



NC Human Trafficking Commission: General Meeting
Wednesday, June 17, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
WebEx through the NC Judicial Center / Hickory Room

10:00 AM – Call to Order & Ethics Statement

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand opened the meeting and called to order. She then read the required Ethics Statement.

10:05 AM – Roll Call Attendance

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand conducted a roll call to document attendance. Commissioners in attendance at the meeting were Dean Duncan on behalf of Dawn Ferrer (joined 10:17am), Simone Gilchrist, Deana Joy, Adrianna Boston on behalf of Dr. Corinna Myres, Marc Nichols, Captain Jordan Reese, Judge Stephanie Reese (joined 10:29am), Caitlin Ryland, Stephanie Tyson, Caroline Valand, and Judge Amanda Wilson. Also in attendance were Commission Executive Director, Christine Long, and staff. Members of the public were also able to view or listen to the meeting via WebEx.

10:10 AM – Ice Breaker

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand began an ice breaker amongst commission members.

10:28 AM – Presentation of Survey Results

Molly Overholt, Grants Manager

Chair Valand introduced Grants Manager Molly Overholt to present the survey results. The survey was completed by roughly half of commissioners. The participating members ranked the vetting of service providers as the top priority. Some of the other priorities included applying for and receiving funding on behalf of the state, data and research analysis, and regional response teams.

10:45 AM – Review and Discuss Survey Results

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand started the discussion of the results. Commissioner Ryland explained key immigration tools for foreign national victims, including Continued Presence (CP)—a temporary status and work permit processed in 2–3 months via law enforcement/HSI—as well as U and T visas. The Commission discussed why local law enforcement often underutilizes Continued Presence and visa certifications. Barriers include high turnover, patrol officer staffing shortages, and a lack of standardized training. Commissioners explored creating a dedicated training committee, developing modular video-based training, and embedding materials into mandatory annual in-service law enforcement platforms, District Attorney trainings, and Family Justice Centers. Next, the commission discussed the funding landscape, various funding strategies and legislative advocacy. The current baseline funding includes \$336,000 for annual Commission operations, a recurring \$500,000 grant appropriation distributed to nine agencies every two years, and a Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) VAWA grant. The Pandemic relief funding that supported broader service grants is set to

expire by September 30, 2026. Members discussed General Assembly outreach and the urgent two-week window before the state budget is finalized. Action items were set to draft a concise "one-pager" with specific talking points for commissioners to contact key legislative leaders. Alternative funding streams to consider could be exploring private foundations, corporate partnerships, and the Rural Transformation fund via DHHS/Medicaid. The possibility of working with a grant writer was discussed as well.

11:57 AM – Lunch

12:35 PM – Continued Discussion Action Steps

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand continued the discussion. The discussion transitioned from acquiring funding to research to support the funding requests. The need was emphasized for a comprehensive statewide prevalence study and needs assessment (such as the proposed \$225,000 *Engage Together* project) to provide empirical data for targeted grantmaking and legislative requests. Potential university research partners include UNC Pembroke, A&T, NCCU, Wingate, and Winthrop. Commission members also discussed asset forfeiture legislation exploring a long-session legislative concept to redirect seized cash and assets from human trafficking operations away from general school board distribution into dedicated victim restitution funds and local law enforcement training. Commissioners highlighted the necessity for standardized vetting for North Carolina service providers; HTC staff is in collaboration with Survivor Network to develop a vetting process. Other issues include critical gaps in emergency placements for trafficked youth, noting that county DSS agencies frequently leave children in hospital emergency departments or DSS offices for months due to a lack of specialized, secure placement facilities.

11:45 AM – Overview of Vetting Process

Christine Long, Executive Director

The Commission is collaborating with the Survivor Network on a formal desk review and vetting framework. The goal is to formally identify accredited providers in the state directory to guide emergency response, improve referral quality, and protect against fraudulent or predatory entities. The contract with Survivor Network ends September 30, 2026.

1:26 PM – Other Business

Caroline Valand, Chair

Legislative Updates

Christine Long, Executive Director

Executive Director Christine Long updated the Commission on evolving legislation regarding a state human trafficking reporting system. Early proposals (which included an unworkable tax on adult materials) were replaced with language directing the Commission to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to assess vendors capable of building a secure statewide reporting dashboard that coordinates with the National Human Trafficking Hotline, law enforcement, and Child Protective Services.

2:00 PM – Adjournment

Caroline Valand, Chair

Chair Valand adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is on Thursday, August 20th, 2026.