

OCEHT Annual Report on Barriers to Accessing Services by Trafficked Persons in the NCR

November 2014 – December 2015

Introduction

Except in the months of July and August, the OCEHT membership meets once a month. During these meetings, barriers in accessing services, resources and supports by persons who have exited or are exiting a trafficking situation, are identified. This report is a summary of the barriers that have been identified beginning November 2014 until and including December 2015. Subsequent annual reports will cover one calendar year (January through December).



The goal of this report is to identify gaps in access to and availability of services, supports and resources and to emphasize areas where service improvement, further service development or partnership may be required, or where services are simply non-existent and therefore require particular attention / action on part of legislators, policy developers and/or funding schemes. This report will also help guide OCEHT efforts and operations and initiatives as we move forward in our work.

This report is not exhaustive as it only captures the experiences of those service providers who are Members of the Coalition who have been involved in providing assistance to persons who have exited or are exiting a trafficking situation. The greater the OCEHT community / network / membership grows, the larger will be the population of service providers that feeds into these annual reports and the more comprehensive the information contained in it will be.

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About Us

We are a community-based network of local organizations, service providers and community members, representing a wide variety of sectors, working on a volunteer basis towards the rescue and recovery of persons subjected to all forms of human trafficking. Our mandate is twofold –

- 1) to meet the acute, immediate and long-term resource and support needs of persons who have exited or are exiting a human trafficking situation, as well as their families and communities, and persons who may be at risk of exploitation for sex, labour/domestic servitude and/or organ removal/harvest (this is done through referral and/or direct provision of services, supports and resources), and
- 2) to provide training to service providers on the indicators of human trafficking (to develop their ability to identify a trafficked person) and on how to respond appropriately.

The goal of OCEHT training is to help create and sustain a continuum among organizations, service providers, community members and volunteers, that provides a uniform, timely and appropriate response to those who seek access to supports, services and

resources because they have been or are being exploited for sex, labour/domestic servitude and/or organ removal, irrespective of their age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethno-cultural background. Irrespective of the avenue through which a person seeks assistance, the OCEHT commitment is to work together with individuals and organizations within and outside the OCEHT network to build a response that is the same. Our training initiative is motivated by the fact that when a service provider comes across a person who is being trafficked (or has exited a trafficking situation), often the window of opportunity to help that person is so small that if the service provider does not know how to identify the situation as involving human trafficking and/or does not know how to respond appropriately and effectively after they have identified a human trafficking case, that person may slip away and never present again. This may be due to a number of factors such as no further opportunities to present (for example, because they cannot get away from their trafficker or they have been physically injured and are therefore physically incapable), fear for their safety due to threatened reprisal by the trafficker, fear of re-victimization and/or stigmatization by service providers, etc.

Our overall goal is simple: to be action-driven and centred around the person who is / has been trafficked so that a meaningful impact can be made in the lives of as many individuals who have been or are being exploited for sex, labour/domestic servitude and/or organ removal, as possible. Since sex trafficking does involve a transaction where sexual services are exchanged for money – similar to that which occurs in prostitution – often our organization is wrongly assumed to be abolitionist. As such, it is important to clarify that this perception is simply unfounded. The OCEHT is against exploitation, not prostitution. These are two very different and distinct realities.

The OCEHT began as a sub-committee of PACT-Ottawa (Persons Against the Crime of Trafficking in Humans). The committee brought together agencies in the National Capital Region that were ready, willing and able to assist a trafficked person. In 2013, the OCEHT became a distinct and separate organization from PACT-Ottawa, but continued with its established mandate. A mandate that focuses on meeting the resource and support needs of trafficked persons, and to provide training on human trafficking to service providers. A new chapter of the OCEHT had begun.

Today, the OCEHT continues the work originally envisioned at its inception. Led by a Chair and Vice Chair, it is composed of over 40 Members who sit as either individuals or as representatives of more than 20 organizations. Its mandate is supported by the work of 10 committees along with a group of Observing Members and Network Members, as well as volunteers that coordinate training, Member / volunteer recruitment, events and communications.

The OCEHT is neither a registered charity nor a non-profit corporation. Its work is financially supported through funding grants and private donations that are made to St. Joe's Women's Centre, and dispersed to the OCEHT appropriately. It operates on minimal funds, which often works to limit its reach and potential.

2015: A Year in Review

In October 2014, the new Chair of the OCEHT initiated a review of the OCEHT structure, operations and overall effectiveness, basing conclusions on consultations with past and present Members. As a result, 2015 was a year of change for the OCEHT. These changes can be summarized as follows:

1. The introduction of the Training Blitz

Each January (Human Trafficking Awareness Month) and June, the Coalition offers Train-the-Facilitator

sessions, as well as training to Traditional and Non-Traditional Service Providers. The training sessions are provided completely free-of-charge at a venue arranged by the Coalition and are concentrated over an 8-day period. (The OCEHT continues to provide training outside of the Training Blitzes but a nominal fee is charged to cover costs associated with that training).

2. Volunteers welcome Historically, volunteers were not permitted to join the OCEHT as membership was exclusively reserved for traditional service providers representing organizations. However, due to the nature and workload of traditional service providers, Members were limited in how they could contribute to the OCEHT in a meaningful manner beyond the monthly meetings. To address this issue, in 2015, the OCEHT opened its doors to volunteers and service providers who want to join as individuals on a volunteer basis, without representing an organization. This has proved to be very effective in advancing the overall mandate of the OCEHT.

