

Advancing Equity through Collaboration: Human Trafficking and Sexual Assault

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Objectives:

- Review how the history of the human trafficking movement and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act has led to the criminalization and coercive intervention of survivors and how that intersects with the sexual violence movement.
- Learn how the public health model of violence prevention includes risk and protective factors that can be predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing, and can also be behavioral, attitude, or environmental, and why a focus on demand reduction detracts from a comprehensive public health prevention approach.
- Identify concrete strategies to engage with different typologies of anti-trafficking advocates in dialogues about equity to increase effective collaboration between the anti-trafficking and sexual violence movements.





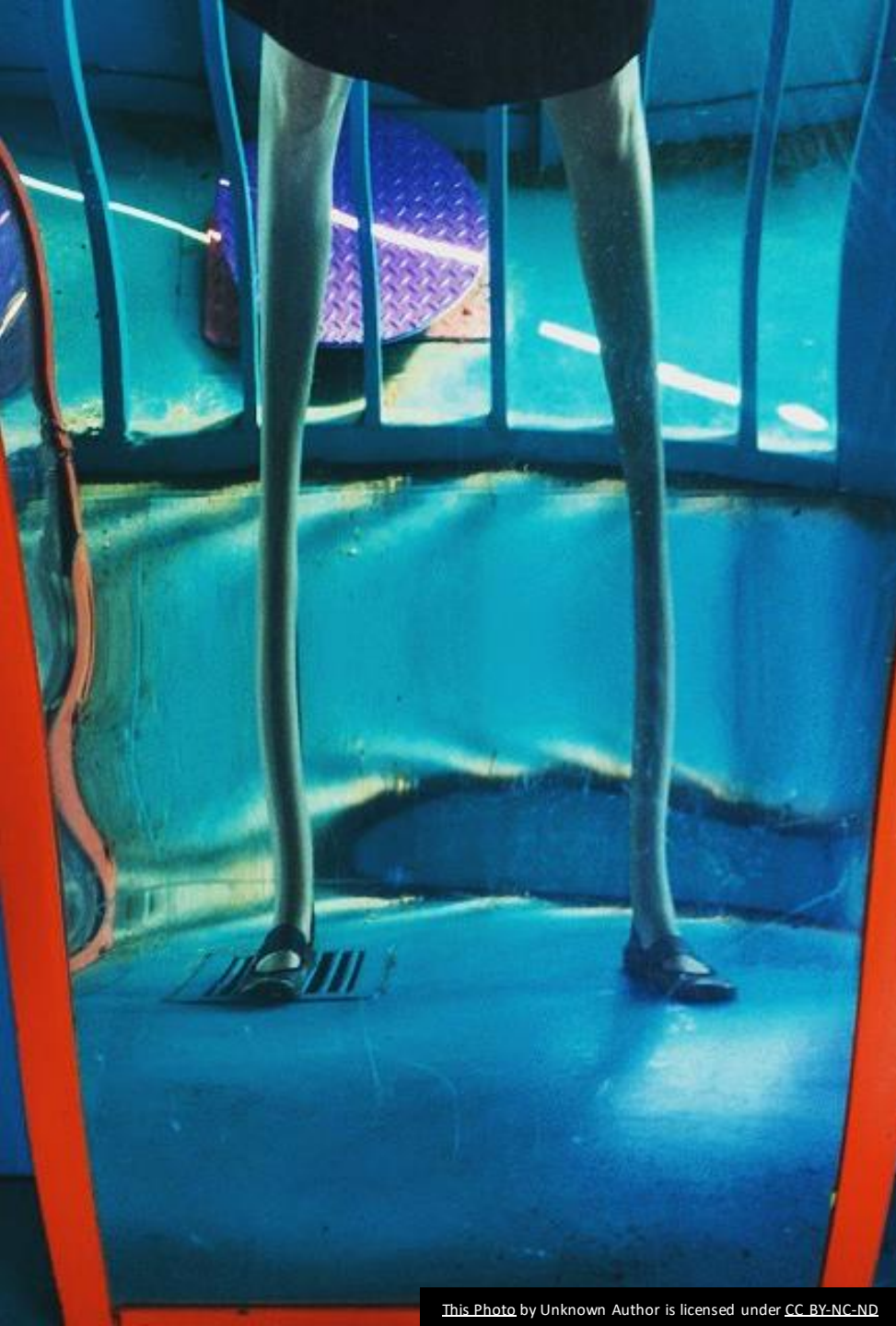
My background

- Trafficking survivor ***and*** former sex worker
- Later got involved in rape crisis response—nonjudgmental service provision to sex workers was *easy*.
- BUT... I still had not-great feelings about buyers &/or clients even from my consensual time.
- It's hard to untangle the sources of pain when you are in crisis all around.



Anti-HT Advocate

- Move to anti-trafficking work
- The words were familiar, but were being used differently.



Confusion!

- I did not judge sex workers or sex work and knew I did not want them to experience discrimination.
- The only models of anti-trafficking I heard about were end demand.
- Was there something I didn't understand?

My background

- Trafficking prevention and sex worker safety are not incompatible.
- So many of us don't entirely agree with them (or agree that they're harmful), but we don't name that explicitly or do things differently.
- Why? Funding and fear.



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The Wrong Questions

We keep asking:

- How effective are “John schools” at convincing buyers that commercial sex is exploitation?
- Does asymmetrical criminalization reduce sex work?
- How can we reduce the sex trades so that fewer people will be trafficking?

