



Attorney General Doug Peterson

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2015

The Attorney General's Human Trafficking Announcement

Today in the Nebraska State Capitol Rotunda, Attorney General Doug Peterson was joined by [Stephen Patrick O'Meara](#), AGO Human Trafficking Coordinator, announcing the Attorney General's Strategic Plan for combatting human trafficking.

Since taking office, Peterson has expressed commitment to battling against human trafficking. This effort began with his legislative package including a bill to strengthen penalties related to human trafficking. LB 294 was sponsored and prioritized by Senator Jim Scheer of Norfolk, and signed into law by Governor Pete Ricketts on May 19, 2015.

Peterson was joined by Congressman Jeff Fortenberry in March of this year for a Roundtable discussion with recognized leaders concerned and working to combat trafficking in our state. During the Roundtable, the Attorney General committed to structuring a Strategic Plan. Attendees of the discussion provided input of ideas they believed would benefit the construction of the Plan.

Following the Roundtable, Stephen O'Meara, recently retired Assistant U.S. Attorney, agreed to commit his experience and expertise towards serving the State in the Attorney General's Office as Human Trafficking Coordinator. His first project was the completion of an application for a \$600,000 federal grant by the Office of Justice Programs from the U.S. Department of Justice. The AGO was awarded the three-year grant, which began October 1, 2015.

Today's announcement was attended by two dozen people including partnering organizations and members of several state agencies, as well as numerous honored guests.

"Today is not about any one of us, but rather, all of us joining together to unite in our efforts to preserve the value and dignity of human life in our state," stated Peterson.

Stephen O'Meara unveiled the overview of a 69 page *Report and Recommendations Regarding Establishment of the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force* (NHTTF). The NHTTF consists of an advisory group as well as three working groups and three operational components. The working groups include Service, Law Enforcement, and Community Partner. The NHTTF will be a coordinated, multi-disciplinary, victim-oriented, statewide response to human trafficking, which will have Response Teams providing the necessary support and service in implementing the work designated by the NHTTF.

The Attorney General provided all in attendance with the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline information: 888-3737-888. The NHTRC takes confidential calls and provides interpreters 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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THE NEBRASKA HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE (NHTTF)

Effective October 1, 2015, the Attorney General, in conjunction with the Salvation Army, was awarded an OVC-BJA “Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking” grant from the United States Department of Justice in the amount of \$1.5 million (\$900,000.00 to the Salvation Army; plus \$600,000.00, to the Attorney General) to assist in establishing the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force (NHTTF). The Attorney General and the Salvation Army will, in a collaborative manner, administer the grant in aid of establishing the NHTTF.

The NHTTF seeks to:

- Help victims/survivors of human trafficking;
- Stop human traffickers;
- Reduce the human trafficking market.

The NHTTF will do this by calling everyone in Nebraska, according to that person’s role in the community, to:

- *Realize* that human trafficking exists throughout Nebraska;
- *Recognize* signs of human trafficking;
- *Respond* appropriately.

Under this “best beginning point” and multi-agency collaborative plan, the Attorney General and the Salvation Army will be advised by an Advisory Group, including among others, representatives of Nebraska DHHS, the Nebraska Courts, federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecutors, Native American tribes, and private sector entities involved with human trafficking. The Advisory Group promotes the process of bringing agencies together to address human trafficking in a unified, integrated manner – to “weave” these entities together to enhance services, enforcement, and a community response. Under this unified approach, various state agencies will also, in part, jointly satisfy their mandates under the Strengthening Families Act of 2015.

The Advisory Group is further augmented by three Working Groups and Committees thereunder:

- the Services Working Group (to enhance services for victims/survivors of human trafficking);
- the Enforcement Working Group (to enhance law enforcement to identify and pursue rescue of victims, and prosecution of human traffickers and legally culpable buyers of human trafficking services and goods);
- the Community Partners Working Group (to raise awareness in the general community and targeted industries/professions, such as health care, education, hospitality, transportation, agriculture, and faith communities; and promote appropriate community responses to human trafficking).

The NHTTF will have a coordinated, multi-disciplinary, state-wide response to human trafficking, consisting of:

- a State Human Trafficking Response Team (to handle more complex or long-term cases across Nebraska);

- Regional Human Trafficking Response Teams, organized initially in NSP regions (to provide proactive and intermediate case response, and backup to local human trafficking response);
- Local Human Trafficking Response Teams or capability, where feasible (to provide immediate response capability).