3. New Terms of Reference The new *OCEHT Terms of Reference* describe the purpose and structure of the OCEHT with a level of detail that provides pragmatic direction on governance and operations, including conditions of / criteria for membership, volunteer recruitment process, service standards, etc.

4. Establishment of governance positions and Committees

The new *OCEHT Terms of Reference* also created key governance positions such as Vice Chair, Secretary, Communications Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator. Once staffed, these individuals immediately began work to expand the organization, support the Chair and build a strong foundation from which OCEHT initiatives could be launched. Also, 10 Committees were created, each with its own distinct mandate that feeds into the overall mandate of the OCEHT. These Committees have not

only been growing, but have been working hard to survey the community and identify gaps, so that the OCEHT can position itself to fill them. The committees are as follows:

- i. Victim Services Committee
- ii. Indigenous Committee
- iii. Francophone Outreach Committee
- iv. Youth Committee
- v. Safe Place Committee
- vi. Labour / Domestic Servitude Committee
- vii. Organ Harvest / Removal Committee
- viii. Presentation Committee
- ix. Events Committee
- x. Finance Committee

5. Launch of a new OCEHT Website The new OCEHT website is easy to navigate and light on content that is easy to understand. The Coalition has received overwhelmingly positive feedback on it, and we could not have done it without the exemplary and generous collaboration and services of MediaForce, which conducted countless hours of work for us, free of charge. Thank you so much for all that you did and continue to do! Often as in this case, it is through the generosity of corporate citizens that the work of organizations like ours continues.

6. Stronger presence on social media With the staffing of the Communications Administrator position and opening doors to volunteers, the OCEHT has become very active and engaged with the community that it serves (and beyond). With regular and relevant posts, the OCEHT has acquired a sizeable following on social media and has effectively used this platform to raise awareness.

7. Membership growth In 2015, the OCEHT membership experienced exponential growth (almost 300%) and that growth continues at a rapid speed. As the organization has grown and further develops its self-management and operations, it also improves on its

initiatives and how it delivers them. This has allowed the OCEHT to gain recognition and credibility within the service community, resulting in partnerships and increased commitment for permanent / active membership.

8. Widespread recognition In 2015, the OCEHT was invited to present at the Summer Institute on Human Trafficking at Lakehead University, which was an intermediate-to-advanced level knowledge transfer and mobilization event featuring presentations on existing Canadian human trafficking response models/referral mechanisms, best practices in service delivery to trafficked persons, and strategies for building productive collaboration between the service providers and the criminal justice system. That year, Chab Dai – an international organization working to end sex trafficking – also reached out to the OCEHT to help pilot the Freedom Collaborative. Also in 2015, Polaris – which operates the US National Human Trafficking Resource Centre hotline – reached out to the OCEHT to discuss opportunities for establishing of a similar national hotline in Canada. These are just some examples of how widespread and diverse our recognition has been. Still, we need to do more.



Human Trafficking and the Needs of Survivors

According to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, a person is guilty of the crime of human trafficking if he/she “recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation”.¹ In Canada, the legal definition of trafficking in persons is about exploitation and does not require movement. Exploitation occurs where a person causes another person to –

*... provide, or offer to provide, labour or a service by engaging in conduct that, in all the circumstances, could reasonably be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety or the safety of a person known to them would be threatened if they failed to provide, or offer to provide, the labour or service.*²

Exploitation can occur by means of force or threat to use force; by means of deception; or by means of the abuse of a position of trust or authority.³ Exploitation also occurs where these means are used for the purposes of the removal of tissue or organs.⁴

Human trafficking occurs both across borders and within a country and does not discriminate against sex, race or class. Although women, youth and Indigenous Persons appear to be the most targeted in our region.

Human trafficking is not human smuggling. These are two different crimes. Human smuggling involves inducing, aiding or abetting one or more individuals in the crossing of an international border without a passport, visa or other travel documents. Smuggling is a

business relationship that ends upon arrival at the agreed upon destination – there is NO exploitation. Still, these two crimes are often referenced interchangeably because it is not uncommon for a human smuggling transaction to turn into a human trafficking situation.

Human trafficking is also not prostitution, although in the case of sex trafficking it does involve a transaction where sexual services are exchanged for money. Still, in prostitution there is no coercion, no control and no exploitation. In prostitution, the person providing sexual services has control over their earnings, conditions of work, which clients they service and what sexual services they perform. This is not so in sex trafficking.

Each case of human trafficking is uniquely different – from the length of time a person was subjected to exploitation, to the age that they were forced into the trafficking situation, to their unique experience of exploitation. Also unique is how the survivor has processed that experience. As a result, persons who have exited or are exiting a trafficking situation present with a wide range of immediate and long-term support and resource needs. Some may need several more services than others, some for a shorter period of time than others, depending on psychology, age, healing stage and experience. From legal services and health care in the short-term, to addiction treatment and life skills training in the long-term, the type of needs will also vary between survivors. These needs should be prioritized and addressed based on the individual person. For these reasons, a standard, one-size-fits-all service response to human trafficking is not possible and should not be pursued if it is to be effective. Two fundamental elements however, are required across the board - the response must be action-driven and centred around the person who is / has been trafficked. In other words, every survivor needs safety, respect, a timely response, involvement in the decision-making that affects their healing process, services that are culturally appropriate

¹ *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 279.01(1).