Instead of:

- What are the harmful impacts of shame-based strategies for sexual behavior control?
- Does asymmetrical criminalization make survivors safer?
- How can we ensure that nobody who doesn’t want to trade sex is without better options?



History

History of Human Trafficking in the United States

- Genocide and enslavement of people from native cultures
- Transatlantic slave trade, 1500s-1800s
- Chattel slavery until 1865

History: The Moral Virtue of White Men

I would not allow a woman at all in the streets. I would compel them to reside inside such localities as those I have named. I would say that knowing our people, and knowing, generally speaking, the virtue that is in them, that half our married men and half our youths would be preserved from misfortune if they did not meet these unfortunate women in the streets . . . It is the looseness and freedom of these women who can walk the streets at night that, generally speaking, have tended to the immorality of our youth and advanced men for years more than anything I know of.⁸⁰

-Reverend Maguire, 1871

History: Moral Virtue

“Make Irish girls stay at home - aye, to starve and die. Let them die in their virgin purity, attended by their priests. Their death beds will be illuminated by the light of faith, and the hope of a glorious resurrection.”

- Kilkenny Journal, 1861

"I would not allow a woman at all in the streets... It is the looseness and freedom of those women who can walk the streets at night that... have tended to the immorality of our youth and advanced men for years."

- Reverend Maguire, 1871

"FOR GOD'S SAKE DO SOMETHING!" *Gen Booth*

FIGHTING THE GREAT WAR ON WHITE SLAVERY IN YOUNG GIRLS



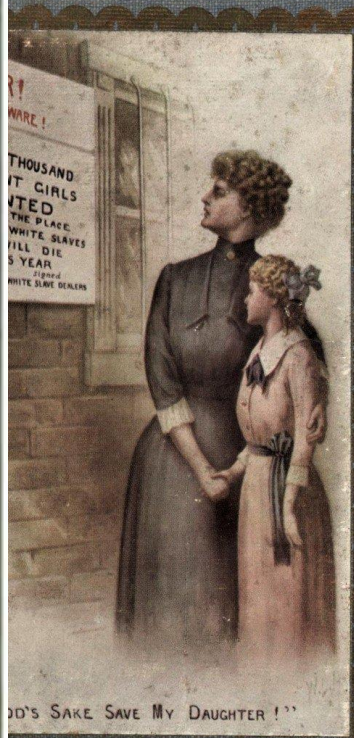
My God! If I only could get out of here.

OR
WAR
ON THE
WHITE
SLAVE
TRADE

THE GREATEST CRIME IN THE WORLD'S HISTORY

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

THE GREAT WAR ON WHITE SLAVERY



FOR GOD'S SAKE SAVE MY DAUGHTER!

OR
FIGHTING
FOR THE
PROTECTION
OF
OUR GIRLS



INNOCENCE IS NO LONGER INNOCENCE

IN THE GRIP OF THE WHITE SLAVE TRADER



6^D
Net

Content warning: Racism, anti-Semitism

**“THE GREATEST CRIME IN THE WORLD'S HISTORY”
“the blackest slavery that has ever stained the human race.”**

“Things are being done every day in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and other large cities of this country in the white slave traffic which would, by contrast, make the Congo slave traders of the old days appear like Good Samaritans”

Recent History:
“Freedom from Sexual
Trafficking Act of 1999”



TVPA Compromise:
Separate Definitions

“Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age”

- “Non-operational” definition is by virtue of suggesting there is a sex trafficking other than “force, fraud, or coercion” – this is not criminalized, and does not grant victim status. SYMBOLIC
- “Operational” definition is what determines what meets the definition of the crime of human trafficking in the sex trades. ACTIONABLE

As part of that compromise, which was happening in both international and US contexts, “demand” was written in as a prevention strategy, NOT because of evidence suggesting it is a root cause or research documenting its effectiveness as a strategy, but as part of an ideological compromise with anti-pornography, anti-sex work religious and radical feminist campaigners.



