education stipends and peer-mentor networks to track two-year outcomes in housing, employment, and education without collecting new personal data.

Expand Identity Protection Options for Trafficking Survivors

Traffickers frequently misuse survivors' names and Social Security numbers to track them, maintain coercive control, and create long-term financial harm. After exiting exploitation, survivors deserve the ability to secure their identity, avoid re-targeting, and rebuild independence. Tennessee can strengthen protections by making safety-based identity changes confidential and accessible.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Create a trafficking-specific identity-protection framework that automatically seals name-change records tied to trafficking cases, eliminates notice requirements to abusers or associates, supports survivors in obtaining a new SSN when safety risks or ongoing harm exist, and ensures all previous identity links are securely protected.

LEAD

TN General Assembly + AOC + TBI HT Unit + DCS/DHS

MODEL(S)

- Washington – Name change program. [Rev. Code Wash. § 4.24.130](#)
- Texas – explicitly applies protections to survivors of trafficking. [Tex. Code Crim. Proc. art. 58.052](#)

MECHANISM

Statutory amendments enabling automatic sealed-record procedures, survivor certification for SSN-change support, trauma-informed judicial handling, and standardized protection guidance across agencies.

Recommendations to strengthen: **SURVIVOR SUPPORT**

Strengthen Survivor Support for Underserved Communities

Data in Tennessee has shown that survivors of human trafficking from underserved communities often face significant barriers to accessing long-term aftercare and reintegrative support, including education, employment, and economic stability. This is especially true for survivors who encounter language barriers, rural isolation, or system involvement. Expanding coordinated survivor services through existing state systems would help ensure that reintegrative pathways exist and are accessible to all survivors, regardless of background or geography.

Recommended Next Steps

ACTION

Establish a coordinated, multi-agency survivor support initiative focused on expanding access to services for underserved communities by integrating trafficking survivor assistance with workforce development, education, and supportive services, including vocational training, tuition or credentialing assistance, and trauma-informed employment pathways.

LEAD

Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development + Department of Human Resources + Department of Mental Health + Department of Public Health + the Tennessee Human Trafficking Task Force + in partnership with survivor-led service providers and educational institutions.

MODEL(S)

- Washington State – Statewide coordination committee including workforce & re-entry focus. [WA RCW 7.68.801](#)
- Florida - Linking DCF and CareerSource Florida to employment supports. [Fla. Stat. § 409.1754](#)

MECHANISM

Authorize use of existing workforce, education, and social service funding streams to expand survivor services in underserved communities through grants to community-based providers, trauma-informed job training and placement partnerships, and portable education or credentialing assistance. Require participating agencies to coordinate referrals and report aggregate, non-identifying outcomes related to service access, employment, and housing stability.

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.

Sources

Public Chapters (Sessions Laws)

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- 2011 Tenn. Pub. Acts 377.
- 2011 Tenn. Pub. Acts 354.
- 2011 Tenn. Pub. Acts 435.
- 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts 1074.
- 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts 613.
- 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts 963.
- 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts 1075.
- 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts 891.
- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 436.
- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 251.
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- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 337.
- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 485.
- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 465.
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- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 278.
- 2013 Tenn. Pub. Acts 464.
- 2014 Tenn. Pub. Acts 711.
- 2014 Tenn. Pub. Acts 646.
- 2014 Tenn. Pub. Acts 957.
- 2014 Tenn. Pub. Acts 722.
- 2015 Tenn. Pub. Acts 503.
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- 2015 Tenn. Pub. Acts 510.
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- 2015 Tenn. Pub. Acts 264.
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- 2015 Tenn. Pub. Acts 237.
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- 2022 Tenn. Pub. Acts 984.
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- 2023 Tenn. Pub. Acts 3 (Spec. Sess.).
- 2024 Tenn. Pub. Acts 653.
- 2024 Tenn. Pub. Acts 571.
- 2024 Tenn. Pub. Acts 545.
- 2025 Tenn. Pub. Acts 424.
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Statutes

- Mandatory posting of Tennessee human trafficking resource center signs. Tenn. Code Ann. § 7-51-1408
- Victims of Human Trafficking Fund. Tenn. Code Ann. § 9-4-214
- Confidential records – Exceptions. Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-504
- Child’s testimony – Closed circuit television. Tenn. Code Ann. § 24-7-120
- Losses or expenses reimbursable (Criminal Injuries Compensation). Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-13-106
- Annual training about human trafficking (Mental Health and Substance Abuse and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities). Tenn. Code Ann. § 33-2-1205
- Termination of parental or guardianship rights. Tenn. Code Ann. § 36-1-113
- Confidentiality of records of shelters, centers, providers. Tenn. Code Ann. § 36-3-623
- Chapter and part definitions (Juveniles). Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-102
- Court files and records – Inspection limited – Exceptions for certain violent offenders – Confidentiality – Expunction. Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-153
- Comprehensive State Plan (Child Sexual Abuse). Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-603
- Recommendations on resources and services for persons 18 to 24 years of age who have been victims of child sex trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-10-502
- Tennessee Business Against Trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 38-1-801
- Reporting on child and human trafficking crimes. Tenn. Code Ann. § 38-6-130
- Restitution to victims of crime. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-11-118
- Ignorance or mistake of fact. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-11-502
- Self-defense. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-11-611
- Criminal proceeds subject to forfeiture. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-11-703
- Part definitions. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-12-203
- Kidnapping and False Imprisonment. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-303
- Involuntary labor servitude – Restitution. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-307
- Trafficking for forced labor or services. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-308
- Trafficking for commercial sex act. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-309
- Violations by corporations. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-311
- Manner in which proceeds from forfeitures are distributed and used. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-312
- Tennessee Human Trafficking Resource Hotline Act. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-313
- Offense of human trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-314
- Offense of advertising commercial sexual abuse of a minor. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-315
- Aggravated human trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-316
- Prostitution – Definitions. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-512
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- Promoting prostitution – Unacceptable defenses. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-515
- Aggravated prostitution. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-516
- Offense of solicitation of a minor. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-528
- Offense of soliciting sexual exploitation of a minor – Exploitation of a minor by electronic means. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-529

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- Offense of promoting travel for prostitution. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-533
- Offense of sexual exploitation of a minor. Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1003
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- Felonies. Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-2-101
- Interception of communications for evidence of certain crimes. Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-6-305
- Expunction of person's public records involving offenses related to status as a victim of human trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-32-105
- Home Address Confidentiality Program. Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-38-601 to -613
- Probation – Conditions – Discharge and dismissal – Expunction from official records – Fee. Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-35-313
- Annual training about human trafficking (Correctional Institutions and Inmates). Tenn. Code Ann. § 41-1-128
- Family Life Instruction. Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1304
- School Term. Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3004
- Annual training about human trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-1-127
- Victims of human trafficking. Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-1-135

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