² *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 279.04(1).

³ *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 279.04(2).

⁴ *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 279.04(3).

and follow-up. Ensuring safety – of survivor and service provider – is always the first priority and something that needs to be continually assessed and reassessed throughout the individual’s healing and recovery. The goal of any service provider in responding to a survivor of human trafficking is to assist in their individual healing and in regaining control over their lives so as to contribute to their resumption of independent living within the community. This begins with a response from service providers that is uniquely customized to each individual seeking escape and/or healing from being exploited in a human trafficking situation.

General Barriers

1. No standardized data collection mechanism on human trafficking in the National Capital Region or at a national level.

Data collection is “the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion”.⁵ Accurate and appropriate data collection on the issue of human trafficking at a local and national level in respect of all forms (sex trafficking, labour trafficking/domestic servitude and organ trafficking) is essential to understanding the problem, which in turn can be used to direct resources, influence public policy and social services, and in the end, contribute to a more effective response. It is expected that initiatives pursued at a governmental and non-governmental level that are based on sound research and data, will be more successful in their relevance and impact. Currently, there is no mechanism in existence in the National Capital Region or at a national level for data collection on human trafficking. Existing evidence is typically limited to

information collected by individual organizations and not based on sound research methodology, is sourced from outside of Canada, or is anecdotal.

There is no formalized way for service providers that come across human trafficking cases to feed into a central databank where information on such cases is gathered in a systematic manner. This is a barrier to understanding the problem of human trafficking in the National Capital Region and at a Canada-wide scale, and hinders a more effective response.

2. Limited after-hours services.

Often persons in / exiting a trafficking situation have a very small window of opportunity to present themselves before a service provider in order to seek help. That window of opportunity does not always take place between the hours of 9am and 4pm, which is when most services are accessible to such individuals in the National Capital Region and surrounding areas. If that window of opportunity is not maximized by the systemic response, it is possible that the individual will never present again. This may be to the detriment of their safety and wellbeing.

Individuals in a trafficking situation or who have just exited a trafficking situation are always encouraged to contact the Ottawa Police Service, which is operational 24 hours, 7 days a week. However, service providers within the OCEHT have indicated that such individuals are not always comfortable in seeking assistance from law enforcement and that some would rather not seek assistance at all. Whether this reality is justified or not is irrelevant. The fact remains, that it is a reality that presents a need for service availability after hours.

Other after hours services available in the National Capital Region do not necessarily offer services that are specialized to trafficked persons or by service providers who have been trained on how to appropriately and

⁵ Northern Illinois University. “Responsible Conduct in Data Management.”
http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/n_illinois_u/data_management/dctopic.html

effectively identify and respond to cases of human trafficking. This again is to the detriment of the person seeking assistance, who has often been traumatized and/or is disoriented, suffering from a substance dependency and/or is in need of a services and supports. If the response is not appropriate or specialized, the risk is that the person will not present again and that could be at the cost of their safety and wellbeing.

3. No official local response protocol.

The OCEHT aims to bring together all service providers and organizations in the National Capital Region and surrounding areas that are ready and willing to provide assistance to persons who have been trafficked. In addition to the OCEHT, there exist *ad hoc* partnerships between organizations in their efforts to respond to human trafficking cases. However, there is no official local response protocol that transcends service type to provide a continuum among services. As a result, the response continues to be quite fragmented and often depends on how well connected within the community the service provider or the organization to which the survivor presented, is. The problem with a fragmented response is that there is little assurance that the needs of the survivor are being met. In addition, the survivor is often left to navigate the system by him/herself, which in turn makes them vulnerable to re-victimization as they often have to recount their experience to numerous service providers whenever they try to access a different service, support or resource.

An official local response protocol is required so that all service providers – irrespective of the sector in which they work – know how to identify human trafficking cases and know how to respond appropriately. Such a protocol would identify a primary care contact (someone who will navigate the system on behalf of the trafficked person to access services, supports and resources) and assist service providers in referring the

trafficked person for follow-up or ongoing treatment and support. Through its work at the Committee level, the OCEHT is developing such a response protocol, which in the long-term will be supplemented by training for traditional service providers. However, due to a lack of funds and resources, progress has been very slow.

4. No local or national 24 hr/day, 7 days/wk. hotline.

The Chrysalis Anti-Human Trafficking Network offers a national, free, confidential telephone counseling service to women, men, and youth who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation. The Network provides local referrals to callers as well as ongoing support to sex workers who do not personally identify as being trafficked or exploited. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; however it is manned by an answering service that has not been trained on human trafficking. A caller is placed on hold while the answering service contacts on-call volunteers who are then connected with the caller for counseling and referral. This is a great initiative but the Network needs funds to develop its local referral list further so that it is more comprehensive. Further, by placing a caller on hold, there is a risk that the caller could hang up and not call back. In addition, the caller is left to navigate the system him/herself if further assistance is required, which is not ideal and risks the caller not presenting again.

What is needed on a local and/or national level is a hotline similar to that established in the United States by Polaris. However, such an initiative requires commitment and the investment of significant public funds. A meeting between Polaris and the OCEHT in 2015 demonstrated that the appetite for such an initiative does exist in Canada, however greater commitment and investment of funds are missing.

