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Report Highlights

Challenges and Gaps in Louisiana's Efforts to Address Human Trafficking

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We reviewed Louisiana's efforts to address human trafficking in order to identify challenges and gaps. Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery; it occurs when a trafficker exploits an individual with force, fraud, or coercion to make them perform commercial sex acts or work. Although the public is most aware of trafficking in the sex industry, human trafficking can also occur in less obvious industries such as construction and agriculture. We conducted this audit because, according to statistics from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the number of human trafficking victims receiving services in Louisiana has steadily increased by at least 261.2% from calendar years 2014 to 2018, as shown in the exhibit on the following page.

What We Found

Overall, we found that Louisiana could strengthen its efforts to address human trafficking in the following areas:

- **Louisiana does not have a designated entity responsible for case management and coordination of services for adult victims of human trafficking or for juvenile victims who are not in DCFS custody. As a result, fewer resources are available to assist these victims and ensure they receive essential services.** Best practices show that a coordinated approach to providing services and case management are important for meeting the diverse and complex needs of all human trafficking victims.
- **Louisiana lacks sufficient placement options and specialized mental health services for victims of human trafficking.** Although there are at least 291 beds available statewide for victims of human trafficking, placement options are often not available in rural areas or do not allow access for all victims. In addition, the development of a statewide and/or regional service provider registry that identifies which programs are evidence-based or incorporate best practices would help victims to better access services.
- **Louisiana has limited data on human trafficking victims and on the effectiveness of services.** Although DCFS collects some data on victims, the data is not complete because DCFS relies on service providers to voluntarily report their cases. In addition, there is no systematic or centralized collection of data on program outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts and services provided to victims.

Sex Trafficking

Adults are compelled to engage in commercial sex acts by force, fraud, or coercion. Minors are compelled to perform commercial sex acts regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion.

Labor Trafficking

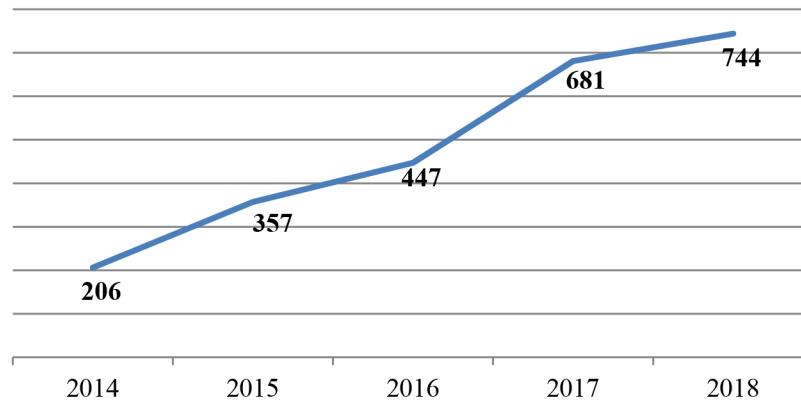
Individuals are compelled to work or provide services by force, fraud, or coercion.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Human Trafficking Victims Receiving Services in Louisiana
Calendar Years 2014 through 2018



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information from DCF's Human Trafficking Annual Reports.

What We Found (Cont.)

- **Although Louisiana has leveraged federal grants to help fund anti-trafficking activities, it does not have a predictable and consistent source of state funding.** For example, the legislature established a dedicated fund in June 2013 to pay for anti-trafficking efforts, but no funds have ever been deposited. In addition, some entities receive no funding for their human trafficking initiatives.
- **While some regions have developed methods to increase public awareness, a statewide campaign would help ensure that Louisiana residents know how to recognize and report human trafficking.** In addition, no entity is responsible for enforcing compliance with the state law that requires child assault awareness training in schools, and some entities need additional training to better identify human trafficking victims.
- **While Louisiana has established criminal laws with penalties for human trafficking, it could improve by providing prosecutorial immunity for trafficked youth and criminal record relief for adult victims as recommended by best practices.** Twenty states and the District of Columbia have legislated prosecutorial immunity for trafficked youth, meaning children cannot be charged with certain statutorily-specified crimes. This is important because a recent trend in state child trafficking policy focuses on treating trafficked youth as survivors of trauma who should be provided rehabilitative services rather than as perpetrators of crimes they were forced to commit.
- **Because Louisiana has focused most of its efforts on sex trafficking, awareness of labor trafficking and efforts to address it are lacking in Louisiana.** One of the largest labor trafficking cases in U.S. history resulted from human trafficking that occurred in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additional training that is focused on labor trafficking may be effective to increase identification of these victims.