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### **Bridging the Gaps: A Policy Analysis of Child Human Trafficking in Underserved Populations, its Impact on Mental Illnesses, and Recommendations for Enhancing the Existing System**

Nguyen Cao Thao Nguyen

*University of San Francisco*, [nguyencaothaonguyen30@gmail.com](mailto:nguyencaothaonguyen30@gmail.com)

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**Bridging the Gaps: A Policy Analysis of Child Human Trafficking in Underserved  
Populations, its Impact on Mental Illnesses, and Recommendations for Enhancing the  
Existing System**

Nguyen Cao Thao Nguyen

University of San Francisco, School of Nursing and Health Professions

MPH 683: Integrated Learning Experience (ILEX)

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## **Abstract**

Extensive research indicates that children who are victims of human and sex trafficking are at an increased risk of developing a variety of mental health illnesses and concerns. This policy analysis aims to pinpoint the deficiencies within the United States' current system and propose evidence-based interventions that can effectively mitigate the negative mental health impact of these individuals. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis, this study establishes a strong correlation between child trafficking and mental illnesses, predominately in underserved communities. Data interpreted in this paper are collected from published studies, articles, governmental websites, and organizational pages. The proposed recommendations can guide policymakers and legislators to address this public health issue at the grass-roots level based on the identified gaps. Addressing these barriers ensures that individuals who are victims of human trafficking can receive fundamental behavioral health support that will be sustained for years to come.

*Keywords:* human trafficking, sex trafficking, children, underserved population, poverty, socioeconomic status, mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, education, training, preventative care

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## Introduction

The act of human and sex trafficking can lead to adverse behavioral health outcomes. The Department of Homeland Security defines the term *human trafficking* as the use of force or exploitation of any sexual or labor act by manipulation or fear (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Anyone can be a potential target of this ongoing epidemic, regardless of their age, nationality, race, or socioeconomic background (U.S. Department of Justice, 2023). However, children and women in underserved populations are most susceptible to these crimes (United Nations, 2016). Traffickers tend to target individuals who show clear indicators of vulnerability and instability (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Some indicated examples include: (1) children and youth who are at risk of homelessness; (2) individuals who are immigrants with language barriers; and (3) those with developmental or intellectual disabilities (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2021). These characteristics create a level of dependency for victims and allows traffickers to gain control.

The term *human trafficking* is broad and can vary from a wide variety of public health concerns including but not limited to: (1) sex trafficking; (2) forced labor; and (3) debt bondage (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Studies have indicated that trafficked victims are more prone to developing certain mental illnesses that include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, substance or alcohol abuse, and other disorders (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Given the correlation, it is crucial to understand the impact of trafficking on mental health and take the necessary precautions to address this ongoing public health issue.

As of 2022, an estimated 27.6 million individuals are trafficked globally (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Around 14,500 to 17,500 individuals from foreign countries get

trafficked into the United States in any given year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). The data exemplifies the urgency of this issue and should raise awareness about the severity of human trafficking and exploitation. This policy analysis seeks evidence-based alternatives to enhance the current behavioral health system to effectively improve the identification of child trafficking cases in the United States. It will also examine global statistics and subsequently narrow its focus to communities within the United States.

### **Background and Literature Review**

Human and sex trafficking continues to be a prominent issue in present-day society. Although the thirteenth amendment was established in 1865 to abolish slavery in the United States, trafficking serves as a modern-day form of slavery (McGough, 2013). Individuals that fall victim to these crimes are prone to poor behavioral health outcomes, which can be difficult to recognize and address for treatment. When identifying potential policy changes, it is essential to analyze the populations that are most susceptible to trafficking. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) suggests that the trafficking industry is the second most profitable illicit industry, falling just right below the drug trade industry (UNICEF, 2017). The United Nations estimates that this industry profits a net income of over \$150 billion annually (United Nations, 2020). Not only is this a public health threat, but it can ultimately be a serious and life-threatening crime. Trafficked victims can potentially be at-risk for an array of physical and behavioral health complications or sexually transmitted infections (STI) such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) (University of Southern California, 2018). These individuals rarely can escape their traffickers without potential consequences. With the small percentage that can, survivors are left dealing with an abundance of long-lasting mental health challenges that will affect their lives in negative ways.

## **Characteristics of Child Human Trafficking**

Children and adolescents are ultimately vulnerable to being a potential target of trafficking. Labor trafficking can include being forced to work in commercial sites, on the streets as beggars, in adult entertainment venues, in war as soldiers, and more (UNICEF, n.d.). Sexual trafficking is when a child under 18 years of age is being manipulated to perform any acts of sex, whether it is consensual or not (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Traffickers can be strangers, partners, friends, family members, and acquaintances (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Initially, trust is built and gained between the victim and trafficker. Once a solid foundation has been established, traffickers will then groom and manipulate the victim, eventually leading to overall control of the child (Polaris Project, 2022).

## **Child Human Trafficking and Socioeconomic Status**

Child trafficking is more common in areas that suffer from poverty (UNICEF, 2017). The absence of job and educational opportunities is a prominent factor for victims. Additionally, communities of color and minorities are more at-risk (U.S. Department of State, 2021). The lack of behavioral health resources and assets provided to these vulnerable communities serves as a grass-root level threat to public health.