The NHTTF rests on various premises, among them are:

- Human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking (including trafficking of girls, women, boys, and men, exists throughout Nebraska, and has potentially very serious and lasting consequences to its victims.
- Victims/Survivors of human trafficking, wherever they may be found in Nebraska, should have protection and necessary services, which should be available “24/7/365.”
- Prescreening, screening, and assessment of human trafficking victims/survivors is potentially a continuing process for any victim/survivor, and should be met with a systematic, trained, and “well-disposed” response throughout that process.
- Helping victims/survivors should be a first priority; but, helping a victim, while failing to stop that victim’s trafficker, tends to promote making another victim. The NHTTF should “help victims/survivors, stop traffickers, reduce the human trafficking market.”
- To successfully address human trafficking, the NHTTF should appropriately “weave” together services, enforcement, and community response. The NHTTF should “build, balance, and blend” a state-wide, integrated, victim-oriented system.
- The NHTTF should establish, maintain, and promulgate a comprehensive list of available human trafficking service providers and designated law enforcement contacts throughout Nebraska.
- Failing to pursue human traffickers, as human traffickers, “feeds” human trafficking – that is the most serious, readily probable offense should be sought against human traffickers.
- Human trafficking does not exist but for its market. “Buyers” ultimately make the market. “No buyers – No market.” “Buyers” should be aggressively pursued and deterred from continuing as “buyers.”
- All law enforcement officers in Nebraska should recognize basic signs of human trafficking and be able to effect rescue and/or arrest as needed.
- Law enforcement, working appropriately in concert with services and community partners, should form a state-wide anti-human trafficking system capable of providing reactive enforcement, emphasizing proactive enforcement, and having available meaningful complex/long-term enforcement.
- Needed anti-human trafficking tools and training should be assembled and provided to multi-disciplinary, anti-human trafficking groups across Nebraska.

Combating Human Trafficking in Nebraska Historical Timeline

- **2000:** The United States Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).
- **2006:** The Nebraska Family Alliance, by Al Riskowski and the University of Nebraska Students Against Modern Day Slavery, with Dr. Shryani Tidall, Ph.D., initiated organized efforts to raise awareness against human trafficking in Nebraska.
- **2010:** Special Agent Anna Brewer of the FBI, and with the approval and encouragement of then Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun (Ret.), established the Omaha Child Exploitation Task Force.
- **2011:** A group of concerned people from the University of Nebraska, the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Council, the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Nebraska, the Nebraska State Patrol, The Family Research Council, and The Salvation Army convened the Nebraska Network Against the Trafficking of Humans (NNATH).
- **2012:** The Nebraska Legislature passed the first Nebraska anti-human trafficking legislation with the passage of LB 1145 sponsored by Senator Amanda McGill. As a result of early legislation and at the direction of the Legislature, the "Governor's Task Force Against Human Trafficking" was established.
- **2012:** The Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI) was launched with the goal to empirically study human trafficking. The HTI's research subsequently became known to the Women's Fund of Omaha, which now sponsors the Initiative.
- **2013:** Project Harmony hosted a number of meetings of anti-human trafficking "stakeholders," in Omaha, to attempt to take practical steps to deal with human trafficking.
- **2014:** The Leadership Conference of Women Religious - Nebraska established the Coalition on Human Trafficking.
- **2014:** As an off-shoot of the "Price of Life" movement, brought to Omaha in significant part by Christ Community Church, Nebraska Against Human Trafficking was established essentially as an information sharing platform regarding anti-human trafficking efforts.