5. No safe place dedicated to persons who have been trafficked.

Currently there are two safe places in existence in all of Canada, and both are situated in Canada's west coast. A third safe place is scheduled to open in Toronto in 2016. While this is an exciting development, more is required. There is a need for a safe place in the National Capital Region that is dedicated to persons who have been trafficked. Currently, individuals who exit a trafficking situation are placed in existing shelters, which is problematic for several reasons. First, occupants of shelters who are victims of violence and abuse have been known to stigmatize survivors of sexual exploitation because of their association with the sex trade. This has served to re-victimize persons who have been trafficked. Second, shelters whose service providers have not been trained in human trafficking and therefore do not understand the unique and complex needs of trafficked persons, are ill-equipped to appropriately respond to such individuals. Lastly, housing survivors of human trafficking can pose unique security and safety risks, as human trafficking increasingly is operated by organized crime and gangs, which are more sophisticated in their organization and operations. A safe place in the National Capital Region that is dedicated to persons exiting a trafficking situation would address all of these issues.

The OCEHT has a Safe Place Committee that is mandated to conduct research and analysis regarding safe place options in our region, with a view to pursue the preferred option in the long-term. It is also responsible for responding to the housing needs of trafficked persons. However, due to a lack of resources this work has been slow.

6. No transitional housing for persons who have been trafficked.

Currently there are no transitional homes for persons who have been trafficked. With a shortage of housing options, many trafficked persons return to their

traffickers or to the sex trade as the only viable option for earning money and supporting themselves.

Investments are required to determine housing options at all stages of healing, which must be followed-up by funding allocation for housing initiatives that specialize in responding to trafficked persons.

7. Inability to communicate with persons in a trafficking situation who are under constant watch of their trafficker.

There is consensus among service providers that there is an absence of tools for communicating with persons in a trafficking situation who are under constant watch of the trafficker. What is effective in educating the community at large on the issue of human trafficking is not necessarily effective in reaching persons who are in a trafficking situation (i.e. pamphlets). Research is required to help determine the best tools for reaching out to individuals in a trafficking situation without putting the service provider or the individual at risk. This research must be supported by funds to produce and distribute these communication tools. Individuals seeking to exit a trafficking situation are more likely to seek help if they have information on the availability a safe, non-judgemental place to present.

Service providers have also indicated that many individuals in a trafficking situation do not have a telephone, thereby making it difficult for them to remain in contact after they initially present.

8. Lack of day-to-day support from dedicated service providers and/or those with lived experience.

Persons who have been trafficked require support and monitoring throughout their healing journey. This often includes day-to-day contact and/or counselling, which is currently not available.

In addition, peer mentorship or emotional support from those with lived experience has been identified as a useful resource on the healing journey of someone who has been trafficked, particularly in cases involving youth. As an organization of service providers, it is our professional duty to ensure that partnering of this type is done with care and in a responsible manner. As service providers, our responsibility is not only to the person who is in need of mentorship and/or support, but also to the person who is offering that mentorship and/or support. In other words, it is important to ensure that the person who is offering mentorship and/or support is ready to do so without harm to themselves or the person they are mentoring and/or supporting. Currently, there exists no program to assess the readiness of a survivor to be able to provide such support.

9. Only a limited number of traditional and non-traditional service providers across all sectors have received training on human trafficking.

Traditional service providers are front line workers employed in health care, social welfare, mental health, the justice system, emergency housing, corrections and community group volunteers. Non-traditional service providers are employees of a specific sector who, through the provision of a particular service, may come into contact with persons in a trafficking situation. Examples include: educators, employees of co-op / community housing, employees of the hotel and hospitality sector, employees of the transportation sector, etc. One of the greatest challenges in the National Capital Region is the lack of awareness that human trafficking is happening here. This lack of awareness is not only present among the average local citizen, but it is also present among service providers – traditional and non-traditional. If service providers are not aware that this is an issue in our community, they will not know to look for it or how to identify it, and

most certainly they will not know how to respond to it appropriately. Further, the response that a trafficked person seeking assistance receives will impact how that person proceeds forward (i.e. whether they file charges, access services and resources, etc.). As such, training on human trafficking of service providers across all sectors that focuses on indicators and appropriate responses (including how to interact with someone who has exited / wants to exit a trafficking situation in a trauma-informed way) is essential to an all-around effective response. This will also help ensure that trafficked persons are referred to the correct services.

The OCEHT provides this training in three formats – 1 hour, 3 hour and a day-long facilitator training. Information about our training can be obtained at: <http://www.endhumantrafficking.ca/training/>. However, resources are needed to conduct wider outreach to service providers and their organizations, and then to respond to the increasing demands for training.

10. Interpreter services need improvements.

Interpreters must be trained on human trafficking so that they can be emotionally prepared to fully understand and properly receive the information that they are required to interpret. It has been identified that due to the horrific nature of the trafficking experience, interpreters often fail to perform their role properly.

It is also important that in assigning an interpreter to a case, efforts are taken to ensure that the same interpreter follows the case to the end. Persons who have exited or are exiting a trafficking situation have cautioned that a change in interpreters can be re-victimizing.

Lastly, interpreters should be the same sex as the trafficked person for whom they are interpreting. They should be a non-biased, third party – someone that the trafficked person does not know.

NOTE: Service providers, including law enforcement, should never act as interpreters.

In 2015, the OCEHT trained 15 interpreters and hopes to expand this number in 2016. Interpreters were very receptive to the information and responded positively to our training.