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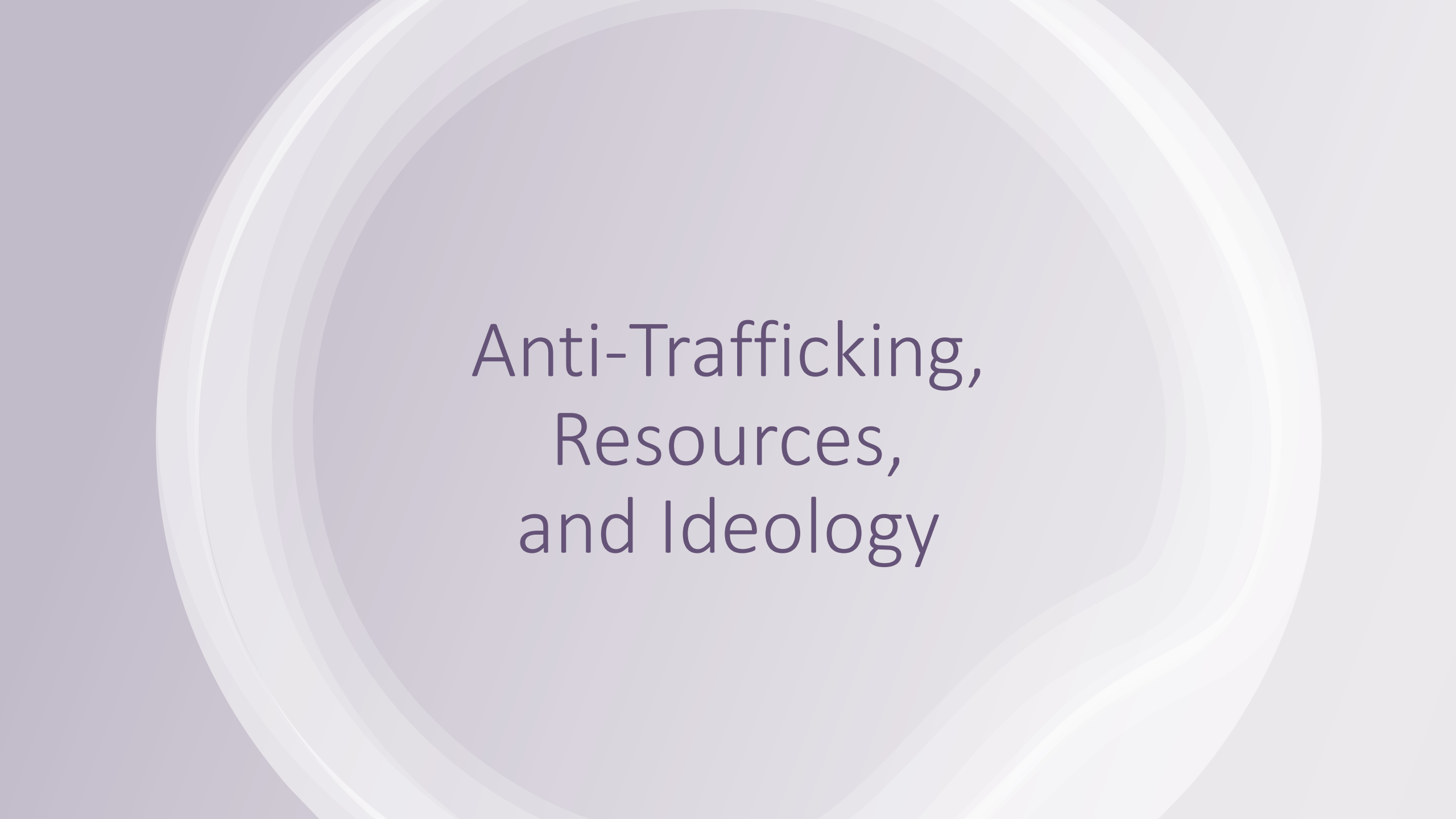


NATIONAL CENTER ON
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
— EndSexualExploitation.org —



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“Earlier this year we changed our name from Morality In Media to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation to better describe our organization’s scope and mission (which remains the same as it has always been).” (2015)

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Anti-Trafficking,
Resources,
and Ideology

What a lot of folks think those who support
end demand are...

Well-funded
FBO

People who hate
sex workers

Well-funded
Anti-Porn Org

People who hate
sex workers

Anti-Sex
Puritans

People who hate
sex workers

But that's not quite accurate...

Well-funded FBO

People who care about children and are looking for resources to keep them safe.

Well-funded Anti-Porn Org

People who worry about objectification of women and are looking for resources to address misogyny

Anti-Sex Puritans

People who worry about subtle dynamics of coercion and are looking for resources to address manipulation

The
resources
they find:

Well-funded
HT nonprofits

Grassroots/
external orgs

the word "sex
work" is offensive

"prostituted
women"

NOT FOR SALE

END DEMAND

human rights

harm reduction





“Low-hanging fruit”

Ideological garbage is the “low-hanging fruit” new advocates (or new to HT, or confused about HT) reach for because it:

- Is accessible and common
- Is well-marketed
- Is well-funded and glossy
- Is often presented in ways that shut down rather than invite dialogue (“WHY DO YOU CARE MORE ABOUT TRAFFICKERS THAN CHILDREN?!?!”)

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Contradictions to Anti-Violence Values in the HT Sector

Values & Norms in Anti-Violence

- **Bodily Autonomy**
- **Harm Reduction**
- **Self-Determination & Supporting Survivors Decisions**
- **Acknowledging the Systematic Failure of Institutions**
- **Divestment from the criminal legal system/Non-punitive orientation**