Combating Human Trafficking in Nebraska Current Timeline

- **2015:** Through the particular efforts of its members, Darrell Fisher, Director of the Nebraska Crime Commission, and Weysan Dun, former FBI Special Agent in Charge (Iowa and Nebraska), the “Governor’s Task Force” initiated efforts.
- **2015:** The Governor’s Task Force Against Human Trafficking published the first significant study of sex trafficking against minors in Nebraska.
- **January 16, 2015:** Attorney General Doug Peterson announces his legislative package containing Anti-Human Trafficking legislation.
- **February 2015:** Women’s Fund of Omaha hires Meghan Malik to serve as its full-time Trafficking Response Coordinator, and commits to a state-wide program to enhance services to victims of human trafficking and raise public awareness.
- **March 2015:** Senator Scheer prioritizes and Senators Pansing-Brooks, Garrett and Watermeier co-sponsor LB294.
- **March 11, 2015:** Attorney General Peterson and Congressman Jeff Fortenberry co-host Human Trafficking Roundtable at the Nebraska State Capitol.
- **May 2015:** The Coalition On Human Trafficking and the Greater Omaha Metro Hospitality Association, initiated its “hotel-motel project,” to enhance identification of victims of human trafficking and reduce demand for sex trafficking through preventative education of hospitality staffs.
- **May 11, 2015:** Stephen Patrick O’Meara is hired in the Attorney General’s Office as the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Coordinator and Child Protection Training Coordinator.
- **May 19, 2015:** Governor Pete Ricketts signs LB294 into law.
- **September 27, 2015:** The Attorney General and the Salvation Army are awarded a three year, federal OVC-BJA grant, regarding collaborative human trafficking victim services and law enforcement efforts; assisting in the establishment of the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force.
- **October 20, 2015:** The Attorney General is joined by the partnering members of the newly formed Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force (NHTTF) and announces strategic plan.

The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Working Groups

Upon their return to Nebraska, following the design proposed by the Attorney General's Office based generally on the format contained in the OVC-BJA grant application, the core group began bringing together various people into three working groups. These working groups, established or being established by the core group, are the Services Working Group, the Enforcement Working Group, and the Community Partners Working Group. These working groups currently function or are being formed to share information and ideas, and make recommendations to the NHTTF Coordinator toward the establishment of the NHTTF. Membership in a working group can be fluid, with persons added to enhance the role of the working group, including among other reasons, to enhance expertise or to enhance geographic representation.

- The Services Working Group (Service Providers)

The Services Working Group is composed of people from entities providing services to victims/survivors of human trafficking and people in certain entities which are in critical positions for referring victims/survivors to such services. The Services Working Group currently includes:

- The core group;
- A human trafficking survivor-advocate;
- Plus representatives of the Juvenile Court;
- The Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers;
- The Nebraska Coalition To End Sexual And Domestic Violence;
- Catholic Charities;
- Lutheran Family Services;
- Heartland Family Service;
- The Salvation Army;
- Methodist Women's Hospital-SANE/SART (Omaha);
- The Women's Center for Advancement;
- Central Nebraska Human Trafficking Immigration & Outreach;
- Justice For Our Neighbors;
- Additional subject-matter specific representation from Nebraska DHHS and the Nebraska Attorney General's Office. (This group is being expanded, in part, to address labor trafficking.)

- The Enforcement Working Group (Law Enforcement)

The Enforcement Working Group is composed of people engaged in the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases, including some involving human trafficking, and persons associated with this function, including victim specialists. The Enforcement Working Group includes:

- The core group and representatives from the Attorney General's Office (including victim services specialist);
- The Douglas County Sheriff's Office;
- The Nebraska Crime Commission;
- The Nebraska State Patrol;
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation/Omaha Child Exploitation Task Force (both investigators and victim services specialist);
- The Omaha PD;
- The Lincoln PD;
- The Platte County Attorney's Office;
- The Norfolk PD;

- The Dawson County Attorney's Office (both prosecutors and victim services specialist);
- Methodist Women's Hospital-SANE/SART (Omaha);
- The Lexington PD;
- The Kearney PD;
- The Scottsbluff PD;
- The Dawson County Sheriff's Office;
- The United States Department of Homeland Security;
- The United States Attorney's Office;
- The Douglas County Attorney's Office.

