

## OCHTTF 2025 Victim Report Press Conference

### **Anaheim Police Department Statement, OCHTTF Co-chair**

As the Chief of the Anaheim Police Department—the lead law enforcement agency of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force—I am honored to be here today to discuss the topic of human trafficking and the release of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force’s Victim Report.

Our community faces the harsh reality of human trafficking—a crime that preys upon the most vulnerable and knows no boundaries. Age, gender, race, or socio-economic status—no one is immune. Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand the devastating impacts human trafficking has on victims, their families, and our entire community. Victims are often manipulated, coerced, or forced into labor or sex trafficking, robbing them of their freedom and dignity. Tragically, we encounter minors involved in sex trafficking on a regular basis.

To make matters worse, human trafficking is often perpetrated by individuals with violent criminal histories. Between 2018 and 2022 in Orange County, 97% of offenders had prior arrests, 37% had been arrested more than ten times, 29% had previously served time in prison, and 72% had a violent criminal history. These statistics illustrate the dangerous landscape victims face and underscore why we must continue strengthening partnerships and refining our strategies to stay one step ahead of traffickers.

The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force was created to combat these heinous crimes, support victims, and establish Orange County as a community that does not tolerate human trafficking. The Task Force brings together local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to address all forms of human trafficking, including:

- The Garden Grove, Irvine, and Santa Ana Police Departments
- The California Highway Patrol (CHP)
- The California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)
- And our federal partners at Homeland Security Investigations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation

We are also fortunate to work closely with prosecutors from the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and the United States Attorney’s Office to aggressively prosecute traffickers and ensure they are held accountable. One of the Task Force’s top priorities is identifying and recovering minors who fall victim to human trafficking. The Investigators of the Orange County

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Human Trafficking Task Force embody what it truly means to serve with compassion, courage, and perseverance. Each day, they go to extraordinary lengths to recover victims—especially the most vulnerable among us: children. Their work is not confined to office hours or the boundaries of Orange County. They chase leads across counties, throughout the state, and sometimes across the country, relentlessly pursuing both victims and traffickers.

I'd like to share a recent success story from a case investigated by the Task Force in May of this year. On May 30, Anaheim Police Officers responded to a motel in Anaheim regarding a girl being held against her will by her suspected trafficker, who was armed with a firearm. Responding patrol officers located and rescued the victim within minutes of her 9-1-1 call. Task Force Investigators immediately launched a human trafficking investigation, and within two hours, they identified and arrested the suspect—a 46-year-old Las Vegas man named Donald Newton—and recovered the firearm he used during the crime.

Just last week, following a week-long trial, an Orange County jury found Mr. Newton guilty on all human-trafficking-related charges after deliberating for only one hour. He now faces several decades in prison. This case highlights the importance of collaboration and the thorough, aggressive investigations for which the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force is known. And this case is not unique—our Investigators recovered another minor victim and arrested her trafficker just one day earlier.

While recovering victims and arresting traffickers is critical, it is only the first step. True justice—and true healing—begin with victim assistance. Victims of human trafficking endure unimaginable trauma. They've been exploited, manipulated, and stripped of trust. Without proper care and support, even the best investigative work can fall short of helping them rebuild their lives. That's why victim assistance is not an accessory to the mission—it's the heart of it.

Our colleagues at Waymakers do this work better than anyone. We are incredibly fortunate to partner with them, as the majority of their referrals come from law enforcement agencies here in Orange County. I want to thank everyone for being here today and for supporting this vital mission.

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### **Waymakers Statement, OCHTTF Co-chair**

It's an honor to stand here today as the Program Director of Waymakers' Victim Assistance Programs alongside our partners and community members who share in the commitment to combat human trafficking and support survivors across Orange County.

Today, we're sharing the latest data from the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force's victim report, which reflects the coordinated response to human trafficking. This data shows not only how many people we've helped, but also the strength of our partnerships and the ongoing need for prevention, awareness, and community action.

In 2023 and 2024, the County of Orange Social Services Agency, The Salvation Army, and Waymakers worked together to assist a total of 411 victims. These individuals represent adults and minors, males and females, and include both labor and sex trafficking survivors. Eighty-three percent of victims are U.S. nationals, trafficking is happening in our own neighborhoods.

Of the total 411 victims assisted, half were minors, and 88 percent were victims of sex trafficking. Breaking this down further, 46 percent were female minor victims of sex trafficking, and 37 percent were adult female victims of sex trafficking. These numbers aren't just statistics, they are real lives affected, and real people in need of help.

About half of all referrals came from government agencies, underscoring the importance of strong collaboration across our community. Law enforcement remains the largest source of referrals, demonstrating the vital role law enforcement plays in identifying victims and connecting them to critical support services as part of coordinated anti-trafficking efforts. Waymakers is deeply grateful to the Anaheim Police Department for its ongoing partnership and co-leadership of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force. Still, this is not work any single agency can do alone, it takes all of us working together to make lasting change.

Prevention is a key part of our work. Over 9,000 youth across Orange County received education on recognizing trafficking and knowing where to turn for help. Prevention is protection, and knowledge is power. Early

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intervention helps protect youth before exploitation occurs, ensuring fewer children are caught in these dangerous situations.

Earlier, Ronnetta Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of Waymakers spoke of a 13-year-old victim who had been identified. The path this young girl faced at just 13 years old was difficult and challenging, a stark reminder that prevention is critical and that every young person deserves the chance to be safe.

This year's report also emphasizes the importance of integrating survivor voices at every level of the anti-human trafficking movement. Survivors bring insight that no statistic can capture, and their expertise is essential. Their voices guide us in creating systems that are effective, inclusive, and compassionate, and ensure that survivors have leadership roles in the very work designed to protect them.

When our community stands together, predators lose power, and survivors gain hope. Every referral, every prevention program, every survivor supported is a victory in the fight against human trafficking. Together, we can build a safer, stronger Orange County, where every person can move from conflict and crisis to a place of strength and stability, which is at the heart of Waymakers' mission.