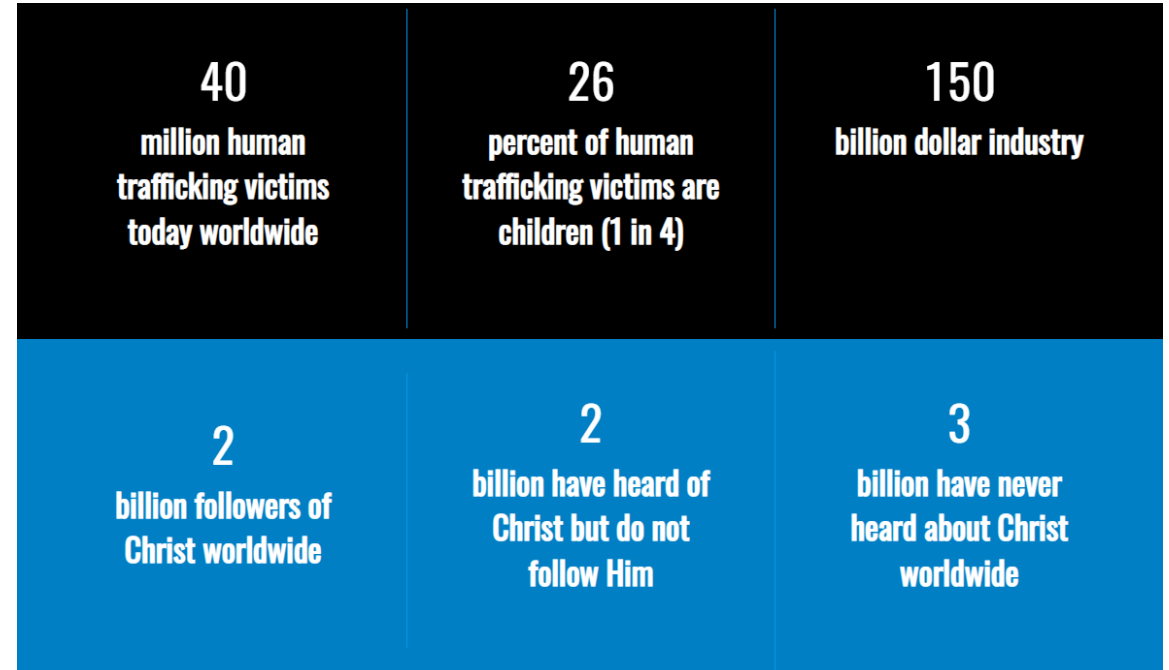
The Anti-Prostitution Pledge

This refers to language in many anti-violence and public health funding streams, enacted in 2003, that requires grantees to “not promote or support the legalization or practice of prostitution.”

- **Sharing safety resources and research is not promoting sex work or sex trafficking.** This clause hinders survivors’ advocacy efforts and is often interpreted in a way that limits harm reduction efforts and increases vulnerability to trafficking in the sex trades, whether they actually promote prostitution or not.
- This clause also limits survivors’ self-determined agency by forcing them to frame their experiences in government-sanctioned ways in order to work in the field.

Faith-Based Influence

While faith-based communities have a history in many anti-violence movements, the human trafficking sector has a foundation and continued presence of faith-based involvement that has contributed to the "moralization" of human trafficking.



Sting Operations and "Rescue" Industry

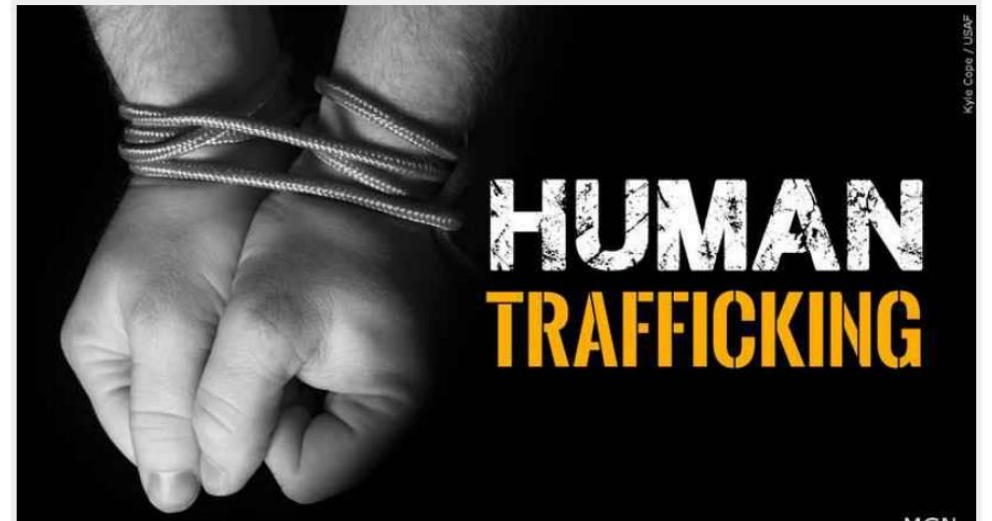
- "Sting Operations" in which buyers, sex workers, and trafficking survivors are arrested is the primary intervention tactic used in the "task force" model of anti-trafficking work
- You will often see a cited number of "victims rescued" but never a definition of what outcome "rescue" refers to.

12-state human trafficking operation nets rescue of 47 victims

Jennifer Bredow

Updated: August 1, 2022 - 9:47 AM

Published: August 27, 2021 - 1:12 PM



The Enhanced Collaborative Task Force Model

Multidisciplinary approach to fight human trafficking with a co-leadership model. Shared decision making by both the lead law enforcement and the lead victim service provider grantees.

- This funding was partially pulled away from services and diverted toward law enforcement collaboration.
- New funding restrictions on operations.

Common Programming Restrictions

Many human trafficking service providers greatly prioritize referrals from law enforcement and lack community investments.

A common element of "Empowerment-Based" human trafficking programming is the requirement that survivors no longer be engaged in the sex trade – even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion present.



Ending Demand through Criminalization

- How has this worked in other issue areas?
- Does criminalization of our communities lead to increased safety and protective factors?
- Are we listening to a diversity of impacted voices?
- Is it evidence-based?
- Does this tactic cause harm to end harm?



National Survivor Network Members Survey:

Impact of Criminal Arrest and Detention on Survivors of Human Trafficking

August 2016

What did we learn?

- Over 90% of survivor respondents reported being arrested or convicted
- 40% arrested 9 times or more
- 41.6% were arrested as minors
- Reported significant barriers to healing

The Evidence: End Demand Causes Harm



How has this impacted the sexual violence movement?

Advocates in the sexual violence movement often feel:

- **Confused** about the values and practices used in the HT sector.
- **Disregarded** in our expertise of anti-violence services and prevention strategies.
- **Apprehensive** about the best way to collaborate and serve survivors.
- **Forced** to engage in harmful tactics or partnerships to maintain funding or relationships.

