What is Human Trafficking?

The Trafficking Victims’ Protection Act defines human trafficking as: a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. A victim does not have to be physically transported from one location to another in order for the crime to fall within these trafficking definitions.

Human Trafficking in North Carolina

Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. The prevalence of human trafficking in North Carolina is due to many factors including the major highways (40, 85, and 95) that run through our state, a large, transient military population surrounded by sexually oriented businesses, numerous rural agricultural areas with a high demand for cheap labor, and increasing number of gangs in North Carolina. In 2014, North Carolina reported 603 tips on human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTRC). According to NHTRC the number of substantive calls received from North Carolina constitutes the 10th highest call volume of all 50 states in 2014.

Project C.O.P.E. (Collaboration, Outreach, Protection, and Empowerment)

Project C.O.P.E.’s purpose is to improve and expand mentoring services, in particular for those at risk for sexual exploitation. The project will also increase protective factors in the lives of vulnerable populations throughout North Carolina. This project will do so through collaboration, outreach, protection, and education. Project C.O.P.E. has four primary goals:

- Increase adult and youth awareness surrounding the risks of commercial sexual exploitation
- Promote resources and services available for children at-risk of exploitation
- Strengthen existing academic, extracurricular, and mentoring programs to serve youth more effectively
- Strengthen protective factors among previously exploited children and youth

NC Council for Women (CFW) has partnered with agencies across North Carolina to plan and implement Project C.O.P.E. The NCCFW will be collaborating with NC Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (YAIO), State Youth Council (SYC), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), NC Center for Safer Schools, Department of Public Instruction, and other youth serving organizations. This two year project is funded through the NC Governor’s Crime Commission grant number PROJ011303.

What Can Project C.O.P.E. do for My Community?

Getting the community involved and aware is a pivotal part in the fight against human trafficking in North Carolina. The Council for Women’s goal for Project C.O.P.E is to increase awareness on the issue of human trafficking in order to eradicate it from our state. North Carolina had 563 human trafficking hotline calls about human trafficking cases or issues related to human trafficking in 2014. Out of the 563 calls made to NHTRC, 27.71% came from community members. This percentage signifies that community members were a major resource in providing assistance to trafficking victims. The C.O.P.E. Project staff will be providing training, technical assistance, and resources to schools and communities across North Carolina. The data collected throughout this project will also be used to improve child safety throughout North Carolina.

How Can I Get Involved?

For more information, please visit our website at http://www.councilforwomen.nc.gov/ or contact us at:

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