



NC Human Trafficking Commission: General Meeting
Thursday, February 23rd, 2023, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
WebEx through the NC Judicial Center / Hickory Boardroom (A1-101)

10:00 AM – Call to Order & Roll Call Attendance

Jennifer Haigwood

Commission Chair Haigwood opened the meeting and called to order. She then conducted a verbal roll call to document attendance. Commissioners in attendance at the meeting were Amy Auth, Maggie Brewer, Judge Ussery (exited 12:20 pm), Jennifer Haigwood, Jasmine McGhee (joined 10:01am, exited 11:30 am), Marc Nichols, Tina Pennington (exited 12:01 pm), Caitlin Ryland (joined 10:02 am), Suzanne Mauney-Smith (exited 11:45 am), Billy West (exited 11:58 am), and Angelica Wind (joined 10:02 am). Also in attendance were Commission Executive Director, Christine Long, Project Analyst, Nancy Hagan, Grants Administrator, Kathy Estrada, Grants Managers, Roxana Zelada-Lewis, Kristen Howe, and Jacqueline Kehinde, and Administrative Secretary, Lauren Amato. Members of the public were also able to view or listen to the meeting via WebEx.

10:04 AM – Ethics Reminder

Jennifer Haigwood

Approval of the Minutes 12/7/2022

(See draft meeting minutes 12-7-2022)

Commission Chair Haigwood read the required ethics statement. She then thanked all in attendance and asked if there were changes to the minutes from the December 7th meeting. No changes were noted. Commissioner Ussery made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Nichols seconded the motion. The minutes were passed unanimously.

10:05 AM – Human Trafficking in Ghana

Jasmine McGhee

(See Human Trafficking in Ghana)

Commissioner McGhee talked about her experience in Ghana with the Eisenhower Fellowship. She traveled for 5 weeks as part of the Eisenhower fellowship program and the 2022 inaugural Justice Program, a specialized program within Eisenhower. The USA Justice Program is a specific program that was started this year for people who are working in the Justice space. There was a total of 11 fellows across the country who worked on issues from environmental and health to criminal justice. While Commissioner McGhee spent some time in Ireland, she wanted to talk about her experience in Ghana as it related to human trafficking. She met with Betty Mould-Iddrisu; the first woman who was attorney general of Ghana. Betty was able to highlight a lot of issues for Commissioner McGhee including how human trafficking shows up in Ghana via domestic workers. There were young girls whose families were suffering economically who were given an opportunity to come to the city for education and job opportunities. Unfortunately, once they found themselves away from home, they were often underpaid and unable to move freely about, finding themselves in a labor trafficking situation. Commissioner McGhee also met with Edmund Agbeve, program assistant with an organization called Curious Minds. Curious minds is doing really innovative work to protect girls' rights, dignity, and humanity. It was started in part to highlight the issue of human trafficking in Ghana, but their mission is much broader than that. They work to ensure that children and youth are well-informed and meaningfully participate in decision making that affect their lives by advocating, generating knowledge,

sharing information, building partnerships, and training young activists at the local, national, and international level. They are doing this while centering children and having them be part of the conversations about what their needs are. The same organization draws the connection with regard to human rights issues. The US State Department findings and recommendations were extensive for things that Ghana ought to be doing to have a better response to trafficking. For example, increasing efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers; increasing the way law enforcement and other stakeholders work together; and improving data collection. Most of the findings/recommendations were themes heard in the US as well. The takeaways were that the context is different but have similar themes. We see them happen here in NC and across the world. There is the importance of public recognition and awareness of this issue that came up again and again. Also, the difficulty of the economic realities that lead to conditions that make people vulnerable for trafficking. Lastly, the culture work that is needed when there's not a respect for human rights and for human dignity.

10:19 AM – Committee Reports and Action Items

Legislative Committee

Christine Long on behalf of Caitlin Brooks

Commission Executive Director Christine Long talked about the legislative agenda for HTC. There were a couple of items on the legislative agenda from back in 2020 that didn't happen, but we've brought those back this year. Over the last couple of years our list has grown a bit as well. While the Legislative Committee hasn't met, efforts have been made to pull together different experts from the field to give us suggestions on items. Lindsey Lane and Lindsey Robertson, former prosecutors in NC, have helped a great deal. Robertson helped write our safe harbor law initially and helped push that through. Lane prosecuted most of the cases out of DA West's district as well as providing feedback on things we can change to help prosecute more cases and bring them to the prosecution stage. There are about 10 items we are vetting, and we have a potential sponsor in the Senate for it that has brought in a bill drafter to help as well. There is also a bill that ShieldNC is trying to put through that the conference of DAs has looked at and approved. We may hear it come up throughout the next few weeks. Once able, we will send out to commissioners and share with the public. Most of these are corrections or tweaks would help bring us up to where we are at today.

