



The Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (**HART**) was created in order to focus on and reduce commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST).

Webpage: <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=4743&Q=562246>

THE EVOLUTION OF HART

by Tammy Sneed

It has been over 10-years since Connecticut took the first steps in addressing human trafficking within the borders of our state; thank you to the champions that made certain the light would continue to shine on this very important issue that for years was misunderstood. Over the years we have learned that our children in Connecticut are being victimized by one of the most horrific crimes in the world, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The numbers of children referred to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (CTDCF) now exceeds 300 individuals all with high risk indicators that demand a collaborative response; as awareness activities increase the referrals increase.

CTDCF took the lead in responding to the children referred with the coordination of an internal Human Trafficking Response Team. This team has evolved over the years to the current **Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (HART)**; over 100 members strong with multi-department, multi-agency partners, various levels of law enforcement, the provider community, faith-based network, etc. The state's system of Multidisciplinary Teams now review DMST/CSEC cases ensuring the child and family has the most efficient and responsive approach during their most difficult times. Law enforcement is being trained across the state in the basics as well as advanced investigative techniques while new trainings are being offered to prosecutors. The service system

is being “trained up” to meet the needs of this very vulnerable population and targeted services are being developed and/or expanded throughout the state. Prevention curriculums are available to our young people across the state; knowing the best intervention is prevention.

HART’s three primary areas of focus include:

- Identification and Response
- Awareness and Education
- Restore and Recover

To focus on HART’s target areas there are several working committees:

- Communication Committee
- Credentialing Committee
- CT’s Laws Committee
- Data Committee
- Forensic Interview Committee
- Law Enforcement Training Committee
- Services Committee
- Training Committee
- Protocols for DMST cases

*Thank you to all the Committee Chairs...the work you are doing is amazing!

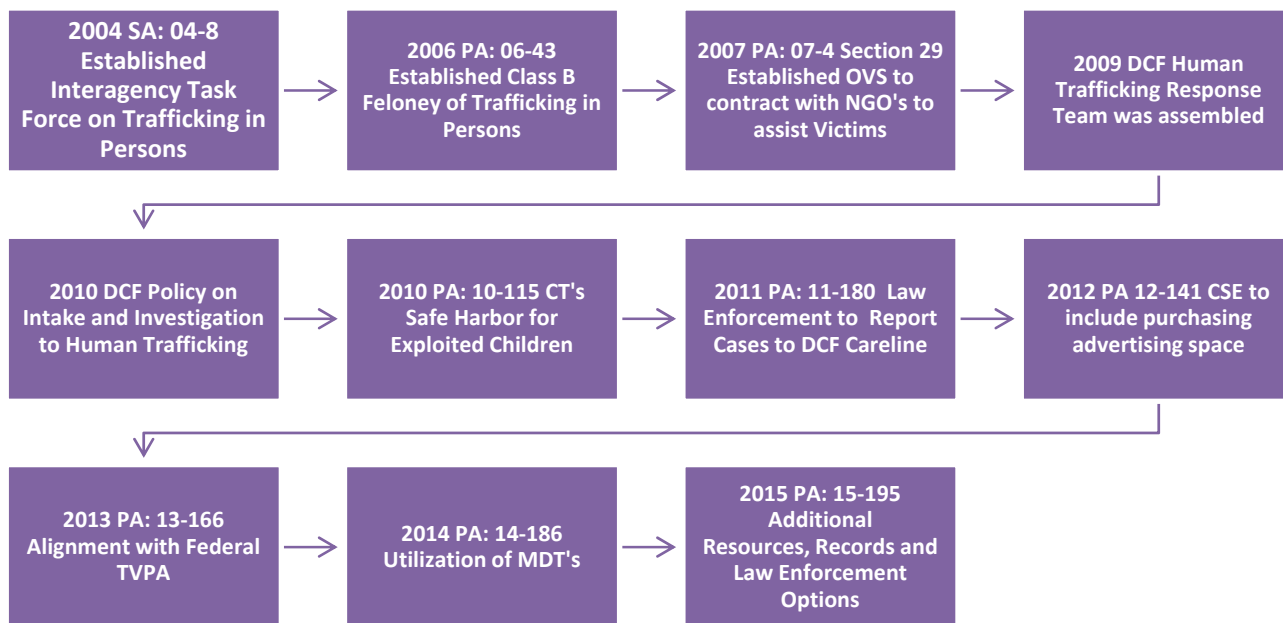
To support this massive undertaking in 2014 CTDCF submitted a grant with the support of many incredible partners to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF). CTDCF was awarded just over \$1 million over a 5-year period to support *Connecticut’s Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (HART) Project*. The funds include a HART Coordinator, system assessment, training and resources for high risk and confirmed child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