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Demand Reduction “Typologies”

FOUR CRITERIA

Knowledge of research demonstrating harms of end demand

- Unaware → Unsure or vaguely familiar → Aware

Position on demand reduction

- Supports → Unsure/confused → Opposes

Ability or willingness to support efforts (behind the scenes)

- Unable/unwilling → Maybe/unsure → Willing and able

Able and willing to create explicit anti-trafficking resources that do not use end demand strategies, offering alternatives rather than critique

- Unable/unwilling/uninterested → Maybe/unsure → Willing and able

Typologies

The
Ideologue

The Learner

The Movable
Middle

The Resister

The
Researcher

The Ally

The
Advocate

The Ideologue

Values:

- Any and all commercial sex commodifies bodies in ways that other forms of labor do not.

De-emphasizes:

- Bodily autonomy
- Consent and agency in navigating power dynamics
- Self-determination

"I know about the research that shows the harms of demand reduction initiatives, but that does not change what I believe."

They may be unmovable, but people turn to them for guidance. They create many of the accessible narratives, and have great marketing.

The Learner

Values:

- Being of service
- Learning

"I'm not sure. There's so much conflicting information out there I'm just doing the best I can."

Because many learners attend trainings and read materials created by ideologues, they may repeat some of the errors or practices of ideologues.

The Movable Middle

Values

- Accountability
- Safety (though perhaps with a limited view of what that means)

"Everybody in the anti-trafficking movement (including every survivor I've ever heard from) supports demand reduction as a way to end trafficking in the sex trades. All the anti-trafficking research supports it too."

These people may support sexual autonomy, but believe that demand reduction "holds traffickers accountable." May have heard research that supports demand reduction but doesn't know about research showing harms, or that it criminalizes safety practices.

The Resister

Values:

- Accountability for systemic harm (including that done by nonprofits and the criminal legal system)
- Noncarceral options
- Evidence from a variety of fields
- Grassroots efforts

"I don't go anywhere near the anti-trafficking movement."

"I used to do anti-trafficking work but then realized they don't want the kinds of change that could actually end trafficking so I left to do harm reduction work."

May either be wary of engaging with anti-trafficking movement or have left to do abolitionist organizing (prison), harm reduction, immigration activism. Likely has not had many (or any) positive interactions with anti-trafficking folks.

The Researcher

Values:

- Evidence-base and evaluation of impacts
- Partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and impacted populations
- Process as well as outcome
- Re-evaluating assumptions as we learn

“I’m unable to publicly state my opposition due to my contract, but I’ll gladly forward to my listserv” or “I’m not allowed to make policy recommendations but I can partner with you educating about impacts.”

The Ally

Values:

- Perceived safety (economic, community)
- Collaboration
- Shifting the needle

"I can't sign your document publicly because I'd lose desperately needed income, but I'm happy to circulate it and to use some of your talking points in our upcoming messaging."

May participate regularly in collaborative task forces with anti-human trafficking organizations that promote end demand or otherwise cause harm, or be required to for grant funding or to keep their job.