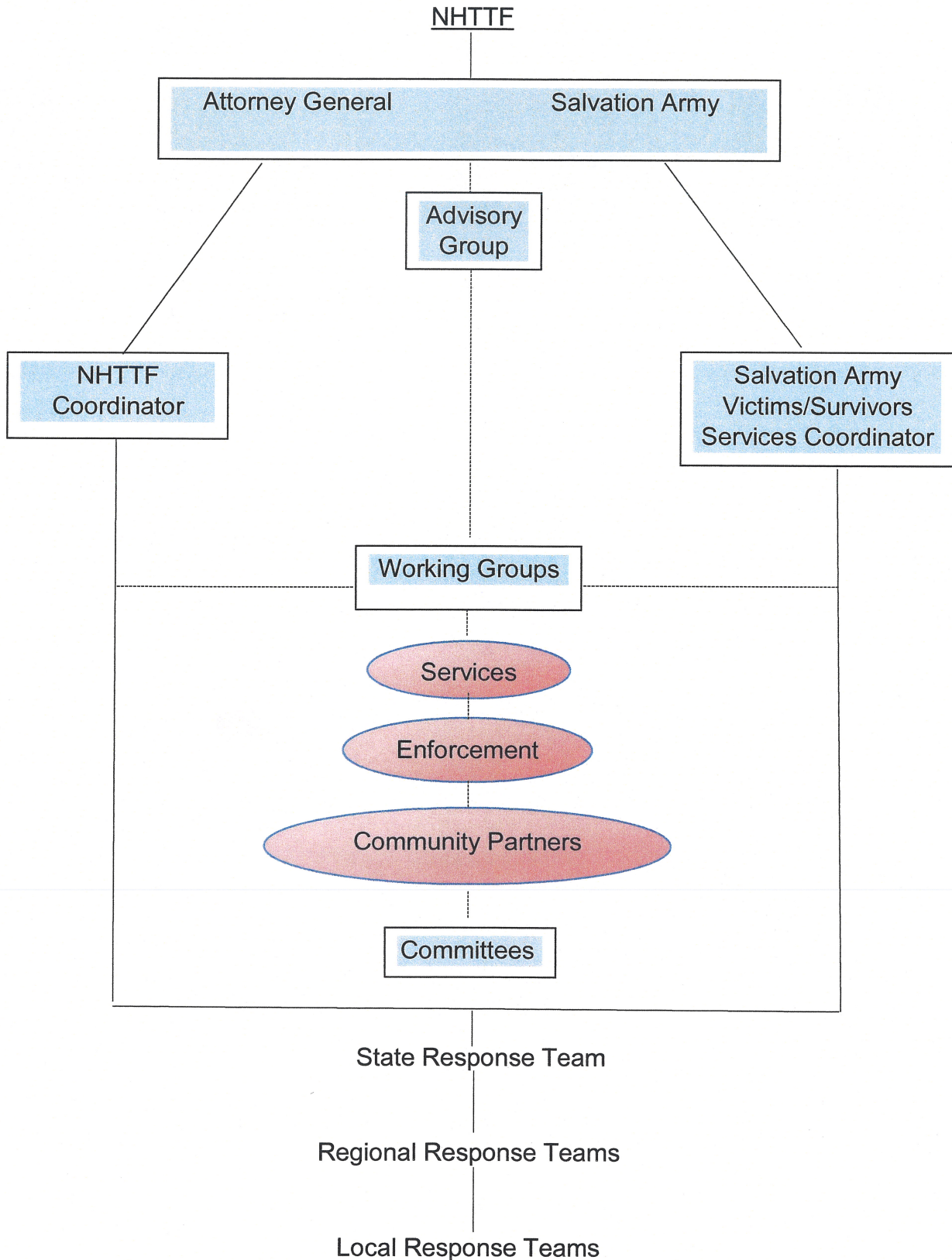
- The Community Partners Working Group

The Community Partners Working Group is just being constituted. It will consist of representatives of entities more likely than the general public to encounter incidents of human trafficking or victims/survivors of human trafficking, or having particular opportunity to promote awareness or intervention/prevention regarding human trafficking. This group includes representatives of industries or professions regarding:

- Health care;
- Education;
- Hospitality;
- Transportation;
- Agriculture;
- Faith communities.

The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force

(With OVC-BJA Grant)



NHTTF

Summary Case Flow Chart

Identification

Any person, health care, education, hospitality, transportation, faith communities

Contact

"Service Provider" (minor)
[Adult consent]

Child Protective Services
Juvenile Probation
Juvenile Court
Law Enforcement
[legal process]

Prescreening

"Maybe"

"No"

Acute Need

No Case

Services

Regional Team

Screening

(Minors CAC)

Law Enforcement Victim Specialist
Victim Advocate

(Salvation Army Coordinated)

Other

Screening

Emergency Services

"Yes"

"No"

Prosecution
Team

Services

Close

Services

"Yes"

"No"

Prosecution
Team

Services

Close

Services

Assessment

National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)

1-888-3737-888

email: NHTRC@PolarisProject.org

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