Public Safety Committee

Marc Nichols

Sheriff Van Shaw

Sheriff Doug Doughtie

Commissioner Nichols introduced the two sheriffs- Sheriff Van Shaw of Cabarrus County and Sheriff Doug Doughtie of Dare County.

Sheriff Van Shaw talked about the legislative appropriation in the form a 5-year grant received in the amount of \$1 million for Cabarrus County through state funding. This grant allows for 2 dedicated positions to focus solely on child exploitation and human trafficking. The funds will cover the full salary, training, vehicles, etc. for these positions. Two of their investigators are moving into these dedicated positions including Detective Shackelford. The county has already committed to picking up those positions at the end of the 5-year term. The Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office has a human trafficking task force led by the DA that meets quarterly to address the needs, issues, etc. There will be an annual public service announcement contest with the high schools later this year that will air in the local area.

Sheriff Doug Doughtie and HT lead investigator, Jackie, talked about the 3-year matching human trafficking grant received from the federal government for Dare County. There are 4 sheriffs that have joined this cause on a limited basis. UNCG helped them right their grant. Jackie has worked with Tina from the commission to identify women that are potential victims. The process so far has been getting various stakeholders involved and getting the training going. There is a lack of resources such as trauma informed and residential housing.

Jackie would welcome any help, training, and resources available to help them get started.

Public Health Committee

Jennifer Haigwood

Dr. Stacy Reynolds

(See Dr. Reynolds Atrium Report)

Commissioner Haigwood introduced Dr. Stacy Reynolds, an emergency physician with Atrium Healthcare. Dr. Reynolds is also the medical director for the Atrium Health Human Trafficking Advocacy Team, which actually started with a grant from the Commission. Most of their victims are sex trafficking victims so the recognition of labor trafficking is not ideal. The focus of this presentation will be around adolescent sex trafficking victims, comparison data of STI between their data and Mecklenburg, pregnancy rates, and some challenges with mental health care access before and after trafficking. They are funded through the NCHTC and through a federal grant through the OVC. The data shown today is a medical snapshot of a subset of those cases that Hannah talked about in our previous Commission meeting (Data & the story it tells). They are focusing on 54 victims treated through atrium health through March of 2022. The report is a retrospective cross-sectional study of adolescents ages 11-21 years. The purpose of the study was to determine the reproductive health outcomes among adolescents evaluated for sex trafficking at an urban, tertiary children's hospital. While females make up 51.2% of the adolescent population in Mecklenburg County, they were the most sex trafficked population, granted, the males and transgender youth may be underrepresented in the data. The data sets presented breakdown the demographics by gender, age, race, language spoken, sexual orientation, history of abuse, and school status (See Report). Sex and labor trafficking occurred in 4%. The report provides the typology and setting of the trafficking found. There were various indications for 147 different admissions among the 54 confirmed/suspected adolescent victims who had different patterns of recidivism, in different intersections with the health care system, over their journey through trafficking. These indications included unsafe disposition (majority of indications), overdose/substance use disorder, management of aggression, management of suicidal ideation/self-harm, management of sexual assault, management of medical/trauma/OB, and traumatic brain services/intellectual developmental disabilities requiring services. They are also seeing this trend in their adult data. Although it is known that the victims are exposed to high levels of violence and sexual trauma, they don't often present at the time of the worst offenses to a hospital. There was a prevalence of STIs and pregnancy in the adolescent sex trafficking population vs community adolescent population. This data really shows the medical and public health impact of trafficking and not aggressively addressing trafficking. Issues that are worth highlighting are the cumulative outcomes and incomplete testing- underestimating the problem at hand. The children or patients need to be tested every time they come in. Healthcare encounters were based on the point of identification and point of identification was determined as when they had confirmed or suspected human trafficking. Poor outcomes with recidivism include exclusions from treatment and suicidality in treatment or elopement in treatment. Sometimes their prior track record would inhibit their access to care. There was a pilot for intensive therapy using grant funding and while there was some success with the program, it was learned later the sustainability became a dead end. There was no opportunity or limited opportunity to appeal treatment conditions. If the child had multiple traumas or early developmental trauma, then it was possible other forms of treatment were not available. As a result of this data, there have been reproductive and preventative health protocols implemented. There is no mechanism to share data to understand the problem on a larger state level. We need standardized approaches to healthcare intake and data collection on cases to address this. At Atrium, they developed a protocol to address human trafficking integrated into an electronic health record tool. There isn't a great care continuum for family centered services. There may be socio economic stressors that prohibit the family to engage more aggressively in healing.