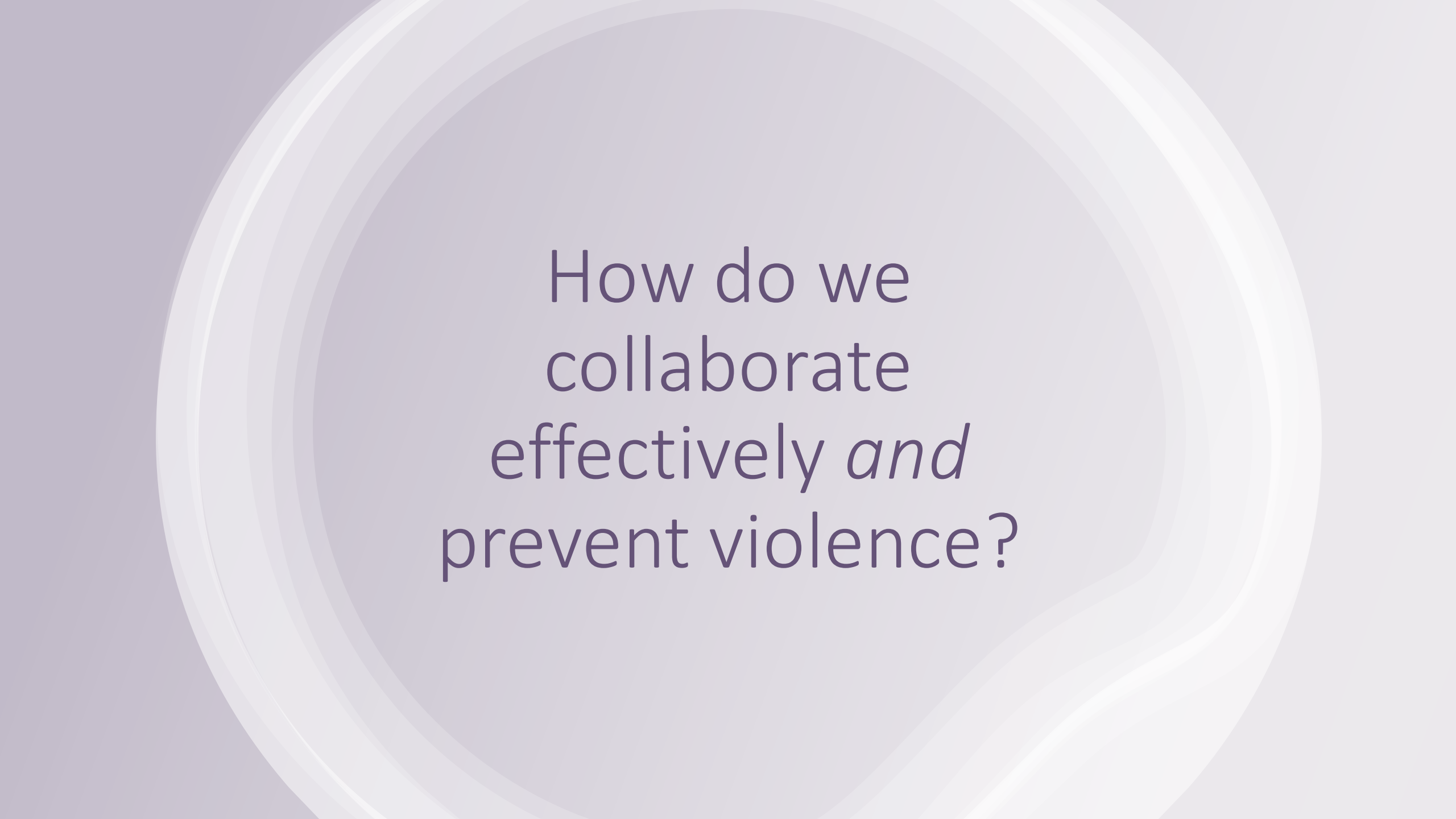
The Advocate

Values:

- Ethics over perceived morality
- Evidence and how to translate it into practice
- Complexity and nuance

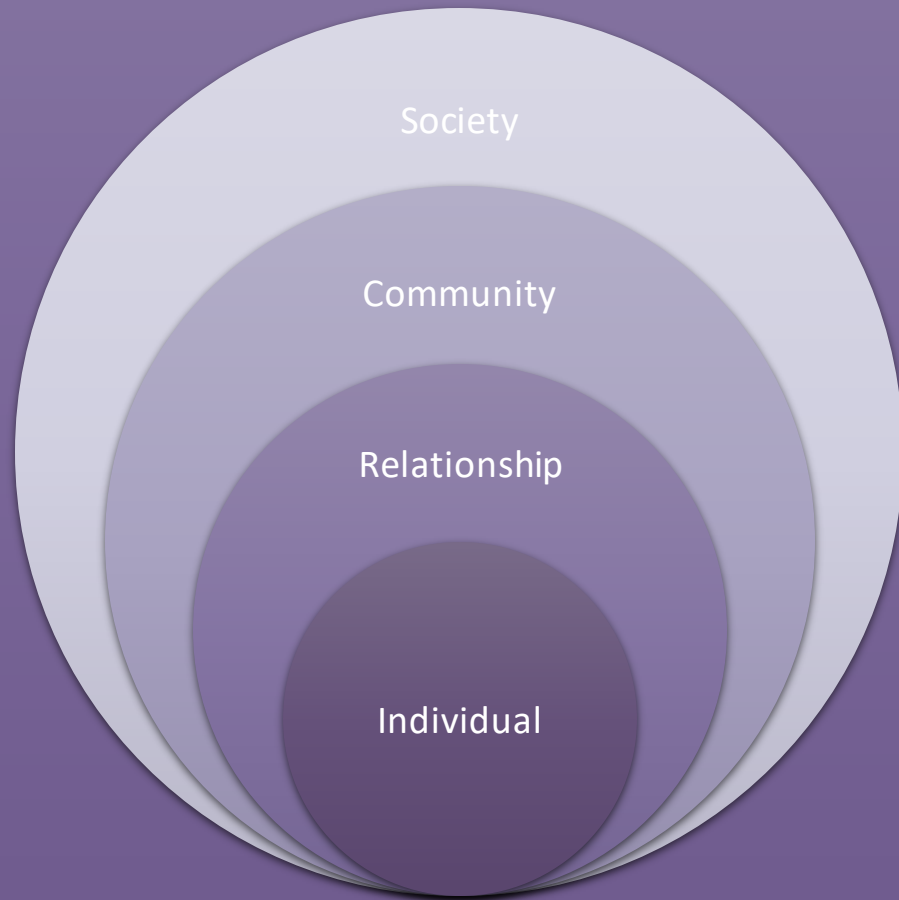
IF THIS IS YOU:

- Remember that it is a place of privilege (or unique necessity) to be able to do all five of these.
- Meet people where they are as an act of systems-level harm reduction.
- You may have allies in multiple groups that do not typically work well together. Use this privilege and position strategically and thoughtfully.
- Remember the power dynamics of survivor-nonsurvivor disagreements, and be conscious of power dynamics when speaking with survivors if you do not also have lived experience.

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How do we
collaborate
effectively and
prevent violence?

CDC Prevention Principles: Social-Ecological Model



- **Risk factors** increase the likelihood of violence occurring, even if they are not causal.
- **Protective factors** decrease the likelihood of violence occurring or increase resilience.

The goal of primary prevention is to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors at all layers of the social ecological model.

Public Health Prevention Principles: PRECEDE-PROCEED

Risk and protective factors can also be:

- Predisposing (things about a person's life that make them more likely to cause or experience harm)
- Enabling (things that exist that make something possible)
- Reinforcing (reward/conditioning for a behavior)

Risk and protective factors can also be:

- Behavioral (things people do)
- Attitude (things people believe)
- Environmental (things in people's environments and communities)




Comprehensive prevention?