Addressing specific risk factors is crucial for identifying individuals who are in jeopardy of being victims of human trafficking. Focusing on risk factors can lead to the development of comprehensive intervention strategies, enable early detection, and provide behavioral health resources to vulnerable populations. A cross-sectional survey was performed to identify the association between risk factors and child sex trafficking in one Midwestern state. The study suggests that 115 out of 273 sampled survey respondents identified themselves as a current or former sex-trafficking victim (Fedina et al., 2019). The bivariate results indicate a significant

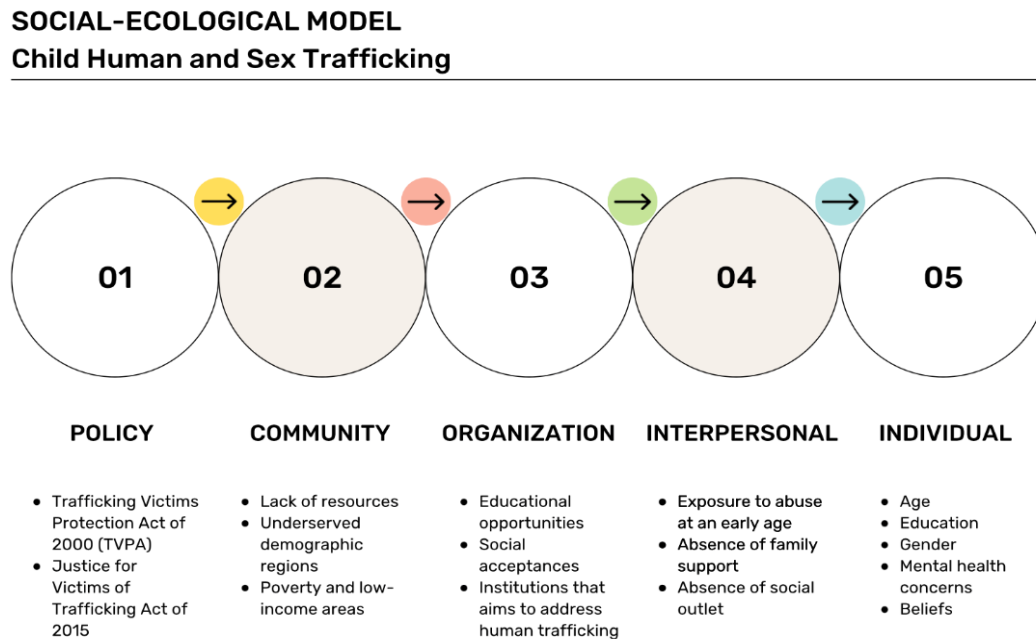


correlation between child sex trafficking and various factors, including childhood emotional and sexual abuse, being a victim of rape, and the involvement of family members in sex work industries (Fedina et al., 2019). The findings recommend the enhancements of child protection programs and enforce a prevention program to respond to sexual exploitation in children (Fedina et al., 2019).

A comprehensive study was conducted in Wisconsin, involving 143 male and female children who were victims of human trafficking to identify the effects that trafficking has on mental health (Palines et al., 2019). The findings reveal a strong prevalence of mental health disorders among the population that was sampled. Specifically, alarming rates of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were identified in 52.4% of the participants, anxiety in 19.6%, depression in 45.5%, oppositional defiant disorder in 25.9%, and psychosis in 14% (Palines et al., 2019). The study suggests that trauma faced by victims is oftentimes complex and may lead to improper diagnosis and treatment of survivors (Palines et al., 2019).

Social-Ecological Models in public health are used to identify the complex interrelations between an individual and their surrounding environment by measuring health and behavior. This model categorizes factors based on the levels including: (1) policy; (2) community; (3) organization; (4) interpersonal; and (5) individual hierarchies. Multiple aspects affect human trafficking victims and their corresponding actions. Recognizing the social determinants can foster healing and re-establishment of a victim's lived experience (Pacquiao and Sanchez, 2020). Understanding and addressing these determinants will restore the victim's overall quality of life and allow opportunities for advanced behavioral health support. Figure 1 addresses the Social-Ecological Model of child human and sex trafficking. The various levels of the model will be elaborated in detail in the following sections.

**Figure 1: Social-Ecological Model of Child and Human Sex Trafficking**



### ***Policy Level***

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, also known as TVPA, was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 2000 (University of Washington, n.d.). It aims to equip the United States Government with the necessary tools to eliminate any forms of modern slavery internationally and domestically (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). The passing of this act allowed for further protection against human trafficking by criminalizing those that partake in these crimes. A regression model study shows evidence that through the passing of this act, there has been a significant increase in charges filed by prosecutors that involved trafficking cases between 1994 and 2007 (Judge & Boursaw, 2016). This indicates that judicial systems are showing an elevated level of seriousness regarding trafficking cases. The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 was signed into law by President Barack Obama on May 29, 2015 (American Bar Association, 2015). This act aims to provide justice for victims of human trafficking and child pornography by penalizing and imposing fines on offenders (American Bar

Association, 2015). The implementation and enactment of these two laws serve as a pivotal first step in the ongoing encounter against human trafficking.

