



# ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

SHERIFF-CORONER DON BARNES

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

August 8, 2023

Honorable Maria Hernandez, Presiding Judge  
Orange County Superior Court  
Central Justice Center  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: Response to 2022-23 Orange County Grand Jury report, *"Human Sex Trafficking in OC"*

Dear Presiding Judge Hernandez:

In accordance with Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, enclosed please find my response to the 2022-23 Orange County Grand Jury report, *"Human Sex Trafficking in OC."*

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Don Barnes".

Don Barnes  
Sheriff-Coroner

cc: Grand Jury Foreperson  
Members, Orange County Board of Supervisors  
Frank Kim, County Executive Officer

550 N. FLOWER STREET, SANTA ANA, CA 92703 | 714-647-1800

[www.ocsd.org](http://www.ocsd.org)

Integrity without compromise | Service above self | Professionalism in the performance of duty | Vigilance in safeguarding our community

**Orange County Sheriff's Department**  
**Response to Findings and Recommendations**  
**2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report**  
*"Human Sex Trafficking in OC"*

**FINDINGS**

**F1.**

**Funding to combat human sex trafficking is both inconsistent and insufficient, resulting in less participation in the OCHTTF by law enforcement agencies.**

**Response:** *Partially agrees with finding.*

Currently, Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) does not receive outside funds for combating human trafficking. OCSD has three Human Trafficking / Vice investigators who handle cases in the unincorporated areas and thirteen cities that contract with OCSD for law enforcement services. Investigators primarily focus their efforts on illicit massage establishments, known thoroughfares for human trafficking, and online solicitation.

OCSD previously participated in the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF), but after evaluating their efforts, OCSD determined that it was more beneficial to concentrate its resources on the areas directly served by OCSD. OCSD experienced greater success in combating human trafficking by focusing its efforts within OCSD's jurisdiction rather than through the task force.

Increased funding for OCSD would allow us to increase our efforts in combating human trafficking by adding more specialized investigators. This increased staffing would not only assist in tackling the human trafficking issue but also potentially prompt a reevaluation of participating in the OCHTTF.

**F2.**

**Limited budgets, training, and hiring challenges constrain local law enforcement agencies' ability to devote significant resources toward combating human sex trafficking.**

**Response:** *Agrees with finding.*

Limited budgets can restrict the allocation of resources for investigations and prevention efforts. Increased budgets would assist with ensuring robust staffing levels to combat human trafficking effectively.

While limited budgets, training, and hiring presents challenges, OCSD has still made a significant impact on human trafficking. In 2022, OCSD human trafficking (HT) investigators made 114 arrests for soliciting prostitution and 31 arrests for pimping and pandering. There were 10 rescued juveniles.

It should be noted that the Orange County Sheriff's Academy allocates a four-hour training block specifically focused on human trafficking. Deputies have the option to pursue additional training

in the field of human trafficking if they desire. Moreover, Human Trafficking investigators conduct informal briefing training sessions on the subject at different Sheriff's sub-stations.

**F4.**

**Education and prevention efforts have increased awareness of human trafficking but remain insufficient to create heightened awareness within the Orange County community.**

**Response:** *Partially disagrees with finding.*

OCSD is actively working to increase awareness of human trafficking within the Orange County community, which is indeed a crucial step in combating this crime. This work includes:

- **Collaboration and Partnerships.** Human trafficking investigators have fostered collaborations with local law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. By working together, these entities have pooled their resources, expertise, and networks to raise awareness more effectively.
- **Public Awareness Campaign.** In an effort to combat human trafficking, OCSD and the Orange County Intelligence Assessment Center (OCIAC) launched a comprehensive public awareness campaign on January 11, 2023, coinciding with National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. The campaign involved the release of a compelling public service announcement and educational materials through OCSD's website and various social media platforms. By engaging the community, the initiative aimed to foster widespread awareness and mobilize individuals to contribute to the end of human trafficking.
- **Community Hotline.** OCSD created a dedicated hotline where members of the community can report suspected cases of human trafficking.
- **Town Halls.** Human trafficking investigators have attended community town hall meetings to increase public awareness and increase prevention efforts. Along with raising awareness, investigators educated the community on recognizing and responding to potential trafficking situations.

**F5.**

**Agencies inadequately record, track, and coordinate their data collection to effectively measure their progress toward addressing human trafficking.**

**Response:** *Disagrees with finding*

OCSD investigators utilize several methods to record, track, and coordinate data collection to measure their progress. Investigators utilize internal unit tracking statistics to assess their advancements. Yearly statistics are utilized to evaluate the number of arrests made and victims rescued. Additionally, OCSD's crime analysis unit analyzes data obtained from calls for service, crime reports, and law enforcement databases. The crime analysis unit advises on hot spots, analysis charts, and timelines throughout the county.

**F6.**

**There is no centralized, coordinated, and specialized database in Orange County that could be utilized across all affiliated agencies to track repeat victimization.**

**Response:** *Partially disagrees with finding*

Orange County law enforcement agencies have access to a variety of databases, including Coplink, WISN-LAClear, Vision, and LinX. These databases offer a wide range of information, including criminal history, field interviews, crime reports, criminal associates, vehicle details, and more.

