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DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES**

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October 31, 2022

Jay D. Hartz, Director  
Legislative Research Commission  
Capitol Annex, Room 183  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Mr. Hartz:

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), presents the attached annual report regarding Kentucky child victims of human trafficking. This report has been prepared in accordance with KRS 620.029(2)(b), established by the Human Trafficking Victims' Rights Act of the 2013 Regular Session and reflects activities and services provided since enactment of the law.

If you have any questions please contact Laura Begin, DCBS Commissioner's Office, at [Laura.Begin@ky.gov](mailto:Laura.Begin@ky.gov) or Melanie Taylor, Director of DCBS Division of Protection and Permanency, at [Melanie.Taylor@ky.gov](mailto:Melanie.Taylor@ky.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Lisa Dennis*

2597068C24204CA...

for **Marta Miranda-Straub**  
Commissioner

# Human Trafficking

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## *Report to the Legislative Research Commission*

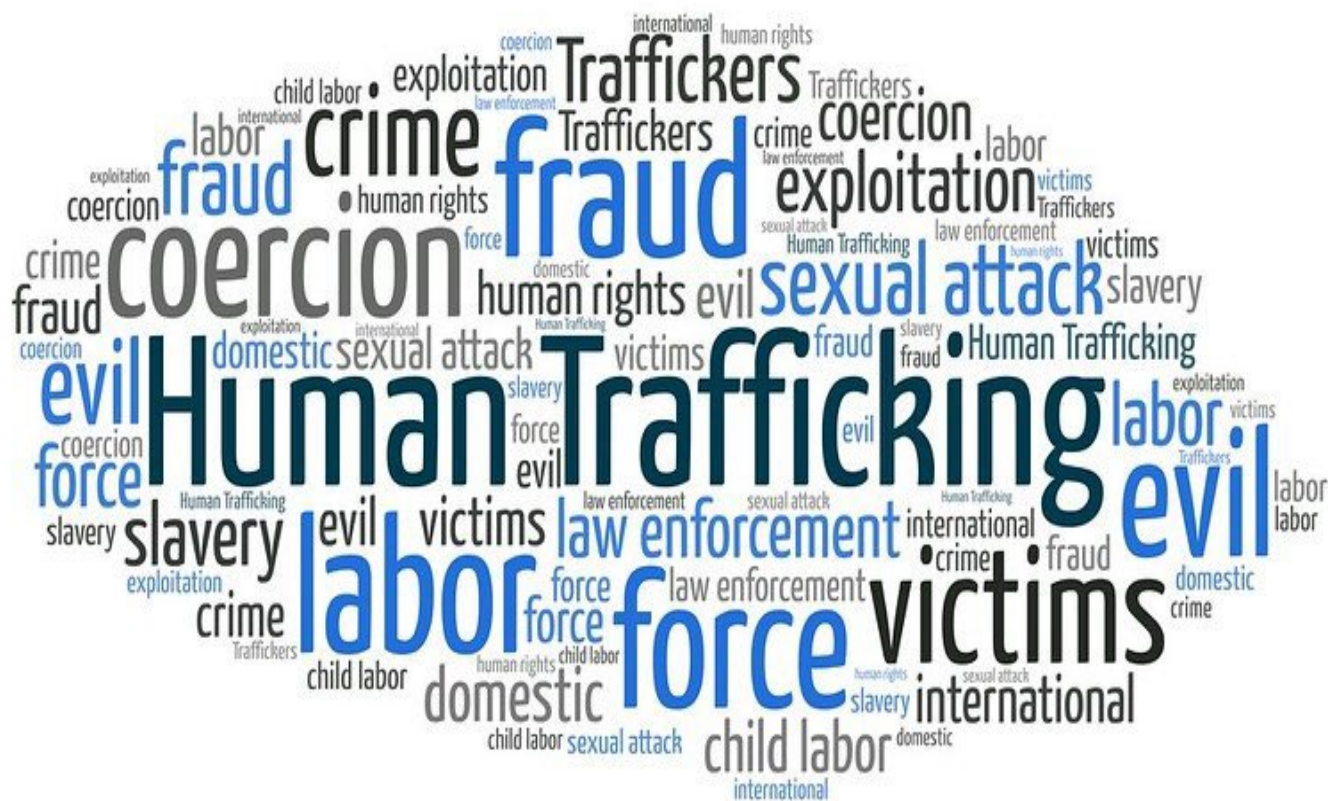
Department for Community Based Services  
Cabinet for Health and Family Services

November 1, 2022

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## Introduction

In accordance with Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 620.029(2)(b), the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (cabinet/CHFS) submits an annual report outlining the cabinet's response for child victims of human trafficking. This report details the cabinet's efforts to implement the requirements of the Human Trafficking Victims' Rights Act of 2013 (Act), which includes ensuring the safety of child victims, collaboration with multiple agencies during investigations and response, and the continuation of efforts to increase staff skill level to better serve victims. The report provides data regarding the number of reports received involving an alleged child victim of human trafficking, assessment findings, and services provided.