### ***Community Level***

Communities and zip codes play a significant role in the lifespan of an individual. The United Nations mentions that victims are highly targeted in low-income households (United Nations, n.d.). Underserved populations such as minorities and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities are also considered high-risk (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Typically, demographic regions that are living in poverty lack essential resources and can increase vulnerability to human trafficking. The absence of assets within communities can also make it more challenging for trafficked victims and survivors to seek behavioral help and healing.

### ***Organization Level***

Educational opportunities can allow individuals within the community to learn the warning signs of human trafficking. Children that live in underserved populations are oftentimes not taught the dangers of trafficking. Social acceptance within areas vulnerable to human trafficking could be limited with minimal access to organizations that focus on trafficking prevention programs.

### ***Interpersonal Level***

The United States Department of Education suggests that the absence of social and family support can put a child at-risk of human and sex trafficking (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). During earlier stages of life, it is pivotal that children grow up with a strong and secure foundation of support from their families and peers. Lacking this aspect can ultimately expose the child to the risks associated with human trafficking.

### ***Individual Level***

The environment in which a child resides shapes their internal factors. Age, gender, beliefs, and education can all mold the child's experiences within their social environment. This can oftentimes shape their susceptibility and vulnerability to human and sex trafficking.

The gaps associated with human trafficking need to be properly addressed with potential recommendations. The Department of Homeland Security suggests that human trafficking can be considered a *hidden crime* due to an individual's language barriers, fear of governmental agencies or law enforcement, and fear of their traffickers (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). For recommendations to become successful, identifying interventions at the grass-roots level is crucial. As mentioned in previous studies, individuals that are victims of human trafficking are at-risk for developing mental disorders (Palines et al., 2019). Directing awareness towards a system that addresses the scarcity of mental health resources in vulnerable communities and identifying best practices in recognizing these gaps are steps towards policy changes and allow justice for trafficked victims.

### **Methods**

The primary method of research that was used consisted of qualitative academic and peer-reviewed publications to conduct a thorough literature review. Databases such as PubMed and Scopus were used to ensure the credibility of the sources. The search terms that were used for the literature review varied from relevant keywords and phrases such as: human trafficking, child trafficking, sex trafficking, child\*, exploit\*, behavioral health, substance use, substance abuse, addict\*, mental health, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. The Google Search engine was also used to access any governmental and organizational web pages.

The initial search on PubMed, a search engine that focuses on the research of biomedical topics, resulted in over 100,000 results. To narrow down search results, additional filters were used to ensure that the research was valuable in terms of cohesiveness and relevance. Only research articles that were in English and included a free full text from ten years or less were used. After completing an advanced search, there were around 80 populated articles that aimed to focus on and address the correlation between mental health and human trafficking in children. A total of 42 sources were used, with a combination of academic articles and organizational webpages.

### **Recommendations**

To address the mental health disparities in child trafficking victims within underserved communities, it is crucial to implement improvements to the current system. Effective regulations must be addressed to ensure preventative methods are being enacted. This is a public health crisis that hinders behavioral health outcomes and must be evaluated through effective policymaking. Legislators and policymakers should consider the implementation of the following recommendations to monitor this issue more effectively.

#### **Recommendation 1: Provide Comprehensive Training and Education for Professionals Who Interact with Trauma Victims by Integrating an Evidence-Based Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Approach in Healthcare Settings**

Recognizing a victim's life experiences, trauma-informed care is an evidence-based approach that aims to enhance the importance of understanding past traumas to deliver effective care that is patient-centered and focused on healing in healthcare settings (Center for Health Care Strategies, 2021). It involves creating a safe space that promotes resilience for individuals who have experienced trauma. This method of care is universally recognized in prominent

organizations such as Kaiser Permanente to reduce childhood trauma (Walker, 2018). Adopting this technique can improve health outcomes, enhance engagement, and encourage effective treatment plans. A systematic analysis that evaluates preexisting quantitative studies suggests that trauma-informed interventions have notably improved symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders in 11 of 23 studies, while 15 of 23 studies have found improvements in other behavioral health outcomes including depression and anxiety (Han et al., 2021). This training and education approach will allow healthcare professionals to adhere to best practices when addressing trauma and its complexities. It will also empower professionals to recognize the impact of trauma, understand the signs and symptoms, and implement an effective strategy that will foster the physical and mental well-being of child trafficked victims.

According to the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, an estimated 15,000 to 50,000 people are trafficked in the United States yearly (Columbia University, n.d.). It is pivotal for healthcare organizations to develop a framework that focuses on patient care holistically, understanding their overall physical, mental, and spiritual needs. Children who have experienced various levels of stressors or trauma can often have difficulty identifying their emotions, which can ultimately put them at risk for developing various mental disorders (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). Due to difficulties in identifying emotions, children who are victims of human trafficking may find it more challenging when expressing their experiences and trauma to healthcare providers. For this reason, proper knowledge of how to identify warning signs of trafficking and mental health issues associated with trafficking can be essential.