During year one of this grant, several efforts have been made to further enhance Connecticut’s response to trafficking victims in the state. Efforts include hiring a HART Coordinator, activating service contracts with several providers, training curriculum revisions, development of data indicators for the PIE data system, developed criteria and exam for credentialing of Licensed Clinical providers, facilitator trainings in Not A Number and MLMC curriculum, Foster Care Model training for staff and foster parents, restructuring of the HART Committees to include a HART Leadership Committee, updating the HART webpage, trained new trainers in the Introduction to DMST/CSEC in CT curriculum which included Law Enforcement personnel, developed a strong collaboration with the Underground a faith based organization, proposed new legislation for strengthening protections for victims of human trafficking, and increased collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) across the State.

Connecticut is concluding its first year of the HHS ACF grant with tremendous progress:

- ✓ Over 70 people were certified to facilitate prevention curriculums across the state
- ✓ Over 50 people were trained to be trainers for the *Intro to CSEC and DMST Curriculum*
- ✓ 32 staff from 12 TFC agencies were trained in the *Caring for High Risk Youth and Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)*.
- ✓ Over 25 TFC foster parents were trained in the *Caring for High Risk Youth and Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)*.
- ✓ 28 Law Enforcement staff trained to be trainers for the POST Certified DMST Training for Law Enforcement.
- ✓ Over 300 police officers and detectives received DMST training
- ✓ Twenty six prosecutors, Investigators and Inspectors attended the “Working with Survivors of Domestic Sex trafficking training presented by ABA at the Chief State’s Attorney’s Office in Rocky Hill.
- ✓ Identified an Extended Forensic Interview Model. Training for prosecutors and forensic interviewers will occur in December 2015.
- ✓ A new data tracking system has been developed in PIE that will go live in December 2015.
- ✓ Criteria for the credentialing of providers including an exam has been developed while oversight process is being determined.
- ✓ All MDT teams received the Introduction to DMST/CSEC in CT training.
- ✓ Governor Dannel P. Malloy signed into law a bill that gives law enforcement an additional tool to investigate domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and also expands access to services to victims of child sexual exploitation.

HART Timeline



HART SHINING STAR AWARDS

The HART shining star awards is a new initiative to honor the exceptional work being done by DCF staff, HART Committee Members, and community providers in CT whose focus is on eradicating human trafficking as well as empowering victims of this crime. These awards will be announced quarterly in the Newsletter. Our recipients this quarter are:

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Melanie Kmetz

DCF HART Liaison/Program Manager

Melanie Kmetz has been employed by the Department of Children and Families for over 23 years. She began her DCF career in the Bridgeport Area Office Intake Unit, where she specialized in the investigation of Child Sexual Abuse. Melanie worked closely with law enforcement and the States Attorney to ensure that those who committed crimes against children were justly convicted. She realized early in her career that her advocacy for childhood victims of sexual abuse was a passion and not just part of the job she was hired to do.

After 10 years as an Investigation social worker, she began working as a supervisor for the DCF Careline. Amongst other duties, her role required critical assessment regarding the safety of high risk and runaway youth, both afterhours and on the weekend. It became clear to Melanie while working at the Careline that this population was in danger and underserved. When she returned to the Bridgeport office, she offered to represent region 1 and to assist with the development of the HART team.