## Section I: DCBS Human Trafficking Program Overview

The cabinet's Department for Community Based Services (department/DCBS) works closely with numerous community partners including law enforcement, service providers, and other professionals to build a stronger community-based response to human trafficking cases. DCBS staff regularly attend Human Trafficking Task Force and Coalition meetings across the state, such as the Kentucky Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force, Northern Kentucky Violence Prevention Task Force, and the Lexington Human Trafficking Coalition meetings. Department staff also participate in subcommittees related to victim services. The cabinet investigates all allegations of human trafficking regarding individuals under the age of 18, regardless of the perpetrator's status as a caretaker or non-caretaker, per KRS 620.030(3).

The 2022 reporting period marked the second year of the cabinet's use of awarded Office for Victims of Crimes (OVC) funds for the Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking Initiative. DCBS implemented two trainings for DCBS staff, community partners, and caregivers of child survivors: Human Trafficking 101: An Overview and Screening and Identification of Human Trafficking. Future trainings are scheduled for release, which will include more detailed training regarding sex trafficking of children and labor trafficking of children.

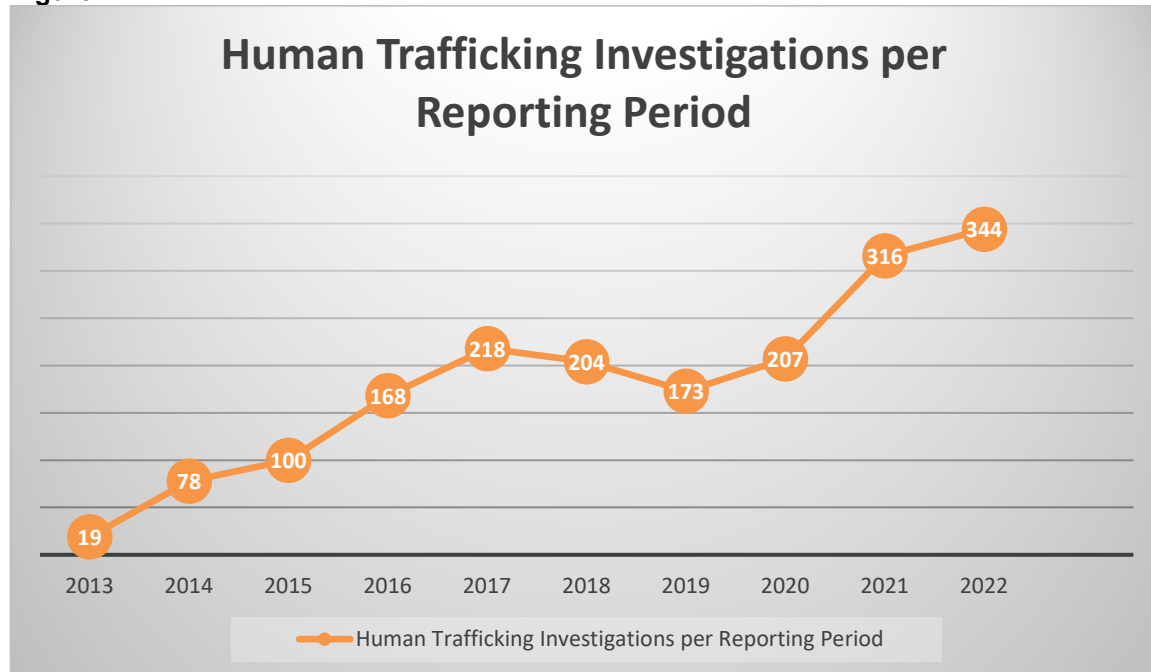
## Section II: Kentucky Human Trafficking Child Victim Investigations

### Historical Data

Each reporting period begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on September 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Between reporting periods 2013 and 2022, there have been 1,827 reports of alleged human trafficking involving 2,189 alleged child victims made to the agency. Historically, the cabinet has received more reports in the Jefferson Service Region. This is likely due to the larger population as well as the number of placement facilities located within Jefferson County.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the number of reports received by the cabinet per reporting period, from 2013 through 2022. It should be noted that some variation is expected due to timeframes for completion of assessment and the subsequent determination of findings.