In 2022, a comprehensive study surveyed 6,603 healthcare professionals across various regions of the country (McAmis et al., 2022). 42% of surveyed participants have received training in identifying human trafficking, while 93% believe they would benefit from this gained

knowledge (McAmis et al., 2022). This demonstrates that there is a scarcity of providers that are trained to recognize the signs of trafficking. The finding also suggests that 88% of victims had encountered the healthcare system while being trafficked (McAmis et al., 2022). This exemplifies the need to properly instruct healthcare providers to identify warning signs of trafficking to assist in providing effective treatment for victims. Another study in 2020 indicated that the current efforts in training healthcare providers to identify human trafficking are highly ineffective and there must be proper evaluation to produce a higher-quality approach (Coughlin et al., 2020). Enforcing adequate and patient-centered training and education for this method of care is a crucial step forward in addressing the mental health outcomes of trafficked children.

Introducing trauma-informed care training in healthcare settings is critical to minimize negative mental health outcomes. Training strategies for healthcare professionals include: (1) providing educational workshops on different types of traumas and understanding which geographic areas are more affected; (2) implementing case studies that incorporate real-life simulations to encourage providers to develop the skills needed to properly identify and respond effectively to trauma; and (3) raising self-awareness techniques when responding to trauma. Training should be an ongoing process that is monitored and enhanced over time.

With the implementation of this recommendation, the proposed training can be evaluated by pre- and post-training assessments within healthcare facilities. This method can measure changes in knowledge regarding trauma identification and recognize other long-lasting skill improvements. Longitudinal studies that track trends in mental health outcomes in potential victims can also be identified over the years.

***Figure 2: Trauma-Informed Care Logic Model***

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE LOGIC MODEL

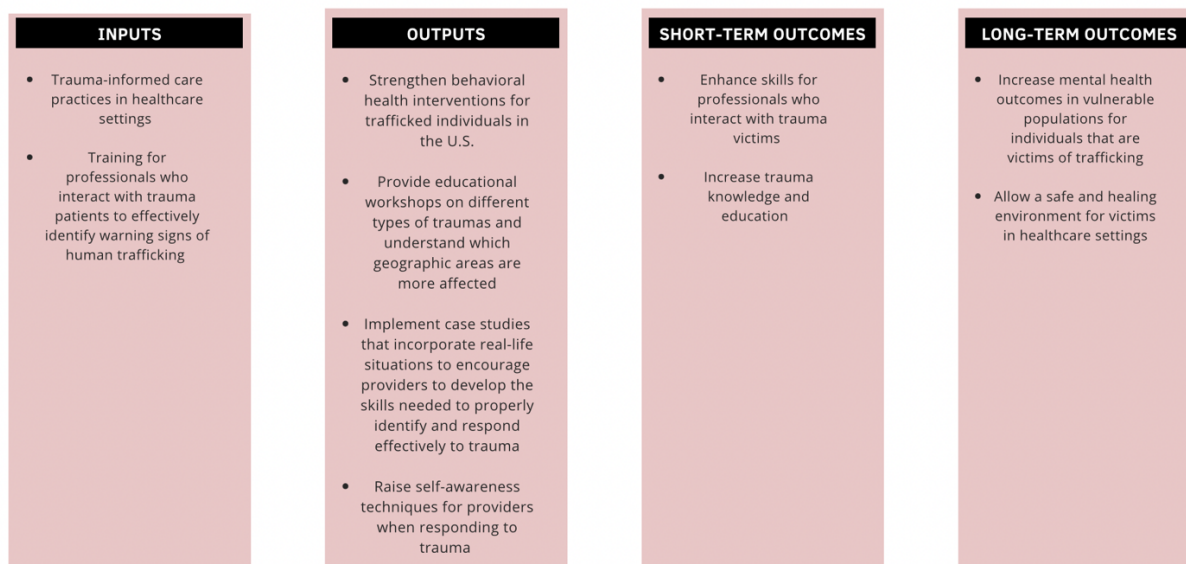


Figure 2 dives into the framework of a potential implementation of a trauma-informed care system using a logic model. In public health, logic models are used to explain the needs, outcomes, and impacts of a recommended solution. Given the statistics mentioned above, a trauma-informed care system will positively impact the future of mental healthcare.

### **Recommendation 2: Optimize Allocation of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative Fund Towards Demographic Regions Most At-Risk of Human Trafficking Following Comprehensive Needs Assessments**

The United Nations recognized that one in five victims of human trafficking are children (United Nations, n.d.). However, in underserved and regions most affected by poverty, children make up most trafficked victims (United Nations, n.d.). To address children's behavioral health outcomes in vulnerable populations, the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative was publicized in July of 2021 (California Health and Human Services, n.d.). This program invested \$4.4 billion to revamp and strengthen pre-existing systems that help support children and youth behavioral health outcomes in individuals under the age of 25 over the span of five years



(California Health and Human Services, n.d.). Allocating a portion of the funding from this initiative to vulnerable populations can be impactful after completing thorough needs assessments and identifying which demographic regions need the most changes.