For many years, Melanie has focused on supports and services for victims of Domestic Minor Sex trafficking (DMST). Melanie established a Region 1 Human Anti Trafficking Response Team, designed to identify and respond youth who are at risk or involved in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. The HART team, with Melanie's leadership has been instrumental in spreading awareness and education within the Department, families we work with, community providers, schools and within the foster/resource care system regarding Human Trafficking. The team assists with safety



"Melanie's leadership skills, organization and ability to work collaboratively with the community has been a tremendous asset to the Department of Children and Families and meeting the needs of the vulnerable youth in our community. We appreciate Melanie's passion for this work, and we agree she deserves to be acknowledged for her years of advocacy on behalf of the children in Region 1."

*Kenneth Cabral, M.Ed.
Regional Administrator
Region 1
Bridgeport/Norwalk*

planning with and for at risk youth by implementing restoration treatment and recovery services. Melanie has trained Region 1 staff to ensure that new policy and procedures were adhered to with regard to DMST/HT cases and has facilitated numerous emergency response meetings. Melanie established a successful partnership with LOVE 146 to assure that high risk area youth are supported and assessed for service implementation. She reached out to our provider community to develop specialized foster families to care for victims of DMST. Melanie developed support groups and educational forums for DCF involved youth. Melanie have been extremely fortunate to have a dedicated and compassionate HART team in Region 1, led by two very committed team leaders, Rosa Cuadrado and Latoya Lowery. Melanie states, "It has been my pleasure to serve as the statewide HART team co-chair and partner with LOVE 146. It has been rewarding to advocate on behalf of these vulnerable children."

COMMUNITY AWARD

Erin Williamson

Survivor Care Program Manager
Love 146

Erin Williamson has over 15 years of experience in program development, program management, direct service, and applied research experience in the field of victim services, with particular expertise in human trafficking. As the Survivor Care Program Manager for Love146, Erin has lead the development, implementation, and operation of Love146's Connecticut aftercare program, which provides short and long-term services to youth at high-risk for and confirmed survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Since its inception in January 2014, Erin has provided services to over 50 youth. Erin has also worked closely with caregivers (e.g., biological/adoptive/foster families, kin-caregivers) and community providers to support program participants as they reintegrate into their communities. Erin serves as the Love146 representative on a number of local and statewide coalitions including the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team, the DCF Girls' Provider Network, the New Haven Multi-Disciplinary Team, and the Connecticut Coalition Against Trafficking. Erin has a master degree in social work and public administration.



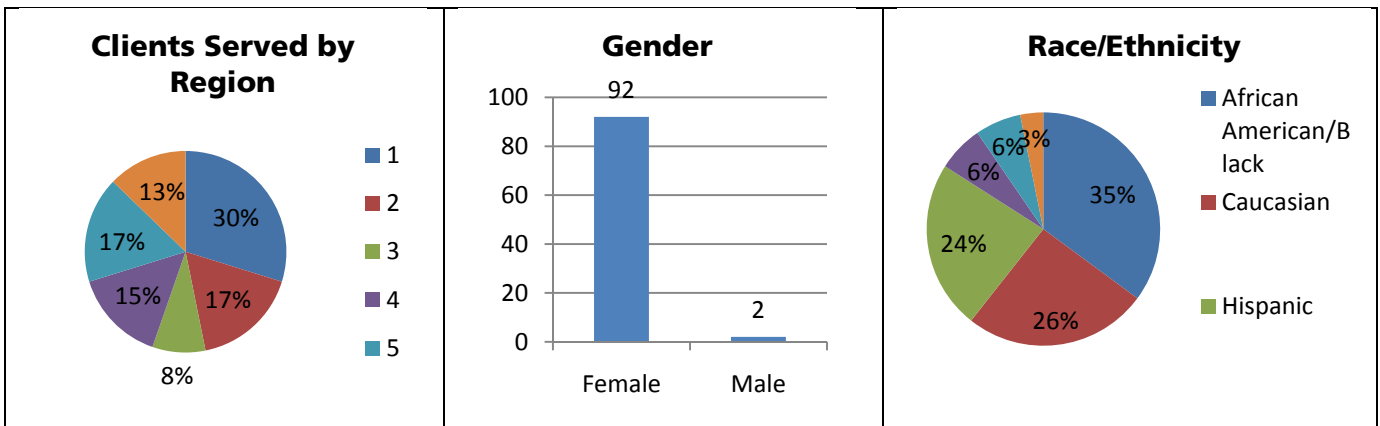
"Erin's skills, experience, passion, tenacity and personality have made her a dynamic addition to the Love146 team specifically, and to the children and agencies she serves. We are thrilled and honored that she has been named as the community's "Shining Star" in this season of our joint work for trafficked and exploited children."