**Figure 1**



### Current Reporting Period

As illustrated in Figure 1, DCBS received 344 reports of alleged human trafficking in the 2022 reporting period. These reports involved 399 alleged child victims, including both sex and labor trafficking. Of the 344 reports received, 332 reports involved sex trafficking and 12 reports involved labor trafficking.

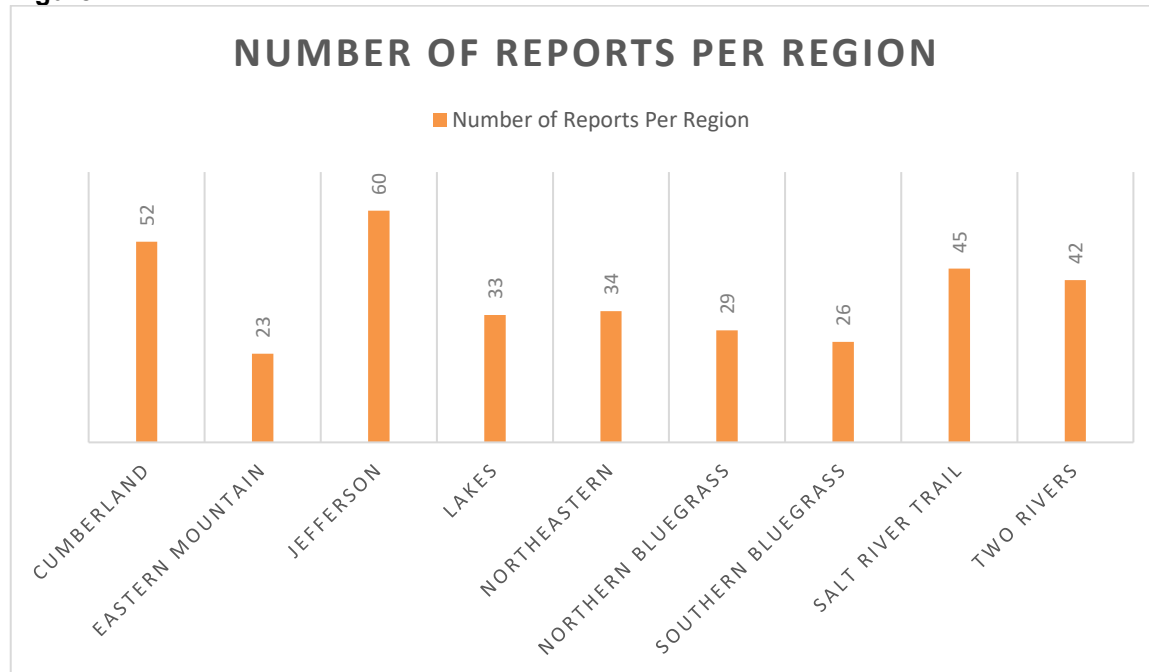
Some of these allegations included:

- Familial sex trafficking involving drugs, money, or something else of value;
- Children forced to participate in “survival sex” activities to acquire basic needs such as shelter, food, etc.;
- Children being solicited for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) through online platforms and social media;
- Children being forced to work while their pay is withheld; and
- Children being defrauded in regards to work and other activities.

### Geographic Area

During this reporting period, the Jefferson Service Region received 60 reports of child trafficking, the highest number of any region across the state. The region with the next highest number of reports at 52 is the Cumberland Service Region. Salt River Trail Service Region had the third highest number of reports at 45. The data shown in Figure 2 details the number of reports received across all nine of the DCBS service regions and indicates that human trafficking is an issue impacting urban, suburban, and rural communities in Kentucky.

**Figure 2**



### Victim Demographics

For this reporting period, there were approximately 333 female victims, 62 male victims, two victims who identify as transgender, and two victims where this information is still pending or unknown.

While most reports involved American-born victims, the cabinet also received several reports regarding children who were foreign-born. As shown in Figure 5, DCBS received 359 reports involving American-born children and 36 reports involving foreign-born children. At the time of this report, there are four reports where this information is unknown as the assessment is still pending.