Although communities of color and low-income populations are mostly affected by human trafficking, some areas are more prone than others. Conducting an intensive assessment is crucial in identifying the specific regions. These comprehensive needs assessments entails collecting and analyzing data to identify needs and priorities. Typically, this can involve many steps such as: (1) conducting surveys; (2) identifying target groups; and (3) evaluating strategic plans. With the allocation of these funds, behavioral health facilities within these communities can focus on ways to support children affected by human trafficking. Within underserved populations, there are usually limited behavioral health resources. Adjusting funding towards at-risk communities and evaluating how the money will be allocated through needs assessments ensures a change in behavioral health outcomes directly linked to human trafficking.

### **Recommendation 3: Implement Anti-Trafficking Initiatives in the United States Education System**

The United States Department of Education suggests that many underaged victims are students in the American school system (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In addition, it is common for victims of human trafficking to remain in the school system (Polaris Project, n.d.). Teachers play a crucial public health role by acting as the first point of contact in many child-related cases (Lowry et al., 2022). Longitudinal studies have recommended that school staff members have a significant impact on the mental health of their students, while also impacting rates of substance misuse, violence, suicide, eating disorders, and more (Lowry et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of developing an anti-trafficking framework within the United

States education systems, consisting of the implementation of an age-appropriate curriculum and anti-trafficking training for staff and faculty.

By enforcing an age-appropriate curriculum, children can learn how to protect themselves and their peers at an early age by recognizing warning signs of human trafficking. This method can also foster trust within schools and allow students to feel safer expressing any concerns they may have to staff members. It will also be crucial to implement training for school staff to identify the signs of human trafficking and to report any suspicions to the appropriate authorities. Training should also be addressed to identify various mental health problems. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration suggests that school educators are often the first to notice mental health conditions in children and young adults (SAMHSA, 2023). Recognizing mental illnesses early can serve as a preventative measure in children's overall health outcomes. Education institutions play a pivotal role in the development of a student's well-being, identity, and emotional skills (The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, 2019). This initiative can serve as interventions within America's school systems.

Policy implementations are dependent on the availability of funding and must also be efficient and cost-effective. For fiscal year 2023, the Department of Education has a budget of \$194.42 billion for its 10 sub-components, with \$29.13 billion allocated towards elementary and secondary education (Department of Education, 2023). This is an indication that governmental funding is available for this initiative to operate. With the implementation of this policy, the suggested recommendations can be evaluated by conducting anonymous surveys of staff members and students to determine efficiency. The surveys can include questionnaires that address mental well-being and be monitored over time by trained clinicians to identify progress.

*Figure 3: Recommendations and Key Outcomes*

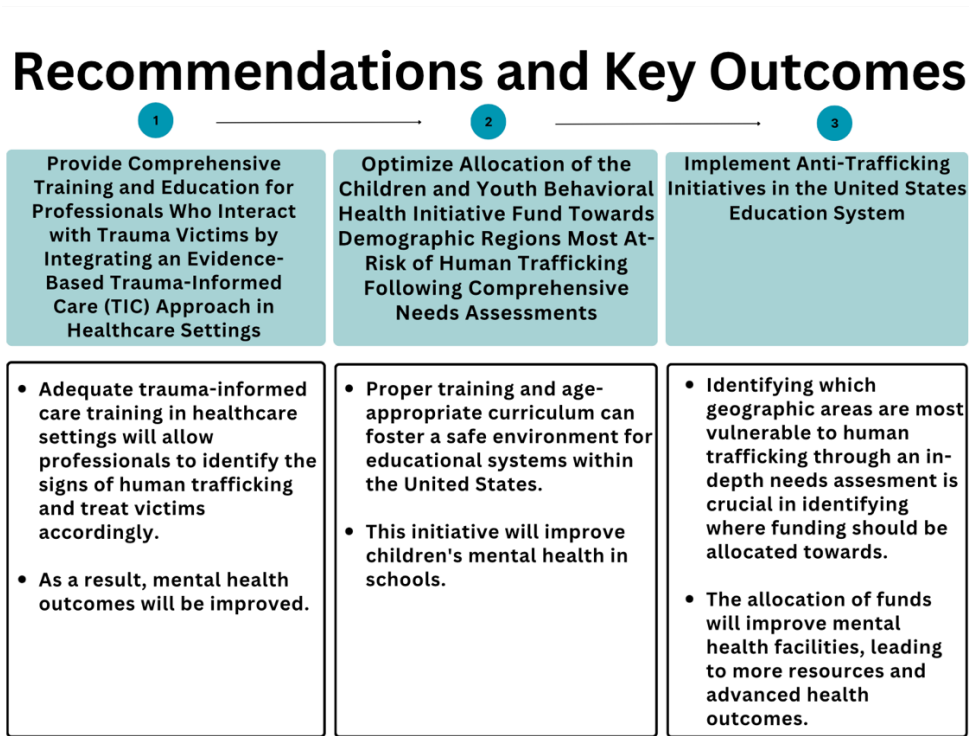


Figure 3 provides an overview of the recommended interventions for children who have experienced human and sex trafficking, corresponding with the key outcomes. While each policy targets different sectors, they all share a common goal of enhancing mental health outcomes for victims in vulnerable or at-risk populations.