*Stephanie Goins, PhD
Executive Programs
Director, Love146*

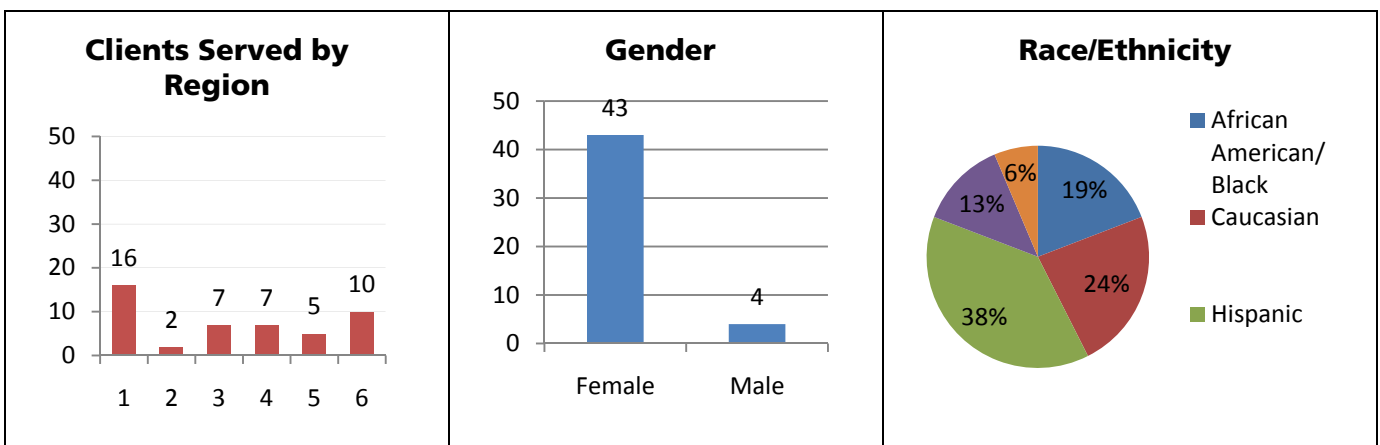
HART DATA

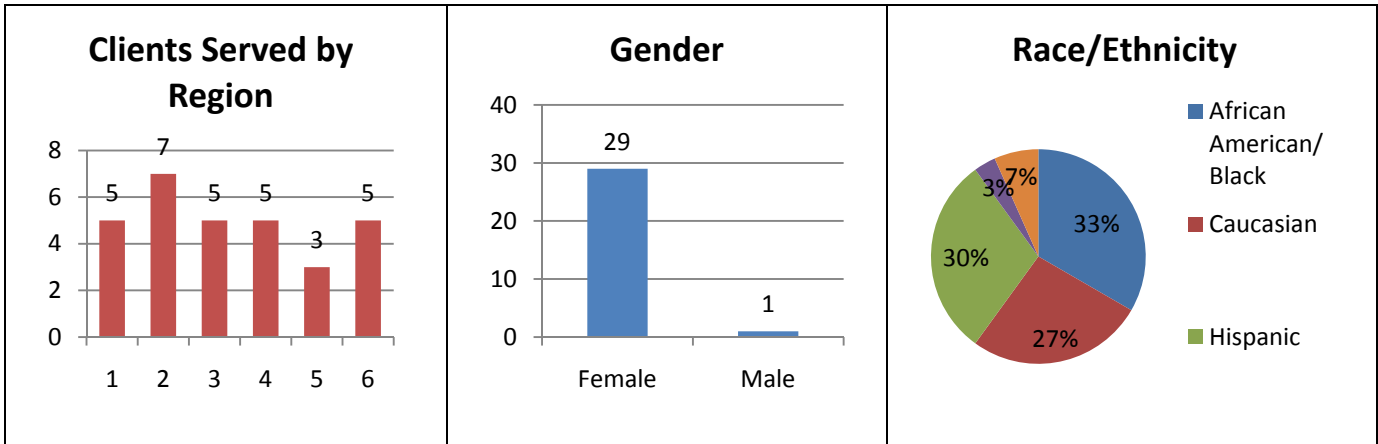
Gathering data is a critical part of the work we are doing through HART. Our data helps us to track referrals and other pertinent information about youth who are at risk or confirmed victims of DMST and CSEC. This year there has been a focus on building a data system that would allow us to streamline our data tracking. A Data Workgroup of our larger HART committee was established in order to ensure this task was completed. Data indicators have been identified and will be developed in the DCF PIE data system by the end of this year. In 2014 the Department of Children and Families (DCF) received 94 referrals of youth who were at risk or confirmed victims of human trafficking. From January – September of this year DCF has received 77 referrals of youth who are at risk or are confirmed victims of human trafficking. These cases were supported by our HART Liaisons in each of our DCF area offices.

