



# Human Trafficking News Digest: May 31, 2017

Compiled by the [Center for Public Policy Studies](#)

## Forbes

[California's Largest Health Provider Takes on Human Trafficking](#) (May 26): Healthcare settings are commonly considered the most promising places to identify and serve victims of human trafficking. Further, health systems are oftentimes the only chance for escape. In fact, a 2014 study found that while being exploited, nearly 88% of sex trafficking survivors reported some kind of contact with healthcare. A 2017 survey further found that more than 50% of victims had access to healthcare while being trafficked, but 97% of those indicated they had never been provided with information on resources or options while receiving care. It is clear that human trafficking is a major public health problem. And whether someone is a victim of labor trafficking or sex trafficking, health providers more often than not fail to recognize the signs, and thus our health systems fail to identify and care for our most vulnerable people. However, Dignity Health, a 21-state network with more than 400 care centers (and the largest hospital provider in California) is trying to change that. Dignity Health, in partnership with Dignity Health Foundation, launched a Human Trafficking Response (HTR) program and has publicly published a shared learnings manual detailing its program and providing internal resources like victim response procedures. Its hope is that other health systems will implement similar programs and use the manual as guidelines for program implementation.

## Hartford Courant

[Senate Passes Bill to Strengthen Penalties for Sex Trafficking of Minors](#) (May 26): The state Senate gave final approval early Friday to a bill that significantly strengthens penalties for sex trafficking of minors. The measure, which cleared both chambers of the General Assembly unanimously, seeks to attack the “demand side” of sex trafficking. It would create a new criminal category, “commercial sexual abuse of a minor,” and increase the penalty if the victim is under 15 from a Class C to a Class A felony, which is punishable by up to 25 years in prison. The legislation also broadens the definition of sex trafficking, defined as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, or provision of a person for the purpose of engaging in sexual conduct with another person for a fee.” And it increase the penalty for trafficking in persons from a class B to a class A felony, punishable by up to 25 years in prison in line with federal law. Advocates hailed the bill, which now goes to Gov. Dannel P. Malloy for consideration. “Passage of this bill sends an unequivocal message to those who pay to have sex with minors that Connecticut won’t stand for such abuse,” said Christine Palm, communications and women’s policy analyst for the Connecticut Commission on Women, Children and Seniors. The bill also offers more assistance to victims of human trafficking by directing state officials to develop a plan to provide mental health counseling, substance abuse and support programs.



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## Texas Tribune

[Behind Closed Doors, Texas Lawmakers Strip Funding for Sex Trafficking Victims](#) (May 25): In recent private negotiations between the Texas House and Senate about which public programs to fund and how to fund them, state lawmakers opted to kill a \$3 million initiative to rehabilitate victims of sex trafficking. That ended hopes from child welfare advocates that 2017 would be the first year in recent memory in which state lawmakers might set aside funds specifically intended to help victims who were sold for sex. Though Texas leaders often boast of their efforts to end human trafficking, they have balked time and again at paying for victims' services, despite findings that many had previous contact with the state's child welfare system. A proposal led by state Rep. Gina Hinojosa, D-Austin, would have rerouted \$3 million from the governor's homeland security budget and directed it to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to help trafficking victims receive "necessary services," though it did not specify which ones. It passed the House, 113 to 32. But that proposal did not survive budget negotiations between the House and Senate, whose spending priorities contained significant differences. Lawmakers on a conference committee met privately to reconcile those differences and prioritize which public programs to fund. The 2009 legislative session offers a historical example. That year, lawmakers passed an anti-sex-trafficking law that called for the creation of a similar, \$10 million-per-year victim assistance program, meant to offer grants to provide housing, counseling and medical care for trafficking survivors. But the Legislature never appropriated the money, and eight years later the program's coffers remain empty.

## Omaha World Herald

[Nebraska Legislators' Approval of Harsher Human Trafficking Penalties Sheds Light on Extent of Crime](#) (May 21): The days of fines and probation for crimes linked to sex trafficking are coming to an end in Nebraska. State lawmakers last week passed a bill that dramatically increases penalties for those who create the supply and demand for human trafficking. A minimum of one year in prison is likely for panderers and solicitors in such transactions. If children are exploited, both the pimps and johns could spend the rest of their lives in prison. One of the most significant bills of the 2017 session also marks a major achievement for state senators, law enforcement officials and women's advocates who have worked for more than a decade to reveal the extent of an invisible crime and take steps to eradicate it. Advocates and experts say they are unaware of research that would show whether tougher punishments produce a noticeable drop in trafficking activity. Each month in Nebraska, 900 people are sold for sex, often more than once, according to a report by the Human Trafficking Initiative. The report stated that almost 400 of those are considered at moderate to high risk of being trafficked. The report also showed that Nebraska's commercial sex market skews toward children and minorities. One in five people is advertised on websites with phrases indicating that she or he is young. And African-Americans make up half of all individuals sold for sex in Nebraska, despite representing just 5 percent of the population.



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## U.S. News & World Report

[Ivanka Trump Holds Human Trafficking Talk](#) (May 19): Ivanka Trump's prominent role and voice within her father's White House was again evident this week. "Combating human trafficking and modern slavery is both a moral and strategic interest domestically and abroad," she said while discussing the administration's efforts to fight trafficking. The discussion was a follow-up to a February meeting on the issue, according to a White House spokeswoman. That session reportedly was organized by the first daughter, and back then, President Trump said he would bring the "full force and weight" of the U.S. government to the fight against trafficking. On Wednesday, Ivanka Trump, who serves as an assistant to the president, said there was a 35 percent increase in cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2016 from the year before. More than 8,000 cases were reported last year, she said. Members of Congress at the session included House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as well as Sens. Bob Corker, R-Tenn.; Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.; and Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D. Trump said "Combating Trafficking and Child Protection Week" is slated for next week in Congress, and lawmakers are expected to put forward multiple pieces of legislation addressing the issue.