11. Many persons who are in a trafficking situation do not self-identify as such.

If a trafficked person fails to identify as such, they are not likely to seek access to services, supports or resources. Many who do not self-identify have a misconception about what trafficking is; some have developed emotions for the trafficker and do not believe that they are being exploited solely for the benefit of the trafficker; some are afraid of being shamed if they self-identify; others normalize exploitation as an extension of an already abusive upbringing, home life, etc.

To address this barrier, it is necessary to invest funds in exploring ways to reach individuals in these situations with these mindsets. It is also necessary to invest in collaborative efforts and partnerships that result in a systemic response that by its very nature welcomes and encourages exploited persons to come forward. The systemic response must be easy to access and navigate.

12. Lack of permanent funding schemes.

There exist many organizations in the National Capital Region and beyond that do wonderful work in fighting human trafficking and in responding to exploited persons. Most are funded by private donations and/or funding schemes that contain an end date. Funding is often uncertain and inconsistent. Regardless of the effectiveness of the initiatives and programs, once funding stops, it is always a challenge to keep the initiatives and programs going, unless further funding can be secured. Sometimes it is possible to secure more funding, sometimes not as much as was granted initially,

while in some cases further funding is not granted at all. The organizations responding to exploited individuals operate in this uncertain reality on a daily basis. An effective response to human trafficking requires specialized and long-term programs. Without funding schemes that are permanent, the impact of programs and initiatives that are supported by short-term or temporary schemes, are minimally impactful at best.

Barriers within the Health Care Sector

1. No detox treatment centre for those who have exited a trafficking situation.

There is no place for trafficked persons to go for immediate detox treatment. There is a shortage of beds. This proves to be a big barrier in assisting a person to exit a trafficking situation. Often this causes the person to return to their trafficker as a means to maintain / satisfy their addiction.

2. Lack of awareness about human trafficking among the medical community.

There appears to be resistance in the medical community in the National Capital Region to the idea that human trafficking happens here. It is thought that training would help address this reality, but evidence-based research and data is also required. Until a systematic data collection mechanism is implemented, evidence will be *ad hoc* and/or anecdotal at best, providing a convenient excuse to look the other way.

Overall human trafficking education should be systematically entrenched. The OCEHT recently issued a letter of support to the Canadian Federation of Medical Students for the incorporation of human trafficking statistics, screening protocols and victim support services into Canadian medical school curricula.

3. Lack of a standardized health care response protocol in the National Capital Region.

Without a standardized health care response protocol within medical institutions in our community, medical professionals cannot respond effectively to cases of human trafficking that may present before them (this includes responding in a trauma-informed manner, separating a trafficker from the patient who has presented for medical care, communicating in a relevant manner, knowing where to refer the patient, etc.).

The only reason a trafficked person may present to the medical community for a second time, is if they need more treatment for a medical issue. This is because trafficked persons who appear healthy are most profitable to traffickers. It is vital therefore that as soon as a trafficking case appears before any medical professional, he/she has the tools to respond in a timely and appropriate manner. One core tool is a response protocol that takes into consideration safety factors, etc.

The OCEHT response protocol currently being developed will contain a health care component; however its development requires greater involvement and collaboration from the medical community, something that the OCEHT hopes to acquire in 2016.

4. Survivors do not have family doctors, but need them for follow-up and long-term care.

Trafficked persons whose immediate needs have been met upon exiting a trafficking situation have ongoing treatment needs. As such, it is important to establish a list of doctors willing to take such individuals on as regular patients to support ongoing care and recovery.

Barriers related to Law Enforcement

1. Lack of a full-time, permanent unit dedicated to human trafficking, within the Ottawa Police Service.

The Human Trafficking Unit at the Ottawa Police Service was set up as part of a pilot project. To date, its status is not permanent and its operations occur on a part-time basis. An effective response to human trafficking in any community requires a law enforcement unit that is dedicated to human trafficking and operates on a full-time, permanent basis. As such, the OCEHT encourages and supports efforts to make the Human Trafficking Unit a permanent entity of the Ottawa Police Service and that it be resourced to operate on a full-time basis.

2. Lack of training of all police officers within the Ottawa Police Service.

All law enforcement should be trained on human trafficking to help identify cases of trafficking and to strengthen the law enforcement response once identification is established. As trafficked persons are suffering from varying degrees of trauma, it is also recommended that law enforcement receive training on how to be trauma-aware and trauma-informed when dealing with such individuals. This will not only strengthen the response but would also serve to encourage trafficked persons to present to the police.

3. Lack of trust towards the police.

Service providers and organizations within the National Capital Region are fortunate to have a unit within the Ottawa Police Service that is dedicated to responding to cases of human trafficking and that is engaged with service providers and organizations within our community. This unit encourages all cases of human trafficking to be directed to it with a goal to assist those

who are being exploited. The unit is committed to taking whatever steps are within their means to make the interaction with them as comfortable and non-intimidating as possible. Still, a lack of trust towards the police continues to be identified as a barrier.

Barriers experienced by Youth

1. Inability to keep at-risk youth away from traffickers once they have presented to service providers.

Traffickers are experts at their game, with promises of a lifestyle that is often more appealing to youth than one that is structured and regulated at home or in a residential program. As a result, parents and service providers are frequently unable to protect and/or keep child(ren) safe at home / in residential care when they AWOL (leave / run away).