During this reporting period, the victims' ages ranged from under one year to 17. There are two cases where the age of the victim is still unknown, indicating the allegations contained unknown children with unknown ages. The average age of victim for this reporting period is 13 years old.

Figures 3, 4, and 5 provide data by the victims' gender, race/ethnicity, and country of origin.

Figure 3

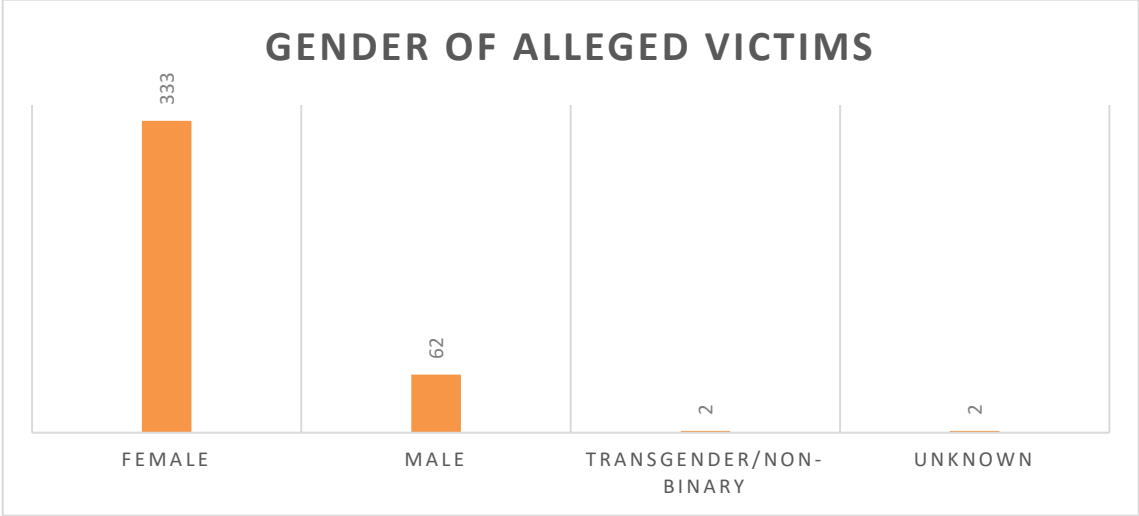
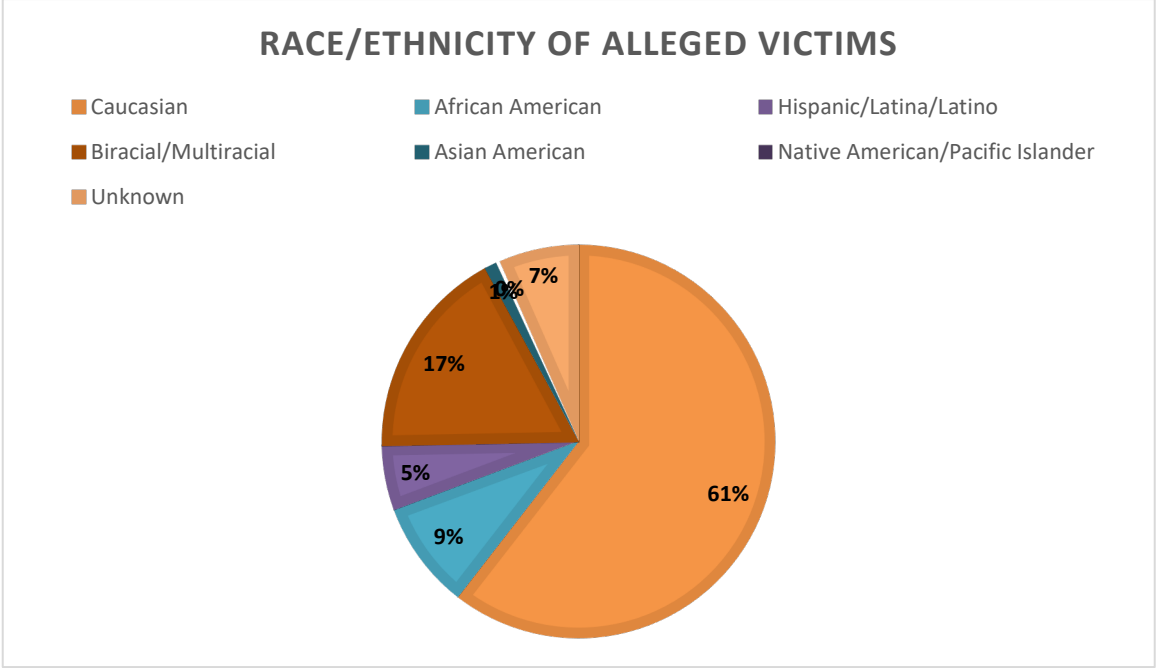
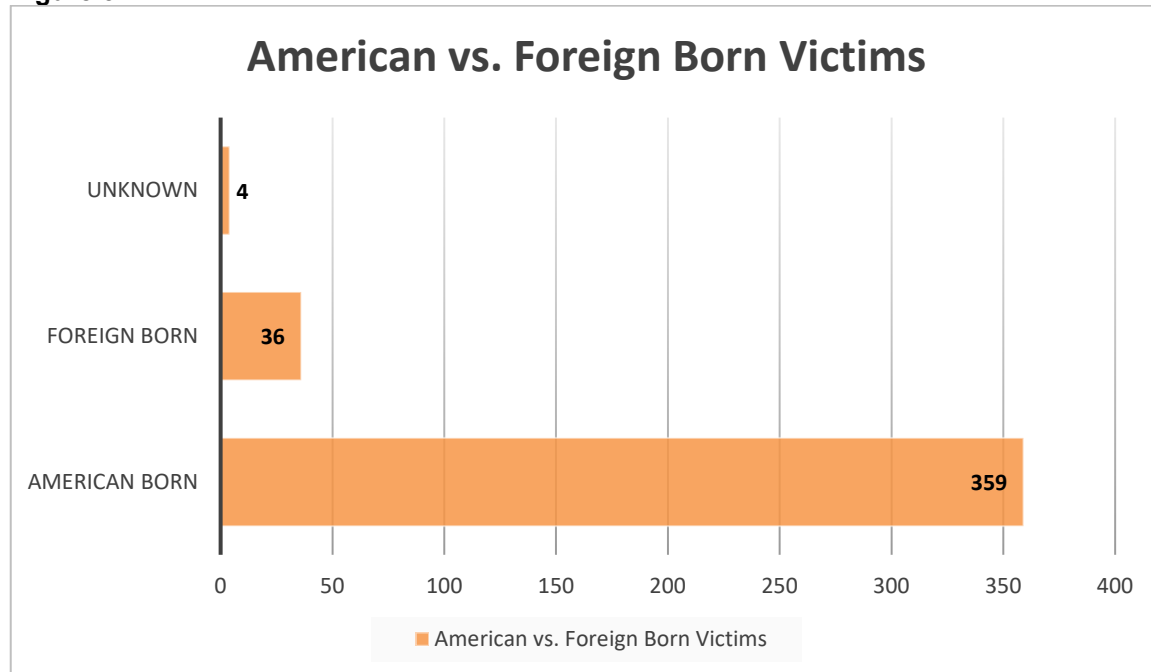