### Implications and Discussion

Children who have experienced human trafficking within the United States have endured adverse mental health issues that can affect their overall quality of life. These illnesses range from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide, anxiety, and more (Altun et al., 2017). Although these issues can be addressed at an organizational level, further advancements are needed to reach policy levels to enable effective evidence-based practices. By enhancing policies nationally, there will be a reduction in mental illness in trafficked victims. There are

costs and benefits with every policy recommendation. Identifying both will allow an informed decision-making approach for legislators.

## **Limitations**

### **Recommendation 1: Provide Comprehensive Training and Education for Professionals**

#### **Who Interact with Trauma Victims by Integrating an Evidence-Based Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Approach in Healthcare Settings**

This policy aims to provide training for professionals to efficiently identify the warning signs of human trafficking in healthcare settings. It also takes on an evidence-based approach to properly strategize effective ways to treat trauma and its complexities. However, there are a few limitations that can be concluded with this policy recommendation. They are: (1) time and resource restrictions in healthcare settings; (2) staff burnout; and (3) limited patient disclosures. The following limitations will be discussed and elaborated upon.

Implementing thorough training can be time-consuming and requires additional staffing, resources, and coordination within the organization. Healthcare settings can be characterized as fast-paced environments with limited time for patient interaction. A trauma-informed care approach will require a more intensive treatment plan, which can hinder time spent with other patients. Addressing trauma due to trafficking is often complex and can take time to address all the needs and concerns of victims.

Professionals who work with child welfare are susceptible to burnout and second-hand traumatic stress (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.). Continuous exposure to secondary trauma can negatively impact professionals that interact with child victims. It is most common in providers who have experienced high stress while working with trauma victims (Child Welfare

Information Gateway, n.d.). This can have a detrimental effect on the mental health of both the patient and the provider.

Limited patient disclosure is also a limitation of this policy recommendation. Trauma victims often face stigma and shame, which can hinder their openness to speak about certain situations. This can make it more difficult for healthcare professionals to properly diagnose and provide treatment for the victim. It may also take time for trust to be built between a patient and provider.

### **Recommendation 2: Optimize Allocation of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative Towards Demographic Regions Most At-Risk of Human Trafficking Following Comprehensive Needs Assessments**

This recommended policy aims to allocate a portion of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative funding based on comprehensive needs assessments of at-risk communities. There are limitations to this recommendation that include: (1) data availability and accuracy and (2) funding constraints. These limitations can hinder the effectiveness of this policy.

Data availability and accuracy can be of concern when relying on needs assessments to determine at-risk communities. Limitations can include data loss or lack of data during collection. Data loss can contribute to: (1) system collection failures and (2) data breaches. The lack of data can be a result of inadequate data collection procedures. Ultimately, inaccurate data can limit the development of evidence-based modifications for intervention strategies. The accuracy of these results can also be an issue for underrepresented populations.

Limited funds can pose a significant constraint and can negatively affect the allocation of resources. This policy suggests thorough needs assessments to identify which geographical areas

are most prone to human trafficking to allocate funding. However, this indicates that funding previously meant for another sector can be affected. This can potentially harm communities that have benefited from the initial funding.

### **Recommendation 3: Implement Anti-Trafficking Initiatives in the United States Education System**

This policy intends to implement anti-trafficking initiatives in America's education systems. These initiatives include: (1) enforcing an age-appropriate curriculum that recognizes signs of human trafficking and (2) training staff and faculty to identify mental illness and warning signs of human trafficking. Some limitations can affect the implementation of this policy such as: (1) coming up with age-appropriate content; (2) measuring the impact of this initiative; (3) obtaining parental consent; and (4) gaining the support of school districts to adopt and implement this policy.

The concept of human trafficking is sensitive and can trigger emotional responses in children. Developing a curriculum that fosters this concept can be profoundly challenging. Creators of this content must find a reasonable balance that addresses the complexities and seriousness of this topic, while not inducing stress or trauma to students. Parents and caregivers must also approve for the curriculum to remain effective.

Measuring the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives in schools can be challenging. Until sufficient data is identified, there can be gaps in the correlation between anti-trafficking training and positive mental health outcomes. This recommendation serves as an intervention for children in the United States education systems by training staff to identify warning signs of trafficking and to notify the appropriate authority of any concerns. However, this can lead to incorrect assumptions and may limit the accurate identification of actual trafficking cases.