In the National Capital Region and surrounding areas, approaches or interventions that are specialized in human trafficking are scarce for youth under the age of 16 years and for their caregivers. While there are multiple services providers in the Ottawa area that work with, and support youth and their families, many of the counselors, social workers, youth workers, etc, are not trained in identifying and responding to human trafficking. Furthermore, service providers frequently work in isolation of one another. Increasing inter-agency collaboration is needed to better understand supports and service options available to trafficked youth and their families. Unless a youth is placed in a facility with trained human trafficking staff who are using appropriate interventions to stop youth from leaving, they continue to run and put themselves at risk.

In addition to training on human trafficking (including information on services available) for those working with youth, there exists a need to develop an evidence-

based response protocol for at-risk youth. This would go a long way in providing protection against traffickers, ensuring safety of children and ultimately in helping to prevent human trafficking within this demographic.

The OCEHT Youth Committee has begun work towards the development of such a protocol. However, due to resource constraints, progress has been slow.

2. Lack of legal safeguards for youth aged 16-18 years of age

In Ontario, children and youth under the age of 16 years can be considered in need of protection under the *Child and Family Services Act*.⁶ Youth over the age of 16 can also continue to receive support from the Children's Aid Society if there is a court order in place.⁷ Children who are placed in the care of the Children's Aid Society may be placed with a family relative, in a foster home, or in a group home. Foster parents or group home staff have likely not been trained in human trafficking interventions. It is also likely that child protection workers, social workers, foster family supervisors and other persons supporting the child, have not been trained in this regard. This training must take place for a more effective response to youth who have been trafficked.

If no court order exists prior to a youth's 16th birthday, the Children's Aid Society has no jurisdiction over a 16 or 17 year old, including youth who have been trafficked. The police also struggle with intervening and removing youth of this age bracket from high risk situations. In the absence of a legal authority to intervene for and protect youth between the ages of 16-18, there are increased safety concerns for and barriers to these at-risk and trafficked youth, and their families. Service providers are also impacted in their ability to support youth of these ages. Ontario is one of the only

⁶ *Child and Family Services Act*, RSO 1990, c C-11, s 37(1).

⁷ *Ibid.*

provinces in Canada where the legal age to leave home is 16 years.

This is a significant shortcoming in the law that must be addressed if a more effective response to trafficked youth in this age group is to be achieved.

3. The exchange of sex for drugs / alcohol is increasingly normalized by youth

Persons Against the Crime of Human Trafficking (PACT-Ottawa) as well as the Human Trafficking Unit at the Ottawa Police Service are actively raising awareness of human trafficking in schools and among students across our community.

Similar to presentations delivered by the police and other traditional service providers to students and parents in schools on various 'trending' issues, including sexting, dating violence, etc., education on human trafficking also needs to be shared. Additional topics of focus can include things like social media safety and regular education regarding the importance / elements of healthy relationships. In combination with this, young males should be targeted by initiatives that aim to teach about how to deter their involvement in exploitation (for example, men talking to boys about what it means to be decent and upstanding men).

Ultimately, awareness raising on the issue of human rights needs to be systematically entrenched (incorporated into school curricula), coupled with the training of educators and guidance counsellors in schools who need to know how to identify at-risk students and students who are already being exploited, and how to respond appropriately. Educators and guidance counsellors are uniquely positioned to positively impact the lives of our youth. Resources for research, focused training and responses are required.

The OCEHT has already begun work in this regard by training educators during its Training Blitzes and

delivering workshops to teaching candidates at the Teaching Choices Symposium hosted by the University of Ottawa. Still, more needs to be done in this regard. More specifically, training on human trafficking, including indicators and appropriate responses should be incorporated into the curricula for educators.

4. Families are not educated on human trafficking and do not know how to support their at-risk / exploited children

There is a need in our community to establish a program to educate families of trafficked youth so that they can support their children and work towards preventing their exploitation, or work towards their healing and recovery. Familial support can have a profound impact upon the life of an affected youth.

Further, counselling services should also be made readily available for family members of those who have been trafficked. For example, learning about the pain and suffering endured by a child while they were being exploited, can have a traumatizing impact upon a parent or sibling. In such cases, familial support for the exploited child may not be possible until such counselling is pursued first.

5. Lack of initiatives that aim to build positive youth/police relations

There is a need for initiatives that build positive relationships between youth and the police. Initiatives must focus on sharing information and building connections. Examples include (but are not limited to): specialized training for police officers working with youth, and an increased positive presence at venues frequented by youth (such as schools, community centers, drop-in's, etc.). The establishment of a positive rapport by police with youth outside of criminal interventions will serve to generate a perception on part of youth towards the police as an ally, rather an enemy.

Barriers experienced by Indigenous Peoples

1. Non-Indigenous service providers lack the ability to respond to trafficked persons in a culturally appropriate manner

It is important for non-Indigenous service providers who come into contact with Indigenous Persons who have been trafficked and/or are at-risk, to recognize and honour Indigenous knowledge, and acknowledge and safeguard values and cultural identity. When culture is respected in word and in action, it respects cultural integrity and builds a foundation towards the healing of Indigenous survivors of human trafficking.

The response of a non-Indigenous service provider to a trafficked Indigenous Person must include an acknowledgement of the diversity among Indigenous Persons. Asking the Indigenous survivor “what Nation they are”, can serve to initiate trust-building between the Indigenous survivor and the non-Indigenous service provider. Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Persons have a need for personal continuity or personal persistence. Markers such as showing appreciation for the trafficked person’s culture can foster cultural continuity in that Indigenous Person’s self-identity and can facilitate a desire for healthier personal continuity, even if only during or immediately after exiting.