Appropriations Committee

Angelica Wind

Kathy Estrada, HTC Grants Administrator

(See Appropriations Report)

Commissioner Wind reported that since the last appropriations meeting, we have been meeting as appropriate. Kathy Estrada is our new Grants Administrator who will be providing an overview of the work that the committee and the staff have been accomplishing funding the programs. Grants Administrator, Kathy Estrada provided updates on Senate Bill 105. In terms of the Facility Improvement Grant (section 16.22), the Committee has awarded all funding for this appropriation through two rounds of requests for proposals. The entire \$4.8 million dollars have been disbursed except for \$14. The quarterly reporting for this section has begun and there were no administrative funds awarded in this section so grant staff are limited in their involvement going forward. In terms of the Economic Assistance Funds for Organizations that Provide Services to Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (section 16.23), the RFP was released on 10/26/2022 and closed 12/14/2022. To date, 81 agencies have applied, and 22 contracts (13 DV, 9 SA) have been approved by the committee totaling 2.265 million to be sent out in the next 4-6 weeks. The grants team are still going through the applications and receiving revisions from agencies. Some agencies haven't requested the full amount allotted so we are working with the agencies to try to help them request the full amount they are eligible for. Our next appropriations meeting we plan to have another vote and hopefully get more contracts approved to get them the funds they need. In terms of the Grants for Nonprofit Organizations Providing Services to Victims of Human Trafficking (section 16.20A), Jaqueline Kehinde was hired as of 12/14/2022 to manage sections 16.20A and 16.20B. The RFP was issued for 16.20A on 2/1/2023 and closes 3/15/2023. Jacqueline has been in contact with all 23 named agencies and 18 have expressed intent to apply. We have received two applications thus far. In terms of the Grants to Develop, Strengthen or Expand Human Trafficking Victim Service Programs (section 16.20B), the RFP was issued 2/7/2023 and closes on 3/15/2023. Jacqueline has been in contact with both agencies, and they have expressed their intent to apply. In terms of the Competitive Grants for Nonprofit Organizations Providing Services to Victims of Human Trafficking (section 16.21), the RFP has not been released yet. The terms will depend significantly on whether the requested changes to that section are adopted by the legislature. There are several areas in the appropriations act that deal with pandemic relief money where they put in certain dates thinking we'd have the money by then and be able to distribute it by that point. We have not been able to meet all of those dates so some of the technical corrections going in have to do with the corrections to the dates. In the competitive grants section, some of the language speaks to an agency being able to prove their economic loss from the pandemic and further states they can only apply for funds up to that economic loss. Our next appropriations meeting will be on the upcoming Monday at 1pm.

12:03 PM – Technology Imaging to Track and Address HT

Dr. Sambit Bhattacharya, Fayetteville State University

Dr. Shyamal Das, Elizabeth City State University

(See AI and Human Trafficking)

Commissioner Haigwood welcomed Dr. Bhattacharya and Dr. Das to present an architectural model for web-based technologies to enhance text-image capabilities in detecting sex trafficking cases. Their work is on AI technology to detect sex trafficking in advertisements by criminals using two modalities- text and image. It's like a detective AI that would go in and go through huge amounts of data to flag certain cases. Technology can help people who are doing the hard work, but it is not the only solution. This project has just started and there is a lot they want to accomplish. The granting agency that made this project possible is CINA or Criminal Investigations and Network Analysis, which is a DHS Center of Excellence located in George Mason University. This project was sponsored an academic research grant that was awarded to only a few people. It's a two-