## **Research and Next Steps**

The next steps in conducting research in the areas of trauma-informed care models, allocating funds to behavioral health following needs assessments, and implementing anti-trafficking education and training in schools can involve various approaches. Recommendation 1 can improve areas of research by: (1) identifying best practices for integrating trauma-informed care models in all healthcare settings; (2) conducting further research or studies that assess the effectiveness of interventions to identify the specific needs of victims; and (3) identifying long-term outcomes after the implementation of trauma-informed care models. The next steps for recommendation 2 include: (1) establishing the cost-effectiveness and economic impact of fund allocation in terms of improving overall health outcomes and reducing overall costs. Future research for recommendation 3 includes: (1) analyzing the knowledge gaps of human trafficking in children and staff following anti-trafficking education and training; (2) researching to assess various trafficking curriculums, considering age factors and appropriateness; and (3) studying long-term outcomes following the education and training to identify knowledge retention of the curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

The ongoing public health crisis of child human trafficking in the United States demands a robust and comprehensive policy evaluation. By implementing various evidence-based policies, there will be more aid for children that suffer from mental illnesses following the act of human trafficking. Through extensive analysis, unidentified gaps are monitored and will be addressed to enable various prevention and detection efforts. It is evident that human trafficking is oftentimes complex and can be difficult to identify, which can lead to the absence of behavioral health support. To address these gaps, the three proposed recommendations are to: (1)

provide comprehensive training and education for professionals who interact with trauma victims by integrating an evidence-based Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) approach in healthcare settings; (2) optimize the allocation of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative towards demographic regions most at-risk of human trafficking following comprehensive needs assessments; and (3) implement anti-trafficking initiatives in the United States education system. The potential enactment of these policies will aim to address and alleviate the current behavioral health concerns of child trafficked victims and raise awareness for this ongoing public health crisis.



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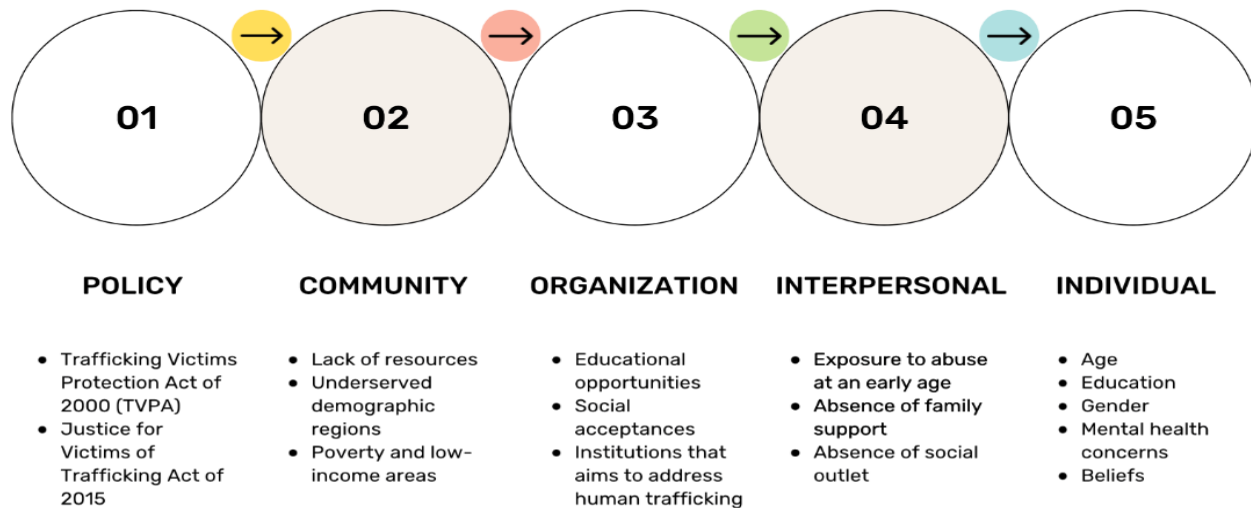
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## Appendix

### Appendix A: *Social-Ecological Model of Child and Human Sex Trafficking*

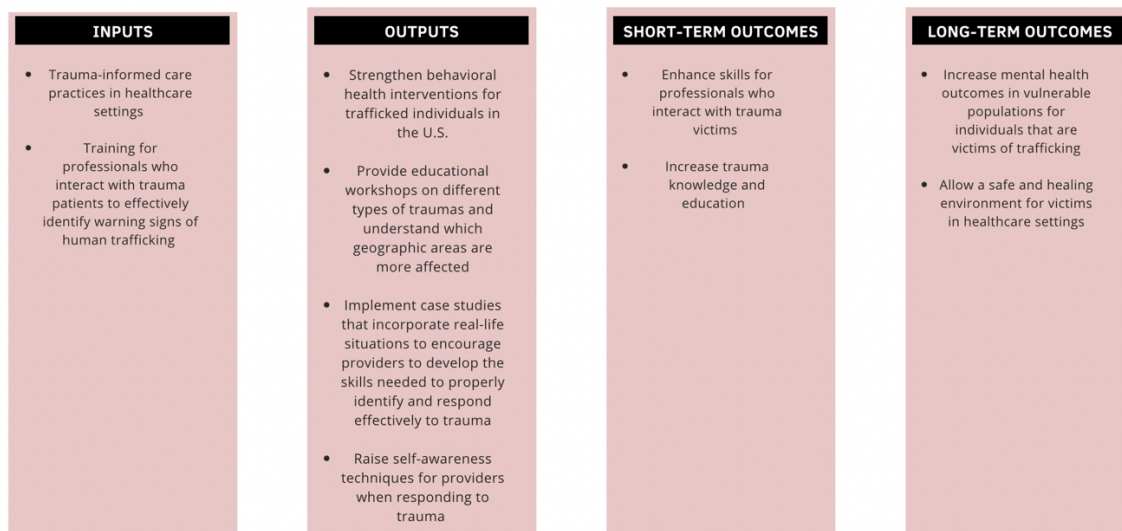
#### SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL Child Human and Sex Trafficking