Figure 4



**Figure 5**



### Victim Placement

Of the 344 reports received, 235 victims were in their home of origin when the allegations of trafficking were reported, nine were in DCBS foster care, 21 were in private child-placing (PCP) foster care, 69 were with a relative or fictive kin caregiver, 13 were in detention, 25 were in a private child-caring (PCC) placement, 17 were in a hospital, and 10 were listed as missing or absent from their placement at the time the allegations were received. It should be noted that while the disclosure or report was made while the child was placed in this setting, the maltreatment may have occurred in a previous setting.

Throughout the reporting period, 21 alleged victims were removed from their home due to safety concerns related to allegations of human trafficking. There were 221 children involved in allegations of human trafficking who were not removed from their home; however, some of those alleged victims were already in an alternative placement when the allegations were disclosed. Currently, placement information is pending verification for 157 victims. DCBS Child Protection Branch staff are working directly with each service region to confirm information to ensure accurate data is reported. Placement settings for the children who were removed consist of relative or fictive kin caregivers, DCBS foster care, PCP foster care, and PCC facilities.

### Assessment Findings

The commercial exchange of illegal substances was identified in the trafficking of 141 children. These substances included alcohol, marijuana and marijuana/THC related products, methamphetamines, nicotine products, etc.

As of the date of this report, criminal charges have been filed against perpetrators in 27 cases of reported human trafficking and no criminal charges were filed in 175 cases. Information related to criminal charges is still pending in 197 cases at the time of this report due to the nature of these investigations. Some of the criminal charges associated with these cases include procurement or promotion of use of minor, human trafficking-forced labor (victim under 18 years old), sexual abuse and rape, use of a minor in a sexual performance, human



trafficking, incest, sodomy, unlawful transaction with a minor, distribution of obscene matter to a minor, and more.

The cabinet has worked jointly with numerous law enforcement agencies, including local police departments, local sheriff's offices, state police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) utilizing a multidisciplinary approach to ensure the safety of the victims, integrity of the joint investigations, and provision of the most appropriate services to the victims and their families/caregivers.

DCBS partnered with Evident Change to develop and implement Structured Decision Making® (SDM®) assessments for use during child welfare interventions. In April 2022, the SDM® Intake Assessment Tool was launched to assist and support central intake staff in making consistent, accurate, and equitable decisions when screening allegations received by the agency. As a part of this implementation process, DCBS Standards of Practice (SOP) changes associated with the implementation process, and to adhere to the expectations set forth by the Children's Bureau, reports are now entered separately based on caretaker status. The Worker's Information SysTem (TWIST, Kentucky's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS)) was updated to reflect these changes to ensure that caretaker perpetrators and non-caretaker perpetrators are not included within the same intake. This is a potential explanation for the increase in the number of reports received during this reporting period.

The relationship of the trafficker to the child and family is assessed to ensure the most appropriate determination is made regarding caretaker vs. non-caretaker status. In some cases, there are multiple perpetrators identified, and cases where both caretaker and non-caretakers are the alleged perpetrators.

A caretaker was alleged to be the perpetrator of human trafficking in 183 cases. Examples of caretakers include parents (biological and adoptive), relatives, a non-relative caretaker, older siblings, babysitters/care providers, parent paramours, etc.

A non-caretaker was alleged to be the perpetrator of human trafficking in 196 cases. Examples of non-caretaker perpetrators include parent paramours, other children/peers, non-relatives, child's significant other, siblings, family member's substance dealer, family friends, traffickers, buyers, etc.

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of the perpetrators and their relationships with the child and/or family in any given reporting period. Table 1 shows the findings at the time of this report.

**Table 1 Human Trafficking Investigative Findings** *(Reporting period 2022)*

<b>Caretaker</b>		<b>Non-Caretaker</b>	
Substantiated	28	Human Trafficking Confirmed	26
Unsubstantiated	78	Human Trafficking Not Confirmed	84
Pending	74	Pending	84
Unable to Locate	3	Unable to Locate	2
Total	183	Total	196

The provision of services related to trafficking is not contingent on substantiated findings. The cabinet offers/provides services to all alleged victims of trafficking. Some of these services

include placement in out-of-home care; forensic interviews and medical exams through children's advocacy centers; trauma-informed screening and assessment; individual, family, and group therapy; and exploitation prevention education. Families/caregivers of survivors participated in services related to therapeutic intervention for trauma, substance use, and parenting, among other things. Specialists on the Clinical Services and Out-of-Home Care branches provide consultation and guidance on a case-by-case basis to ensure that each child/family is connected with appropriate services and supports to meet their unique needs.

### **Section III: Conclusions and Program Enhancement**

The cabinet continues to utilize a multidisciplinary approach to address allegations of human trafficking, collaborating with community partners ranging from law enforcement, mental health professionals, medical treatment providers, among others, to ensure that victims receive the most appropriate services and supports. Specialists in the DCBS Child Protection Branch consult with field personnel, as needed, to provide guidance and technical assistance during the assessment process. Children participate in forensic interviews at children's advocacy centers, as necessary, for trafficking cases per Kentucky statute. The cabinet notifies law enforcement of every report of human trafficking it receives. The cabinet worked jointly on 223 human trafficking cases during the current reporting period.

As part of the OVC-funded Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking Initiative, the cabinet and its training partners plan to release additional trainings in the coming year. These trainings will enhance and inform a coordinated response to human trafficking by child-serving professionals in Kentucky.

Updated SOP related to screening for human trafficking, supported by additional training, are forthcoming. The cabinet anticipates increased identification of human trafficking corresponding with increased screening, training, and other awareness efforts. Increased identification of human trafficking and assessment of victims' and families' needs will support the development of a robust service array to meet the needs of these survivors in their home communities.