Most service providers understand the value of culture; however they do not have the proficiency or resources to connect Indigenous trafficked persons with the culturally appropriate services that are available. Accordingly, resources are required to gather information on available services and then to share it among all non-Indigenous service providers. Resources are also required for training of non-Indigenous service providers on culturally appropriate responses to persons who have exited or are exiting a trafficking situation. Using culture for healing and support has been found to

be very effective, but can backfire if the service provider is forceful in their push for cultural participation or is otherwise uninformed or not-trained in this regard.

2. Lack of accurate data about human trafficking of Indigenous Persons.

Current discourse (academic and otherwise) on human trafficking of Indigenous Persons links exploited Indigenous girls with prostitution, rather than human trafficking. This results in gross inaccuracies in the little data that is available, which currently shows an overrepresentation of Indigenous girls in prostitution. Such an outcome distorts the human trafficking situation in Indigenous communities and shifts focus and resources away from the development of important prevention and response initiatives. The absence of a standardized mechanism at a national or local level for collecting information on the human trafficking of Indigenous Persons, further hinders the development of a response that is appropriate and effective.

3. Indigenous Persons who are exiting or have exited a trafficking situation are not presenting to law enforcement.

Although there are strong indications that Indigenous Persons in the Ottawa area are being trafficked, the Human Trafficking Unit at the Ottawa Police Service has not come across any number of cases that correspond with those indications. There is general consensus that Indigenous Persons simply do not report to law enforcement. This is dangerous to Indigenous Persons who have or are exiting a trafficking situation.

Appreciating and acknowledging both historical and contemporary encounters between Indigenous Peoples and law-enforcement officers is essential to understanding current police-Indigenous relations. Indigenous Peoples’ perceptions of the police have historically been shaped by a culture of oppression and

economic domination against them.⁸ There have been many assertions that racism still remains a driver of contemporary policing, contributing to the continued negative perceptions of law enforcement by Indigenous Peoples. The role police played in the assimilation of Indigenous People has also negatively impacted perceptions of law enforcement. A situation that is further exasperated by under-policing in cases of violence against Indigenous women, who believe they are viewed as less worthy.⁹

Efforts to engage in positive dialogue between law enforcement and Indigenous communities are essential to bridging this gap and restoring partnership and collaboration that will result in a meaningful impact.

4. Lack of capacity in Indigenous communities to respond appropriately to human trafficking.

Resources are needed to support Indigenous communities in dealing with the issue of human trafficking. Aboriginal women are rather alone in their work against sexual exploitation of girls, especially on reserves, where they face resistance from various sections like chiefs and counsels.¹⁰

Research is needed to examine whether Indigenous communities may create a safe place within their own Indigenous resurgence paradigm that is “rooted, accountable and transformative”¹¹ for trafficked persons. Often a trafficked person’s sense of self and sense of life

⁸ Rodin, J. 2005. *Aboriginal Peoples and the Criminal Justice System: Ipperwash Inquiry*.

⁹ Amnesty International. 2004. *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*.

¹⁰ Save the Children Canada, 2000.

¹¹ Taiiaki Alfred. 12 November 2015, Carleton University. *A Talk by Taiiaki Alfred: Research as Indigenous Resurgence*.
<http://carleton.ca/aboriginal/cu-events/a-talk-by-taiiaki-alfred-research-as-indigenous-resurgence/>

is cheapened or indifferent. Bringing these persons back onto their land that embodies their traditional cultural practices and long-term strategies, can contribute to the restoration of their integrity and provide them with a foundation for healing. In other words, healing can be enhanced through experiences that are lived through against the backdrop of cultural continuity.

5. Lack of alliances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and communities.

The need for non-Indigenous service providers to form productive alliances and collaborations with Indigenous service providers is paramount if the needs of trafficked persons of Indigenous descent are to be met without prejudice or judgement. In other words, Indigenous Persons who have exited a trafficking situation must have access to services, supports and resources that assist in their healing in a culturally relevant way, if they so choose, even if they present to non-Indigenous service providers. These alliances can be built through organizations like the OCEHT Indigenous Committee or through partnerships built between other organizations. Whatever the means, the alliances must be formed for both sides seek a common goal - an end to human trafficking and neither can achieve this on its own.

NOTE: Identifying and acting upon opportunities for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and agencies is likely to result in increased prosecutions against traffickers.

6. Lack of a resource for non-Indigenous service providers to obtain information pertaining to Indigenous culture, services, supports and resources.

There is no one-stop-shop for non-Indigenous service providers to go to once they have determined that the individual who has exited a trafficking situation is of Indigenous descent and wishes to access Indigenous

services available in the National Capital Region. Such a resource (such as a hotline, or other tool) is necessary to quickly provide information needed to meet the culturally-specific needs of the trafficked person, including shelter, food, clothing, non-emergency medical needs, Elder requests, access to land-based activities (i.e. where the trafficked person wishes to go into the woods for a walk with an Elder or tradition keeper), etc.

7. Lack of safe housing and support that specializes in servicing trafficked persons of Indigenous descent.

The need for safe environments that value and recognize the inherent cultural integrity of Indigenous survivors of human trafficking, cannot be stressed enough. This must be coupled with options for long-term housing that include access to supports and resources in accordance with a person's needs, such as ongoing day-to-day peer support, so that they have every opportunity to recover from the devastating effects of the trauma they have experienced. The journey of recovery and healing is a process that takes time. Currently, no housing that specializes in supporting trafficked persons of Indigenous descent is available.