One significant challenge faced by agencies combating human trafficking is the inability to gather comprehensive victim information due to victim confidentiality laws. Confidentiality laws often restrict the disclosure of sensitive information about victims, including their identities, personal details, and involvement in trafficking cases. This limitation makes it challenging for agencies to gather comprehensive data on victim demographics, experiences, and patterns of trafficking.

**F7.**

**Orange County's wealth and tourist attractions make it a magnet for human sex trafficking.**

**Response:** *Agrees with finding*

Orange County Sheriff's Human Trafficking/ Vice investigators proactively combat human trafficking during major events. In January and February 2022, HT investigators actively participated in a collaborative initiative called "Operation Red Zone," aimed at combating human trafficking across multiple jurisdictions. This specific operation was strategically executed before the Super Bowl. Throughout the operation, the team cooperated closely with the OCIAC and various local agencies. Their approach involved deploying undercover online advertisements in several hotels and conducting enforcement operations in areas notorious for prostitution activities. As a result of Operation Red Zone, significant achievements were made, including 29 misdemeanor arrests related to prostitution, four misdemeanor arrests for municipal code violations, and two felony arrests linked to human trafficking. Moreover, the team successfully reached out to eight female victims, providing them with comprehensive support services. Notably, their efforts led to the recovery of a missing adult and a missing juvenile, ensuring their safety.

**F8.**

**Sex trafficking is an underground crime. Trafficked individuals are transient and mobile, making it difficult to discover and identify victims.**

**Response:** *Agrees with finding.*

Sex trafficking networks operate covertly, employing sophisticated methods to conceal their activities and avoid detection by law enforcement. This includes changing locations frequently, utilizing encrypted communication, and employing various forms of coercion and manipulation. Traffickers exercise significant control over their victims, using tactics such as physical violence, psychological manipulation, and threats against their families. This control restricts victims' ability to seek help or disclose their situation to authorities.

Current legislation has also made it difficult to identify human trafficking victims. SB 233 and SB 357, both authored by Senator Scott Weiner, have made this work particularly difficult. SB 233 limits specific type of evidence to establish intent to commit prostitution. SB 357 repealed a loitering law and effectively de-criminalized those paying for services and those exploiting women. The loitering law was a tool used by investigators to engage with potential victims and determine if they were a victim of human trafficking. It also helped identify those who may be conducting the larger operation. Both senate bills took away important tools and prevent law enforcement from identifying and, ultimately, helping victims of trafficking.

**F9.**

**Law enforcement attitudes and methods have changed to a “victim centered trauma informed” approach, but more training is needed to identify, intervene on behalf of, and support victims.**

**Response:** *Agrees with finding*

Investigators have shifted attitudes and methods towards a victim-centered approach in addressing human sex trafficking. Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities and needs of trafficking victims is crucial for effective intervention and support. While investigators have made significant progress in this area, ongoing training and education will enhance the identification, intervention, and support of victims.

**F10.**

**Law enforcement agencies do not focus enough on the demand side of human sex trafficking, and punishment of the clients is minimal.**

**Response:** *Disagrees with finding*

OCSO’s human trafficking investigators focus mainly on the demand side of human trafficking by conducting operations targeting purchasers of prostitution to disrupt the demand for commercial sex and identify individuals involved in human trafficking. These operations can involve sting operations, undercover work, and online monitoring to catch and prosecute buyers.

Investigators also focus efforts on the victim side to gather important information. Investigators recognize the value of human trafficking victim information in identifying and prosecuting perpetrators and clients involved in human trafficking. Victims' phones and other evidence can provide crucial leads, including names, contact information, and clientele lists, which help in identifying and apprehending those involved in exploiting victims.

**F11.**

**Victims and survivors need complex ongoing social service support.**

**Response:** *Agrees with finding*

Victims and survivors of human trafficking require complex and ongoing social services support. Key social services for victims and survivors of human trafficking are available in Orange County through the Orange County Social Services Agency and Waymakers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**R4.**

**By June 30, 2024, the City of Anaheim and the County of Orange should develop a database dedicated to Human Trafficking that specifically tracks Sex Trafficking networks and victims.**

**Response:** *This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable or warranted.*

Orange County Law Enforcement agencies already use several databases that contain information on suspects who have committed human trafficking and other offenses. These databases offer a wide range of information, including criminal history, arrests, field interviews, crime reports, criminal associates, vehicle information, residences, employment, properties, social media, and more.

One significant challenge faced by agencies combating human trafficking is the inability to gather comprehensive victim information due to victim confidentiality laws. Confidentiality laws often restrict the disclosure of sensitive information about victims, including their identities, personal details, and involvement in trafficking cases. This limitation makes it challenging for agencies to gather comprehensive data on victim demographics, experiences, and patterns of trafficking.

**R6.**

**By June 30, 2024, the County of Orange should fully fund Education and Prevention Programs to address Human Sex Trafficking.**

**Response:** *The recommendation is being implemented.*

The Orange County Sheriff's Department conducts public awareness campaigns to educate the community about the signs of human trafficking and how to report suspicious activities. These campaigns include distributing informational materials, organizing community events, education through social media and collaborating with local groups to help educate and prevent human trafficking.