2014



January – June 2015





TRAININGS

Training on the new CT DMST Foster Care Model (*Caring for High Risk Youth and Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)*) designed specifically for agencies and their families to work with youth at high risk or confirmed victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking occurred in October. On October 20th this training was offered to Therapeutic Foster Care Staff and on October 24th, identified therapeutic level foster parents were trained.

A YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVE

LOVE 146 SURVIVOR CARE SERVICES

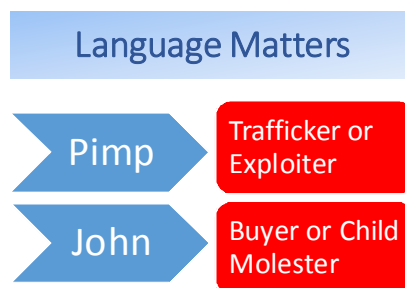
"Who would have thought my whole life would change just by being told that I am more than just a body?"

Back in the year 2014 I would have to consider myself a lost soul. I didn't understand the difference between love and lust, therefore allowing any man to use not only my mind but also my body. As a young teen, I was lured into the life of prostitution. After a while of selling myself, I lost view of who I once was. Not seeing any other path to take other than the one my pimp was offering me, I was about to give up but then out of nowhere, I was given light. I was given a way out and her name is Erin Williamson. Since day one, Erin and I connected. She gained my trust quickly, so when she told me I was more than a body, I believed her. She was there throughout

everything and now, close to a year later, she still is. Erin taught me the meaning of self-respect and she helped me understand that I am very much capable of anything I put my mind to. Not once did she judge me, as a matter of fact she didn't even allow me to judge myself. I look up to Erin and as honest as I can be, I do not think I would have made it where I am today without the friendship she and I share. I didn't think I would ever amount to anything but Erin taught me I was wrong. Today I am proud to say that I have gotten myself off the streets, I have begun working, and I am doing well. Who would have thought my whole life would change just by being told that I am more than just a body? Erin Williamson did and I would like to give her special thanks for having faith in me. I would have never found myself if you weren't part of my life.

STAY INFORMED

The term "Pimp" is used in popular music, TV shows such as "Pimp My Ride," teen discussions, etc. as something glamorous and someone to idolize or aspire to be like; by changing the term to "Trafficker" or "Exploiter" we assist young people as well as adults in understanding these are not persons to idolize.

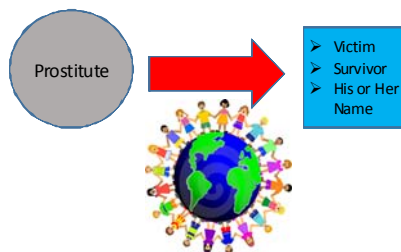


The term "John" has been used for many years referring to a male soliciting an adult woman that is prostituting.

Historically, the "john" has been viewed as a more passive/non-aggressive offender, but he is no less a criminal than the pimp, his actions are no less offensive toward another human being. By changing the term to "Buyer" or "Child Molester" we clearly define the act of buying another

human being of any gender and/or the reality that sex with any young person under the age of 18 makes that person a child molester.