Barriers experienced by Francophones in Ontario and Anglophones in Quebec

1. Access to services in language of choice.

Persons who have exited a trafficking situation who speak French and live in Ontario experience difficulty in accessing services in French. The same is true of those who speak English and live in Quebec. This is stressful and often serves to re-victimize the person seeking assistance. Having to recount the exploitative experience is difficult on its own, but to feel as though one is not understood because of a language barrier is

frustrating and can discourage the person from presenting again or seeking further assistance. This can result in the person returning to their trafficker because of a perceived lack of options available to them. To help address this barrier it is important to educate service providers across this region about the supports, services and resources available in either or both official languages. This will result in appropriate referrals, which in turn will serve to ensure that the needs of the trafficked individual are being met.

Furthermore, it must be stated that there needs to be better coordination of services between Ontario and Quebec for survivors who often experience challenges in receiving social assistance and/or medical care.

The Francophone Outreach Committee within the Coalition is mandated to facilitate collaborative efforts with and between agencies and organizations in the community to better respond to the needs of trafficked persons of both linguistic profiles. Currently, the Committee is surveying the community to identify services, supports and resources from a linguistic perspective. This will facilitate the identification of gaps and direct follow-on efforts of the Committee.

Labour Trafficking and Domestic Servitude

1. No standardized data collection mechanism on labour trafficking and domestic servitude in the National Capital Region or at a national level.

Accurate and appropriate data collection on the issue of labour trafficking and domestic servitude at a local and national level is essential to improve understanding of the problem, which in turn can be used to direct resources and in the end, contribute to a more effective response.

2. Improved collaboration between federal and municipal government agencies, as well as local organizations is needed.

In Canada, those who have been exploited for labour and/or domestic servitude are more likely to have come here from a country outside of Canada. This introduces various complexities involving legal status to be in Canada. Often, the official government / law enforcement response to these cases does not necessarily speak to the unique needs of those who have been exploited in this way. Many exploited persons feel that due to their legal status in Canada (or lack thereof), they have no rights here and do not, or are not, given an opportunity to seek services, supports and resources, choosing instead to be deported.

Collaboration between government agencies and local organizations must be improved, particularly in cases involving exploited persons who have no legal status in Canada. Specifically, local victim services organizations should be given access to such persons to ensure that exploited individuals fully understand their rights in Canada and are given an opportunity to have their needs met, along with an opportunity to pursue legal status, if that is their choice.

Organ Removal/Harvesting

1. No information about human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal and / or harvest in the National Capital Region or at a national level.

Information on this issue is minimal and anecdotal. It is thought that human trafficking for organ removal and/or harvest is a crime that is even more clandestine than sex trafficking or trafficking for labour. However, the reality is that there is a much greater demand for organs in Canada than there are available organs, yet anecdotal evidence suggests that the excess demand is being met through other, unknown means. Resources are needed to

investigate this issue further so that the needs of persons exploited in this way can be identified and work can commence on mobilizing a response to their needs.

Moving Forward ...

Between November 2014 and December 2015, the OCEHT evolved in size, capacity, partnerships, and overall mobilization and progress towards its mandate. This is a direct result of implemented changes that have been fuelled by our mission to be action-driven, and focused upon the rescue and wellbeing of the trafficked person. This report is but one outcome of these changes, which we hope will serve to help direct resources at all levels of government, as well as non-governmental organizations, so as to improve the current response. As has been evidenced by this report, much remains to be done if the response is to be effective and its impact is to be meaningful and lasting. The response must focus as much on long-term follow-up and care to secure permanent independent living within the community, as it does on helping trafficked persons exit a trafficking situation and ensure that immediate needs are met.

Meanwhile, the OCEHT will press on with its training efforts, community asset building and service initiatives. We will continue our efforts to strengthen and grow our membership and volunteer base, with a view to advancing our mandate even further. The OCEHT has a very exciting year ahead, which will build upon the momentum that began in 2015. Specific initiatives being pursued include: the launch of our website in French, the launch of a new Committee dedicated to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQQ) issues, as well as partnerships with PACT-Ottawa in organizing events such as the Freedom Relay in September (please visit our websites for up-to-date information and consider coming out to support us). In the interim, we hope that you will share this report widely so that it may affect positive change in the

current response to trafficked persons, who suffer from
the violation of their most basic human rights.

Important OCEHT Contact Information

(613) 769-6531

(9am-4pm)

General email:

info@endhumantrafficking.ca

Website

www.endhumantrafficking.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ottawacoalition

Twitter: @oceht

Instagram: @oceht_endHT

Communications Administrator

(Please refer all media inquiries and requests for interviews to
the Communications Administrator)

communications@endhumantrafficking.ca

Victim Services Committee

victimservices@endhumantrafficking.ca

Francophone Outreach Committee

francophoneoutreach@endhumantrafficking.ca

Youth Committee

youth@endhumantrafficking.ca

Indigenous Committee

mfni@endhumantrafficking.ca

Safe Place Committee

safeplace@endhumantrafficking.ca

Community Presentation Committee

(This committee processes and responds to all
training and presentation requests.)

presentation@endhumantrafficking.ca

Events Committee

publicoutreach@endhumantrafficking.ca