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## Appendix B: *Trauma-Informed Care Logic Model*

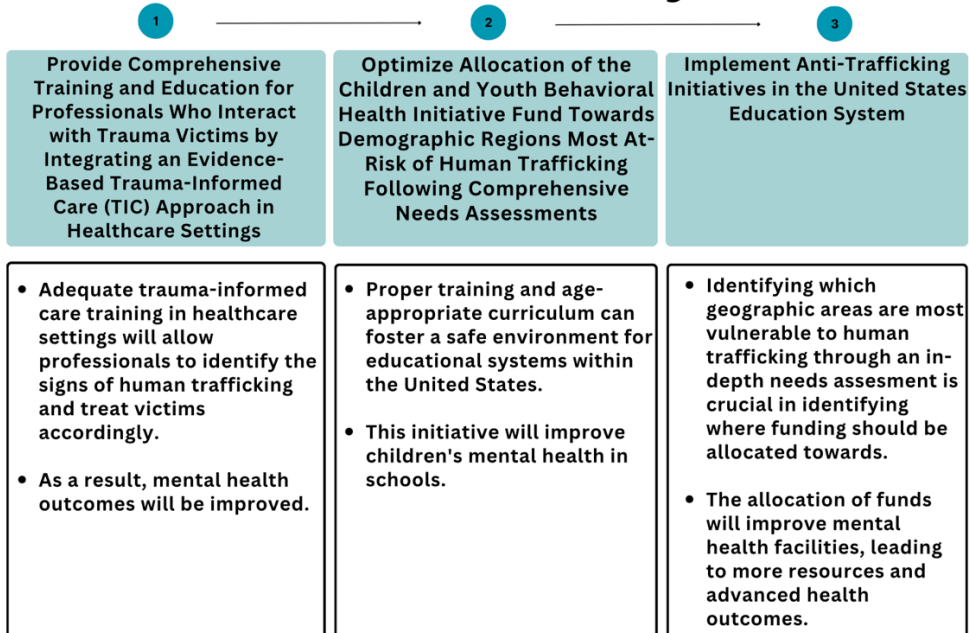
### TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE LOGIC MODEL





## Appendix C: Recommendations and Key Outcomes

# Recommendations and Key Outcomes



## Appendix D: *Master of Public Health Competencies*

### MPH Foundational Competencies

Foundational Competency	Description of how used for Capstone
Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health	
1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice	
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context	
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software as appropriate	
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy and practice	Analyzed and interpreted results from academic studies and data to suggest policy recommendations for the enhancements of behavioral health outcomes.
Public Health & Health Care Systems	
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings	
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels	Described and identified geographic regions that are disproportionately affected by child human trafficking.
Planning & Management to Promote Health	
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health	
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs	Applied principles of a community-based needs assessments to identify geographic regions most at risk for child human trafficking.
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention	
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management	Analyzed funding resources and restrictions to help implement proposed recommendations.
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs	
Policy in Public Health	
12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence	Provided and analyzed evidence from different levels of the Social-Ecological Model in support of identifying various factors that play a role in behavioral health outcomes.
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes	
14. Advocate for political, social and economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations	

15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity	
<b>Leadership</b>	
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making	
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges	
<b>Communication</b>	
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors	
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation	Outlined, drafted, and finalized Capstone paper including a literature review, recommendations and implications on a current public health problem. Created a slide deck based on the Capstone paper and delivered an oral presentation at Health Professions Day in front of an interprofessional audience.
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content	
<b>Interprofessional Practice*</b>	
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams	
<b>Systems Thinking</b>	
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue	Designed a logic model to visually portray the inputs, outputs, and short and long-term outcomes for an evidence-based trauma-inform care approach.

### **Health Policy Leadership Concentration Competencies**

Competency	Anticipated FW Activity
1. Apply economic concepts to understand the effect of changes in policies at the government, health systems, and public health sectors	
2. Synthesize economic concepts to assess equity and efficiency in making health policy recommendations in underserved communities	
3. Formulate efficient health policy change recommendations through the analysis of proposed health policy initiatives that could affect health outcomes of vulnerable populations	Identified areas that are vulnerable and need the most changes to propose recommendations.
4. Develop recommendations to improve organizational strategies and capacity to implement health policy	Analyzed and reviewed peer-reviewed and academic articles to identify gaps in existing strategies. Following the identification of the problem, suggested recommendations were examined to promote changes in preexisting systems.

5. Analyze policy options to address environmental health needs at the local, state, and federal levels	
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