Never a Prostitute



Too often boys and girls who are being exploited are referred to as prostitutes, when in reality they are victims of a trafficker and a buyer. It is essential that we do not blame children for being exploited therefore it is important that we change our language to adequately represent the experience of CSEC/DMST youth.

THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground is a grass-roots faith-based initiative dedicated to ending sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in Connecticut. Since it began in late 2013, The Underground has grown to over 450 members from over 50 churches. The Underground uses a unique model that allows churches to pool human and financial resources to work cooperatively toward the common goal of ending modern-day slavery. Because of that cooperation, The Underground is able to put all donations directly toward benefitting victims and survivors in Connecticut.

On September 19, 2015, The Underground hosted a concert at Wintonbury Church in Bloomfield featuring Robin Mark. A Christian artist from Belfast, Ireland, Robin Mark performed uplifting songs accompanied by musicians from local churches. The concert was sold out, with over 400 people in attendance from 56 churches of various denominations, including some from Massachusetts and New York. The concert also included presentations from Tammy Sneed, Director of Girls Services at Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), and The Connecticut Heart Gallery, which seeks to find adoptive homes for Connecticut youth. Concert-goers were given the opportunity to connect with several Connecticut foster, adoption and mentoring agencies, as well as agencies providing services to at-risk adults. Thanks to the generosity of all who came to the event, The Underground raised approximately \$8,000.

The hope of The Underground is to gather the faith-based community and engage them to serve in the fight against sex trafficking. With that goal in mind, The Underground has undertaken several initiatives aimed at education, prevention or survivor care. For instance, in the winter of 2015, over one hundred people joined together to make emergency backpacks for homeless youth, a population vulnerable to sex trafficking. The backpacks were stuffed with items ranging from toiletries, non-perishable food, winter accessories and bus passes. Hundreds of gently used winter coats were also donated. In the summer of 2014, teams



from The Underground visited over 20 hotels and motels on the Berlin Turnpike, talking with owners about sex trafficking and providing them with resources donated by the dedicated professionals of Love146.

For more information about The Underground, visit www.theundergroundct.org or www.facebook.com/theundergroundct. You may also contact The Underground via email at theundergroundct@gmail.com.

ACF GRANTEE MEETING



The first annual HHS ACF Grantee meeting for recipients of grants to address trafficking within the child welfare population was held August 4 – 5, 2015 at the lovely DuPont Circle Hotel in Washington, DC. In attendance were Tammy Sneed, Yvette Young, Melanie Kmetz and Samantha Lowry. We had the opportunity to learn how the other 8 grant recipients were combating the issue of human trafficking in their state. Tammy presented on the work being done in Connecticut and how

this grant has assisted us in advancing our efforts to combat DMST/CSEC in Connecticut. We had the opportunity to visit the Polaris office to discuss the

National Human Trafficking Resource Center and listened to various presentation from providers who are working to support the efforts to eradicate human trafficking in the United States.



In attendance (l-r): Yvette Young, Melanie Kmetz, Tammy Sneed and Samantha Lowry.

CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN CONFERENCE

Internationally recognized, the Crimes against Children Conference in Dallas, Texas is the premier conference of its kind providing practical and interactive instruction to those fighting crimes against children and helping children heal. 2015 saw a record attendance of nearly 4,000 participants. Tammy Sneed, Erin Williamson and Caroline Diemar attended the conference this

year as presenters. The title of their workshop was, "Utilizing Multi-disciplinary Teams to Effectively Address Cases of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking". Using case examples, the presentation discussed how law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates can effectively work together through MDTs to address human trafficking in their communities. The presentation discussed how team members can collaborate to meet the needs of victims, support the successful prosecution of traffickers, and effectively address common challenges that can present themselves in these cases. Attendees also learned about the systems and protocols that the Department of Children and Families put in place to facilitate interagency collaboration and to support the use of MDTs in addressing cases of human trafficking across the state.



In attendance (l-r), Tammy Sneed, Erin Williamson and Caroline Diemar

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