year project for approximately \$340,000. The two academic institutions are Elizabeth City State University and Fayetteville State University. They plan to work with consultants and potential collaborators. The principal investigators are our presenters, Dr. Shyamal Das and Dr. Sambit Bhattacharya. Dr. Das is the principal investigator, professor of homeland security and sociology at Elizabeth City State University, expert in sex trafficking research and author of many peer-reviewed journal articles. Dr. Bhattacharya is the co-principal investigator, professor of computer science at Fayetteville State University, expert in artificial intelligence, lead PI in grants from NASA and the department of defense, and the author of many peer-reviewed articles as well as being invited to speak at conferences. The industry consultants are Phil Williams and Dr. Bill Rivera. The industry consultants bring a lot of value in their academic research so investigators can finally begin to translate that academic research into usable software for analysis. There is deep personal interest as well as professional interest for the involved parties in this project being parents and grandparents. One powerful thing about their AI is that the decision doesn't have to be binary but could generate probabilities. AI can deal with ambiguity and process massive amounts of data full of these ambiguities. The ad in the presentation declares the girl's height, weight, and age, which isn't believable. AI can flag certain cases although a lot of the flagged cases are false positives where the AI says it's a trafficking case, but it is not. While more accuracy is a matter of tweaking the algorithm, it is best to have the false positives so that we will at least be catching all the cases. Now the human analyst can go in and discard the ones that are not HT cases. The investigators believe that the AI can help the analyst by processing lots of data fast. The purpose is to assist analysts in detecting sex trafficking through automated data analysis supported by the AI software. The rationale is that digital data is very large in size, manual analysis is almost impossible, AI can perform data triage, and high numbers of false positives but the benefits outweigh the shortcomings. The final product is to produce a prototypical software and architectural model. There is a uniqueness to this project because they are trying to have the AI understand and process both image and text data which are collocated in the same ad so that the analysis on the text data can help uncover ambiguities or difficulties and understand the image data and vice versa. The AI is tasked to understand data based on features which are visual and linguistic where one informs the other, capture only the data that shows criminal activity, and be customizable for new contexts. Some works in progress are identifying characteristics of victims from images including predicting the age, gender, and ethnicity from face images and increasing accuracy of AI by data augmentation with synthetic data. The next work in progress is to identify keywords and meaning in language by advertisement language pattern, words and phrases of interest, countries of interest, multiple victims advertised, victim weight, reference to website or spa massage therapy. Another work in progress is the cross-modal analysis to develop a joint feature space where features are coming from text and other features are coming images or visual features to combine them to ultimately generate probabilities. The progress to date includes literature review, software architecture of the system, software projects started in the computer science program, and meetings and discussion with potential collaborators and organizations that are helping.

12:28 PM – Human Trafficking and Patient Broker Schemes

Amy Upham, Eleanor Health Foundation

(See Patient Brokering)

Amy Upham, the Executive Director of Eleanor Health Foundation, talked about patient brokering. This is the "new" human trafficking that has been going on for a little while. It's sort of an additional trafficking that works with and separate from sex trafficking and labor trafficking. It specifically targets people who are vulnerable for substance use. A very big problem in Western North Carolina as well as Charlotte. Patient brokering also called body brokering is a range of activities in which a "consultant" is paid kickbacks by a substance use treatment center or sober living home to recruit patients to their services. For example, the treatment center and sober living home will excessively bill for services, many of which are not needed. Many times, it's under the table. Some of the lingo used is very normal language used in healthcare transactions such

as “in-network”. It is a federal crime but not a state crime (yet). Law enforcement agents are precluded to following individuals to and from treatment. The different types of brokering are lead selling, lead buying, patient enticement, listing theft, misrepresentation of services, and patient privacy violations, insurance overbilling, affordable care act fraud. Do not google addiction care if you want or need it. Google sites are hijacked regularly through the suggested edits feature and unaffiliated individuals from that program will reroute calls to somewhere else (virtual call centers). Addiction is big money right now because some people see a cash cow. The facilities will sometimes inaccurately portray the services provided such as who is licensed and who isn’t licensed, and a treatment center where all the same people are going to the same sober living home. Settings for brokering include treatment centers, sober living homes, methadone clinics and SSP’s, 12 step groups and peer support groups, the world wide web, justice system, and anywhere and everywhere. People are brokered everywhere. Some local examples are provided by Amy Upham (See Patient Brokering). There is an intersection with other forms of trafficking including sex and labor trafficking where the broker may demand sex or labor for services or prey on vulnerable individuals. Indicators of patient brokering might include that its too good to be true, they’re offering free services, cash on hand or waiving fees, etc. It is not illegal in NC yet but there are resources out there. Various options are provided by Amy depending on the situation. Amy and her team have been working with the Buncombe County Health and Human Services and Addiction Professionals of NC for the last 3 years to introduce SB 408 to make patient brokering a felony and to include a truth in the marketing clause. The attorney general’s office helped to draft this bill.

12:52 PM – Public Comment

Jennifer Haigwood

Commission Chair Haigwood opened the floor for public comment. Pam Strickland would like the meetings to be recorded and shared on the website. Her nonprofit as well as 2 others help create the NC Demand Reduction Task Force that many non-profits have joined. She would love the opportunity to share their plans and what they have found so far.

1:00 PM – Adjournment

Jennifer Haigwood

Commission Chair Haigwood adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is Thursday, April 27th, 2023.