Level of Factors	Order of Factors	Type of Factors
Society	Predisposing	Behavior
Community	Enabling	Attitude
Relationship	Reinforcing	Environmental
Individual		

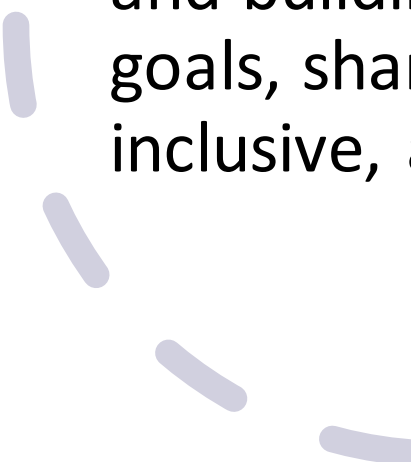
NSN Values

Exploring a human rights and public health framework led by survivors


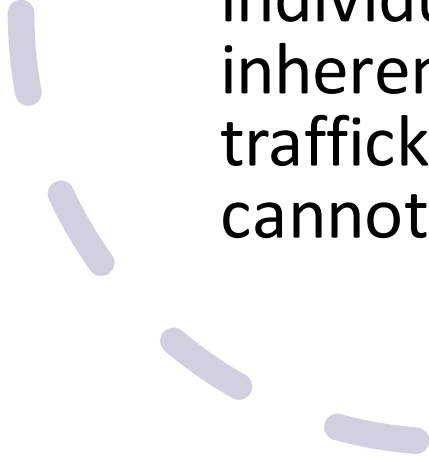





1. The NSN uses the operational, criminal definition of severe forms of trafficking found in the TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT - A person who is exploited through force, fraud, or coercion, or someone who was in the sex trades while a minor.




2. The NSN believes in trauma-informed, nonviolent communication, and building survivor-centric cultures of care. We emphasize collective goals, shared facilitation, and active listening, and promote informed, inclusive, and equitable dialogue over debate.


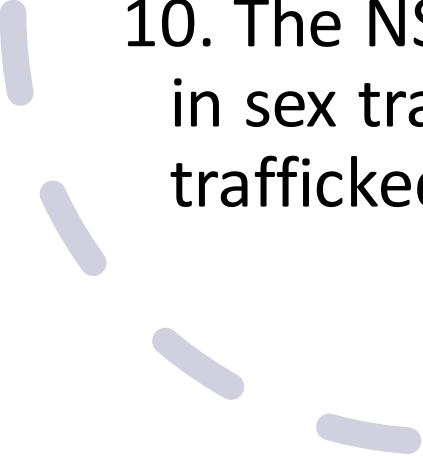
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3. The NSN promotes a public health framework and human rights-based approach to anti-human trafficking efforts.
 4. The NSN seeks to end human trafficking without co-opting the language of slavery or abolition.
 5. The NSN acknowledges that all human trafficking exploits an individual's body and mind, and that trafficking in the sex trades is not inherently more traumatic, grievous, or important to address than trafficking in other forms of labor, as different experiences of trauma cannot be compared or measured.



6. The NSN acknowledges that human trafficking is horrific and is an extension of rather than an exception to the range of exploitation inherent in capitalist systems of labor.

7. The NSN acknowledges that injustices experienced disproportionately by people of the global majority are rooted in systemic and historic oppression of these people and communities.



- 
- 
8. The NSN acknowledges that labor trafficking is underreported due to an increased emphasis on trafficking in the sex trades in awareness and prevention campaigns as well as media coverage and service provision.
 9. The NSN opposes the use of forced or exploited labor in prisons.
 10. The NSN opposes conflation of consensual and trafficked engagement in sex trades and acknowledges that not all adults in the sex trades are trafficked.