[Bill Would Dismiss Charges for Human Trafficking Victims](#) (May 16): Human trafficking victims forced or coerced into prostitution could get certain criminal charges deferred or dismissed under a bill approved by the Michigan Legislature on Tuesday. The state Senate passed legislation that would allow some prostitution-related charges to be dropped regardless of any prior convictions. The move comes following recommendations made by the attorney general's office and the Michigan Human Trafficking Commission. Currently, human trafficking victims are eligible for probation programs if they have no previous prostitution-related convictions, said state Rep. Bronna Kahle, R-Adrian, who sponsored the bill. Kahle said the bill would change Michigan's law and help human trafficking victims lead better lives. But University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic Director Bridgette Carr said the legislation does not go far enough to address the issue of recognizing human trafficking victims as victims. The bill passed the House in March and now goes to Gov. Rick Snyder.

## Star-Telegram

[Human Trafficking Becoming a Growing Concern in Fort Worth](#) (May 16): City Council members learned Tuesday that Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston are the two Texas metro areas with the highest numbers of human-trafficking cases. "Human trafficking is an issue," said Ken Dean, assistant police chief. "It's very rare you find just one victim. We have our fair share when it come to the numbers of human-trafficking victims. We have plenty of work to be done." Fort Worth's major-case unit along with a detective, officer, two Homeland Security agents and a civilian task force coordinator investigate human trafficking in Fort Worth, Dean said. Human trafficking involves forcing a person or child into the sex trades or other labor, he said. Councilwoman Kelly Allen Gray said, "We as a city need to figure out how to do more."



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## Government Technology

[State Takes Aim at Human Trafficking](#) (May 15): In the Grant County, Wash., Courthouse, there's a little poster on the wall by the sink in the men's restroom. "No one should force you into work or prostitution," the headline reads. "You have rights in the United States, regardless of immigration status. If you or someone you know is being forced to work, please call for help." The message is repeated in eight different languages: Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Tagalog, Somali, and Korean. And two phone numbers on the bottom — one for the Washington state Crime Victim Service Center, and another for the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. Because you never know who might see that sign. Or who might need it. There are few reliable statistics about human trafficking in the state of Washington. There's a lot of talk about the I-5 corridor, tracking along I-90, and the addition of trafficking to the portfolio of some street gangs in the Spokane area. But there's not a lot of light, because there aren't many reliable numbers. "We don't know much about human trafficking in Central Washington," said Rick Torrance, the managing director of the Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy in Olympia. "We don't have good statistics." So, rather than try to count it all, Torrance said his office focuses on identifying those most at risk of being trafficked, and getting help those who need it.

## U.S. News & World Report

[House Bill Seeks Human Trafficking Education, Service Funds](#) (May 9): Some North Carolina House lawmakers say more must be done so young women avoid the forced sex trade and to help those rescued from human traffickers get their lives back on track. North Carolina already has laws punishing human trafficking. But on Tuesday, House Republicans discussed their proposed legislation for a pilot program in three urban counties to teach public school students about the dangers of human trafficking and to teach law enforcement officers how to detect it. The proposal, which could take tens of millions of dollars to carry out, also envisions funding in those counties — Wake, Mecklenburg and New Hanover — to help nonprofits create shelters that house sex-slave victims and to provide mental health services. Current North Carolina law includes "safe harbor" provisions so that individuals held against their will to perform sex acts for cash can avoid prosecution for prostitution. But they often lack protection and physical and psychological assistance to overcome their scars, a chief sponsor of the bill said. The bill seeks more than \$50 million over two years to carry out the pilot. Dollar, a senior House budget-writer, downplayed specific numbers for now, calling the measure a work in progress. Brawley said he'd ultimately like to see a program go statewide and to increase penalties against traffickers.

## Wisconsin Public Radio

[Eau Claire Hotel Staff Getting Training to Spot Victims of Human Trafficking](#) (May 9): Staff from Eau Claire-area hotels are being trained on how to spot victims of human trafficking. Fierce Freedom, a non-profit organization based in Eau Claire working to stop human trafficking in western Wisconsin, teamed up with police this week



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to train local hotel management and staff on the signs that someone is being forced to trade sex for money. Jodi Emerson, of Fierce Freedom, said police usually respond after a crime has already happened, but alert hotel staff can help them prevent it. “People who are working the hotels are going to see things differently and they’re going to see it on a more consistent basis. So, having them be the eyes and ears of law enforcement really makes a big difference,” Emerson said. Emerson said her group is also working on system to rate hotels based on how aggressive they are in spotting human trafficking. She expects to have a website with the ratings up by Memorial Day. Eau Claire is a common stop for traffickers on Interstate 94 between Chicago and Minneapolis.

## NPR

[Atlanta Airport Boosts Effort to Stop Human Trafficking](#) (May 4): Atlanta’s airport is ramping up efforts to spot instances of human trafficking. Part of the program is teaching more airline and airport workers how to identify victims. “We want them to know the things they can do,” said Jan Lennon, director of security at the airport, “so they can help us globally to stop human trafficking.” A survivor, Donna Hubbard, trained employees at a seminar Wednesday. She is now a flight attendant who works with a human-trafficking awareness group called Airline Ambassadors International. “They will be malnourished,” Hubbard said. “They may have bruises on their body. They may not know where they’re going or where they’re coming from.” Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport plans to hold another seminar later this year. It is also creating audio messages about the crime to air throughout the airport.