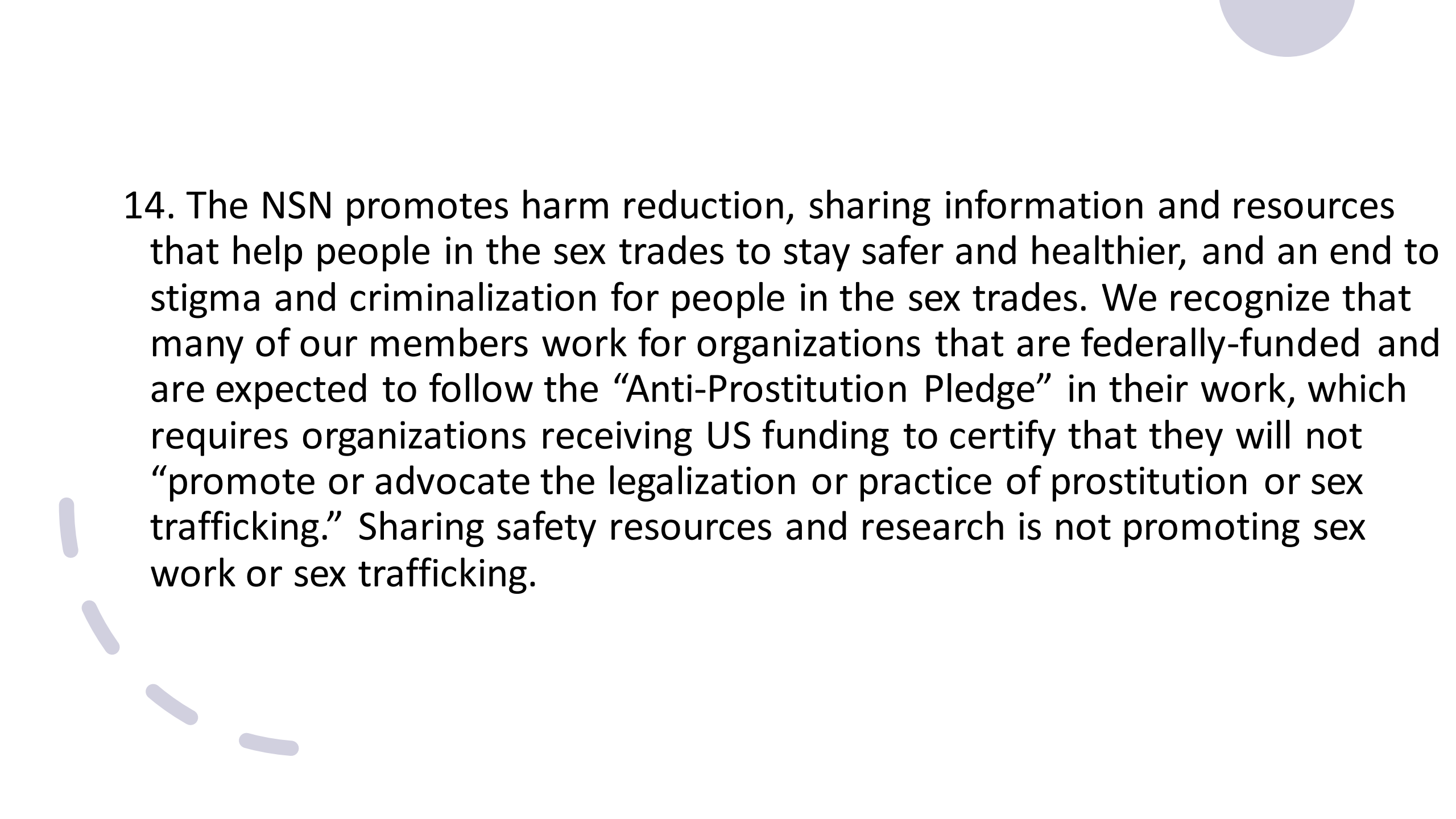


11. The NSN believes that social policy and norms (like immigration policy, anti-Black racism, and homelessness policy, for example), can either prevent or drive trafficking by decreasing or increasing vulnerability.


12. The NSN does not advocate for causing harm to end harm, and end demand practices (including models known as the “Nordic Model” or “Equality Model”) harm people in the sex trades, whether consensual or trafficked.



13. The NSN calls for an end to law enforcement ever having sexual contact with individuals in custody or potential victims, or ever having sexual contact while acting under the color of the law.

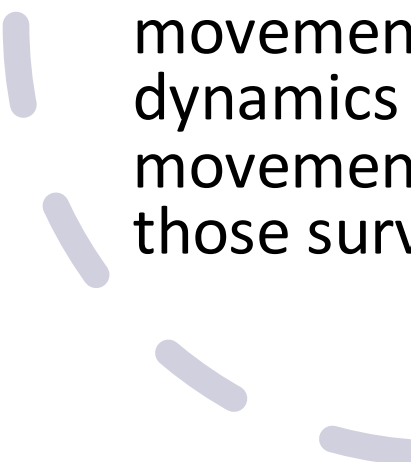


14. The NSN promotes harm reduction, sharing information and resources that help people in the sex trades to stay safer and healthier, and an end to stigma and criminalization for people in the sex trades. We recognize that many of our members work for organizations that are federally-funded and are expected to follow the “Anti-Prostitution Pledge” in their work, which requires organizations receiving US funding to certify that they will not “promote or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution or sex trafficking.” Sharing safety resources and research is not promoting sex work or sex trafficking.

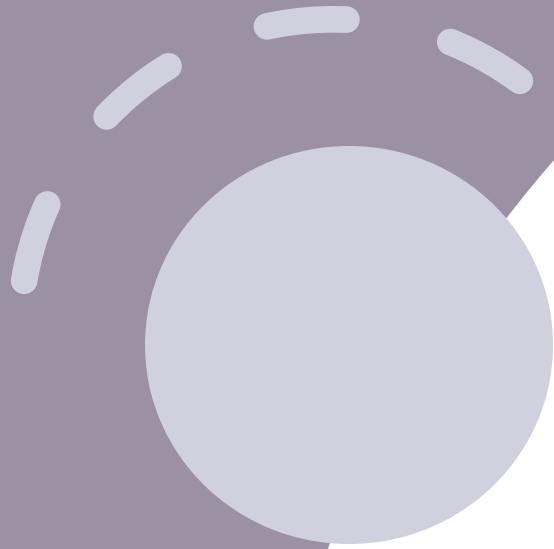


15. The NSN opposes criminalizing survivors for their trafficking experiences and supports holistic and comprehensive vacatur expansion for all survivors of human trafficking.

16. The NSN supports the right to permanent resident status and equitable visa protections as well as a path to citizenship for noncitizen survivors of trafficking.



17. The NSN supports meaningful survivor leadership in both the sector and the movement rather than tokenized contributions, the mitigation of power dynamics over when and how survivors choose to tell their stories, and a movement whose frameworks are big enough to accommodate and advocate for those survivors whose narratives have been ignored or invalidated.



What are YOUR values

- about bodily autonomy
 - about consent
- about how power dynamics impact ALL sexual consent
- about how power dynamics and economic coercion impact ALL income-producing labor



Strategies for Effective Collaboration

- Recognize that human trafficking is complex *and* that it exists within a larger framework of anti-violence expertise.
- Human trafficking should not be the exception to your values.
- Follow evidence-based models of intervention and prevention.
- Acknowledge if funding or partnerships do not align with your values.
- Commit to continued self-reflection, learning, and engagement with the HT sector.
- Remember that survivors are not a monolith – listen to a diversity of voices.

Questions?

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